

Lafayette Bible Study Series
(1987-1992)
by Mr. John Ogwyn

Lesson #	Date	Title of Lesson	Comments	Chart
1	07/21/87	Proof of the Bible (Part 1)	No question sheet	Yes
2	08/11/87	Proof of the Bible (Part 2)	No question sheet	Yes
3	08/25/87	The time of Ezra and Nehemiah - The Fifth Period of Canonization of the Old Testament	No question sheet	
4	09/08/87	How the New Testament Came Together	No question sheet	
5	09/22/87	The Inspired Order of the Books of the Bible	No question sheet	Yes
6	10/27/87	Introductory Material to the Survey Approach of Studying the Bible	No question sheet	
7	11/10/87	Genesis 1 - 3		
8	12/08/87	Genesis 4 - 9 (Part 1) (only 1 question sheet)		Yes
9	12/22/87	Genesis 4 - 9 (Part 2)		Yes
10	01/12/88	Genesis 10 - 11		
11	01/26/88	Genesis 12 - 36		
12	02/09/88	Genesis 37 - 50		
13	02/23/88	Exodus 1 - 18		Yes
14	03/08/88	Exodus 19 - 40		Yes
15	03/22/88	Leviticus (Part 1) (only 1 question sheet)		
16	04/12/88	Leviticus (Part 2)		
17	04/27/88	Numbers		Yes
18	05/10/88	Deuteronomy		
19	05/24/88	Joshua		
20	06/14/88	Judges		Yes
21	07/12/88	I Samuel 1 - 15 and I Chronicles 1 - 9		Yes
22	07/26/88	I Samuel 16 - 31 and I Chronicles 10		
23	08/23/88	II Samuel 16 - 31 and I Chronicles 11 - 20		
24	10/11/88	II Samuel 2 - 24 and I Kings 1 - 11, I Chronicles 21 - 29 and II Chronicles 11 - 20		
25	10/25/88	I Kings 12 - 22, II Kings 1 - 2, II Chronicles 10 - 20		Yes
26	11/08/88	II Kings 3 - 25 and II Chronicles 21 - 36		Yes
27	12/13/88	Ezra and Nehemiah		Yes
28	12/27/88	Between the Testaments	No question sheet	
29	01/10/89	Introduction to the Survey of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John	No question sheet	
30	01/24/89	Matt. 1 - 4:11; Mark 1:1-13; Luke 1 - 4:13; John 1 - 2:12		
31	02/28/89	Matt. 4:12 - 9:17; Mark 1:14 - 9:22; Luke 4:14 - 5:39; John 2:13 - 4:54		
32	03/14/89	Matt. 8, 11, 12, 13; Mark 2:23 - 4:20; Luke 6:1 - 8:15; John 5		
33	03/28/89	Matt. 8, 9, 10, 13, 14; Mark 4:21 - 6:29; Luke 8:16 - 9:9		
34	04/11/89	Matt 14:13 - 17:23; Mark 6:30 - 9:32; Luke 9:10-45; John 6:1 - 7:1		
35	05/09/89	Matt. 17:24 - 18:35; Mark 9:33 - 10:1; Luke 9:46 - 12; John 7:2 - 10:21		
36	05/23/89	Matt. 19; Mark 10; Luke 13 - 19:29; John 10:22 - 12:11		
37	06/13/89	Matt. 20:18 - 25:13; Mark 11:1 - 13:37; Luke 19:29 - 21:38; John 12:12-50		
38	06/27/89	Matt. 25:14 - 26:75; Mark 13:37 - 14:72; Luke 22:1-62; John 13:1 - 18:27		
39	08/08/89	Matt. 27:1 - 28:20; Mark 15:1 - 16:20; Luke 22:66 - 24:53; John 18:23 - 21:25		
40	08/22/89	Acts 1 - 9		
41	09/12/89	Acts 10 - 17		
42	09/26/89	Acts 18 - 28		
43	11/14/89	General Epistles	No question sheet	
44	11/28/89	James		
45	12/12/89	I & II Peter		
46	12/20/89	I, II, III John & Jude		
47	01/23/90	Major Prophets - Introduction	No question sheet	
48	02/13/90	Isaiah 1 - 14		
49	03/13/90	Isaiah 15 - 35		
50	03/27/90	Isaiah 36 - 49		

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Lesson #	Date	Title of Lesson	Comments	Chart
51	04/24/90	Isaiah 50 - 66		
52	05/08/90	Jeremiah 1 - 15		
53	05/22/90	Jeremiah 16 - 34		
54	06/26/90	Jeremiah 35 - 52		
55	08/14/90	Ezekiel 1 - 16		
56	08/28/90	Ezekiel 17 - 32		
57	09/11/90	Ezekiel 33 - 48		
58	09/05/90	Background on the Apostle Paul	No question sheet	
59	11/13/90	I & II Thessalonians		
60	11/27/90	Galatians		
61	12/11/90	I Corinthians		
62	01/08/91	II Corinthians		
63	01/22/91	Romans		
64	02/12/91	Colossians & Philemon		
65	02/26/91	Ephesians & Philippians		
66	03/12/91	Hebrews		
67	04/09/91	I Timothy & Titus		
68	04/23/91	II Timothy		
69	05/14/91	Battle Against First Century Heresies	No question sheet	
70	05/28/91	Minor Prophets - Introduction	No question sheet	
71	06/11/91	Hosea & Joel		
72	07/09/91	Amos, Obediah, and Jonah		
73	07/23/91	Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah		
74	08/13/91	Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi		
75	08/27/91	The Writings - Introduction	No question sheet	
76	09/10/91	Psalms 1 - 41		
77	10/08/91	Psalms 42 - 72		
78	11/12/91	Psalms 73 - 89		
79	11/26/91	Psalms 90 - 106		
80	12/10/91	Psalms 107 - 150		
81	12/24/91	Proverbs 1 - 9		
82	01/28/92	Proverbs 10 - 22:16		
83	02/04/92	Proverbs 22:17 - 31:31		
84	02/11/92	Job		
85	02/25/92	Song of Solomon		
86	03/10/92	Ruth		
87	03/24/92	Lamentations		
88	05/12/92	Ecclesiastes		
89	05/26/92	Esther		
90	06/09/92	Daniel (Part 1)		
91	06/23/92	Daniel (Part 2) (includes Trumptets Sermon 09/30/89)		Yes
92	07/14/92	Ezra, Nehemiah and I & II Chronicles	No question sheet	
93	07/28/92	Revelation - Introduction	No question sheet	
94	08/11/92	Revelation 1 - 3		
95	09/08/92	Revelation 4 - 6		
96	09/22/92	Revelation 7 - 10		
97	10/27/92	Revelation 11 - 13		Yes
98	11/10/92	Revelation 14 - 18		
99	12/08/92	Revelation 19 - 22		
100	n/d	Questions & Answers		

Lafayette Bible Study

By Mr. John Ogwyn

July 21, 1987

Lesson # 1

Proof of the Bible Series (Part 1)

(Chart at end)

I've given some consideration as to what to get into by way of Bible study. There are many different things we could go through and, undoubtedly (in the time ahead of us), many things that we will go through. I felt that maybe a good place to start would be to **go back to the Bible itself—to take some time as to the proof of the Bible, the origin of the Bible, etc.**

Many times we, in the western world, take this Book for granted. The Bible is a book that we have grown up with, whether we grew up in the Church or not. We grew up with a certain familiarity with the Bible. Everybody had a Bible, heard of a Bible or knew about a Bible. We kind of take for granted the fact this is God's Book.

If we were to look around the world, there are many people in many areas of the world—many different societies and cultures—that certainly don't recognize the Bible as being anything in particular. And there are differences that come in, even as far as what constitutes the Bible. The Roman Catholic Church, for instance, regards the books that compose the Bible as being different from the books that we normally use in our Bibles. Why is the Bible that we use in God's Church the same as what is used in the Protestant world, as opposed to the Bible that is used in the Catholic world?

Most of you are undoubtedly familiar with the books in the Catholic Bible that are different. There are several books that are included—the so-called Apocrypha books, as well as certain endings on some other books. There are various things that are included that you don't find in the Bible we customarily use. Why is that? Why the difference and how can you know that the books that you are using as the Bible consist of the books that God wanted preserved? How did it come about? Who decided that this is the Bible? Who had the right to decide that and what gave them the right to decide?

The Roman Catholic Church, of course, claims that they are the ones who have the right to decide what the Bible is. That's why, after the Protestant Reformation had its beginnings with Martin Luther, the Roman Catholic Church, at the Council at Trent, declared certain books to be part of Scripture—the books that constitute the Catholic canon.

The word "canon" is a word that simply means "measure." It comes from a Greek term that had to do with a measuring rod. When you speak of canon in terms of the Bible, you are not talking about something you shoot—a big gun. Canon comes from the Greek term which meant "a measuring rod." In other words, the canon was the books that measured up. That's kind of the sense of the word. That's the meaning. It's sort of a technical term that's used, and that's the origin of it. It refers to those books that measure up or don't measure up. Going back to ancient times, it was the term that was used. We will be talking about the canon, or the canonization, and the books that composed the canon, or the books that are not considered a part of the canon.

The Roman Catholic Church had the council of Trent in the sixteenth century, following the Protestant Reformation. The Protestants said the Bible is supreme. This was their claim. That is not the way it actually worked out in practice, but their claim was that the Bible is supreme. The Catholic Church said, 'You don't even know what the Bible is and the church is supreme. The church is superior to the Bible because the church determines what the Bible is. And to prove that, we will add some books! We will declare, as a part of the canon, books that have been kind of on the borderline. We will declare those as a part of the Bible. We will fix the canon and we will determine—we will decide—what is in the Bible, and what is not. We are the ones that decided it and established the Bible to begin with.' This was their claim. Is this true? The Catholic Church claims to be the one who provided the Bible. Is that really an accurate statement? What about the Old Testament? What about the New Testament? When was it written? Who wrote it? How do you know which books are a part of the Bible?

Jesus Christ said that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). If we are going to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Father, how do you know that this Book, the Bible, consist of every word of God? How do you know we have the whole thing? Maybe we just have part of it. Can we be sure?

From time to time, we read of certain obscure books. Maybe you've heard of certain books termed "lost books of the Bible." Various books, sometimes, would turn up—the Apocrypha,

books that are normally used as a part of the Catholic canon—and there are other books floating around from ancient times that even the Catholic Church does not consider a part of the canon. But you hear of them: the book of Enoch, Jasher and various ones. Sometimes they are even referred to in the Bible. In the Bible itself, you read a mention of the so-called book of Jasher and of certain other books like that. What about these books? Are they supposed to be a part of the Bible? Can you know if we have the whole Bible? Who decided that it was the Bible and how was it preserved? The copy we have in front of us—where did it come from? How do we know that this Book we have right here, in front of us, is God’s Book for us? How do we know that this is all of it? How do we know that there are not other books floating around somewhere that somebody will dig up, that maybe we ought to add in? How do we know that the books we have are all the books that God intended?

There are several things that we might look at. Romans 3:1 is one good place to start. Paul asked, “What advantage then has the Jew, or what profit is there of circumcision?”

In v. 2, he answers it, “Much in every way! [Here is the chief advantage the Jews had.] Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.” “Oracles” means “the Word of God.” So the chief advantage that the Jews had is that, ‘to them were given the Word of God.’

Verse 3, “For what if some did not believe it? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?” The advantage that the Jews had was that to them were given the Word of God! What if they didn’t believe it? What if some of them did not practice it? Many of them today do not practice it. Does their unbelief make the faithfulness of God of none effect?

If God was going to give His Word to someone, does it make sense that God would then break His Word? Does God inspire something to be written, but is helpless to preserve it? Are you going to go out and dig it up somewhere and then not know if you’ve found the right thing or the wrong thing? If God is going to inspire something as His Word, then there needs to be some means of preserving it and of guaranteeing that what we have—what God’s people have had through the centuries—is what God wanted them to have.

Now, if you are going to do that, then there has to be someone to preserve it. That was the job the Jews had. Their chief advantage is that they had committed to them the keeping of God’s

Word. If they didn’t believe it, that didn’t affect it. They still had to keep God’s Word. God was going to be faithful. It was God’s responsibility to preserve it. He used them as human instruments. God can use human beings in spite of themselves and has done so many times. So, God utilized the Jews to preserve His Word.

There is an interesting statement that Jesus made in the book of Matthew in what is called the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:17-18, “Don’t think that I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill [to fill to the full]. For truly I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, not one *jot or tittle* shall in any wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.”

Now what does that mean “not one jot or one tittle”? The term “jot” refers to the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, pronounced in Hebrew as “yad.” It looks like a little apostrophe, and it is the Hebrew letter that is the equivalent of our “y” or “i” sound. It is the smallest, least significant-looking letter. It looks like a little apostrophe. The “tittle” referred to kind of a decoration that was put on certain letters of the alphabet, particularly the ending letters of a word. What Christ is saying in effect is, ‘not the dotting of one “i”, not the crossing of one “t” is going to disappear.’ Everything is going to be preserved to the letter.

That’s a pretty strong statement. He said it would be easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for the dotting of an “i” or the crossing of a “t” to pass away from the Old Testament! It’s interesting because even though the Jews have not obeyed—certainly not obeyed in the spirit of the law—many of the instructions that God gave, they historically have had a regard and a certain reverence for the Bible—the Holy Scriptures.

The Jews don’t use the term “Old Testament.” The obvious reason is that if you have an Old Testament, then you must, therefore, have a New Testament. The Jews do not recognize the authority of the New Testament because, as a nation, they rejected Christ as being the Messiah spoken of in the Scriptures. They have, therefore, rejected the authority of the New Testament. The New Testament was preserved in a different manner. We will address that at a later time. The Jews have preserved the Old Testament, or as they have termed it, “the Holy Scriptures” or “the Sacred Writings.”

It is interesting the way in which the Old Testament has been preserved. There was a group of scribes known as the “Sopherim” that were responsible for the transcribing of the Old

Testament. This was a lifetime job. This was a major job. The Sopherim were a very meticulous, technical and detail-minded people. They devised various ways to make sure that nothing got lost.

In the Hebrew language, each letter has numeric significance. Most of us are familiar with Roman numerals. “I” is “1,” “V” is “5,” “X” is “10,” “L” is “50,” “C” is “100,” etc. We are familiar with this type of thing and realize that, in modern times, we now use what is termed “Arabic numerals” (the one through ten designations), our alphabet being distinct. But in ancient times, most nations and their languages utilized the letters of their alphabet as also being numbers. This was commonly used in the Roman Empire in the Latin language. A number of the letters had numeric value, and we use it even today as Roman numerals.

In Hebrew, the “alpha,” which was the first letter, was “1,” the “beta” was “2” and the “gamma” was “3.” That was just the way it was, and they had various combinations of letters that stood for certain numbers. So each letter had a numeric value, which means that any word that you could write out, would also have a numeric value. If each letter has a numeric value, then you can spell it out and pronounce it as a word or you can add it up as a number. That is referred to in Revelation 13:18 when we’re told about the beast—the number of his name will be “666.” This is something that was very understandable to people at that time because they were familiar with languages where the letters had numeric value. Every name had a numeric value because if every letter of the alphabet has a numeric value, and you write out your name, whatever your name is you can go through and add it up. We could do that. You can do it in Roman numerals if your name happens to have a lot of “i’s” and “v’s” and “x’s” in it. Maybe for most of us we wouldn’t come up with very much. There are all kinds of names you can add up if you get the right combinations. Anyway, this was something they were familiar with.

The point I’m making is that was one of the primary ways that the Jewish scribes checked to make sure that nothing got lost in the shuffle. They went through the scriptures and literally counted every word and every letter. They had added up various combinations and they knew, for instance, which letter ought to be the two hundredth letter, counting from the first letter in Genesis as you count forward. They knew what would be the two hundredth letter, or what would be the five hundredth word, counting

forward and backwards, from the end of Genesis. They had many number tricks like this, including what would be the numeric value of the first chapter. It was their way of crosschecking their work. When a scribe copied, someone would go back and arbitrarily look at various places. They might take the book of Obadiah, and they would know what should be the ninety-ninth letter. So they would count from the first letter to the ninety-ninth to see if it corresponded. At other times they might count backwards. They would add up certain sections. They would add the numeric value and see if it totaled up. They had all these numerical methods of cross checking to where, if one letter was added or taken out, it would throw the numbering off, and it would be very apparent.

If all you were doing was just going through, reading and comparing, it would be very easy to miss a letter. How many times have you proofread something you’ve typed and found out later there were spelling errors you had missed? I have lots of times. It’s easy to miss something when you are proofreading something this way. But they would have one man do the copying, and someone else would go through and not just proofread it in the sense of reading through what he was copying. They would have these intricate little puzzles that they had devised as a means of crosschecking. If they ever found one that diverged, they would go through letter by letter to see what the divergence was. And the rule was: when Scripture was copied onto vellum parchment (animal skin), there could *never* be an erasure. If they found an error, they made a note in the margin as to the proper reading, but nothing could be erased. If vellum was used it could not be erased because you wouldn’t know how to distinguish what had been erased by the scribes or erased by someone else. For those occasional errors, they would make a notation in the margin so that anyone reading it would be able to spot what it was and read it properly. But there were not any scratching out, scribbles, erasing and this kind of thing. They were very meticulous, even to the point of a virtual superstitious awe of the Scriptures. Not one jot or tittle was to pass. The Jews were very careful in this regard.

Let’s go on a little further. What books constituted the Old Testament as we know it? It’s very apparent what Jesus Christ considered the Scriptures consisted of.

After the resurrection, Jesus Christ, in His showing Himself to the disciples in [Luke 24:44-45](#), “He said unto them, ‘These are

the words I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.' Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures." How did Jesus Christ define the Scriptures? He defined the Scriptures as consisting of the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms (or the Writings). That is the traditional Jewish division of the Scriptures: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings—a three-fold division. Jesus Christ recognized that as being authoritative and refers to it here, specifically, as the LAW, the PROPHETS and the PSALMS (or WRITINGS). He defined it in v. 45 as being "the Scriptures."

The books of the Apocrypha simply do not fit into that. The Jews never have regarded them as a part of the Law, or a part of the Prophets, or a part of the Writings (Psalms) division. They don't fit into that three-part division. The books of the Apocrypha were primarily written in the Greek language during the time between the close of the Old Testament period and the beginning of the New Testament period. They were books that had their origin in the Jewish community. Jews did not regard them then, nor do the Jews regard them now as being scriptural. They are simply thought of, by the Jews, as being books—historical books—books of certain value, just as we have many books in our society today. Books that may contain a certain degree of fact and a certain degree of fable—books that are simply books. Somebody wrote them, and they give that person's opinion. The Jews have never considered the Apocrypha a part of the Scriptures.

Josephus was a Jewish historian who lived in the first century—in the time of Christ and on up through the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. He was not only a priest, but he was also an individual of the highest echelons of Jewish society. He was a Jewish general in the Jewish revolt against the Romans, and he was an historian. He provides in his books—in his works that have been preserved for us—a certain listing of the Scriptures and makes an interesting statement. He declares that the Holy Scriptures consists of twenty-two books, divided into three sections: the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms (or Writings). Now if you were to go through your Old Testament and were to start counting books, you would very quickly come up with more than twenty-two. What did he mean by that? The Jews today count twenty-four books as being in the Scriptures of the Old Testament in

these same three divisions. There is a reason why.

In the traditional reckoning of the books, some of the books that we count as multiple books, they count as simply one. Let's notice an example. In I Samuel, in most of your Bibles, it will probably have, "The First Book of Samuel, otherwise called the First Book of the Kings." Maybe you've never noticed that. Flip over in your Bible a few pages to II Samuel. It reads, "The Second Book of Samuel, otherwise called the Second Book of the Kings." Just flip over a few more pages, and you will come to I Kings and it reads, "The First Book of the Kings, commonly called the Third Book of the Kings." Guess what it says at the beginning of II Kings! You guessed it! "The Second Book of the Kings commonly called the Fourth Book of the Kings." Now, what does all this mean? Well, simply put, the Jews regarded the books that we term I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings, and II Kings as simply one book—"The book of the Kings." It was written on four different scrolls because of length, but it was considered one book. It had four volumes because the size of the scroll would have been so enormous that they could not have gotten it up and down off the shelf. It is the story of the kingship from its inception to its end. They counted it as only one book, but it was divided into four scrolls.

The books of Joshua and Judges were counted as one book. They were written on two scrolls because, again, of their size and length. They tell the story from after the death of Moses to the beginning of the kingship. The Jews counted it as one book even though it was written on two scrolls. That's why it's divided into two books in most of our translations.

The Minor Prophets are: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah and all the way through Malachi. These were very short little books, all written on one scroll and was simply called, "The Twelve." Those twelve books, or Prophets, were considered one book and were counted as such.

Today, Ezra and Nehemiah are reckoned as two books in most English translations. Some Bibles that follow the Septuagint and the Catholic translation will refer to them as I and II Ezras, or I and II Ezra. (Ezras is simply the Greek form of the Hebrew Ezra). Ezra and Nehemiah were considered one book—Ezra-Nehemiah. The Book of Chronicles was also divided into two scrolls because of its size and was considered one book—The Book of the Chronicles.

The Jews, by counting them this way, came up with twenty-two books. They had five books of **the Law**: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These were the five books that Moses gave. The second division that Christ referred to was **the Prophets**. The Jews divided the Prophets into two sections: the **Former Prophets** and the **Latter Prophets**. The Former Prophets were Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. Those are books we would not normally consider prophets. We think that they are historical.

Let me ask you a question. What is the difference between history and prophecy? They are simply the same things seen from different directions—you look back on history; you look forward on prophecy. They are the same things. They considered the historical books and the prophetic books as one section—the Prophets. The Prophets have, as their purpose, to tell you what happens when you obey God and what happens when you don't. All prophecy is based on the blessings and the curses given by Moses in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. God promises blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. That's all prophecy is. It's a story of what happens when you keep the Law, and what happens when you don't keep the Law.

We look at the Former Prophets—Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings—as the record already written of what Israel of old did. Then we look at what are called the Latter Prophets, consisting of the major and the minor. The **Major Prophets** consist of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. They are called major because they are longer, lengthier books, not because they are more important. Then there are the **Minor Prophets**, or “The Twelve.” All these together are considered the Prophetic division consisting of Joshua/Judges, Samuel/Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and The Twelve—six books.

Added up, so far, we have the Law—the first five. Then the next six are the Prophets. Next is **the Psalms (or Writings)** Division that consists of a little more variety. The book of Psalms was the first of those books. The Division was often called Psalms because that was the biggest and most lengthy book, and it was also the first of that section. Sometimes it was called the Writings because that Division also consisted of poetic books and writings—Psalms, Proverbs and Job were the first three, and this was the order they went in. Psalms, the chief or leading one, set the stage for that section of Scripture. It was written in poetry. Psalms was the logical book to come first, to set the stage for the rest of

the section. David was the primary author of Psalms. Solomon, his son, was the primary writer or author of Proverbs. Proverbs logically followed Psalms. Job came later, even though it had been written much earlier than the others. Psalms was the logical book to come first and set the stage for the rest of that section. Job is placed there about as early as it can be put in—right after Psalms and Proverbs.

Then we have the five books that are called the five Festival Scrolls. The Jews traditionally read them at certain festival occasions. First was the Song of Solomon, which was read at the Passover season. Next was the book of Ruth, which was read at Pentecost season. The book of Lamentations was read during the summer in a national holiday that was kind of a 4th of July in reverse—the feast of Ab.

Ab was the fifth month of the calendar year and corresponds, approximately, to our July. It was that particular day that Solomon's Temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Interestingly enough, it was exactly the same day centuries later that the temple was destroyed by Titus in 70 A.D. The temple was destroyed, both times, on the same day. The Jews set that day aside as a voluntary fast day—a day of national lament—and on that day they read the book of Lamentations, which is a lament. This would be a logical book to read on that occasion.

Then the book of Ecclesiastes was the fourth of that festival section, read during the Feast of Tabernacles. The book of Esther was read on the national day of Purim, which is mentioned in the book of Esther—that's five. Psalms, Proverbs, Job, then, the five Festival Scrolls. Then three more—Daniel, Ezra/Nehemiah and Chronicles. You add that up; you have the five Festival Scrolls and the three at the beginning and the three at the end. This totals eleven. So there are five books of the Law, six books of the Prophets, and eleven books of the Writings—the sum of which is twenty-two.

Let me show you something about the number twenty-two and why the Jews considered that an important number. Psalm 119 is a good place to go to illustrate the point. Notice under Psalm 119. In most of your Bibles you will have a funny little squiggle and a name “Aleph” written out by it. If you come down eight verses, you'll find another funny looking little squiggle and the word “Beth” written out by it. Come on down eight more verses, and “Gimel” is by it. Then “Daleth,” “He,” “Vau,” “Zain,” “Cheth,” “Teth,” “Jod” and “Caph.” Right on down every eight verses, you'll find another little squiggle and a

funny looking word written by it, until you finally come down to the last one, "Tau." Now if you will count all the funny little squiggles, you'll find there are exactly twenty-two—the same number in the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 119 is what is called an "acrostic." If you were reading this in Hebrew, you would find that every eight verses begin with a different letter. We are familiar with acrostics. Little kids learning to read say "a" is for "apple," "b" is for "boy," "c" is for "cat," "d" is for "dog," etc. They go through the story and each page will have a letter with different things that begin with that letter. That's an acrostic. It uses up every letter in alphabetical order. A poem can be written with an acrostic where every line begins with a different letter. This was an important part of Hebrew poetry, and it had significance.

Psalm 119 is a perfect acrostic. In other words, it was an acrostic that used every letter. You had said all you could say on a subject. You had used up the whole alphabet from A to Z, and you had completed it. There was nothing else to be said. This was the sense of it. In Psalm 119, which is in praise of God's perfect law, the entire alphabet was used up. Every eight verses a different letter was used until all the letters were used. The entire alphabet was used up in praise to God's perfect law.

The Holy Scriptures, as the Jew's preserved them, were considered an acrostic. Twenty-two books—twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet. God's revelation in the Hebrew language was complete. It was obvious that He had used up all the letters.

Now, I mentioned that the Jews today count twenty-four books. There is a reason for that. Does anybody know how many books there are in the New Testament? There are twenty-seven. Count them. Does anybody know what twenty-seven and twenty-two added together make? Forty-nine! Seven times seven! The significance of that was not lost on the Jews. In fact, it became such an embarrassment to them (in the first century when the New Testament was completed) to see that the Old Testament added to the New Testament had God's stamp of approval numerically. It caused quite a bit of consternation.

About forty-five years after the canon of the New Testament was complete, they called a conference and added two letters to the alphabet and divided two of the books. They divided Joshua and Judges into two different books at that time. I believe they also divided Ezra and Nehemiah at that time, but it may have been

Chronicles. They actually divided the books and renumbered them at that time (a little over one hundred years after the time of Christ) because it was such a problem to them. They were so embarrassed of the idea of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament added to the twenty-two books of the Old Testament totaling a perfect forty-nine (seven times seven), they decided they would just have to change their alphabet. They added two letters. They also divided a couple of books in the Old Testament. They didn't change "a jot or a tittle"; they just changed the way they counted them.

Josephus, a Jewish historian and priest, wrote prior to the completion of the New Testament (in the 70s and 80s A.D.) when this had not yet become an issue. He tells on them. He tells exactly how many books there were and how they did it (Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, book I, section 8). God used them to preserve His word. Nothing was changed.

Now, when you look at it again, you see that there is no room for the Apocrypha. When you have twenty-two books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven books in the New Testament, you have God's number of completion and perfection—seven times seven. You add anything to it, and you mess it up. You take something out, and you mess it up. There is no room to add or take away. It's perfect! It's complete, just the way it is. The Old Testament—God's revelation in the Hebrew language, of which not one jot or tittle was to pass—has been preserved, and it was very clearly marked that it was what God intended for the Jews to preserve. He gave them one book for every letter of the alphabet. He used up the alphabet and that was the end of the story. Now it was time to go on to something else.

Another interesting thing is that the New Testament is prophesied in the Old. Notice a statement that Moses said in Deuteronomy 18. Deuteronomy 18:15, "The Lord your God will raise up unto you a Prophet from the midst of you of your brethren, like unto me, unto Him you shall hearken." Now what did Moses mean, "The Lord your God will raise up unto you a Prophet...like unto me...?"

Hold your place there and turn back to Deuteronomy 34:10, "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." Moses said God would raise up a Prophet like unto him.

Let me make a comment about that. Who wrote Deuteronomy 34:10? Clearly, Moses himself

didn't write it, though he wrote virtually the entire book of Deuteronomy.

Evidently, Chapter 34 was probably written by Joshua because we are told in Deuteronomy 34:5-6, "Moses the servant of the Lord died and he was buried." Moses didn't write the account of his own funeral. Joshua was inspired to write this as the postscript—the addendum—to the story of Moses' life, which was also included in others of the first five books. Joshua, as Moses' successor, wrote that.

But v. 10 could not have been written by Joshua. To have made the statement, "there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses," that is a statement made looking back over a long period of time. You don't write that ten minutes after someone died. 'Look around; hasn't anyone else just like him showed up. He died twenty minutes ago, and we haven't seen anybody like him since.' No, that statement was made as an editorial comment at the conclusion of the Old Testament canon, which was done at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah—the time of the final editing of the Old Testament. We will go into some of that. We don't have time this evening, but we can actually go through and prove (both from the Scriptures and from history) that both Ezra and Nehemiah were responsible for giving us the Old Testament in the form in which the Jews preserved it.

There were many places in the Old Testament where a certain place-name or something was edited, or an editorial comment was stated where it would bring it up to date, so to speak. For instance, in Genesis it would refer to a certain event or a certain location, and then there is an editorial comment that, "this place" or "this may be seen at 'such and such' until this day." That was a statement added at the time Ezra and Nehemiah were putting the Old Testament into final form. These comments were added in—parenthetical statements—to bring it up to date, so to speak.

Deuteronomy needed this statement to bring it up to date because the prophecy was made in Deuteronomy 18:15, 'There would arise in Israel a Prophet like unto Moses.' At the conclusion of the canon of the Old Testament, that Prophet had not yet arisen! So the statement was added in at the end of the book after the end of Moses' life because that was the logical place to add it. The Prophet spoken of by Moses—a Prophet like unto him—had not yet come.

Now, what kind of prophet was Moses? How did Moses differ from any other prophet? How did God deal with Moses?

Deuteronomy 34:10, *God knew Moses face to face. And God gave law through Moses.* Through no other prophet in the Old Testament did God give law. The other prophets commented on the law, and they rebuked the people for disobeying the law, but none of them claimed to speak for God or to announce the law. No one else in the Old Testament could be called a lawgiver. Moses gave the law, and everything else was a commentary on that.

Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant—right? Aren't we told that in Hebrews (Hebrews 9:15-19)? He was the one that was the go-between, between God and the people. Has there arisen a Prophet like unto Moses?

In the book of Acts, we are told that there has! Acts 3:20-24, "'and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.' And it will come to pass that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people. Yes, and all the prophets from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold of these days.'"

Verse 26, "'To you first, God, having raised up His servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you...'" Peter quotes what Moses wrote and said that Jesus was that Prophet raised up like unto Moses.

It is referred to back in Acts 7:37-38, "'This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.' This is he who was in the congregation [church] in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us.'"

The point is that Jesus Christ was the Prophet like unto Moses. Jesus Christ came as a Lawgiver. Read the Sermon on the Mount that is recorded in the greatest detail by Matthew. What did Jesus say?

Matthew 5:27, "'It has been said unto you of old time, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say unto you whosoever shall even look on a woman to lust after her in his heart has committed adultery already.'"

Verses 33-34, “It has been said unto you, “do not foreswear,” but I say unto you, swear not at all.”

Verses 21-22, “It has been said unto you of old time, “you shall not commit murder”, but I say unto you whosoever shall hate his brother without cause....” —You go on through.

Jesus Christ was giving law! He said, ‘Now it has been said, you shall do this, but I’m telling you...’ He was not making a modification. This is the way it was; here is the modification. In effect, He was expanding and magnifying the law. Jesus Christ came as a Lawgiver.

The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6 and 7 is comparable to the statutes and judgments in Exodus 21, 22 and 23. The Ten Commandments were the basis of both the Old and the New Covenant. They were called the tablets of the Covenant (Deuteronomy 9:11). They were placed in the ark of the covenant. The Ten Commandments was the basis of the Old Covenant. It is also the basis of the New Covenant. God will write His laws in our hearts and in our minds (Hebrews 8:10; Jeremiah 31:33). The statutes and judgments were the applications of the law.

How do you apply them in practical day-to-day circumstances? Exodus 21, 22 and 23 were the statutes and judgments for a physical, carnal nation. How were they to apply the principles of the law in their circumstances? Jesus Christ came along as a lawgiver and dealt with a converted nation. He said in Matthew 5, 6 and 7, ‘this is the way you apply the spirit of the law.’ Under the New Testament, Jesus Christ came as a lawgiver, as a Prophet like unto Moses. The Jews recognized this scripture in Deuteronomy 18—there would come a Prophet like unto Moses; a Prophet who would give law; a Prophet who would introduce Scripture because Moses established Scripture. Moses established a Canon, a measure of books. He established Law. When the Old Testament concluded, this Prophet had not yet come.

At the conclusion of the Old Testament, everything God had to say in Hebrew had been said. The entire alphabet had been used up. God’s revelation in the Hebrew language was complete, and it was committed unto the Jews who were responsible for preserving it. Not one dot of an “i” or cross of a “t” was going to be lost. God ensured that. But His revelation of His message was not yet finished. That was made evident because that Prophet had not yet arisen. So when One claiming to be that Prophet came and the New Testament books of Scripture were

complete, it was too much for the Jewish leadership. They recognized that this was too much to be a coincidence, so they actually changed the way they numbered the books.

It’s an interesting story, and we have only touched on the beginning of it. We will go back through and find out the way in which we came to have the Old Testament. We will find certain definite periods in which the Scriptures were written and certain individuals who were responsible for preserving it. Then we will find, in the story of the New Testament, that the Catholic Church had nothing to do with preserving it. In fact, they did their best to either alter it or destroy it! Their early church councils were not arguing about trying to establish a canon. They were arguing about a canon that already existed, and they were trying to make alterations in it. That also provides some interesting material that we will discuss later.

Moses was responsible for that first period of canonization—for that first set of Scriptures—the books of the Law (the first five books of the Old Testament).

We will notice the principle laid down in Deuteronomy 31:9, “So Moses wrote this Law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Eternal and to all the elders of Israel.” Moses wrote this Law. It is called the Law of Moses (Joshua 8:31-32). Moses wrote this Law and gave it to the priests.

Deuteronomy 31:10-11, “And Moses commanded them saying: ‘At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this Law before all Israel in their hearing.’” What did Moses do? He wrote this Law, and he gave it to the priests.

Notice what instruction he gave them in vv. 25-26, “that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying: ‘Take this Book of the Law and put it beside of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God that it may be there for a witness against you.’”

Moses established the first canon of Scripture—the book of the Law—the first section of authoritative writings.

At the end of Moses’ life, he took the five books (the books of the Law—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) and laid them up. He gave them to the priesthood, and they were to be kept by the side of the ark—laid up in kind of a pouch or pocket on the side of the

ark. They were to be kept there as *Holy Scriptures*. What makes something holy? God makes it holy! God is holy. God's presence is holy. The word "scripture" simply means "writings." Here were writings that were laid up before God. They were in the Holy of Holies, right next to the ark. This was the official, authoritative Temple copy from which everything else had to be compared.

As time went by other copies were made. When a copy became damaged or illegible, it was destroyed. The reason being that as copies would become tattered and worn, sections would become illegible, and it would be possible for errors to creep in because sections would become difficult to read or would just wear away over time. Little sections of a page may tear or wear away over time, and letters would become difficult to read.

It was the priesthood's responsibility to make a new, official, authoritative copy when an old copy began to show signs of wear. The new copy

was then laid up inside the ark, and the original that had become tattered was destroyed so that no error might creep in, and there would not be any divergent copies floating around. They did not want something that was worn out, pages missing, or this sort of thing. They were very conscious of making an exact, one hundred percent, and total continuation of the Scriptures that had been given. This was the beginning of the canon. Moses laid up these five books of the Law.

When we will pick it up next time, we will find out who continued that—the second time an addition was made to the canon of Scripture. We will find out who did it, why they did it, and on whose authority. We can go right on through and find the story of how we came to have the Old Testament and how we came to have the New.

[Editorial Comment: The New Kings James Bible (NKJV) is used unless otherwise indicated.]

THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS AND DIVISIONS

				<u>Parts</u>
I. The <u>Law</u> Division	{		Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	} 1
II. The <u>Prophets</u> Division	{	The Former Prophets The Latter Prophets	Joshua-Judges Samuel-Kings Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel The Twelve	} 2 } 3 } 4
		{	The Major Prophets The Minor Prophets	
III. (Psalms) <u>Writings</u> Division	{	The Poetic (or Metre) Books The Megillot or Festival Books The Restoration Books	Psalms Proverbs Job Song of Songs Ruth Lamentations Ecclesiastes Esther Daniel Ezra-Nehemiah Chronicles	} 5 } 6 } 7

Bible Study # 2
August 11, 1987
Mr. John Ogwyn

Proof of the Bible Series (Part 2)
(Chart at end)

In continuing with what we talked about last Bible study, **how do we know we have the whole Bible?** The books commonly called the Apocrypha, how do we know that those books are not a part of the Bible? And **how do we know that the books we use are the ones God inspired?** How can we be sure of that?

The Old Testament has seven logical parts: 1) the Law (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), 2) the Former Prophets (Joshua-Judges, Samuel-Kings), 3) the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel), 4) the Minor Prophets (The Twelve), 5) the Poetic (or Metre) Books (Psalms, Proverbs, Job), 6) the Megillot or Festival Books (Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther) and 7) the Restoration Books (Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles). The Old Testament is complete as the Scriptures of God of the Old Testament. But there is something yet to come. It doesn't end with the same finality as the New Testament does in Revelation 21 and 22. How did the Old Testament begin?

Deuteronomy 31:24-26, "So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying: 'Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there as a witness against you.'" **This was the beginning of the Canon, the Books that were to measure up as Scripture (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy).**

God, prior to this time, had dealt with individuals. He talked with them and He walked with them. But now He began to work with a nation, a group of people He called out.

Exodus 12:3, "'Speak to all the congregation [church] of Israel....'" "Church" means "those who are called out." How much time did Abraham spend studying the Bible? None! Abraham never read the Bible because there wasn't a Bible. Abraham knew God's will because God instructed and taught him. God revealed things to them (Example: Genesis 28:10-22—Jacob's dream). But now God began to deal with a whole group of people, and there needed to be some clear statements given.

There were, evidently, some documents that had been preserved, but it was not the Bible as we know it.

Genesis 5:1, "This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God."

Genesis 10:1, "Now this is the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham and Japheth. And sons were sons born to them after the flood."

God's basic revelation of His will was set down. God revealed the basic law through Moses. It was the basis of the Old Covenant. This Book of the Law was presented to the priests and the Levites—against which everything else was to be compared. It was the beginning of Holy Scripture. It filled the needs of the people. God's basic Law was revealed.

The second period of canonization: The second period was because there was a need for change. This next period was at the time of David and Samuel. David wanted to build a temple. Things had grown and increased. Some of the things Moses had set up could no longer function. One of the things was the service set up by the Levites. As the years went by, and the numbers increased, you couldn't get all the priests around the altar at the same time. You no longer had just Aaron and his sons.

I Chronicles 9:22, "All those chosen as gatekeepers were two hundred and twelve. They were recorded by their genealogy, in their villages. David and Samuel the seer had appointed them to their trusted office." There was a reorganization that began at the time of David.

I Chronicles 24:1, "Now these are the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar."

Verses 7-9, "Now the first lot fell to Jehotariab, the second to Jedaiah, the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim, the fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin."

Verse 18, "the twenty-third to Delaiah, the twenty-fourth to Maaziah." You get down to twenty-four divisions—twenty-four different families of priests. David divided them into twenty-four courses.

Luke 1:5, "There was in the days of Herod the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division [course] of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth." Zacharias was a priest of the course of Abijah.

I Chronicles 24:10, "the seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah." You could actually go through to find when the two-week period—or course—

of John the Baptist's father was. David, under inspiration, divided them up.

I Chronicles 25:1, "Moreover David and the captains of the army separated to the service some of the sons of Asaph, of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, stringed instruments, and cymbals. And the number of the workmen according to their service was:"

Verse 7, "So the number of them, with their brethren who were instructed in the songs of the LORD, all who were skillful, was two hundred and eighty-eight." They were divided up.

II Chronicles 29:25, "Then he stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet; for thus was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets." David established music. But what were they going to sing? That is where the book of Psalms comes in.

Notice Psalms 72:19-20, "And blessed be his glorious name forever and let the whole earth be filled with His glory, Amen and Amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended." Notice how it ends. What does that mean?

What does it mean in Psalms 72:19, "Amen and Amen"? If you take the number seventy-two and divide it by twenty-four (you had twenty-four courses of singing and there were seventy-two songs selected), they had three songs for each course. Psalms 1—72 are psalms of David. (You will find that there are other psalms that David wrote—101, 108, 109 and 110. We will go into that later.) When you reorganized the service in the temple, there were additional things that needed to be brought in.

With the reorganization of Temple worship and as the nation was growing into a great nation, there was also a need for instruction in wisdom.

Proverbs 1:1-3, "The proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel: to know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment and equity." So you had this set apart.

Ecclesiastes 12:9, "And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs." Solomon taught the people. He set in order proverbs—meaning the book of Proverbs.

Proverbs 1:1, "The proverbs of Solomon, the son of David...." Solomon set in order Proverbs. Added at this time were Psalms 1—72 and

Proverbs 1—24, 30—31. This was a second period of canonization.

The third period of canonization: Things went on and the nation of Israel split up into two nations. It was a time of crisis, a time when the existence of the entire nation was at stake. During the time of Hezekiah, the king of Assyria surrounded Jerusalem (II Kings 18 and 19). Hezekiah prayed and fasted (19:1). God sent an angel and wiped out the Assyrians (19:35-37). It was a time of crisis. What we will see is that the first two periods of canonization were periods of reorganization—things for a settled nation. The next three periods were times of crisis. Things had drifted and the truth was in danger of being lost. The first revival was at the time of Hezekiah. It was a time of crisis that threatened to literally destroy the entire nation.

II Chronicles 28:1-2, "Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord, as his father David had done. For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made molten images for the Baals." We pick up the story of the way the nation got "off track."

Verses 21-24, "For Ahaz took part of the treasures from the house of the Lord, from the house of the king, and from the leaders, and he gave it to the king of Assyria; but he did not help him. Now in the time of his distress King Ahaz became increasingly unfaithful to the Lord. This is that king Ahaz. For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus which had defeated him, saying, 'Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, I will sacrifice to them, that they may help me.' But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel. So Ahaz gathered the articles of the house of God, cut in pieces the articles of the house of God, shut up the doors of the house of the Lord, and made for himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem." The nation got off track and Temple worship ceased.

II Chronicles 29:1-7, "Hezekiah became king when he was twenty-five years old, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them. Then he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them in the east square and said to them: 'Hear me, Levites! Now sanctify yourselves, sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry out the

rubbish from the holy place. For our fathers have trespassed and done evil in the eyes of the Lord our God; and they have forsaken Him, have turned their faces away from the habitation of the Lord, and turned their backs on Him. They have also shut up the doors of the vestibule, put out the lamps, and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel.”

He said they needed to get back on track and clean out dirt that had accumulated in the Temple for years. It took days.

Verse 25, “Then he stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, of Gad the king’s seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for thus was the commandment of the Lord by His prophets.” Hezekiah began to reorganize things and set things back on track the way David had organized them. He told them to sanctify themselves.

Verse 30, “Moreover King Hezekiah and the leaders commanded the Levites to sing praise to the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.”

Psalm 72:20, “The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.”

Notice Psalm 73—“A Psalm of Asaph.” Turn to Psalms 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82 and 83—all “Psalms of Asaph.”

II Chronicles 29:30, “Moreover King Hezekiah and the leaders commanded the Levites to sing praise to the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped.” They worshiped with the words of David and Asaph.

Now notice Isaiah 38:1, “In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz went to him and said to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Set your house in order for you shall die and not live.”’”

Verses 5-8, “Go and say to Hezekiah, “Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; and I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city. And this is the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing which He has spoken: Behold, I will bring the shadow on the sundial, which is gone down with the sun on the sundial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward.” So the sun

returned ten degrees by which it was gone down.”

The sun literally went backward. It stood still at the time of Joshua (Joshua 10:13). If you think that was something, wait until you find out how it went backward in the time of Hezekiah.

Verse 20, “The Lord was ready to save me; therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments all the days of our life, in the house of the Lord.” —The aftermath of that.

Notice Psalms 120—134—“Songs of degrees” (KJV). There are fifteen songs of degrees—one for each of the fifteen years. Hezekiah wrote ten of them; five were written by David. Hezekiah’s songs were to be added to the songs of Scripture. Hezekiah added them to the canon of Scripture.

Notice also Proverbs 25:1, “These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied.” Solomon’s Proverbs ended with Proverbs 24. Here was an addition that the men of Hezekiah wrote out.

This was also a period when the nation was facing captivity. Isaiah was written at this time. The books of Joshua, Judges and Kings were also written at this time.

II Chronicles 32:32, “Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, indeed they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, and in the books of the kings of Judah and Israel.” What is the book of the kings of Judah and Israel? —The books of Samuel and Kings. I Kings is otherwise known as the Third Book of the Kings—the actual title in the King James Bible.

II Chronicles 32:33, “So Hezekiah rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the upper tombs of the sons of David; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem honored him at his death. Then Manasseh his son reigned in his place.”

II Chronicles 26:22, “Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, from first and last, the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz wrote.” Isaiah wrote the book of Kings. If you compare II Kings and Isaiah, II Kings 18-20 is identical to Isaiah 36-39. They are identical. There were also books added to the Psalms by the Levites during this time. Then things got off track again.

We come to the second great revival and reorganization—the **period of the fourth canonization**. It was the time prior to Judah going into captivity. Northern Israel was already in captivity (II Kings 18:11); Judah was almost taken into captivity (II Kings 18-19). Then there was a revival by Hezekiah (II Kings 18-20). But

then there was another period of crisis—a time when the nation was faced with captivity.

II Chronicles 33:1-3, “Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. But he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; he raised up altars for the Baals, and made wooden images; and he worshipped all the host of heaven and served them.” So, they really got off track. Let’s notice a comparison as to what Josiah did in getting things back on track.

II Kings 23:1-3, “Then the king [Josiah] sent them to gather all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem to him. And the king went up into the house of the Lord with all the men of Judah and with all the inhabitants of Jerusalem—the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great; and he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the Lord. Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. And all the people took their stand for the covenant.”

II Kings 22:1-2, “Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not aside to the right hand or to the left.” He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.

II Kings 23:4, “And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, the priests of the second order, and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of the Lord all the articles that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel.” This is what King Josiah did to get things back on track. When they went to repair the temple, they found the Book of the Law.

II Kings 22:8, “Then Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, ‘I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord.’ And Hilkiah gave the Book to Shaphan, and he read it.”

II Kings 23:2-3, “...and he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which

had been found in the house of the Lord. Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this Book. And all the people took their stand for the covenant.” Then he began to order these things.

Verses 7-8, “Then he tore down the ritual booths of the perverted persons that were in the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the wooden image. And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba; also he broke down the high places of the gates which were in the entrance of the Gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were to the left of the gate of the city.”

Verses 10-12, “And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molch. Then he removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance of the house of the Lord...and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire. The altars that were on the roof, the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the Lord, the king broke down and pulverized there, and threw their dust into the Brook Kidron.” He pulverized them and threw their dust into the Brook Kidron.

Verses 13-14, “Then the king defiled the high places that were east of Jerusalem, which were on the south of the Mount of Corruption, which Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he broke in pieces the sacred pillars and cut down wooden images, and filled their places with the bones of men.” He broke down the images and the groves.

Verses 21-22, “Then the king commanded all the people, saying, ‘Keep the Passover to the Lord your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant.’ Surely such a Passover had never been held since the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah.” Josiah turned to God with all his heart. It was a time of revival.

II Chronicles 34:4, “They broke down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and the incense altars which were above them he cut down; and

the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images he broke in pieces, and made dust of them and scattered it on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them.”

Verse 8, “Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the temple [house], he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah and Maaseiah the governor of the city and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the Lord his God.”

Verse 14, “Now when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the Lord, Hilkiyah the priest found the Book of the Law of the Lord given by Moses.” He found the Book of the Law of the Lord. He found the Bible that existed at that time.

Verse 19, “Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Law, that he tore his cloths.”

Verse 21, “Go, inquire of the Lord for me, and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the Book that is found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this Book.”

Verses 32-33, “And he made all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin take their stand for it. So the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. Thus Josiah removed all the abominations from all the country that belonged to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel diligently serve the Lord their God. All his days they did not depart from following the Lord God of the fathers.”

II Chronicles 35:1, “Now Josiah kept a Passover to the Lord in Jerusalem, and they slaughtered the Passover lambs on the fourteenth day of the first month.” It was a time of revitalization.

Verses 17-18, “And the children of Israel who were present kept the Passover at that time, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days. There had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of Samuel the prophet; and none of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as Josiah kept, with the priests and the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” There had been nothing on that grand scale since Samuel the prophet. It was a revitalization of worship just prior to the captivity. God said He would postpone judgment on the nation because of Josiah. For the sake of Josiah, God was going to spare things as long as he lived, but when he died, that was going to be the end (II Kings

22:15-20). You talk about everything resting on one man! So you can imagine when Josiah was cut off at an untimely death.

II Chronicles 35:23-25, “And the archers shot at King Josiah; and the king said to his servants, ‘Take me away; for I am severely wounded.’ His servant therefore took him out of that chariot and put him in the second chariot that he had, and they brought him to Jerusalem. So he died, and was buried in one of the tombs of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. Jeremiah also lamented for Josiah. And to this day all the singing men and the singing women speak of Josiah in their lamentations. They made it a custom [KJV, “ordinance”] in Israel; and indeed they are written in the Laments” [KJV, “lamentations”]. —An ordinance for Israel written in the lamentations. Where do you find it? Turn over to the book of Lamentations—“The Lamentations of Jeremiah.” What do we see in v. 25? Lamentations was recorded as a permanent record and made an ordinance and a law.

Verses 26-27, “Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and his goodness, according to what was written in the Law of the Lord, and his deeds from first to last, indeed they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.” Jeremiah was responsible for recording the final things in Samuel and Kings.

Lamentations was written at the time of Josiah’s death. His death was all that stood between captivity and destruction for Judah. Lamentations is a prophecy of the Great Tribulation. The death of Josiah was the reason Lamentations was written when it was. It went along with the book of Jeremiah.

II Chronicles 35:25, “Jeremiah also lamented for Josiah. And to this day all the singing men and the singing women speak of Josiah in their lamentations. They made it a custom [KJV, “ordinance”] in Israel; and indeed they are written in the Laments [KJV, “lamentations”].”

After Josiah’s death, the temple was destroyed and the nation was taken into captivity. Jeremiah was the prophet who bridged the gap—before the captivity, during, through and after. The books of Jeremiah, Lamentations, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Habakkuk and Zephaniah were added to the canon Scripture by Jeremiah. Jeremiah finished the books of I & II Samuels and I & II Kings.

How was Scripture to be preserved? Go back to the book of Daniel.

Daniel 1:4, “young men in whom was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom,

possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans." Daniel lived during the captivity (v. 3). He was a prince. He was of the king's seed (v. 4) and very intelligent. He had access to the archives of Babylon. The Bible was preserved in the archives of Babylon (v. 2). Nebuchadnezzar didn't just burn the temple; he transported these things out of the temple, and they were sent back in the royal archives and treasure of Babylon. And who is in a better position to take care of it than Daniel?

Daniel 9:11, "'Yes, all Israel have transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him.'" Daniel had access to the Bible and was able to study it. All the vessels and sacred things of the temple were taken to Babylon. He was primed, taught and made knowledgeable.

Daniel 1:3-4, "Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, young men in whom was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans." He was brought to Babylon to be trained and educated.

In Daniel 9:3-22, we read of Daniel praying. Jeremiah added the prophets. How do we know?

Read Daniel 9:2, "in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord, given to Jeremiah the prophet that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." Daniel had been puzzled over this prophecy.

Jeremiah 25:12, "'Then it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,' says the Lord; 'and I will make it perpetual desolations.'" Jeremiah's and Daniel's lives overlapped. At the time Daniel was a teenager, Jeremiah was an old man. God took this young man and put him in a position to preserve the Scriptures. That would have been the time the Bible would have been lost—during the time of the captivity. Daniel was brought here. He

studied the Bible. He studied the book of Jeremiah and was trying to understand. Then it finally came to him. He understood it about the time it was supposed to be fulfilled (Daniel 9:1-2). The first Babylonian captivity was 604 B.C. The year of Cyrus' decree to return to Jerusalem was 534 B.C.; the seventy-year prophecy was completed.

The point is Daniel had access to the Scriptures and took care of them during the Babylonian captivity.

Lamentation, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah were all written prior to the captivity and were added to the canon of Scripture by Jeremiah.

Then we come to the period that finished the Old Testament—the **fifth period of Old Testament canonization**—the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Solomon died in 921 B.C. About two hundred years after Solomon's death, Northern Israel went into captivity. About twenty years later was the time of Hezekiah and a revival. About one hundred years later, we come down to Jeremiah and Josiah and another revival. Then, 604 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar comes in and takes them captive. He comes back a few years later and takes more into captivity. About 587 B.C., he destroys everything, and the whole nation goes into captivity. Daniel was in captivity as a young man on up until he was an old man. (Jeremiah provides about a seventy-year period during this time.) Seventy years later, 534 B.C., Cyrus issued a decree for them to return and repair the temple.

We pick up the story in the book of Ezra. Ezra 1:1-3, "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, 'Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? May his God be with him! Now let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem.'" "

Verses 5-7, "Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with all those whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up and build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem. And all those

who were around them encouraged them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered. King Cyrus also brought out the articles of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem and put in the temple of his gods.” These were the things he brought back.

Ezra 4:1-5, “Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the descendants of the captivity were building the temple unto the Lord God of Israel, they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers’ houses, and said to them, ‘Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do; and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.’ But Zerubbabel and Joshua and the rest of the heads of the fathers’ houses of Israel said to them, ‘You may do nothing with us to build a house for our God; but we alone will build to the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us.’ Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building, and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.”

They literally hired lawyers and went to court. Zerubbabel and Joshua finished the part of the work God had called them to do.

Ezra 7:1, “Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah.” Verse 10, “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.” He is coming to Jerusalem prepared to teach Israel statutes and judgments.

Verse 12, “Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven: perfect peace, and so forth.”

Verse 14, “Whereas you are being sent of the king and his seven counselors to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, with regard to the law of your God which is in your hand.” – According to the law of your God which is in your hand. He was bringing the copy that had been preserved in Babylon. He brought back the Law—the Bible.

Nehemiah 8:1-3, “Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate, and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the congregation, of men and women and all who

could hear with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.” The Bible was being read and understood.

Verses 5-8, “And Ezra opened the Book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. Then all the people answered, ‘Amen, Amen!’ while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin...and the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law; and the people stood in their place. So they read distinctly from the Book, in the Law of God; and gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.” We have this example in the time of Ezra.

Editorial comments added: There were things that had to be added to deal with new things and circumstances.

I Samuel 10:25, “Then Samuel explained to the people the behavior of royalty, and wrote it in a book and laid it up before the Lord. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house.” Samuel added what is in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. It refers to it here.

Deuteronomy 34:10, “But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.” Joshua couldn’t have written this. This was an editorial comment made at the conclusion of the Old Testament canon by Ezra and Nehemiah about 400 B.C. Ezra went back and on authority, made an editorial comment. There were times when things simply had to be added. The time of Ezra and Nehemiah was that time—a time of editing. It was also a time of crisis, a great deal of trouble. We are going into that at the next Bible study—the things that were going on and what these things were.

During this fifth period of canonization, Psalms 90—119, 135—150, Ruth, Esther, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Ezekiel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and I & II Chronicles were added to the canon of Scripture. One of the statements that Josephus makes is that nothing had been added since the time of Artaxerxes. Since that time there had not been a succession of prophets. The Jews recognized that the spirit of prophets ceased. From that time on, there was never a succession of prophets, and

no one ever took it upon himself or dared to ever make a change. It all goes back to Ezra and Nehemiah. Josephus said that during the reign of Artaxerxes (465-424 B.C.), the canon of Scripture was completed and delivered unto the hand of the Great Synagogue (or Assembly). We will go back and understand why Chronicles had to be written at this time. Malachi was the last book written and added in about 420-400 B.C.

We have a story of how these five periods of the Bible were put together—this setting apart of the authoritative canon of Scripture. We see the five periods of time when the Old Testament came together. Then we will see the two times when the New Testament came together—God putting it together working with His prophets. We will see how it all came together and how God has given us this Book we call the Bible.

THE FIVE PERIODS OF OLD TESTAMENT CANONIZATION

1. Moses

Genesis	Moses
Exodus	Moses
Leviticus	Moses
Numbers	Moses
Deuteronomy	Moses

2. Solomon and Nathan

Psalms 1—72	David
Proverbs 1—24, 30—31	Solomon

3. Hezekiah and Isaiah

Proverbs 25—29	Hezekiah
Psalms 73—89	Hezekiah *
Joshua—Judges	Samuel
I & II Samuel	Isaiah
I & II Kings	Isaiah
Isaiah	Isaiah

4. Josiah and Jeremiah

Lamentations	Jeremiah
Jeremiah	Jeremiah
Hosea	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Obadiah	Obadiah
Jonah	Jonah
Micah	Micah
Nahum	Nahum
Habakkuk	Habakkuk
Zephaniah	Zephaniah

5. Nehemiah and Ezra

Psalms 90—119, 135—150	*
Ruth	Samuel
Esther	Mordechai
Song of Solomon	Solomon
Ecclesiastes	Solomon
Ezekiel	Ezekiel
Ezra	Ezra
Nehemiah	Nehemiah
Daniel	Daniel
Haggai	Haggai
Zechariah	Zechariah
Malachi	Malachi
I & II Chronicles	Ezra

- numerous authors

The canon of the Old Testament was sealed up about 400 B.C. by Ezra and Nehemiah and the Great Assembly that they headed.

Bible Study # 3
August 25, 1987
Mr. John Ogwyn

Proof of the Bible Series (Part 3)—The Time of
Ezra & Nehemiah: The Fifth Period of
Canonization of the Old Testament

I want to continue on with the material we had been getting into the last time, when we were **going through the last period of the canonization of the Old Testament—the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.** I want to go back and go into some things in Ezra and Nehemiah. I think it **will help us to understand more clearly the things with which we are dealing.** There was a lot involved in that time period.

If you remember the story, Judah had gone into captivity beginning 604 B.C.—the first period of invasion and captivity. Coming down, about ten years later, was a second Babylonian invasion, and then seven to ten years later, a final Babylonian invasion. The city was burned, the temple was destroyed and the people were taken into captivity. We noticed Daniel was taken captive as a young boy. He had access to and preserved the Bible during that interim time.

Then we read in Daniel 5:30-31, the story we are very familiar with—the Medes and the Persians invading and taking Babylon. This was in 539 B.C. (one of the major dates of history), falling on the Feast of Trumpets that year, and the night Belshazzar saw the handwriting on the wall (Daniel 5:1-5). The empire of the Medes and Persians was established. Daniel continued in the immediate future in a high position (about five years) under Darius (Daniel 6:1-3).

After the Medes and Persians came in, we pick up the story in Ezra.

Ezra 1:1-3, “Now in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? May his God be with him! Now let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah and build the house of the Lord God of Israel. (He is the God), which is in Jerusalem.”

Verse 7, “King Cyrus also brought out the articles of the house of the Lord, which

Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem and had put in the temple of his gods;”

We find that they left to go back to Jerusalem. This was done by Zerubbabel, or Sheshbazzar, as he is termed in Ezra 1:8-11.

Ezra 3:1, “And when the seventh month had come and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem.” They set this up and kept the Feast of Tabernacles (v. 4). That began the process of reorganization.

Verse 8, “Now in the second month of the second year of their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jozadak, and the rest of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all those who had come out of the captivity to Jerusalem, began work and appointed the Levites from twenty years old and above, to oversee the work of the house of the Lord.”

Verse 11, the foundation was laid.

The prophets at that time were Haggai and Zechariah. They were contemporary with Joshua and Zerubbabel (c. 534-500 B.C.). The major thrust of the work of God at that time was the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 3:8—6:15). Read II Kings 17. What happened in II Kings 17 is crucial to understanding the later story of what happened in the canonization of the Old Testament and later the New Testament. Approximately 721 B.C. (one hundred twenty years before Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion of Judah), the Assyrians invaded Northern Israel and transported the ten tribes into captivity. Israel had sinned and walked in the statutes of the heathen.

II Kings 17:8, “and had walked in the statutes of the nations whom the Lord had cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.”

Verse 10, “They set them up for themselves sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill, and under every green tree.”

Verse 16, “So they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, made for themselves a molded image, two calves, made a wooden image and worshipped all the host of heaven and served Baal.” They did all the things God told them not to do.

Verse 18, “Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone.” They were taken out. They were not left behind. They were transported.

Verses 22-23, “For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did

not depart from them, until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away out of their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day.” —“to this day.” —The time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Israel was still where they had been two hundred years earlier. They had not returned with the Jews. Notice what happened.

Verse 24, “Then the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities.” Instead of the children of Israel, he brought Babylonians and some of the surrounding suburbs and settled them in Northern Israel. Meanwhile, wild animals had increased (v. 25).

Verse 26, “So they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, ‘The nations whom you have removed and placed in the cities of Samaria know not the rituals of the God of the land; therefore He has sent lions among them, and indeed, they are killing them because they do not know the rituals of the God of the land.’” They sent a message to the king of Assyria: ‘We have a problem. We want you to send someone to teach us the manner [rituals] of the God of the land.’

Now who was the king of Assyria going to send to teach them about the God of the land? —The priests of Northern Israel! What were they?

I Kings 12:28-31, “Therefore the king took counsel and made two calves of gold, and said to the people, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!’ And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one, as far as Dan. He made shrines on the high places, and made priest from every class of people [KJV, “made priests of the lowest of the people”], who were not of the sons of Levi.”

Jeroboam had gotten rid of the priests and made priests of the lowest of the people.

Verse 32, “Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the feast that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And at Bethel he installed the priests of the high places which he had made.” The people never departed from the sins of Jeroboam. And it was because of this they went into captivity.

Now, what were the priests going to teach them? What he did was to attach the name of God to

their old pagan religion. They retained the name of God; they talked about God, but they didn’t really serve God in sincerity and truth.

Verse 29, “and he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.” Each nation made gods of its own.

Verses 32-33, “Jeroboam ordained a feast on the *fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the Feast that was in Judah*...So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, *in the month which he had devised of his own heart*. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense.”

I Kings 13:34, “And this thing was sin of the house of Jeroboam, so as to exterminate and destroy it from the face of the earth.”

II Kings 17:29, “However every nation continued to make gods of its own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in the cities where they dwelt.”

Verses 32-33, “So they feared the Lord, and from every class they appointed for themselves priests of the high places [KJV, “made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places”], who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. They feared the Lord yet served their own gods—according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away.”

Verse 34, “To this day they continue practicing the former rituals; they do not fear the Lord, nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances, or the law and commandment which the Lord had commanded the children of Jacob, whom He named Israel.”

Verse 41, “So these nations feared the Lord, yet served their carved images; also their children and their children’s children have continued as their fathers did, even to this day.”

What we have given here in II Kings is the origin of the Samaritans—the Samaritans that we are going to read of in Ezra, Nehemiah and the New Testament—in the book of Acts. This is the origin of the Samaritans. They were not Israelites; they were Babylonians. They resettled them in the land and then brought back the priests. They paid lip-service to the God of Israel, but in reality they continued the same old pagan religion they had all along. Does that sound familiar? What we need to understand is that this was the Babylonian approach to religion, the Babylonian Mystery Religion, but they now attached to it the name of God. They

identified themselves as Israel, but in reality, they were Babylonians. This is the group that we are going to meet in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah and the group later in the New Testament. In the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, Sanballat was the chief leader of the Samaritan followers of the Babylonian Mystery Religion.

You look around today and see the successors. They still have their graven images and fear the Eternal to this day; the same people doing the same thing. It was important that the Samaritans be known. They were quick to claim that they were Jews when it was to their advantage. Alexander the Great gave a release to the Jews during the Sabbatical year to not have to pay taxes, and the Samaritans (Babylonians) said they were Jews, too. When the Jews were being tortured and butchered they were quick to say they didn't have anything to do with them.

In Ezra 3, we find that the work of God, at the time of Zerubbabel and Joshua, was reorganization and rebuilding.

Ezra 4:1-2, "Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the descendants of the captivity were building the temple of the Eternal God of Israel, they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers' houses, and said to them, 'Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do; and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.'"

Ezra called them the adversaries of Judah. One of Satan's tactics is to infiltrate from within. Judah had gone into captivity because of disobedience to God.

Then the work of God was established: rebuilding the temple and temple worship, re-establishing the nation into which Jesus Christ the Messiah would come at a later time and setting the stage. Right after work gets started, the Samaritans come, and they say, 'We're good Christians just like you. We all worship the same God. We want to get in on this. We'll help you.' They used God's name, but didn't really follow the Scriptures.

Verse 3, "But Zerubbabel and Joshua and the rest of the heads of the fathers' houses of Israel said unto them, 'You have nothing to do with us to build a house to our God: but we alone will build to the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us.'" 'You have nothing to do with us.' God had stirred up Cyrus to bring them back to do the Work.

Verses 4-5, "Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building, and hired counselors against

them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia." They went to court. Look up the word "counselors."

Verses 6-8, "And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. And in the days of Artaxerxes also, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the letter was written in the Aramaic script, and translated into the Aramaic language. Rehum the commander and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes in this fashion."

Verses 11-12, "This is the copy of the letter that they sent him—To King Artaxerxes from your servants the men beyond the River, and so forth: Let it be known to the king that the Jews who came up from you have come up to us at Jerusalem, and are building the rebellious and the evil city, and are finishing its walls, and repairing the foundations." —'This bad city, and they are setting up walls.' They took facts; they took the truth and made it sound bad.

Verse 13, "Let it now be known to the king that, if this city is built and the walls completed, they will not pay tax, tribute, or custom, and the king's treasury will be diminished." —They will cut your revenues. They won't pay taxes.

Verses 14-15, "Now because we receive support from the palace, it was not proper for us to see the king's dishonor; therefore we have sent and informed the king, that search may be made in the book of the records of your fathers. And you will find in the book of the records and know that this city is a rebellious city, harmful to kings and provinces, and that they have incited sedition within the city in former times, for which cause was this city destroyed." We are coming to you as loyal citizens to tell you about these things.

Verse 16, "We inform the king that if this city is rebuilt, and its walls are completed, the result will be that you will have no dominion over the region beyond the River."

Verse 21, "Now give the command to make these men cease, that this city may not be built until the command is given by me."

Verses 23-24, "Now when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem against the Jews, and by force of arms made them to cease. Thus the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem ceased, and it was discontinued until the second year of the reign of Darius king of

Persia.” They first tried to infiltrate and get inside. When that didn’t work, they hired lawyers and then put padlocks and closed it up. Those are old tactics and have been around for a long time.

Ezra 5:1-2, “Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. So Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Joshua the son of Jozadak rose up and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them.”

They just began to act—injunction or no injunction. Go back and read Haggai and Zechariah.

Verses 3-5, “At the same time came Tattenai the governor of the region beyond the River and Shethar-Boznai and their companions, came to them and spoke thus to them: ‘Who has commanded you to build this temple and finish the wall?’ Then, accordingly, we told them the names of the men who were constructing this building. But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, so that they could not make them cease till a report could go to Darius. Then a written answer was returned concerning this matter.”—All the way to the Supreme Court.

Ezra 5:11-17, “And thus they returned us an answered, saying: ‘We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the temple that was build many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and completed. But because our fathers provoked the God of heaven to wrath, He gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this temple and carried the people away to Babylon. However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to build this house of God. Also, the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple that was in Jerusalem and carried into the temple of Babylon—those King Cyrus took from the temple of Babylon, and they were given to one named Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor. And he said to him, “Take these articles; go, carry them to the temple site that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its former site.” Then the same Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundation of the house of God, which is in Jerusalem; and from that time even until now it has been under construction, and it is not yet finished.’ Now therefore, if it seems good to the king, let a search be made in

the king’s treasure house, which is there in Babylon, whether it is so that a decree was issued by King Cyrus to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send us this pleasure concerning this matter.”

Then the truth finally comes out.

Ezra 6:1, “Then King Darius issued a decree, and search was made in the archives, where the treasures were stored in Babylon.” He makes a decree.

Verse 11, “Also I issue a decree that whosoever alters this edict, let timber be pulled from his house and erected, and let him be hanged on it; and let his house be made a refuse heap because of this.”

Verses 14-16, “So the elders of the Jews built and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia. Now the temple was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius. Then the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites and the rest of the descendants of the captivity, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.”

This is in the latter part of the sixth century, around 515 B.C. There is a gap when you pick it up in chapter 7. You will notice that there is a gap of about fifty years—a generation. Zerubbabel, Joshua, Haggai and Zechariah had died. Now their children are on the scene.

Ezra 7:6-11, “this Ezra came up from Babylon; and he was a skillful scribe in the Law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given. The king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him. Some of the children of Israel, the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the Nethinim came up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes. And Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. On the first day of the first month he began his journey from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel. Now this is the copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave Ezra the priest, the scribe, expert in the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of His statutes to Israel.”

Verses 13-14, “I issue a decree that all those of the people of Israel and the priests and Levites in my realm, who volunteer to go up to Jerusalem, may go with you. And whereas you are being sent by the king and his seven counselors to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, with regard to the Law of your God which is in your hand.”

Ezra came back bringing the copy of the Scriptures. He came on the scene about fifty years after the curtain has dropped from what we saw at the time of Zerubbabel and Joshua.

Ezra 8:1-20 shows the various ones that came back from Babylon.

Ezra 8:21-23, “Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and for our little ones and all our possession. For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, ‘The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him.’ So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.”

The alternative was to fast. ‘We can’t ask the king to protect us because it would look like we didn’t trust God to protect us.’

Verses 31-32, “Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go to Jerusalem. And the hand of our God was upon us and He delivered us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambush along the road. So we came to Jerusalem, and stayed there three days.”

Ezra 9:1, “When these things were done, the leaders came to me saying, ‘The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, with respect to the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians and the Amorites.’”

Now, what has transpired in these fifty years? The Jews have not kept themselves separate in a physical sense or a spiritual sense. They had mixed and mingled and intermarried with the people of the land. The rulers (leaders) failed to set the example. They didn’t keep themselves pure and separate as they should have. When there are problems, it always gets back to a failure on the part of the leadership to set the right example they should have. Problems usually start at the top and work their way down.

Everyone has to take responsibility for his own actions, but it’s ultimately because the leaders didn’t keep themselves pure and separate in the way they should have.

Ezra heard this, and he was so absolutely overwhelmed. He couldn’t believe it! He came down there, and he saw this mess that had developed. Fifty years earlier the people had returned, and they came to do a work. They built the temple. They had gone through the persecutions and all the problems. Finally, the work was done and the persecutions, seemingly, had stopped. But Satan didn’t retire. He started back on infiltration again.

Understand! We have an adversary—a roaring lion that’s going about seeking whom he may devour. If he can’t overwhelm by frontal attack (discouragement and cause us to fall by the wayside), then he tries to subvert from within. If he gets caught there, he makes a frontal attack and tries to overwhelm from without and tries to discourage. If that doesn’t work, then he comes back. –Different tactics but really the same old tactics.

Verses 4-15, “Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel assembled to me, because of the transgression of those who had been carried away captive, and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice. At the evening sacrifice I arose from my fasting; and having torn my garment and my robe, I fell on my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God, and said, ‘O my God: I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You, my God; for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens. Since the days of our fathers to this day we have been very guilty, and for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plunder, and to humiliation, as it is this day. And now for a little while grace has been shown from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage. For we were slaves. Yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken Your commandments, which You have commanded by Your servants the prophets, saying, ‘The land which you are entering to possess is an unclean

land, with the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations which have filled it from one end to another with their impurity. Now therefore, do not give you daughters as wives for their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons; and never seek their peace or prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good of the land, and leave it as an inheritance to your children forever.” And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, since You our God have punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and have given us such deliverance as this, should we again break Your commandments, and join in marriage with the people of these abominations? Would You not be angry with us until You had consumed us, so that there would be no remnant or survivor? O Lord God of Israel, You are righteous, for we are left as a remnant, as it is this day. Here we are before You, in our guilt, though no one can stand before You because of this.”

Ezra 10:1-7, “Now while Ezra was praying, and while he was confessing, weeping, and bowing down before the house of God, a very large congregation of men, women, and children assembled to him from Israel; for the people wept very bitterly. And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, ‘We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this. Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the counsel of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. Arise, for this matter is your responsibility. We also will be with you. Be of good courage, and do it.’ Then Ezra arose, and made the leaders of the priests, the Levites, and all Israel swear an oath that they would do according to this word. So they swore an oath. Then Ezra arose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib [high priest; grandson of Joshua]; and when he came there, he ate no bread and drank no water, for he mourned because of the guilt of those from the captivity [Eliashib was high priest (Nehemiah 3:1)]. And they issued a proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the descendants of the captivity, that they must gather at Jerusalem.”

Word went out. Ezra could see that the very existence of the congregation of God was in danger. He sent out a decree and commanded that the entire nation be assembled.

Verse 8, “and that whoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the leaders and elders, all his property would be confiscated, and he himself would be separated from the congregation of those from the captivity.” If anyone refused, they were to be disfellowshipped, cast out of the congregation and their property was to be forfeited. Ezra ruled with a strong hand. They knew a strong hand from somewhere had arrived. God had raised up Ezra and sent him back from Babylon because the very existence of God’s Church was in jeopardy.

Verse 9, “So all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered at Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month; and all the people sat in the open square of the house of God, trembling because of this matter and because of heavy rain.”

Verses 10-18, “Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, ‘You have transgressed and have taken pagan wives, adding to the guilt of Israel. Now therefore, make confession to the Lord God of your fathers, and do His will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the pagan wives.’ Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, ‘Yes! As you have said, so we must do. But there are many people; it is the season for heavy rain, and we are not able to stand outside. Nor is this the work of one or two days, for there are many of us who have transgressed in this matter. Please, let the leaders of our entire congregation stand; and let all those in our cities who have taken pagan wives come at appointed time, together with the elders and judges of their cities, until the fierce wrath of our God is turned away from us in this matter.’ Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah opposed this, and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite gave them support. Then the descendants of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain heads of the fathers’ households, were set apart by the fathers’ households, each of them by name; and they sat down on the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. By the first day of the first month they finished questioning all the men who had taken pagan wives. And among the sons of the priests who had taken pagan wives the following were found of the sons of Joshua the son of Jozakdak, and his brothers: Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah.”

Verse 44, “All these had taken pagan wives, and some of them had wives by whom they had children.”

A period of about thirteen years goes by, and we pick up the story in Nehemiah. Nehemiah was a servant of the king in the palace of Susa in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 1:1). He had a position in the Persian court.

Nehemiah 1:3-4, “And they said to me, ‘The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.’ So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.”

What he heard was going on in Jerusalem bothered him. Ezra had come down and, through force of personality, “carried the day” for a while. We find that the very family of the high priest had intermarried. The high priest’s grandson, who was in line to be high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat, the leader of the Samaritans (Nehemiah 13:27-28). Trouble was brewing. Ezra said they would all have to put away these strange wives. Some of the leaders refused to do so (Ezra 10:15). If they refused, the reform among the people would be short-lived. Now, thirteen years later, Nehemiah became aware of the state of things.

Nehemiah 1:3, “And they said to me, ‘the survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.’” They had never finished repairing the city. Nehemiah was greatly bothered.

In vv. 5-11, he prayed and asked God to give him an opportunity to have a part in straightening it out.

Nehemiah 2:1-5, “And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before. Therefore the king said to me, ‘Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorry of heart.’ Then I became dreadfully afraid, and said to the king, ‘May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ tombs, lay in waste, and its gates are burned with fire?’ Then the king said to me, ‘What do you request?’ So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king, ‘If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.’”

Nehemiah wanted to rebuild the city. The temple had been rebuilt under Zerubbabel, but the work had kind of faded down. What always happens when people begin to mix and mingle with the world around them and become absorbed in the world and its ways? They lose their zeal to finish the work. This is what happened here.

Verses 6-9, “So the king said to me (the queen was also sitting beside him), ‘How long will your journey be? And when will you return?’ So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. Furthermore I said to the king, ‘let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the River, that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah., and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which pertains to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy.’ And the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me. Then I went to the governors in the region beyond the River and gave them the king’s letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.”

The king sent him back.

Verse 10, “When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard of it, they were deeply disturbed that a man had come to seek the well-being of the children of Israel.” It upset them. They were leaders of the Samaritans.

Verses 11-20, “So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode. And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down and its gates, which were burned with fire. Then I went on the Fountain Gate and to the King’s Pool, but there was no room for the animal that was under me to pass. So I went up in the night by the valley and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work. Then I said to them, ‘You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach.’ And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon

me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me. So they said, 'Let us rise up and build.' Then they set their hands to do this good work. But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed us to scorn and despised us, and said, 'What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?' So I answered them, and said to them, 'The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem.'"

Nehemiah 3:1, "Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They built as far as the Tower of the Hundred, and consecrated it, then as far as the Tower of Hananeel." They began to rebuild the wall.

Nehemiah 4:1-2, "But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews. And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, 'what are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish—stones that are burned?'"

They made fun of the Work of God.

Verses 6-10, "So we built the wall and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. Now it happened, when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and the gaps were beginning to be closed, that they became very angry, and all of them conspired together to come and attack Jerusalem and create confusion. Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night. Then Judah said, 'The strength of the laborers is failing, and there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall.'"

Verses 18-21, "Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet was beside me. Then I said to the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people, 'The work is great and extensive, and we are separated far from one another on the wall. Therefore, whenever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.' So we labored in the work, and half of the men held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared."

They went through a very strenuous time. There were many problems to be straightened out.

Nehemiah 5:1, "And there was a great outcry of the people and their wives against their Jewish brethren." The book of Malachi was written at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Malachi 3:9, "You are cursed with a curse...." The curse they were cursed with was in Nehemiah 5. They were in such hard times; they had to borrow money to eat and pay taxes (Nehemiah 5:2-5). Put Nehemiah 5 with Malachi 3.

God said in Malachi 3:10, "'Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and prove Me now in this,' says the Lord of hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such a blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.'"

In Nehemiah 5, Nehemiah was very angry because of the state of things (v. 6). The people weren't helping each other, but taking advantage of each other and charging interest (v. 7). So he called them together and required an oath of them (v. 12). From the time Nehemiah was appointed governor in Judah—in twelve years—he didn't take his salary or exhort taxes from the people (v. 14).

Nehemiah 6:1-5, "Now it happened when Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and that there were no breaks left in it (though at that time I had not hung the doors in the gates), that Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying 'Come let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of Ono.' But they thought to do me harm. So I sent messengers to them, saying, 'I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?' But they sent this message four times, and I answered them in the same manner. Then Sanballat sent his servant to me as before, the fifth time, with an open letter in his hand."

Verses 8-9, "Then I sent to him saying, 'No such thing as you say are being done, but you invent them in your own heart.' For they all were trying to make us afraid, saying, 'Their hands will be weakened in the work, and it will not be done.' Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands."

Verses 13-14, "For this reason he was hired, that I should be afraid and act that way and sin, so that they might have occasion for an evil report, that they might reproach me. My God remember Tobiah and Sanballat, according to these their works, and the prophetess Noadiah and the rest

of the prophets who would have made me afraid.” He continued in the work.

Verse 15, “So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Elul, in fifty-two days.” The wall was finished.

Verse 19, “...And Tobiah sent letters to frighten me.” The Samaritans were doing everything they could to subvert what was going on.

Nehemiah 7:4-5, “Now the city was large and spacious, but the people in it were few, and the houses were not rebuilt. Then my God put it into my heart to gather the nobles, the rulers, and the people, that they might be registered by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of those who had come up in the first return [534 B.C.; Ezra 2]....”

Nehemiah 8:1-4, “Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the congregation, of men and women and all who could hear with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month [Feast of Trumpets, Leviticus 23:24]. Then he read it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. So Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood which they had made for the purpose; and beside him, at his right hand, stood....”

Verses 5-14, “And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. Then all the people answered, ‘Amen, Amen!’ And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground...and the Levites helped the people to understand the Law; and the people stood in their places. So they read distinctly from the book, the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading. And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, ‘This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn nor weep.’ For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law. Then he said, ‘Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.’ So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, ‘Be still, for the day is holy; do

not be grieved.’ And all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them. Now on the second day the heads of the fathers’ houses of all the people, with the priests and Levites, were gathered to Ezra the scribe, in order to understand the words of the Law. And they found written in the Law, which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the Feast of the seventh month [Feast of Tabernacles, Leviticus 23:34, 39-42].”

Verses 17-18, “...And there was very great gladness. Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the Feast seven days, and on the eighth day [Last Great Day, Leviticus 23:36, 39, 44] there was a sacred assembly, according to the prescribed manner.”

The Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day—the people were assembled.

Nehemiah 9, in his prayer, Nehemiah gives an historical review.

Nehemiah 9:38, ““And because of all this, we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our leaders and our Levites and our priests seal it.””

Nehemiah 10:1-27, a covenant was made and the ones who signed the covenant are listed.

Nehemiah 10:28-31, “Now the rest of the people (the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the Nethinim, and all those who had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, everyone who had knowledge and understanding), they joined with their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse and an oath to walk in God’s Law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and His ordinances and His statutes—that we would not give our daughters as wives to the peoples of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons; that if the people of the land bring wares or any grain to sell on the Sabbath day, we would not buy it from them on the Sabbath or on a Holy Day; and that we would forego the seventh year’s produce and the exaction [collection] of every debt.”

Verse 37, “to bring the firstfruits of our dough, our offerings, the fruit from all kinds of trees, the new wine and oil, to the priests, to the storerooms of the house of our God; and to bring the tithes of our land to the Levites for the Levites should receive the tithes in all our farming communities.”

Notice that when the people returned to God with all their heart, they returned in these areas:

- 1) They separated themselves from fellowship with the world (v. 28).
- 2) They became very conscious of properly observing the Sabbath (v. 31).
- 3) They paid their tithes (vv. 35-38).

This is the way in which they turned around.

Verses 38-39, “And the priest, the descendants of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive tithes; and the Levites shall bring up a tenth of the tithes to the house of our God, to the rooms of the storehouse. For the children of Israel and the children of the Levi shall bring the offering of the grain, of the new wine and the oil, to the storerooms where the articles of the sanctuary are, where the priests who minister and the gatekeepers and the singers are; and we will not neglect the house of our God.”

Nehemiah 11:1-2, “Now the leaders of the people dwelt at Jerusalem; the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to dwell in Jerusalem, the holy city, and nine-tenths were to dwell in other cities. And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.” Problems were not entirely solved.

Nehemiah 13:1-5, “On that day they read from the Book of Moses in the hearing of the people, and it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever come into the congregation of God, because they had not met the children of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing. So it was, when they had heard the Law, that they separated all the mixed multitude from Israel. Now before this, Eliashib the priest, having authority over the storerooms of the house of our God, was allied with Tobiah.”

Eliashib the high priest was allied with Tobiah. Tobiah actually had a chamber right there in the Temple where he would come in and stay. He stayed in the place where they brought in meat offerings and tithes.

Verses 6-12, “But during all this I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king. Then after certain days I obtained leave from the king, and I came to Jerusalem [Nehemiah had been gone for twelve years] and discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, in preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me bitterly; therefore I threw all the household goods of Tobiah out of the room. Then I commanded

them to cleanse the rooms; and I brought back into them the articles of the house of God, with the grain offering and the frankincense. I also realized that the portions for the Levites had not been given them; for each of the Levites and the singers who did the work had gone back to his field. So I contended with the rulers, and said, ‘Why is the house of God forsaken?’ And I gathered them together and set them in their place. Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain and the new wine and the oil to the storehouse.”

Verse 25, “So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, ‘You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves.’”

There kept being a problem because the family of the high priest was allied with the leadership of the opposition. And he never enforced it because his own grandson was married to a pagan woman.

Verses 26-31, “‘Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin. Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women?’ And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite; therefore I drove him from me. Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites. Thus I cleansed them of everything pagan. I also assigned duties to the priests and the Levites each to his service, and to bringing the wood offering and the firstfruits at appointed time. Remember me, O my God, for good.”

Nehemiah finally cleaned house by chasing the grandson of the high priest out of the country. He disfellowshipped him! It never solved the problem until he started at the top and expelled the grandson of the high priest.

As we pick up the story from history, the father-in-law of this grandson took him in, and the Samaritans built a temple on Mount Gerizim. This grandson of the high priest became the high priest of the Samaritans, where he had intermarried.

When we come to the story in the Gospel accounts, we understand why there is such hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans in the time of Christ. The Jews wouldn’t have

anything to do with the Samaritans. Nehemiah made believers out of them!

Understanding what happened in the time of Nehemiah (as a background), when we come to the story in the Gospel account, we understand why there is such hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans.

John 4:4-9, “But He needed to go through Samaria. So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, ‘Give Me a drink.’ For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, ‘How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman? For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.’”

Verse 20, ““Our fathers worshiped on this mountain [Mt. Gerizim, in Samaria], and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.”” This became the controversy. The family of the high priest that was expelled from Jerusalem claimed that the only thing that is the Bible is what Moses gave—the Torah (the first five books)—and they altered that.

This was the situation in which it was necessary for Ezra and Nehemiah to make plain, once and for all, what constituted the Word of God. The book of Chronicles was written by Ezra. Chronicles tells the story from a different viewpoint. It deals almost entirely centering on Jerusalem. The first chapter of Chronicles sets the stage and spends the whole book on King David and making Jerusalem the capital. II Chronicles focuses on Solomon and the building of the temple at Jerusalem. The rest of Chronicles primarily focuses in on Kings Hezekiah and Josiah and the great revivals that took place.

The story of what happened in Northern Israel is only referred to in a very general sense. The story now has to be written to make it plain in a time of confusion. Charges and accusations were being made. Everyone was claiming to represent God. The family of high priests that were expelled from Jerusalem claimed to represent God. Ezra and Nehemiah said they represented God. It was in this context that the official canon of the Scriptures was finally finished. Ezra, during this time, was a ready scribe of the Law who came back to teach the Bible. It was necessary that an authoritative seal be set

because the Samaritans were seeking to subvert things from within. It was necessary that things be established.

The Jews, while in Babylon, had adopted a new method of writing—the square script of the Babylonians. The original Hebrew script was different. It looked more like the Arabic you see today. Hebrew is a much squarer script with bolder letters. Arabic is much more flowing, cursive. That is more akin to what the Jews had written with. The letters were the same, but the shapes were different.

The Jews had become familiar with the written Babylonian script while in captivity. Ezra now changed the Hebrew script from the older script that had been used to the Babylonian script they had adopted in Babylon. The reason being was that the Bible was recopied in this Babylonian script. This made a very clear distinction between what the Jews recognized as Scripture and what the Samaritans did because the Samaritans were unwilling to copy the Jews. They hadn’t been there in captivity. They had adopted the Hebrew script hundreds of years earlier, and they weren’t about to change back to copy the Jews. So now it was very apparent, at first glance, if a book was Samaritan or Jewish. The official canon of the Old Testament was set at this time.

The book of Chronicles focuses in on the periods of revivals, how everything was centered in Jerusalem, and that’s where God’s work was centered. It was necessary that this be done. Josephus testifies that from the time of Artaxerxes (Ezra and Nehemiah), no more books were added to the canon. Ezra edited certain things to bring it up to date, such as the expression, “to this day.” This was the closing—the seal—of the official canon of the Old Testament. God, through Ezra and Nehemiah, had set the nation back on the right track, and the official final canon of Old Testament Scripture was completed.

Deuteronomy 34:10, “But since then there had not arisen in Israel a prophet Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.” —Which we’ll come to next in the New Testament. We’ll see what caused the New Testament to have to be put together in the way that it was and that it very greatly paralleled the events of Ezra and Nehemiah. It was an attempt, again by the Samaritans—by the false church—to subvert, to infiltrate, to circulate all kinds of false and spurious books and to claim that they were equal with Scripture. It became necessary for the

people of God to know the difference and for an authoritative difference to be made.

Bible Study # 4
September 8, 1987
Mr. John Ogwyn

Proof of the Bible Series (Part 4)—How the New Testament Came Together

In this Bible study we **will see how the New Testament came together**. We have been talking about how we got our Bible, the Bible as we know it, and how the Scriptures came to be. We have been focusing in on the Old Testament, and how it came to be. Last time we went through Ezra and Nehemiah, the conclusion of the Old Testament and what gave us our canon of Scripture. There was a conclusion to the books, as inspired by God and preserved by the Jews. The books that they recognized as sacred had not been added to since the time of Artaxerxes in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Deuteronomy 18:15, "...a Prophet like me..." and One who would give law. This was something none of the other prophets did. They had no authority to add to or take away from the Law of Moses. There was this prophecy, "that One like Moses," and that was Jesus Christ.

Acts 7:37, "This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him shall you hear.'"" —Showing that all these prophecies referred to Jesus Christ.

The same statements were referred to back in Acts 3:20-22, "and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him shall you hear in all things whatever He says to you.'""

—"Like me...Him shall you hear."

Verse 26, "To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities." The emphasis is that all these prophets referred to Jesus Christ—like Moses in a way that no one else ever was. What does it mean to be a prophet like Moses? Moses gave Law. Moses was responsible for the canon of Scripture laid up in the ark. God used Moses to write Scripture and to give Law. Let's notice a prophecy in the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 8:14, "He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the

inhabitants of Jerusalem." Who is this referring to?

Turn briefly back to Romans 9:23, "and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory."

Verses 32-33, "Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him shall not be put to shame.'" That stumbling stone refers, of course, to Jesus Christ.

I Peter 2:4-8, "Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.' Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious but to those who are disobedient, 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,' and 'A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.' They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed."

This is quoted from Isaiah 8:14, "He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

—Referring to Jesus Christ.

Verses 15-20, "And many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken, be snared and taken.' Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples. And I will wait on the Lord, who hides His face from the house of Jacob; and I will hope in Him. Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells in Mount Zion. And when they shall say to you, 'Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,' should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? To the Law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them."

To the law and to the testimony—that expression or statement is utilized various times. For instance, in Revelation 12:17, "...the rest of her offsprings, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ," and

in other places in Revelation it refers to the Law and to the testimony (Revelation 12:11; Revelation 19:10; Revelation 1:2, 9; Revelation 6:9).

Isaiah 8:16, “Bind up the testimony, seal the Law among My disciples.” *The testimony would be bound up, and the Law would be sealed among the disciples of Jesus Christ.* “Bind up” means “to canonize, to seal, to set it apart.” The testimony and the Law would be set apart. The testimony and the Law would be set apart as authentic and genuine among whom? —The disciples of Jesus Christ! It was not going to be canonized by the Catholic Church. It was to be sealed by the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 42:21, “The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness’ sake; He will magnify the Law and make it honorable.” Jesus Christ would magnify the Law.

Notice Matthew 5:17, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law, or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” —To fill up to the full! He was coming to magnify the Law. He was not coming to destroy it or do away with it.

Verse 18, “For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.” —Not one jot or tittle. Then He begins to magnify the Law.

Verses 21-22, “You have heard that it was said...but I say to you....”

Verses 27-28, “You have heard...but I say to you....”

Verses 31-32, “Furthermore it has been said...But I say to you....”

Verses 33-34, “Again you have heard...But I say to you....”

Verses 38-39, “You have heard...But I tell you....”

Notice as we go on through, and you find again a sixth place where He says in vv. 43-44, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”

—Bless them that curse you.

Verse 48, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” —Be completely spiritually mature. He goes on focusing on different things. He is magnifying the Law. He says, ‘This is what you have always been told, but I say to you.’ He was making it more binding. It is not enough to keep the letter of the Law. He taught the spirit of the Law. He

magnified the Law. He did come, and He did magnify the Law.

In Isaiah 8:16, the Law was bound up by His disciples. In the beginning they did not feel a need to preserve what Jesus said and did because they expected His return soon.

The last question they asked Him, Acts 1:6, “...‘Lord, will You at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?’”

Verse 7, “And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.’” They expected Christ to return in their lifetime (including the Apostle Paul), but as time went on and as they got further along, it was apparent—the awareness began to dawn on them—that there were things yet to be done. As a result, certain records began to be set down.

II Peter 1:12-15, “Therefore I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.”

The story of who was responsible for giving us the New Testament, as we have it, is not that different than what Ezra and Nehemiah faced. It was because of the Samaritans and their trying to subvert and water down the truth of God. It was their opposition and their antagonism that caused Ezra and Nehemiah to set apart these books.

Was there anything like this in the New Testament? Yes, there was—in Acts 8:9-11, Simon the Sorcerer (the magician) known in history as Simon Magus. The Samaritans looked to him as God’s representative on earth.

Acts 8:12-13, “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.”

We are going to see what he believed a little later. He was amazed at the things Philip did.

Verses 17-18, “Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money.” He offered them money. He tried to make a deal. He said, ‘I want this office.’ He was trying to buy an apostleship.

Verse 19, “saying, ‘Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’” He said, ‘I want the office that you hold; I want to be able to do that.’

Verse 20, “But Peter said to him, ‘Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money.’” He told him to take his money and where to go with it.

Verse 21, “‘You have neither part nor portion [KJV, “lot”] in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.’”

“You have neither part nor lot.” What does that expression mean? Notice what the apostles said after Judas had committed suicide.

Acts 1:24-26, “And they prayed and said, ‘You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.’ And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”

Acts 8:21, “‘You have neither part nor portion [KJV, “lot”] in this matter....’” It was a reference to the apostleship.

Verse 20, “...‘Your money will perish with you....’”

Verse 21, “‘You have neither part nor portion [KJV, “lot”] in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.’” You have not been chosen nor designated by God.

Verse 23, “‘For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.’” –The bond of lawlessness. He looked into Simon and saw that he wasn’t in any way repentant. He was bitter against the Government of God. He was caught up in an attitude of contempt toward the Law of God.

Verse 24, “Then Simon answered and said, ‘Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me.’” He said, ‘I hope all those terrible things don’t happen.’ He didn’t repent.

Simon loomed rather large on the horizon in church history. He was the religious leader of the Samaritans. What was their religion? They practiced the Babylonian Mystery Religion. They paid lip-service to the God of Israel but attached that to their old pagan religion. They kept doing the same things but called it by the name of God.

John 4:19-22, “The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain [Mount Gerizim, in Samaria], and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is

the place where one ought to worship.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.’”

Jesus made it very plain that you don’t look among the Samaritans for the truth of God. They used God’s name, but they didn’t even know anything about the name of God. Don’t look to the Samaritans for what they preserved. Don’t look there; look to the Jews. They are the ones who have the responsibility of preserving the text. It is among these Samaritans that we find Simon the Magician. He thought he was the great one. He tried to buy an apostleship.

Later we read where Paul talked about those who were false apostles.

II Corinthians 11:13, “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.”

John also talked about them in I John.

I John 2:19, “They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us, but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.” That is who he was talking about.

The interesting thing to note, concerning the Samaritans and the Jews, there is another comparison. When the Apostle Paul went out into the Greek-speaking world, primarily he went where the Jews were. It really started out by being preached to those who were familiar with the Law. Three hundred years earlier was the dispersion (Greek, “*Diaspora*”)—the scattering of the Jews during the time of Alexander the Great. That served as the nucleus around which the Church of God was built.

There was another group of people who were dispersed in the ancient world—the dispersion of the Samaritans. Rome and Alexandria, Egypt were the two major areas where the Samaritans settled.

It is interesting to note that when we come across a church in the second century, as the curtain lifts from the time the New Testament closes, we find a church that calls itself Christian, but it’s not doing the things we find practiced by Jesus and the early apostles. It was a church that used the name of God and Jesus Christ, but was, in reality, following the same old Babylonian Mystery Religion. It was none other than the church that Simon the Sorcerer was responsible for founding. It was the outgrowth of what Simon did among the Samaritan colonies.

There are many warnings in the New Testament. It was a time of confusion. Let's go back to II Peter. He was writing in the latter part of the 60s A.D.

II Peter 2:1-3, "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber."

Peter was talking about false prophets—those who would mislead. There are these warnings. The Apostle Jude gave a number of these warnings.

Jude 3, "Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."—Again, writing in the late 60s A.D. So even thirty-five years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Jude was telling the Church to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered.

Verse 4, "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." There was a false message being taught, turning the grace of our God into lewdness and denying the only Lord God.

Notice here in vv. 11-12, "Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves; they are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots." There are spots in your feasts, twice dead. He speaks here of these individuals who were a source of contention, a source of problems. The Church was told to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered.

Christ said He would bind up the Law among His disciples (Isaiah 8:16).

II Peter 1:12-14, "Therefore I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding

you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me." "Tent"—he was referring to his mortal body.

Verse 15, "Moreover *I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.*" He said, 'I am not going to be negligent. I know that I am not going to be alive much longer, but I am going to endeavor that after I die, you will have all of these things in remembrance.' How could Peter do this?—By having these things written down and set apart as canon of Scripture.

I want you to notice something we always read right over.

Verse 16, "For we did not follow cunning devised fables..."

Verse 15, "Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder..." He switched from first person singular to first person plural. He switches from "I" to "we."

In vv. 12-15, Peter used "I"; in vv. 16-18, he used "we." Who is the "we" to whom he is referring?

II Peter 1:17-18, "For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mount."

To whom is "we" referring? It is very plain this "we" refers specifically to Peter and John alone, and I can prove that.

Let's go to Matthew 17:1-9. "We" refers to those who were in the mountain and heard, "This is My beloved Son."

Matthew 17:1-2, "Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, brought them up on a high mountain by themselves, and was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light." Does that sound like Jesus back in Revelation 1 in His glorified state?

Verse 5, "While He was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'"

Verses 3-4, "And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.'" They saw a vision (v. 9).

Matthew 16:28, "'Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His

kingdom.” They saw Jesus coming in His kingdom.

In Matthew 17:1, Peter, James and John went up into a mountain six days later, and they saw Christ, in glorified form, coming in His Kingdom and saw Moses and Elijah (Church and State) resurrected in a vision (v. 9). They heard that (v. 6). It was a vision, and Jesus told them not to say anything about it.

Matthew 17:9, “...Jesus charged them, saying, ‘Tell the vision to no one, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.’” Who was there? Three men: Peter, James and John. Go back to Acts.

Acts 12:1-2, “Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.” A few years into the New Testament period (about thirteen years after the crucifixion) James was killed.

In II Peter 1, there were only two other men still alive.

In II Peter 1:16, when Peter said, “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty,” this “we” can only refer to Peter and John, the only two people still living who had heard the voice. Notice something about Peter and John.

Verse 19 (KJV), “We have also a more sure word of prophecy...” We have the authoritative word of prophecy.

Verse 20, “knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation.” Peter and John were responsible for the canonization of the New Testament. They were the ones to whom were given the authoritative word of prophecy. Peter was responsible for the first canonization of Scripture, and about thirty years later, John was responsible for the last canonization of Scripture. We are the ones who have the sure word of prophecy (v. 19).

Verse 16, “For we [Peter and John] did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made know to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”

II Peter 2:1, “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.”

‘There were false prophets, but we [Peter and John] are the ones you listen to. We are the

ones that God has given that authority to—to say what is inspired of God and what is not. We are the ones that God has given that authority to.’ Just read church history and all the spurious accounts.

II Peter 2:3, “By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words...” Covetousness was the actual motive of those who tried to subvert.

Verses 4-5, “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly.”

Verses 9-10, “then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed; they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.”

They despise government and church authority. That has been a stumbling block in our day. They didn’t want to be told what to do. They wanted to do what they wanted to do. Peter was very quick to call “a spade a spade.” He had a way of being very blunt and to the point.

Jude 8, “Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.” –Just as in our time and, as we saw, with the Samaritans. Satan hasn’t changed his tactics.

Verse 10, “But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.”

Verse 12, “These are spots in you love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves; they are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.”—Clouds without water.

II Peter 2:12-13, “But these like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you.”

People were coming in trying to fellowship with God’s Church and yet using that opportunity for

fellowship to try and subvert with their own deceptions.

Verses 14-15, “having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, beguiling unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practice, and are accursed children: They have forsaken the right way and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.”

Verses 17-19, “These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, to whom the gloom of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through licentiousness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption, for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought in bondage.”

They promise them liberty. Peter makes it very plain.

Notice II Peter 3:1-2, “Beloved, I now write this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior.”

This is referring to Scripture—the prophets and the apostles. Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone, and He is what the Bible is all about. He personified the Bible and lived it totally and completely.

There are several interesting things that come out in this. We noted before that as the Jews count the Old Testament, there are twenty-two books. There are twenty-seven books in the New Testament. When you add the twenty-seven and twenty-two, you come up with forty-nine—seven times seven—God’s number of completion and perfection.

If you take the four Gospels, which tell the story of Jesus Christ’s life, and Acts, which continues that story of what Jesus did through the Church (in those five books), the story of Jesus is the focal point. There are twenty-two books before and twenty-two books after those five books. Christ is the center of the Bible—the focal point. He is the chief cornerstone.

John wrote five books of the New Testament—the last books written—the Gospel of John, I, II, III John and Revelation. He outlived all of the other apostles by thirty years. If you take out John’s Books, how many remain for Peter to have canonized? —Twenty-two! Exactly the

same number as already existed in the Old Testament canon. Then, thirty years later, five final books were added by John.

In II Peter 1:15, he says that he is going to be sure, after his decease, to have these things always in remembrance. How? —By setting down an authoritative canon of Scripture. But he made it plain that he was not the only one with that authority. Thirty years later, after the scene had changed, John had five more, which brought the total to twenty-seven. With the twenty-two of the Old Testament, it made God’s perfect number, and it also represented the seventh period of canonization. 1) The time of Moses, 2) Solomon, 3) Isaiah and Hezekiah, 4) Josiah and Jeremiah, 5) Ezra and Nehemiah, 6) the time of Peter and then, 7) the Apostle John put the final books in as the Greeks preserved it. God, over a period of centuries, working seven distinct periods of time, put together a book that consists of seven times seven. There is a logical flow and it finishes out with eternity in Revelation.

II Peter 3:2, “that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior.” He makes it plain the people were to accord the same to these Scriptures as they had with the Old Testament.

Verses 3-9, “knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking after their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.’ For this they willingly forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which now exist are kept in store, reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

God has a time plan. Peter began to expound that. Peter is writing in the late 60s A.D. Peter could see that Jesus Christ was not coming back in their lifetime. Peter begins to go through and explain. God has a time plan. He is not slack concerning His promises. It is not that God has forgotten about what He said. In that time plan a day is as a thousand years.

Verses 13-15, “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found of Him in peace, without spot and blemish; and account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you.” There is a definite article there.

Verse 16, “as also in all his epistles speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.” Notice the fact that Paul’s writings were now available. But there were things that weren’t clear. “The rest of the Scriptures”—Peter says Paul’s writings were Scriptures. Peter makes it plain.

Turn back to II Timothy 4 and see a little bit as to how some of these things came about.

II Timothy 4:6-9, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that Day, and not to me only but to all who have loved His appearing. Be diligent to come to me quickly.”

Verse 11, “Only Luke is with me. Get Mark, and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.” He was useful to him for a service. ‘I need him to do something.’

Verse 13, “Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come...and the books, especially the parchments.” Parchment was a writing material of value. It was what the scrolls were made of. It was not something on which you wrote your everyday letters, but official documents that needed to be preserved a long time. Normally, on what the Scriptures were written. Paul told Timothy, ‘Come and see me because the time of my departure is at hand. I am going to be executed. I need you to come, and bring Mark. I need him to do something and, especially, bring the parchments.’ Timothy was coming there from Ephesus, the area Paul had been and the area where there was a depository of a copy of the letters that Paul had written.

I Peter 5:13 (KJV), “The church that is at Babylon, selected together with you, salutes you; and so does Mark, my son.” Mark was to function as Peter’s assistant in the same way that Timothy was to Paul. ‘I need you to bring some

things and bring Mark. He is profitable to me for a service.’

The copy of the letters that Paul had written had been preserved in Ephesus—copies of all the things that he had written. He edited those things in the final period of his life and put them in the final form. Timothy was bringing these to Peter and Mark was coming along.

Remember the prophecy—“seal up the Law among My disciples” (Isaiah 8:16). Peter and John were the ones to whom were given the authoritative, sure word of prophecy. They were responsible for sealing up those things. He sent them, by Mark, to Peter and was responsible for putting the first twenty-two books in the New Testament. They were kept and preserved thirty or so years, and the Apostle John put the New Testament in its final form. It was preserved by the Greeks; it was preserved right where Paul spent his final years.

The emphasis on Ephesus, as the early Church, was significant in more than one way. That is where John lived his final years. That is the area where the book of Revelation was written. That is where the authoritative copies of the New Testament were kept. That is where we find them preserved as we come on down to our time today—the official Greek text, preserved in the Greek-speaking world. The other copies, that were not as completely and clearly preserved, were found elsewhere.

We find the story, a couple of centuries later, when the church at Rome and Alexandria were arguing over a canon that already existed. They were debating over whether to exclude certain books from it—Revelation, II Peter, Jude—books that showed who they were and what they were doing. Revelation 17 talks very plainly of a great city that sits on seven hills, that reigns over the kings of the earth. Rome was noted as being the city of seven hills. Some of the references were so plain that they did their best to get rid of it.

We find here that God ensured the preservation of His Word. He inspired it to be written and raised up individuals to preserve and seal it up as authoritative. And God has preserved it!

The next time we will focus in on the order in which the Jews preserved the Old Testament and the Greeks the New Testament. The order was a little different and there are reasons for that. There are things that are obscured, that you don’t properly see. Even though they couldn’t get rid of the books, they tried to confuse them. God is a God of order. The Book, on which we base our life, is God’s Book and He has put His stamp on

it. Our God has placed on this Book His seal and His stamp. You can't take anything out or put anything in because it doesn't make sense. Paul wrote fourteen books. Time after time, you see these sevens that run through. God has done these things in a systematic way. Next Bible study we will see these things more clearly.

Bible Study # 5
September 22, 1987
Mr. John Ogwyn

Proof of the Bible Series (Part 5)—The Inspired Order of the Books of the Bible
(Chart at end)

Our focus has been on **how we can come to know and have the confidence that we have the complete Bible, and that it is really the Word of God.** We have gone through and seen how we have come to have the Old and New Testaments. We have seen God's completion of the Bible.

We mentioned that there were seven periods of how the Bible came together. When you add the twenty-two books to the twenty-seven books, you come up with forty-nine. There is no room for an Apocrypha. The Bible has an internal unity. **There are seven divisions of the entire Bible.** There are **three divisions of the Old Testament Scriptures:** 1) the Law, 2) the Prophets and 3) the Writings. There are **four divisions of the New Testament Scriptures:** 1) the Gospels and Acts, 2) the General Epistles, 3) the Epistles of Paul and 4) Revelation. It is not the order you have in your King James Bible and there is a reason for that.

What we term the "Old Testament," the Jewish Publication Society Edition terms it, simply, the "Holy Scriptures." In their translation, they record in the inspired order. There was a translation made (that took place over a period of years) called the "Septuagint Translation"—in reference to the seventy scholars. It was not translated for the authoritative Scriptures. They were on the edges of the Jewish community. It was the common translation in the Greek language and was the only one for a number of years. (Jews in Palestine looked down on it.) The Law, the Prophets and the Writings did not make sense to them.

They based the order of the Septuagint on what was commonly used by the Catholic Church. When the translation was made, they used the order that was already there by the Catholic Church. It loses something. The Greek manuscripts are preserved in a particular order. Only one translation preserves the proper Greek order—the Ivan Panan translation. When the King James was translated, they utilized the order which was already being used, and that was the order of books that the Catholic Church utilized. They went to the right sources of the translation, but they lost sight that God is a God

of order who builds order in a system and has a reason for doing it that way. *Let's look and see how the inspired order differs with the order in which we are familiar.*

The Old Testament has three sections (Luke 24:44):

1) **The Law:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. That part has not been tampered with.

2) **The Prophets:** There are two sections of Prophets: the **Former Prophets:** Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. They are books we would consider as historical. These books tell the story of the entrance of Israel until they go into captivity; they are told in a logical order. Then, the **Latter Prophets:**—divided into the **Major Prophets:** Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel; and the **Minor Prophets** (simply based on the size of the books): Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. History and prophecy are simply the same thing. You look back on history and forward on prophecy. It is the story of what happens when you obey the Law and what happens when you don't—the blessings and the curses. God's law is the fundamental revelation. Everything builds on that. That is the starting point. The **Former Prophets**, written earlier, tell the story of what Israel did—what happened when they obeyed and what happened when they disobeyed. The **Latter Prophets** drew lessons out into the future and showed the ultimate end of things.

3) **The Writings (or Psalms)** division consists of things that amplify and many things of poetry. They sandwiched it in with the Prophets because they didn't understand it. We are going to come back and see there is a direct logical reason why these Writings are in the order that they are. As we come into the New Testament, we see again the logic. When you read them in the order we have them today, you don't really understand what Ruth is all about. The point is often lost. We come to I, II Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, and it seems like Chronicles is rehashing what you just read. Ezra and Nehemiah are sandwiched in there along with Esther. You come to Job, and it seems to be sticking out, unrelated anywhere. You have Song of Solomon, then Lamentations (after Jeremiah). We add in the book of Daniel, and then, finally, books dealing with the Minor Prophets. That is not the way God had it. The **Former Poetic (Meter Books):** Psalms, Proverbs and Job are all written in a poetic fashion. Psalms was written primarily

as songs to sing. They were written to be memorized.

Psalm 148:1, “Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise Him in the heights!” A poetic expression repeated. There is a certain repetition of thought.

You find the same thing in Proverbs 2:2, “So that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding.”

And Proverbs 1:20, “Wisdom calls aloud outside; she raises her voice in the open square.” They were written to be meditated on. There was a rhythm to them. It’s far easier to commit poetry to memory than to prose. You are able to call it back to mind. You think on them; you meditate on them. There are a lot of things you have to think about to get them out. Job was written in poetry.

The Megillot (Festival Books): Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther were Festival Scrolls read through the year to illustrate points. Realize, when you understand when these books were to be read, you get some understanding. They don’t get lost in the shuffle.

Then, we have the books written after the captivity. **Latter Restoration Books:** Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles—written as a conclusion to the Old Testament. Daniel answers to the book of Revelation in the New Testament—written as a parallel to that. Ezra and Nehemiah pick up the story after the return from captivity and how the Old Testament came to be. They tell you the story of what happened when they came back and make it plain about the Samaritans and Israel. After several hundred years, we know where to look. Simon the Magician claimed that they were the source of truth, and it resulted in a religion that claimed to be of Christ. Chronicles tells the story from the standpoint of Jerusalem. It tells you nothing about Northern Israel or King Saul. I Chronicles tells you about King David, that the temple was built there and that this was where God was working. It is obvious when you go through and read the Old Testament that there needs to be something to come after.

In the inspired order, II Chronicles 36:23 is the end of the Old Testament—the end of the Scriptures. It is a totally different feeling than what you get at the end of Revelation, where it would end. The next thing you would be reading in the inspired order is the book of Matthew. Matthew 1 goes right on through, coming down fourteen generations—all the generations from Abraham to David to Christ. Matthew backs up

the story and kind of summarizes it from the standpoint that II Chronicles had just gotten through telling it. We find, as we go into Matthew, it ties in with II Chronicles.

The New Testament has four sections:

1) **The Gospels and Acts:** Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts correspond to the books of the Law.

Luke 1:1-3, “Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which are most surely believed among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent *Theophilus*.” Go on to Acts.

Acts 1:1-2, “The former account I made, O *Theophilus*, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen.” Acts is the story of the Living Jesus Christ after He had ascended to heaven and sent the Comforter. He continued to work through His servants. John is inserted between Luke and Acts.

2) The next section is the **General Epistles:** James, I, II Peter, I, II, III John and Jude.

3) Then follow the **Epistles of Paul.** They follow through Paul’s letters to seven Churches: Romans, I, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and I, II Thessalonians. Then comes Hebrews (General Epistle) followed by Timothy, Titus and Philemon (Pastoral Epistles).

4) **Revelation.**

Let’s go back and understand a little more why this order has some relevance.

There are seven divisions of the Bible:

I. The Law: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Logically, Genesis is the place to begin. Why is Genesis a part of the Law? God didn’t open up with the Ten Commandments. That is not where the Bible starts. It starts in the most logical place—“In the beginning.” It starts out by introducing to us who and what God is. We are introduced to God. God created and fashioned the earth. He is the Creator of the earth and of man upon it. He is the Author of that. He introduces Himself as the Creator and the Life-giver. Then He introduces Himself as the Lawgiver. We find God promises land to Abraham. We understand that the God, who promised land to Abraham, created it, and He owns it. It is His to give. We are introduced to

Him in that context. We are introduced to Abraham.

Notice the focus. God starts out with the universe and then the family of man. In a matter of twelve chapters, He goes all the way from the universe to one man, Abraham and then the family of Abraham, zeroing in on the family God was to work with in the future.

We then go to the story in Exodus. God didn't do it the way it would seem logical to people. They never really anticipated that God would allow their descendants to sink down as slaves. God wanted them to get the point that He was the One who gave the blessings. Man seems to think, 'Look what I have done; look what I can do.' As God brings them out of slavery, He then begins to speak. He reveals that Law and goes through the statutes and judgments and the experiences Israel went through wandering in the wilderness for forty years. There is logic and order.

II. The Prophets: As we go through the Former Prophets, it is continued in story form. It is an amplification of the promises that God made (the blessings and the curses) and what happened when they obey and what happened when they disobeyed.

III. The Writings: Then we come back with the Writings—written in poetic and philosophical fashion, focusing in on many ways you can derive lessons. The Megillot (Festival Books): Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther. The Jews traditionally read the Song of Solomon during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

The Song of Solomon is a love story in poetic form, the story of a young lady and her intended. It is the story of an attempt by the king to take her into his harem, and the story of two people who saved themselves for each other. It is a beautiful love story that we will be going through during a Bible study. I don't know of any sin more difficult to really see the need of putting away than sin dealing with the area of sex. This book read during this time was to focus in on the positive blessings and benefits that two young people were to have if they put away sin and saved themselves for one another. It is a beautiful and a graphic story. God is not prudish. The Song of Solomon is very graphic. It contains many things of instructions, in terms of sexual matters. It is important for young people to understand.

The book of Ruth was read on the Day of Pentecost. Again, it is a love story; it is more of a symbolic story. It ultimately focuses in on the marriage of Christ and the Church. It looked

back to the marriage of Christ and Old Testament Israel. The marriage of the Lamb has not yet taken place. Ruth embraced the ways of God and then her marriage to Boaz. It was a story that parallels the story of Pentecost.

Lamentations was read during their national holiday—the Feast of Ab (not one commanded in Scripture)—an anniversary of the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar. Titus did it on the same day in 70 A.D. So the Jews had a greater reason to fast. It was kind of a 4th of July in reverse. It's a prophecy of the Great Tribulation of which the destruction of Jerusalem was a type.

Ecclesiastes was read during the Feast of Tabernacles. That may strike some as unusual. But when you understand the message of Ecclesiastes, it was the story of a man who lived the Feast of Tabernacles three hundred sixty-five days during the year. His name was Solomon. He had everything. He lived it up. It was a time of prosperity, a time of abundance.

Micah referred to the World Tomorrow.

Micah 4:4, "But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree..." This term was used during the reign of Solomon (I Kings 4:25). This was to be characteristic of the World Tomorrow. Solomon, however, had to learn some lessons, and those lessons are set out in the book of Ecclesiastes. If physical things are all that you have, then there is an empty spot. The book of Ecclesiastes was read during that occasion. You see, there is a story contained in these Festival Scrolls.

Latter restoration books: Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles. The book of Daniel is prophecy from a completely different standpoint. It was written by one outside the land of Palestine, written primarily dealing with Gentile areas. It was written after the captivity. Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles complete the story from that standpoint.

Then when you come to the New Testament, it is interesting that the Church is described as being built on the foundation of the prophets and the apostles (Ephesians 2:20). The Old Testament was written by prophets; the New Testament, by apostles and Jesus Christ being the Chief Cornerstone.

IV. The four Gospels and Acts: *Why are there four gospel accounts?* They tell the story from four different standpoints. They follow a similar outline, but they tell the story in a different way.

Matthew was written to a Jewish audience. It focuses in on things from a Jewish standpoint. Those who were reading it were coming from a

background of strict, orthodox Judaism. It covers Christ's confrontation with the Pharisees and the Olivet Prophecy. It gives things not given in any other account. It was written to people very familiar with the Law. The confrontations were written in detail.

Mark (written by Mark)—the one who accompanied Peter. The thrust was to the area Peter ministered to. It is a book that focused in on the things that Christ did. It is a fast-moving story. It uses the word "straightway" (KJV), "immediately" (NKJV). It focuses in more on what Christ did rather than what He said. It doesn't give the details that Matthew gives.

Luke was written primarily to the Gentile area. Luke was a companion to Paul. There are two genealogies of Christ—Matthew and Luke. Matthew establishes that Jesus is the Messiah—the heir of David and Abraham. Those were the ones that were important as far as the Jews were concerned. God made the promises to Abraham and reiterated it to David. Matthew emphasizes that Jesus was the King. Luke traces it back to Adam, showing a common bond to all humanity. This was the Gospel that was circulated where Paul preached. It was written from a little different standpoint.

So, here were three Gospel accounts that circulated in three different areas: Matthew's in the area of Judea and Jerusalem, Luke's and Paul's in the Gentile area and Mark's in the area where Peter and Mark worked.

John simply omits some of the things that Matthew, Mark and Luke talk about. John wrote at a much later time. He doesn't give the Sermon on the Mount. You will find that it gives what Christ said and did on seven occasions: three Passovers, Pentecost, Feast of Trumpets, Feast of Tabernacles and The Last Great Day. John focuses in on these Festival occasions. John simply added in material that was important for the Church to know. It was a time when the validity of the Holy Days and the Sabbath was being questioned.

Acts picks up the story from Luke, carries it through, and ends abruptly in Paul's imprisonment. It tells how Christ established His Church and worked through it. That set the stage. That is a logical place to begin the New Testament.

V. The General Epistles: James, Peter, John and Jude. Remember last Bible study, the warning from Peter about Paul's writings—"things difficult to be understood"—some things people tend to misapply and misuse. You read Jesus' example of the days He observed and

kept. Then the book of Acts and the good news of the Kingdom they preached. We have two sections that were to set the stage.

James explains faith; Peter, hope; and John, love. Faith without works is dead (James 2:20). He emphasizes faith. The faith it takes to be healed in James 5. The kind of faith Abraham had (2:23). The kind of faith it takes. When you get through reading the book of James, you realize that it is necessary to do something (2:20).

Peter focuses on hope.

John goes through and explains about love.

I John 5:3, "This is the love of God that we keep His commandments."

II John 6, "This is love, that we walk according to His commandments." He goes on explaining about the things we are to love. We are not to love the world (I John 2:15). It focuses in on what real love really is.

Then Jude warns you that you must earnestly contend for the faith once delivered. After having that as a background, you are prepared to read what Paul wrote. The Catholics didn't like the book of James; it was too Jewish. They like the book of Romans. They put all the general epistles to the back, hoping you wouldn't make it all the way there.

VI. The Epistles of Paul: The order of Paul's Epistles is interesting. He wrote to seven Churches: Romans, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians and a General Epistle: Hebrews. He wrote four Pastoral Epistles: I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus and Philemon.

Some modern critics want to say that Paul didn't write Hebrews. When you include Hebrews, you have fourteen that he wrote. There are seven General Epistles: James, I Peter, II Peter, I John, II John, III John, and Jude. There are fourteen letters from Paul. That is logical. God does things in a logical way. There is order. Many of the scholars can't understand why the epistles are in the order they are, but there is logic.

The order of Paul's epistles is based on the outline of God's plan based on the Holy Days. The book of Romans explains the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread.

Romans 5:8, "...Christ died for us." Isn't that the message of the Passover? It continues right on into Romans 6—the Days of Unleavened Bread and the necessity of coming out of sin.

Romans 5:8, "...while we were sinners Christ died for us." But we can't live in sin; we have to come out of it.

Then you go on to the book of Corinthians—the instruction about Passover (I Corinthians 11) and the little leaven that leavens the whole lump (I Corinthians 5:6). The Holy Days picture God’s plan of salvation.

Then you go on to Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. Those four focus in on the meaning of Pentecost and the giving and working of God’s Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23—the fruits of the Spirit. Ephesians is an entire sermon on Pentecost. Ephesians in the New Testament and Ruth in the Old Testament explain being called out of the world and the marriage covenant. Let’s notice one little thing here.

Ephesians 2:11-12, “Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”

That’s what Ruth was—a Moabite. She turned her back from the world. What did she tell Naomi?

Ruth 1:16, “...‘Your people will be my people and your God my God.’ It has to do with us being called out of the world. ‘Husbands, love your wives; wives obey your husband.’ He goes through this in Ephesians 5, and people think he is talking about the husbands and wives. Then he comes down and says it is a mystery about Christ and the Church (v. 32).

Philippians focuses in on God’s Spirit and how to overcome. Colossians continues on with the very same things—things that zeroes in, in a special way, with the meaning of Pentecost. What does I Thessalonians talk about? What comes next? Trumpets!

Chapter 4:16, Christ will descend from heaven.

I Thessalonians 5:1-2, “...the times and seasons ...the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night.”

II Thessalonians 2:1-2, “Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.” Paul goes through and explains things—setting the stage of the Feast of Trumpets.

Then, Hebrews focuses in on the things that deal with Atonement and Tabernacles. We always go back to Hebrews on Atonement because it explains the symbolism of Leviticus 16.

In Hebrews 8 and 9, Paul explains, “but now Christ has entered into the Holy Place” (9:12). Hebrews 11, focuses in on the time when they will receive the promises (vv. 13-16)—the Feast of Tabernacles—a time yet to come. There is a thread that runs through, focusing in on the return of Christ and on into the World Tomorrow.

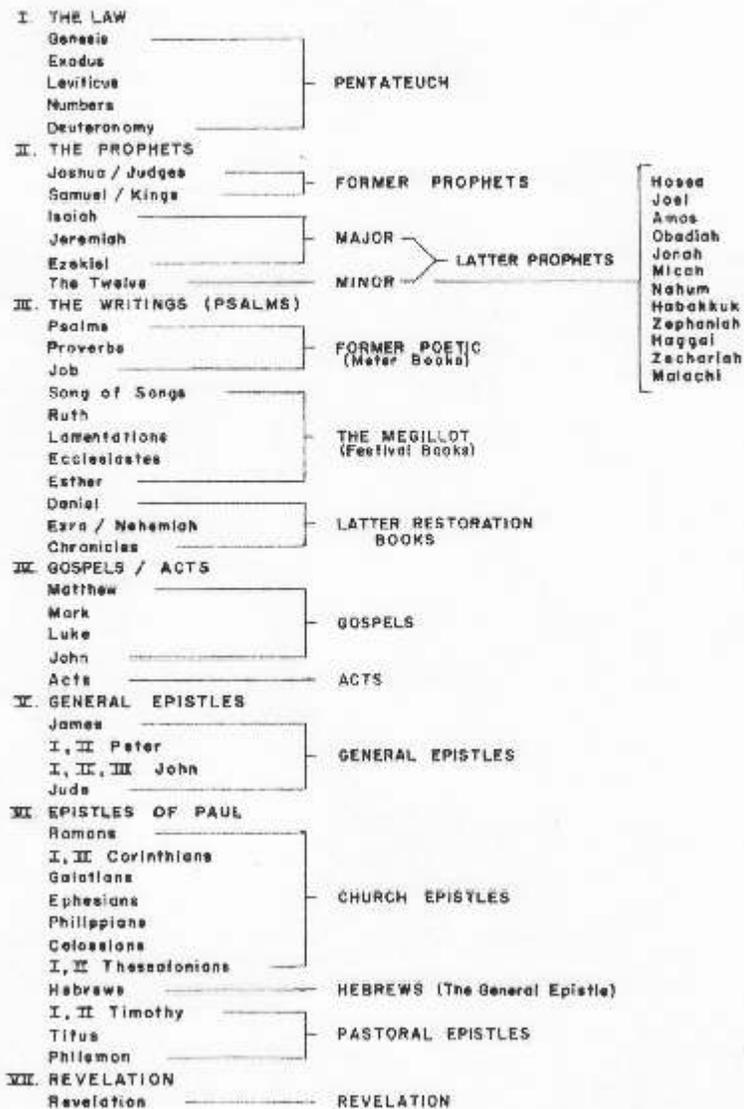
You have a logical flow through Paul’s epistles, then his letters of instructions to the ministry: Timothy, an Evangelist, Titus (of less responsibility) and Philemon, an elder in the Church. There is logic as you go through it.

VII. Revelation: The logical place to end is Revelation—on out into eternity. Genesis opened up in the beginning; Revelation ends on the brink of eternity—forever stretching out beyond. They both boggle your mind. You can’t understand “forever” in the past and in the future. Genesis starts with the Tree of Life in the midst of Paradise. Revelation ends with the Tree of Life and God building His family. We find the twelve sons of Jacob have now become twelve tribes designated by twelve gates. All mankind ultimately becomes the spiritual seed of Abraham. Jacob had twelve sons because God had an organizational structure that is ultimately going to relate to all those twelve tribes. Everyone who comes in has to go through one of those twelve tribes.

The Bible: things written over a period of a millennium and a half—one thousand five hundred years. Yet there is logic. There are seven divisions in the Bible: three in the Old Testament and four in the New Testament. This Book that God gave to mankind starts at the beginning and ends on the brink of eternity.

Next Bible study we will focus in on different aspects of the Bible. Many aspects will be of value to us in coming to understand more deeply this Book—every word by which we are to live. That is what we are going to focus in on—this Book that is to be the basis of how we live our lives.

TRUE ORDER AND DIVISIONS OF THE BIBLE



Bible Study # 6
October 27, 1987
Mr. John Ogwyn

Introductory Material to the Survey Approach of Studying the Bible

We have been going through a series of the proof of the Bible. Where did we get the Bible? How did it come to be? Where did it derive its authority? The canonization of the Bible, how it came to be set apart?

Tonight we **are going to begin another series.** Have you ever wished that you could take part in an Ambassador College Bible class? Some of you have had that privilege. The approach we are going to take in the months immediately ahead is that we are going to go through the entire Bible in several different series: a Historical Survey of the Old Testament, a series on the Gospels, Acts, the Major Prophets, the Minor Prophets, the Writings (the poetic books), the General Epistles, the Epistles of Paul and Revelation. We will go through the Bible in a set of different ways.

There are different ways to study the Bible. One way is to study the Bible in terms of subject matter. Many of our booklets and the Bible Study Course utilize that. It takes all the scriptures that pertain to a subject and is presented that way. We are going to take another approach in this series. We are going to take it from a standpoint of surveying the book and the subjects that book covers. We **are going to take a survey approach.**

I am going to go through some material this evening that is introductory. We are going to start with the Books of the Law, then Joshua, Judges, then a harmony of the events contained in Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, ending with the material covered in Ezra and Nehemiah. Then we will cover the transition period and then the Gospels. Later we will come back with material such as the Major Prophets, etc.

Every Bible study you will be told what we are going to cover. You will have two weeks to study these chapters. You will have a standing assignment, and you can read that material. I will hand out questions, and I will go through the answers with you with each of those. You will have questions that will take you through every single book of the Bible. You will have two weeks to cover the material and get the answers. You may come up with questions yourself.

The material of this section of the Bible—the first five books of the Old Testament—are called “the Law” or “the Torah.” “Torah” is a Hebrew

word that means “Law.” They are sometimes called “the Books of Moses” or “the Law of Moses.” The Law didn’t originate with Moses, but he was the one God used to deliver the Law. God used Noah as the physical instrument to build the ark, and God used Moses as the physical instrument to deliver the Law—the first authoritative revelation set apart. Just prior to Moses’ death, he delivered the authoritative copy of the Law to the Levites.

Deuteronomy 31:24-26, “So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying: ‘Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there as a witness against you.’”

That comprised the very first canonization of Scripture. It also served as a basis for the rest of the Bible because everything else goes back to and derives from those first five books. That is God’s most basic revelation. You can’t understand anything that comes after unless you first understand the beginning.

The other two divisions of the Old Testament, the Prophets and the Writings, are simply expansions of and commentary on the Law. The Prophets tell you what happens when you obey the Law and when you don’t obey—an amplification of the blessings and the curses. Hosea, Joel and other prophets are simply an expansion of the curses in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 and the blessings that God’s people are ultimately going to have. Why are those good things going to happen? Why is the whole world going to enjoy a Feast of fat things (Isaiah 25:6)? —Because the whole world will be obeying the law. The Prophets tell you the effect; the Law tells you the cause. The Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings) show the extent to which the nation obeyed the Law. The Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel) projected it on out into the future. Then we have the poetic amplification of the Law—the Psalms or Writings.

Christ came to fulfill the Law—to fill it to the full.

Matthew 5:17, “Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.” He amplified and expanded the Law in the spiritual. The Gospels, the Acts and the Epistles continue to build upon the Law.

Moses wrote the first five books—the Pentateuch.

Exodus 17:14, “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua....’”

Exodus 24:4, “And Moses wrote all the Words of the Lord....” Moses wrote these things because God told him to.

Numbers 33:1-2, “These are the journeys of the children of Israel, who went out of the land of Egypt by their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron. Now Moses wrote down the starting points of their journeys at the command of the Lord....” Again, we are told that Moses wrote this account and by God’s instruction.

Deuteronomy 31:9, “So Moses wrote this Law and delivered it unto the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel.”

The books of the Law themselves testify to Moses’ writings. Other Old Testament writers claim that Moses wrote it. Joshua testifies that Moses wrote it.

Joshua 1:7, “Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law, which Moses My servant commanded you....”

The testimony of later writings: King David testifies that Moses wrote it.

I Kings 2:3, “‘And keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses....’”

In the latter part of Kings, it testifies that Moses wrote it.

II Kings 21:8, “‘and I will not make the feet of Israel wander anymore from the land which I gave their fathers—only if they are careful to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that My servant Moses commanded them.’”

Malachi 4:4, “‘Remember the law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.’” In the Old Testament, all testify to Moses. The Pentateuch, or Torah, testifies that Moses wrote it and so do other Old Testament writings.

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ Himself claimed that Moses wrote of Him.

Matthew 19:8, “And He said to them, ‘Moses because of the hardness of your hearts permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.’” He is quoting from Deuteronomy 24:1.

John 5:45-46, “‘Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you—Moses, in whom you trust. For if you

believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote of Me.’” Jesus said that if you didn’t believe what Moses wrote, then they were not going to believe Him either because what Moses wrote was the basis of the background that led to Him.

John 7:19, “‘Did Moses not give you the law, and yet none of you keep the law?’”

Luke 16:29, “‘Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’”

Verse 31, “‘But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets [referring to the Old Testament Scriptures], neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’”

Luke 24:44, “Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which are written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’” Jesus testified of the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms (or Writings).

There is also the external evidence of the books themselves. Some of the very things that the critics used (back in the early part of this century), trying to prove that Moses couldn’t have written the Law, trying to prove that someone wrote it centuries later, has served to enforce that Moses wrote the book of the Law. It has turned out that the more archaeology has uncovered, the more it has shown certain things that were customs and things that were practiced at an earlier time and since forgotten about. Things serve to authenticate the books of the Law and serve to show they were written at the time—not someone writing centuries later. There are details that were not uncovered until recent years about cities that have ceased to exist. No one who wrote later than Moses could have known because they would not have existed. There are details of migrations—details that could not have been invented by an imposter. These things have served to enforce that Moses is the one that wrote the book of the Law.

The book of Genesis is the book of beginnings. It gives the origin of the human family. It gives the origin of the family with whom God made His Covenant and with whom He chose to work.

Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” God introduces Himself. He did not start the Bible with the Ten Commandments. He started the Bible in the only logical place—in the beginning. He first introduces Himself. What right does He have to tell us what is right and wrong? He is the One who made everything. The God we read of is the Creator. He is the One who brought those things

into existence. He created the universe, this planet and human life on this planet. And He created that human life in His own image—setting apart that human life from animal life. Biologically, chemically and physically there is not that much difference between human life and animal life. He made human beings after His likeness. It gives the origin of the different nationalities that comprise the human race and then focuses in on one human family (Abraham) with whom He made a special agreement—a Covenant. Then, He brings his descendants all the way into the land of Egypt. Genesis is the introduction to the whole Bible.

The laws of God were known and understood. We are introduced to the Sabbath right in the beginning.

Genesis 2:2-3, “And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”

Joseph knew that it was wrong to commit adultery.

Genesis 39:9, “...‘How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?’”

Romans 4:15, “...for where there is no Law, there is no transgression.”

It was a sin for Cain to murder Abel.

Genesis 4:7, “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door....” You go on through and see that, time after time, the Laws of God were known and understood.

Then we follow with the book of Exodus. It begins with Israel, as the Covenant people, having entered Egypt with great prominence because of Joseph, but moved from this position of prominence to being slaves. Then we have God’s intervention in calling them out of Egypt, giving to them the first codification of God’s Law and establishing His Church—the Congregation of Israel. We have the story of God intervening to bring the people out of the enslavement of this world’s system. That journey was made possible through God’s intervention. God’s Law—the Law—is codified in the book of Exodus (Exodus 20).

Leviticus has as its emphasis to be holy. It was written to the priesthood. They were to teach the people the difference between the holy and the unholy. We are to become perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect. We are told to become holy, as our God is holy. If we are to become like God,

we must be characterized as being holy. God will not dwell in uncleanness. God entered into a covenant relationship with Abraham and then with Israel; they must be a holy people because God is a holy God. The emphasis in the book of Leviticus is to be holy in order that God’s presence might remain among them and that they might remain holy. We will see, as we go through the book of Leviticus, that there are basically seven sections on what it means to be holy.

The ceremonial things were lessons—a schoolmaster—to educate us about Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:24) and to recognize that, in order to come into the presence of God, they had to have sin paid for. Our sins must be paid for in order for us to come into the presence of God. The sacrificial offerings were a type. It showed their need for a Savior, their need for One whose life could pay the penalty. There are many principles in Leviticus all dealing with how to be holy. God will not dwell in the midst of uncleanness. If God would not dwell in the midst of physical uncleanness, how much less would He dwell in spiritual uncleanness? We cannot conduct our lives in such a manner and expect that God would dwell in us and be our God.

Numbers is the account of the wanderings in the wilderness. Let’s notice what the Apostle Paul said.

I Corinthians 10:1-2, “Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud [under water; water vapors], all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” They came through the water. In other words, they were surrounded by water. They had it all around them, both sides and on top. They were, in a figurative sense, baptized. They were immersed in water.

Verses 6-7, “Now these things were our examples to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.’”

Verses 10-12, “Nor murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all things happened to them as examples, and they are written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages are come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” These things happened to them for examples. These things are primarily contained in the book of Numbers.

We are right now, in our position of coming out of Egypt, going into the Promised Land. We are going through, figuratively, our forty years in the wilderness. We are the heirs of the world to come. This is not our age, our world. We are in a transition period. Living in this world, we are coming through a wilderness. We have turned our back on Egypt and are going toward the Promised Land. We are not there yet.

Numbers is a very important book. It tells us the things that entangled and trapped the people to whom He had made great promises. Seeing these things, we are able to bypass these pitfalls.

Hebrews 3:7-12, “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, “they always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.” So I swore in My wrath, “they shall not enter My rest.”’ Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.”

Verses 17-19, “Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” We see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. The book of Numbers is the story of that.

To the extent that we can learn the lesson, these lessons set down for our benefit, we don’t have to repeat the same mistakes. The book of Numbers is a very profitable book that enables us to be a holy people unto our God and enables us to become like Him. It shows the pitfalls that we encounter along the way.

“Deuteronomy”—the name means “the second law.” It lays great emphasis on the responsibility of the individual to follow through with His covenant obligation. It serves as a completion of the Law by showing us the ultimate results of obedience and disobedience. Deuteronomy 27 and 28 are an outline of blessings and curses.

Deuteronomy 28:6, “Blessed shall you be when you come in and blessed shall you be when you go out.”

Verses 8-13, “The Lord will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you. The Lord will establish you as a holy people

to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways. Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of you. And the Lord will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give you. The Lord will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow, and the Lord will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them.”

‘You shall be the head and not the tail. You will set the example, and others will come to you to learn.’

Verses 14-15, “So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them. But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you.”

Verses 21-22, “The Lord will make the plague cling to you until He has consumed you from the land which you are going to possess. The Lord will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning fever, with the sword, with scorching, and with mildew; they shall pursue you until you perish.” —All kinds of diseases.

Verse 37, “And you shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations where the Lord will drive you.”

Verse 41, “You shall beget sons and daughters. But they shall not be yours; for they shall go into captivity.”

Verse 43, “The aliens among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower.” Israel would suffer curses and come to a point that, in the midst of their inheritance, they would be at the bottom and others at the top.

Verse 47, “Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things.”

We have the basis for all of prophecy in the conclusion of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy

serves as a re-statement, a reminder, as it serves to put the Law into perspective. It is a book of reminders, just prior to inheritance, by stating that things are a matter of cause and effect.

We have, throughout these first five books, a tremendous amount of material. These things are examples. They serve to introduce to us the true God, to understand God's law, to have it codified for us, to have principles and to have a special relationship with God. They warn of the pitfalls that we are encountering in the Christian life and the basic things we need to understand as we prepare to enter in.

There is so much contained in these first five books. It sets the stage for everything else that comes after—especially Genesis, which is the book of origins. You can't understand science unless you understand the book of Genesis. It is the foundation for knowledge. You can't understand history.

God made of one blood all the nations on the face of the earth (Acts 17:26). All are simply a branch of the human family from one man and his wife; all human beings are derived from that. We are one family. God was ultimately looking forward to a Family that He was going to put together for all eternity.

God is a God of organization and harmony. God's Family, on out into eternity, is not going to be a mass of people getting into each other's way. God's Family will have a work to accomplish, expanding God's government and family on out into the universe. But it has to be done in a systematic way. That is why God programmed diversity into the family. Any organization has departments responsible for different aspects.

We are given the basic material of origins. The Bible is a foundation of knowledge. It contains a foundation on which all knowledge is to be built. Man has the ability to search out and discover, but if we do that apart from God's revelation, then we get off the track. God reveals the basic information.

We are going to spend a little more time in the book of Genesis. God summarizes such vast information in Genesis—one thousand six hundred fifty-six years of human history in simply a matter of a few chapters. The first five or six chapters tell you one thousand six hundred fifty-six years of human history. Then, in some places, God paints in with a broader brush.

For the next Bible study, I want you to read and study the first three chapters of Genesis. I will hand out questions, and I will go through the answers with you on our study of Genesis 1—3.

If you will utilize it, it will be something that will help you deepen your own knowledge of the Word of God and have some deeper insight into this Book by which we are to live as the people of God.

Bible Study # 7
November 10, 1987
Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—Genesis 1—3

We are going to be getting into our study on the book of Genesis, **getting, specifically, into the first three chapters of Genesis.** We will go through some of the material in the first three chapters. We will also **go over and review the Bible study questions** that we passed out for this evening, and then I have more to pass out that will be for the next Bible study. One of the things that sometimes comes out is: where did Moses get all the information that is in the book of Genesis? Ever wonder about that? Where did Moses come up with all the information? How did he know some of these things? Did God just supernaturally tell him every word of it or did he get some of it from some other source?

The reality is that there are at least eleven documents, or books, that are included in the book of Genesis that had been preserved from different periods of time. There is at least one that traces all the way back to Adam, himself. It was compiled during his lifetime and was, evidently, preserved on board the ark. Then it came down through the family of Shem and Abraham—right down to being preserved by the family in Egypt. It was a book that Moses would have had access to. We might notice, as we go through, references to that.

To begin with, you might notice in Genesis 5:1, “This is the book of the genealogy of Adam...” Now this is, actually, a document that is referred to—“This is the book...”—and it goes through and gives a detailed account.

You might notice back here in Genesis 2.

Genesis 2:4, “These are the history [Lit. “generations”] of the heavens and the earth when they were created in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.” A little later we come to the book of the generations of Noah (Genesis 6:9). We find references in Genesis 10. Genesis 10:1, “Now this is the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham and Japheth...” It goes through and is a document that preserves names and genealogies.

In Genesis 11:27, “This is the genealogy of Terah...” Terah was the ancestor of Abraham. If we were to go through the book of Genesis, we would find, at a later stage, the genealogy of Ishmael in Genesis 25:12. We would find the genealogy of Isaac in Genesis 25:19. Also, in

Genesis 11:10, Genesis 25:19, Genesis 36:1 and Genesis 37:2, we find various genealogies.

What it amounts to is that Moses would have had access to a number of records, or books, that in some cases, were simply family genealogical records where certain things were compiled, preserved and maintained in the family that came down. Moses would have had access to it, and it served as a basis for his compilation of much of the early material in the book of Genesis. There were a number of written accounts.

We are not going to get into it this time, but next Bible study we will go into some things about the very origin of writing. You might be surprised to note the man who invented writing. He invented writing with a stylus, a pen, and his name is mentioned in the Bible. We can basically pinpoint approximately the time that the human family began to use writing, and it was, certainly, within the lifetime of Adam. You might be surprised that man is mentioned. I won't tell you where his name is mentioned or who he is, but we will go into that next Bible study. If you're curious, then you might want to be here.

There were a number of written documents—a number of things that were preserved.

We note in Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The word for “heaven” is plural. “In the beginning”—there is a lot involved here that is sometimes overlooked and not understood.

Verses 1-3. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” This is the way that it reads in the New King James Bible. This period, “In the beginning God”—this beginning that you read of in Genesis 1:1—involves the origin of the very universe, the bringing into existence of physical matter. There was a time when only God existed—the One that we know as God the Father and as Jesus Christ. There was a time when only God existed and God formulated a certain plan. God brought into existence the angelic order (that we read of) prior to the beginning of the physical universe.

Isaiah 57:15, we are told, “...God who inhabits eternity...” That is a dimension that you and I cannot really comprehend because we inhabit time. We have a finite universe that is bounded by distance and time.

Do you realize that prior to the beginning of the physical creation, there was no such thing as time? Time did not exist prior to the bringing

into existence the universe. That is kind of a mind-boggling concept, but what is time? Time is measured by the relationship of the heavenly bodies toward one another. Time is defined by the length of time it takes the earth to rotate on its axis. That's a day; twenty-four hours. A year is defined by the length of time it takes the earth to revolve around the sun. Time is based upon the relationship of the physical objects of the universe. When there was no physical universe, there was no time. There was no physical relationship there to define time. There was no such thing as time. After all, God does not inhabit time; God inhabits eternity. Time didn't exist until God brought the physical universe into being. When God brought the physical into being, time began.

God had existed prior to that, and there was a spiritual creation—the angelic order. We know that the angels existed prior to this because we are told in Job 38:7 that when God brought the physical universe into being, the angels sang for joy. The angels couldn't sing for joy unless they were already there; they already existed. There was a creation on that level.

God inhabits eternity, and time had no existence or meaning until God brought forth the physical universe. God took the Spirit essence that flows out from Him—the Spirit that emanates out from God and from God's mind—and brought matter into existence. God is spirit, and His Spirit emanates out from Him. The purest form of energy that originates with God emanates out from the very mind of God.

God performed a miracle. God changed, or transformed, pure spirit energy into matter. God brought matter into existence. We are told, in Hebrew 11:3, that He made the things that we see of things that do not appear—things that are invisible. He made it of His spirit. That is the basic building block.

Man keeps breaking down the atom and keeps trying to divide and sub-divide. What is matter composed of? It is composed of atoms. Then we divide down, and what is the atom composed of? We look at electrons and neutrons and protons. We keep dividing and sub-dividing and see certain things, and they divide things down a little further. If you have ever read some of these things, it's very intriguing things, and they keep dividing it down. Well, what is smaller than that? What comes beyond that? What is the fundamental building block? They will never get to the bottom of it because the bottom of it is spirit.

God transformed pure spirit energy into matter. Which came first, matter or energy? Energy did. It originated from God. Pure spirit energy transformed into matter; the physical universe was brought into being.

Scientists speculate on the idea (and there are various reasons to speculate on that) that it was a period of time, approximately five billion years ago—give or take a billion—that the physical universe was brought into being. They throw around billions as though it was the U.S. government spending dollar or something. Time, when you are talking in terms of billions of years, hasn't any relevance to human beings or human life. It's not a conception of time that human beings can comprehend. That is time only angels can comprehend. God brought into being the physical universe, and it talks about the angels singing for joy. Prior to that, it is pointless to speculate as to how long prior because prior to the beginning of the universe, there was no time. There was no basis of measuring time. Time did not exist because God inhabits eternity. He inhabits a dimension where time didn't exist.

Some of these concepts are a little bit mind-boggling, and we have trouble grasping. We understand things based on what we know and see. Can you imagine trying to explain a television to somebody who had never seen or heard of such a thing? Maybe your father or great-grandfather died prior to the turn of the century or what if someone who died two hundred years ago was suddenly resurrected. How would you explain the television? Would it make any sense to them at all? Is there any way you could explain it, that they could really comprehend the idea, that you have this box; you turn it on and see what's happening on the other side of the world. They're not really people in there, but you're actually seeing this great big ceremony that's going on over in China (which is halfway around the world), and you're seeing it while it's happening. You see all these things, and you see it close up. You see the groups or scenes. You can switch to another channel, and all of a sudden, you're watching somebody in London or someone commenting on what is going on in China while you're sitting there in your living room. That's kind of mind-boggling. We take it for granted because we are familiar with it.

I remember something that very deeply impressed me. I remember exactly where I was at the time—the time when the first men walked on the moon. One of the things that I specifically remember about that evening as a group of us

were watching the moon landing on television, we saw the lunar module set down and Neil Armstrong step out and take the step. As we were watching these events live coverage, I stepped outside on the balcony. I looked up and could see the moon. It was a beautiful full moon. Standing there on the balcony of the men's dorm in Pasadena, California, I could look up in the sky and look at the moon suspended, hanging up there. I could look in through the doors, and on the television set, I could see a close-up of men walking around on the moon. That's kind of mind-boggling—looking up there and then looking across the room and seeing a close-up picture of what's actually happening right there. Realize—it's very difficult for us to conceive certain things because they are outside of our realm of experience, in terms of understanding what it means to inhabit eternity. We will understand it when we inhabit eternity because at the resurrection, we will put on immortality. We will step out of this dimension that is bound by time—that dimension of time—and we will step out into eternity. We will put on immortality, and then we will grasp what it means to inhabit eternity in a way that we simply cannot fully fathom right now.

God has created the spirit realm. He has created the angelic beings. There had been training of these angelic beings—instruction, plans—things that were thought out when God brought the physical universe into existence. All of the physical laws that regulate the universe had to be conceived, planned out and defined. The relationship of matter, energy and all of these things had to be thought out and defined, and it was brought into existence.

God took Lucifer and the angels and placed them on this planet earth. God introduced on this planet certain life forms. Instructions were given to Lucifer and the angels under him, in terms of the implementation of God's government. It was an opportunity for them to learn and to practice the exercise of God's government and to bring this earth to a state of preparation for the next phase in God's plan. It was apparent, early-on, that Lucifer began to diverge from God's intent—from the proper exercise of God's government.

We are told in Acts 3:19 (referring to the time after Christ's return), "...so that times of refreshing [KJV, "restitution"] may come from the presence of the Lord." —A time of restoring. What is it going to be like during the reign of the Messiah?

We are told in Isaiah 11:9, "'They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain...'" This is characteristic of the World Tomorrow. It is characteristic of the way the earth will be administered through the government of God when Jesus Christ is directly administering it.

It is apparent from the geologic record that is not the way Lucifer administered the earth because there is the geologic evidences that very clearly show, at that time, there was violence. You look at certain creatures, and there are the literal remains of violence that they did to one another.

John 8:44, Jesus refers to Satan the devil and he told the Pharisees, "'You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.'"

He was a liar, and he abode not in the truth—two aspects. He didn't say he was an adulterer from the beginning or that he was a thief from the beginning. It says he was a murderer from the beginning—the spirit of violence. Evidently, from a very early point, Lucifer decided that the way to excellence lay through competition, strife and the "survival-of-the-fittest approach." It was the way of competition, the way of strife, the way that only the survivors would remain. He was convinced that competition was the way to excellence—not cooperation.

God, over a period of time, had the universe come into being—that probably was in the nature of perhaps billions of years. There is nothing in the Bible to at all contradict that. If science wants to say, based on the evidence that can be discerned, that the physical universe came into existence four or five billion years ago, there is nothing in Scripture to contradict that. There is no reason for saying that was not the case. But there was a point when God introduced certain life forms.

Lucifer was given responsibility and he approached his responsibility from his own way. God allowed things to progress to certain points. There were certain points at which God simply eliminated certain forms of life and introduced, suddenly, different forms of life—more complex and more sophisticated forms of life—forms of life that were capable of more things. It was an opportunity for Lucifer and his angels to gain experience—practical experience in government. It was an opportunity for God to see what they would do. God worked with them over a period of time—that probably was in the nature of

perhaps billions of years—to instruct them in His ways. God saw that it was not the way that was going to lead to where He wanted to go. Things proceeded to a certain point and God simply stopped the experiment. He eliminated certain forms of life.

Science looks at the geologic record, and they can't understand why certain forms of life, such as the dinosaurs, simply ceased. There was just a point where they ceased. They didn't turn into something else. They didn't evolve into some other form; they simply ceased. And, all of a sudden, there are other forms of life that are extant.

Things proceeded on for a period of time, and during this time, Lucifer became ever increasingly embittered. He began to nurture a spirit of bitterness—a root of bitterness—because God didn't see things his way. He proceeded from a spirit of murder to a spirit of lying and began to lie and slander to the angels under him.

From the state of things, from what was happening and from the forms of life that God had placed on the earth, it became apparent to God that the very next step would be the introduction of creatures made in the very image of God that would be capable of being transformed from matter into spirit as a part of the very Family of God to rule over him. The thought of something such as that was beyond Lucifer. It became apparent to Lucifer that God was not going to allow him to continue doing the things he was doing. And there came a point where Lucifer simply rebelled. You read of it in Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14.

In Isaiah 14:13, he said, "...“I will exalt my throne above the stars of God [above the angels]...””

Verse 14, ““I will ascend above the heights of the clouds [this shows that he was below the heights of the clouds]; I will be like the Most High.”” He was thrust back down to this earth (Revelation 12:9).

The result when that occurred, we read of in Genesis 1:2, when it says, “The earth was without form and void...”

The word “was” here in Genesis 1:2 is exactly the same word “became” that is used in Genesis 19:26, where we read of Lot and his wife leaving Sodom and Gomorrah. His wife looked back and she became a pillar of salt. Was Lot's wife always a pillar of salt? No, she became a pillar of salt. The word that is translated “became” is exactly the same word, in the Hebrew, that was

translated “was” in Genesis 1:2. “The earth was without form and void.”

The earth was not always without form. God did not create it without form. It became without form, just as Lot's wife became a pillar of salt. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth became without form and void.” It became void, which means “empty.” The Hebrew words that are translated “without form” and “void” are “*tahu*” and “*bohu*.” The earth became “*tohu*” and “*bohu*.” It became without form. It became chaotic, empty and desolate. ‘It became chaotic and desolate’ is another way it can be translated. God did not create the earth in a chaotic, desolate state.

That is made plain in Isaiah 45.

Isaiah 45:18, “For thus says the Lord who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited...”

The word translated “in vain” in Isaiah 45:1 is the Hebrew word “*tobu*.” It says here God Himself formed the earth. He made and established it. He did not create it “*tohu*.” Yet when you read in Genesis 1:2, we find that the earth had become “*tobu*.” But Isaiah 45:18 says God did not create it “*tohu*”; so, what are we told? ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth but the earth became chaotic.’ God did not create it chaotic. It became “*tohu*”; God did not create it “*tohu*.”

I Corinthians 14:33, “For God is not the author of confusion...” He did not create the earth chaotic and desolate. The earth became chaotic and desolate as a result of Satan's rebellion.

The stage was being set, over a period of time, which is simply incomprehensible to us as human beings. It was a period through which God worked with Lucifer and the angels under him and allowed certain things to transpire. God allowed certain influences to be exerted as Lucifer was adamant that his way of competition and survival-of-the-fittest approach was the way to excellence. He was convinced that it was the way that would produce something that would have good results. God allowed certain things to take place to demonstrate that this kind of survival-of-the-fittest mentality did not lead to excellence in the true sense. It led to strife. It led to a planet being filled with violence.

When you hear the term “survival of the fittest” used in an evolutionary context, realize that the survival of the fittest does not, at all, explain the arrival of the fittest. The fittest may have survived, but from whence did they arrive?

Where did they come from? The fact that they survived is irrelevant. The point is: where did they come from? Where did they originate? Their survival does not explain their origin. Certainly, the most fit survived, but that doesn't tell you where they came from in the beginning. God created the heavens and the earth, but the earth became without form. It became void, chaotic and desolate and it became dark.

Notice the description in v. 2, "...darkness was on the face of the deep..." What was the result of Satan's rebellion? —Absolute pitch-black darkness. There was chaos, desolation, destruction, darkness and there was death. Those were the results of Satan's way.

In the aftermath of Satan's rebellion (his being thrown back down to the earth and the destruction that took place), light, as we know it, simply ceased on the planet. Everything was flooded and overwhelmed with water. There was absolute pitch-black darkness. Undoubtedly, there would have been gigantic volcanic eruptions and all kinds of debris, poisoned gasses, fumes that spewed into the atmosphere, and there was a thick poisonous pall that hung over the planet. Everything was flooded and covered with water. Instead of an atmosphere, there was nothing but pitch-black darkness. If you were standing on the face of the earth, you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. There was a thick black pall, noxious, poisonous gasses and debris that had been thrown into the atmosphere until all light had been blocked out.

When God stepped in, God, through the power of His Spirit, began a process of refashioning and molding the face of the earth through the period of one week. The **first day** was the starting point.

Verse 3, "Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light." —The first thing that has to occur. There are spiritual lessons we learn. There is a reason why God progressed in the way that He did.

Realize! That's where Satan's way always led. It's where it led physically. It led to destruction, it led to darkness. Satan's way is characterized by darkness. Even from a physical and human realm, there are things that people like to do under cover of darkness that they would simply not think of doing in the bright light of day. It's not an accident that certain places are not noted for being well lit. You don't expect to go into a bar and expect to have the bright light of day or a bright, shining atmosphere.

John 3:19, "...men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." They like

the lights turned down really dim and low because they may be up to something that they wouldn't be doing out in the middle of the noonday sun—trying to pull some of those "shenanigans." It would be a little uncomfortable to be out—standing on the street corner in the bright light of noonday sun—trying to pull some of the shenanigans that they would try to get by with under cover of darkness in some very dim, secluded spot. Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

God started with, "let there be light." The very first thing that occurred was some of the debris and things that were extant in the atmosphere were cleared out to where light could penetrate to the surface. It was still as though it was a heavy overcast, cloudy day, or a foggy day would be a better comparison. It would have been as though it were a very foggy day. The poison and the debris were cleared out of the atmosphere, and it was simply a thick water vapor—thick fog—that remained.

You can travel on a foggy day (sometimes you cross the Atchafalaya, the swamp, between Lafayette and Baton Rouge), and the fog can be so thick, but you can tell whether it is daylight or dark because light penetrates. You can tell that it is daytime, but that's about all that you can say about it. You can be in a fog so thick that you can just barely see past the end of your car.

God said, "Let there be light" That was the first thing. God made that distinction. He cleared the atmosphere to where light was apparent and it now made possible the distinction between day and night. If it is dark all the time, you can't tell when the day starts and the night stops or vice versa. This was the first day.

The **second day** God said, v. 6: "...Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters..." "Firmament" is an old English word that we don't commonly use; it simply means "an expanse." It could be used to refer to anything. You can beat metal and make an expanse of metal, or you could stretch a tent and make an expanse of canvas. "Firmament" simply means "a big something that is spread out," and in this context—the sky. If you look it up in a dictionary (even a Webster's plain unabridged dictionary) the word "firmament" is simply an old English word that refers to the sky—the area of the earth's atmosphere. The Hebrew word that is translated firmament is simply a word that means "expanse." It means "something spread out." God made an expanse in the midst of the waters, and He divided waters from the waters (v. 6). In other words, the thick fog was lifted.

Now there was a thick fog cover and water, but there was an expanse in-between. There was atmosphere now—an expanse in-between. It was not just a continuous pea-soup fog that existed. God cleared that out of the way and made an expanse in between.

Then on the **third day**, God brought forth dry land. God brought forth the continents. When He brought forth the continents, it caused the waters to recede from the continents (vv. 8-9).

Verse 11, “Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind.’” Notice that when life was introduced, it was to reproduce after its own kind. It didn’t evolve from one thing into something else. It reproduced after its kind. Now, obviously, there is variety within a kind. We look around in this room, and we look at human beings. We are all human beings and ultimately the same family.

Acts 17:26, “...‘made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on the face of the earth...’” But, look around at all the different sizes, colors and shapes—all the variety. Yet we are all human beings. Eve’s very name means “living” because she was the mother of all living. All human beings come from Adam and Eve, but God built in to where there could be variety.

Look at various plants. Some of you have been involved in agriculture and realize there are different breeds, maybe different breeds of cattle. Strains maybe developed of certain plants, but it’s still what it was. You can have a wide variety of dogs, but they are still dogs. They don’t turn into cats or something else; they stay dogs. You can even breed a wide variety of cattle. You can have shorthorns, longhorns and polled varieties. You can have a wide variety, but they are still cows. None of them turn into horses, camels, zebras or something else.

Life reproduces after its own kind. There’s room for variety, and there can be specialization, whether you are talking about roses or different varieties of sugarcane. There is room for variety, but it still reproduces after its kind. There are bounds beyond which it simply doesn’t go. It doesn’t change from one kind into another. You simply cannot believe the Genesis record and believe in evolution because evolution implies that you have a progression of life with one kind developing from another kind. It says here that it brings forth after his kind. God brought forth the dry land and plant life into existence on the third day.

Then on the **fourth day**, Genesis 1:14-16, “Then God said, ‘Let there be lights in the firmament of

the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth’; and it was so. Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also.”

The word that is translated “made” in Genesis 1:16 is a totally different word than is used in Genesis 1:1 when it says God “created.” The term that is used here that is translated “made” simply means “God set two great lights.” He appointed two great lights. This is not an account of the creation of the sun and the moon. God created the sun and the moon when He created the heavens and the earth. That’s a part of the heavens. If God was just making the sun, the moon and the stars—well, what were the heavens that He created way back in the beginning?

We started off with total darkness and all kinds of debris and noxious, poisonous gasses that just absolutely covered everything. It was thick pea soup that contained so many contaminants and foreign particles that there was simply no light that could penetrate the surface of the earth. The first thing God did was remove the debris, and then it was just like you were in a thick fog. The next thing He did was to remove the fog; now you had a thick cloud cover and water, but you had an expanse of open air in-between. Then He brought forth the continents. He caused the water to recede to where the continents appeared and plant life appeared on the land. Then the next thing He did was to clear away this thick cloud cover to where, now, not only was light visible from the surface of the earth, but you could clearly distinguish the sun and the moon and stars. Also, evidently, at this time there was something else that occurred.

What is it that gives us the seasons? What are the seasonal variations? That is based on the earth’s revolution around the sun. If you look at a globe you will find that globes, set on a stand, are always set at a tilt. It is always set at exactly the same tilt. That is known as the earth’s axis, which just simply means an imaginary line. If you somehow could step out into space, you would find that the earth is aligned and hangs out there in a particular way. The tilting of the earth gives us seasons. God had in mind a certain seasonal configuration that was to take place involving the southern and northern hemisphere.

He had in mind a plan from the very beginning. God's Holy Days outline God's plan. God had His plan involved before He ever brought this into being. He didn't sanctify the seventh day because He worked really hard, and it took Him six days to finish, and it just so happened that the seventh day He rested. If it had taken Him a little longer, He would have rested on the eight or ninth day. If He had been a little faster, maybe He could have gotten things done earlier and rested on the fifth day. It's not just an accident. It didn't just happen that He rested on the seventh day because it just kind of came up that way.

God ordered what He did during creation week. He built to a climax on the sixth day so that He would rest on the seventh because He had in mind a seven-thousand year plan and illustrated it here with the seven-day week. He inaugurated a seven-day week to give to man the outline of His plan. Before He ever started, He had in mind a plan that we find outlined in the Holy Days.

In Revelation 13:8, for instance, it talks about Christ, "...the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world." What does that mean? It means that in God's plan there was a Passover. God had a plan outlined. He knew what was going to happen. It was important that seasons be as they are.

One of the things that science can demonstrate is that the earth's axis has not always been as it is now. They know it has been different because the areas where the earth's axis penetrates—the areas that are the Polar Regions today—are frigid. There is no way those regions can be anything but frigid because those are the areas with the least amount of direct sunlight. It's just a matter of the way the planet is tilted. But it's apparent from things that have been discovered in Antarctica and other places, the earth's axis has not always been the way it is. There are areas in the Polar Region that at one time were fairly tropical that are now frozen wastes.

God had in mind a plan. He knew where His plan was going to center, in terms of geography—the Middle East in the northern hemisphere. All of these things were thought out. God already knew where the tribes of Israel were going to be. Do you think God was surprised to find out that all the oil wound up over in the Middle East? You think that was an accident? God designed that would be the Middle East. That's where He wanted attention directed at the end time. God had it all thought through. He knew where He was going to end up before He ever started.

In Isaiah 46:9-10, God declared the end from the beginning.

Some of you have been in construction. If you set out to build a very involved building, you wouldn't have somebody just dump some lumber and blocks. You get out there and somebody says, 'What are you going to build?' And you say, 'Well, I don't know. I will just kind of start hammering some things together and see what evolves.' I'd hate to see the building that would develop. You don't just kind of dump all the materials out and randomly start hammering things together and hope that something kind of evolves. The more sophisticated and complex a building is, the more time it takes. In some cases, architects spend years designing all these things, making models, etc. The more elaborate and involved it is—before they do the first thing—the more it has to be designed and every detail figured out. How you are going to do this; what are you going to do there, and all the various things have to be designed and thought through. God knew where He was going to be in the end before He ever started in the beginning.

Here, in Genesis 1:14, it says, "...let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years.'" The earth's orbit was ordered to be exactly the way that it is. The tilt of the axis was changed. God wanted the northern hemisphere and the southern hemisphere to have their present configuration, with the Middle East having the configuration in terms of climate. God wanted a progression of seasons with the spring, summer, fall and winter that would illustrate His plan. There is a progression of the seasons. The northern hemisphere was to illustrate the plan and purpose God was going to work out because that was the area where He was working. It would be centered—starting originally with Israel—there in the Middle East, which is in the northern hemisphere.

You don't get the same picture in the southern hemisphere where they have the Feast of Tabernacles in the spring and Passover in the fall. Their seasons are reversed. You simply don't get, from nature around you, the same idea. Spring is a time of new growth, new beginnings. The first month of spring, "Abib" means "green ears" or "new growth." God has set and ordered this to where the proper seasonal variations were designed and set at this time. It was appointed and set at this time—not created.

There were modifications that were made in terms of the length of time for the rotation of the earth on its axis, a revolution of the earth around the sun, the orbit—any adjustment that needed to

be made because of things that had occurred during Satan's rebellion. The sun, stars and moon were all readily visible now from the face of the earth.

On the **fifth day**, God brought forth all of the sea life—the moving creatures that have life. Look at v. 20 (KJV), "...the moving creatures that have life...."

—The moving creatures. The word "creature" is "*nephesh*." The word "moving" is "*sherets*." In Hebrew it means "wiggling" or "moving"—the "*sherets nephesh*"—the wiggling souls. "*Nephesh*" is the Hebrew word for "soul." God breathed into Adam the breath of life, and Adam became a living soul (2:7). "Soul" is exactly the same word (*nephesh*) that is used in v. 20. If a soul (*nephesh*) is immortal, then fish have one, too. And not only fish, but all kinds of little wiggling creatures. God brought forth the sea life and the flying creatures (vv. 20-21). He blessed them and told them to reproduce to replenish the earth (v. 22).

Then on the **sixth day**, God began introducing all the land animals—all of the creatures on earth—and all of these were to bring forth after its kind (vv. 24-25). It is emphasized that life begat like life. They brought forth after their own kind.

Verse 26, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness....'" Not after the animal kind (the monkey or cow or cat or dog kind) or any other kind but after Our kind, after Our image, after Our likeness. Man was made in the outward shape and similitude of God, and man was made with the potential to have God's very nature and character. Man was given dominion (v. 26). He was given rulership. Man was given characteristics of God, and not only that, he was made to become God. He was given responsibility and rulership.

Verse 27, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female created He them." The term "man" here is the generic term. It means "mankind" or "human beings"—male and female.

Verse 28, "...God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over....'" They were to exercise responsibility.

Then instruction is given about diet, concerning the things that they were to eat (vv. 29-30). This concluded the sixth day.

Genesis 2:2, "And on the **seventh day** God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day...." He created the Sabbath on the seventh day.

Verse 3, "Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it...."

There is a progression through seven days. God worked six days and rested the seventh. He set it apart. He sanctified it. He blessed it. He hallowed it. He instructed man, 'You can work six days, but you rest on the seventh because that's Mine. That belongs to Me.' That was to typify God's whole plan of allowing mankind six, one-thousand year days, but reserving that seventh one-thousand year day for Himself.

We have a summary in chapter 1.

One thing I might mention.

We noted in v. 26, "Let Us make man...." The word for God in Genesis 1:1 is the Hebrew word "ELOHIM." The "IM" ending in Hebrew is a plural ending. Just as we use "s" in English, the "IM" ending is a plural ending. God (ELOHIM) consisted of more than one being.

John 1:1-3, "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."

Verse 14, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us...." —The Word, Jesus Christ. He was in the beginning with God the Father, and He also was God.

Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God [ELOHIM]...."

Verse 26, "Then God [ELOHIM] said, 'Let Us make man in Our image....'"

I will give you something interesting on that. You are familiar with the statement that Jesus made in Matthew 27 when He was hanging there being crucified. Remember what He said as He hung there? —Some of His very last words.

Matthew 27:46, "...Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani,' that is, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'" Remember that? It quotes it in the original Aramaic (the language that He spoke) and then gave the translation into Greek. We have it translated into English, but even in the New King James Bible, it preserves the exact quotation that He said in Aramaic. Aramaic is akin to Hebrew.

One of the things that is very interesting to note is that the term that is translated God—"My God, My God"—"Eli, Eli" is the singular form. Throughout the Old Testament you don't find the singular form used. It's always Elohim, the plural. When Jesus addressed the Father, He didn't say "Elohim, Elohim, lama sabachthani," because it wasn't plural. Since one of the two that comprised God was on earth speaking to the other who was in heaven, He used the singular,

“Eli.” It’s an interesting term and one of the things that can demonstrate that the plural form is used in Genesis 1. And that doesn’t have to be limited to two. We can compare it in the New Testament, when Christ addressed the Father. He never used the plural. He used the singular, which shows that there were only two. If you have plural and you take out one, that leaves you singular. Then, it’s one and one is two. That’s kind of simple to figure.

Genesis 2 is a detailed account of God’s creation of man.

Genesis 2:4 (a document), “This is the history [Lit. “generations”] of the heavens and the earth when they were created...” It gives a detailed account.

Verses 7-9, “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. The Lord God planted a Garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

There were two trees in the midst of this garden: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We read of the tree of life in other places such as Ezekiel and Revelation. At the end of the book of Revelation, you read of the tree of life that is going to be there.

Revelation 22:1-3, “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of the street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse...” Notice in Revelation 22, you have what answers to Genesis 2 and 3. We read of man being cut off from God in Genesis 3:23-24; in Revelation 22, we read of man completely reconciled to God. In Genesis 3:24, we read of man being denied access to the tree of life; in Revelation 22, we read of man being restored to access to the tree of life.

Revelation 22:14, “...that they may have the right to the tree of life...” God placed these literal trees to symbolize certain things.

Genesis 2:9, “...and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” The word “knowledge” carries with it the connotation of experience. When man partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, by the very act of reaching out and taking

what God told him not to take, he had experienced evil. He had experienced something that he wasn’t supposed to do or experience.

The word “knowledge” is kind of an interesting term. It’s the same word that is used when it says that Adam knew his wife and she conceived. It has to do with more than simply an academic thing. He didn’t look her up in the encyclopedia and say, ‘Yeah, that’s the woman alright.’ That’s not what that means. The connotation of the word in Hebrew has to do with experience. It goes beyond just simply an academic knowledge. Man experienced good and evil. He became involved with good and evil by partaking of this, by doing what God told him not to do.

God made the woman (Eve) and presented her to Adam.

Before we go too much further, I’d like to go back and comment on the questions. Some of them we have commented upon.

Questions

1. Give the Hebrew name for “God” in Genesis 1:1 and explain its significance.

The Hebrew name for God is Elohim, and the significance is that it shows that God consists of more than one individual because it is the plural form.

2. What would be a better translation in the first part of v. 2?

It is the fact that the earth became without form. It became void. It had not always been that way. God did not create it that way. It became that way.

3. Cite at least one other scripture elsewhere in the Bible that proves whether or not the earth was created formless and void.

Isaiah 45:18, “...God created the earth not in vain...” –Not “*tohu*.” You could quote I Corinthians 14:33 that, “God is not the author of confusion.”

4. What is the meaning of the term “firmament”? It literally means “an expanse.” The Hebrew word that is translated “firmament” means “an expanse.” Firmament refers basically to the sky—to an open area or an expanse.

5. Explain the meaning of Genesis 1:7.

God made the firmament and divided the waters. In other words, He separated the clouds (fog) from the waters that were covering the earth. The

pea-soup fog disappeared—it lifted—and now you had clouds and water and an expanse of sky in-between.

6. Does Genesis 1:14-19 mean that the sun and the moon were not created until the fourth day of creation week? Explain the significance of these verses.

Genesis 1:14-19 doesn't mean that the sun and moon were created the fourth day. That was created in the beginning, probably billions of years before. What you read in Genesis 1:14-19 is referring to (we went into detail)—it is plain—that they were appointed or set in their present orbits, and things were arranged to produce the seasonal variations in the way that we have them today, as well as the cloud (fog) cover being cleared to make the sun, moon and the stars very easily visible from the face of the earth.

7. What is the Hebrew word for “soul” and what is its significance?

The Hebrew word for “soul” is “*nephesh*,” and its significance is the fact that it does not have any connotation of immortality. The word “soul” in the Hebrew is “*nephesh*,” and “*nephesh*” does not refer to immortality. In Genesis 1:20, it's used to refer to fish. They have a soul, too? If Adam became a living soul, well God said, “Let the waters bring forth the *sheret nephesh* (the wiggling souls) that have life.” All these little wiggling souls came forth. Somebody might get all “buggy” if they go back to Ezekiel and read about all the fish being resurrected. Remember a couple of Sabbaths ago, we went through what's going to happen when the pure water goes out, and how all these fish are going to be resurrected. That doesn't mean they are going to have immortal souls and go to heaven when they die—when you eat them or something like that. “*Nephesh*” just refers to a creature.

8. What does the term “an help meet for him” mean?

God said in Genesis 2:18, “‘It is not good that man should be alone. I will make him a help meet for him.’” In other words, a “helper” that is exactly compatible to him. One rendering of the Hebrew is to surround him exactly—in other words, someone who is exactly compatible. ‘I am going to make him a helper that exactly fits.’ God did not make men and women to be exactly alike. He made them to fit together mentally, emotionally and physically. They mutually complement one another. That's the implication here.

Satan wants and desires people to be frustrated. He hates humanity. He wants people frustrated. One of the great lies that has permeated our western world is the fact that, ‘Women, you have to be just like a man. You have to get out and act like a man, dress and act like a man, walk and talk like a man, function as a man in a man's world, compete like a man.’ God didn't make men and women to be exactly alike. He made them to complement one another—to fit together. He made “a help” suitable for, and exactly compatible with, Adam. God made somebody that just exactly fit with Adam as a partner, as a helper. God didn't make somebody that was exactly *like* Adam; God made somebody that exactly *fit with* Adam—and there is a difference.

The only way that any of us are truly happy is when we are fulfilling the role for which God designed us. When we try to fulfill the role that Satan tries to hoist off on us as a substitute for what God designed, all we're going to have is frustration. That's one of the reasons the whole western world is so bogged down in frustration, tension and stress because male and female is at the basis of the family relationship. When you destroy a concept of male and female—in proper relationships of male and female—you destroy any basis of understanding of what a family is and how it ought to function. When you destroy the family and the basis by which it ought to function, you deprive man of that which is unique on the human level and a picture of what's on the God level.

Animals don't have families. They reproduce, but they don't have families. They don't establish a family. A while back (a year or two ago), my cat had kittens, and I gave one of the kittens to my brother. If we go there and our cat is with us, our cat and his cat aren't glad to see each other. It's not “old homecoming” where they have to sit down, and it's a son and Mom and ‘It's good to see you again.’ They don't want anything to do with each other. There's no family relationship. Animals have a certain nurturing instinct when the young are small. They nurture and protect them, but they get grown up and go their way. There's not some family relationship that's established, and they come back and say, ‘Glad to see you Mom and Dad.’ There's no concept of that. That's unique to human beings, and Satan desires, desperately, to destroy that.

9. Who spoke the words recorded in Genesis 2:24? Prove.

God did, or to be more literally correct, Jesus Christ was the member of the God Family that spoke this. “Therefore shall a man leave father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall be one flesh.”

You can prove that by going to Matthew 19:4-5, “And He answered and said to them, ‘Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning “made them male and female,” and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh?”’”

If you just read it in Genesis 2, you might think that Adam said these words. But you can clearly show from what Jesus said in Matthew 19 that this is what God Himself said. This is the record of the first wedding ceremony. God presented Eve to Adam, and He instructed them. That’s why we follow a basic format from Scripture at the time of the wedding. God explained what marriage was to Adam, and we ought to understand something about marriage just from reading this. If somebody wants to know how many wives God thought a man should have, how many did He make for Adam? He didn’t present Adam with a harem. He didn’t make half a dozen—take your choice; rotate around. He didn’t create one woman and a bunch of men. He created one man and one woman. God clearly defined as to what He intended in terms of marriage and He instructed Adam about it. He gave them an explanation.

10. What does this tell us about God’s will concerning marriage?

It tells us that God intends one man and one woman to love each other, to establish a home, to live together and to become one—until death do them part. Anything else is going to involve sin somewhere along the line. It clearly shows in Matthew 19 where Jesus quoted this scripture when the Pharisees wanted to argue and “wrangle” about divorce. They wanted to “tangle Him up,” arguing about a particular verse in Deuteronomy.

Matthew 19:4-5, “And He answered and said to them, ‘Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’”

We are told in Genesis 2:25, “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed.” From what source did they learn a sense of shame and guilt about sex and about their own bodies? Did they get it from God? No.

God explained to them, and He told them to multiply and replenish the earth. I think He went into a little more detail than that because I think a certain amount of explanation would have been called for. The explanation God gave when He presented Eve to Adam—He explained about marriage. He told them that they were to cleave together. They were to become one flesh. In other words, God gave them instruction about sex. He explained to them what it was all about. He explained to Adam why he was having all these sensations and feelings that he didn’t quite understand, and the same with Eve. He explained to them what was going on.

11. What was the first recorded lie? What is its significance?

Genesis 3:4, “And the serpent said to the woman, ‘You shall not surely die.’” —The first recorded lie.

The devil said, Genesis 3:1, “...And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, “You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”’” The serpent said, ‘God said you can’t have any of the trees.’

Verses 2-3, “And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, “You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.”’” Eve said, ‘Sure we can. We can have them all, except this one. God said, “don’t eat of this one, don’t touch it and don’t do anything with it, lest you die.”’

Verse 4, “And the serpent [devil] said to the woman, ‘You shall not surely die.’” That was a lie.

Eve was deceived (II Corinthians 11:3). She decided that the way to find out whether the devil was telling the truth or not was to try what he suggested and see if it worked. That’s the reverse. Instead of trying what the devil suggests to see if it works, why not try what God suggests. God doesn’t say concerning tithing, ‘Don’t tithe and see if you are cursed.’

He says, Malachi 3:10, “‘Bring all the tithes into the storehouse...and prove me now in this,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.’” You prove God by doing what God says. That’s the way you set out to do it. That’s what Eve should have done, but she took the devil’s word. She performed an experiment.

12. From what source did Adam and Eve learn a sense of shame and guilt about sex and about their bodies?

There was nothing God told them that made them embarrassed or ashamed. There was no sense of shame that they got from God's instructions, very likely, late on a Friday afternoon or evening. The instruction they got from God just at the conclusion of creation or just at the beginning of the Sabbath marked the beginning of their marriage—of their union as husband and wife. There was nothing that gave them a sense of shame from what God said.

But a little later, we find a sense of shame that entered in—a sense that something was dirty, something was bad. They were trying to hide—hide from one another and hide from God. Where did they get it? The only other one that is introduced on the scene between Genesis 2:25 and Genesis 3:9-11 (the point where we find them hiding) is the devil. So it's a pretty good conclusion. Where did they get the sense of shame? They got it from the devil. He was a liar and the father of a lie. He took a very subtle form. He came along, and he was "peddling his wares."

I will refer you to the section in Mr. Armstrong's book, The Missing Dimension in Sex. There is a chapter, "Where did this sense of shame arise?" He goes through this account in Genesis 3 very clearly. He goes in great details and explains about the relationship, of the sense of shame and guilt connected with sex. He ties it in with the pagan concept of the immortality of the soul and goes back to Genesis 3. I would simply refer you to that section of the Missing Dimension as a very detailed commentary of this account that explains what happened.

13. Explain Genesis 3:15.

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, you shall bruise His heel." The "Seed of woman," in the ultimate sense, refers to Jesus Christ. It's interesting. It's referred to as the Seed of woman because He was born of a female parent but not of a human male parent. The enmity was to be put between Satan and his followers and Jesus Christ.

Jesus said to certain ones in John 8:44, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."

What are we shown here? We are shown that those who are of the seed of the serpent—those who are of their father the devil, those who were the adherents of Satan's way—ultimately sought to destroy Jesus the Messiah. They very temporarily seemed to triumph over Him. They put Him to death, but He triumphed over death. He is going to destroy death and sin and completely triumph over and put away Satan. You destroy a serpent by crushing its head. The sense of it is, 'I am going to put enmity there.' The ultimate sense of it is there are two ways of life. Culminating in Jesus the Messiah, the Seed of woman will triumph over Satan and his followers. Even though He may be wounded by them, He will crush them. They wound Him, but He crushes them. 'You will bruise His heel, but He will crush your head.'

14. Cite a verse that proves that all human beings who have ever lived trace their ancestry back to Adam and Eve.

Genesis 3:20, "Adam called his wife's name Eve [Hebrew, "*chavvah*"] because she was the mother of all living." "*Chavvah*" means "life."

Acts 17:26, "And He made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on the face of the earth...." All human beings trace their ancestry back to Adam and Eve.

15. What did the tree of the knowledge of good and evil signify?

It signified man's way—the way that man has pursued, the way of human experience, the way of experimentation, of trying—for man had a choice. There were two trees. God expelled Adam and Eve because they were not going to be given access to the tree of life. The tree of life certainly symbolized something. It evidently was a literal tree, and that tree is going to be readily available.

Bible Study # 7 Questions

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

Genesis 1—3

1. Give the Hebrew name for “God” in Genesis 1:1 and explain its significance.
2. What would be a better translation of the first part of Genesis 1:2?
3. Cite at least one other scripture elsewhere in the Bible that proves whether or not the earth was created formless and void.
4. What is the meaning of the term “firmament”?
5. Explain the meaning of Genesis 1:7.
6. Does Genesis 1:14-19 mean that the sun and the moon were not created until the fourth day of creation week? Explain the significance of these verses.
7. What is the Hebrew word for “soul” and what is its significance?
8. What does the term “an help meet for him” mean?
9. Who spoke the words recorded in Genesis 2:24? Prove.
10. What does this tell us about God’s will concerning marriage?
11. What is the first recorded lie? What is its significance?
12. From what source did Adam and Eve learn a sense of shame and guilt about sex and about their bodies?
13. Explain Genesis 3:15.
14. Cite a verse that proves that all human beings who have ever lived trace their ancestry back to Adam and Eve.
15. What did the tree of the knowledge of good and evil signify?

Bible Study # 8 & 9

Bible Study # 8
December 8, 1987
Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—Genesis 4—9 (Part 1)
(Chart at end)

This is a very crucial area. We **are going to spend a little time on this part because beginnings are crucial. This has to do with the foundation this world's society is based on.** There is a great deal of information packed in here. Genesis 4-6 summarizes one thousand six hundred fifty years in a matter of three chapters. Approximately one-quarter of human history occurred prior to the flood. Genesis 7-9 gives details surrounding the flood.

As we focus in on this section, here in Genesis, there are a number of things helpful for us to realize. In addition to the Biblical account, we have certain traditions and history. Josephus was a contemporary to the Apostle Paul. He lived during that time. One of the reasons his account is so important is that there were records preserved in the temple—historical documentation preserved through the priestly family—that were burned up during the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The only account we have of this is through Josephus. What we gain from him is the understanding that the priests had of these accounts.

We have tradition, the stories preserved by other nations. All nations have in common the fact that they all derive from the family of Noah. All nations, all over the world, have a certain tradition of the flood.

During this period of time we are covering this evening, civilization was based primarily in Egypt. The history of the pre-flood world centers in Egypt. One of the things that we are going to find is that the world's civilization is primarily derived from Cain, and that shouldn't be a surprise. Who is the god of this world?

In Genesis 3:1-8, Adam and Eve had listened to Satan. They had performed an experiment. They checked it out and found out for themselves. While Adam knew better, he didn't do better. This society is good and evil. Man's civilization is a mixture. It is a poisonous mixture. It is a mixture of truth and error, and it is a fatal mixture. If everything about it were evil, then people could, perhaps, see through that more clearly. They chose to follow the best that man could come up with.

Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden, and God cut off access to the Garden. The Garden was destroyed in the flood. The Cherubim were there for about one-quarter of human history.

Genesis 4:1, "Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, 'I have gotten a man from the Lord.'" Commentators don't understand it. Eve had been told a short time earlier (3:15) that there would be the promised Seed of woman who would come forth as the Savior; the Redeemer. She thought her first-born son was that seed. Cain grew up with this attitude. This was how Cain viewed himself. The word "Cain" means "get"; that was his way. The way of Cain was the way of get.

Verses 2-5, "Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel [may indicate that they were twins]. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. [Notice what happened] Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry and his countenance fell."

Verse 3, "In the process of time..." or "At the end of the days..."—The time of the harvest. At this time, Cain brought of the fruit of the ground—not the firstfruits. Abel brought of the firstlings of the flock. It shows a fundamental difference in attitude.

In Genesis 3:21, God took an animal and made garments from those animal skins. Undoubtedly, God explained certain things to them about that. How did they know about sacrifices? When He slaughtered those animals that would have been the occasion to explain that "without the shedding of blood there was no remission of sins" (Hebrews 9:22)?

That looked forward to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God introduced that concept to mankind. Abel brought a sin offering. He recognized that he was a sinner and had a right attitude. God was pleased with Abel's offering. Cain simply brought "something," and he didn't bring it in the right attitude.

Genesis 4:2, "...Cain was a tiller of the ground." Cain used improper farming methods. He forced the ground—probably the slash-and-burn method—with short-term gain and didn't worry about the long-term results. Cain didn't bring the best and didn't bring a sin offering. God was

pleased with Abel's offering, but He was not pleased with Cain's.

Verses 6-7, "So the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.'"

He said, 'Why are you in a bad attitude? If you do well, don't you think that I would accept you? And if you don't do well, sin lies at the door. Cain, you have got to overcome. If you do what you are supposed to do, I will accept you the same as I accepted Abel. You have to recognize that sin lies at the door. If you don't overcome you are going to fall into something that will be very destructive to you.' Cain didn't take the instructions.

Verse 8, "Now Cain talked with Abel his brother and it came to pass when they were in the field that Cain rose against Abel his brother and killed him." He probably told him, 'You got me in trouble. You made me look bad.' We see our problems as what someone else did. 'I wouldn't have looked so bad if you hadn't looked so good.' He must not have been corrected very much. Spoiled! One who could do no wrong—Cain viewed himself this way. He wanted his own way and, undoubtedly, had gotten his way far too much. He murdered Abel.

Verse 9, "Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is Abel your brother?' And he said, 'I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?'" God simply asked to see what Cain would say. He wants to know how we will respond. Ever call your kids in? You already know, but you want to hear their response. Cain was going to try and bluff his way through.

Verse 10, "And He said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground.'"

Verses 11-13, "'So now you are cursed from the earth which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you [I am going to put you out of the farming business]. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.' And Cain said to the Lord, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear!'"

'Woe is me!' Cain, when confronted, denied knowing anything about it. Then he immediately began to feel sorry for himself. 'Poor me! You are picking on me. My punishment is greater than I can bear.' Notice, his whole approach was of concern for self. 'You are being too hard on me.' No sorrow for what he had done.

Verse 14, "'Surely you have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth and it will happen that everyone who finds me will kill me.'"

—"...everyone who finds me will kill me." It would only take one.

Verse 15, "And the Eternal said to him, 'Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.' And the Lord set a *mark* on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him."—A marker.

The origin of the races has nothing to do with the mark of Cain. God is the author of different races. God originated the races. Some have been cursed or blessed for their actions. They have gotten results, whether blessings or curses, for their actions. The whole human race fell in line with the way of Cain, and as a result, violence filled the earth.

Deuteronomy 32:7-9, "'Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations. Ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you: when the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people, Jacob is the place of His inheritance.'"

—"...when He separated the sons of Adam..."

The races go all the way back to Adam. Your particular ethnic origin is the result of what your parents were. What about Adam and Eve? They didn't have parents or grandparents. Each egg in the girl contains the blueprint of her character; every man, in the sperm. In Eve, God made every egg cell that she was going to have—the blueprints. Every one of the races was what God wanted—all the various branches of the human family. Adam and Eve's children were different races. Their children did not have the same heredity. God purposed those races.

Verse 8, "...He set the boundaries of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.'"

There will be twelve gates in New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:12), one for each of the tribes of Israel. Jacob had twelve sons because God had purposed an organizational structure that was to be in the New Jerusalem. God knew where He was going before He started. That is why He will be satisfied when He gets there. God had a plan and a purpose. God is going to have a family, and that family will consist of literally billions of sons. It will be highly structured. The various

racers were designed into that. You talk about genetic engineering! God designed and invented genetics. He designed certain characteristics and things that were to be there. We find races derived from Adam and Eve.

Let us come back to *the mark of Cain* (Genesis 4: 15). It does not have to do with the origin of the races. It was a boundary mark between the land of human habitation and the land of Nod or the land of wandering (v. 16).

Here was a boundary line that was set up. It is very likely that a replica of this boundary marker came to be worn by Cain and his descendants as a good-luck charm. The cross dates back to all kinds of pagan antiquity. It did not originate with Christianity. We find this came to be established as the mark that would save his life. The church of Cain has the mark, worn every-which-way.

God could have executed Cain and chose not to do so for a specific reason. God wanted the lesson of experience written. God wanted man to learn what the results of that way produced. What was the result of Cain being left alive? He reproduced and had kids who reflected his own values—people ready to resort to violence.

Abel was righteous, and then others of Adam and Eve's children fell in between. Which one expanded? Did the way of Seth and Abel encompass the earth? No, the way of Cain did.

I Corinthians 5:6, "...a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" Sin spreads; sin contaminates. If you allow certain things that we should not in a society, it will spread until it contaminates everybody. You cannot tolerate sin because sin spreads and contaminates. Contamination tends to spread in a way that righteousness does not. Sin has to be purged out.

God wanted a record to be written. He wanted man to realize that when sin is allowed to exist, it will contaminate. God said, 'You have chosen to know good and evil, and I am going to let you see, that when you mix good and evil, the evil drowns out the good.' You have to purge out the evil or it will ultimately destroy the good.

God exiled Cain. Josephus mentions several things about Cain. Cain invented a system of weights and measures. Cain was the first to set boundaries about land. Ability and character are two totally different things. His problem was not a lack of ability but lack of character. He was self-centered to the point that he was willing to do anything to get his way. He established a city and was the author of civilization in that way.

It is interesting when we go to Egyptian history (what is termed as the Old Kingdom of Egypt was pre-flood)—if you were to look at a listing

of the gods they worshipped and what they said about each one. They started out with two: Osiris and Isis. Osiris was the god of the earth, and Isis was his wife. The Egyptians derived from these first two parents. The firstborn son was Osiris, the founder of the Egyptian kingdom. He was the author of agriculture and the inventor of civilization. What does the Scripture tell us? Cain was the first one to contrive to plow the ground and was the inventor of sets and measures. They venerated him as a god. They worshiped Osiris as the inventor of agriculture and the giver of civilization. They attributed to Osiris what the Bible attributes to Cain.

The Old Kingdom of Egypt is the history of the conflict between what is termed as the Osiris kings and the Set kings, and there was conflict between them. Osiris's brother was Set. The conflict of the Old Kingdom of Egypt was between the adherents of Set and the adherents of Osiris. "Saturn" is the name Cain called himself.

Genesis 4:14 (KJV), "...shall I be hid..." is "Saturn" (in the Hebrew) who is viewed as the giver of agriculture and the inventor of civilization. From Saturn derived Jupiter. Ultimately, Cain's family grew.

Genesis 4:17, "And Cain knew his wife and she conceived and bore Enoch. And he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son—Enoch." We see that Cain had Enoch and built this city. "Enoch" means "initiate." City life was initiated.

As the family of Cain progressed, we find Lamech, a very significant figure.

Verses 18-24 focus on Lamech. God clearly intended man to have one wife. That went along for a period of time. Then we come to one who took him two wives.

Verse 19, "Then Lamech took for himself two wives: the name of one was Adah, and the name of the second was Zillah." The names of "Adah" and "Zillah" mean "dawn" and "dusk"—light and dark. He was the one who, evidently, took Cain's place.

Verses 20-22, "And Adah bore Jabal. He was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. His brother's name was Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the harp and flute. And as for Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah."

Let's focus on Tubal-Cain. In mythology, Vulcan gave his name to volcanoes. Vulcan is pictured as being black. Tubal-Cain was a

worker of metal—making metal weapons of warfare.

Verses 23-24, “Then Lamech said to his wives: ‘Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; O wives of Lamech, listen to my speech! For I have killed a man for wounding me, even a young man for hurting me. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-seven fold.’”

What did he mean by ‘I have slain a man...a young man who hurt me?’ Perhaps he is referring to two different individuals. According to tradition, Lamech was responsible for killing Cain. Isn’t that the logical outgrowth of a family that thrives on violence? One who would come along and view Cain as being the only thing that stood in his way. The other may refer to Enoch. (Genesis 5:24). If Enoch was preaching righteousness, you can bet Lamech didn’t want to hear it. Everyone outlived Enoch by hundreds of years.

We see that from the family of Cain derived things that had to do with civilization. Mankind’s civilization became decadent from the beginning. Man headed off in the wrong direction. Metals and metalworking were invented. This is the kind of civilization that began to derive—civilization based on “get.” Civilization in the pre-flood world derived from Cain, and his way permeated this world’s civilization.

Genesis 4:25-26, “And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, ‘For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.’ And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the Lord.” From Seth derived the family of Noah.

Genesis 5:4, “After he begot Seth, the days of Adam were eight hundred years and he begot sons and daughters.” Adam and Eve had many children.

Genesis 3:20, all human beings derive from Mother Eve. Abraham married his half sister (20:12); but by the time of Moses, there was prohibition against it. What happens when livestock interbreeds too closely? Close inter-marriage would result in rapid degeneration. There was no degeneracy at the beginning, no problems to inherit. But as generations progressed for a while, things would come along that would lead to degeneration of the human race. At the beginning, there was no one else to marry.

Let us note in Genesis 4:26, “And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh....”

In Isaiah 8:1, “Moreover the Lord said to me, ‘Take a large scroll and write on it with a man’s pen concerning....’” Have you ever wondered where writing came from? The normal word for “man” is “ish.”

Isaiah 8:1, “...‘a man’s [enosh] pen....’” The word in Hebrew is “enosh”—the same name as the word for the son of Seth. Around three hundred years after creation, possibly, writing was introduced through the family of Enosh. It is considered that the sacred calendar that we recognize was developed and came to be understood at this time.

Genesis 6:2, “that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.”

Verse 1, “Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them.” —A group of wicked men who called themselves the sons of God and provoked God’s wrath by their actions that resulted in the destruction of the flood. Civilization, as we began to know it, was developed. As Cain developed his city, he developed false religion to go along with it. The “sons of God” can refer to angels. Job 38:7 refers to angels as the sons of God.

Genesis 4:26, “...Then men began to call on the name of the Lord.” or “Then began men to call themselves the sons of God.”

This may tie in with Genesis 6:2, “...the sons of God....”

Questions

1. What is the proper translation of Genesis 4:1? Eve thought that he was the promised Seed. “I have gotten a man, the Eternal.”

2. What is the meaning of the name “Cain”? What is its significance? “Cain” means “get” and that was his way, the way of get. The way of Cain encompassed the earth.

3. Prove that meat was eaten prior to the flood. Genesis 4:2, “Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep but Cain was a tiller of the ground.” What did he keep them for? He didn’t start out as a pig farmer.

4. Give a paraphrase of Genesis 4:7 that conveys the proper sense of the verse.

“If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”

‘Why are you in a bad attitude? If you do well, don’t you think that I would accept you? And if you don’t do well, sin lies at the door. Cain, you have to overcome. If you do what you are supposed to do, I will accept you the same as I accepted Abel. You have to recognize that sin lies at the door. If you don’t overcome, you are going to fall into something that will be very destructive to you. Sin’s desire will be to pull you down. You have to master it.’ He was being told that he had to overcome.

5. What was the curse that God put on Cain?

It was a marker. It was the boundary mark between the land of human habitation and the land of Nod or the land of wandering. Here was a boundary line that was set up. It is very likely that a replica of this boundary marker came to be worn by Cain and his descendants as a good-luck charm. He was forced to become a wanderer. He was put out in exile.

6. Explain the real meaning of Genesis 4:21.

His brother’s name was Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the harp and flute. He was the first to profane the harp; he perverted music.

7. Give a couple of alternate translations of Genesis 4:26.

“And as for Seth, to him also a son was born and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the Lord.” “Then began men to call themselves the name of the Eternal.” “And then began men to preach in the name of the Eternal.”

8. Did Enoch die?

Yes. If Enoch had never died, that would put him one up on Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 11:5, “By faith Enoch was translated so that he did not see death, and was not found because God had translated him, for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”

Verse 13, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises....” These all died. None of them received the promises. They all died in faith. God simply physically removed the body of Enoch. Our allegiance and our loyalty are transferred from the god of this earth to the God of heaven. We are ambassadors for Christ. He transferred his loyalty and his allegiance. The significance was simply that he died.

Deuteronomy 34:6, God buried Moses. It is a parallel.

Bible Study # 9

December 22, 1987

Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—Genesis 4—9 (Part 2)

This is the second part on Genesis 4-9 on **the way this world’s civilization came to be, and recognizing that the origin of how it came to be goes back to Cain—realizing he was the originator of most of this world’s civilization.** Cain is identified in pagan mythology as Osiris, the giver of their civilization. The Romans and Greeks identified him with Saturn. The Greek name was *Kronos*. He was the teacher of agriculture and the giver of civilization. He is generally pictured as holding a scythe in his right hand. *Old Man Time*—holding a scythe and a serpent that bites its own tail. It is a part of the season we are in right now (winter/December).

In Genesis 4:14, “shall I be hid [Saturn]” was actually the name which Cain called himself.

We have the inauguration of city life and many things that are characteristic of this world’s civilization.

Verse 26, “And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh....”

In Isaiah 8:1, the pen or stylus is referred to as “...‘man’s [*enosh*] pen’...” or “*enosh pen*.” The sacred calendar traces its origin back to this time of Enosh.

Genesis 6:2-3, “...the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. And the Lord said, ‘My Spirit shall not strive with man forever....’” Some people think this was intermarrying with angels. Angels don’t marry. Certainly the term “sons of God” sometimes refers to angels (Job 38:7). The whole context is not angels, but men.

Notice the whole context in vv. 5-7, “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the Lord said, ‘I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I

am sorry that I have made them.” It is the sin of man, the sin of human beings. Whoever these sons of God were, they were human beings. It is clear that angels are not being referred to here.

I John 3:2 (KJV), “...now are we the sons of God.”

Is it converted people it’s referring to in Genesis 6:2? No. God said, ‘I am not going to always put up with this.’ God was sorry that He had ever started things with human beings. These were self-willed people, doing what they wanted to do. Individuals who were sinners, their motivation in life was to do what they wanted to do, as long as they could get by with it.

You can tie in Genesis 4:26, “...then began men to call upon the name of the Lord” or “to call themselves by the name of the Lord” with “...the sons of God...” in Genesis 6:2.

Cain was called a god. His followers looked upon him as god in the flesh and his followers took the title, the “sons of god.” He began city life by gathering and forcing his descendants together at this fortress named Enoch (Genesis 4:17). He utilized false religion. He was Saturn or Osiris in mythology, the one who was the originator of man’s civilization. This is in much of Greek and Roman mythology. We find that the line of Cain took wives of whomsoever they chose—making a contrast of the line of Seth and the line of Cain.

Race is in no way a curse. Race had nothing to do with the mark of Cain. God designed and authored that and put different branches of the human family. God knew where He was going before He started His plan. He was to wind up with the highly structured family that He would use to administer the whole universe. Before God ever began His plan, He knew where He was going to wind up.

Revelation 21:1, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth...” We know God is going to wind up with a new heaven and a new earth.

Verse 12, the New Jerusalem is going to have twelve gates. As I mentioned before, God didn’t look down and become impressed with Jacob’s family. It is not an accident that Jacob had twelve sons. It was God’s purpose to begin with (Deuteronomy 32:8). He programmed that Eve’s children would be different races. God built that diversity. They were to spread out; but inspired by Satan, they were going to do away with that.

Revelation 21:2, “Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” In the New Jerusalem will dwell the firstfruits. The bride will be right there

with the Bridegroom. The bride and Bridegroom will increase the family. They will be inside; the others will dwell outside. They will come in and go out through those twelve gates.

Verse 24, “And the nations [Greek, “ethnos”] of those that are saved shall walk in light...” We don’t have to understand every detail. It is sufficient to understand what is given. When we get there, we will clearly understand.

Satan has resented every facet of God’s plan. Genesis 6:4, “There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.”

In Deuteronomy 2:11, “Giants” is a totally different word, “They were also regarded as giants, like the Anakim, but the Moabites call them Emim.”

The term used in Genesis 6:4 is a word that does not necessarily mean giant in stature. It could refer to individuals who bullied and oppressed others—men of great power. It is not the real translation.

Genesis 6:11-13, “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.’”

God looked at the state of things. That which He had built in and designed was in the process of being lost, and violence was everywhere. God took note and said He would not let it get to this point.

Verse 18, ““But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.”” He would send His judgment and start it over again through Noah.

Verse 9, “...Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.” Noah was a righteous man, one who obeyed God and perfect in his generations. This word “perfect” is the word used throughout Leviticus and Deuteronomy to describe sacrifices—a term applied to animals. The first thing God noticed: Noah was righteous and just; he was “perfect in his generations.” His lineage had been preserved without mixture. God purposed to use these families and re-launched the human family after the flood.

If we go through Genesis 10, the European stock primarily comes from Shem, the African stock

comes from Ham and certain European stock comes from Japheth. Japheth undoubtedly was an Oriental. Ham's wife was Naamah, a descendant of Cain.

The thing to also understand is that the sins or character of an individual is not something that heredity plays a primary part in. It isn't that one line is righteous and the other wasn't. The family through which God worked came through the family of Shem. God has worked with others. But the bulk of Shem's descendants would not follow the true God. On the ark everyone agreed to what the truth was. But in time (after the flood), again the tendency of human beings was to follow self-will.

In Genesis 5:1-4, we read of the generations of Adam. The sons of Adam got their wives from their sisters.

Genesis 5:21-24, "Enoch lived sixty-five years and begot Methuselah. After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and begot sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him."

Some have the idea that Enoch did not die. That is not true. That would contradict what the Bible says. Enoch did die, and it is very clearly stated in the scripture that he did die. To begin with, if Enoch did not die, that puts him one-up on Jesus Christ, one step ahead of Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ died.

In I Corinthians 15:20, we are told, "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."

John 3:13, "'No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.'"

Genesis 5:23, "So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years."

Hebrews 11:5, "By faith Enoch was translated so that he did not see death, 'and was not found because God had translated him'; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

Verse 4, "By faith Abel...."

Verse 5, "By faith Enoch...."

Verse 7, "By faith Noah...."

Verse 8, "By faith Abraham...."

Verse 11, "By faith Sarah...."

Verse 13, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises...." Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah—these all died in faith. What does it mean that he did not see death?

Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed for man to die once...."

I Corinthians 15:22, "As in Adam all die...." — Every human being; all die! Enoch was an individual who walked with God and served God. It was a time when God took him, as Elijah was physically removed, to a different place. When Moses died, God buried him where no one knew (Deuteronomy 34:5-6). Enoch was removed.

In Genesis 5:21-27, we come to Methusaleh. The meaning of his name is "when he dies it will be sent forth." Methusaleh died the year of the flood. His whole long life was a prophecy, and when he died, the flood was sent forth.

Genesis 5:29, "And he called his name Noah, saying, 'This one will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord has cursed.'" Noah was to comfort them concerning the work.

II Peter 2:5, "...Noah, one of the eight people, was a preacher of righteousness...." Noah was the eighth. Enoch was the seventh (Jude 14). We have a line of preachers of righteousness that God worked with. Noah was the eighth; his great-grandfather, Enoch, was the seventh. By this time the whole line of Seth was pretty well turning away from the things that Seth himself had stood for. From what is described in Genesis 6, there was a loss of identity.

Satan has always tried to counterfeit God's plan: one world. Satan's world is Babylon—many sorts of paganism blended together and one world religion. God is going to have unity—one King, one government and one religion.

The human family is allocated separate inheritances. In the time of Joshua, He allocated the land to the different tribes (Joshua 13-17). It was divided out into the families. The whole purpose of the Jubilee was to return the land back to those it was given. When Christ returns and programs a Jubilee, the land will be allocated out. God works through families. That is why Satan hurts the family so much. He tries to attack, pervert and destroy it because it is the way God is going to structure the family throughout eternity. Satan tried to cause people to lose their family identity. Satan would like to wipe out family altogether. And that is what he is very successfully trying to do in our modern age today.

Genesis 6:11, "The earth also was corrupt before God and the earth was filled with violence." Every aspect of human society deteriorated. Everything became so totally corrupt, God looked at it and said, "There is no way this can last another four thousand four hundred years. If I wait and let it run its course, there will be such

an unrecognizable mess it will never be sorted out.' The flood set things back a ways, but they would have wiped themselves off the earth millenniums ago.

God described to Noah how to build the ark (Genesis 6:14-22). The capacity of the ark was eight freight trains of sixty-five cars each. The number of animals that were on board the ark, if you count every specific animal, not varieties—God did not create every single breed of cattle, some originated in recent years; on the ark, God did not have one hundred varieties of dogs—you come out with about thirty-five thousand species. That would have filled two and one-half freight trains. God could have transported all of those animals in two and one-half freight trains. You still would have five and one-half freight trains of sixty-five cars each that would have been empty. We are looking at a lot of space that people don't realize. Food was transported as well so there was space for food storage (v. 21).

Some people think the flood occurred in just a local area. There is no way that you can believe that. One is simple logic. The ark landed in Mount Ararat. Water seeks its own level and spreads out. Everything that is not taller than that mountain is going to be covered. Plus, God clearly says to build an ark. If we are looking at a local flood, why build the ark? Just climb the mountain and get on the other side. It makes no sense, logically.

Notice in vv. 17-21, “And behold, I Myself am bringing the flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; and everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring two, of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds after their kind, of animals after their kind, and of every creeping thing of the earth after its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive. And you shall take for yourself of all food that is eaten, and you shall gather it to yourself; and it shall be food for you and for them.”

Genesis 7:1-3, “Then the Lord said to Noah, ‘Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation. You shall take with you seven each of every clean animal, a male and his female; two each of animals that are unclean, a male and his female; also seven each of birds of the air, male and female, to keep the species

alive on the face of all the earth.’” The knowledge of clean and unclean was known before the flood. God designed certain animals to be eaten and others to have other functions.

Verse 7, “So Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, went into the ark because of the waters of the flood.” When Noah entered the ark, it wasn't raining. Noah went in the ark in faith. He probably went in on the Sabbath; then seven days later, God would start it. Noah spent a week on the ark before the rain came (vv. 1, 4, 10).

He preached during this one hundred twenty-year period of time. The work of God was accomplished on faith. People did not believe the warning.

Verse 11, “...on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.” The fountains of the deep broke up and great geysers of water erupted. There would probably have been a lot of “takers” then. *This is a lesson for us!*

Isaiah 55:6, “Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.” About the time the Tribulation starts, there will be many who would wish they had listened to “Tomorrow's World,” but it will be too late, physically, then.

Hebrew 11:6, “Without faith it is impossible to please God...” God requires that. At some point, we must step out in faith. When the time came, God closed the door. ‘Alright, now is the time.’

Genesis 7:17, “Now the flood was on the earth forty days. The waters increased and lifted up the ark, and it rose high above the earth.”

Verse 19, “And the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered.” —A universal flood.

Genesis 8:1-3, “Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided. The fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were also stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained. And the waters receded continually from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters decreased.” The water was there for a time. Then it began to abate, and then another two and one-half months.

Verses 4-5, “Then the ark rested in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountain of Ararat. And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month. In the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.”

Verses 7-11, “Then he sent out a raven, which kept going to and fro until the waters had dried up from the earth. He also sent out from himself a dove, to see if the waters had abated from the face of the ground. But the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, and she returned into the ark to him, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her, and drew her into the ark to himself. And he waited yet another seven days, and again he sent the dove out from the ark. Then the dove came to him in the evening, and behold, a freshly plucked olive leaf was in her mouth; and Noah knew that the waters had abated from the earth.”

It was abated enough that some of the shoots were beginning to come forth. From this, Noah knew that the waters had abated. He was up on a mountain. He could not see, so he sent these birds out.

Verse 14, “And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry.” The flood was a total of one year and ten days. The flood started on the seventeenth day of the second month (7:11). Noah left the ark on the second month and the twenty-seventh day of the month (8:14) —one year and ten days. But they had been on the ark seven days before (7:1, 4, 10). So the time on the ark altogether was one year and seventeen days.

Genesis 9:1-2, “So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand.’” The animals were to have a distinctive fear of man.

Verse 3, “‘Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.’” They had been eating grains, but they could begin eating flesh again.

Verse 6, “‘Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.’” The intrinsic value of human life: man is made in the image of God. God did not execute Cain before the flood. It was to teach a lesson.

I Corinthians 5:6, “...a little leaven leavens the whole lump...” Sin spreads, and its corrupting influence will cover everything. What happens when you don’t have a lesson? God allowed that, and it only took a short period of time until things were in an abysmal mess. Then He said, ‘Things must not be allowed to get to that point. Violent crime must be dealt with.’

Genesis 6:11-13, “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.’”

Genesis 9:9-17, “‘And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth. Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.’ And God said: ‘This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.’ And God said to Noah, ‘This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.’”

God pointed out the rainbow and said that this would be something that would represent that the rain would stop. It would be a reminder of God’s promise that He would not destroy the earth again by water.

Verses 18-25, “Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham was the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated. And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank of the wine and was drunk and became uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father’s nakedness. So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him. Then he said:

‘Cursed be the Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren.’”

Let us understand what this is talking about. Some have thought this was unfair because Canaan was being cursed because of Ham. It says “his younger son.” Does it refer to Ham? The answer is “no.” Ham was the middle son, not the younger son.

Genesis 10:1 says the birth order was Shem, Ham and Japheth.

Genesis 10:6, “The sons of Ham...” How does Canaan figure in all this?

Verse 6, “The sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan.” Canaan was the younger son of Ham. He talks about Ham, the father of Canaan.

Genesis 9:24, “...he knew what his [Ham’s] younger son had done to him.” What had happened was an act of perversion committed by Canaan. And a curse was made. Curses come from disobedience; blessings, from obedience.

God knew that He would be able to work with the family of Abraham. God knew that Abraham would bring forth certain results that would have an impact on his children and grandchildren. The very basis of stability in a society and people is the family, the basic building block of society. It was very apparent that the family of Canaan was going to suffer because of the family deterioration and morality of Canaan himself. Don’t you think that children suffer from some of the environment they grow up in?

The major thing emphasized here is the deterioration of the family structure. When morality is not what it ought to be the family deteriorates and the society deteriorates. The result of Canaan’s sin was the consequences that he brought on his descendants. The problems were the result of the weakness of the family.

Verse 25, “...‘Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren.’” He was to be a servant of servants. God said we must all become servants. Those whom Canaan ultimately came to serve must also learn to be servants. Canaan will ultimately learn to serve the Lord God that Shem was serving at that time.

Verse 27, “‘May God enlarge Japheth, and may he dwell....’” —The majority of the people on earth have sprung from Japheth—the vast multitudes of the Orient and others. God was going to preserve the knowledge of the truth through Shem.

Questions continued...

9. Explain the significance of Methuselah’s name.

It means “it will go forth.” He died in the year of the flood.

10. Explain Genesis 6:2. Who were the “sons of God”?

They deified their ancestors. Cain was deified by his followers. He was called a god. These “sons of God” were self-willed people, doing what they wanted to do.

11. What was the approximate size of the ark?

The approximate size is three hundred cubits by fifty cubits by thirty cubits, about four hundred fifty feet by seventy-five feet by forty-five feet. It would have been the minimum of eight freight trains of sixty-five cars each.

12. Was the flood of Noah a universal deluge?

Genesis 6:17, “‘And behold I Myself am bringing the flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life, and everything that is on the earth shall die.’”

Genesis 7:19, “The waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward and the mountains were covered. It prevailed above all the mountains.”

13. Prove that God’s law of clean and unclean meat was known prior to Moses.

Clean and unclean was known prior to the flood. Genesis 7:2, “‘You shall take with you seven each of every clean animal, a male and his female, two each of animals that are unclean, a male and his female....’”

14. How long were Noah and his family in the ark?

One year and seventeen days.

15. Explain Genesis 9:3.

This is not doing away with the laws of clean and unclean. We are to eat them in the same way we eat the vegetables or herbs, but avoid the bad ones.

16. Explain Genesis 9:24-25.

“So Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his younger son had done to him.”

Verse 25, “Then he said: ‘Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren.’” He knew what Ham’s younger son had done to him. What had happened was an act of perversion committed by Canaan, and a curse was made.

Chronology: Adam — Abraham

Dates - Anno Mundi - 5000 BC 1000 BC 2000 BC 3000 BC 4000 BC 5000 BC 6000 BC 7000 BC 8000 BC 9000 BC 10000 BC 11000 BC 12000 BC 13000 BC 14000 BC 15000 BC 16000 BC 17000 BC 18000 BC 19000 BC 20000 BC 21000 BC 22000 BC 23000 BC 24000 BC 25000 BC 26000 BC 27000 BC 28000 BC 29000 BC 30000 BC 31000 BC 32000 BC 33000 BC 34000 BC 35000 BC 36000 BC 37000 BC 38000 BC 39000 BC 40000 BC 41000 BC 42000 BC 43000 BC 44000 BC 45000 BC 46000 BC 47000 BC 48000 BC 49000 BC 50000 BC

Gen 1:1-5	AM	Adam (930 yrs)	930 AM
Gen 1:4-8	130	Seth (912 yrs)	1042 AM
Gen 1:6-11	235	Enosh (905 yrs)	1142 AM
Gen 1:9-11	325	Cainan (910 yrs)	1252 AM
Gen 1:12-17	345	Mabatalaleel (875 yrs)	1257 AM
Gen 1:15-20	410	T Jared (962 yrs)	1422 AM
Gen 1:18-24			
Gen 1:22-27			
Gen 1:25-31			
Gen 1:28-32			
Gen 1:29-29			
Gen 1:10-11	1054	Noah (950 yrs)	1542 AM
Gen 1:10-13			
Gen 1:12-15			
Gen 1:14-17			
Gen 1:16-19			
Gen 1:18-21			
Gen 1:20-23			
Gen 1:22-25			
Gen 1:24-27			
Gen 1:26, 25, 7			
Gen 12:1-4		Abraham's entry into Canaan (75 yrs old)	
Gen 12:1-8		Covenant with Abraham (99 yrs old)	
Gen 12:20-26		Death of Abraham	
Gen 11:26			
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Bible Study # 8 & 9 Questions

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

Genesis 4—9 (Part 1 & Part 2)

1. What is the proper translation of Genesis 4:1?
2. What is the meaning of the name “Cain”? What is its significance?
3. Prove that meat was eaten prior to the flood.
4. Give a paraphrase of Genesis 4:7 that conveys the proper sense of the verse.
5. What was the curse that God put on Cain?
6. Explain the real meaning of Genesis 4:21.
7. Give a couple alternate translations of Genesis 4:26.
8. Did Enoch die? Explain what happened.
9. Explain the significance of Methuselah’s name.
10. Explain Genesis 6:2. Who were the “sons of God”?
11. What was the approximate size of the ark?
12. Was the flood of Noah’s a universal deluge? Prove.
13. Prove that God’s law of clean and unclean meat was known prior to Moses.
14. How long were Noah and his family in the ark?
15. Explain Genesis 9:3.
16. Explain Genesis 9:24-25.

Bible Study # 10
January 12, 1988
Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—Genesis 10—11
(Chart at end)

In the earlier part of Genesis, we saw the focus on the very beginning and then the civilization of man that developed. In Genesis 4-7, we saw what happened.

God allowed a certain record be made, which deals with man's experiment in government. One of the reasons why Cain wasn't executed was because God wanted the record written of what happens if the lesson is not learned and people come up with their own ideas. God wanted us to see what happens.

What happened? It came to the point where violence filled the earth. In a matter of one thousand six hundred fifty-six years from the time of creation, things were in such a mess—such violence and decadence—God stepped in and destroyed man through the flood. After preserving Noah, we see where He gave certain instructions to Noah. We spent a lot of time on the pre-flood civilization.

This section **deals with the formation of this present age, this present civilization of man.**

Genesis 10-11 is an important area of Scripture because it focuses in on the beginning of post-flood civilization. It contains the origin of mankind's society. Babylon is the beginning of our civilization. In our society, everything has its origin in Babylon.

Genesis 10:1, "Now this is the genealogy of the sons of Noah: **Shem, Ham, and Japheth**..."

Japheth: v. 2, "The sons of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras." Japheth's wife was of oriental extraction. They divided into a Western and an Eastern branch. Some took more after Japheth; some, more with his wife. Japheth settled in Asia or Eastern Europe depending on whether they took after the oriental side or Japheth's side.

Ham: v. 6, "The sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan." Jewish tradition says Ham's wife was none other than Naamah, who was the daughter of Cain (Genesis 4:22). His grandson was Nimrod.

Genesis 10:8, "Cush begot Nimrod..." Cush settled in the Western part of Ethiopia. "Ethiopia" is the Hebrew word for "Cush"; "Mizraim" is Hebrew for "Egypt."

The nations today are known by modern names. When nations are referred to in Bible prophecy,

they are not referred to in the names they have today; they are referred to in the name of their ancestors. The more some of these people had contact with Israel, the more they were able to be traced down.

God divided the languages. The division of the language was God's way of making the families go the way He wanted them to go to overspread the earth and to have the population increase. God desired that and desired these national groupings.

Shem: v. 22, "The sons of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram."

Genesis 11:10-26, "This is the genealogy of Shem..." —All the way to Abraham. Abraham is a descendant of Shem. The European stock primarily comes from Shem

We are given an overview of the families and are able to identify them in a sense.

Questions

1. Explain the significance of Genesis 10:8.

Let us pick it up in vv. 6-8, "The sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan. The sons of Cush were Seva, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabtechahl and the sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan. Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth."

That word "mighty one" is "*gibbor*" in Hebrew. It means "a tyrant, champion, chief, giant man, mighty, strong." —A mighty man, but a despot, a tyrant.

After the flood, animals reproduced rapidly. Genesis 9:2, "And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth and on all the fish of the sea. They are given unto your hand." All these animals began to reproduce, and there was a rapid increase in animals like wolves, etc.

Genesis 10:9, Nimrod began to be a mighty hunter, as a protector. He is known in mythology as the hunter of wolves. He made himself the despot. He established his government on mankind.

2. Who is the instigator of Babel?

Genesis 10:8, "Cush begot Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one on the earth."

Verse 10, "And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel..."

Genesis 11:1-4, "Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there.

Then they said to one another, 'Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.' They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.'"

Here was a great city. He began to bring everything into his rule. God wanted people to spread out. But Nimrod said, 'If you spread out you will be killed,' and that they should all get together and build this giant tower. They had heard about the flood. This tower would dwarf anything around them. Satan stirred Nimrod to do this. We begin to see the introduction of a false civilization. Religion was brought in. Nimrod made himself a god-king. Cain did that before the flood; Nimrod did after the flood. We just came through the season that celebrates Nimrod's birthday.

It is interesting, by the way, some of the customs and traditions that come down. A Nimrod tree—tradition is to put them up on a building when the building is finished being built. They put it on the top. That goes all the way back to the tower of Babel. We can trace many of the customs back to Egypt and to Babel.

He was "put out of business" in Babel when God confused the languages. They fled to Egypt.

Genesis 10:10, Nimrod was the instigator of Babel.

3. Where was the original center of human habitation in the post-flood world?

Genesis 11:1-2, "And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech. And it came to pass as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and they dwelt there." —The land of Shinar. All the earth was of one language. They got the idea of building the city. Nimrod was the instigator.

4. In what way were the people rebelling against God in their plans at Babel? What had God told them?

Genesis 9:1, "And God blessed Noah and his sons and said unto them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.'" It was God's desire for the human race to spread out. The basic racial stocks had been preserved through the flood. God did not want them to stay there and intermarry. The separate identifiable strains would have been lost. We would have had a blend. If that was what God wanted, He would not have put in the varieties in Eve. This was a

part of His overall plan from the beginning. They had organized themselves under the government of man, under Nimrod. It doesn't take long to deteriorate.

5. How did God force the various tribal groupings to migrate to different areas of the world?

Genesis 11:6-7, "And the Lord said, 'Indeed the people are one and they all have one language and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.'"

God forced the various tribal groupings to migrate to different areas of the world by confusing their languages to such an extent that they had to divide. God proposed that different areas of the earth would be for different peoples. God knew that apart from His Spirit and under man's government and man trying to get together, the results were not going to be good. In the twentieth century, we have been able to bridge the things which have divided us; man's technology has taken off. Without God's Spirit and not guided by the government of God, man will create something to blow themselves up (Matthew 24:22). With that ability and without God's Spirit, we would blow ourselves off the planet.

God says there is no limit to what man can do if every branch of the family can put his input into it. God has built special talents in each branch of the family. Just look around the world. The cultures of the nations express the personality of the people. When everything is pooled together, there is no limit. Man should ask 'Should we?' not 'Could we?' It is like opening Pandora's Box. Man can create things that he is incapable of handling. They would have reached the twentieth century many centuries ago. "*Babel*" means "confusion" in Hebrew and "the gate of god" in Chaldean.

6. About how long after the flood did the division of language occur? Prove from Scripture.

Genesis 10:10-32 gives us a chronological framework.

Genesis 10:16, "Eber lived thirty-four years, and begot Peleg."

Go through and add up the years for the time span. The division of the language occurred about one hundred one years after the flood.

Genesis 10:25, “To Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg [Division], for in his days the earth was divided.”

Peleg was born about the time of the division of the languages. “Peleg” means “division.” In his days, the earth was divided. He was named in honor of that occasion.

For further study, read two books: The Two Babylons and Babylon Mystery Religion.

7. How many years transpired between the flood and the time of the death of Abraham’s father, Terah?

According to Acts 7:4, that event marked the beginning of the call of Abraham.

Acts 7:4, “Then he [Abraham] came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell.” The death of Terah marked the beginning of Abraham’s call according to Acts 7:4. When you go through from the time Arphaxad was born (Genesis 11:10), add up and come all the way down to the time that Terah died (compare Genesis 11:32 with Acts 7—it will show you why that ties in), it will show that it was four hundred twenty-seven years. Abraham left Haran when his father died. Genesis 12:4 tells us he was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.

8. Could Abraham have heard a first-hand account of the flood? How?

Yes, he could have heard the account from Shem who lived five hundred two years after the flood. Genesis 11:10-11, “...Shem was one hundred years old, and begot Arphaxad two years after the flood. After he begot Arphaxad. Shem lived five hundred years....” —A total of five hundred two years. Abraham was called four hundred twenty-seven years after the flood at age seventy-five. Their lives overlapped about one hundred fifty years. Abraham probably carried certain things (documents) that were on the ark. How could Moses have quoted, “the generations of Adam” (Genesis 5:1)?

9. What relationship were Lot and Abraham?

Genesis 11:26, “Terah...begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

Verse 31, “...Lot, the son of Haran...” Lot was Abraham’s nephew, the son of Haran.

10. What does “Babel” mean?

“Babel” means “confusion” in Hebrew.

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE O.T. SERIES

TABLE OF NATIONS

JAPHETH:

Gomer: 1) Ashkenaz (E. Poland) 2) Riphath (Soviet Central Asia, parts of Bulgaria and Hungary) 3) Togarmah (Tibet, Siberia, Korea).

Magog: Mongols

Madai: Medes (primarily Ukrainians of today).

Javan: 1) Elishah (2 branches, western and oriental—Greeks, many Polynesian peoples) 2) Tarshish (2 branches, western and oriental—Spain, Japan) 3) Kittim (South Italy and Sicily) 4) Rodanim (Portuguese) Evidently there were other sons who just used the tribal name of their father Javan and were of the oriental branch. They are known as Tsin and settled south China.

Tubal: Tobolsk branch of the Great Russians

Meshech: Moscow branch of the Great Russians.

Tiras: South American Indians

HAM:

Cush: 1) Seba (South India) 2) Havilah (Melanesians and Micronesians) 3) Sabtah (Ethiopians) 4) Raamah (Sudanese—Sheba-Uganda, Dedan-N.W. Africa) 5) Sabtecha (N. Central Africa) 6) Nimrod

Mizraim: 1) Ludim (Gypsies) 2) Anamim (Chams and Annamese of Indo-China) 3) Lehabim (Lybia) 4) Naphtuhim (Gypsies) 5) Pathrusim (Egyptians) 6) Casluhim (Berbers of North Africa) 7) Caphtorim (Gypsies)

Put: North India and Central and Southern Africa

Canaan: 1) Sidon (Phoenicia, now in N.W. Africa) 2) Heth (Hittites, now North American Indians) 3) Jebusite (so. Coast of Spain) 4) Amorite (N. Africa) 4) Girgasite (Tunisia) 5) Hivite (Cent. American Indians) 6) Arkites (No. American Indians) 7) Sinite (Australian Aborigines) 8) Arvadite (ancient kingdom of Arvad in S. E. Asia) 9) Zemarite (part of population base of Malaysia and Philippines) 10) Hamathite and Canaanite (Western Africa—most American Negroes trace their ancestry here).

SHEM:

Elam: Slavic peoples

Asshur: German peoples

Arphaxad: Chaldeans Eber (Hebrews—the ancestor of Abraham) Joktan 1) Almodad (white population of India) 2) Sheleph (Bactria in Cent. Asia) 3) Hazarmaveth (Poland and E. Europe) 4) Jerah (Dalmatia) 5) Hadoram (part of Arab stock) 6) Uzal 7) Diklah (Persia) 8) Obal (Baltic area) 9) Abimael (in Albania) 10) Sheba (Sabaens of ancient Italy) 11) Ophir (Afghanistan, another branch migrated to ancient Peru) 12) Jobab (Hungary).

Aram: 1) Uz (Syria) 2) Hul (Armenia) 3) Gether (Goths) 4) Mash (area of modern Romania)

The family of **Abraham**, the Father of Many Nations

Lot (Abraham's nephew): 1) Moab (Iraq) 2) Ammon (Jordan)

Ishmael: Arab peoples

Isaac: 1) Esau (Turks) 2) Jacob (Israel – 1) Reuben—France 2) Simeon—scattered, many settled in Scot highlands 3) Levi—scattered among Jews and Israel, many in Wales 4) Judah—Jews 5) Dan—Ireland 6) Naphtali—Sweden 7) Gad—Switzerland 8) Asher—Belgium 9) Issachar—Finland 10) Zebulum—Netherlands 11) Joseph—Ephraim (Britain) and Manasseh (United States) 12) Benjamin—Norway and Denmark.

Bible Study # 10 Questions

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

Genesis 10—11

1. Explain the significance of Genesis 10:8.
2. Who was the instigator of Babel?
3. Where was the original center of human habitation in the post-flood world?
4. In what way were the people rebelling against God in their plans at Babel?
5. How did God force the various tribal groupings to migrate to different areas of the world?
6. About how long after the flood did the division of languages occur? Prove from scripture.
7. How many years transpired between the flood and the time of the death of Abraham's father, Terah? According to Acts 7:4 that event marked the beginning of the call of Abraham.
8. Could Abraham have heard a first-hand account of the flood? How?
9. What relationship were Lot and Abraham?
10. What does "Babel" mean?

Bible Study # 11
January 26, 1988
Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—Genesis 12—36

This is a very important area of Scripture. Genesis 12 **begins to narrow its focus on one man, Abraham.** The rest of the book of Genesis deals with Abraham and his family up until they went into Egypt. Throughout the rest of the book, we **focus on the family through which God was going to work in the future—the literal descendants of Abraham—his son, grandson and great grandchildren.** Then we pick up the story several generations later, in Exodus, to see what has transpired.

It is important for us to understand this section. You cannot understand prophecy unless you understand about Abraham and his descendants. Why would God single out Abraham? Everyone who inherits anything will ultimately inherit through Abraham. He is the father of the faithful (Romans 4:11). The ultimate fulfillment of God's blessings upon Abraham include the promise that he and his spiritual offspring would inherit the earth (Romans 4:13). There are two aspects of that promise: the spiritual inheritance and the physical promises made to Abraham. (For further study read: What's Ahead for America and Britain? booklet)

Genesis 12:1-3, "Now the Lord had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, from your kindred and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you: and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'"

What was offered to Abraham, originally, was the birthright blessings. It was a great but rather vague promise. It was an unspecified land and a promise that his descendants would be a great nation. A lot of details were not given.

Verse 4, "So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran."

Verse 7, "Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'to your descendants I will give this land....'"

We are going to see that Abraham was called "the father of the faithful." He acted on faith. Verse 6, he found the Canaanites were there.

Verse 10, he shows up just in time. There was a famine in the land and Abraham has to go on down to Egypt to find something to eat.

Verses 11-12, "And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, 'Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance. Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you that they will say, "This is his wife"; and they will kill me, but they will let you live.'" Abraham began to get scared that Pharaoh was going to kill him in order to take his wife.

Verse 13, "'Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you.'" Abraham used human reasoning. She was his half-sister (Genesis 20:12), but the intent was to mislead.

Verses 17-20, "But the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. And Pharaoh called Abram and said, 'What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, "She is my sister?" I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife take her and go your way.' So Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they sent him away, with his wife and all that he had."

Abraham told Pharaoh Sarai was his sister. As a result of his human reasoning, he got himself in a mess. Abraham had to grow in faith. He had the same doubts we have. Ever notice how your faith goes up and down. It seems like one situation has passed, another one comes, and you cave in. Then you wonder, 'How did I ever do that?' Abraham became the person that most exemplified faith. God had to work with Abraham for years to teach him. Patience builds faith.

Genesis 13:5-8, "Lot also who went with Abram had flocks and herds and tents. Now the land was not able to support them that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock... So Abram said to Lot, 'Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren.'"

Abraham told Lot, 'I don't want there to be trouble with us.'

Verse 9, "'Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left.'" Abraham said,

‘You take the part you want and I will take the rest of it.’ Abraham didn’t have to give him first choice, but he exemplified a Godly attitude.

Verse 10, “And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere...like the garden of the Lord....” Lot picked the best. So Abraham said, ‘Fine, go to it.’

Let’s notice the series of mistakes that Lot made. He was greedy. He chose the best part, not just the ordinary “run-of-the-mill-greedy,” but over and above.

Verse 12, “...Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom.” Lot got as close to Sodom as he could. He liked the “bright-lights” atmosphere. Lot didn’t do all the things they did, but he was not careful of his associates.

Genesis 14:1-12, there was an invasion and Sodom and Gomorrah were captured.

Verse 14, Lot and his family were taken captive. By this time he was dwelling in Sodom. Lot was taken a prisoner of war for being in Sodom.

Verse 13, someone told Abraham what had happened.

Genesis 14:14-16, “Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants...he and his servants attacked them and pursued them...So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people.”

Verses 18-20, “Then Melchizedek King of Salem brought out bread and wine; He was the priest of God Most High. And He blessed him and said: ‘Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.’ And he gave him a tithe of all.” Abraham tithed to Melchizedek.

In Hebrews 7:7, Paul explains this, showing that Melchizedek was superior to Abraham.

Hebrews 7:1-3, “For this Melchizedek, King of Salem, Priest of the Most High God...first being translated ‘king of righteousness,’ and then also king of Salem, meaning ‘king of peace’, without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.” Melchizedek was King of Righteousness and King of Peace—those are divine titles.

Verse 17 shows that Christ is a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrew 6:20, “Where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest

forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” Melchizedek was the manifestation of the One that we know in the New Testament as Jesus Christ. “Melchizedek” means “King of Righteousness.” That is a title that would be blasphemous to use for any human being. Abraham tithed to Melchizedek and was blessed by Him.

Genesis 15:1-2, God told Abraham, “...‘I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.’ But Abram said, ‘Lord God what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’” He said, ‘Look, You have given me no offspring. I am childless. To whom will I pass on these blessings?’

Verses 4-6, “And behold, the word of the Lord came to him saying, ‘This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from you own body shall be your heir.’ Then he brought him outside and said, ‘Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.”

God said, ‘I am going to give you descendants that you will not even be able to number,’ and Abraham believed Him. God said, ‘I am going to bless you,’ and he believed it.

Verses 13-16, “Then He said to Abram: ‘Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.’”

They will come here again the fourth generation. God said, ‘I can look and see what is going to happen, but I am not going to deal with this people right now because their iniquity is not yet full. But I can see the way it is headed, and I know what is going to happen.’

Verses 18-21, “On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: ‘To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates—the Kenites, the Kenezites, and the Kadmonites; the Hittites, the Perizzites, and the Rephaim; the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.’” God expands the promise.

Genesis 16:1-3, “Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. So Sarai

said to Abram, 'See now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her.' And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan."

Now Sarai comes up with an idea. She used a little human reasoning. 'God has not answered on our time schedule, so maybe we better solve it our own way.' These are lessons of faith God is teaching them. God doesn't operate according to our time schedule. By this time, he had dwelt in the land ten years and he was eighty-five years old. He told him at the age of seventy-five to get up and go to another land.

Verse 4, "So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived her mistress became despised in her eyes." From the time this started there was trouble. It was apparent that this was not going to work. Sarai was jealous of Hagar. Sarai came to greatly regret taking matters into her own hands.

Verses 6-9, Hagar fled; God told her to go back.

Verses 11-12, "And the Angel of the Lord said to her: 'Behold, you are with child, and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael...He shall be a wild man; his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him. And he shall live in the presence of his brethren.'"

New English Bible, "... 'He shall be a man like the wild ass...his hand is against every man and every man's hand is against him. He lives at odds with all of his kinsman.'" This is a description of the Arab world. Ishmael is the ancestor of the Arab people. It is understood throughout the Arab world. Here is a description of the Arab world. They are continually fighting among themselves. Ever wonder why two hundred million Arabs can't get rid of a few million Jews? They are too busy fighting among themselves. They are a very independent-minded people. The Arab world has continually been a scene of turmoil.

Genesis 17:1-5, "When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him. 'I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.' Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: 'As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your

name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.'" "Abraham" means "father of many nations."

Verses 6-8, "I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.'" Years later when Abraham was ninety-nine, his name was changed to Abraham; now it is many nations and a royal line, a kingship. The promise is being expanded.

Verses 10-17, "This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; ...it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any stranger who is not your descendant...and the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.' Then God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her and also give you a son by her, then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.' Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, 'Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?'"

Abraham fell on his face and laughed. Put yourself in Abraham's place. Abraham told God, 'Please don't make fun of me; don't kid me that way.'

Verse 19, "Then God said: 'No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.'" "Isaac" means "laughing."

Verse 25, "And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised..." The Arabs circumcise today when they are thirteen. They just didn't get the point.

Genesis 18:1-8, Abraham entertains three men (18:2). Two were angels (19:1) and one was the Lord (18:13, 33).

Genesis 18:9-15, “Then they said to him, ‘Where is Sarah your wife?’ And he said, ‘Here in the tent.’ And He said, ‘I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.’ And Sarah was listening in the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, ‘After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?’ And the Lord said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh, saying, “Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?” Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.’ But Sarah denied it, saying, ‘I did not laugh,’ for she was afraid. And He said, ‘No, but you did laugh!’” ‘Yes, you were laughing. I heard you.’ Verse 17, “The Lord [the One who became Jesus Christ] said....”

Verse 19, ““For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”” God knew He could depend on Abraham to teach his family. Twenty-five years had gone by since God had called him. God let twenty-five years go by before Abraham had the son God promised. God wasn’t in a hurry. He wanted to make sure that Abraham knew that this was a miracle from God, and that it was God’s promise.

Genesis 18:20-21, “And the Lord said, ‘Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know.’” Abraham got scared because Lot was there.

Verse 23-31, Abraham began to bargain with God. He got down to forty, thirty and then twenty.

Verse 31, “...and He said, ‘I will not destroy it for the sake of twenty.’”

Verse 32, “...‘I will not destroy it for the sake of ten.’”

Genesis 19:1, “Now the two angels came down to Sodom....” The two angels were two of the three that had appeared to Abraham (18:2).

Verse 12, “Then the men said to Lot, ‘Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your

daughters, and whomever you have in the city—take them out of this place!’” ‘Take them out!’

Verse 14, “So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law...and said, ‘Get up, get out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city!’ But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.” They laughed at him.

Verse 15, when the morning came the angels said, ‘Get out of here!’

Verse 16, “And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.” He was lingering because he was going to have to leave his grown children and grandchildren behind. The angels said, ‘We can’t destroy it with you here. You have to get out.’

Verse 17, “So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, ‘Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed.’” They said, ‘Flee to the mountains.’

Verses 18-19, “Then Lot said to them, ‘Please, no, my lords! Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die.’”

Verse 20, ““See now, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one; please let me escape there [is it not a little one?] and my soul shall live.”” He said, ‘Let me go to that little city over there.’ Lot was an individual who kept getting as close to the world as he could get. He kind of compromised around the edges.

Verse 22, ““Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there.’ Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.”

“Zoar” means “little.” They said, ‘Okay, but get out of here!’ Lot had just not quite gotten the point. He wanted to go to the city.

Verse 24, “Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens.” All of a sudden the mountains didn’t look so bad.

Verses 25-26, “So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But his wife looked back behind him and she became a pillar of salt.” Lot’s wife looked back longingly. She couldn’t turn loose of what was back there.

Verses 27-30, “And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord. Then he looked toward Sodom and

Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace. And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt. Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains and his two daughters were with him; for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar. And he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave.”

The difference is: look at how Lot raised his children and how Abraham raised his. Look at where Abraham had pitched his tent. He was not part of society. Lot kept getting as close to it as he could; finally he just went and moved in. Lot compromised and let things happen. What happened was his children mixed and dated with the people of Sodom. His daughters had intermarried there. The result was that when it was time to go, they were not going to go with him. They laughed at him.

Abraham didn't allow Isaac that kind of involvement with the people around. When it came time for Isaac to get married, he sent his servant back to Ur of the Chaldean. Not much of anything, in a positive way, came of Lot's family, even though he himself was saved by the “skin of his teeth.” A lot that was important went “down the drain.” Peter says he was “just Lot,” but he was just barely “just Lot.” We could have an entire sermon on the contrast of how Lot raised his children and how Abraham did. He allowed his children too much freedom.

Lot's daughters thought the whole world had burnt up.

Verses 31-38, “Now the firstborn said to the younger, ‘Our father is old, and there is no man on the earth to come in to us as is the custom of all the earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father.’ So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father, and he did not know...It happened on the next day that the firstborn said to the younger...let us make him drink wine tonight also, and you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father...Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moah; he is the father of the Moabites to this day. And the younger, she also bore a son and called his name Ben-Ammi; he is the father of the people of Ammon to this day.”

They thought everybody had been burned up and decided to solve it their own way. They decided to get Lot drunk and have children by him. Ammon is the capitol of Jordan to this day. We see all the feuding and the problems that are so apparent.

Genesis 20:1-3, “And Abraham journeyed from there to the South and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, ‘She is my sister.’ And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, ‘Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife.’”

We find Abraham again messing up. Again God had to teach Abraham a lesson about trusting Him—not getting fearful and trying to solve it his own way.

Genesis 21:1-5, “And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age; at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac. Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.” Abraham was one hundred when Isaac was born.

Abraham had his ups and downs; at times he sought to obey God, and at times he caved in. Now God was going to put him to the test. God gave Abraham the supreme test.

Genesis 22:1-2, “Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ And He said, ‘Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.’”

Some say the land of Moriah is the Temple Mount. It may have been on Mount Moriah. Another possibility is that it was just across the valley from Mount Moriah. Abraham called the name of the place, “The-Lord-Will-Provide.”

Verses 5-12, “And Abraham said to his young men, ‘stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship and we will come back to you.’ So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, ‘My father!’ And he said, ‘Here I am, my son.’ And he said,

‘Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order, and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ And He said, ‘Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.’”

Verse 14, “And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, ‘In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.’” God did provide a sacrifice—His Son.

Verses 16-17, “and said, ‘By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld you son, your only son, in blessing I will bless you, in multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.’” Another blessing was added to the promise—his seed would possess the gate of his enemies.

Verse 18, “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

Genesis 23:1-2, we have the death of Sarah at the age of one hundred twenty-seven.

Genesis 24:1-4, “Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house... ‘I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; but you shall go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac.’”

Abraham told him he was sending him back to the area where he came from, and he was to find a wife there for Isaac.

Verse 6, “But Abraham said to him, ‘Beware that you do not take my son back there.’” Isaac was not to return back to Babylon.

In vv. 12-14, he prayed and asked God to lead him to the one.

Verse 15, “And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham’s brother, came out with her

pitcher on her shoulder.” It turned out she was of the same family.

Verse 53, “Then the servant brought out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and clothing, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and her mother.” He demonstrates to the family that Abraham’s family can take care of her.

Verses 57-58, “So they said, ‘we will call the young woman and ask her personally.’ Then they called Rebekah and said to her, ‘Will you go with this man?’ And she said, ‘I will go.’” Rebekah had a choice in the matter. She also acted on faith.

Verse 63, “And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening...” Isaac was close to God. He trusted God to pick out the right wife. He was an example of a son who exemplified obedience. Did Abraham do a good job in bringing up Isaac? Through this family, God could accomplish His work. He allowed twenty-five years, and it came to the point where He knew Abraham would do what He wanted him to do. Sometimes we look back and think about doing things differently with our children, but God allowed Abraham to learn the lessons he needed to learn.

Genesis 25:1, Abraham remarried.

Genesis 25:7, “This is the sum of the years of Abraham’s life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years.” Abraham lived one hundred seventy-five years and he died.

Verse 11, “And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac...” God blessed Isaac.

Verse 12, “Now this is the genealogy of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah’s maidservant, bore to Abraham.” —The genealogy of Ishmael.

Verse 19, “This is the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham’s son...”

Verses 21-23, “Now Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived. But the children struggled together within her; and she said, ‘If all is well, why am I this way?’ So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her: ‘Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger.’”

Verses 24-26, “So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb. And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau. Afterwards his brother came out, and

his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob...." They were not identical twins.

Verses 27-34, "So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary. And Esau said to Jacob, 'Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary.' Therefore his name was called Edom. But Jacob said, 'Sell me your birthright as of this day.' And Esau said, 'Look, I am about to die; so what profit shall this birthright be to me?' Then Jacob said, 'Swear to me as of this day.' So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright."

We see something about Esau's character. He treated his birthright cheaply. He didn't regard it. He had no vision or forethought. He wanted things for the moment. Esau was self-willed.

Genesis 26:34-35, "When Esau was forty years old, he took wives Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah." Rebekah and Isaac were upset that he had married someone of the land.

In Genesis 27:6-29, Jacob is instructed by Rebekah and obtains the blessing. Jacob was a very crafty fellow; always trying to finagle around to get his way. He was going to have to learn some hard lessons.

In vv. 41-44, he created such a problem that he was going to have to get out.

Genesis 27:46, "And Rebekah said to Isaac, 'I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughter of Heth, like these who are the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?'"

Genesis 28:1-2, "Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: 'you shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.'" Jacob has a dream.

Verses 11-15, "So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to

heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood above it and said; 'I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.'" He had this very vivid dream.

Verses 20-21, "Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God.'" Jacob said, 'God, if You will take care of me, then I will worship you.' Ever try to make a bargain with God? "...so that I come back to my father's house in peace..." -He was afraid Esau was going to kill him.

He was in for a lesson. Genesis 29, he found his uncle.

Genesis 29:18, "Now Jacob loved Rachel; and he said, 'I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter.'"

Verse 20, "So Jacob served seven years for Rachel..." Seven years passed and he got married, but it wasn't Rachael. It was Leah (vv. 23-25).

Verse 25, "...'why then have you deceived me?'" He said, 'You tricked me.' Wonder if he remembered anyone he had tricked?

Verse 30, He served another seven years for Rachael.

Genesis 30:31-32, "So he said, 'What shall I give you?' And Jacob said, 'You shall not give me anything. If you will do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep your flocks: Let me pass through all your flock today, removing from there all the speckled and spotted sheep, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and these shall be my wages.'"

In Genesis 31:7, over the course of the next few years, Laban changed his wages ten times. When you deal with people in this kind of way, it is not very pleasant to be on the receiving end of it. He wound up twenty years on the receiving end of Laban. God was teaching him a lesson. He was a shyster from the word "go." It took Jacob twenty years to extricate himself from this mess (Genesis 31:41).

There were two major differences between Esau and Jacob. Esau had a major character flaw. He was a “quitter.” When the going got tough, he quit. Esau was willing to trade the long term for the immediate, the right now. He had no vision. Jacob also had a character flaw. He was a crooked dealer. He was always “wheeling and dealing.” The lesson God wanted Jacob to learn: when you deal with people in this kind of way, it isn’t pleasant to be on the receiving end. And God dealt with him. He learned the lessons the hard way and he came to repentance. God tested him. God wanted to test Jacob to see if he was a “quitter.”

Genesis 32:24-28, “Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob’s hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, ‘Let Me go, for the day breaks.’ But he said, ‘I will not let You go unless You bless me!’ So He said to him, ‘What is your name?’ And he said, ‘Jacob’. And He said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.’” Jacob prevailed with God.

Genesis 34:1-4, “Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her. His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the young woman and spoke kindly to the young woman. So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, ‘Get me this young woman as a wife.’”

Jacob allowed too much freedom to his daughter. They committed fornication then wanted to marry.

Verse 7, “And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved and very angry, because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob’s daughter, a thing which ought not to be done.”

Verse 22, ““Only on this condition will the men consent to dwell with us, to be one people: if every male among us is circumcised as they are circumcised.””

Verse 25, “Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males.” The brothers wiped out the whole place.

Genesis 35:1, “Then God said to Jacob, ‘Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there....’”

Verses 16-18, this is where Rachael dies giving birth to Benjamin.

Genesis 36 gives the generations of Esau.

Questions

1. What was originally offered to Abraham as the beginning of the birthright blessings?

What was originally offered to Abraham, as the birthright blessings, was a vague promise—an unspecified land, a promise that his descendants would be a great nation. A lot of details were not given.

2. What did Abraham tell Pharaoh about Sarah and why?

He told Pharaoh she was his sister (she was his half-sister, but the intent was to mislead) because he was afraid that Pharaoh was going to kill him in order to take Sarah as his wife.

3. Show a series of mistakes that Lot made that almost resulted in the destruction of him and his family.

He was greedy. He chose the best part of the land. He got as close to Sodom as he could; he liked the bright-lights atmosphere. He was not careful of his associates. He finally just went and moved into Sodom.

4. Contrast Abraham’s example and actions with those of Lot.

Lot was an individual who kept getting as close to the world as he could get. He got as close to that society as he could. Abraham, on the other hand, kept his distance.

5. What are the two examples of tithing given in the book of Genesis?

Genesis 14:20; Genesis 28:22.

6. What was the age difference between Isaac and Ishmael?

The age difference was fourteen years. Genesis 16:3, Abraham had dwelt in the land ten years. Genesis 12:4, he was seventy-five when he departed from Haran, so that means he was eighty-five when Ishmael was conceived. Genesis 21:5, he was one hundred years old when Isaac was born.

7. What is the prophecy that God made about Ishmael and his descendants (check the New English Bible)?

Like a wild ass living at odds with all, of his kinsman (Genesis 16:11-12, NEB). He had twelve sons—twelve tribes (Genesis 17:20).

8. What was the physical sign of the covenant that God made with Abraham?
Circumcision (Genesis 17:10-12).

9. What did God know that Abraham would do that would allow God to bring all the blessings He has promised upon him?
Genesis 18:19, ““For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He has spoken to him.”” He would properly rear his family and teach them God’s way.

10. What is the origin of the Moabites and Ammonites?
They were children of Lot through his daughters (Genesis 19:36-38).

11. What was the supreme test that God put Abraham to? After that, was the receiving of the birthright blessings by Abraham’s descendants conditional upon anything?
The supreme test was the sacrifice of Isaac. The receiving of the birthright blessings became unconditional. The conditions had been met. ‘Now I will do this because you have met the conditions.’
Genesis 22:16-18, “and said, ‘By Myself have I sworn, says the Lord, for because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, that in blessing I will bless you and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea shore, and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because you have obeyed My voice.’”

12. What was the only part of the Promised Land that Abraham actually owned during his lifetime?
The only part was a cave near Hebron, as a burial place for his wife, Sarah (Genesis 23:4-6).

13. Was the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca forced?
No. Genesis 24:57-58, “So they said, ‘we will call the young woman and ask her personally.’ Then they called Rebekah and said to her, ‘Will

you go with this man?’ And she said, ‘I will go.’”

14. What bad character trait did Jacob have that he had to learn the evils of the hard way?
He was devious and cunning to get his own way. He met up with Laban to learn the hard way.

15. How long did Jacob serve Laban?
Twenty years. Fourteen years for his wives and six years for wages.
Genesis 31:41, ““Thus have I been twenty years in your house. I served fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your cattle and you have changed my wages ten times.””

16. Why was Jacob very upset when he heard that Esau was coming out to meet him on his return home?
When he left, Esau was ready to kill him (Genesis 27:41-42).

17. What serious mistake did Jacob make in regard to his daughter Dinah and what was the consequence of it?
He allowed her too much freedom. She “palled around” with the Canaanite girls and dated the prince. Simeon and Levi wiped out the whole city (Genesis 34). The attitude and streak of Simeon and Levi was that they were not going to take anything from anybody.

18. How did Reuben disqualify himself for the birthright?
Genesis 35:22, “And it came to pass when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father’s concubine; and Israel heard about it.”
I Corinthians 5:1, ““It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife.”” He committed adultery with his father’s concubine and disqualified himself—a lack of stability in regard to morality. This was not going to be the birthright tribe. They were not going to be the birthright tribe because of this lack of morality.

19. Where was Rachael buried?
Genesis 35:19, “And Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). Bethlehem was regarded as her city.”
Matthew 2:18, ““Rachel weeping for her children was an illusion to the slaughter of Bethlehem.””

Bible Study # 11 Questions

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

Genesis 12—36

1. What was originally offered to Abraham as the beginning of the birthright blessings?
2. What did Abraham tell Pharaoh about Sarah and why?
3. Show a series of mistakes that Lot made that almost resulted in the destruction of him and his family.
4. Contrast Abraham's example and actions with those of Lot.
5. What are the two examples of tithing given in the book of Genesis?
6. What was the age difference between Isaac and Ishmael?
7. What is the prophecy that God made about Ishmael and his descendants? (Check the New English Bible.)
8. What was the physical sign of the covenant that God made with Abraham?
9. What did God know that Abraham would do that would allow God to bring all the blessings He had promised?
10. What is the origin of the Moabites and Ammonites?
11. What was the supreme test that God put Abraham to? After that, was the receiving of the birthright blessings by Abraham's descendants conditional upon anything?
12. What was the only part of the Promised Land that Abraham actually owned during his lifetime?
13. Was the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca forced? Prove.
14. What bad character trait did Jacob have that he had to learn the evils of the hard way?
15. How long did Jacob serve Laban?
16. Why was Jacob very upset when he heard that Esau was coming out to meet him on his return home?
17. What serious mistake did Jacob make in regard to his daughter Dinah and what was the consequence of it?
18. How did Reuben disqualify himself for the birthright?
19. Where was Rachel buried?

Bible Study # 12
February 9, 1988
Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—Genesis 37—50

This section of material is the final portion of the book of Genesis—the book of beginnings. Genesis 37-50 **is the story of Joseph and the entrance into Egypt.** This final section of Genesis explains to us why we find the things that we do at the beginning of Exodus. The Bible does not start at Mount Sinai when God gave the Ten Commandments. Genesis has shown that God is the Creator, and it shows the family through which God is working: Abraham, a man of faith, coming on through Isaac and Jacob. Now we come to the spreading out. We see twelve men, the ancestors of the children of Israel, particularly, focusing in on Joseph. It was through Joseph the birthright was to come. We see how the promises were expanded out, becoming more and more specific.

We pick up the story: Joseph came into Egypt as a slave in 1704 B.C., and in 1691 B.C., he was made second in the kingdom because of the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream. In 1682 B.C., the second year of the famine, his family joined Joseph in Egypt. He rose to prominence in the time of the Hyksos Dynasty. This was a dynasty that had its origin outside of Egypt. They controlled only around the Nile area.

One of the things about Egypt, when we think Upper and Lower Egypt: if you were to hear about Upper Egypt, you would be looking at the area further south, and Lower Egypt is the part that is up at the top of the map. Why do they have it backwards in Egypt? It is very simple. They base that terminology on the way the Nile River flows. The Nile River is an unusual river in that it flows from the south to the north. It flows downhill and comes out at sea level in the Delta area at the mouth of the Nile, where it flows into the Mediterranean. It makes a little shape almost like a little triangle where it comes out. That little triangle is the Greek shape of the letter "delta." It looks like a triangle. It spreads out at its mouth, and because it looked like that letter in the Greek alphabet, it came to be applied to any river that flowed out that rich soil. Lower Egypt is that part of the river; Upper Egypt is up the Nile. When Joseph came in, it was called Lower Egypt.

During the time of the famine and immediately thereafter, the fifteenth Dynasty (the Hyksos), expanded their control over the entire nation.

The seven years of famine set the stage for a total change of rulership of Egypt. God was preparing a place for the nation of Israel to be safely nurtured and grow—to grow from a family into a nation. As a result of the famine, Egypt was the only one that had anything. During the time of plenty they saved up and, in the aftermath, were able to use that as leverage. They expanded out their control into much of the surrounding area.

The Israelites were given the land of Goshen as an inheritance. Joseph came into Egypt in 1704 B.C. In 1691 B.C., he was made second in the kingdom. The second year of the famine was 1682 B.C., and in 1611 B.C., Joseph died. There had been a period of time of over seventy years, and in that period of time, the family had greatly multiplied. We see this mushrooming out into a nation that began to take place in a period of a little over seventy years.

The most significant single chapter is Genesis 49. It is prophetic. It deals with every tribe of Israel in the last days. This shows that they were to remain separate, identifiable nations even into the end time—right on down to the specific promise that Ephraim would become a great company of nations and Manasseh a great nation.

Genesis 37:1-4, "Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. This is the genealogy of Jacob. Joseph being seventeen years old was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his fathers. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all of his children because he was the son of his old age. He made him a coat of many colors."

We notice, right here, a mistake of Jacob's that led to resentment from his brethren—the open favoritism. This was a carry over of him being from Rachel, the wife that he loved. Here was a situation where the children in the family were not all full brothers; they were half brothers. Unfortunately, sometimes when children don't have the same parents, some are singled out for favoritism. What is the result? The result is that it creates resentment among others in the family—resentments that lead to problems that last generations.

Verses 5-8, "Now Joseph dreamed a dream, and told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more. So he said to them, 'Please hear this dream, which I have dreamed: There we were binding sheaves in the field. Then behold my

sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf.' And his brothers said to him, 'Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?' So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words." Joseph didn't help matters any.

Verses 9-11, "Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, 'Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time the sun, the moon and the eleven stars bowed to me.' So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, 'What is this dream? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?' And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind."

Joseph was always the favorite and he was rubbing it in.

The result, vv. 12-14, "Then his brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, 'Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them.' So he said to him, 'Here I am.' Then he said to him, 'Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me.' So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem." Jacob sent him down to check on them. Jacob had a lot of confidence in him. Joseph had obviously shown that he could be trusted. He did not have the same degree of confidence in the others.

Verse 18, "Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him."

Verses 19-20, "Then they said to one another, 'Look, this dreamer is coming! Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, "some wild beast has devoured him." We shall see what will become of his dreams!'" They had really gotten bitter over the situation.

Verse 21, "But Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, 'Let us not kill him.'" Reuben heard what they said.

Verse 22, "And Reuben said to them, 'Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit which is in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him'—that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father." He delivered him out of their hands. He was the oldest and felt a certain responsibility. Reuben had the idea of releasing him himself. He lacked the confidence he needed to speak up and set his brothers

straight. He knew they shouldn't do what they were going to do.

Verses 26-27, "So Judah said to his brothers, 'what profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh.' And his brothers listened." Judah is the father of the Jews. 'What profit are we going to make? Let us turn a buck on this deal.' He is the father of the Jews. Sometimes you see characteristics that tend to run in families. Some of his descendants had the same tendency. "...let us sell him..." So the brothers were content; they listened.

Verse 28, "Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt." They took Joseph out of the pit and sold him. They brought him to Egypt.

Verse 29, "Then Reuben returned to the pit, and indeed Joseph was not in the pit; and he tore his clothes."

Verses 31-33, "So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood. Then they sent the tunic of many colors, and they brought it to their father and said, 'We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son's tunic or not?' And he recognized it and said, 'It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces.'" They said, 'This is what we found. We don't know what happened to your son.'

Verse 34, "Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days." Jacob leaped to the conclusion that Joseph had been killed. He was very grieved and upset.

Verse 36, "Now the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard."

Genesis 38, skip Joseph for a moment and go to Judah. Judah had two sons.

Genesis 38:6, "Then Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar."

Verse 7, "But Er...was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord killed him." After God killed him, Onan had the responsibility of raising up seed to his brother. Onan was not willing to fulfill his obligation because the inheritance of his brother would have passed to his brother's children, and he wanted it for himself.

So Onan himself died (vv. 8-10). God got rid of both of them. They were individuals of such character and nature that God didn't want to use them to develop the tribe of Judah. In the process

of time, Judah's wife died (v. 12) and he had not fulfilled what he had promised Tamar. She dressed herself as a harlot (v. 14).

Verses 15-18, "When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, because she had covered her face. Then he turned to her by the way, and said, 'Please let me come in to you'; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. So she said, 'What will you give me, that you may come in to me?' And he said, 'I will send you a young goat from the flock.' And she said, 'Will you give me a pledge till you send it?' Then he said, 'What pledge shall I give you?' So she said, 'Your signet and cord, and your staff that is in your hand.' Then he gave them to her, and went in to her, and she conceived by him."

She asked what he would give her. She asked for a pledge. He gave her certain things. After all of this had taken place, Judah sought to send the kid goat back to her. Word came to him that Tamar had played the harlot. She was pregnant and not married. Judah said, 'Let her be burned' (v. 24). Judah had a double standard.

Verse 25, "When she was brought out, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, 'By the man to whom these belong, I am with child.' And she said, 'Please determine whose these are—the signet and cord, and staff.'" She said, 'Don't you think you should do something to the man? It was the man who these things belonged to.'

Tamar brought forth twins (v. 27). One of these twins put forth his hand and the midwife put a scarlet thread on it (v. 28). It was to have been born first. This was important because the firstborn would receive the scepter promise. It took its hand back in, and the other was born first. This was a breach. His name was called Pherez (v. 29), and the other was named Zerah (v. 30). There was a breach, but eventually they were united. One of Zedekiah's daughters (a Pherez) would marry the son of the High King of Ireland (a Zerah), and that healed the breach. This breach had to be healed. (For more information read, [What's Ahead for America and Britain?](#))

In Genesis 39, Joseph was brought into Egypt. The Lord was with Joseph (vv. 1-2). He worked hard. He was dependable. He had great favor. He left all that he had in Joseph's hand (vv. 3-6).

Genesis 39:7-9, "Now it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, 'Lie with me.' But he refused and said to his master's wife, 'Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater in this house

than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

Potiphar's wife began to cast eyes on Joseph. Joseph refused. It was known and understood what sin was before God spoke on Mount Sinai.

Romans 4:15, "...where there is no law there is no sin."

Romans 5:13, "...sin is not imputed when there is no law." You cannot have sin if there is no law against it. Something is not wrong unless there is a law against—by God or man. Joseph knew that adultery was a sin; the law of adultery was known and understood. Potiphar's wife took advantage of every opportunity, and Joseph ignored it (v. 10).

Genesis 39:12, "that she caught him by his garment, saying, 'Lie with me.' But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside." One day she grabbed him. He took off, and she ripped off his outward garment.

Verses 13-20, "And so it was, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside, that she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, 'See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. And it happened, when he heard that I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me, and fled and went outside.' So she kept his garment with her until his master came home. Then she spoke to him with words like these, saying, 'The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came in to me to mock me; so it happened, as I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me and fled outside.' So it was, when his master heard the words, which his wife spoke to him, saying, 'Your servant did to me after this manner,' that his anger was aroused. Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison."

She said, 'See what he tried to do. He tried to rape me.' So Joseph was arrested and Potiphar put him in jail. Potiphar must have had some doubt because he didn't have him killed. He just put him in jail. He was soon the head trustee.

Verses 21-23, "But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's hand, because the Lord

was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper.”

Genesis 40:1-3, “It came to pass after these things that the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt. And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief butler and the chief baker. So he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison, the place where Joseph was confined.”

The baker and the butler had dreams and Joseph explained what they meant.

Verse 5, “Then the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, dreamed a dream, both of them, each man’s dream in one night and each man’s dream with its own interpretation.”

Verses 8-15, “And they said to him, ‘We each have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it.’ And Joseph said to them, ‘Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please.’ Then the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, ‘Behold, in my dream a vine was before me, and in the vine were three branches; it was as though it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes. Then Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh’s cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand.’ And Joseph said to him, ‘This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days. Now within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your place, and you will put Pharaoh’s cup in his hand according to the former manner, when you were his butler. But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house. For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon.’”

Verses 16-19, “When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said to Joseph, ‘I also was in my dream, and there I had three white baskets on my head. In the uppermost basket there were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head.’ So Joseph answered and said, ‘This is the interpretation of it: The three baskets are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you.’”

The baker was going to be executed; the butler was going to be set loose.

Verses 20-22, “Now it came to pass on the third day, which was Pharaoh’s birthday that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand. But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them.”

The only two accounts of anyone celebrating birthdays: Herod and Pharaoh, two wicked kings. We note this by way of passing by example.

He had told them, ‘When you get out, remember me, and tell him about me’ (v. 14).

Verse 23, “Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.” He was so happy to be out he forgot about Joseph.

Genesis 41:1-4, “Then it came to pass, at the end of two full years, Pharaoh had a dream; and behold, he stood by the river. Suddenly there came up out of the river seven cows, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. Then behold, seven other cows came up after them out of the river, ugly and gaunt, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the river. And the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven fine looking and fat cow. So Pharaoh awoke.” The seven lean cows ate the seven fat cows.

Verses 5-7, “He slept and dreamed a second time; and suddenly seven heads of grain came up on one stalk, plump and good. Then behold, seven thin heads, blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them. And the seven thin heads devoured the seven plump and full heads. So Pharaoh awoke, and indeed, it was a dream.” The lean grain ate the fat grain

Verses 8-9, “Now it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them for Pharaoh. Then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh, saying: ‘I remember my faults this day.’”

Verse 12, “Now there was a young Hebrew man with us there, a servant of the captain of the guard. And we told him, and he interpreted our dreams for us; to each man he interpreted according to his own dream.” He said, ‘I remember a guy. We had these dreams, and there was this guy who was able to tell us about our dreams.’

Verse 14, “Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh.” Joseph was concerned about showing proper respect. He cleaned up and shaved to show proper respect to the office of Pharaoh.

Verse 16, “So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, ‘It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.’”

Pharaoh told Joseph his dream (vv. 17-24). Joseph told Pharaoh what it meant.

Verses 25-30, “Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, ‘The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do: The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads are seven years; the dreams are one. And the seven thin and ugly cows, which came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine. This is the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do. Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land.’”

There would be seven good years followed by seven years of famine. Then he went on to explain what Pharaoh needed to do.

Verses 33-36, “Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years. And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt that the land may not perish during the famine.’”

He said, ‘Choose a man who can be trusted and set him over Egypt. Let him get organized and store twenty percent of the produce year by year. Then during the years of famine, there would be all this extra that was stored.’

Verses 39-41, “Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. You shall be over my house and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you.’ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.’” Joseph was over all of his affairs. He was given a wife (v. 45).

Joseph was in the area of the Dynasty of the Hyksos, people kindred to the Hebrews. After the expulsion of the Hyksos, then arose a dynasty that was against the Israelites.

Verses 50-57, “And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine...Joseph called

the name of the firstborn Manasseh [forgetting]: ‘For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father’s house.’ And the name of the second he called Ephraim [fruitfulness]: ‘For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.’ Then the seven years of plenty which were in the land of Egypt ended, and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, ‘Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do.’ The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. And the famine became severe in the land of Egypt. So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine was severe in all lands.”

The famine was all over the land. It is through Joseph that Egypt became the breadbasket of the world. It is interesting as you come down to our time. Who has been responsible for feeding the world? The grain-exporting nations of the world are Joseph’s: the United States, England and Australia. There are many parallels in prophecy. The famine was also in the land of Canaan.

Genesis 42:1-3, “When Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, Jacob said to his sons, ‘Why do you look at one another?’ And he said, ‘Indeed I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down to that place and buy for us there, that we may live and not die.’ So Joseph’s ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt.” Jacob sent his sons to buy food in Egypt.

Verse 7, “Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he acted as a stranger to them and spoke roughly to them. Then he said to them, ‘Where do you come from?’ And they said, ‘From the land of Canaan to buy food.’” He saw his brothers and knew them. He began to quiz them; where did they come from?

Verse 9, “Then Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about them, and said to them, ‘You are spies! You have come to see the nakedness of the land!’” He remembered the dreams that he had. Here they were bowing down to a ruler of Egypt.

Verses 10-14, “And they said to him, ‘No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food. We are all one man’s sons; we are honest men; your servants are not spies.’ But he said to them, ‘No, but you have come to see the nakedness of the land.’ And they said, ‘Your servants are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and in fact, the youngest is with our

father today, and one is no more.’ But Joseph said to them, ‘It is as I spoke to you, saying, “You are spies!”’ He said, ‘I don’t believe that you are brothers.’

Verse 15, “‘In this manner you shall be tested: By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here.’” He said, ‘I believe that you are spies. If you don’t bring back your younger brother, you won’t leave this place.’

Verse 17, “So he put them all together in prison three days.” For general principle, he put them in jail for three days.

Verses 19-20, “‘If you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined to your prison house; but you go and carry grain for the famine of your house. And bring your youngest brother to me; so your words will be verified, and you shall not die.’ And they did so.” He said, ‘Bring your youngest brother to me.’

Verse 22, “‘And Reuben answered them, saying, ‘Did I not speak to you, saying, “Do not sin against the boy”; and you would not listen? Therefore behold his blood is now required of us.’” See what Reuben told them, ‘I knew we would get into trouble.’

Verse 24, “...Then he returned to them again, and talked with them. And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.” Simeon was the one Joseph put in jail. Simeon was probably the one out to really kill Joseph, the most “hotheaded” one.

The Simeonites were scattered. They were not allowed to have a separate country. They might have ganged up and conquered the world. Their descendants are in Scotland, the highlands of Scotland. We see all the wars that took place among the clans. When the British took Ireland, they took some of the highland Scots and settled them in the Ulster plantation. The others settled in the United States in the Appalachians area: West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, down into the Ozarks of Arkansas—all those mountain people.

Remember the feuds between the Hatfield’s and the McCoy’s? —A group of people that have tended to have that proclivity today. Today in Ireland, they are still at it. A great deal of the controversy was that these Scots settled in Northern Ireland to keep Ireland loyal to the Crown. When Britain wanted to get rid of Ireland, they couldn’t because of these Ulster men—Scotch-Irish. You read the story of Simeon and that tendency to violence, not wanting to back down.

Verse 24, Simeon was the one Joseph left to stay in jail so he could assess some of the things he had done in life.

Verse 25, “Then Joseph gave a command to fill their sacks with grain, to restore every man’s money to his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. Thus he did for them.” He put their money back.

Verse 28, “So he said to his brothers, ‘My money has been restored, and there it is, in my sack!’ Then their hearts failed them and they were afraid, saying to one another, ‘What is this that God has done to us?’” They said, ‘Now we are really going to be in trouble.’

Verse 34, “‘And bring your youngest brother to me; so I shall know that you are not spies, but that you are honest men. And I will deliver your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.’”

Genesis 43:1, “Now the famine was severe in the land. And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, ‘Go back, buy us a little food.’” They had to go back or starve.

Verse 3, “But Judah spoke to him, saying, ‘The man solemnly warned us, saying, “You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.”’” He’s going to throw us in jail again.

Verse 8, “Then Judah said to Israel his father, ‘Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our children.’” He said, ‘Let him go with me. I will be responsible for him.’ So finally he let him go back.

Verses 12-14, “‘Take double money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight. Take your brother also, and arise, go back to the man. And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved, I am bereaved.’” They took double money and they came down.

Verse 16, Joseph saw Benjamin with them.

Verse 30, “Now his heart yearned for his brother; so Joseph made haste and sought somewhere to weep...”

Joseph feeds his brothers.

Verse 33, “And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth; and the men looked in astonishment at one another.” He had them seated from the firstborn to the youngest. They marveled that he knew the order they were born.

Genesis 44:1-2, “...‘Fill the men’s sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man’s money in the mouth of his sack. Also put

my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his grain money....” He said, ‘Put my cup in the sack of the youngest.’ They found it in Benjamin’s sack. Joseph was testing them.

To what extent had they changed their character? There was no doubt that Benjamin was the favorite. He had the cup planted in Benjamin’s sack. He wanted to see their attitude and how they would respond. He wanted to see if they would treat Benjamin the way they had treated him.

Verses 30-34, “Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the lad is not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad’s life, it will happen, when he sees that the lad is not with us, that he will die. So your servants will bring down the gray hair of your servant our father with sorrow to the grave. For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father forever.’” Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers. For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me, lest perhaps I see the evil that would come upon my father?”

Judah said, ‘I will take responsibility. I said that I would do it. Our father just won’t be able to take it. I will stay here instead of the lad. If you want to punish somebody, I will be the slave in his stead.’ You think maybe Judah had learned over the years? There was a change. He had put them to the test.

Genesis 45:1-4, “Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, ‘Make everyone go out from me!’ So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard it. Then Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am Joseph; does my father still live?’ But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence. And Joseph said to his brothers, ‘Please come near to me.’ And they came near. And he said, ‘I am Joseph your brother whom you sold into Egypt.’”

Joseph could no longer restrain himself as he saw the attitude displayed. He told them he was Joseph whom they sold into Egypt.

Verses 5-8, “But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor

harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.” He said, ‘God has blessed me.’

Verse 9, “Hasten and go up to my father, and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph: God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry.’” ‘Go to my father and tell him God has made him lord of Egypt and come down. Tell my father what you see.’

Verse 11, “There I will provide for you....”

Verse 13, “So you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and you shall hasten and bring my father down here.”

Verses 16-19, Pharaoh was happy because Joseph’s brothers were there.

They went back to tell Jacob.

Verse 26, “And they told him saying, ‘Joseph is still alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt.’ And Jacob’s heart stood still because he did not believe them.”

Verses 27-28, “But when they told him all the words Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. Then Israel said, ‘It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.’”

Genesis 46:2, “Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night and said, ‘Jacob, Jacob!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’” God spoke to Jacob that night.

Verses 3-4, “And He said, ‘I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. I will go down with you into Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes.’”

Verses 5-25 list all the children and the grandchildren who went to Egypt.

Verse 26, “All the persons who went with Jacob to Egypt, who came from his body, besides Jacob’s sons’ wives, were sixty-six persons in all.” Sixty-six descendants of Jacob came into Egypt.

Verse 27, “And the sons of Joseph who were born to him in Egypt were two persons. All the persons of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were seventy.” Sixty-six plus Jacob, Joseph and two sons made seventy.

Acts 7:14, “Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to him, seventy-

five people.” Some have thought this was a contradiction.

Let me call it to your attention.

Acts 7:14, “...Jacob and all his relatives to him, seventy-five people.” Yet in Genesis 46:26, all the souls were sixty-six. What is the difference? The seventy-five persons mentioned in Acts 7:14 include the sixty-six in Genesis 46:26, plus nine wives of Jacob’s eleven sons who were coming into Egypt. Commentaries agree that the wives of Judah and Simeon died prior to this. So, only nine of the remaining sons—excluding Joseph, who was already in Egypt—had their wives. The difference is it says in Acts 7:14, “...all his relatives...” which would include the daughters-in-law. In Genesis 46:26, they “...came from his body...”—sons, grandsons and great grandsons. The Bible does not contradict itself. Sometimes the story is told from a different standpoint. The details all fit together. It is just a matter of getting the story together.

Genesis 46:32-34, ““And the men are shepherds, for their occupation has been to feed livestock”...So it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says, “What is your occupation?” that you shall say, “Your servants’ occupation has been with livestock from our youth even till now, both we and also our fathers,” that you may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.”” Joseph told Jacob when he came before Pharaoh to tell him they were shepherds. The Hyksos were shepherd kings. The Egyptians despised shepherds. They disdained that as an occupation.

Genesis 47:6, ““The land of Egypt is before you. Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen. And if you know any competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock.”” Pharaoh gave them an area away from the Egyptian proper—a bountiful place for their crops, the best of the land, but away from the people.

Verse 9, Jacob was one hundred-thirty years old at this time, the second year of the famine (Genesis 45:6). We are able to date it from this.

Verse 28, “And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the length of Jacob’s life was one hundred forty seven years.”

In Genesis 48:1, toward the end of Jacob’s life, Joseph took Ephraim and Manasseh and brought them before Jacob.

Genesis 48:5, ““And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be

mine.”” ‘I want them to be my sons. They are going to inherit right along with the others.’ Joseph was given the birthright and a double portion.

I Chronicles 5:1, “...Reuben the firstborn of Israel—he was indeed the first born, but because he defiled his father’s bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright.” Each of the two sons was to inherit as a full tribe.

Verses 10-14, “Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them. And Israel said to Joseph, ‘I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!’ So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel’s left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel’s right hand, and brought them near him. Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim’s head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh’s head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn.” —“...guiding his hands knowingly.” His father crossed his hands. He knew what he was doing.

Verses 17-18, “Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took hold of his father’s hand to remove it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. And Joseph said to his father, ‘Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn: put your right hand on his head.’” He said, ‘Dad, you have it the wrong way. You have your hands on the wrong one.’

Verse 19, “But his father refused and said, ‘I know my son, I know, [He refused and said, ‘I know it. I am doing so knowingly.’] He [Manasseh] also shall become a people, and he also shall be great, but truly his younger brother [Ephraim] shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.”” The younger brother was going to be greater of the two. His seed shall become a multitude of nations.

Verses 15-16, “And he blessed Joseph, and said: ‘God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day, the Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a

multitude in the midst of the earth.” The name Israel refers in a very special way in prophecy. Verse 19 says Manasseh was to be a great nation, and Ephraim “...shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.”

Genesis 49:1, “And Jacob called his sons and said, ‘Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you **in the last days.**’” Notice the setting of these words. Not what is going to happen in a few years but in the last days. It is very clear that the prophecy in Genesis 49 is for our time, not something that related back at that time.

As I said at the beginning, Genesis 49 is the most significant single chapter. It is prophetic. It deals with every tribe of Israel in the last days. This shows that they were to remain separate, identifiable nations even into the end time and right on down to the specific promise that Ephraim would become a great company of nations and Manasseh a great nation. The tribes of Israel were going to exist as separate, identical units all the way to the end; a different fate was to befall every one of the tribes. They were clearly not going to be all the same people, in a sense of what happened to the Jews.

Questions

1. What mistake on Jacob’s part led to some of the resentment that Joseph’s brothers showed toward him?

Open favoritism.

2. What did Joseph himself do that aggravated the problem?

He dreamed dreams, and he told it to his brothers that they would bow down to him.

3. Was Judah a believer in the double standard?

Prove.

Yes. Genesis 38:15-18, “When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot because she had covered her face. Then he turned to her by the way and said, ‘Please let me come in to you’; for he knew not that she was his daughter-in-law. So she said, ‘What will you give me, that you may come in to me?’ And he said, ‘I will send you a young goat from the flock.’ And she said, ‘Will you give me a pledge, till you send it?’ Then he said, ‘What pledge shall I give you?’ So she said ‘Your signet and cord and your staff that is in your hand.’ Then he gave it to her and came in to her and she conceived by him.”

Verses 24-26, “And it came to pass, about three months later, that Judah was told, saying, ‘Tamar your daughter-in-law has played the harlot; furthermore she is with child by harlotry.’ So Judah said, ‘Bring her out and let her be burned!’ When she was brought out, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, ‘By the man to whom these belong, I am with child.’ And she said, ‘Please determine whose these are—the signet and cord, and staff.’ So Judah acknowledged them and said, ‘She has been more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah my son.’ And he never knew her again.”

4. What was the significance of the “scarlet thread”?

This was important because the firstborn would receive the scepter promise.

5. What happened to Joseph in the twenty years that elapsed between his sale into Egypt and the next time that they saw him?

After being sold into Egypt, he was sold to Potiphar and ended up in jail. He interpreted dreams and was given great position and rulership.

6. What was the significance of Pharaoh’s dream?

It showed there was to be seven years of plenty and seven years of drought to immediately follow. He had two dreams to emphasize.

7. What did Joseph recommend doing in preparation for the famine?

He recommended storing up twenty percent of the harvest for seven years and selling it during the years of famine.

8. How did Joseph get his brothers to bring Benjamin back to Egypt?

He told them he suspected them of being spies and would not sell them grain until they brought back his younger brother.

9. In what way did Joseph test his brothers to see how they had changed over the years since they had callously sold him into slavery?

He told them he suspected them after they were ready to leave. He told his steward to put his personal cup in Benjamin’s sack. He wanted to see if they were willing to sacrifice for Benjamin and to see if they had learned their lesson. There was a change. He had put them to the test.

10. How old was Jacob when he came into Egypt?

Jacob was one hundred thirty years old (Genesis 47:9).

11. What land was given Jacob and his family when they entered Egypt?

It was the land of Goshen (Genesis 47:6), the area in which the Suez Canal was constructed by the birthright nations. France had a first opportunity, but it belonged to the British.

12. What was the significance of Jacob crossing his hands on the heads of Ephraim and Manasseh when he blessed them?

His right hand, with the greater blessing, was given to Ephraim. Manasseh, the firstborn, became a great single and powerful nation. But Ephraim became the greatest empire the world has ever seen. In a period of, basically, over a century, one-fourth of the land's surface and one-fourth of the people were British subjects. They controlled all the strategic sea gates except Panama, and we (U.S.) controlled that. Now it is a chaotic mess. Israel, as a whole, does not appreciate what God gave them. Israel was intended to be used as a blessing to other nations.

13. Who, according to Scripture, would the name of Israel primarily apply to in prophecy?

Ephraim and Manasseh (Genesis 48:16).

14. To what time period do the prophecies of Genesis 49 apply?

It applies to the end time (Genesis 49:1).

Reuben: Genesis 49:3-4, “‘Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power. Unstable as water, you shall not excel, because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it—he went up to my couch.’” ‘Reuben, you are the beginning; you are the starter.’ France has been known for culture, protocol and etiquette. No one can hold up to the reputation that France has had in terms of culture, dignity and protocol—a pride in excellence and in power.

One of the unstable things is the government of France. It is called the fifth republic. At a time when we are celebrating the first constitution, France has had about ten: the first and second republic, Napoleon the third, the fourth and DeGaulle the fifth republic—basically ten constitutions in all. They are unstable. There is a certain instability that has been there that has

tended to be characteristic. They were the starting point.

There is a certain rivalry between Reuben and Judah—between France and Britain. The French were in Panama first. Somehow, it just went through their hands. There has been that quality of going first class, but a certain instability that has been reflected is there. There are problems that have reflected themselves, in terms of morality of the family. They have under-minded what they could have had. Reuben is to be one of the great outstanding nations of Tomorrow's World. They have this greatness; they have all the makings of greatness. They couldn't quite get it together. They did not receive the birthright blessings. It has gone through their hands.

Simeon and Levi: vv. 5-7, “‘Simeon and Levi are brothers; instruments of cruelty are in their habitation. Let not my soul enter their council; let not my honor be united to their assembly; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they hamstrung an ox. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.’” They were instruments of cruelty. They were scattered through the inheritance. They were not to be given a separate nation.

Judah: vv. 8-12, “‘Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's children shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down; he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people. Binding his donkey to the vine, and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk.’”

He was to receive the scepter promise. The royal line in Europe is the descendant of Judah. The major promise given to Judah was the scepter promise. Judah has received the scepter.

Zebulun: v. 13, “‘Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea; he shall become a haven for ships, and his border shall adjoin Sidon.’” As you look in northwest Europe, where the tribes settle the area of the Netherlands (the very word “nether” refers to “that brought back from the sea”), you see Rotterdam and Amsterdam, the greatest seaports in the world—a haven for ships.

Issachar: vv. 14-15, “‘Issachar is a strong donkey, lying down between two burdens; he

saw that rest was good, and that the land was pleasant; he bowed his shoulder to bear a burden, and became a band of slaves [KJV, “tribute”].” This describes Finland, crouching between Russia and the West—Russia breathing down their necks and the West putting pressure. They have been willing to pay tribute rather than fight, which are certain family characteristics. You would never imagine the Irish doing that.

Dan: vv. 16-18: “Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, a viper by the path that bites the horse’s heels so that its rider shall fall backward. I have waited for your salvation, O Lord!” ‘I wait for Your salvation, O Lord!’ He was excluded from the one hundred forty-four thousand (Revelation 17), so he waits. Dan is like a serpent by the way. A serpent, when it goes, leaves its mark, a writhing, wiggling pattern. When they migrated, they named places after their ancestor Dan, all the way from up in the area of the Black Sea to, ultimately, Ireland. They went through Dan’s mark (Denmark), the Danube River and all the way up into Ireland. They have had certain proclivities in judging the people. They have been politicians and policemen, especially along the East Coast. When you think of the Irishmen, you think law and politics. “A serpent by the way”—that’s the way they have been toward Britain. The IRA and the situation come right down to today.

Gad: v. 19, “Gad, a troop shall tramp upon him, but he shall triumph at last.” Deuteronomy gives us more prophecies about the tribes.

Deuteronomy 33:21, “He provided the first part for himself, because a lawgiver’s portion was reserved there. He came with the heads of the people; he administered the justice of the Lord, and his judgments with Israel.” He executed justice and judgment. Switzerland is the nation of the troop. It has been said that it is a nation that does not have an army; it is an army. “Gad” means “troop.” On a per capita basis, it is the most heavily armed nation in the world and not entangling themselves with others.

Asher: v. 20, “Bread from Asher shall be rich, and he shall yield royal dainties.” –The area of Belgium. It describes everything from Belgium lace, chocolate and porcelains. It is also known for diamonds (Antwerp became the diamond capital) and trade. Deuteronomy 33 gives some parallels.

Deuteronomy 33:24, “And of Asher he said: ‘Let Asher be blessed of sons; let him be favored by his brothers, and let him dip his foot in oil. Your

sandals shall be iron and bronze; as your days so shall your strength be.’”

Naphtali: v. 21, “Naphtali is a deer let loose; he gives goodly words.” Naphtali is a female deer with promiscuous behavior. What is Sweden noted for? Goodly words—the Nobel Prize.

Joseph: vv. 22-26, “Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; his branches run over the wall. The archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him and hated him. But his bow remained in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), by the God of your father who will help you, and by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers.” –Growing up and spreading out, a colonizing people. It describes what is going to occur with Joseph. It was to be a colonizing nation.

Benjamin: v. 27, “Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.” The Vikings sailed under the wolf insignia—Norway and Denmark.

15. What major promise was given to Judah? The scepter promise was given to Judah.

16. What is the significance of Genesis 49:22? They would be growing and spreading out—a colonizing people.

Genesis 49:33, Jacob died.

Genesis 50:5-9, “‘My father made me swear, saying, ‘Behold, I am dying; in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me.’ Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father and I will come back.’” And Pharaoh said, ‘Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear.’ So Joseph went up to bury his father, and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, as well as all the house of Joseph, his brothers and his father’s house. Only their little ones, their flocks, and their herds they left in the land of Goshen. And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen, and it was a very great gathering.”

Verses 13-14, “For his sons carried him to the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of

the field of Machpelah, before Mamre, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite as property for a burial place. And after they buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers and all who went up with him to bury his father.”

Verse 15, “When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, ‘Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him.’” They figured Joseph was going to get even with them now that their father was dead.

Verses 19-21, “Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about, as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.’ And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.” Joseph said, ‘I will take care of you.’

Verse 22, “So Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father’s household. And Joseph lived one hundred and ten years.”

Verses 24-26, “And Joseph said to his brethren, ‘I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land, to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.’ Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, ‘God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.’ So Joseph died, being one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.” Joseph died in faith and said, ‘I want to go into the Promised Land when you go.’ In Exodus they brought Joseph’s remains when the children of Israel left Egypt (Exodus 13:19).

We have gone through a major section as a survey. I would refer you back to some material. Go through the study questions and the Bible Story Book, a running commentary on the material, and the booklet, What’s Ahead for America and Britain?

We have had, in the book of Genesis, some things that lay a foundation in understanding prophecy, and all of the things that come after. Without a foundation—the book of Genesis—you can’t understand prophecy. We also have, in the context of this kind of material, things they did, the good things and the bad. And from that we also might learn lessons and recognize that there are child-rearing principles and examples that were inspired to be written down.

Bible Study # 12 Questions

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

Genesis 37—50

1. What mistake on Jacob's part led to some of the resentment that Joseph's brothers showed toward him?
2. What did Joseph himself do that aggravated the problem?
3. Was Judah a believer in the double standard? Prove.
4. What was the significance of the "scarlet thread"?
5. What happened to Joseph in the twenty years that elapsed between his sale into Egypt and the next time that they saw him?
6. What was the significance of Pharaoh's dream?
7. What did Joseph recommend doing in preparation for the famine?
8. How did Joseph get his brothers to bring Benjamin back to Egypt?
9. In what way did Joseph test his brothers to see how they had changed over the years since they had callously sold him into slavery?
10. How old was Jacob when he came into Egypt?
11. What land was Jacob and his family given when they entered Egypt?
12. What was the significance of Jacob crossing his hands on the heads of Ephraim and Manasseh when he blessed them?
13. Who, according to scripture, would the name of Israel primarily apply to in prophecy?
14. To what time period do the prophecies of Genesis 49 apply?
15. What major promise was given to Judah?
16. What is the significance of Genesis 49:22?

Bible Study # 13
February 23, 1988
Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—Exodus 1—18
(Chart at end)

In this Bible study, we **will be covering the first eighteen chapters which deals with the Exodus per se.** Joseph had come to power under the Hyksos rulers of Egypt. Joseph died in 1611 B.C. Within a period of time of about fifty years after Joseph's death, the Hyksos were overthrown and expelled from Egypt. The Dynasty of Thebes XVIII, of Ethiopian origin, came into power in 1567 B.C. (see chart). Some of the common names you will notice are "Moses," "Amose," "Tutmose," etc., being found in the dynasty, the dynasty logical to find Moses—and this is where we find him.

Dynasty XVIII was the dynasty of the oppression. They began systematically oppressing the children of Israel for about forty years, to the time that brings us to the birth of Moses. Hatshepsowe was the Pharaoh's daughter who adopted Moses. She died during the same year that Moses was forced to flee Egypt. Once she was dead, Moses was unsafe in Egypt. The idea of a prince of Egypt being indicted on a murder charge was unusual. Thutmose III was Hatshepsowe's stepson. She had been the regent on the throne until he became an adult. He became kind of a co-ruler. After Hatshepsowe's death, Moses' stepbrother was in full charge, and there was a great deal of rivalry. From 1483-1443 B.C., Moses stayed away. Amenhotep II (1450-1425 B.C.) was the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

Exodus 1 picks up the story, as Genesis left off, with the names of the children of Israel.

Exodus 1:1-6, "Now these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt; each man and his household came with Jacob: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin; Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher. All those who were descendants of Jacob were seventy persons (for Joseph was in Egypt already). And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that generation." Joseph died and all his brethren. The family had been there for seventy-one years. (Israel came into Egypt in 1682 B.C.; Joseph died in 1611 B.C.) You had in excess of three generations that would have been born during that time.

Verse 7, "But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew

exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them." The family increased tremendously. They began to literally multiply out.

After the death of Joseph there was a period of about fifty more years during which some of his brothers outlived him and the Hyksos were expelled. Then for fifty more years they multiplied. By the time the Hyksos were expelled, they were a large and sizeable community.

Verses 8-14, "Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, 'Look the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land.' Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel. So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in bricks, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor."

The Egyptians systematically made the situation worse. Work gangs and various restrictive laws were passed over a period of about forty-five years; they even attempted wiping out the nation by destroying the male children (vv. 15-22).

Verses 8-22 are a consolidation and summary of a fifty-year period. A lot can happen in fifty years.

Exodus 2:1-6, "And a man of the house of Levi went and took as wife a daughter of Levi. So the woman conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he was a beautiful child, she hid him three months. But when she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds in the river's bank. And his sister [Miriam] stood afar off, to know what would be done to him. Then the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river. And her maidens walked along the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby wept. So she had compassion on him, and said, 'this is one of the Hebrews' children.'"

Hatshepsowe came down to bathe, saw him and adopted him. God had planned for Moses' training. Miriam was nearby watching.

Verse 7, “Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, ‘Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?’” She went back and got her mother (v. 8).

Here, Moses’ mother was able to raise Moses under the protection of Pharaoh’s daughter. You see how God worked things out to make sure that Moses was brought up with a knowledge and understanding of God’s truth. He grew up being taught by his mother and yet being reared in Pharaoh’s court with the best education that was available and offered to a prince of Egypt.

Hebrews 11:24-27, “By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.”

He cast his lot with the children of Israel. He had to make a decision. With whom was he going to identify—with Egypt or with God, what He was doing and the people of God.

Exodus 2:11-12, “Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.”

Verse 13, word spread very quickly.

Verse 14, “Then he said, ‘Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?’ So Moses feared and said, ‘Surely this thing is known!’” Moses knew that this thing was known; he knew that his step-mother was dead and would not be able to protect him. He also knew Thutmose III looked at him as a rival. He got out of Egypt.

Verse 15, “When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian....”

The Midianites were the descendants of Abraham. After Sarah’s death he married Keturah (Genesis 25:1). The Midianites were descendants of Abraham and Keturah. They were the same stock of people as the Israelites. That is why we find this priest of Midian with the knowledge of the true God. Moses married one of the daughters (v. 21).

Exodus 2:23-24, “Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. So God heard their groaning and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.” The situation was continuing to deteriorate.

Exodus 3:1, “Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian....” “Jethro” was a title that meant “excellency,” a title of respect.

The story of the burning bush is told.

Verse 2, “And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, but the bush was not consumed.” God began to speak to him out of the bush.

Verses 5-9, “Then He said, ‘Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.’ Moreover He said, ‘I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said: ‘I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.’”

Moses used various excuses to try to get out of his calling.

Verses 10-11, “Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh [Excuse: I am not important enough.], and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt.’”

Verses 12-14, “So He said, ‘I will certainly be with you [yes, you can; I will be with you.]. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.’ Then Moses said to God, ‘Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you,” and they say to me, “What is His name?” What shall I tell

them?’ [Excuse: I don’t know what to call Him.] And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the children, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” ‘The I AM, THE EVERLASTING ONE has sent you.’

Exodus 4:1-4, “Then Moses answered and said, ‘But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, “The Lord has not appeared to you.”’ [Excuse: They won’t believe me.] So the Lord said to him, ‘What is that in your hand?’ And he said, ‘A rod.’ And He said, ‘Cast it on the ground.’ So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent. Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Reach out your hand and take it by the tail’ (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand).” Just a stick! A real test! I imagine he had to think about that one.

Verses 6-7, “...‘Now put your hand in your bosom.’ And he put his hand in his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, like snow. And He said, ‘put your hand in your bosom again.’ So he put his hand in his bosom again, and drew it out of his bosom, and behold, it was restored like his other flesh.”

Verse 9, “And it shall be, if they do not believe even these two signs, or listen to your voice, that you shall take water from the river and pour it on the dry land. And the water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry land.”

These were three miracles to strengthen Moses.

Verse 10, “Then Moses said to the Lord, ‘O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue’” [Excuse: I am not a good speaker.]. God was not well pleased with Moses’ excuses. When God has a job for you, and you start making excuses, God doesn’t like that.

Verses 11-13, “So the Lord said to him, ‘Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord? Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.’ But he said, ‘O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send’” [Excuse: I can’t do it and don’t want to; can’t You send someone else?].

Verses 14-20, “So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and He said: ‘Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. [God is getting pretty fed up with this. Moses was probably saying, ‘I don’t remember how to speak Egyptian.’] And look, he is also coming out to meet you. [Now go! You get there and meet him.] When he sees you,

he will be glad in his heart. Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do. So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God. And you shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs.’ So Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said to him, ‘Please let me go and return to my brethren who are in Egypt, and see whether they are still alive.’ And Jethro said to Moses, ‘Go in peace.’ And the Lord said to Moses in Midian, ‘Go, return to Egypt, for all the men are dead who sought your life.’ Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt...”

Verse 24, “And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the Lord met him and sought to kill him.” The point is God waited to see how long this thing would go. Moses was the meekest man in all the earth. Mrs. Moses wasn’t the meekest woman in all the earth. She had not wanted the children circumcised; Moses had given in for her to have her way.

God has standards He expects. Here was someone going back claiming to represent God and telling Israelites what to do, and he had not even exercised it in his own family. He was ready to cross the border never having circumcised his son. God struck him down sick to where he became deathly ill. It was apparent, ‘You are going to do it, or you are going to die. Do what I called you to do. The reason you draw breath on this earth is for the job I called you to do.’

Verse 25, “Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses’ feet, and said, ‘Surely you are a husband of blood to me!’” Interestingly enough, God allowed Moses to be so sick that Zipporah had to do it herself.

Verse 26, “So He let him go. Then she said, ‘You are a husband of blood!’—because of the circumcision.” She was probably in a “wonderful” attitude about this.

Exodus 5:1-2, “Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel: “Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.”’” And Pharaoh said, ‘Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go.’”

He said, ‘Who is the Eternal that I should obey His voice? I don’t know anything about this

YHWH.' These were famous last words. God made Himself very well known to Pharaoh, to where he did not have any doubt as to whom God was. God introduced Himself here. The ultimate plan and purpose was to lead Israel out, but that was not the first thing Moses told him.

Verse 3, "So they said, 'The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go three days' journey into the desert and sacrifice to the Lord our God....'" —To journey into the wilderness to serve God.

There are several lessons we can learn here. One of the things that you notice as you go through, this fellow wanted them to compromise.

Pharaoh gave three compromises to Exodus 5.

Exodus 5:1, "Let us go into the wilderness...."

(1) Exodus 8:25, "Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron, and said, 'Go, sacrifice to your God in the land.'" 'Why don't you serve Him here?'

(2) Exodus 10:11, "... 'Go now, you who are men, and serve the Lord, for that is what you desired.'" 'You go and serve Him and let the kids stay behind.'

(3) Exodus 10:24, "Then Pharaoh called to Moses and said, 'Go, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be kept back. Let your little ones also go with you.'" 'You go and take the kids but let the animals stay behind. I'll keep your resources.'

When you get ready to serve God, the devil wants you to do it on his terms. He wants you to stay here in Egypt. You cannot remain a part of this world, spiritual Egypt, and serve God. You have to come out. 'Well, at least let me keep your kids.' He doesn't want you to do it; but if you do it, do it in a compromising way. 'Give me your kids and go yourself.' 'I would like to keep your resources; you will have so many ties, you will come back.' It is a parallel to the Christian life of coming out of Egypt.

Pharaoh's original response was:

Exodus 5:17-18, "But he said, 'You are idle! You are idle! Therefore you say, "Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord." Therefore go now and work....'" 'You obviously have too much time on your hands.'

Verse 21, "And they said to them, 'Let the Lord look on you and judge, because you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us.'" They said, 'You have us in enough trouble. We want God to solve our problems, but we want Him to do it our way.' In the process of the delivery, the temperature began to get turned up. They were continually complaining.

Exodus 6:1, "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh....'" As we go through the account, God told Moses, 'You are going to see what I am going to do to Pharaoh.'

Exodus 7:5, "'And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them.'" 'They are going to know who I am.'

How did God harden Pharaoh's heart? Pharaoh asked that they take the problem away, and when God removed the problem, then he said to himself, 'that is probably the worse He can do.' Every time the pressure was off, he hardened his heart.

Then we go through the ten plagues God sent Egypt:

(1) He turned the Nile to blood (Exodus 7:20-21). They worshipped it as a god. They viewed it as a life-giver; God was the giver of life. The first thing He did was to turn their god into the river of death.

(2) Frogs came upon the land (Exodus 8:5-6). They worshipped the frog as the god of wisdom. You will have frogs everywhere. It wasn't long before they were killing their gods. God was showing them that the things they looked to and worshipped were no god.

(3) Lice came on man and beast (Exodus 8:16-17). They prided themselves on cleanliness.

(4) Flies swarmed (Exodus 8:24).

(5) Livestock died (Exodus 9:6). They worshipped the cows. There is a lot of correlation between the Hindu religion of India and the religion of Egypt. The Eastern branch of the Cushites was in India, and the Western branch was in Upper Egypt in Ethiopia.

(6) Boils broke out in sores (Exodus 9:10). They really prided themselves on their great medical skills.

(7) Hail came throughout the land (Exodus 9:22).

(8) Locusts covered the earth (Exodus 10:13).

(9) Darkness blotted out the sun (Exodus 10:21). The god of Egypt was the sun god; He blotted out their god. God was getting their attention. Moses was continuing to go to Pharaoh. Pharaoh kept backing down. Then the final plague:

(10) Death of the firstborns (Exodus 12:29).

At what point did He make a clear-cut division between the Israelites and the Egyptians?

Exodus 8:22-23, "'And in that day, I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there, in order that you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the land. I will make a difference between My people and your people. Tomorrow

this sign shall be.” The difference was between the third and the fourth plagues. One of the things to note is that God did not isolate His people from all the problems. They suffered from the plagues. As our society goes “down the drain,” we will be affected to, but there will come a time when there will be a clear distinction. In terms of land, Israel was apart.

Exodus 11:1, “And the Lord said to Moses, ‘I will bring yet one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. Afterwards he will let you go from here....’”

Verses 4-5, “Then Moses said, ‘Thus says the Lord: About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt; And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on the throne, even to the firstborn of the maidservant who is behind the hand-mill, and all the firstborn of the beasts.’”

The origin of the term “Passover” is in Exodus 12.

Exodus 12:13, “Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will *pass over* you, and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.”

God gave Israel instructions. On this final plague, He was going to send the death angel to pass through the land of Egypt, and all the firstborn would die (11:4-5). If you didn’t want to die, you would have to kill a lamb and put the blood on the doorposts. All those underneath the blood of the lamb, the death angel would pass over (12:13). The only way they could be exempted from death was to be dwelling underneath the blood of the lamb. If you were, He would pass over you and not smite the firstborn.

Verse 2, “‘This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year in you.’” —The month “Abib” means “green ears of grain” or “new beginnings.”

Verses 3-8, “Speak to the congregation of Israel, saying; ‘On the tenth day of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man’s need you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight.

And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.” They were to kill it at twilight, between sunset and total darkness.

Verse 9, “‘Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire—its head with its legs and its entrails.’” It was not to be eaten raw, but roasted with fire; the entire animal is to be saved.

Verses 10-11, “‘You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire. And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord’s Passover.’” It is to be eaten in haste.

Verse 12, “‘For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord.’” —“Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment.” The plagues destroyed the things that the Egyptians worshipped. In the book of Revelation, God is going to execute vengeance against all the gods of modern Egypt. They will be shown to be no gods.

Verse 14, “‘So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance.’” —An ordinance forever.

Verse 15 goes through this particular Festival, the Days of Unleavened Bread. Why did Israel roast the lamb with the head, the legs and the entrails? It was bled and the entrails were cleaned out. They were kept in the fire; it was a part of the sacrifice. It was kept whole; there was not a bone broken. It was a whole sacrifice. It was a symbolism of Christ. It was roasted over a hot bed of coals.

We come down to vv. 28-31, “Then the children of Israel went away and did so; just as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did. And it came to pass at midnight that the Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on his throne, to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock. So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead. Then he called for Moses and

Aaron by night [the wee hours of the morning], and said, ‘Rise and go out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel. And go, serve the Lord as you have said.’”

Moses was in an area across the Nile; Pharaoh was in Memphis. So Moses had to cross over to where Pharaoh was. What transpired here was a period of several hours from the death of the firstborn to the time of sending for Moses.

In vv. 35-36, Moses told the Israelites to gather the things that they had. They collected back wages for the things that they had done. This took place during the daylight. They were forming up.

Verse 37, “...about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children.” You are looking at six hundred thousand families. They spent all day getting loaded up and organized. They had to be notified, and their animals gathered up. They formed up there at Ramses and journeyed to Succoth.

Verse 42, “It is a night of solemn observance to the Lord for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is that night of the Lord, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.” This is the night after the Passover; the night God brought them out.

Verse 40, “Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.” If you just read Exodus, it would be difficult to understand.

Compare Exodus 12:40 with Galatians 3:16-17, “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one. ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ. And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God, in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.” —Confirmed four hundred thirty years later. Confirmed from what? It refers to “the law”; the covenant of Sinai was four hundred thirty years after the covenant with Abraham. The covenant of Sinai was made about six weeks after the Exodus. So from the time God made the covenant with Abraham, until He began to deliver Israel from Egypt, was four hundred thirty years.

Exodus 12:22, “...‘And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning.’” They were told to stay inside all night, not to go out till morning.

Verse 28, “Then the children of Israel...did so; just as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.” They actually did it! They

did what they were told—one of the few times they did what they were told.

You might also compare Numbers 33:3, “...on the day after the Passover, the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians.” They came out the day after the Passover.

We are told in Exodus 12:42 that they came out at night—a night to be much observed, the day after the Passover. It should be pretty apparent, when you put all the scriptures together, that they came out the night after the Passover. Some of the Jews of the New Testament period—the Pharisees and Sadducees—observed the Passover a day later than Jesus and His disciples observed it. The Jews follow their custom; we follow Christ’s custom. You have Christ’s example, which really settles it.

Exodus 13:3-7, “And Moses said to the people: ‘Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten. On this day you are going out, in the month Abib. And it shall be, when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites...which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the Lord. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters.’” —No leavening in all your quarters.

Verses 20-21, “So they took their journey from Succoth...and the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night.”

Verse 18, “So God led the people around by way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt.” The term “in orderly ranks” (KJV, “harnessed”) means “by five and around.” They lined up and marched, the only efficient way to move that many people. They were lined up by tribe, clan and family. They followed where God led.

Verse 19, “And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him...”

Exodus 14:2, “Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea.” God really led them into a box canyon. South

and west there were mountains; east was the Red Sea; and north was the way they came in. It looked impossible. They were led into a bottleneck. There is a point here: God doesn't like "back seat drivers." God will do it His own way. Sometimes we don't see what God is doing. God did it His way.

Exodus 15:26 gives the origin of God's healing covenant, "...If you diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord your God and will do that which is right in His sight, and will give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon you, which I have brought upon the Egyptians for I am the LORD that heals you." To the extent that Israel would totally yield to Him, He would solve their problems for them and would protect them.

Verse 22, "So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water."

Verse 24, "And the people murmured against Moses, saying, 'What shall we drink?'" Every time problems arose, every time things didn't go the way to suit them, they murmured.

Verse 25, "So he cried out to the Lord and the Lord showed him a tree; and when he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made a statute and an ordinance for them. And there He tested them." God healed the waters and used this as a point to test them.

Exodus 16:1-3, "And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt. Then the whole congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said to them, 'Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.'" They griped, murmured and complained, 'Why didn't you just leave us there? Now we are going to die of hunger.'

Verse 1, "And they journeyed from Elim and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin...on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt."

A month after the Exodus, God began to give them manna. God conclusively demonstrated to the Israelites which day was the Sabbath.

Verse 4, "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.'" God began to give them manna.

Verses 5, 22, "'And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily'...And so it was, on the sixth day, that they gathered twice as much bread..." Why was this?

Verse 23, "Then he said to them, 'This is what the Lord has said: "Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.'" —Because it was the Sabbath. You could do anything with manna. But if you gathered extra, it would rot, except on the Sabbath.

Verse 24, "So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it."

Verse 26, "'Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, there will be none.'" Every Sabbath none came. You had to gather a double portion on the sixth day. The Sabbath was in effect from the very beginning (Genesis 2:2-3). He is making it very plain by a miracle which day the Sabbath is.

Verses 27-28, "Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. And the Lord said to Moses, 'How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?'" God's Commandments and His laws were already in existence before Mount Sinai. The law did not come into existence at Sinai. The question here was, 'how long would they continue to refuse to keep my Commandments?'

Manna was like a round small seed and tasted like honey wafers (v. 31).

Exodus 17:3, "And the people thirsted there for water, and the people murmured against Moses, and said, 'Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?'" Every time something happened, the people were ready to blame Moses. Moses must have longed for the good old days as a shepherd.

Verse 7, "So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, 'Is the Lord among us or not?'" They tempted God.

Exodus 18:5, “and Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness, where he was encamped at the mountain of God.” Moses’ father-in-law was coming out to meet him.

Verse 9, “Then Jethro rejoiced for all the good, which the Lord had done for Israel, whom He had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians.” Jethro gave advice to Moses for the successful delegation of authority.

Verse 14, “So when Moses’ father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, ‘What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?’”

Moses said, ‘I am explaining God’s laws’ (vv. 15-16). God’s laws were already in existence. God’s statutes, laws and Commandments all were in existence before Mount Sinai. They didn’t come on the scene at Sinai and leave at some other point.

Verses 17-18, Jethro said, ‘This tremendous line of people will wear you out.’

Verses 21-22, “Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties and rulers of tens, and let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you.”

‘Appoint captains of ten, fifty, one hundred and one thousand; the people will come to the captains with problems for them to solve. Then if necessary, they will be brought up to you.’

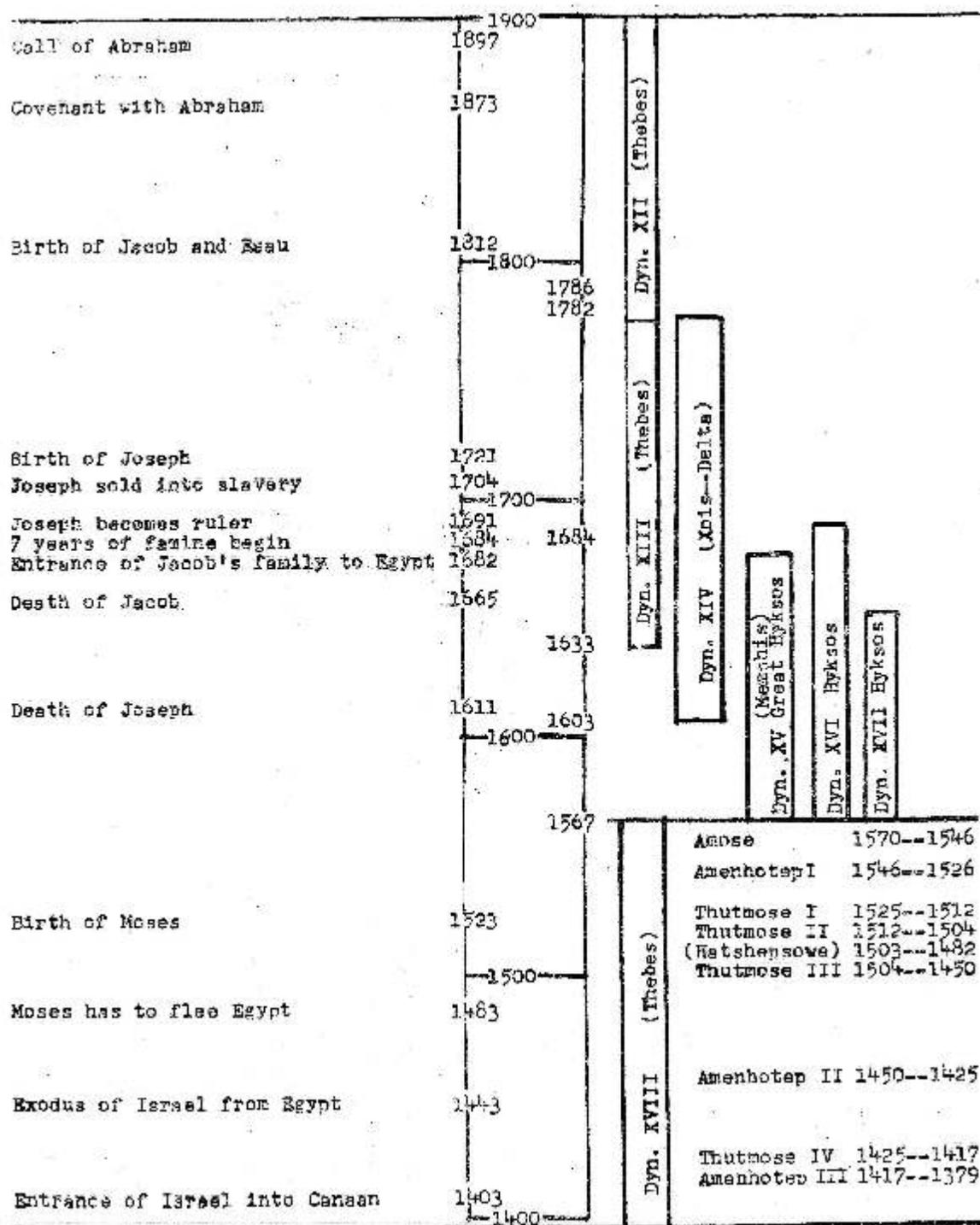
Verse 24, “So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law...”

This was used in the Big Sandy campgrounds; Mr. Herbert Armstrong did what Moses did here. They established that system, and we utilized the system in Big Sandy for the Feast of Tabernacles.

So we see here, the setting of the stage for the covenant that God was going to make with ancient Israel, which we are going to go into next time.

One of the things that becomes apparent is this is ***a survey course***, and in order for you to get the benefit out of it, you are going to have to ***read and study this material ahead of time***. That way

I can hit the highlights; we can try to focus in on the key points. In this way over the course of time, we will literally cover every book in the Bible. If we go through it systematically, it can be a tool in helping you to understand God’s word.



Chronology of Israel in Egypt

Bible Study # 13 Questions

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

Exodus 1—18

1. How many of Jacob's immediate family originally came into Egypt?
2. What happened after years passed, the first generation died and the family of Israel multiplied greatly?
3. In what way did God prepare Moses by way of training and background for the eventual job that He called him for?
4. Who were the people of Midian?
5. What excuses did Moses use to try to get out of His calling?
6. Explain Exodus 4:24.
7. What was the attitude of the Israelites after Moses' first encounter with Pharaoh?
8. How many plagues did God send on the Egyptians? What were they?
9. At what point in the plagues did God make a clear-cut division between the Israelites and the Egyptians?
10. What is the origin of the term "Passover"?
11. How long did God say the Passover was to be kept?
12. Explain Exodus 12:40.
13. Did the Israelites leave Egypt on the same night that they partook of the Passover? Prove.
14. Where is the origin of God's healing covenant with us?
15. What attitude did the Israelites display every time problems arose? Give examples.
16. How did God conclusively demonstrate to the Israelites which day was the true Sabbath?
17. What does "manna" mean? Describe it.
18. What good advice did Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, give to him?

Bible Study # 14
March 8, 1988
Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—Exodus 19—40
(Chart at end)

While the first eighteen chapters of Exodus deal more specifically with the Exodus per se, the latter half, Exodus 19-40, **deals with the Israelites' acceptance of the Covenant and all that it entails.** It sets the stage for the book of Leviticus. We find things that relate very directly to us today.

In Exodus 19, the Covenant is introduced. Moses went up the Mount to receive instructions (v. 3). Exodus 19:8, then God proposed the covenant and the people said, "All that the Lord has said, we will do."

In Exodus 20, God speaks the words of the Ten Commandments, which is the basis of the covenant God made with Israel.

Following the giving of the Ten Commandments, we have the statutes and judgments in Exodus 21, 22 and 23. They might be compared to the statements which Christ made in Matthew 5, 6 and 7, which also are judgments. Statutes and judgments are applications of the Commandments to specific times and circumstances.

In Exodus 21, 22 and 23, you will find the word "If" over and over again. The whole basis of the judgments was the application. What do you do with a physical nation that has the Ten Commandments? They have accepted God's Laws, but they are a physical, carnal nation, unlike the converted who have a heart that will obey (Deuteronomy 5:29). What do you do when someone does something they shouldn't? How does the nation respond? That is why you have the judgments. They were civil judgments; they contained principles that would be applicable to us. When you have that many people, you would have anarchy and chaos without this. There has to be a way of applying these things. If they had a heart of obedience, these judgments would never have come up.

When Christ gave the judgments in Matthew 5, 6 and 7, He was dealing with a people who had a heart of submission and obedience to God. It was the application of the Law to a converted people. Exodus 25:8 tells us God would dwell among them. It is said of us that God will dwell in us. That was the difference between Exodus 21-23 and Matthew 5-7. God was *among* Old Testament Israel; He dwells *in us* through the

power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9, 11) The Holy Spirit was not promised in the Old Testament. God promised them blessings here and now.

In Exodus 24, they formally accepted the Covenant.

Exodus 24:3, "So Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments. and all the people answered with one voice and said, 'All the words which the Lord has said we will do.'"

Exodus 25-31, Moses went up into the mountain and received further instructions.

In Exodus 32, he came down. By this time, they have broken the Covenant and built the golden calf. They didn't last six weeks.

Exodus 33:7-11 and 34:27 explain Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant; then he went back up into the mountain for a second forty-day period (34:28).

Exodus 35, the final instructions for the tabernacle were given.

Exodus 36-40, the building of the tabernacle occurs. The tabernacle was very important because of the symbolism involved. The tabernacle was a figure, an illustration for the time present.

There was a courtyard one hundred fifty feet long by seventy-five feet wide. The walls were seven and one-half feet tall. There were posts and curtains to make the walls, and then the tabernacle itself was at one end. It was a small room, fifteen feet wide and forty-five feet long. Inside the tabernacle, the front two-thirds was fifteen feet by thirty feet. In the Holy Place, the back one-third was the Holy of Holies fifteen feet square, and the ceiling was fifteen feet high—a cube. The front part of the tabernacle was fifteen feet by thirty feet and fifteen feet high. About halfway in the courtyard of the tabernacle, the first thing you would see was the altar of sacrifice. It was a giant barbeque pit; it was where they cooked the meat. You couldn't come to the tabernacle without passing the altar of sacrifice. Then you came to the oblong brazen laver. The priests immersed themselves in that before they went in and put on clean clothes. It was only after they washed that they could walk into the tabernacle.

All this had spiritual significance. You have to accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. You are washed by baptism, and you put on righteousness. The primary garment the priests wore was white linen.

Revelation 19:8 (KJV), "...fine linen is the righteousness of the saints."

Once in the tabernacle, you had on one side the seven-branched candlestick. It was like little cups holding olive oil; there were seven little cups on a lamp stand. That was the source of light. On the opposite wall, there was a table that had twelve loaves of unleavened bread. It was called “showbread” because it was shown in the presence of God. Incense was burned on the altar.

Revelation 5:8, “...golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.” It represents the prayers of the saints.

Into the Holy of Holies the high priest came once a year (Hebrews 9:7). That symbolized the very presence of God. Inside the Holy of Holies were the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat, symbolizing the very Throne of God. In the ark were tables of the Ten Commandments, the golden pot of manna, Aaron’s rod that budded and the scrolls of the Law (Hebrews 9:4)—what existed at that time.

When the priests came in for the morning and evening sacrifice, they built up a fire, took some of the coals of the altar and put it in the golden censor. Some of the sacrifice was burned and some roasted. Then they took some of the live coals and put them in this golden pan and put incense on them. It would loft back to the Holy of Holies. God gave instructions to Moses as to how this was to be done. Symbolism is involved here.

Hebrews 9:1-5, “Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lamp-stand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which had the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.”

Verses 9-10, “It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.” What laws were done away? How do you know what applies or doesn’t? Right here it tells you the only things that were temporarily imposed: the physical ceremony, the meat offerings, the oblations and the drink offerings. The physical ceremonies were imposed upon them until the “time of

reformation,” which was to make them aware of the fact that by the shedding of the blood, we are cleansed.

Hebrews 9:22, “...without shedding of blood there is no remission.”

The blood of bulls and goats was not able to take away sin (Hebrews 10:4), but they pointed to the fact that, without the shedding of blood, there was no remission of sin. It pointed to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

God set these symbolisms of cleanness to impress on us that we must be clean to be the people of God. If God would not dwell in the midst of physical uncleanness, how much more would He not dwell in the midst of spiritual uncleanness? It looked forward to the fact that, if you were going to be in the presence of God, you had to be clean.

Three basic things are fundamental:

(1) You need a Savior. You have sinned. Every time the blood of that bull or goat was poured out, you were reminded of your need to be clean.

(2) You have to be clean. That was what the ritualistic washings were all about. You could not be polluted. God will not put up with uncleanness.

(3) God wanted things done a specific way through the rituals. You serve God the way God wants to be served.

These things were added until the time of reformation (9:10), until the time of Jesus Christ. These things were added because they broke the covenant (Jeremiah 7:22-24; Galatians 3:19). Israel was separated out by God—they were to be distinct from the world around them. There was a separateness that set them apart.

The **altar** of the burnt offerings pointed to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God set these symbolisms about cleanness to impress on us that we must be clean to be the people of God.

The **candlestick** was used in Revelation to represent the different eras of the Church (Revelation 1:20) and to be a light to the world.

The **incense** represented the prayers of the saints.

The **veil** of the temple was rent in two (Matthew 27:51). Prior to at the death of Jesus Christ there wasn’t access to God the Father. It was the death of Jesus Christ that made it possible to have direct access to God the Father.

The **Holy of Holies** signified the very throne of God.

Sometimes we get bogged down in details and fail to see the significance of some of these things. God wanted it done a specific way. God uses certain physical things to teach spiritual lessons. That is why we are to avoid certain

physical things. If you don't practice doing it right, you get the wrong things embedded in you. They can convey the right or the wrong lessons.

Questions

1. What did God have in mind for Israel to become?

Exodus 19:5-6, “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all the people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priest and a holy nation....” They were to be a light to the world, and to set an example to the world.

I Peter 2:9, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” Peter was paraphrasing that section in Exodus 19:5-6. What God had in mind for Israel in a physical sense, we have stressed to the Church in a spiritual sense. We are peculiar, special and different. The way we conduct ourselves ought to be different than the world around us. The world around us reflects a certain value system. The last thing anyone is interested in is godly values. It is whatever will sell. We are not trying to be like the world. We are to reflect God's values, and if you are, you will not be like the world around you.

2. Upon what was that promise conditional?

Exodus 19:5, “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people....” IF you obey, I am going to use you in this way. God had made a promise to Abraham that was unconditional. Since Israel did not follow through with the Covenant, the blessings were to be withheld. They were going to be punished.

God began to talk.

Exodus 20:1-17, “And God spoke all these words, saying: ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love

Me and keep My commandments. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.”

3. What was the people's reaction after they heard God speak the Commandments?

Genesis 20:18-19, “Now all the people witnessed the thundering, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, ‘You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.’” It scared the daylights out of them.

Then God instructed them as to what they were to do and the type of altar that was to be made.

Verses 23-25, “You shall not make anything to be with Me—gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves. An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you. And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone, for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it.”

In Exodus 21, 22, 23 we have the statutes or judgments that God gave.

Chapter 21:2, “If”; v. 4, “If”; v. 7, “if”; v. 8, “If”; v. 9, “if”; v. 11, “if”; v. 13, “if.” “If” is in almost every verse. The point is these are judgments. What do you do if someone does this or that? It doesn't say you are to do all these things. But if you do this, then this is to be done. That is the key word to understand the judgments. Since you

are dealing with people who are going to be doing things they shouldn't do, these principles were given.

4. What was the maximum length of time that an Israelite servant would normally belong to his master?

Exodus 21:2, “If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing.” –Six years. Understand that slavery, as it is spoken of in the scripture, was a matter regulated by law. There were certain things you couldn't do. When a person got himself in debt and couldn't pay, then it was a matter that he had to work it out. It was not an indefinite thing. The seventh year he went out free. We are looking primarily at an agricultural society. If he couldn't manage his own affairs, then he ended up working for somebody else. Or he may have committed a crime—he worked it out. In crimes against property, restitution was made. It taught responsibility. And there came a time when you would be given a fresh start.

Crimes against persons were different.

Verse 12, “He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death.”

Verse 13, “But if he did not lie in wait, but God delivered him into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee.” If it's not premeditated, appoint him a place where he can flee.

Verse 14, “But if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor, to kill him with guile, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die.”

5. What was the civil penalty for kidnapping?

Exodus 21:16, “He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death.” It was the death penalty. It was simply a matter that there are types of crimes that as a person does them, there is no place for them in society.

Verses 28-29, an ox goring; the ox is put to death. If it was known in the past that this animal would do that, then the owner was also put to death. He knew he had a violent animal and didn't keep it pinned up. He had been warned. It was a matter of liability. If you didn't know, then it was considered an accident.

Verse 30, “If there is imposed on him a sum of money, then he shall pay to redeem his life, whatsoever is imposed on him.”

In crimes against property, restitution was made. It taught responsibility.

Verse 35, if a couple of animals got in a fight, they have to share the loss. There were principles of liability.

Exodus 22 gets into theft.

Exodus 22:1, “If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep.”

Verse 5, “If a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed and lets loose his animal and it feeds in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard.”

Verse 6, “If fire breaks out and catches in thorns, so that stacked grain, standing grain, or the field is consumed, he who kindled the fire shall surely make restitution.”

Verse 7, “If a man delivers to his neighbor money or articles to keep, and it is stolen out of the man's house, if the thief is found, he shall pay double.”

Verse 21, “You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” If someone was of another ethnic background than Israel, you don't take advantage of them—you are not to mistreat a stranger or oppress him.

Verse 22, “You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child.” You don't afflict any widow or fatherless child, someone who can't take care of themselves.

Verse 25, “If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; you shall not charge him interest.” You don't make money off of a poor person—loaning them something and charging them interest.

6. What does the law say concerning borrowed property?

Exodus 22:14-15, “And if a man borrows anything from his neighbor, and it becomes injured or dies, the owner of it not being with it, he shall surely make it good. But if its owner was with it, he shall not make it good; if it was hired, it came for its hire.” This deals with the subject of borrowing. The principle is that, in the case where you borrow something and you break it, you are responsible for replacing it. It was also a matter of liability.

7. What scripture applies to the subject of “reverse discrimination”?

We saw earlier that you were not to mistreat a stranger or oppress him.

Exodus 23:2, “You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to

turn aside after many to pervert justice.” You don’t follow the majority opinion of what is right or wrong. You stand for what is right. The Jews rendered it by hearing the youngest and then the eldest. They felt everyone should give his honest opinion and not just go along.

Exodus 23:3, “You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute.” You are not to oppress the fatherless, the widow and the poor, but you don’t stand for a person and favor them because they are poor.

Verse 6, “You shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute.” You don’t countenance him or take advantage. What is right is right.

8. How did God propose to rid the land of the Canaanites?

Exodus 23:27-30, “I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you. I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beast of the field become too numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land.” God would drive them out with hornets a little at a time. They went to war because they refused to trust God. They would never have had to go to war if they had trusted Him.

Verse 32, “You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods.” God knew that the intermixing of the cultures would not be good. No good thing would come out of it. We will see later in Judges that no good would come out of it.

9. What experience did the leaders of Israel have immediately after the making of the covenant?

Exodus 24:9-11, “Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity. But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God and they ate and drank.” A special occasion, a literal banquet took place. What they saw was very similar to the vision that Ezekiel saw. God manifested Himself here. Go back to Ezekiel 1 to see how this took place.

10. What subjects was Moses primarily instructed in while he was in the mount?

Exodus 25, 26, 27:

Exodus 25:8-9, “And let them make Me a sanctuary *that I may dwell among them*. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.” It was important that they follow the pattern. They made the table of showbread (vv. 23-30), the lamps (vv. 37-40), the curtains (26:1-13) and the beautiful colors (v. 31). The colors in the Ambassador auditorium are the same colors mentioned here in chapter 26. Mr. Armstrong saw this and said these must be the colors that God likes. God is a God of beauty.

Exodus 28:2, “And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty.” The priestly garments were called “holy garments” because they came into the presence of God.

11. What point did God stress as being the reason for all of the instructions that He had given Moses?

The reason for all the instructions God gave Moses was to impress coming into His presence and to signify the way He wanted things done.

Exodus 29:42-46, “This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet you to speak with you. And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by My glory. So I will sanctify the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. I will also sanctify both Aaron and his sons to minister to Me as priests. *I will dwell among the children of Israel* and will be their God and they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, *that I may dwell among them*. I am the Lord their God.”

There is a point that God stressed as to why He gave all of these instructions. The people had to be holy because God was going to dwell among them—a people of whom it was said, ‘God dwelt among them.’ They had to be sanctified and set apart. They have to be holy. The point of all these things was to impress that lesson of holiness.

Exodus 30:18-21, “...a *laver* of brass...between the tabernacle and the altar...for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not: or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire

unto the Lord. So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not. And it shall be a statute forever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generation.”

Exodus 30:25, 30, “...and you shall make these an holy anointing oil...it shall be a holy anointing oil. And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them, that they may minister unto Me in the priest’s office.”

12. What special covenant did God inform Moses of in the Mount?

Exodus 31:13-17, “Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: “Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you. You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath Day, he shall surely be put to death. Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a *perpetual covenant*. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.””

This is not the origin of the Sabbath. Israel knew about the Sabbath before Mount Sinai (Genesis 2:2-3). It is a sign between God and His people.

13. Explain Exodus 32:14.

Exodus 32:1, “Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, ‘Come let us make gods that shall go before us; for this Moses...we do not know what has become of him.’”

Verse 4, “And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, ‘This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt.’”

Verses 7-11, “And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, “This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!”’ And the Lord said to Moses, ‘I have

seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation.’ Then Moses pleaded with the Lord his God, and said: ‘Lord, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?’”

Exodus 32:14, “And the Lord relented [KJV, “repented”] of the evil which He thought to do unto His people.” What does that mean? “Repent” means “to turn away from.” God had mercy on them, and in His mercy, He did not visit on them the punishment that He had considered doing. They deserved to be wiped out.

Moses saw what was going on and he threw the tablets down (v. 19).

Verse 26, “then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, ‘Whoever is on the Lord’s side, let him come to me.’ And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him.” The Levites were not mentioned prior to this. He sent the Levites out to wipe them out (vv. 27-28). Remember what I told you about the Levites. God made a covenant with Israel (Exodus 19). There is nothing in the Covenant about sacrifices. It was a matter of obedience, but the people did not obey, so there were things added because of disobedience (Jeremiah 7:22-24; Galatians 3:19). Leviticus opens up with instructions on the sacrifices.

Who is on God’s side? The Levites said, ‘We are.’ So they were told to go and take care of the matter. One of their responsibilities was to keep things in line.

Moses was instructed to come back up the mount (Exodus 34:1-2).

14. How did God normally deal with Moses?

Exodus 33:11, “So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend...” –Face to face. Moses had a very special relationship with God. God dealt with Moses in a very unique manner.

Exodus 34:18-22, God reviewed certain things with him—the festivals. It goes through various types of things.

Exodus 34:27-28, “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.’ So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. He wrote on the

tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.”

After having come back again:

Exodus 34:29, “Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses’ hand when he came down from the mountain) that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him.”

15. In what context was Exodus 35:2-3 stated?

Exodus 35:2-3, “Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh day shall be a holy day for you, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord. Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. You shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the Sabbath day.” This has to be set in context. This instruction is the preface to the general instructions of building the tabernacle. They were to get started on the tabernacle. There were going to be a lot of things to be done—smelting metal and that sort. It didn’t take precedence of the Sabbath. Kindling a fire was a smelting fire. It was not a day that they were to be involved in work.

16. How long after the Exodus, was it before the tabernacle was completed?

Exodus 36—39 describe the building of the tabernacle.

Exodus 40:1-2, “Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ‘On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting.’”

Numbers 33:3, “They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of the Egyptians.” Moses finished the work just short of two weeks prior to a full year since the Exodus. The bulk of the book (Exodus 12-40) covers a year.

We have here the basis of God making a nation, a special nation, a holy nation, a nation that was to be different in the way that they conducted themselves. They were to be a holy nation, and God gave them all of these instructions. Perhaps we have a little bit more overview of this section of Scripture and the relationship that Israel had. As we look at it, we will understand civil law that will, once again, be applied in Tomorrow’s World. We are not now administering civil law. Some have been applied in this nation. We will notice the distinction between civil laws and ceremonial laws, which were to instruct in

spiritual principles and in the basic principles of the Law—the Ten Commandments—that apply to people of all time. It will be helpful in focusing in on this just prior to the Passover.

GOD'S ORGANIZATION OF ISRAEL'S CAMP

DIMENSIONS OF COURT
EX. 27: 9-19

DIMENSIONS OF TABERNACLE
EX. 26: 1-30

WEST

108,100

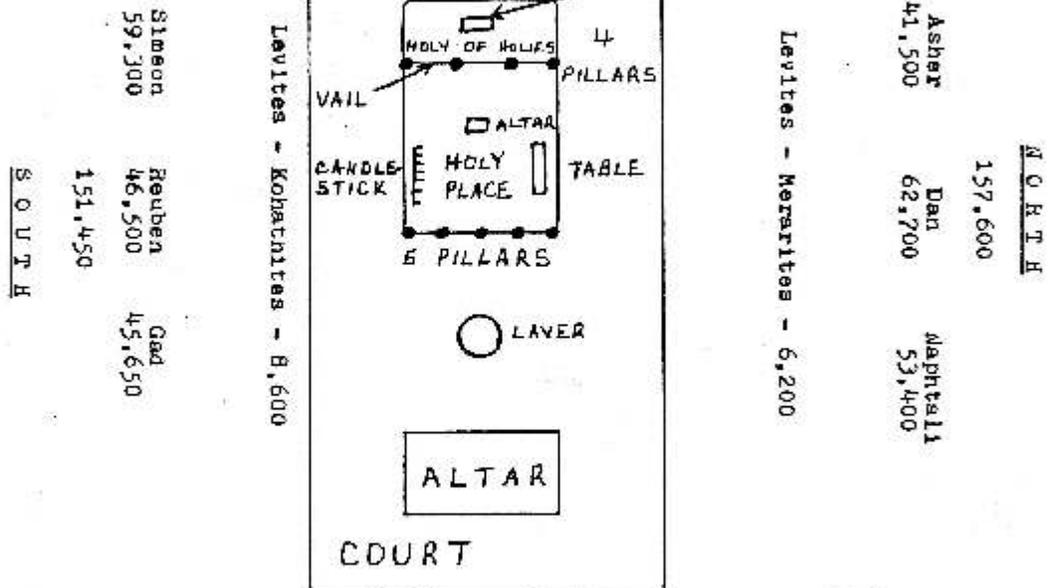
Manasseh
32,200

Ephraim
40,500

Benjamin
35,400

Levites - Gershonites - 7,500

ARK AND MERCY SEAT



Simeon
59,300

Reuben
46,500

Gad
45,650

SOUTH

Asher
41,500

Dan
62,700

Naphtali
53,400

NORTH
157,600

Moses Aaron Priests

Issachar
54,400

Judah
74,600

Zebulun
57,400

186,400

EAST

Bible Study # 14 Questions

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

Exodus 19—40

1. What did God have in mind for Israel to become?
2. Upon what was that promise conditional?
3. What was the people's reaction after they heard God speak the Commandments?
4. What was the maximum length of time that an Israelite servant would normally belong to his master?
5. What was the civil penalty for kidnapping?
6. What does the law say concerning borrowed property?
7. What scripture applies to the subject of "reverse discrimination"?
8. How did God propose to rid the land of the Canaanites?
9. What experience did the leaders of Israel have immediately after the making of the covenant?
10. What subjects was Moses primarily instructed in while he was in the mount?
11. What point did God stress as being the reason for all of the instructions that He had given Moses?
12. What special covenant did God inform Moses of in the Mount?
13. Explain Exodus 32:14.
14. How did God normally deal with Moses?
15. In what context was Exodus 35:2-3 stated?
16. How long after the exodus was it before the tabernacle was completed?

Bible Study # 15 & 16

Bible Study # 15

March 22, 1988

Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—Leviticus (Part 1)

The book we are going to get into this evening often gets overlooked, except for one or two chapters. We **are going to look at the overall theme of holiness and an overall outline of Leviticus.** It is a book that has a tremendous amount of significance for us today. You might wonder, why this significance? What does “Leviticus” mean? It means “to the Levites.” What was the function of the Levites? They were set aside as the priesthood.

The first time we see the Levites set aside was in Exodus 32:26-28 after the golden calf incident. Moses said, ‘Who’s on the Lord’s side,’ and the Levites said, ‘We are.’ They came forth and took a stand. In the aftermath of that, we find the next book is written to the Levites. They were set aside as the priestly tribe.

That has a lot of significance to us because we are ultimately called to be priests. When we read that we are to be kings and priests in Tomorrow’s World, this is very hard for us to relate to. What does it mean to be a priest? Most of us have some concept of what it is to be a king.

Taking a statement from Ezekiel 44, speaking of the priesthood, it explains the function of the priesthood:

Ezekiel 44:23-24, “‘And they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. In controversy they shall stand as judges, and judge it according to My judgments. They shall keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed meetings, and they shall hallow My Sabbaths.’”

The function of the priesthood is to teach the people to make distinctions as God makes them. Our distinctions are based on the ideas of the concepts around. The people were to be taught to make distinctions on the same basis that God makes distinctions. They had the responsibility to teach, and they had the responsibility of teaching God’s law. When a controversy came up, they were to make judgments according to God’s law. Church and state are very much intertwined.

Throughout the book of Leviticus, the emphasis is holiness. Israel, as a covenant people, must be

holy if God is to dwell among them. To impress upon them the need for holiness, there are seven sections we go through. Seven is a number God uses as a very significant factor to denote completion. It is used over and over throughout the book of Leviticus.

The book is divided into seven sections; each of these seven sections focuses on an aspect of holiness and defines how to be completely holy. God is holy, and where God places His presence is holy. We have in the tabernacle what was the Holy Place, and we have the Holy of Holies.

What makes something holy? God makes something holy by His presence. God dwelt in the tabernacle. The Sabbath is a holy day because God sanctified and set it apart and put His presence in it in a special way. Therefore, it is holy because God’s presence is in this time in a very special way. We find also the priests had holy garments. Why were they called holy? Because they were only used when they went into the Holy Place, only worn in the presence of God.

God wanted to impress upon ancient Israel that the people of God must be holy and that God will not dwell in the midst of uncleanness. He impressed that upon them by various physical ceremonies. They had to bathe and change clothes.

In Exodus 3:5, God told Moses, “take your shoes off, the ground you stand on is holy.” Because God was there, it was holy.

In Exodus 19:23-24, at Mount Sinai there was a fence. You can go there now, and it is not holy. That which comes into contact with God must be suitable to where God will impart holiness.

As we start out, I would like first to note the outline of the book of Leviticus:

Section I: Chapters 1—10 deal with the subject of offerings, the sacrificial system. This is the basis of our approach to God, the start for our journey to holiness. We don’t offer burnt offerings today.

Hebrews 9:10, “concerning only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.” There were only four things that were temporary added “until the time of reformation,” until the time of Christ.

Hebrews 10:1-6, “For the [sacrificial] law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have

ceased to be offered? For the worshippers, once purged, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have no pleasure.’”

Verses 10-18, “By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His foot stool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, ‘This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts and in their minds I will write them,’ then He adds, ‘Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’ Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.”

The price of our sins have been paid. This is the point; the price, the penalty for our sins has been paid. The sacrificial system pointed to Jesus Christ. He came as the Lamb of God (John 1:29) to pay the penalty for our sins.

Hebrews 9:11, “But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.” The sacrificial system in Leviticus was a type, a physical representation that pointed toward Jesus Christ and what He did. He came as the Lamb of God (John 1:29) to pay the penalty for our sins.

Galatians 3:24, “Therefore the [sacrificial] law was our tutor [KJV, “schoolmaster”] to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” The sacrificial system was a physical illustration to help teach lessons and to point out what the Messiah would do. It was a physical illustration for a people who did not have the Spirit of God, a people to whom God gave His basic Law and to whom He gave an outward physical symbolism to orient them toward something that was to come.

Hebrews 9:12-14, “Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place, once for all, having

obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goat and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

Verses 22-28, “And according to the law almost all things are purged with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”

The tabernacle was a physical pattern of things that actually existed in the heavenly realm.

Hebrews 10:3-4, 12, “But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins...But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.” It is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin but the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

The first ten chapters focus in on the sacrificial system, the offerings. This is the starting point of holiness. We cannot make ourselves holy. Only God can impart holiness. What is it that makes you holy? It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. God places His presence within you, then that makes you holy, just as He made that place holy where the burning bush was. “A holy people unto God” means “saint.” All converted Christians are saints. The saints will inherit the Kingdom of the Most High. He will give the Kingdom to the saints (Daniel 7:18). Those are the only ones who are going to be there. Being a saint is not a matter of human will. The first ten chapters tell us the basis of being a holy people. It is a matter that deals with our approach to God. It pointed to the final sacrifice of Jesus

Christ. We are able to approach unto our God. We have access to God. Sin cuts us off from God (Isaiah 59:2). God is holy; God is perfect holiness. God refuses in any way to be tainted with sin. If we are going to come into the presence of the Father, the price of sin has to be paid. Jesus Christ paid that.

Leviticus 1 starts out dealing with a burnt offering.

Leviticus 2, a meal, or grain offering.

Leviticus 3, the peace offering.

Leviticus 4, the way to deal with a sin offering.

Leviticus 5, a trespass offering.

Leviticus 6, trespass offerings.

Leviticus 7, the way in which offerings are to be made.

Leviticus 8, consecration of Aaron as a high priest.

Leviticus 9, gives more detail.

Leviticus 10 continues the same subject and here provides the illustration of individuals (Nadab and Abihu) who came into the presence of God improperly, and their lives were blotted out. You don't casually approach God. You don't treat the Creator of the Universe in a casual manner. You don't lightly esteem the things of God.

The first ten chapters deal with our approach to God. All of us are sinners. How do we gain access to a Holy God? The first ten chapters tell us. We need a High Priest to make intercession for us and to go between us and God. There must be a sacrifice; there must be the shedding of blood. That ties in very directly with the message of the Passover. Jesus Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin forever.

John 1:29, "...Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Our first step in our journey to holiness is our access to God.

Section II: Our next step in becoming a holy people is the second section of Leviticus, which are chapters 11-15. They deal with laws of clean and unclean, laws of cleanliness. It is not enough that the price for sin has been paid. We must continue and be cleaned up. Jesus Christ died in our stead, but what do we have to do? We have to repent.

Acts 2:37-38, "...Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" We have to be cleaned up. Jesus Christ did not die to save us in our sins. He died to save us from our sins. "From" means "away, out of." We have to

come out of sinning. He did not deliver Israel to stay in Egypt. Whatever we serve, that is whose slave we are (Romans 6:16). If we are the servant of sin, that is who our master is. God impressed upon Israel that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22). You can't leave out the first ten chapters.

Leviticus 11, clean and unclean meats and contact with unclean animals.

Leviticus 12, laws regulating motherhood.

Leviticus 13, contagious diseases.

Leviticus 14, individuals who have had contagious diseases.

Leviticus 15, various washings and uncleanness. These were outward, physical manifestations of uncleanness. What is taken and illustrated here is a physical basis, but the requirements in chapters 11-15 go beyond simply the things that would have been needed for a purely physical matter of health and hygiene. Notice the reason for the laws of clean and unclean.

Leviticus 11:43-45, "'You shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creeps; nor shall you make yourselves unclean with them, lest you be defiled by them. For, I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth. For I am the Lord who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God, You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.'"

Now that is not just the teaching of the Old Testament. What did Jesus say in the Sermon on the Mount?

Matthew 5:48, "'Therefore you shall become perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.'" We are to become like God because we are ultimately to become God. We are to be born into the Family of God and be His children. We are to bear the name God.

I John 3:1-3, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God! ...Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who had this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." We have to become like God.

The second step in that journey toward holiness, after the sacrifice has been made for sin, is we have to be made clean. We have to avoid those things that have tainted and polluted us. That which in the past has already tainted and polluted them had to be washed away, and they

were to avoid further contact with anything that was unclean—being physically unhygienic. He emphasized these things.

What is stressed here, we may have trouble getting the point of because we view it from a twentieth century standpoint. Why make such a big deal of washing? We are accustomed to taking a shower every day. It hasn't been that many years ago that people had a lot more trouble getting clean. If you had to clean your clothes by going to the creek or in an old pot, you wouldn't be washing every day.

Here were the Israelites; they didn't have running water and all these things (washing machines, etc.). It is in this context that God made a great issue with cleanliness. (The greatest cause of battlefield casualties during the Civil War was the doctor going from patient to patient, never washing his hands.) There was obviously a physical basis of the law given.

There were animals that were not meant to be eaten. All the way back to Noah, the clean and unclean animals were known. Every creature of God is good (I Timothy 4:4) but for different reasons. God made animals for different purposes. As you go through, the emphasis here is an emphasis that goes beyond simply physical necessities because God utilized what the people could see—things that were physically repugnant. God utilized those things on a physical level to illustrate a principle: sin is repugnant. Here was the camp of Israel, and the emphasis was if you want to come into the presence of God, you must be clean. It impressed the necessity to be washed.

The different meat and drink offerings and the various washings were added to illustrate another aspect that the sacrifices illustrated. First, Christ died and paid the penalty, but secondarily, we must be washed. The Holy Spirit is compared to rivers of living water (John 7:37-39). We are to be washed in the washing of water by the word (Ephesians 5:26). We are to be spiritually clean, we must avoid those things that would spiritually defile us, and we must clean up those things we have already been polluted with. Our values and the things we do—God's Spirit helps us to get rid of unclean thoughts and actions. Unclean actions are the result of unclean thoughts. God will not dwell in the midst of uncleanness. *First, the sacrifices; then we must get rid of sin.*

Section III: Now we come to the third section; chapter 16 deals with the Day of Atonement, the symbolism of the Day of Atonement and the putting away of Azazel. It's unfortunate that

words change. The term "scapegoat," as it was utilized in 1611 A.D., was simply a way of saying "the goat that escaped"—the one that got away. The term "scapegoat" has come over the centuries to be used as "someone who was unfairly blamed," someone who unfairly got the blame for what happened. That is what the term "scapegoat" has come to mean in English, which is entirely contrary to what is in Leviticus 16.

Satan the devil is being represented in Leviticus 16, and he certainly is not unfairly getting the blame. We have the symbolism of the Day of Atonement here. That is the next step for holiness. We have to have the penalty for our sins paid; we must be cleansed from our sins and begin that journey toward holiness and being one with God. Then that influence of Satan the devil must be purged away. It stands in the way of our being at one with God. So in Leviticus 16, *we have the third section which emphasizes the fact that the devil must be removed, as symbolized on the Day of Atonement.*

Section IV: The fourth section is Leviticus 17. This deals with *another aspect of our approach to God; this is the fact that our access to God must be through God's government.* We are on a journey to holiness. First comes the sacrifice of Christ, then our repentance, our being cleansed from sin through the washing and the water of the word. We must recognize the devil's part and that he must be removed. In the fourth section in our journey, notice what it says here:

Leviticus 17:2-9, "'Speak to Aaron, to his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them, 'This is the thing which the Lord has commanded, saying: 'Whatever man of the house of Israel, kills an ox or lamb or goat in the camp, or who kills it outside the camp and does not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, to offer an offering to the Lord before the tabernacle of the Lord, bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people, to the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices which they offer in the open field, that they may bring them to the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, to the priest, and offer them as peace offerings to the Lord. And the priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and turn the fat for a sweet aroma to the Lord. They shall no more offer their sacrifices to demons, after whom they have played the harlot. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations.'" And you shall

say to them: “What ever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn among you, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, and does not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, to offer it to the Lord, that man shall be cut off from among his people.””””

Now notice—you can’t go off and have an independent approach toward God. You cannot approach God your own way; you can’t just go out and do things the way you choose to do them. They didn’t go out in an open field and do it. They were indicted for the high places. Their approach was: ‘why do we have to go to the tabernacle and the priesthood; why can’t we go out and do those things ourselves, independently?’ You can’t be an “independent Christian.” To learn to be holy, you have to do it the way God wants it done. It is an important area emphasized here, the way that things had to be done. We are not to take a casual approach in offering offerings. We are to do what we do in the context of God’s government, with respect to where God is working. So this emphasis on God’s government and emphasis on this whole principle is brought out in chapter 17.

Section V: The fifth section is Leviticus 18-22. This deals with *our personal relationship—our relationship with other people*. We have seen our relationship with God made possible by Christ’s sacrifice, our being cleaned up, the devil’s responsibility in it and working through God’s government. Now we continue realizing that, if we are to be the people of God, our relationship with others must be appropriate. We must be clean and holy in our relationships with other people.

I John 4:20, “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar...” In this section, we see personal conduct regulated.

Leviticus 18:3-5, ““According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances. You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord.”””

You don’t get your standards of what’s right and wrong from the world around you. You don’t look to see what the commonly accepted morality is in this society. Society’s standards have changed drastically in the last two or three decades, but that has no bearing on anything.

Evil men grow worse and worse (II Timothy 3:13). God’s standards don’t change; you do it the way God says to do it.

Verse 27, “““(for all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled),””” It makes the land dirty.

When we start teaching in Tomorrow’s World, we will have to deal with morality. A society cannot be stronger than its family unit. The family is the basis of society. Morality is the basis of the family. When you destroy morality, you destroy the basis of the integrity of the family unit, and you have destroyed society. Then you have the equivalent of a pack of dogs running down the street; unfortunately, we have people who act like that. The dog is doing something that comes naturally. Human beings were made with the capacity to overcome. Leviticus 18 deals with various aspects of sexual immorality, various perversions. It goes into quite a bit of details.

Leviticus 19:1-3, “And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them; “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I am the Lord your God.””” We are to be a holy people unto our God; be holy for God is holy.

The remainder of chapter 19 deals with being generous when you harvest (vv. 9-10); being responsible for our brethren and keeping the Sabbaths (v. 30); and honoring the elderly (v. 32). It deals with all kinds of physical principles of conduct, the way we treat our neighbor and interact with other people.

Leviticus 20 explains a number of things that relate to people and personal actions. Israel was a nation as well as a Church. There has to be certain physical punishments meted out. The nation is doomed to anarchy if it is not cleaned out.

Ecclesiastes 8:11, “Because the sentence against an evil work in not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set to do evil.” There will be a swift punishment meted out.

Leviticus 20:7-8, ““Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am the Lord your God. And you shall keep My statutes, and perform them: I am the Lord who sanctifies you.”””

Verses 22-23, ““You shall therefore keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them, that the land where I am bringing you to

dwell may not vomit you out. And you shall not walk in the statutes of the nation which I am casting out before you; for they commit all these things, and therefore I abhor them.”” You don’t look to the world around you as a standard. Just because the world doesn’t see any big deal about it, it doesn’t mean that we should take that approach. You get back to what are the principles of God. God’s way is good, positive, uplifting, harmonious, excellence and beauty—things that are good and positive. The world’s way is opposite—things that are degenerate, that smack of rebellion, things that are unharmonious. Whether it is music, or whatever, recognize that there are values that we can see from the world around us that are false values. We can’t afford to follow the ways of this world.

Leviticus 21 and 22 outline special laws for the priests in their personal relationships because they were to set an example for the people. The high priest had even more stringent requirements on him because he was a type of Jesus Christ. It reflected even in his marriage. The high priest was required to marry a virgin (21:13). He could not marry a widow or someone divorced or someone tainted with immorality. None of the priests were to marry anyone who was divorced. The priests were to exemplify God’s way. A people never rise higher than the standard set by their leader. The high priest in his marriage was a type of Jesus Christ marrying the Church, the virgin bride of Christ (II Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:6-9). His office specifically typified Jesus Christ. That is the reason for the symbolism there. He was to be a physical type of Jesus Christ.

Section VI: Leviticus 23 *addresses the Church.*

It gives the Holy Days, which provide the outline of God’s plan. It reveals God’s holy plan to God’s holy people. It gives the way God is going to go about making the people His own, making them a part of His Family. It gives the outline of the Holy Days, the seven Festivals. These days are assigned to God’s people in that journey toward a special relationship with God, personal relationships and the plan by which God is making us His people.

Section VII: Leviticus 24-27 *deal with the laws of the nation.* It deals with miscellaneous instructions that relate very directly to the nation remaining as God’s holy people. Much of this section of Scripture even deals with matters of

economics. It deals with the laws of the Sabbatical year, the Jubilee.

We came through the approach toward God:

- (1) The sacrifice which illustrated the need for Christ’s sacrifice.
- (2) The laws of cleanliness—that we must be cleaned up.
- (3) Satan’s role—ultimately bearing the responsibility of sin.
- (4) The need for God’s government and our function in that government.
- (5) Personal relationships—chapters 18-22 give laws that relate to the people (individuals).
- (6) Chapter 23 addresses the Church.
- (7) Chapters 24—27 address the nation—how to be a holy nation.

Leviticus 24:22, ““You shall have the same law for the stranger and for one from your own country, for I am the Lord your God.””

Leviticus 25 continues with laws for the nation in terms of holiness: the Sabbatical Year (vv. 1-7) and the seventh Sabbatical Year ending with the Jubilee Year (vv. 8-16), which was the basis of the economic system and matters of usury (vv. 35-38).

Leviticus 26 tells what would happen to the nation in terms of blessings and curses.

Leviticus 27 is a wrap-up that deals with economic aspects, with tithing (vv. 30-32) and further instructions in detail of the Jubilee (vv. 17-25). So we have instructions to individuals, to the Church and to the nation.

As we begin to look at Leviticus, we have only gotten into an overview of it. Hopefully as a result of this evening, you have more of an overview of the book of Leviticus, and that it has a lot that applies to us. There are many, many lessons that we can learn. Even though many of the ritualistic aspects were added, they were to teach a lesson. Hopefully, we will learn that lesson and understand what is involved in holiness and what it means to be a holy people unto our God.

Bible Study # 16
April 12, 1988
Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—Leviticus (Part 2)

Last Bible study we focused on the overall theme of the book of Leviticus, the overall theme of holiness. We saw the emphasis that the people of God must be holy. The way we become holy is first and foremost access to God because God is the source of holiness. We went through an overall outline of the book and now we want to **summarize more specifically on the sacrificial system.**

In the first section of Leviticus, chapters 1-9 are on the various sacrificial offerings. There are five basic sacrificial offerings. Let us understand them, what their purpose and function was: (1) the burnt offerings, (2) the grain (or meal) offerings, (3) the peace offerings, (4) the sin offerings and (5) the trespass offerings.

The Burnt Offerings: Leviticus 1:1-10, 14, “Now the Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the tabernacle of meeting, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: “When any one of you brings an offering to the Lord, you shall bring your offering of the livestock—of the herd and of the flock. If his offering is a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish; he shall offer it of his own free will at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord. Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. He shall kill the bull before the Lord; and the priests, Aaron’s sons, shall bring the blood and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of meeting. And he shall skin the burnt offering and cut it into its pieces. The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar, and lay the wood in order on the fire. Then the priests, Aaron’s sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat in order on the wood that is on the fire upon the altar; but he shall wash its entrails and its legs with water. And the priest shall burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord. And if his offering is of the flocks—of the sheep or of the goats—as a burnt sacrifice, he shall bring a male without blemish...and if the burnt sacrifice of his offering to the Lord is of birds, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves or young pigeons.””

Verse 3, ““...he shall offer it of his own free will...”” Jewish translation renders it, “that he may be accepted before the Lord”—an offering to guarantee acceptance. That he may be accepted. An introductory offering, it was killed and flayed and washed by the individual and presented. The whole thing was burned. This typified Jesus Christ, that we might have access to God. This was a total sacrifice. This sacrifice looked forward to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. *It was an offering made to provide access to God.* It had to be a male without blemish—the perfect physical offering. It was a type of the spiritual perfection of Jesus Christ. He was the perfect offering. Jesus Christ presented Himself as our Savior that we might be accepted before God. The whole thing was burned. They had to go through a lot of effort.

The Grain Offering: (KJV, “meat” offering, ironic because it was the only one that didn’t consist of meat. Grain was used. It is rendered as “meal” in the Jewish translation and “grain” in the NKJV.)

Leviticus 2:1-4, 9, ““When anyone offers a grain offering to the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour. And he shall pour oil on it, and put frankincense on it. He shall bring it to Aaron’s sons, the priests, one of whom shall take from it his handful of fine flour and oil with all the frankincense. And the priest shall burn it as a memorial on the altar, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord. The rest of the grain offering shall be Aaron’s and his sons’. It is a most holy offering of the offerings to the Lord made by fire. And if you bring as an offering a grain offering baked in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil...It is an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.””

Here was an offering that was made from grain, made from fine flour. Christ was a living sacrifice. The other sacrifices were dead. Here was in a sense a living sacrifice. It was food, grain and bread, the staff of life characterized by it being made with fine flour. It could not have coarseness. Christ was a living sacrifice in whom there was no roughness or unevenness, very finely ground up. Christ’s life had a consistency to it. It was to have oil added to the flour. This olive oil was a type of God’s Holy Spirit. He was totally permeated. His whole life was a sweet aroma to God. This is what the frankincense was. We are told several other things about it. It is to be unleavened cakes (vv. 4-11), no leaven; Jesus

Christ is again typified. No honey—honey would speed the fermentation process. There was no corruption in Christ. This offering was to be offered with salt (v. 13).

Salt had significance for people at that time that we don't normally have. We think of it as a flavor enhancer; salt has a preserving effect and is a purifying agent. That was the connotation it had back then. Salt is a purifying agent; it will cleanse. That was the connotation it had for them. Again, the grain offering typified Christ. It was an offering eaten by the priest. Here was Jesus Christ presented as a living sacrifice in whom there was no roughness or unevenness, totally permeated with God's Holy Spirit—the olive oil. There was no leaven, no honey or fermentation. *It looked forward to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.*

The Peace Offering: Leviticus 3:1-3, 5-6, 16, ““When his offering is a sacrifice of peace offering, if he offers it of the herd, whether male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the Lord. And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering and kill it at the door of the tabernacle of meeting; and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall sprinkle the blood all around on the altar. Then he shall offer from the sacrifice of the peace offering an offering made by fire to the Lord. The fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails...and Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt sacrifice, which is on the wood that is on the fire, as an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord. If his offering as a sacrifice of peace offering to the Lord is of the flock, whether male or female, he shall offer it without blemish...and the priest shall burn them on the altar as food, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma; all the fat is the Lord's.””

It was to be a male or female. A peace or freewill offering was offered voluntarily because of unexpected blessings. It was an offering made in which the one offering partook of part of it as a meal. It was entering into a communion with God. It was called a peace offering. It was a sign of peace, communion, fellowship; there's something particularly bonding about that. *This represented entering into fellowship with God.* Part of it was burned on the altar. The priest took a part and you took a part. It was typical of the fellowship of the communion with God that is made possible for us through Jesus Christ. Through Jesus Christ's sacrifice, we have the opportunity of entering into intimate contact and

fellowship with God. We find that typified here in chapter 3.

The first three offerings were voluntary. There was not a prescribed time. You brought the burnt offering because you wished to be accepted before God. You presented the grain and peace offerings voluntarily. The last two were required, and without the shedding of blood, there was no remission of sin (Hebrews 9:22).

The Sin Offering: Leviticus 4:1-5, 12, 22-23, 27-28, 35, “Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, saying: “If a person sins unintentionally against any of the commandments of the Lord in anything which ought not to be done, and does any of them, if the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, then let him offer to the Lord for his sin, which he has sinned a young bull without blemish as a sin offering. He shall bring the bull to the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord, lay his hand on the bull's head, and kill the bull before the Lord. Then the anointed priest shall take some of the bull's blood and bring it to the tabernacle of meeting...the whole bull he shall carry outside the camp to a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn it on wood with fire; where the ashes are poured out it shall be burned...When a ruler has sinned, and done something unintentionally against any of the commandments of the Lord his God in anything which should not be done, and is guilty, ...he shall bring as his offering a kid of the goats, a male without blemish...If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally by doing something against any of the commandments of the Lord in anything which ought not to be done, and is guilty, ...he shall bring as his offering a kid of the goats, a female without blemish...He shall remove all its fat...Then the priest shall burn it on the altar, according to the offerings made by fire to the Lord. So the priest shall make atonement for his sin that he has committed, and it shall be forgiven him.””

The sin offering was for specific sins for which no restitution was possible. The priest offered a bullock; a ruler offered a he-goat; and the common people offered a she-goat. Jesus Christ was sacrificed outside the city walls of Jerusalem. He was symbolic of the sin offering taken outside the camp. Sacrifices were costly. It was to teach a lesson that sin didn't pay. If you had to offer a bull or goat, it didn't take long to run out if you didn't “keep a lid” on things. The priest had to offer a bull. For the priest who made a mistake, a direct infraction of the letter of

the law, God wanted the most serious penalty on the priest. The ruler, people who are in charge, used a he-goat—a Billy goat. I know of nothing more symbolic than the stubbornness of the Billy goat. For the common people it was the least expensive of the three offerings. God was holding the priest to the highest standard, then the ruler and then the common people. So this was the offering that was required for specific sins for which no restitution was possible.

The Trespass Offering: Leviticus 5:1, ““If a person sins in hearing the utterance of an oath, and is a witness, whether he has seen or known of the matter—if he does not tell it, he bears guilt.”” The voice of adjuration—they were adjured to come forward if they had knowledge of something that was going on, and you were called forward to come forth. God holds you responsible.

Verses 2-6, ““Or if a person touches any unclean thing, whether it is the carcass of an unclean beast...or if he touches human uncleanness...or if a person swears, speaking thoughtlessly with his lips to do evil or to do good, whatever it is that a man may pronounce an oath, and it is hidden from him—when he realizes it, then he shall be guilty in any of these matters. And it shall be, when he is guilty in any of these matters, that he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing; and he shall bring his trespass offering to the Lord for his sin which he has sinned...so the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin.”” It had to do with specifics.

Verses 15-16, ““If a person commits a trespass, and sins unintentionally in regard to the holy things of the Lord, then he shall bring to the Lord as his trespass offering a ram without blemish from the flocks, with your valuation in shekels of silver according to the shekel of the sanctuary, as a trespass offering. And he shall make restitution for the harm that he has done in regard to the holy thing, and shall add one-fifth to it and give it to the priest. So the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him.””

Leviticus 6:2, ““If a person sins and commits a trespass against the Lord by lying to his neighbor about what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or about a pledge or about a robbery, or if he has extorted from his neighbor,””

Verses 4-5, ““then it shall be, because he has sinned and is guilty, that he shall restore what he has stolen or the thing which he has deceitfully

obtained, or what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or the lost thing which he found, or all that about which he has sworn falsely. He shall restore its full value, add one-fifth more to it, and give it to whomever it belongs, on the day of this trespass offering.”” *It has to do with making restitution for transgressions where restitution was possible—six-fifths of the value, the value plus one-fifth.* That is the difference between the sin offering and the trespass offering. In the day you made your trespass offering and were reconciled to God, you also had to get reconciled to your neighbor; you added a fifth part to it.

Christ used this in the New Testament in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5.

Matthew 5:23-24, ““Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift.”” Christ was referring back to Leviticus. That was the law. That was what Leviticus 6 said, and Christ applied it in principle and spirit. In order to be reconciled to God, we must be reconciled to our brother. If I have done hurt or damage to someone, I must seek to make restitution. It is not just to go to God and say you are sorry, but you must go to the person, admit you are wrong and say you are sorry. Real repentance has to do with willingness to take responsibility.

Remember the wicked tax collector? He was in the tree.

Luke 19:8, ““Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.’” ‘The people I have cheated; I am going to give them back the money plus.’ He extended the attitude of repentance. He said in effect, ‘I have cheated and stolen all my life; money has been my god. I have cheated people all my life; I don’t want to be that way anymore. I am going to restore money to them.’ Christ was impressed with that attitude. It was what was required in the trespass offering in Leviticus 6.

It had to do with a matter of taking responsibility—certain types of things where restitution can be made. You can’t go back and undo everything you have ever done; that is true. Many times there is no way you can undo it. That was the sin offering, and when you made restitution, there was the trespass offering. There is a principle there: first be reconciled to your brother, and then go to the altar and offer your

gift. An important aspect is the willingness to make amends where possible.

Leviticus 1-5 deal with offerings.

Leviticus 6-7 deal with some of these offerings.

Leviticus 8 deal with the consecrations of priests.

Leviticus 9 describes the consecration, to be set apart.

In Leviticus 10, Nadab and Abihu evidently had gone into the Holy Place to offer the incense. They had not done what they were supposed to do. They had not been paying attention and serving God the way they were supposed to do. They offered strange fire. They had this giant fire and couldn't get the coal out. So they went out to get other coal, and God burned them up. Their charred remains were on the floor of the tabernacle. They were instructed not to mourn for them (v. 6).

It was a judgment from God. They were in a public capacity. The priests were not to give indication to the people that God had acted unfairly. Instructions about drinking were given right after this (v. 9). They had been drinking and as a result had become careless. So the emphasis was given that when you are performing your duties before God or for God, you make sure you are clearheaded.

Leviticus 11-15 deals with the need to be clean, to be physically holy.

Leviticus 11:2-3, 9, 13, ““Speak to the children of Israel, saying, “These are the animals which you may eat among all the beast that are on the earth: among the beast, whatever divides the hoof, having cloven hooves and chewing the cud—that you may eat...These you may eat of all that are in the water: whatever in the water has fins and scales whether in the seas or in the rivers—that you may eat...and these you shall regard as an abomination among the birds; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, the buzzard.”” We have the outline of clean and unclean animals, fish and birds. That is why we don't eat what our neighbors eat.

Verses 44-45 deal with holiness, ““For I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy, for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth. For I am the Lord who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.””

Leviticus 12 deals with the matter of motherhood, physical cleanliness and purification.

Leviticus 13 deals with laws for contagious diseases, leprosy. The priests had the responsibility of making the diagnosis (v. 3).

In vv. 38-42, the priest pronounced him with leprosy, a skin eruption.

Verse 46 shows they were to keep away from other people. They dealt with contagion with quarantine laws.

God gave ancient Israel diet, sanitation, hygiene and quarantine instructions after having come out of Egypt. There are all kinds of things that have come out of Egypt that are not so far different than some of the things done today—practices that paraded under the name of medical in Egypt.

In vv. 47-52, certain garments were to be burned because they could not be cleaned.

Leviticus 15:2-7 explains that if someone has some kind of disease with open sores, if you touch it, you were unclean.

We take that for granted, but it has only been in the last one hundred years that medical science has discovered it. You would never have had what went on during the Civil War. Ancient Israel did not have that problem. They had to wash.

A very detailed breakdown is given. The people for whom it was written at that time had no practical knowledge of common-sense hygiene. These people weren't familiar with it, so it was very specifically detailed instruction. It continues with a woman with her menstrual cycle. This whole section deals with clean and unclean.

Leviticus 16:2 details how the high priest entered once a year into the Holy of Holies.

Verse 8 introduces the scapegoat; the word in Hebrew is “Azazel.” Scapegoat gives the connotation in modern English of someone who bears the wrong for someone else. But it is the goat for Azazel, the name referring to Satan.

Revelation 20:1-3, “And then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.”

He will be permanently put away. The angel comes down and binds him and puts him away.

Leviticus 17:3-4, ““Whatever man of the house of Israel, kills an ox or lamb or goat in the camp, or who kills it outside the camp, and does not

bring it to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, to offer an offering to the Lord before the tabernacle of the Lord, bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people.””” This emphasizes that God wants things done a certain way. We have to work it the way God wants it. God wants to be worshipped in sincerity and truth. He wants to be worshipped the way He prescribes worship. If you are going to offer a sacrifice, you bring it to the door of the temple. You don’t offer it where you want to offer it.

Verse 11, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood....”

In Leviticus 19, God inspired Moses to exhort the people that they were to be holy, for God is holy (v. 2). The Creator wants us to share His outlook and to possess His character.

Verses 9-18 contain a series of injunctions that are summed up by the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (v. 18). How do we apply this in a practical way?

In vv. 9-10, the first point mentioned is *generosity* to those in need.

When farmers harvested their crops, they were told not to reap the corners of the field or to return to pick up what was dropped. Neither were they to go back afterward to gather the last of the fruit. This was to be left for the poor and the strangers. From the very beginning, God’s people were taught the very opposite of a self-centered approach focused on getting for self.

The next point stressed in vv. 11-13 is the importance of *honesty* in all of our dealings. Agreements are to be kept and our word is to be our bond. Specifically, the strong are not to take advantage of the weak.

Leviticus 19:13, ““You shall not defraud your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning.”” –Holiness in terms of how we deal with our neighbor. Don’t rob him. When you hire someone, you pay him. You don’t even keep it at night. Wages are to be paid in full and when promised. To do otherwise is to defraud our neighbor and only establishes grievances.

James 5:4, “Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.” Don’t defraud; you are to pay it. You are not to try and beat them out of it.

Leviticus 19:14 shows that we are to extend *respect* to all, whether they are aware of it or not. A deaf person may not know when someone is

cursing him. But such an act of disrespect shows contempt for another human being. To put a stumbling block before the blind is to do harm when you think there is no chance of being discovered by the one harmed. However, the end of the verse gives us the key.

Leviticus 19:14, “...but [you] shall fear your God: I am the Lord.” We are to live our life in deep awareness of God’s presence. It is not a question of whether or not people will know how we have treated others. It is not even a matter of whether those to whom we showed contempt are aware of it. Life is to be lived before God, not simply before man.

Verse 15 instructs us to be *fair to all*. We are not to have a double standard of justice, showing favoritism either to the rich or to the poor. Regardless of social position or wealth, the person with whom we are dealing is our neighbor and is to be treated in an evenhanded way. To tilt the scale—either because we feel sorry for someone’s lowly station or because we are awed by someone’s high station—leads to a society that is unjust and inequitable. While this happens frequently in today’s world, it will not be allowed in a society governed by God’s law.

Verses 16-18 reveal how those who truly love their neighbor as themselves will respond to the sins of others. We also see that God’s law forbids the most common approaches that people today take toward conflict and disagreement. The law reminds us that we are *not to be talebearers*. We are not to go about as purveyors of scandal, nor are we to talk to all who will listen to get them to agree with us in cases of conflict. Trying to gather allies or simply putting others down is not the way of peace. Talebearing ensures that old sins will not be forgotten and that old conflicts will not truly be resolved. It is often motivated by a desire to gain approval at the expense of another.

Actually, we are not to harbor grudges or seek revenge. Nursing resentments ensures that nothing from the past is ever put to rest. Some people actively display their resentment and hostility toward other people, while others simply hold hate in their heart. Whether it involves telling “our side” to others to get them to agree with us or trying to “get even” with someone who wronged us in the past, these approaches are all equally forbidden by the law of God.

Verse 27, ““You shall not shave around the sides of your head, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard.”” This is not talking about shaving or haircuts per se. It was dealing with

the way of cutting the hair for the monastic order; the solar disc (haircut) went back to ancient Babylon. The priests of the sun god in Babylon did that, and it came down through the Middle Ages. They had ways of cutting that was characteristic of a pagan priesthood. God told them not to do this, not to round the corners of their head the way the Egyptian priesthood did. It had certain pagan significance in Egypt. The Israelites were to cut their hair where it resembled the shape of the head. God did not want his priesthood copying the pagan priesthood.

Leviticus 20:13, ““If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.”” Homosexuality—you are looking at something that literally destroys the family. They were to be put to death.

Leviticus 23:32, ““It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your Sabbath.”” From sunset to sunset you shall celebrate your Sabbath.

Leviticus 24:22, ““You shall have the same law for the stranger and for one from your own country; for I am the Lord your God.”” There is one standard of law; right is right. You are to deal with people in a fair way, whether or not they speak another tongue.

Leviticus 25:2-7, ““Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: “When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a Sabbath to the Lord. Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in its fruit; but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the Lord. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, for it is a year of rest for the land. And the Sabbath produce of the land shall be food for you: for you and your servant, for your maidservant and your hired servant, for the stranger who sojourns with you, for your livestock and the animals that are in your land—all its produce shall be for food.””

It was a Sabbath of rest unto the land. The land was to lie fallow. They were not to force the land, not to push it to get everything out of it. Every seventh year it was to lie fallow.

Verses 8-10, ““And you shall count seven Sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven

years; and the time of the seven Sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout the land. And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his family.””

The fiftieth year was the Jubilee—characterized by all the same things as the Sabbatical Year, and all the slaves went free. In Israel, farmland could actually only be leased and not sold. It could be leased out, but at the Jubilee, it reverted back. It was an economic principal preventing the disparity of the rich and the poor. Everyone had a chance for a fresh start.

Deuteronomy 15:1, ““At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts.””

The overall theme of the book of Leviticus is holiness so that God could continue to dwell among them. There are many important principles of this book that are very directly related to us today. It should become apparent, as we go through some of these things, there is a great deal in all of these books that pertain to us today, even in the ceremonial aspects. There are different principles that relate to us and enable us to understand many of the principles of the way that God thinks and the way God intended ancient Israel to function. We have departed from it, and we are reaping physical penalties as well as spiritual penalties. As people living together in communities, we have rejected God’s laws, and we have a society that is at the point of civil collapse. We in the Church today are not a civil nation. We are putting those laws into practice in our lives and preparing for the time to share with the whole world what God has imparted.

Bible Study # 15 & 16 Questions

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

Leviticus (Part 1 & Part 2)

1. What are the five types of sacrificial offerings characterized in Leviticus and what is the difference between them?
2. What was the sin of Nadab and Abihu?
3. With what theme does Leviticus 11—15 deal?
4. How often was the high priest allowed to enter before God in the Holy of Holies?
5. What would be a better rendering of the word translated “scapegoat” in Leviticus 16 (KJV)?
6. What did the high priest picture by confessing the sins over the head of the “scapegoat” and then sending it away into the wilderness?
7. What point is God stressing in Leviticus 17:3-4?
8. Where is the life of an animal (or of a human) contained?
9. What is the point emphasized in Leviticus 19:13?
10. Does Leviticus 19:27 mean you should not shave? Explain.
11. What does God decree as the penalty for homosexuality?
12. What does God say is to mark the beginning and the end of the Sabbath?
13. Was Israel permitted to have a different standard of justice for the Gentiles than for the Israelites?
14. What was to characterize the seventh year in Israel?
15. What was to characterize the fiftieth year in Israel?
16. What is the overall theme of the book of Leviticus?

Bible Study # 17
April 27, 1988
Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—Numbers
(Chart at end)

This evening we **are covering the book of Numbers**. The book of Numbers, as with Leviticus, has a great deal of significance to us as Christians. I think it is important for us to understand how the book of Numbers applies to us today. We want to go beyond simply the historical record. We want **to focus on the historical and to understand the specifics that did occur, but we also want to understand the lessons that God would have us derive from this book**.

In I Corinthians 10:1-2, the Apostle Paul writes, “Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” Paul is drawing an analogy of ancient Israel who came out of Egypt, and he says that figuratively they were baptized. Now what does that mean? They were immersed in water—water all around them—they just didn’t get wet. This is the only case of baptism without being wet; they had water of the Red Sea on each side of them, taller than they were, and the cloud that was water vapor was over the top. So they were totally surrounded by water, totally enveloped in water, yet they were dry. That was a remarkable situation, and Paul draws it as an analogy that symbolically they were baptized.

Verses 3-4, “all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.” The physical rock that was in the wilderness out of which came rivers of living water that they drank was symbolic of the spiritual Rock which is Jesus Christ, the source of living waters (John 7:38-39).

Verse 5, “But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.” He says God was not well pleased with most of them.

Notice here, the analogy that Paul is drawing is Israel coming through the wilderness, the story that is contained in the book of Numbers. The book of Numbers covers a thirty-nine-year period. Exodus covers the first year of the wandering, and that takes you up to the dedication of the tabernacle (Exodus 40), basically a year after the Exodus. Leviticus is the

detailed instruction that the Levites received around the time that the tabernacle was dedicated. They had to know all this information in Leviticus in order to dedicate the tabernacle that you read of in the end of Exodus. Numbers picks up the story about a year after the Exodus and takes you all the way forward through the period of wandering in the wilderness. It takes you all the way forward until just prior to the entrance into the Promised Land. Deuteronomy deals with the final instructions just before they crossed over the Jordan. So the book of Numbers covers the period between the time Israel came out of Egypt and the time they entered into the Promised Land. It covers the time of wandering in the wilderness.

Brethren, where do we find ourselves today? We have left spiritual Egypt and have turned our backs on this society, but we have not yet reached the Promised Land, have we? We are on a journey through the wilderness, through a spiritual wilderness. We are in a process of traveling from Egypt to the Promised Land. We are in circumstances that Israel of old was. We are in the spiritual circumstances that compares with their physical circumstances because they were on a journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. We are on a journey from spiritual Egypt to the Promised Land.

God records the details of what Israel went through.

Paul says in I Corinthians 10:5-6, “But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now *these things were our example*, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.”

Verses 7-11, “And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.’ Nor let us commit sexual immorality [KJV, “fornication”], as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now *all these things happened to them as examples*, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come.”

Paul enumerates several things that we are going to read about in the book of Numbers. He says, ‘This is what messed up the people.’ These are the pitfalls in the Christian life. These are the things that can keep you from entering into the Promised Land. Why didn’t they?

Well, some of them began to lust after evil things. They began to lust and covet that which they didn't have, which of course, led them into idolatry and the kind of attitude it describes. They sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. It is not talking about drinking a glass of milk and having a hamburger and going out to play volleyball. That really was not the problem. It is talking about a lifestyle of just a drunken debauch—a worldly lifestyle, that involved the drinking to excess, that involved the kind of things that you often see around.

So, here were the things that got to them. 'Nor let us commit fornication'; immorality was a problem. 'Nor let us tempt Christ...Nor murmur, gripe,'—complain, fault find. These things that happened to them were for examples or for types. They are to represent certain things and to make us aware of the type of things that can befall us and interfere with our successful completion of our spiritual journey.

So I think it is important that we study the book of Numbers from that standpoint. We will notice as we go through, that there are certain types of problems, certain things that tripped them up. Things that we today can interfere with us, things that have tripped up many of God's people in this age.

Certainly, *one of the basic themes of the book of Numbers is that God's people can only move forward so long as they trust in God's promises and lean upon His strength.* The older generation of Israel did not enter into the Promised Land (Numbers 14:22-23). Why? Israel quit following where God led. They got sidetracked with other things. Their own fears came in the way; they were afraid to go where God led. God was leading them into the Promised Land; they focused on how big the giants were and were scared to go in (Numbers 13:25-33).

Romans 1:17, "...The just shall live by faith."

Numbers is the record of Israel's lack of faith. Because of unbelief, they were unable to enter the Promised Land. Hebrews 3 and 4 also provide an analogy between the lesson of Numbers and the Christian life.

The book of Numbers takes its meaning from the prominence of two censuses. One was taken at the beginning of the wandering; the other was taken at the end of the wandering. So there are numbers that are recorded in this particular book. Yet interestingly enough, the Jews sometimes referred to it as the Book of Murmurings because that is what it was—the story of Israel's murmurings in the wilderness.

We start out in Numbers 1 with the census that is taken. At the beginning when the census was first taken, we note that Judah was the largest tribe, almost seventy-five thousand men from twenty years old and upward—seventy-four thousand six hundred of the tribe of Judah. That stood out as quite large. You go through the census, but we won't take time to go through each one.

We note that there is organization. We note that, for instance, beginning in vv. 4-5, there was a leader, a prince (leader) for each tribe.

Numbers 1:7 we note of Judah, "...Nahshon, the son of Amminadab" was the prince. Now if you were to go back to the book of Ruth, you would find that Nahshon, the son of Amminadab was the grandfather of Boaz. Remember Boaz married Ruth. Nahshon that is mentioned here in v. 7 is the prince of the tribe of Judah and the grandfather of Boaz. Now Boaz himself was the great grandfather of King David. You remember that Boaz and Ruth had a son Obed who was the father of Jesse, who was the father of King David (Ruth 4:17-22). It gives you a little "tie-in" in terms of generations and shows that it was a prominent family, a leading family in Judah. Numbers goes through the tribes, and we find that there were just over six hundred thousand men in Israel. This is not counting the Levites (v. 46).

Numbers 2 has the detailed instructions of the way the camp was organized. We note there is organization.

Notice Numbers 2:2, "Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard [ensign, banner, flag], beside the emblems of his father's house...." One of the things that we note is organization. God is very organized, and the camp of Israel was very organized. You did not have a mob of two or three million people out here in the desert just kind of wandering around, one giant mob scene. They were organized by tribes; when they pitched their camp, you had the tabernacle in the midst.

Verses 3-7, on the east side toward the rising of the sun there were three tribes: Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. They had the ensign (banner, standard, flag) of the camp of Judah.

Verses 10-14 tell us Reuben, Simeon and Gad were on the south side.

Verses 18-22, on the west side, were Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin.

Verses 25-29, on the north side, were Dan, Asher and Naphtali.

Verse 17, "...everyone in his place, by their standard."

There were four flags. There is not a particular description of the flags in the Bible, but there are references in the book of Deuteronomy to the things that were described as having relevance to each of these tribes. In Jewish tradition, there has been preserved the pictures of the ensigns of Israel. One of the interesting things to note is that most of the materials, most of the things that made up the ensigns, have been preserved in the royal coat of arms of Great Britain and portions of it also in that of the United States, France and some of the other nations of Israel.

The statement in [Deuteronomy 33:17](#) describes Joseph, “His glory is like a firstborn bull, and his horns are like the horns of a wild ox [KJV, “unicorns”]; together with them he shall push the peoples to the ends of the earth; they are the ten thousands of Ephraim and they are the thousands of Manasseh.”

It is interesting that if you were to look on the royal coat of arms of Great Britain, you would see pictured on it the unicorn and the bullock. In terms of Judah, it is described in Genesis 49:9 as a lion’s whelp. The lion was the symbol of Judah. Christ was called the Lion of the tribe of Judah. The lion, of course, was symbolic of Judah and is descriptive because from Judah was to come the kingly line. That’s why the lion is also there in the royal coat of arms of Great Britain—Queen Elizabeth is a direct descendant of King David and occupies the throne of David. You have united there in the royal coat of arms the insignias that represent Ephraim and Judah because the royal family that is in Britain is the descendant of the kingly line of Judah, ruling over the tribe of Ephraim, the chief of the tribes of Israel. You would actually find pictured much of the insignias and the things that are identified with the British Isles. If you looked at these insignias, much of the material of the coats of arms actually dates back to the particular time that is described here and the flags that are described.

There were flags held up that they could see, and there was a captain over each tribe. We saw earlier that God had given Moses instruction through his father-in-law that he should appoint captains of ten, captains of fifty, captains of one hundred and captains of one thousand (Exodus 18). We find these are tribal captains that are above the captains of a thousand. There were captains over each tribe, twelve princes—one for each tribe. There was organizational structure.

If you have ever been to Big Sandy, Texas for the Feast of Tabernacles, you have a glimmer on a very small scale of how it works. We take it for

granted, but people in the world are amazed that you can come up at the Feast of Tabernacles with a city of four or five thousand people overnight with no paid or permanent staff. You have people that are coming in from all over, and in a day’s time you have an organized city of four or five thousand people. You have sanitation and hygiene, police and fire, and everything you would have in any city of four or five thousand people. It functions and it functions smoothly. With that, we get a flavor, if you have ever been there, of what it was like.

I look back and appreciate the opportunity that I had for quite a number of years to be involved there with the camp in Big Sandy and to have a part in organizing it because this was our model. This was what we looked to. Why did we organize it the way that we did? Because this was the way God had Moses do it. If it was good enough for God and Moses, I don’t think there was any point in our trying to improve upon it. So we never tried to improve upon it. We didn’t experiment with captains of twelve or captains of five or captains of fifteen. We just stuck to ten, fifty, one hundred and one thousand, just like God told Moses to do it, and it worked.

In Numbers 2, you had this organization: three tribes on the east (vv. 3-7), Judah, Issachar and Zebulun; on the south (vv. 10-14), Reuben, Simeon and Gad; on the west (vv. 18-22), Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin; and on the north (vv. 25-29), Dan, Asher and Naphtali. The Levites were camped on the inside, right around the tabernacle. There was order; there was organization to it.

You had the flags on every side, and each tribe was outlined. First were the tribes; then the tribes were subdivided into the basic clans in the tribe, family groupings in the clans, the extended family groupings and finally the families themselves. There was an organized structure going from groups of ten families, groups of fifty families, groups of one hundred families and groups of one thousand families. We get a little bit of the flavor of this type of thing.

One of the things that you might note, it does not go into detail here, but elsewhere we are told of the seventy elders who were basically, in structure, between the captains of one thousand and the princes over the tribes. If you would look, for instance, at Judah where there were seventy-four thousand families, you would wind up with seventy-four captains of one thousand. Let’s say ten captains of one thousand reported to each elder; then you would wind up with seven or eight elders from Judah. If you were to

take that number and go through, you would see that it would come out to about seventy in terms of the overall number that they would have. That would mean about seven or eight elders then reported to each prince. So you had that structure where everybody had a manageable number that reported to him, coming up to the twelve princes that reported to Moses. You had a highly structured, organized situation through which you could handle all of this.

The other thing to note in comparison is that when you go back to the New Jerusalem at the end of the book of Revelation, you know what you find? You find a city that is laid out in square with three gates on each side of the city. And guess what—each gate is meant for one of the tribes. Here, you find the organization that God is later going to use on out into eternity with the New Jerusalem.

It is headquarters of the universe. This structure is going to get back to the twelve tribes. Everybody who comes into the New Jerusalem relates to one of the tribes of Israel, and that ties in with the one hundred forty-four thousand where you have twelve thousand of the firstfruits assigned for each tribe (Revelation 7:4). The word “of” in this verse is Greek and can just as easily be translated “for” as well as “of.” In that sense, it is not that each one of the twelve thousand will necessarily be physical descendants *of* that tribe, but *for* that tribe—they are appointed for that tribe, at least spiritually in the context of the New Jerusalem.

Then you have the physical descendants who report in, who come in through those gates, as well as the various Gentile nations that flow in because all must ultimately become spiritually the children of Abraham. You know, if you are Christ’s, you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to the promise.

We are told in the book of Isaiah (46:10) that God declares the end from the beginning. God had an organized structure in mind. He started out in the beginning with a pattern that He is going to follow out into eternity. Sometimes I think we don’t realize some of those things, but you know what? You are going to have God right in the center in the New Jerusalem; then from there flows out that organization of each tribe, three tribes on every side.

Numbers 3:12, “Now behold, I Myself have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel. Therefore the Levites shall be Mine.” God says He has taken the Levites. We find they did a census and

it turned out the number of the sons of Levi (Levites) were twenty-two thousand: Gershon, seven thousand five hundred (v. 22); Kohath, eight thousand six hundred (v. 28); and Merari, six thousand two hundred (v. 34).

Verse 39, “All who were numbered of the Levites...all the males from a month old and above, were twenty-two thousand.” Now if you actually add up the numbers, you come out to twenty-two thousand three hundred. There was a difference of three hundred. Of the twenty-two thousand three hundred, three hundred were themselves firstborns, and they couldn’t redeem themselves. That is where there is one apparent discrepancy that is really not.

If you take the numbers given here in Numbers 3, the seven thousand five hundred of Gershon, eight thousand six hundred of Kohath and the six thousand two hundred of Merari, and you add them all together, you will find that the numbers come out to be twenty-two thousand three hundred. Yet in v. 39, it refers to the number as being twenty-two thousand. The difference is that there were three hundred of these that were themselves firstborn; they could not be counted toward the redemption of the other firstborn because they could only redeem themselves, they could only take their own place.

Verse 43, “And all the firstborn males, according to the number of names from a month old and above, of those who were numbered of them, were twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three.” From a month old and upward there were twenty-two thousand two hundred seventy-three firstborn sons in Israel. God said all the firstborn belong to Me, but I am going to take the Levites instead.

God took all of the Levites; it left two hundred seventy-three extra. They were redeemed with a monetary value.

Verse 47, ““You shall take five shekels for each one individually; you shall take them in the currency of the shekel of the sanctuary, the shekel of twenty gerahs.”” They took up five shekels apiece.

Verse 50, “From the firstborn of the children of Israel took he the money, one thousand three hundred and sixty-five shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary.” If two hundred seventy-three firstborns were redeemed, then one thousand three hundred sixty-five shekels (divided by five, v. 47) was taken.

A shekel was equivalent to about a four-day average wage for a laborer. Five shekels was about twenty days or approximately a three-week wage of the average laboring man. That is

what this would work out to in terms of equivalence.

The point that God wanted to make was that when He came through Egypt and spared the firstborn, He said they belonged to Him because He struck all the firstborn of Egypt dead and spared yours. God said, ‘All the firstborn belong to Me. In exchange for them, I am going to take one tribe, but everybody has to be accounted for. Numbers 4 details the Levites entering into full responsibility.

Numbers 4:3, “‘from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, all who enter the service to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting.’” They worked in the tabernacle in full responsibility from age thirty to age fifty. We note elsewhere that they performed certain jobs in the temple from age twenty-five. Up to age twenty-five was basically set aside for their education; from ages twenty-five to thirty was more of an apprentice. From ages thirty to fifty, they were in full responsibility. From ages fifty and older, they were in the category of elders—elders in the sense of those who were older. It was basically from the age of fifty and up that the Levites were no longer performing the physical rituals in the temple, but they are of whom you read that sat as judges in the gates in the various cities of Israel.

You read of what they did in the temple, and there was a lot of hard strenuous physical work. When you start slaughtering a bunch of bulls and goats, you begin to realize you are talking about some work, and that is what they spent a lot of time doing. There were many physical rituals in the physical ceremonies, and those from ages fifty and up were simply not burdened with that type of responsibility.

It describes the specific coverings; the materials of the articles of the tabernacle had to be transported through the wilderness, so there were special coverings for them. They were given instructions as to how to carry them (vv. 4-14).

Verse 15, “‘And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is set to go, then the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them; but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These are the things in the tabernacle of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry.’” They were not to touch any of the holy things lest they die.

It goes through and describes the specifics of the numbers that were involved in each of these. We find there were eight thousand five hundred

eighty Levites between the age of thirty and the age of fifty (vv. 47-48).

Numbers 5:2, “‘Command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp every leper, everyone who has a discharge, and whoever becomes defiled by a dead body.’” It defines those who were put out of the camp because of uncleanness. The symbolism was that God dwells in the tabernacle in the midst of the camp, and anyone who became defiled had to go outside the camp and become clean in order to come back into the presence of God. Obviously, there were physical aspects of quarantine that were involved, but more importantly was the spiritual symbolism—that we have to be clean to be in the presence of God. This past Sabbath we noticed one of the scriptures that Jesus said in Matthew 5.

Matthew 5:8, “‘Blessed [and happy] are the pure in heart for they shall see God.’” To be pure in heart is to be spiritually clean, to be sincere. If we want to be in the presence of God, we have to be spiritually clean. How do we become spiritually clean? We are washed by the water and the word (Ephesians 5:26). They went through a physical washing; we go through a spiritual washing.

There were symbolisms that were to be impressed upon the people; God does not dwell in the midst of uncleanness. If God would not dwell in the midst of physical uncleanness, how much less is God going to dwell in the midst of spiritual uncleanness?

We are told in II Corinthians 6:16, “‘...For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’” God dwells in us through His Spirit.

I Corinthians 3:16, “‘Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?’”

I Corinthians 6:19-20, “‘Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.’” We belong to God. The emphasis is there that if they became physically or ceremonially defiled, they had to go outside the camp—even though there were certain physical reasons in terms of quarantine and in certain matters of contagious disease. But it went beyond that because it was to impress upon them the point that God will not dwell in the midst of uncleanness.

Numbers 6:2-6, "...When either a man or a woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazarite to separate himself to the Lord, he shall separate himself from wine and similar drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from similar drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin. All the days of his vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled...he shall not go near a dead body." The Nazarite vow is recorded.

There were three conditions of the Nazarite vow: (1) He was not to eat fruit of the vine or the grape, nor to touch any derivative of it such as wine, strong drink and vinegar. He was not to eat liquor of grapes or moist or dry grapes. Nor could he eat anything that comes from the vine.

Realize that other than at the grape harvest time in the fall, the only products you would have from the vine would be wine or vinegar or raisins because what happens within a week or two after it has been harvested? If you don't have refrigeration or are unable to pasteurize the grape juice, what do you think would happen if you took fresh grape juice and squeezed it out in the fall and stored it? Do you think you would come back in the spring or summer and find grape juice? It wouldn't happen! There are natural yeast spores. That's what that white is. If you ever see a concord grape and see all the white, that's natural yeast spores out of the air.

People ask the question, 'How do you know that Christ and the disciples didn't drink grape juice, rather than wine?' It's very simple; there was no such thing as grape juice in the spring. It would have been impossible. It was not a question of what they drank. The grapes are harvested in the fall. That's the only time that grapes are harvested. Within a couple of weeks, there wasn't any more grape juice. It was either on its way to wine or vinegar, but it wasn't grape juice. I don't think Christ sat there and drank vinegar, so that didn't leave a whole lot of alternatives. It was just simply a matter of that's what you had.

Grape juice, as we know, it did not exist until the advent of pasteurization, other than at harvest time. At harvest time, you would press it out and have fresh grape juice, but you couldn't preserve it that way unless you could freeze or pasteurize, bottle and store it. Those are recent innovations.

Same thing with the grapes, you had to make raisins out of them. You ate what you could fresh at the time you harvested; the rest of it you made

raisins or wine out of it or it went bad. This is just to make a point.

The Nazarites were to separate themselves. They didn't partake of wine or strong drink, or for that matter, anything else that came from the vine—though that was primarily what came from the vine most of the year.

(2) They were not to shave or cut their hair.

(3) They were not to touch a dead body.

This was the case throughout the time of their Nazarite vow, which was for a limited duration. It was something that set them aside. It was a vow of humility; it set them aside for special service to God and marked them out from the congregation. One apparent thing is that people normally shaved and cut their hair. If they didn't, the Nazarites wouldn't have stood out from anybody else. They stood out and looked pretty different. They were not allowed to shave or cut their hair for the period of the vow, which generally would run for a period of a few months. Just from that statement alone, you can derive that normally the Israelites did cut their hair and didn't just go some other way.

In Numbers 8, we find the Levites set aside and consecrated. They were in the training period.

We see in vv. 24-25 a kind of five-year on-the-job training from ages twenty-five to thirty; then from age fifty, they were to cease waiting on the service. They were to serve with their brethren in the tabernacle, but they were not to actually perform the service in terms of slaughtering the animals and that sort of thing.

Numbers 9 explains what is termed as the second Passover. The situation came up when there were individuals who were defiled and unable to keep the first Passover. They were not in a state of purity or cleanness and were unable to keep the Passover. What was to happen?

In Numbers 9:10, the statement was made that, "...if anyone of you or your posterity is unclean because of a dead body, or is far away on a journey, he may still keep the Lord's Passover. On the fourteenth day of the second month, at twilight, they may keep it..." He is to observe the Passover.

There are times that individuals are unable to be present at the Passover—primarily in this age, it would be because of sickness, shut-ins, etc. So in their case, they would observe the second Passover as it is prescribed here, which is on the fourteenth day of the second month. If you, for a valid reason, are unable to attend the first Passover, then there is a second that is prescribed. That emphasizes the importance of observing the Passover. God made provision,

recognizing that there could be circumstances that would arise that would be beyond the control of an individual that would keep him from being present at the Passover. And if that were the case, there was a second chance. This is not for an individual because of an attitude of unwillingness to obey God, but rather circumstances beyond that individual's control.

In Numbers 10, we note instruction that they were to make two trumpets of silver. They had a coded system that made communication easy among all these people. God is not the author of confusion. If you have all of these people out there, hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people, how do you communicate? If you go out and holler, you are not going to go very far. Well, they had these trumpets made up, and the blast of these trumpets could be heard in a wide area. Through these loud blasts, they were able to blow an alarm. It was coded as to what the people in different sections of the camp were to do when they heard it because, again, God is not the author of confusion.

Numbers 11:1, "Now when the people complained, it displeased the Lord; for Lord heard it and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the Lord burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts [KJV, "uttermost parts"] of the camp." There are various times you read of where God consumed those who were in the uttermost part of the camp. Those were the "fringers."

There's always a certain element that wants to hang around the uttermost fringe of the camp. On the one hand, they identify with it, but they didn't want to be right there in the center of things. In the center was where God was. They wanted to be as far away from God as they could be and yet still kind of be identified with the people of God. Unfortunately, there are a few of those that kind of tag along on our journey through the wilderness; they are the "spiritual fringers."

We used to see in Big Sandy, at the camp, there was a certain element of people that liked to show up a day late for the Feast and wanted to go down and pitch a camp on a corner down there on 32nd Street. Now why in the world would anyone want to do anything like that? – Because they wanted to be on the uttermost fringe of the camp. We always knew when we organized the camp in Big Sandy it was crucial to protect the fringers. You were very careful as to whom you camped on the farthest back street because they had to secure the back of the camp. You knew if you had trouble, it was going

to be down on the uttermost fringe of the camp. It never failed. I saw it from 1974 to 1986, and I don't know of any exception. If you had trouble, it was down on the uttermost fringe of the camp. That's where you could always depend on there being problems because it was hard to get to. If people are going to get in trouble, they kind of gravitate toward the edges, kind of get off where there's nobody looking, and, sure enough, there is trouble. When there was trouble and God got ready to "zap" somebody, He generally zapped somebody on the uttermost fringes of the camp because that way you would catch most of the ones that needed zapping.

Then we find the people began to gripe and complain.

Verse 5, "'We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.'" 'Woe is me; all we have is this manna.' They began to gripe and complain; they didn't like what God had given to them. This attitude of griping and complaining—God wasn't doing things the way they wanted Him to do it.

Earlier they were complaining they didn't have anything to eat; so God sent them manna. They were glad to get the manna, but after a little while they said, 'Why isn't God raining down watermelons? Why isn't He raining down some fish and some really good seasoning?' Evidently manna didn't have spicy seasonings or something on it. They began to complain because it was too bland.

Earlier they had complained because they didn't have anything to eat, and they were glad to get the manna, bland or not—they were hungry. But notice when their need began to be filled, there were their wants! God says He will provide our needs, but sometimes we confuse our needs with our wants. Instead of being appreciative to God for what He was giving, they began to gripe and complain and murmur and fault-find. They said, 'Things were not so bad back in Egypt.'

Of course, that can happen to all of us; we have memories of coming out of the world while beginning our journey. We begin to look back and remember, and say, 'God's way of life is really kind of bland. There's not all of the spice and excitement. Boy, I remember some of the things that we use to do. I don't know; it just seems like it is kind of dull. I'd kind of like to just kind of spice things up. Why can't we do some of the things we use to do?' We begin to get in that kind of attitude. Do you want to know what God thinks of that kind of attitude? Read chapter 11. There were those who did not come

out too well on that deal. The people were smitten because of their lust. This is made plain in Numbers 11.

In Numbers 12, we find another problem. Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman he had married. He had married—past tense—an Ethiopian woman. If you read the account, when did he marry the Ethiopian woman? Well, Josephus makes it plain that he married a princess of Ethiopia back when he was a prince of Egypt over forty years earlier. Acts 7:22 mentions that Moses was a man mighty in words and deeds among the Egyptians. Josephus records the account of some of Moses' exploits as an Egyptian general—how he besieged and laid siege to the Ethiopian city of Maro, and the city surrendered. They made a deal that he would marry the princess and the city would surrender. We don't read of the woman during the period of time Moses left Egypt. We don't know exactly the situation. We know that he later married a Midianite woman that we read about in Exodus 2.

But notice the point here. Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses. They began to criticize and put Moses down in the midst of the congregation because of this marriage, which they recognized as not being proper. It was something that they knew, in effect, created disrespect for Moses. They wanted to criticize or condemn Moses because of a marriage he had entered into that was not really in accordance with the way that things should be. Notice their attitude.

Numbers 12:2, "And they said, 'Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?' And the Lord heard it." 'Who does Moses think he is? He's not perfect; look at this situation with the Ethiopian wife.' They brought this up because this served to be an emotional issue that kind of stirred up people, and they were going to use that to just kind of criticize Moses and put him down.

Verse 3, "(Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)" Moses did not flare up and take matters into his own hands. They began to criticize and put down Moses, began to stir things up and to use this as something to criticize Moses. They were jealous of Moses. What happened? Moses didn't fight his own battle here; God did.

Numbers 12:4-10, "Suddenly the Lord said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, 'Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!' So the three came out. Then the Lord came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle,

and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward. Then he said, 'Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision, and I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?' So the anger of the Lord was aroused against them, and He departed. And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow...."

What was the point? They began to criticize and condemn Moses. There were individuals years ago that evidently had not read Numbers 12; if they had read it, they hadn't gotten the point.

I remember a time when Mr. Herbert Armstrong made a marriage and that there were those who were not afraid to speak evil, condemn, criticize and seek to incite people. They obviously had not gotten the point of Numbers 12.

God said, 'Look, Moses is My servant. You have nothing to say about him to the people to put him down. If anybody tells Moses anything, I will tell Moses what he needs to know. I will deal with Moses. You are putting yourself up in a way that you do not belong.' However, Moses beseeched God to heal Miriam (v. 13) and He did. God wanted to make a point.

One of the things you find throughout the book of Numbers is rebellion. People found fault with Moses. They found fault with the leadership.

Paul said in I Corinthians 10:6, 11, 'Look, these things happened to them as examples for us so that we can read an account and know what happens to people who try to follow God and know the kind of adversities, the kind of temptations that effect them.'

If you are going to try and follow God, leave Egypt behind and head for the Promised Land. There are different types of difficulties that you will encounter. How should you conduct yourself when you meet these difficulties? Here's the Book; it tells you the kind of problems God's people encountered. Paul tells us these things were written down as examples for us, so that when we read the account, we might know how we ought to conduct ourselves if we ever find ourselves in a similar circumstance. That's one of the ways to read the Bible. Read it has from the standpoint of what happened to God's people in the past. What difficulties, what adversities, what temptations beset them? How did they handle it? What was

the right way, the wrong way? Learn from it so that when we encounter something similar, we don't have to make the same mistake.

Here was a problem that came from people at the top. You see they were familiar, he was their brother—'Who does he think he is?' And they began to find fault and cut him down in the eyes of the people because they wanted to put themselves up. And God intervened in that. The problem was not a matter of God approving Moses' marriage one way or the other. The greatest sin involved was in speaking against Moses, an attitude of rebellion. They were trying to exalt themselves and to demean Moses in the eyes of the people.

Numbers 13 gives the instructions to send out spies into the Promised Land, a land that flowed with milk and honey. They sent them out, and when they came back to report, they told them that, Numbers 13:33, "There we saw giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

Verse 30, now Caleb and Joshua told the people, "Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, 'Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.'"

Numbers 14 shows that they complained and murmured and griped and bellyached and wept and wailed and lamented because of all of this. God, of course, was not pleased with their attitude. It was a total lack of faith. They were unwilling to follow God. So God said, 'You are going to wander.'

Numbers 14:34, "According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection." Each day for a year; we find that a principle in prophecy. They bore that for forty years. All of that generation, except Joshua and Caleb, died. God brought the children over.

Numbers 15:30, "But the person who does anything presumptuously, whether he is native-born or a stranger, that one brings reproach on the Lord, and he shall be cut off from his people."

Verse 32, "Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day."

Verse 30 presents a presumptuous sin.

In v. 32, an individual was going about his work on the Sabbath. He was out chopping firewood and gathering that up. He was put to death (v.

35). It comes right after the statement in v. 30 about the presumptuous sin.

A presumptuous sin is when you know better and do it anyway. We are looking at an attitude, an attitude of rebellion—rebelliousness. This is not a case of where a man made a mistake or didn't understand or didn't realize. We are not looking at the need of someone to be instructed. We are looking at the need of someone to be corrected. It served as an example for the people that you don't just have this kind of self-rule attitude. Here God is governing the nation directly, and He tells you what to do. The man says, 'I don't care, I am going to go out and do what I want to do.' God says, 'No, you are not; I am not going to tolerate that.' God was governing in a very direct way and making plain how He viewed things that we might read it and understand God's perspective and how seriously God takes these matters.

Numbers 16:1-3, "Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men; and they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown. They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, 'You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?'"

Here is Korah; he is a cousin of Moses, one of the Levites. In a sense, he is one of the leading ministers, but he is not the priesthood. He got together with some who were the sons of Reuben (v. 1). They were leading ministers in the congregation, men of renown. They said, 'You take too much upon yourself. Since all the congregation is holy, everyone, we are all God's people, every one of us.'

Verse 3, 'Who do you think you are; why are you lifting yourself above the congregation of the Lord?'

Verse 10, "...are you seeking the priesthood also?'"

Verses 11-14 show an attitude of rebellion, murmuring and complaining because God isn't doing things the way they want. So they begin to take things into their own hands. People who begin to focus in on the difficulties and adversities become so overwhelmed and discouraged, they give up and quit and won't be going forward. You saw what happened. God

gave the instructions. ‘You think you are so great? We are going to find out who is God’s servant.’

Verses 31-32, “Then it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods.” God opened up the earth and swallowed up Korah, Dathan and Abriam and everything that pertained to them. He sent fire out and consumed the two hundred fifty men who offered incense (v. 35).

Verse 41, “On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, ‘you have killed the people of the Lord.’” You know what, the next day everybody was complaining about Moses and Aaron. ‘You have killed God’s people.’ The people were all mad and upset with what God had done. So God struck them with a plague, and fourteen thousand seven hundred of them died (v. 49).

In Numbers 17:1-9, they were all told to bring in their staff and plant it in the sand. They came out the next day, and Aaron’s rod had budded. It was made out of almond wood; it had grown leaves and had almonds on it. That’s not normally what is going to happen when you stick your walking stick in the sand overnight. You are not going to come out and find all of a sudden you have oak leaves growing out the thing and little acorns hanging off of it, almonds or whatever. That’s not what is going to happen. It didn’t happen to any of theirs, but it happened to Aaron’s. God was going to get the point across—‘this is the one through whom I am working.’ God selects those through whom He works. God may not be working through perfect human instruments, but God knows that. The basis of God’s government is faith that God will do what He says He will do. We look to God in faith.

Verse 10 indicates Aaron’s rod was kept for a token. They kept it in the tabernacle.

In Numbers 18, we find God’s instruction about tithing. The tithes belong to God. All the way back to the beginning, Abraham understood that. That is something that has always been done. You find, way back at the beginning, righteous Abel brought the firstlings of his flock (Genesis 4:4). He was tithing. You find Abraham tithe to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:20). You find that Jacob understood that tithing was something converted people did (Genesis 28:22). Now he was still unconverted and tried to cut a deal. You remember he told God, ‘Let’s make a deal—if

you will take care of me and bring me back safely, then I’ll worship You and start tithing’ (Genesis 28:20-22). Jacob hadn’t entirely gotten the point, but he did understand—from the example of his father and grandfather—that one of the things converted people did was that they tithed. Jacob wasn’t quite ready, he was still kind of “wheeling and dealing,” trying to cut a deal with God—‘You take care of me and I’ll come back and make it up to you. I’ll pay up.’ But God also had ways of dealing with Jacob and getting the point across to him.

Numbers 18:20-21, “Then the Lord said to Aaron: ‘You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel. Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting.’”

God instructs Israel what they’re to do. He says, ‘I am paying the Levites. They are working for Me; they’re My employees. They’re going to do the service of the tabernacle; they’re going to take care of My work. So I am going to pay them. I am giving them all the tenth in Israel.’ Then the Levites were told that they were to present a tithe to the priest (v. 26). The people tithed to the Levites; the Levites in turn tithed to the priests.

It is interesting if you think about it. God ensured that the Levites would be well paid; they had a crucial job, the most important job. And they would have been amply rewarded for it. They didn’t have an inheritance. They did not have a tribal inheritance. What they had was the tithe that came in. They had a tenth of everything that came in from the other twelve tribes.

Now if the wealth of the land were divided up, you would figure that if it evened out, every tribe would have the equivalent of about a twelfth because there were twelve tribes when they divided the land. Each of the twelve tribes tithed; so the Levites in that sense would have had the highest standard of living in all of Israel.

They had the most crucial job; they were responsible for the health and well being of the nation—spiritually, physically and in every way. But understand this, God ensured that if the Levites didn’t do their job, they would be the most destitute people in the nation—they didn’t have farmland given to them; they didn’t have a tribal inheritance.

What would happen if the Levites didn’t do their job, really be faithful to God and teach the

people God's way? Well, the people would begin to fall away from the truth. What do you think was the first thing the people would stop doing when they began to fall away from the truth? The same thing people stop doing today when they fall away from the truth. They'll quit tithing. Guess who was going to be in trouble when the people quit tithing? The Levites were because they didn't have any other source of income. They didn't have an area that they could go back to. So what God said, in effect was, 'If you are faithful to Me and you really do the job I have given you, you will be greatly blessed. But if you don't, you are going to be greatly cursed. You're going to starve to death because you're not even going to have a farm you can go and work. You're going to be "up a creek" without a paddle if you don't do the job I am giving you to do. You do it, and you will be well and amply rewarded because God says the servant is worthy of his hire' (Luke 10:7). That was appropriate.

The Levites were the judges and the teachers; they had that responsibility. If the Levites did their job, the whole nation was going to be blessed because they were all going to be obeying God. And if they all were obeying God, the Levites were going to be blessed. In other words, the principle is: when you obey God, everybody all up and down the line is blessed. But when you're not, the nation is going to bring trouble upon itself, and the Levites are going to have trouble, too. They're going to be "out of things."

It's interesting when you go through and read in the book of Kings the various times of revival. One of the things that you find is the Levites were destitute and scattered; then they gathered together and started tithing again and keeping the Sabbath. It's an interesting principle how God built that in. I guess you could say in that sense the Levites were on commission instead of salary. You could kind of look at it that way. They were literally rewarded according to their work. If they didn't work very much, then they didn't get very much reward, at least after a while because things have a tendency to fall apart.

When we come to Numbers 20, there is basically a forty-year period or the best part of a forty-year period. Let's say a thirty-seven-year period elapses because when you come to chapter 20, you come towards the end of the forty years and Miriam dies. We find that Aaron dies (v. 28) and God also tells Moses that he was not going to enter into the Promised Land (v. 12).

Numbers 21:5, "And the people spoke against God and against Moses: 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread.'" We find, again, the people spoke against God and Moses. And again, they were dealt with. God sent fiery serpents this time among them (v. 6).

In Numbers 22, we come to an interesting individual—and that is Balaam. As the children of Israel were coming into the plains of Moab, the king of Moab was afraid; he saw what happened to everybody else—that no one could stand in Israel's way. He sent a messenger to Balaam.

Numbers 22:5, "Then he sent the messengers to Balaam, the son of Beor at Pethor, which is near the River in the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying, 'Look, a people has come from Egypt. See, they cover the face of the earth, and are settling next to me!'" This is an area that is near the area of the Chaldeans. It was a long, long, long way away.

Balaam was, in reality, the chief religious leader. He was literally the Pontifex Maximus of the ancient world. There is an interesting progression to that title because there is a man today that has that title "Pontifex Maximus" and that is, of course, one of the titles of the Pope.

It is interesting where the Pope got that title. He has a claim to it, a legal claim to the title. The first pope to have the title "Pontifex Maximus" was Pope Damasus in 378 A.D. It was a title that had been the title of the Roman Emperors. They had possessed it.

It was the title that gave authority over the calendar, among other things. Julius Caesar established the Julian calendar. He did so in his role as Pontifex Maximus. Pope Gregory established the Gregorian calendar, which we use today. He did so in his role as Pontifex Maximus.

The Roman Emperors had the title going back through the Pontifex Maximus of Rome. They received that title in 133 B.C. The Romans got it from Atalys, III, who was the king of Pergamum. When he died, he willed his kingdom and the title "Pontifex Maximus", which he possessed, to the Roman rulers, and it came down through the Roman rulers until in 378 A.D. Emperor Gratian (full name Flavius Gratianus) bestowed the title on the Pope and they use it today.

The kings of Pergamum had received the title from the Babylonians through Alexander the Great. The Babylonian priesthood had it, and it goes all the way back to Balaam and all the way

back to Nimrod. It can literally be traced down through the pagan hierarchy of the Chaldean Mystery Religion, down through Balaam, down through Pergamum, down through Rome and down to today. Interestingly, they use the same old titles.

This was a big deal and they sent hundreds of miles back to find the chief leader of the religious world. Balaam was the king back there. They said, 'We have a job for you. We want you to come and curse this people' (v. 6).

Verse 7, "So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the diviner's fee in their hand, and they came to Balaam and spoke to him the words of Balak." They came to Balaam and they told Balaam what they had in mind. They came to pay Balaam. Notice that you see Balaam charged for what he did.

One of the differences between God's work and the work of Satan is that God's work says, Matthew 10:8, "freely you have received, freely you give." Ever see someone go up and pay Jesus? They wanted Balaam to heal them. So they came up, and they had to pay him. Ever find where Jesus told them they had to pay Him for Him to pray for them?

There are people that claim they have the power to pray someone out of purgatory, but they only do it for a price. You have to "pay up." Inflation sets in. Maybe it used to be \$5, but now, maybe it is \$10 or \$20. Different places, different priests charge different amounts—kind of whatever the market will bear. In some of the poorer parishes around, it's fairly cheap; they can pray you out for a discount. You go into some of the prosperous parishes, and you find that inflation has set in. They charge a little more. Maybe their prayers are worth more somehow.

Well, Balaam was charging. They had a big job for Balaam. Instead of wanting him to pray somebody out of purgatory, they wanted him to pray somebody in. So they came back with a pretty good reward.

When they explained the situation to Balaam, he said in Numbers 22:18, "...though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." 'I cannot go beyond the word of the Eternal. I cannot do more than God will allow me to do.' He wanted them to stay (v. 19). Balaam kept trying to deal with them; Balaam really wanted to do what they wanted and kept trying to figure a way to do it.

Verse 20, "And God said to Balaam at night and said to him, 'If the men come to call you, rise and go with them; but only the word which I

speak to you—that you shall do.'" God said, 'Okay, if you want to go, you can go.'

Verse 21, "So Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab." Balaam was anxious.

Verse 23, "Then God's anger was aroused because he went, and the angel of the Lord took his stand in the way as an adversary against him. And he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. Now the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand, and the donkey turned aside out of the way, and went into the field. So Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back onto the road."

This angel manifested himself where Balaam's donkey saw it. Now this donkey had enough sense to know that you don't go that way; here is a big angel. So the donkey just turned aside and went out into the field. Balaam was all upset. You can just see Balaam beating on that donkey. If you have ever ridden a donkey, you understand that they can be stubborn animals; you can beat on them quite a bit before you get things done.

So Balaam got the donkey turned back and the angel of the Lord stood in the path of the vineyard. A wall was on his side, and when the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself against the wall and crushed Balaam's foot. He smote her again (vv. 24-25). He was mad by that time. You can just see him there.

Verses 26-28, "Then the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam's anger was aroused, and he struck the donkey with his staff. Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, 'What have I done to you, that you have stuck me these three times?'"

Now you know this must have been quite an event. All of a sudden this donkey turned around and said, 'What are you hitting me for?' Balaam was so frustrated by this time, he said, 'Because you are making fun of me. Three times you kept running out of the way.' Balaam was talking to the donkey. He said, 'I'd do more than hit you, you stupid donkey. If I had a sword in my hand I would kill you' (v. 29).

Verse 30, "So the donkey said to Balaam, 'Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?' And he said, 'No.'" Balaam said, 'No, you never have.'

Verse 31, “Then the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes and he saw the angel standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face.” It scared him to death.

Verse 32, “And the angel said to Balaam, ‘why have you hit your donkey three times? Behold, I have come out to stand against you, because your way is perverse before Me.’”

‘Look, the donkey is smarter than you are Balaam. I stood in the donkey’s way and the donkey had enough sense to stop. I stood in your way and you were just bound and determined to find a way around. This donkey is smarter than you are because the donkey at least had enough sense to stop when he saw that God was blocking the way.’ Balaam didn’t have enough sense to stop when he saw God was blocking the way. He just tried to figure a way to get around.

God was basically making a point. God could have made it in some other way; you know God has a sense of humor and sometimes chooses to make a point in a humorous way. In effect, God says, ‘When you try to get around doing what God wants you to do, you don’t have as much sense as a jackass.’ That’s basically the point. Even a stupid jackass can figure out that when God says stop, you ought to stop. And you ought to be at least as smart as a donkey. This was the point made to Balaam, and it is recorded for us that, hopefully, we can learn and all be as smart as donkeys.

We come down and obviously Balaam had not gotten the point because he continued to go on trying to curse Israel. You go through all of these shenanigans where they kept trying to get to Balaam and he kept trying to do it.

Numbers 24:13, “‘Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the commandment of the Lord to do either good or bad or of my own will; but what the Lord says, that I must speak.’” In other words, it’s not a matter of ‘I wouldn’t,’ but ‘I can’t. I can’t work my magic; I can’t do my sorcery. I can’t do these things. I can’t go beyond what God will allow. It’s not a matter of you paying me more. I’m not just trying to hold out for a higher price; I simply can’t do it. I can’t go beyond that.’

Go back to the book of Job. Remember God set boundaries to Satan, and He wouldn’t let him go beyond a certain point. Satan went as far as God would let him, but he couldn’t go beyond that.

Job 1:12, the first thing God said, ‘I will let you destroy anything he has, but you can’t touch him.’ Job had hardly turned around before there

was a guy riding in saying all your camel, donkeys, cattle and sheep were taken and all your kids were killed (vv. 13-19). Wham—he turned around from one and another would ride in. You get the idea; when Satan gets to do something bad, he gets really excited about it and is in a big hurry to do it all. But he couldn’t go beyond what God allowed. Then God said, ‘I’ll let you do anything you want to do to him, but you can’t kill him.’ So Satan went as far as God would allow. Well, here was Balaam. We find what eventually happened.

Numbers 25:1-2, “Then Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.” Let’s notice the message to one of the Churches in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 2:14, “‘But I have a few things against you, because you have those there who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality.’” Here the doctrine of Balaam is defined. Who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication?

What you find in Numbers 25 is Israel began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab and began to go to the sacrifices of their gods. To see what Balaam eventually came up with, you have to put what it says in Numbers together with Revelation.

Balaam eventually came up with a plan. God wouldn’t let Balaam curse Israel, but there was a way that could get them to curse themselves—get them involved in immorality, get them involved in fornication and idolatry. God would get so disgusted with them, He would wipe them out. So Balaam is the one who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block. Balaam is the one who came up with a plan. He eventually devised a way that he thought would bring a curse upon Israel. All this was going on, and things went from bad to worse.

Numbers 25:3, “So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel.” They got involved in immorality and idolatry.

Notice the kinds of things that have gotten in Israel’s way: lust, a craving for the things they left behind, murmuring, griping and complaining about leadership. We notice Israel going after a worldly approach to immorality and idolatry,

going into the world. We notice the kind of things that interfered. They just really got off the track, and the anger of the Eternal was kindled against Israel.

Verses 5-6, “So Moses said to the judges of Israel, ‘Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor.’ And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.” It was just so open and blatant in sin, challenging Moses.

Verses 7-8, “Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel.” Phinehas was a Levite of quick temper, and boy, when he saw this, he had had it. He went in there and put a stop to it. And the plague stopped. There were twenty-four thousand people that died in the plague (v. 9).

Verses 10-13, “Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. Therefore say, “Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God and made atonement for the children of Israel.”’” God made a covenant with Phinehas that the line of the high priesthood would come down through him.

In Numbers 26, again the census was taken.

Numbers 27:18, “And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him.’” The laying on of hands—Moses was ordaining Joshua.

Numbers 29 reviews some of the festivals.

Numbers 30 deals with vows. Vows are not to be made lightly by men or women. But if a woman is single and living at home, then her father has the right to annul the vow. If she is married, then the husband has the same right because there are those to whom she is responsible. This is the principle that if a minor runs off and get married, the parents can have the marriage, the vow, annulled. That is where the law is derived from,

from right here. There is a point: you can make a vow, but there are those who have the right to disallow that vow because you are not considered in the position to do that.

Numbers 31:8 records the end of Balaam. Balaam was slain with a sword.

Numbers 31:16, “Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.” It is apparent when you read this verse with Revelation that Balaam is the one who actually came up with the idea that resulted in this plague coming upon Israel.

Numbers 32:23, “But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out.” This is a very important scripture that I think ought to be a memory verse, one that I made a point to try and teach my children. One thing to realize: if you are God’s people, you are not going to get by with it. Your sin will find you out; it will catch up with you. That’s really because God loves you. God doesn’t want you to do something that is bad for you, and so your sin will find you out. You are going to find, and I think it’s important and good for our kids to realize, they are not going to get by with things that kids in the world get by with. There are going to be things that the world does and seemingly gets by with and don’t get caught because God is not chastening them right now. They are not His. But God chastens every son whom He loves, and be sure your sin will find you out. You do it and you are going to get caught. God will make sure of it. It just works that way. After you are converted you will appreciate it.

Numbers 33:1-3, “These are the journeys of the children of Israel, who went out of the land of Egypt by their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron. Now Moses wrote down the starting point of the journeys at the command of the Lord. And these are their journeys according to their starting points: They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians.” So they departed on the fifteenth day of the month on the day after the Passover.

In Numbers 34, you will notice Manasseh, the tribe that couldn’t get along with itself, is the only tribe that had two halves. Half the tribe of Manasseh stayed on one side of the Jordan and half of them stayed on the other side. The

dichotomy between North and South goes back a long way. It really does.

You find that Manasseh had two wives (Deuteronomy 3:13-15), or rather, he had a wife and a concubine. The descendants of the concubine dwelt in Gilead (v. 15, "Machir"); they were more the agricultural branch with cattle and sheep. The others from his wife (v. 14, "Jair") traveled over the Jordan. Manasseh didn't get along with itself.

You go back to the very earliest part of the history of this country and you find two centers—one in Virginia and one in Massachusetts. Historically, the migration in this country has been from east to west. North/south migration was extremely limited until the aftermath of World War II. It's interesting that you can actually track it back, and they are the two half-tribes of Manasseh. They couldn't get along with each other then, and they've had their difficulties all the way down—one people, but with certain difficulties.

Numbers 35:2-7, "Command the children of Israel that they give the Levites cities to dwell in from the inheritance of their possession, and you shall also give the Levites common-land around the cities. They shall have the cities to dwell in; and their common land shall be for their cattle, for their herds, and for all their animals. The common land of the cities, which you shall give the Levites, shall extend from the wall of the city outward a thousand cubits all around. And you shall measure outside the city on the east side two thousand cubits, on the south side two thousand cubits, on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits. The city shall be in the middle. This shall belong to them as common land for the cities. Now among the cities, which you will give to the Levites, you shall appoint six cities of refuge, to which a manslayer may flee. And to these you shall add forty-two cities. So all the cities you will give to the Levites shall be forty-eight; these you shall give with their common land."

We find the Levites were given cities. They were ultimately given forty-eight cities along with the suburbs for their habitations. These cities were the administrative centers of Israel. They were to serve as cities of refuge for people who were guilty of manslaughter or accidental homicide. It was where people came to be judged. There were forty-eight cities, forty-eight administrative districts. Interestingly, this country was divided into forty-eight states for many years in terms of actually the continental United States. Alaska and Hawaii are kind of tagged on, but they are

not really part of the continental overspread that God gave us. Ancient Israel was divided into those forty-eight districts, and the Levites were there and had responsibility.

Numbers 1:1, "Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt...."

Deuteronomy 1:3, "Now it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the Lord had given him as commandments to them."

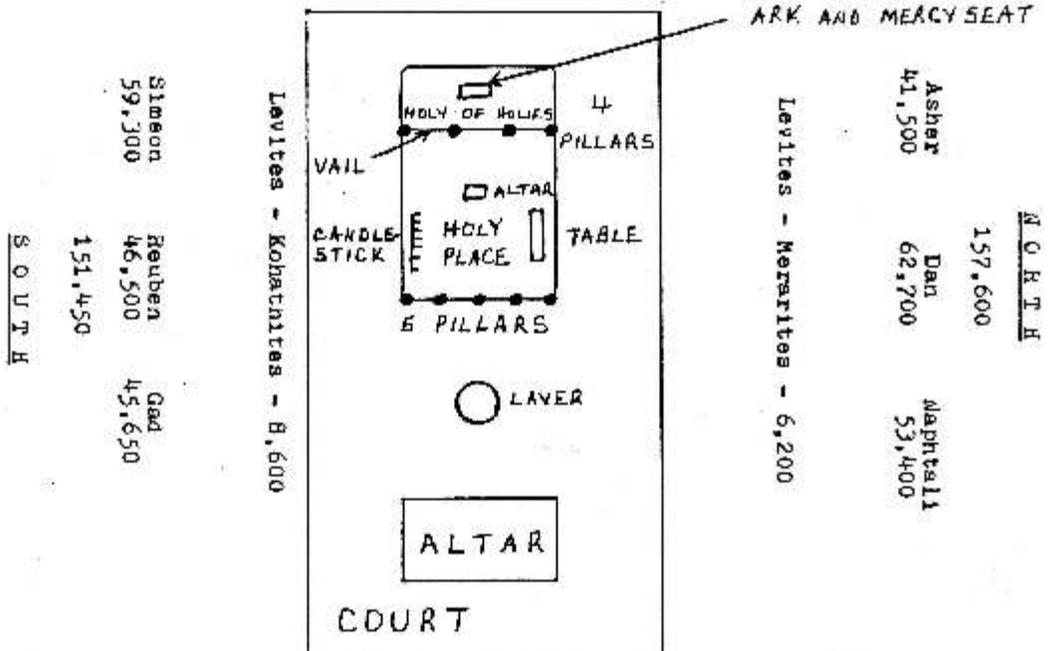
If you compare Numbers 1:1 and Deuteronomy 1:3, it is apparent that thirty-nine years are covered in the book of Numbers. I think from this we have somewhat of an overview of the book. A lot of material we could not, of course, cover in detail, but hopefully we hit the high points.

GOD'S ORGANIZATION OF ISRAEL'S CAMP

WEST
 108,100
 DIMENSIONS OF COURT
 EX. 27: 9-19
 Manasseh 32,200 Ephraim 40,500 Benjamin 35,400

DIMENSIONS OF TABERNACLE
 EX. 26: 1-30

Levites - Gershonites - 7,500



Moses Aaron Priests

Issachar 54,400 Judah 74,600 Zebulun 57,400

186,400

EAST

Bible Study # 17 Questions

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

Numbers

1. At the time of the first census, which tribe was the largest?
2. What did God take in exchange for all of the firstborn sons of the Israelites?
3. At what age were the Levites to enter into full responsibilities?
4. What were the conditions of a Nazarite vow?
5. What does God say individuals who were unable to keep Passover are to do?
6. Why did God send the plague recorded in Numbers 11?
7. What sin did Aaron and Miriam commit in Numbers 12?
8. Does this chapter prove that God approves of interracial marriage?
9. What punishment did God send on the Israelites because of the report of the spies?
10. Only two men who left Egypt were still alive at the entrance into Palestine. Who were they?
11. What was the sin of Korah?
12. What instructions does God give in Numbers concerning tithing?
13. What was the sin of Balaam?
14. What plan did Balaam come up with in order to get the Israelites destroyed?
15. What instructions does God give about vows?
16. What distinction does Numbers show between the night of the Passover and the night the Israelites left Egypt?
17. What geographic areas were the Levites given for an inheritance and what special importance did they serve?
18. What time span is covered by the book of Numbers?

Bible Study # 18
May 10, 1988
Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—Deuteronomy

With the study this evening, we **are wrapping up the five books of the Law**. The first five books, the books of Moses, serve as a basis for understanding what comes after. We have spent quite a bit of time on Genesis because that is the basis; that is the beginning. “Deuteronomy” means “the second law.” It is derived from the Latin name of the book that in turn was derived from the Greek translation. It is called a second giving of the law. It was not entirely a second giving of the law; it was not some different law—it was a reiteration.

What you have to understand, the book of Deuteronomy focuses on Moses’ final instructions to the people as they were there in the plains of Jordan. This was just prior to Moses’ death, in the closing weeks, perhaps the last few months of Moses’ life. We have recorded several addresses Moses made to the people, particularly two or three lengthy sermons and several shorter admonitions. They were put together and recorded here.

We are looking at a generation that had been children at the coming out of Egypt. You might stop and think—if all of the older generation, the generation that came out of Egypt died, if all the adults died (except Joshua and Caleb—remember they were the only two), you know what that means? That means there wasn’t anybody in this crowd, other than Joshua and Caleb, who were sixty years of age or older. The adults were counted from twenty years of age and up. Everyone who was age twenty and up when they came out of Egypt, which had been forty years earlier, had died in the wilderness, except Joshua and Caleb.

The only ones that are there are those who were either teenagers or younger at the time of the Exodus. They simply did not have a clear recollection of many of the most momentous events. Many of them had not even been born. Anybody who was the age of forty or younger had not even been born at the time of the Exodus. You’re looking at only that group between ages fifty and sixty who would even have any memory or very much detailed memory of the most memorable events. Unless a child was up in age, close to ten years of age, their real understanding of the events going on would have been somewhat hazy. Obviously, if things were

dramatic enough, it would have made an impression upon them, but it would not be a generation with clear understanding and a really clear-cut memory of events. Understand that now we have a generation that is preparing to enter the Promised Land, but it is not primarily the generation that came out of Egypt. It is the children, the grandchildren and, in some cases, the great grandchildren of those who came out of Egypt. God has told Moses that he’s going to die.

The book of Numbers makes a couple of things plain as we focused on last Bible study. The book of Numbers has to do with the journeying through the wilderness, and it contains information that God’s people need to know because it parallels our journey in the Christian life.

One of the things it **focuses on is respect for God’s government**. That’s an important lesson that we have to learn. We must learn to trust God, to look to Him and to respect His government. God’s government in this age through human beings is imperfectly administered. If we can learn to respect God’s government, when it is imperfectly administered, we certainly won’t have any problem on out into eternity, when it is being perfectly administered. God could ensure that everything was done perfectly right, here and right now, if that was His primary aim, but God has chosen to work through human beings, human instruments.

We have to learn to see beyond the human instrument to see God. Those who dropped out in the wilderness didn’t see beyond Moses to see God. All they saw was one old man, and they said, ‘Who does he think he is?’ They began to nitpick and find fault with him. They didn’t like the way he said things or they didn’t like this or that.

Someone else comes along promising them a new deal, and you know how politicians are—they all promise a new deal. Generally, it turns out to be the same old deal, but people don’t pick up on that. They keep going back. Every so many years, they are going to elect a new reformed candidate, and he’s going to reform everything. Of course, if the reforms lasted, why do we have to keep going back and get a new reformer every few years? We will notice some admonitions to secular rulers a little bit later, and we will notice that God foresaw what the problems were going to be.

We saw in Numbers that there was an emphasis on government. While, on the one hand, God would not tolerate the people rebelling against

those He had set in charge, such as Moses, God also made plain another point—the fact that He would deal with those whom He had set in charge. If they made mistakes, God would correct them. God would deal with them.

Moses made a mistake. Moses handled something in a way that God felt it was necessary to make a point to Moses and to the people—no one is above the law. God is merciful; God loves and forgives. But Moses had to learn a lesson. Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land because he got carried away and made the mistake. He focused the people's attention on himself and not on God. 'Must we give you water to drink again?' —Whack—he struck the rock when God had told him to speak to the rock. Moses got upset, and even though he was the meekest man in all the earth, he lost his temper one time. As a result God said, 'You're not going to enter the Promised Land.' Moses accepted God's will in the subject. God deals with and corrects His servants. It's not that God's servants never make mistakes, but *God will correct*. That is also an important lesson in the book of Numbers.

I mention these things, brethren, because you know what we are going to see when we get to the book of Joshua? We are going to see that Israel served God all the days of Joshua and the elders that outlived him, but then they didn't serve God because the lesson of history is: people never learn the lesson of history, and they keep going back and making the same mistakes over and over.

It's important that we understand. I'm here to tell you, if we don't learn the lessons—the lessons that are recorded here, the lessons that some brethren who used to be among us didn't grasp and understand from the Bible—they wound up rewriting the same story. We are going to soon be approaching the time when a generation will have come that, at that time, simply never went through and experienced the things that we went through and experienced in the Church. And if you don't learn the lesson, brethren, the next generation will turn around and do the same things. People, every generation, keep thinking they can come up with a new idea. They have a new way of doing it. Brethren, *the devil's way has been around for a long time*, and he keeps selling people on the idea that there's something new under the sun. There's nothing new under the sun, not when it comes to human nature and the approaches that people have. So it's important, and I want to keep focusing on that because it's important that

we understand how relevant some of these things are to us.

What we have in Deuteronomy is Moses now reminding the generation that is getting ready to enter the Promised Land. He goes back and rehearses the story. In effect, he asked them the question, 'Why are we here?' Some of you who have been around for a while will remember how Mr. Herbert Armstrong used to always start out with and go back to 'Why are we here?' He would start at the beginning and come all the way back down. That's what Moses does right here. If you read the first few chapters, Moses goes back and rehearses the events of how it was they came to be where they were because he knew it was important. Here was a group who was getting ready to cross the Jordan. He knew it was important that they understand why they were there and how they got there—that they didn't somehow get there on their own. He rehearses certain of these events. It's kind of a review.

Most of Deuteronomy chapters 1-4 are a historical review. Then we have a second discourse that Moses gives beginning in the latter part of chapter 4 and continuing through chapter 26 that focuses on laws by which Israel was to live. It is a summation of many of the points that had been covered. It is summarized from a layman's standpoint, not in the technical way that certain of the instructions in Exodus and Leviticus were given, which was written primarily for the priests.

There are portions of Exodus and Leviticus that were written primarily for the priests, which gave a lot of technical detail because those were things the priests needed to understand. Why are all these technical things on the rituals set down? Well, there were priests that were supposed to perform those things, and if the details of it were not written down, right down to the last "jot" and "tittle," how would they know what they were supposed to do? Those things were more technical in nature and were written primarily focusing from a priestly standpoint.

But Deuteronomy is to summarize principles for the people, and this was something that was to be read and re-read by the people to summarize things for their information. It brings material up to date; it addresses some things that simply had not been issues in the forty years in the wilderness. But now they were getting ready to embark on another way of life. They had been wandering in the wilderness for forty years, and now they would have a settled lifestyle. There was a great job before them—the conquest of the

land. The stage needed to be set, and the heart of the book is a reiteration of many of these laws.

Deuteronomy chapters 27—30 are more in the line of warnings and predictions. As Moses begins to look down the road, he tells them what's going to happen when they do what they ought to do and when they don't do what they ought to do. He can already look down the road and knows that their human nature is not any different than that of their forebears who had not learned the lessons that they should have learned. Moses kind of sets the stage of warning them about what lies ahead.

Deuteronomy 32 contains a song, the song of Moses. It is interesting. Because when you read in Revelation 15, you find that we are going to learn the song of Moses. It talks about the fact of the firstfruits singing the song of Moses. We will note some things as we go through it—what it focuses on. There are a couple songs of Moses that are recorded here: one in Exodus right after the Exodus (Exodus 15) and then the song of Moses here in Deuteronomy 32.

Then in the latter part of chapter 32 and through chapter 33, we have Moses' final charge to the people and the leaders in his farewell.

Deuteronomy 34 is simply a summation of Moses' death—in effect, his obituary. It's kind of a postscript. Obviously, Moses didn't write this; it's the account of his death. This was added in by his successor Joshua who wrote a statement of the events surrounding Moses' death. The end of Deuteronomy was the logical place to conclude the story; then we go to the book of Joshua. It is important that we understand this.

Deuteronomy provides a summary of God's law and an overview of what Israel's relationship with God was to be. One of the things that some of the commentators have noted is the fact that Deuteronomy, in terms of its format, follows the style of the Covenant treaties that were extant back at this time in history, the second millennium B.C. There was a particular legal style just as we have a certain legal form that is used in documents today.

There was a particular legal form that was common in this Middle Eastern area during the second century B.C. It was a particular legal style that followed a treaty made by a great king or ruler with his vassal subjects. It was a particular style of writing where there was a preamble, basically a historical review of the relationship, the terms of the relationship and the warnings of what was going to happen if the relationship was not faithfully followed. This was a particular document style.

Many commentators have noticed that Deuteronomy follows that style and, in that sense, it is marked as a legal document, a restatement of the Covenant for the generation that was going to enter the Promised Land. That generation had not really been of age when the Covenant had been made. The Covenant was being rehearsed for the benefit of the next generation.

Deuteronomy 1:1-2, “These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain opposite Suph, between Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab. It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir unto Kadesh-Barnea.” Kadesh-Barnea is the area of Petra; there is a lot of historical detail that we can go into to prove it. The term “Kadesh-Barnea” literally means “the holy place of the children of wandering.” It is holy because God placed His presence there, and that's literally what “Kadesh-Barnea” means. “Kadesh” has to do with “holy”; “bar” means “son of”; “nea” comes from a term that means “to wander, wanderers.”

Verse 3, “Now it came to pass in the fortieth year, the eleventh month on the first day of the month that Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the Lord had given him as commandments to them” Here we have the final days before Israel crossed the Jordan because we will note that they crossed the Jordan just prior to the Passover. It is made plain that they crossed the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month (Joshua 4:19), so here we are on the first day of the eleventh month. It was just a matter of two months and ten days before they crossed the Jordan, right within sight of entering the Promised Land.

Verse 3 (latter part), “...Moses spoke unto the children of Israel according to all that the Lord had given him as commandments to them.” Moses begins to rehearse.

Verse 5, “On this side of the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses began to explain this law, saying.”

The first five verses are a kind of preamble that sets the stage; then the historical review begins.

Verses 6-9, “The Lord our God spoke to us in Horeb saying, “You have dwelt long enough at this mountain. Turn and take your journey, and go to the mountains of the Amorites, to all the neighboring places in the plain, in the mountains and in the lowland, in the South and on the seacoast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the River Euphrates. See, I have set the land before you; go

in and possess the land which the Lord swore to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to give to them and their descendants after them.” And I spoke to you at that time, saying, “I alone am not able to bear you.””

Here Moses begins to go back and rehearse the events at Mount Sinai giving the Law and explaining the fact that God told them to go in—it was now time to go in.

In vv. 12-18, he is rehearsing with them the background as to how the governmental structure came into existence, and how he wasn't able to handle it all by himself. God had given instructions as to how it was to be done. There was to be organization and structure set. There were to be captains, the captain system.

His charge to the judges at that time had been to, vv. 16-17, “...Hear the cases between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the stranger who is with him. You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great...” There was to be one standard, and it certainly created disrespect when more than one standard was applied. So this is reiterated.

Verse 19, “So we departed from Horeb, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw on the way to the mountains of the Amorites, as the Lord our God had commanded us. Then we came to Kadesh-Barnea.”

Verses 22-29 rehearse the fact they sent the twelve spies in and how the people decided that they couldn't go up. He is rehearsing the story of how they came to wander in the wilderness. He is going back and telling the story.

Verse 30, notice what God had told the Israelites about fighting the inhabitants, “The Lord your God who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all that He did for you in Egypt, before your eyes.” This is a point to understand: if Israel had been faithful to God, God would have fought their battles.

Verse 32, “Yet, for all that, you did not believe the Lord your God.” Because Israel didn't trust God, they wound up having to do many things that they would not otherwise have had to do. It would have been unnecessary for people to have fought and gone to war if Israel as a nation had trusted God. They did not trust God; they didn't really rely on God in faith. God then used them as His physical instrument to do those things. We will see later on what God had really proposed to do. He would have sent hornets in and things like that, and simply driven the people out. But many times Israel did things the hard

way. He reiterates that Joshua and Caleb were the only two who were faithful (vv. 35-38).

They stayed there in Kadesh-Barnea, the area of Petra, and they then turned and took their journey into the wilderness by way of the Red Sea (v. 40). It goes through and describes this wandering.

Deuteronomy 2:1-13 describes their encounters with the Edomites and the Amorites in the land of Bashan and Gilead.

Deuteronomy 2:14, “And the time we took to come from Kadesh-Barnea until we crossed over the Valley of the Zered was thirty-eight years...”

Deuteronomy 3:12-15, “And this land, which we possessed at that time, from Aroer, which is by the River Arnon, and half the mountains of Gilead and its cities, I have to the Reubenites and the Gadites. The rest of Gilead, and all Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to the half tribe of Manasseh. (All the region of Argob, with all Bashan, was called the land of the giants. Jair the son of Manasseh took all the region of Argob, as far as the border of Geshurites and the Maachathites, and called Bashan after his own name, Havoth Jair, to this day.) And I gave Gilead to Machir.”

Machir was one of the sons of Manasseh. Manasseh had sons by a wife and by a concubine. His son by the concubine was Machir. There was a certain friction between the half tribes of Manasseh that has preserved itself down time. Manasseh was the tribe that didn't get along with itself. The ones that descended from Machir, those who came from the concubine, didn't want to cross the river with the other half. They stayed on the east side of the Jordan. They inherited the area of Gilead.

The tribes of Reuben and Gad shared the inheritance of the Trans-Jordan area. If you look on a map, you'll see it is actually the area of the modern day kingdom of Jordan. They are fighting with the Jews to give up the West Bank. What they don't realize, not only are the Jews not intending on giving up the West Bank, they figure the East Bank belongs to them, too. So there are problems in the Middle East. Now they agreed that these tribes were going to inherit the area on the east side of the Jordan, but instructions were that the men would cross over and they had to be in the forefront of the armies (v. 18) until God had given rest to all their brethren. They were not going to take the easy way out.

Verse 20, “until the Lord has given rest unto your brethren...” Notice that Israel's

inheritance of the Promised Land was called “entering into rest.” That was a physical type of our spiritual entrance into rest of the Kingdom of God.

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, “Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments, which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you. You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take anything from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.” It reiterates that they were not to add to the words that God had commanded.

Verse 3, “Your eyes have seen what the Lord did at Baal Peor: for the Lord your God has destroyed from among you all the men who followed Baal of Peor” He reminds them of the events concerning Baal Peor—that was the events with Balaam.

Notice what would have been the impact on other nations if Israel had obeyed God’s law. Verses 6-8, “Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law, which I set before you this day?””

God said, ‘Look, if you obey My law, you are going to stand out. People are going to be impressed with your wisdom and your understanding, which is really not yours, but it derives from obedience to My law.’ Notice that the nations around would notice. Israel would have been a light to the nations.

That is what is going to happen in the Millennium. We read in Isaiah 2 how the nations will send emissaries.

Isaiah 2:3, people will say, “Come... let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways...” When Jesus Christ comes back and regathers the lost tribes to the land of Israel and begins to establish Israel as the firstfruits of the nations, the surrounding nations are going to notice. Israel is going to be a light and an example. It is not going to be long before they will begin sending emissaries saying, ‘Would you please send somebody to teach us; we see the results, and we want those results.’ They are going to have a teachable attitude because they

are going to see those results. With some it may take a while to get the point, but God will deal with them as well. Israel’s example would have gone a long way of being a light to the nation if they would have followed God’s law.

What point regarding obedience to His law does God continually emphasize in the book of Deuteronomy? It is emphasized over and over, almost every chapter: the crucial importance of Israel obeying the law would result in blessings for them. The point is doing exactly as God said, not adding to it or taking away from it (Deuteronomy 4:2), that is stressed over and over.

You can see it in Deuteronomy 5:32, “...you shall not turn aside, to the right or to the left.” The point that is emphasized is that we are to serve God the way God said. The tendency of human beings is to think they have come up with a better idea. They get bored with doing it the same old way and begin to look around and see what the nations around them are doing. ‘Well, isn’t that a nice custom; look, they put trees up every winter and decorate them. That’s kind of cute, why don’t we do that?’ God said that He didn’t want us looking around seeing if we could improve on His way. He wants us to learn to be faithful to Him. As soon as we start copying the customs of the nations—the customs of the pagans—and trying to adapt them to the worship of the true God, we are headed for trouble. God reiterates over and over the importance of *serving Him the way He chooses to be served*.

As we come through Deuteronomy 5:2-3, Moses reminds them of the Covenant that God had made in Horeb or Sinai; then the Ten Commandments are restated (vv. 6-21).

Deuteronomy 5:22, “These words the Lord spoke to all your assembly, in the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and He added no more. And He wrote them in two tablets of stone and gave them to me.” Moses said, ‘Look, don’t come up with an amendment to the Ten Commandments.’ These are the words of God; He spoke them with His own mouth, He wrote them with His own finger, and He gave them to Moses. He didn’t add anything else to it. If somebody comes along and has an eleventh or a twelfth Commandment, or they have revised or amended the “majority of opinion”—the idea of give them what they want—the scripture says, Proverbs 14:12, “there is a way that seems right to a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death.” It’s a very crucial lesson.

Notice in v. 29 (after the Ten Commandments) what Moses looks forward to, “‘Oh, that they had such an heart in them, that they would fear Me, and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!’” This is actually a prophecy of the time when God would give His Holy Spirit and would give them a heart to obey. You find this scripture quoted or referred to in Jeremiah 32:38-39 and also in Ezekiel 11:19-20, which are prophecies that look forward.

You can go then to Hebrews 8 and read these statements of how this is the New Covenant, that God would give them a new heart. God would “put His laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts”—a new heart. Even here, at the making of the Old Covenant, there was a looking forward to a New Covenant, which would change the heart of the people. God was making the point that *it takes more than human beings on their own*. Even given everything the way it ought to be, they simply didn’t keep it. We need something beyond that; we need conversion. But if there had never been the opportunity for the nation to prove that even with all of the advantages, there would have been the thought that God never gave anybody a chance. Well, He picked a nation, the descendants of Abraham, and He gave them that opportunity to illustrate that there had to be something on beyond.

Why did God tell us to obey His Law? Deuteronomy 6:24, “‘And the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.’”

Notice, God’s law is for our good. The world misses that point. The world’s concept of sin is that sin is all the things that are fun—a totally pagan concept. You see it every year, the concept that comes in at Mardi Gras. The idea is if you are going to have to be good for a while, you really get in one last fling and make it one that you will be able to remember for at least the forty-Lent days. It’s a matter that equates obedience to God with something that is not fun, something that’s not good for you. It is as though God arbitrarily looks at all the things that people like to do and makes a rule against it. The idea is, ‘We really would have a lot more fun if we could do what we wanted to do, but God is going to burn you if you do. He likes to throw you down and watch you hop around on hot coals, worse than a cat on a hot tin roof’—a totally pagan concept.

God’s law is for our good. And it shouldn’t be as though we are really giving up something by

having to obey God. What we are really giving up is a lot of pain and a lot of problems. We are giving up the headaches and the hangovers when we start obeying God. It’s not that we are giving up all the fun and the good times, and ‘Oh, woe is us, things are going to be so dull.’ God has things out in front of us that go way beyond anything that we could imagine.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5, “‘Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and with all your might.’” Do those words sound familiar? They ought to; that’s what Jesus answered when He was asked in the New Testament, what is the first and great Commandment of the law (Matthew 22:36-39). He quoted Deuteronomy 6:4 and then He also quoted a scripture from Leviticus which says “‘you shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Some people say the Old Testament is done away and now it’s just the New Testament. Do you realize the book of Deuteronomy alone is quoted eighty times in the New Testament? This kind of thing is stated very clearly.

Matthew 22:39, “‘And the second is like unto it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” That is quoted from Leviticus 19:18. Christ quoted from the Old Testament. He quoted out of Deuteronomy and Leviticus. Most professing Christians, if they think anything is done away, they think Deuteronomy and Leviticus are done away.

In Matthew 22:40, Christ said, “‘On these two hang all the Law and the Prophets.’” –When they asked Him what everything was about. To love God with your whole heart and love your neighbor as yourself is not simply New Testament theology; it’s Old Testament theology, too, because this is where it comes from. Christ did not come to do away with the law. He expanded and amplified the law (Matthew 5, 6, 7).

Deuteronomy 6:7-8, “‘you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.’”

Some of you are old enough to remember back when people plowed with mules and horses; you remember they used to put blinders on the animal because they didn’t want the old mule to get kind of sidetracked, look off to the side and kind of wander off this way or that way. What did they want him to do? They wanted him to

plow a straight furrow. They didn't want that old mule veering off to the right hand or to the left. They had frontlets there, something that blocked its side vision.

God told Israel that His law was to be like frontlets. He doesn't want us to depart to the right hand or to the left. That's what He told them; they were not to veer off to the right hand or to the left. That is what He told them in Deuteronomy 5:32. The law is there as blinders; you don't look off because *the law directs your attention right down a straight narrow path*. If you keep your eyes fixed straight ahead, you will be able to plow a straight furrow, and it won't look like you kind of wandered or meandered all over the field, which of course is the way a lot of people live their life. This is what God's law was to be; it was to be frontlets.

You are to have the law there. It's always to be in front of your attention to control what you think and what you do. You teach this diligently to your children and talk about it. Take advantage of circumstances. It doesn't mean you just stand your kid up every day and preach at him for a while. It means you take advantage of every circumstance. When you are going about normal day-to-day activities, take advantage of circumstances to teach God's law because from the time they are tiny children, there are incidents that come up that you can direct them to what God says. You begin to use that to take advantage of circumstances to point out things that happen. You are helping your children to draw cause-and-effect relationships.

The immature mind does not normally make the connection between cause and effect. That's why a little kid will wander out in the street to play. He doesn't think in terms of cause and effect: if you get out in the street, a car comes by and you're smashed. He doesn't make that cause-and-effect connection. He just saw his ball roll out there; he's not thinking ahead. That is characteristic of the immature mind. That is why you see people talking about learning from experience because if you have experienced enough causes and effects, even with the densest of people, a few things will gradually begin to sink in. Experience is a teacher, but it is a very, very painful teacher.

God preserves a lot of causes and effects here, and we need to help our children draw the connection. When our children see someone having certain problems, when they see the problems and difficulties "so-and-so" is in, help them see cause and effect. Whether it has to do with matters of morality, people or things of that

nature that they become aware of, help them to see how it started. Point out how it happened. Point out that they didn't start off to get in that kind of shape, but this is where they made the wrong turn. Use day-to-day circumstances; this is the point God is making. God commands these things for our own good (6:24).

In Deuteronomy 7, God told Israel what to do when they came into the land of the Canaanites.

Verse 2, God wanted the Canaanites completely destroyed.

In v. 3, he did not want Israel to intermarry. Israel was to protect and preserve their identity, physically and spiritually. The two go hand in hand together.

The whole point of ethnic identity goes back to God's purpose and plan. Even at the tower of Babel He confused the languages to prevent the assimilation of those differences. By giving the different families different languages, they were forced to go out away from one another. God did not want Israel to lose its identity. If it lost its identity physically, it would lose its identity culturally and spiritually; so God forbade them to do that.

In v. 5, he told them that they were to destroy the altars. They were not to preserve all those quaint little artifacts and kind of set them around. They were not to do what another religion did when it came into Mexico with the Spaniards. They looked at all of the interesting things that the Aztecs were doing. They took the shrines and paraphernalia that the Aztecs had, and they simply changed the name—it became a shrine to some saint.

Deuteronomy 7:2, Israel was not to enter into alliances or treaties with the Canaanites.

Verse 16, they were not to allow them to remain in the land or to try to learn any of their pagan customs.

Deuteronomy 7:20, "Moreover the Lord your God will send the hornet among them, until those who are left, who hide themselves from you, are destroyed." God was going to drive them out.

Verse 25, God told them the idols were to be burned.

Verse 26, "Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it; but you shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it; for it is an accursed thing."

All those little artifacts, the pagan insignias, the crucifixes—all those things—are just to be gone. You take a trip over to the Far East; you go to China or Japan. Don't bring back all these little Buddhas and think, 'Aren't they cute, I'll set

them up in there.’ God says don’t bring an abomination into your house. God does not like them. Don’t decorate your house with all kinds of paganism that you found that the Canaanites had and think, ‘Oh, isn’t this cute?’ Don’t do that. God says that His people are to be special, and these things have a completely wrong connotation. They are religious artifacts. They were instruments of religious worship; they were means by which those people worshipped false gods—and we’re not to have them around.

Verse 22, God told them He would drive the Canaanites out with hornets a little at a time, and the land would not become overpopulated and overrun with wild animals. God purposed to drive the Canaanites out, and Israel was not to entangle themselves with them. There is a lesson for us, a point that we need to learn spiritually. *We are not to get entangled with the world*, with a lot of worldly alliances and entanglements, or things that enmesh us into the religious and political affairs of this world.

We live in the world and conduct business in order to be good citizens on a business basis, but we are not to entangle ourselves and enmesh ourselves with a lot of religious, social and political entanglements. You have to keep your distance in those ways. We do business. We are in the world, but we are not to be of the world—part and parcel of this society—because it will start you out on *a road of compromise that begins to blur the distinctions of God’s law*.

We will notice a lot of that as we get into the book of Joshua next time. God told them that He would bless them and set them apart if they would do this. Was this because Israel was so good? Did God give the land to them because of their righteousness? Absolutely not!

It’s plain in Deuteronomy 9:5, “‘It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the Lord swore to your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.’”

God says there were two reasons for going in. ‘It’s not because you were so good, so get that out of your mind. It’s because (1) you were so bad, and (2) I made a promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’ At the time of Abraham, God told him, ‘I am going to give you this, but because the sins of the Canaanites are not yet full, things have not gotten to the point where I am prepared to visit this kind of punishment on them yet.’ They were bad, but they’re not that bad;

however, there came a point when they were better off simply wiped out. Things continued to degenerate and deteriorate in terms of morality and in the state of things, the state of just the way that people dealt with one another. It got to the point that God said, ‘It’s time.’

Notice Deuteronomy 8:2, “‘And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and to test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep My commandments or not.’” You know why God led them through the wilderness forty years? Two reasons: to humble them and to test (prove) them, to know what was in their heart whether they would keep the Commandments or not. He humbled them by putting them in a situation where they were unable to provide their own physical needs. He didn’t want them to trust in themselves, and He wanted to prove them.

Do you realize, brethren, this is why we go through what we go through. Do you realize why we go through the period in the wilderness? Do you know why you go through some of the trials you go through? The same reason Israel wandered forty years, to humble and to prove you.

God allows us all, at one time or another, to find ourselves in a situation that we are powerless to deliver ourselves out of. Israel was in a situation where they couldn’t even feed themselves or provide the most basic necessities of life, food, clothing and shelter. God allows us all, at one time or another, to find ourselves in a circumstance from which we are powerless to deliver ourselves. We have to come to a point where we recognize our powerlessness, in order to be properly humbled and to realize our relationship with God. As long as we are able to take care of ourselves, we don’t give thought to how much we need God. God allows us, by circumstances, to be humbled, to come into a situation of recognizing our powerlessness. And He also allows certain things to hang on sometimes, to prove us, to test us, what’s really inside. Are you going to obey Him come what may? It is interesting to read Deuteronomy 8 from that perspective and to realize that God is working with us just as He was working with them.

As we come down we note, God told them, Deuteronomy 9:6-7, “‘Therefore understand that the Lord your God is not giving this good land to possess because of your righteousness; for you are a stiff necked people. Remember and do not forget how you provoked the Lord your God to

wrath in the wilderness; from the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the Lord.”

Verse 24, “You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you.” That seems to be characteristic of the nations of Israel. They have not been a docile people and easily led. Frankly, some of the Gentile nations are more easily led. They have not invented democracy. That is something that is a peculiarly Israelite approach to life because they don’t like somebody telling them what to do; they wanted to put things to a vote, all the way through the book of Numbers. Every time something came up, they were ready to put it to a vote.

We notice, therefore, the problem God focuses on in Deuteronomy 10.

Deuteronomy 10:16, “Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff necked no longer.” *God looked toward to conversion.* Look forward in the New Testament where this scripture is actually quoted in Romans 2:28-29 and in Acts 15, where the apostles came to understand that the circumcision required under the New Covenant, of those who become converted, is a spiritual circumcision—not to be hardheaded any more.

Verses 12-13, “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?” We are to love God with all our heart and to keep His Commandments always.

Deuteronomy 11:16, “Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them.”

Verse 19, “You shall teach them [v. 18, “My word”] to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up.”

Verses 26-28, “Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse; the blessing, if you obey the Commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the Commandments of the Lord your God.”

He gave them the boundaries:

Verse 24, “Every place on which the soles of your foot shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the River Euphrates, even to the Western Sea shall be your territory.” The Jews read this and they

invade. It is one of the reasons that many of the Jews over there don’t have compunctions about going into Lebanon because they say that, ‘God gave that to us anyway.’ They simply view it that way. In this country, religion does not play that big a role in terms of making public decisions. We don’t understand the extent to which many of the Jews, particularly to that forty percent or so that are religious, are observant Jews—they read these things and take it literally—they say, ‘It is ours.’ So you see the reason why things are set in the Middle East in the way they are.

Deuteronomy 12 focuses on the place that God would designate. It is simply the fact that *God has a central place, a place where He chooses to place His name*, and that’s where things are to be focused.

Deuteronomy 12:5, “But you shall seek the place where the Lord your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His habitation; and there you shall go.”

Verses 10-11, “But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and when He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety, then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause His name to dwell there....”

Verses 13-14, “Take heed to yourself that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see, but in the place which the Lord chooses....”

Verses 17-18, “You may not eat [second tithe] within your gates...But you must eat them before the Lord your God in the place which the Lord your God shall choose....” The place that God chooses is emphasized.

Then we note that Israel is not to be ensnared by inquiring after the gods of other nations.

Deuteronomy 12:30-33, “take heed to yourself that you be not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, “How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.” You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.”

Deuteronomy 13:1-5, “If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, “Let us go after other gods which you

have not known, and let us serve them,” you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the Lord you God....”

If there arises among you a prophet or dreamer, and it comes to pass, does that prove he represents God? No, not if he doesn't preach the truth. What really proves whether or not somebody is God's servant is whether he teaches God's message, regardless of what happens. This shows that *if somebody is not teaching obedience to God's law, he's not God's servant.*

Deuteronomy 14:2, “For you are a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.” This focuses on being a holy people.

Next He reiterates the laws of clean and unclean (vv. 3-21). These needed to be reiterated; they had been living on manna for forty years. They needed to be reminded of what they could eat, and what they couldn't eat.

Verse 22, “You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain, that the field produces year by year.” The tithe to Levites is emphasized.

Verse 23, “And you shall eat before the Lord your God, in the place where He shall choose to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstlings of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always.”

This focuses on a different tithe, a second tithe, to be eaten individually. In the book of Numbers we saw that God had given the Levites the tithe for their inheritance, but here in Deuteronomy 14:23 there is a tithe that is to be eaten, that an individual is to consume before God. This is not the tithe that goes to the Levite. Therefore, it is called a second tithe because it is the second one mentioned. It is to be consumed in the place where God chooses that we might learn to fear God. You don't have to take the goods; you can turn it into money (v. 24). You buy what you want and you rejoice there, you and your household. This is to be utilized at the Festivals where God has set His name. The excess Festival tithe that the individual has is to be shared with the Levites, the widows and the needy (v. 29).

Then in v. 28, there is yet another tithe, a third tithe, but this is different than the other two because it is not one that the Israelites saved annually. At the end of three years they were to bring forth all the tithe of their increase of that particular year, and it was to be kept there within their gates—the Levite and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow were to eat. It was to be used for the needy.

Deuteronomy 15 goes into the seventh year of release; so technically, Israel kept this third tithe on the third and sixth year of every seven-year cycle. It was an agricultural cycle. If you just kept it every third year, then within a period of time, you would come out with a third-tithe year that would coincide with a seventh year of release—and there wouldn't be anything to tithe; the widow and fatherless would go hungry in the seventh year. So everything was on this seven-year cycle. The third and the sixth year of that cycle they set aside an extra tithe, one that was reserved for use by the needy (v. 28).

There are three distinct tithes mentioned:

(1) One we read of in Numbers 18:20-21 where God said He gave the Levites the tithe in Israel for an inheritance. The tithe was for wages because they were doing God's work. That was what God reserved to Himself, and He paid it to the Levites.

(2) God told Israel to save a second tithe and consume it themselves in the place where He chose (Deuteronomy 14:22-23). They were to utilize that tithe in celebrating God's Festivals and rejoicing before God. It was used by the individual himself and his family in observing God's festivals; the excess that he had over and above his needs was to be shared with those that had need (v. 27).

(3) Then on the third and sixth year of every seven-year cycle, an additional tithe was set aside for the use of the needy (v. 28).

In Deuteronomy 15, we have the matter of the Sabbatical year, the year of release. If debtors couldn't pay, the debt was forgiven. Few lenders would be willing to extend credit if they thought they would not get their money back before the seventh year of release. Society would quickly adopt a “cash-as-you-go” policy.

Deuteronomy 16 reiterates basic information on the Holy Days and emphasizes that three times (seasons) during the year we are to appear before God.

Deuteronomy 17 focuses on the establishment of a king, and that is what Israel would ultimately do—ask for a king. It contained instructions to kings.

Deuteronomy 17:14-20, “When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, “I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,” you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the Lord has said to you, “You shall not return that way again.” Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself. Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall make for himself a copy of the law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all these words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.”

There were three things a king was not to do: (1) to multiply horses, (2) to multiply wives and (3) to multiply for himself silver and gold.

God did not want the kings to become self-indulgent, to take advantage of their office, to do things that others couldn't do. But notice another aspect of it. He didn't want huge standing armies or great wealth in the hands of a central government because of the temptations and mischief that would result. The bigger government grows, the more problems there are going to be. He told the kings that they were not to concentrate wealth and power and great standing armies because it would be a temptation. What happens when kings get a lot of money and a big army? Well, they decide after awhile they had better go and make war with somebody. It's just too much of a temptation. That's what happens to nations today. They build up and get a little bit prosperous, and they decide they better go take something away from somebody or they get into a “scrap” with someone.

God had a job to keep the king busy. He wanted him to write out his own hand-written copy of the book of this law. ‘Look, just copy out the Bible by hand; that will keep you busy. You won't have time to do these other things.’ How much better off would we be if our leaders spent

their time copying the Bible. By the time they got through making their own copy, they wouldn't have had time to get into some of the trouble they got themselves into. What was it Will Rogers said about Congress? Comparing himself to Congress, ‘I am just an amateur. When I make a joke, people can laugh or not laugh depending on whether or not people think it is funny. But when they make a joke, it is a law, and when they make a law it is a joke.’ That was his opinion and, unfortunately, it has proven to be the case too many times.

Deuteronomy 18:15, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.” That, of course, is a prophecy of Jesus Christ; you find it quoted in Acts 3:22 and Acts 7:37.

Deuteronomy 19—23 deal with civil matters and criminal justice Israel would have to deal with in the Promised Land. What happens in terms of crime and violence, exemptions from military service, etc.?

Deuteronomy 21:15 refers to the fact that if someone has been married twice, there can't be a preference to the second wife and children. It's a matter of inheritance; you can't disinherit the children of the previous wife.

Deuteronomy 22 has various laws dealing with relationships with individuals. Notice several of the things.

Verses 1-4, if your neighbor's animals were lost, you needed to return them to your neighbor. If you see something that is lost, you're to restore it to your neighbor.

God did not approve of the unisex look.

Deuteronomy 22:5, “A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are abomination to the Lord your God.” God wants women to look feminine and men to look masculine. There are even laws relating to ecology, not to destroy wild life (vv. 6-7).

Notice the instructions just in terms of public safety regulations:

Verse 8, “When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet [guard or rail] for the roof, that you may not bring bloodguiltiness on your house if anyone falls from it.” Houses normally had flat roofs, and people would go up there. God gives instructions. It was the original OSHA requirements. You have to build a rail about it. You don't build a house with a flat roof on it and not have a railing up around it. Someone, maybe a child, may get up there on the edge and fall off. It was a matter of law, certain

safety requirements and various things like that are mentioned.

Deuteronomy 23:18, ““You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the price of a dog, to the house of the Lord your God for any vowed offering, for both these are an abomination to the Lord your God.”” Does that mean you shouldn’t tithe on the sale of a dog?

A few years ago a fellow who raised dogs for a living read this and got worried if maybe he was doing something bad and shouldn’t tithe on the sale of his dogs. It’s a matter of understanding what the term “dog” means. It was a slang term in the Hebrew that referred to “a male prostitute, a whore or a prostitute.” In English, there is a slang term that takes the name of a female dog and applies it to certain immoral women. Well in ancient Israel, the masculine form was used to refer to a homosexual, to a male prostitute. These were the kinds of things that were, frankly, common in many of the pagan religions. God said nothing of that was to be associated with worship of Him.

Deuteronomy 24 deals with the subject of divorce. This is what the Pharisees quizzed Jesus about and He expounded it in the New Testament (Matthew 19:3-9).

Deuteronomy 24:19 discusses gleaning of the fields.

Deuteronomy 25 deals with controversies and the way that the judges deal with it, the matters of justice (vv. 1-3).

In Deuteronomy 27—28, we have the blessings and curses. To impress upon the people the necessity of obeying God’s law, Moses told them to set up two huge stones, to plaster them and to inscribe the book of the law on them as a memorial marker (27:2-4). They were to also be divided up, half the people—six of the tribes—on Mount Ebal and six of them on Mount Gerizim. They were to read the blessings and the curses back and forth. They went through all of this to impress upon them the keeping of God’s laws as they were preparing to enter into the land.

Deuteronomy 28:43-44, ““The stranger [alien] who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head and you shall be the tail.”” The upsurge of foreign investment in the U.S. and increasing foreign control of the U.S. economy is predicted. The U.S. has gone from the greatest lender nation to the greatest debtor nation. We are finding more and more of the wealth and resources of this nation are owned

by foreigners, the strangers. What the Arabs don’t own, the Japanese are buying. We are going to find that we have not looked to God and we will find ourselves very, very vulnerable. We’ve gone from a position of being the head of the nations, being chief of the nations because God set us so—but we didn’t give God the credit. We are going to find ourselves being the tail. It describes what was going to happen to Israel, that Israel would find itself in its own nation on the bottom of the heap. That was a part of the curse that God would bring because they didn’t appreciate the blessings that God had given. It describes here all of these various things and the various curses.

We might notice another matter as Moses reiterates these things.

Deuteronomy 31:9-11, ““So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, saying: ‘At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing.’” The law was to be read every seven years—to be reiterated at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Deuteronomy 31:24-26, ““So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying: ‘Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there as a witness against you.’” This was written and given by Moses to the Levites. Moses told them to take the book and put it in the side of the ark as a witness.

Deuteronomy 32:7-9, ““Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations. Ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you: when the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord’s portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance.””

The geographical division of racial groupings and national groupings are not purely time and chance or a matter of accident. It was a matter of divine purpose and plan. This shows racial grouping goes all the way back to Adam. God had an organizational structure in mind from the

very beginning predicated on the twelve tribes. The twelve gates of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21) are an organizational structure God had in mind from the very beginning. It's part of the reason that He even built that diversity into the human race to produce different ethnic groupings. God built that. He designed the diversity and preserved it by giving different languages at the Tower of Babel to ensure this preservation. God divided the world; various bodies of water and natural boundaries of mountains and deserts and oceans served to divide the different branches of the human family. It is not simply that people evolved. God has set and established things. It's not just time and chance and coincidence. God emphasizes that He's the One that brought Israel into the Promised Land. He emphasizes that.

Deuteronomy 31:27, “For I know your rebellion and your stiff neck. If today, while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the Lord, then how much more after My death?”

Deuteronomy 33 is a reiteration of Moses' final words to each tribe, Moses' final blessing.

In Deuteronomy 34, Joshua writes of Moses' death. We see, of course, that the whole book of Deuteronomy was written down and placed by the side of the ark. Then in chapter 34, Moses died at one hundred twenty years of age. Joshua was the successor.

We have an overview. There is an awful lot of material in the book of Deuteronomy, an awful lot that we would do well to focus on.

Bible Study # 18 Questions

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

Deuteronomy

1. What does the word “Deuteronomy” mean? What is the significance of the name?
2. What did God tell the Israelites about fighting the inhabitants of the Promised Land?
3. Which tribes settled the area of Gilead? Where was it?
4. What would have been the impact on other nations if Israel had obeyed God’s law?
5. What point regarding obedience to His law does God continually emphasize in the book of Deuteronomy?
6. What does Deuteronomy 5:29 look forward to?
7. Why did God tell the people to obey His law?
8. What did God instruct the people of Israel regarding the Canaanites in the land? What did God propose to do?
9. Was Israel being given the Promised Land because of their righteousness? Explain.
10. What boundaries did God promise the people if they obeyed?
11. Is the fulfillment of his prophecy or a miracle the real test of whether or not someone is a messenger sent from God?
12. What instructions regarding tithing are contained in Deuteronomy 14?
13. What instructions were given to apply to any future kings?
14. What does Deuteronomy 18:15 refer to?
15. What was the law regarding an escaped slave?
16. Does Deuteronomy 23:18 mean that you should not tithe on the sale of a dog?
17. What was done right before the entrance into the land to impress upon the people the necessity of obeying God’s law and the resultant consequences?
18. Where is the upsurge in foreign investment in the USA and the increasing foreign control of the U.S. economy predicted?
19. Is the geographical division of racial groupings and national groupings purely time and chance or accident?
20. What was to happen to Deuteronomy and the entire book of the law after it was written down?

Bible Study # 19
May 24, 1988
Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—Joshua

We are focusing in on the book of Joshua this evening. It has an important theme. We noticed as we went through the account of the Exodus **the parallels there are to the Christian life. There are continuing parallels in the book of Joshua.** It shows the irresistible power of God's strength to overcome the world, providing they maintained trust in God's strength, and as long as the people are faithful to God and go forward. God told Joshua to be strong and of good courage, and as long as the people trusted and obeyed God, there was nothing or no one that could stand in their way. When they let things come in, there definitely were problems.

Joshua picks up the story in the conclusion of the wandering and the death of Moses and carries through for about twenty-five years. It covers the conquest and division of the land. Israel crossed the Jordan River right above the Dead Sea. They had been on the east side, which is now modern-day Jordan. The east side was the area the Reubenites and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh were to inherit.

Moses died on the east side of the Jordan. He looked across, but was not allowed to cross over. They remained there for thirty days; then it was time to move on. They crossed the river and observed the Passover in the Promised Land. It was in the midst of that they conquered the city of Jericho, the major city of the Canaanites. We pick up the story here in the book of Joshua.

Joshua 1:1-5, "After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying: 'Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel. Everyplace that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.'"

Joshua was Moses' assistant and had been ordained by Moses to take his place (Deuteronomy 31:14). God had a job for Joshua

to do. He was to pick up where Moses left off and they were to go forward. It was time for the Israelites to enter into God's rest, in a physical sense. There was a six-year period of subduing the land and on the seventh year they rested. That was the first sabbatical year.

Verses 6-9, "'Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.'"

God stressed to Joshua to be strong and of good courage. He was to be a conqueror. The word "conquer" is also translated "overcome."

Revelation 2 and 3 have different messages to seven Churches, but one thing that all have in common is that each message ends up with the statement, "to him that overcomes I will give power." Joshua stands out as an example of a conqueror. Where did that sense of courage and strength come from? I want you to note just a little bit later where that courage came from.

We will notice in Joshua 5:13-15, "And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, 'Are You for us or for our adversaries?' So He said, 'No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.' And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, 'What does my Lord say to His servant?' Then the Commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, 'Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy.' And Joshua did so." This is right before the conquest started, before they conquered Jericho.

It is very apparent to whom Joshua was talking. Was he talking to an angel? It is apparent that he was not. That can be shown in various ways. The simplest place to go to demonstrate that it was not an angel would be Daniel 8:16-18 and Revelation 22:8-9. When a vision was shown and an angel appeared, they fell down before the

angel, and what you find was the angel always told them to get up, 'I am a servant of God like you are.' This Being said, 'You better take your shoes off, you are standing on holy ground—you are standing in the very presence of God, the One we know as Jesus Christ.' Joshua was checking out the area and knew he was to conquer the land. Here was this Man standing in full battle array, and he said, 'Are You for us or against us?' And the Being said, 'I am in charge. You thought you were the one in charge, and I wanted you to know who really was.' Needless to say, he was completely overwhelmed. 'What do You want me to do?' 'Take off your shoes for the place where you stand is holy' (v. 14).

What was the source of his courage? Joshua knew that God was fighting the battle. That is the key to our overcoming. We are not the one who is out leading the battle. Jesus Christ is the Captain of our salvation. All we have to do is "fall in" and follow. He will conquer.

John 16:33, "...be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." This was the strength and encouragement that Joshua had. It was a pretty intimidating thing.

Moses' shoes were pretty big things to fill; God had used Moses in a way that He had not with anyone else. He had used Moses to establish His covenant and lead Israel for forty years. There was never a time when the adults who came into the land couldn't remember when Moses was not on the scene—the same as us with Mr. Herbert Armstrong. Now Joshua is in the role of taking over. God encourages him here in the beginning. Joshua 1:12-15, "And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh Joshua spoke, saying, 'Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, "The Lord your God is giving you rest and is giving you this land. Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land that Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan. But you shall pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valor, and help them, until the Lord has given your brethren rest, as He has given you, and they also have taken possession of the land which the Lord your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and enjoy it, which Moses the Lord's servant gave you on this side of the Jordan toward the sunrise.'""

God said, 'You go forward and do what I said.' He gave special instructions to the half tribe of Manasseh and the tribes of Gad and Reuben. What were their men supposed to do? This was the agreement they had made with Moses. They

were to help the Israelites conquer the west side of Jordan. *The entrance into the land is called entering into rest.* That is important to understand because it is a spiritual analogy that Paul draws back in Hebrews 3 and 4.

Hebrews 3:11, "'So I swore in My wrath, "they shall not enter My rest.'""

Hebrews 4:1, 3, 5, "Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it... For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: 'So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest'...and again in this place: 'They shall not enter My rest.'"

Joshua 2:1, "Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, 'Go, view the land, especially Jericho.' So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there." Joshua gives them instructions to spy out the land. They came to the house of Rahab the harlot. The term translated as "harlot" can also refer to "an innkeeper." This was a logical place to come. God had led them there.

Verses 2-3, "And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, 'Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country.' So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, 'Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country.'" The king of Jericho already knew that they were there.

Verse 4, "Then the woman took the two men and hid them; and she said, 'Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from.'" This was not true, but that was the least of her problems.

Verse 6, "(But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof.)"

Verse 9, "and said to the men: 'I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are faint-hearted because of you.'"

What Rahab had learned was that she believed God.

Verses 10-11, "'For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.'"

What she heard was that He must be the true God. This is what she had learned from what she had heard, 'I don't know much about Him, but from what He has done for His people, He must be the true God.' She had faith and had an attitude that God took note of. The others had heard the same thing, but they had not come to believe that this was the God of heaven above.

Verses 12-13, "Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the Lord, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death." She asked that she and her family be extended mercy.

Verse 14, "So the men answered her, 'Our lives for yours, if none of you tell this business of ours. And it shall be, when the Lord has given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with you.'" Our life is in your hands now, and if you don't betray us and are faithful with us, we are certainly going to keep faith with you.

Verse 15, "Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall; she dwelt on the wall. And she said to them, 'Get to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you. Hide there three days, until the pursuers have returned. Afterward you may go your way.'" She led them down and gave them instructions as to how to get away.

Verse 23: "So the two men returned, descended from the mountain, and crossed over; and they came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all that had befallen them." The spies told Joshua what had occurred.

Joshua 3:5, "And Joshua said to the people, 'Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.'" He told the people to get prepared.

Verse 7, "And the Lord said to Joshua, 'This day I will begin to magnify you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.'" God purposed to work a miracle through Joshua similar to what He did with Moses. God wanted to show that He was still in charge and to demonstrate to the people that He was working through Joshua as He had with Moses.

Verses 14-17, "So it was, when the people set out from their camp to cross over the Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, and as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the

whole time of harvest), that the waters which came down from upstream stood still, and rose in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that is beside Zaretan. So the waters that went down into the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people crossed over opposite Jericho. Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan." The people walked across dry sod.

Joshua 4:19-20, "Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal." They set up twelve stones as a monument.

Verses 21-24, "Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: 'When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, "What are these stones?" Then you shall let your children know, saying, "Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land; for the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever.'" "

By taking these stones out of the river, it stood as a reminder that the only place you could get these stones was from the river and a reminder that it had parted. This was where God parted the Jordan River, and the proof of that are these stones that came out of the river. Notice the results also.

Joshua 5:1-5, "So it was, when all the kings of the Amorites who were on the west side of the Jordan, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel until we had crossed over, that their heart melted; and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the children of Israel. At that time the Lord said to Joshua, 'Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time.' So Joshua made flint knives for himself, and circumcised the sons of Israel at the hill of the foreskins. And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: All the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way, after they had come out of Egypt. For all the people who came out had been circumcised, but all the people who were born in

the wilderness on the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised.”

Verses 8-9, “So it was, when they had finished circumcising all the people, that they stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed. Then the Lord said to Joshua, ‘This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.’ Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal to this day.” All those born in the wilderness were circumcised.

Verses 10-12, “So the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho. And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day. Now the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year.” They were eating of the produce of the land on the morrow after the Passover.

Notice here that they could not eat of the new harvest until the wave sheaf was offered. This is a key verse to understand one technical point. *The wave sheaf was always offered on Sunday, the day after the Sabbath* (Leviticus 23:11). In this case, the Sabbath did not occur during the Days of Unleavened Bread. The Passover day was a Sabbath; the First Day of Unleavened Bread was on a Sunday; and the Last Day of Unleavened Bread was on a Sabbath. Normally it wasn’t a problem, but here the days started on a Sunday and ended on a Sabbath.

How do you count for Pentecost? Do you start from the Sunday, the first day during the Days of Unleavened Bread or the Last Day of Unleavened Bread? This verse settles it. *They ate the new produce on the day after the Passover.* The Passover had to have been a Sabbath, and they could not eat the new produce until the wave sheaf. So it is apparent that the wave-sheaf Sunday, in this case, coincides with the first Holy Day of Unleavened Bread. We begin the Pentecost count from the first Holy Day which would be the wave-sheaf Sunday. This is really the only place you can go to prove which way you count. *The manna ceased on the second day of Unleavened Bread.* They ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan.

Verses 13-15, “And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, ‘Are You for us or for our adversaries?’ So He said, ‘No, but as

Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.’ And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, ‘What does my Lord say to His servant?’ Then the Commander of the Lord’s army said to Joshua, ‘Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy.’ And Joshua did so.” This was when the Captain of the Lord’s host introduced Himself.

Joshua 6:1-5, “Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in. And the Lord said to Joshua: ‘See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor. You shall march around the city, all you men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six days. And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark. But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. Then it shall come to pass, when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him.’”

During the seven Days of Unleavened Bread, the children of Israel were marching around Jericho. They were told to compass the city once every day for six days. On the seventh day, they were to go around it seven times. The priests were to blow the trumpet and the people were to shout. God wanted them to know that He was the One providing for them when He brought them through the land. When you get ready for an invasion, you don’t circumcise the whole army. Levi and Simeon had used this as a trick to wipe out a whole city (Genesis 34). Now they were told to walk around Jericho. God wanted them to know that He was giving them the land, and He wanted the Canaanites to know also.

Verse 20, “So the people shouted when the priests blew the trumpets. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.”

Verse 25, “And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father’s household, and all that she had...” Finally on the seventh day, the trumpets blew, and the people shouted, and all the walls came tumbling down—except the section where Rahab was.

It is interesting. In Matthew 1:4-5, Rahab became the wife of Salmon, the son of Nasson and the mother of Boaz, Jesse's grandfather. Jesse's was the father of David. Rahab became the mother of the line from which sprang David and eventually Jesus Christ. Salmon (her husband) may have been one of the spies whose life she saved. She was the mother of Boaz who married Ruth (Ruth 4:18-22).

She is mentioned in Hebrews 11:31, "By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace." There was a complete repentance and turning around in her life. She turned towards God's way. Now notice what they were told when they came to Jericho.

Joshua 6:17, "'Now the city shall be doomed by the Lord to destruction, it and all who are in it. Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.'" Only Rahab shall live.

Verses 18-24, "'And you by all means keep yourselves from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord.'" So the people shouted when the priests blew the trumpets. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city. And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword. But Joshua had said to the two men who had spied out the country, 'Go into the harlot's house, and from there bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her.' And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. So they brought out all her relatives and left them outside the camp of Israel. But they burned the city and all that was in it with fire. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord."

Joshua 7:1, "But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of the Lord burned against the children of Israel." Here was a

problem. They were to come in and wipe out the whole city and not take the wealth of that city. But there was one guy, Achan, who simply couldn't resist. He thought nobody was going to know, so he took some and thought, 'What difference does that make?'

Verses 2-3, "...So the men went up and spied out Ai. And they returned to Joshua and said to him, 'Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few.'" There was a small city, Ai; you might compare Jericho and Ai with Lafayette (medium size) and Broussard (smaller). They were thinking, 'Look what we did; we wiped out Jericho.'

Verses 4-5, "So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the man of Ai. And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them from before the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water." They went over to Ai. The men of Ai came out and smote Israel, and Israel ran. Nobody could understand what had happened.

Verses 10-11, "So the Lord said to Joshua: 'Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put it among their own stuff.'" God told Joshua Israel had sinned.

Verses 12-13, "'Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you. Get up sanctify the people, and say, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the Lord god of Israel: 'There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you.''"

Verses 16-20, "So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken; and he brought the family of Zarahites; and he brought the family of the Zarahites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. Then he brought his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. So Joshua said to Achan; 'My son, I beg you, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make

confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me.’ And Achan answered Joshua and said, ‘Indeed, I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and this is what I have done.’”

Brethren, do you think it is an accident that the Church quit growing in the 70s; even in some cases, it went backwards. You are reading the story right here of what happened. Until the problems were purged out, He wasn’t going to bless it and go forward. There was a serious problem contaminating God’s people. God said it has to be purged out. God says, ‘If you want My blessings you are going to have to be clean as a people.’

Verses 25-26, “And Joshua said, ‘Why have you troubled us? The Lord will trouble you this day.’ So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. Then they raised over him, a great heap of stones, still there to this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day.” It was apparent that God would not allow sin in the midst. It was a very serious matter.

Joshua 8:26-29, “For Joshua did not draw back his hand, with which he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. Only the livestock and the spoil of that city Israel took as booty for themselves, according to the word of the Lord which He had commanded Joshua. So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation to this day. And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until evening....”

Verses 30-33, “Now Joshua built an altar to the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses: ‘an altar of whole stones over which no man has wielded any iron tool.’ And they offered on it burnt offerings to the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings. And there, in the presence of the children of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written. Then all Israel, with their elders and officers and judges, stood on either side of the ark before the priests, the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, the stranger as well as he who was born among them. Half of them were in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel.”

Verses 34-35, “And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them.” That has to be the longest sermon on record. He read all the words of the Law. He read the whole thing. They all stood there. He told them, ‘You guys had better get the point. God has made it plain; the only way you will go forward and receive what God has for you is that you have to do so in obedience to God, wholehearted in your commitment, not adding or taking away from it.’ God is not going to bless something when there is sin and corruption tainting the whole thing.

Joshua 9:1-6, “And it came to pass when all the kings who were on this side of the Jordan, in the hills and in the lowland and in all the coasts of the Great Sea toward Lebanon—the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jevusite—heard of it, that they gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord. But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and mended, old and patched sandals on their feet, and old garments on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry and moldy. And they went to Joshua, to the camp at Gilgal, and said to him and to the men of Israel, ‘We have come from a far country, now therefore, make a covenant with us.’”

They didn’t want to be wiped out. ‘We have come from a long, long way. We want to make a treaty with you.’

Verse 14, “Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not ask counsel of the Lord.” Joshua made a mistake here. He didn’t ask council of God.

Verses 15-16, “So Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them to let them live; and the rulers of the congregation swore to them. And it happened at the end of three days, after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were their neighbors who dwelt near them.” They were their neighbors.

Verse 18, “But the children of Israel did not attack them, because the rulers of the congregation had sworn to them by the Lord God of Israel. And all the congregation murmured against the rulers.” Everybody was upset.

Verse 19, “Then all the rulers said to all the congregation, ‘We have sworn to them by the Lord God of Israel; now therefore, we may not touch them.’” They had made an agreement.

Verses 20-21, “‘This we will do to them: We will let them live, lest wrath be upon us because of the oath which we swore to them.’ And the rulers said to them, ‘Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for all the congregation, as the rulers had promised them.’”

A decision was made as to what was going to happen. The decision that occurred was because the Gibeonites had practiced deception; they would become bondsmen. They were to become the servants and slaves to the Levites.

It is interesting that in recent years, there was a great bit of publicity that accompanied a migration of Falasha people from Ethiopia to Israel. They were commonly known as the Black Jews. Various questions were raised as to where they came from. They were the descendants of the Gibeonites. They were in Judah until the destruction of the temple. When Judah was taken into captivity, they fled into the area of Egypt. They settled in Ethiopia and have remained there until this day. The Levites had made such good Jews out of them that they practiced the religion of the Old Testament up until our day. Josephus and other historians bring that out.

Joshua 10:1-4, “Now it came to pass when Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem heard how Joshua had taken Ai and had utterly destroyed it—as he had done to Jericho and its king, so he had done to Ai and its king—and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were among them, that they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, like one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai and all its men were mighty. Therefore Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem sent to Hoham king of Hebron, Piram king of Jarmuth, Japhia king of Lachish, and Debir king of Eglon, saying, ‘Come up to me and help me, that we may attack Gibeon, for it has made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel.’”

Take note here. In Genesis 14, Melchizedek (the One we know as Jesus Christ), the King of Salem was at the site of what is Jerusalem today. “Adoni-Zedek” means “lord of righteousness.” He came along and established his headquarters in Jerusalem and usurped to himself the title and prerogative of God. They were upset that the Gibeonites had made peace with them. They were going to make an example out of Gibeon.

Verse 6, “And the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp at Gilgal, saying, ‘Do not forsake

your servants; come up to us quickly, save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites who dwell in the mountains have gathered together against us.’” The Gibeonites came to Joshua and he told them not to worry.

Verses 7-11, “So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor. And the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Do not fear them, for I have delivered them into your hand; not a man of them shall stand before you.’ Joshua therefore came upon them suddenly, having marched all night from Gilgal. So the Lord routed them before Israel, killed them with a great slaughter at Gibeon chased them along the road that goes to Beth Horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah. And it happened, as they fled before Israel and were on the descent of Beth Horon, that the Lord cast down large hailstones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died from the hailstones than those whom the children of Israel killed with the sword.”

We find that Joshua led the Israelites up to Gilgal and fought against the Canaanites.

Verse 12, “Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel: ‘Sun, stand still over Gibeon; and Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.’” A tremendous miracle occurred; he told the sun to stand still.

Verses 13-14, “So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the people had revenge upon their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. And there has been no day like that; before it or after it, that the Lord heeded the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel.”

Here was one of the greatest miracles that ever occurred. Just a matter of days earlier, Israel was smitten, they ran, and here they were facing the entire confederation of the Canaanites. The day was lengthened by twelve hours. There is no limit to what God can do for his people if they are faithful to Him, but if sin and corruption are tolerated in their midst, God will allow all kinds of problems. God would fight their battles when they were faithful to him. When there were serious sins in the midst, God’s blessing was removed. According to Jewish tradition, this day occurred on a Friday.

Verse 25, “Then Joshua said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; be strong and of good courage, for thus the Lord will do to all your enemies against whom you fight.’”

Verses 40-43, “So Joshua conquered all the land: the mountain country and the South and the lowland and the wilderness slopes, and all their kings; he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel had commanded. And Joshua conquered them from Kadesh Barnea as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even as far as Gibeon. All these kings and their land Joshua took at one time, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel. Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.” We saw the miracles that God worked with the sun and moon standing still.

Joshua 11:19, “There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon. All the others they took in battle.”

Verse 23, “So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had said to Moses; and Joshua gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Then the land rested from war.” The land rested from war. They entered into rest.

Joshua 12:1-24 lists all the thirty-one cities the Israelites took.

Joshua 14:6-9, “Then the children of Judah came to Joshua in Gilgal. And Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him: ‘You know the word which the Lord said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh Barnea. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back word to him as it was in my heart. Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the Lord my God. So Moses swore on that day, saying, ‘Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children’s forever, because you have wholly followed the Lord my God.’” Caleb came to Joshua and said, ‘I want the inheritance that I am to have.’

Verses 10-11, “And now, behold, the Lord has kept me alive, as He said, these forty years, ever since the Lord spoke this word to Moses while Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, here I am this day, eighty-five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in.”

‘I am as strong as I was when Moses sent me out.’ Caleb was forty when he went to spy out the land (v. 7), one year after the Exodus. He was thirty-nine at the time of the Exodus, and now

forty-five years from the time he spied on the land, he is eighty-five, forty-six years after the Exodus. He was eighty-five when the land received the rest.

Verses 12-15, “Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the Lord spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the Lord said.’ And Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel. And the name of Hebron formerly was Kirjath Arba, for Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim. Then the land had rest from war.”

Caleb was eighty-five when the land received rest. Israel was in the wilderness for forty years, now six more years subduing the land. From the time they crossed the Jordan and had their rest was six years. The seventh year was to be a sabbatical year. What better year for them to enter into rest; so that is what happened. There are a lot of spiritual analogies drawn here.

Joshua 13:1-33 describes the boundaries. It enables us to draw a map of the Promised Land because it mentions everyone of the towns. We know where every tribe was.

Joshua 15 lists which cities were included.

Joshua 16 gives the various lots.

Joshua 18:1, “Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of meeting there, and the land was subdued before them.” God established a headquarters and placed the tabernacle here at Shiloh. This was in the territory of Ephraim.

Verses 2-3, “But there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes which had not yet received their inheritance. Then Joshua said to the children of Israel: ‘How long will you neglect to go and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers has given you?’” So he took the area, divided up the rest of it and gave them detailed instruction down through chapters 18 and 19.

Joshua 20:9, “These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel and for the stranger who sojourned among them, that whoever killed any person accidentally might flee there, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood until he stood before the congregation.” They designated cities of refuge.

Joshua 21:41, “All the cities of the Levites within the possession of the children of Israel were forty-eight cities with their common-lands.” There were forty-eight cities with their suburbs. Israel was divided into forty-eight Levitical administrative districts. The United States started with thirteen states, as Israel had thirteen tribes—ironies that God built in that showed that.

Joshua 21:44-45, “The Lord gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass.”

Joshua 22:4, ““And now the Lord your God has given rest to your brethren, as He promised them; now therefore, return and go to your tents and to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side of the Jordan.””

Hebrews 3:10-11, ““Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, “they always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.” So I swore in My wrath, “they shall not enter My rest.”””

Verses 18-19, “And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”

Hebrews 4:1-3, “Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: ‘So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest,’....” If the rest Joshua gave them was all that there was, David would not have spoken of a rest in a future tense.

Psalms 95:11, “So I swore in My wrath, ‘they shall not enter My rest.’” David wrote about a future rest four hundred years after Joshua led them into the Promised Land.

Isaiah 14:7, “The whole earth is at rest and quiet....”

Isaiah 11:10, “And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious.”

Joshua was not the ultimate rest, but a physical type of a spiritual rest. You can’t understand Hebrews 3 and 4 if you don’t understand that. Paul showed that it is not the ultimate rest. We

look forward to the time of Tomorrow’s World when we enter into God’s rest.

Joshua 22:11-12, “Now the children of Israel heard someone say, ‘Behold, the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh have built an altar on the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan, on the side occupied by the children of Israel.’ And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered together at Shiloh to go to war against them.” A rumor got out. They were ready to go to war.

Verses 13-16, “Then the children of Israel sent Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest to the children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, and with him ten rulers...and they spoke to them saying, ‘Thus says the whole congregation of the Lord: “What treachery is this that you have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the Lord, in that you have built for yourselves an altar, that you might rebel this day against the Lord?”””

They had jumped to the conclusion that they were building idols. A good example of what can happen when gossip occurs.

Verses 18-19, “...“And it shall be, if you rebel today against the Lord, that tomorrow He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel. Nevertheless, if the land of your possession is unclean, then cross over to the land of the possession of the Lord, where the Lord’s tabernacle stands, and take possession among us; but do not rebel against the Lord, nor rebel against us; by building yourselves an altar besides the altar of the Lord our God.”””

‘If you are not satisfied with the land, come over here, but don’t rebel against God.’

Verses 21-24, “Then the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh answered and said to the heads of the divisions of Israel: ‘The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, He knows and let Israel itself know—if it is in rebellion, or it in treachery against the Lord, do not save us this day. If we have built ourselves an altar to turn from following the Lord, or if to offer on it burnt offerings or grain offerings, or if to offer peace offerings on it, let the Lord Himself require an account. But in fact we have done it for fear, for a reason, saying, “In time to come your descendants may speak to our descendants saying ‘What have you to do with the Lord God of Israel?’””” We have not built an altar in rebellion but for fear.

Verses 26-29, “Therefore we said, “Let us now prepare to build ourselves an altar, not for burnt offerings nor for sacrifice, but that it may be a witness between you and us and our generations after us, that we may perform the service of the Lord before Him with our burnt offerings, with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your descendants may not say to our descendants in time to come, ‘you have no part in the Lord.’” Therefore we said that it will be, when they say this to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say, “Here is the replica of the altar of the Lord which our fathers made, though not for burnt offerings nor for sacrifices; but it is a witness between you and us.” For be it from us that we should rebel against the Lord, and turn from following the Lord this day, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for grain offerings, or for sacrifices, besides the altar of the Lord our God which is before His tabernacle.”

They said, ‘This altar is not for sacrifice, but for a witness.’ It turned out that there was really nothing out of the way about it. There was almost a war because they had jumped to conclusions. Thankfully, somebody went and asked, ‘why did you do that?’ It was a witness, ‘that we are all part of the same nation. We know better than to build an altar to worship on.’

Ever notice how people can go off “half-cocked.” They jump to conclusions. When you start examining motives as to why they did it, then you are stepping on territories that you know nothing about. You don’t know why they did it. You can’t read their heart. They immediately assume they know, instead of going and saying, ‘I saw you building this thing, why are you building it?’ They thought they knew why they were building it. There is a very important lesson.

Joshua 23:1-2, “Now it came to pass, a long time after the Lord had given rest to Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua was old, advanced in age. And Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers, and said to them: ‘I am old, advanced in age.’” Almost twenty-two years had gone by.

Verse 3, “You have seen all that the Lord your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the Lord your God is He who has fought for you.” You see what God has done, and you have seen all of these things.

Verses 6-8, “Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, and lest you go among these

nations, these who remain among you. You shall not make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause anyone to swear by them; you shall not serve them nor bow down to them, but you shall hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have done to this day.” Be very courageous.

Joshua 24:1-2, “Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and called for the elders of Israel, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel: “Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods.”’” Joshua gathered them all together and began to speak to them. He recounts the history, going all the way back to Abraham, and coming to Jericho.

Verses 14-15, “Now therefore, *fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth*, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Joshua says, ‘I know some of you are worshipping idols. It is time to make a choice. Moses is dead and I am getting ready to die. You need to make a choice of what is going to happen to you. Are you going to go back into idolatry or serve God? I know what I am going to do; I am going to serve God in sincerity and in truth.’

We can prove that Joshua wrote Scripture.

Verse 26, “Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.” He wrote the book of Joshua.

Verse 27, “And Joshua said to all the people, ‘Behold, this stone shall be a witness to us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord which He spoke to us. It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God.’”

It is interesting because this was evidently *Jacob’s pillar stone*. It was the symbol of the Covenant that God had made with Jacob and taken into the wilderness through the forty years. It was a witness when God had spoken forty years before. They had taken it with them through the wilderness. It was kept near the tabernacle and in that sense a witness, a

reminder. It had been there during all the times God has spoken to them. Jacob's pillar stone—the kings of Israel were crowned on it. Jeremiah took it from Jerusalem to Ireland, and it is still the stone on which the kings of the House of David are crowned.

Verses 28-29, "So Joshua let the people depart, each to his own inheritance. Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being one hundred and ten years old."

Verse 31, "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the Lord which He had done for Israel." Basically, they obeyed God during the time of Joshua and the contemporaries of Joshua, the elders that had been there. They didn't last very long. We are going to note that when we get into the book of Judges in the next Bible study.

There is an important lesson to learn, and we see it over and over. The people as a whole, when the leadership is strong, tend to reflect the leader and fall into line; when it is not strong, they go the path of least resistance. That is the tendency of human nature. A second generation comes along, takes things for granted, and begins to let it slip. I think we do well to consider the warnings mentioned in Joshua in the context of the end of this age and the Laodicean era. There is a certain parallel we need to meditate on and consider. There is the tendency to develop familiarity and as new generations come along, to not take it too seriously. After Joshua's death and the death of that group of elders, things began to slide. I think we can find parallels in what was happening in ancient Israel that can make the book of Joshua come alive.

Bible Study # 19 Questions

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

Joshua

1. Even though the half tribe of Manasseh and the tribes of Reuben and Gad were already in possession of their part of the Promised Land, what were their men supposed to do?
2. Where did the spies stay when they came to spy out Jericho?
3. How did the Israelites cross over the Jordan into the land?
4. What was Joshua's first action after crossing over the river and erecting a memorial?
5. Explain the significance of Joshua 5:10-11.
6. What was the sin of Achan? What was its result?
7. Give a scripture reference for what must have been one of the longest sermons on record.
8. What did the Gibeonites do? What happened to them as a result?
9. What great miracle did God work during the battle between Joshua and Adonizedek's Canaanite confederation?
10. How long after the entrance into the Promised Land was it before the division of the land to the various tribes?
11. Where did Joshua establish headquarters and place the tabernacle?
12. Prove that Joshua wrote a book of scripture.
13. What does Joshua 24:27 probably refer to?
14. How long did Israel serve God?

Bible Study # 20
June 14, 1988
Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—Judges
(Chart at end)

I have a chronology of the book of Judges that lists all of the judges. I think this will be helpful to you as we start going through the judges that we are talking about. **Judges is an interesting and very important book because of the lessons that it contains.** Many times it is a book that people have had difficulty with because it seemed to them to be continual strife, fighting, all types of atrocities and terrible things that seemingly occurred. Many have had difficulty with that in trying to understand.

Samuel evidently wrote the book of Judges, though later editorial comments were added in, perhaps by Ezra, at the time the Old Testament was edited prior to the conclusion of the Canon. **The book of Judges certainly underlines the inability and unwillingness of Israel to keep the terms of the Covenant. Everyone was only interested in doing his own thing.**

To get the picture of what was going on in the book of Judges, I think we need to understand the analogy of our own nation's history. During the time of the book of Judges, following the death of Joshua, Israel was not really united under one central government with a centralized administration. Rather, there were twelve independent tribes loosely confederated together. This was comparable, frankly, in many ways to the U. S. under the articles of confederation after the Revolutionary War.

If you want to understand the book of Judges, you have to kind of put yourself in the picture of the settling of the frontier—the settling of the Old West with all the Indian Wars and the strife that was going on because that's really what you had. You had a "rough-and-ready" frontier type of circumstance where a new land was being settled. Some of these judges were kind of like some of the circuit judges of the "Old Judge Roy Bean" variety or the "law west of the Pecos" type of a thing.

That's really the comparable situation to Israel under the Judges. It was the kind of strife and circumstances that characterized the settling of the Old West. Remember the circumstances? There really was not a lot of organized law and order. There was a lot of strife, things going on here and there, the constant threat of some of the Indian wars, and things of that nature.

Sometimes it was difficult to separate the good guys from the bad guys. That's the kind of situation you find in the book of Judges, a period of the frontier. You had twelve independent tribes loosely confederated together, a lot of things going on that could be compared to the circumstances of the Old West.

As you note here on the chronology—let's pick it up here. We had another chronology that started with Abraham and brought it down to Moses, but this chronology basically picks it up from there—from Moses coming down to the entrance into the Promised Land under Joshua in 1403 B.C., and then six years later in 1397 B.C., Israel entered into rest. Joshua himself died about sixteen years later in 1381 B.C. There was a period of several years of the elders that outlived Joshua that brings us down to 1374 B.C. We begin a period of oppression by Mesopotamia and then the first of the judges, Othniel.

He was a younger brother of Caleb. We note him here in a lengthy period. He established a certain degree of centralized authority. What you have to realize is that, even when you had a judge ruling, it was not an organized central government in the sense that Israel had later under the kings or that we would think of in our nation today. It was still comparable to the U. S. during the period prior to the Constitution when you had the semi-independent states that were loosely confederated together. If they could agree on something, they did it; and if they couldn't agree, they didn't.

This was the circumstance, and there was not strong leadership most of the time. The judges were the ones who administered God's law, but it was more of a "circuit-rider-type" judge. People would come to him for matters to be judged. He would lead them during times of warfare. What it came down to was Israel showed unwillingness on their own, as individuals, to really submit to God and obey the laws of the Covenant. In the aftermath of every judge's death, we see what happened—Israel would begin to go after other gods.

We see this forty-year period of Othniel's judgeship ending up with Israel being oppressed by the Moabites. Then God raised up Ehud to deliver them. That went on for a period of time until the Israelites were oppressed by the Canaanites in 1228-1208 B.C. We note here, right around that time period, the birth of Eli. Now God raised up Barak and Deborah to drive out the Canaanites in 1208 B.C. Then we had the period of oppression by the Midianites, and in

the aftermath of this oppression by the Midianites, God raised up Gideon. Gideon was the last judge that exercised authority over all of the tribes until you come down to Samuel. The death of Gideon marked the collapse of centralized administration.

Eli began his high priesthood about twenty years after Gideon's judgeship began, about halfway through Gideon's judgeship. You will note on the right side of the sheet there is the part showing the judges and explanatory information; on the left hand side shows the other events going on.

At Gideon's death the nation fractured. One of Gideon's sons sought to establish himself as king. This son was half Canaanite. It didn't work. It only lasted for about three years. In the east, the Ammonites began to take over. In the north, Abimelech tried to take over. He was part Canaanite. In the south and west, the Philistines tried to take over. So you find the nation fracturing into three sections. During this time Eli was high priest.

We find during this time, in the north, Tola and later Jair fighting in the area where the Canaanites (Abimelech) had been. Then Jephthah and later Ibzan, Elon and Abdon were fighting in the east against the Ammonites. Samson was fighting in the west and in the south against the Philistines. Then it was Samuel who basically took over in the aftermath of all of that. The Philistine power collapsed when Samson pulled the temple down and destroyed the entire leadership of the Philistines. That marked the beginning of Samuel's judgeship, and there was a consolidation where Samuel basically became, after a few years, judge over all of Israel. From the time when Samuel first began his judgeship after the collapse of the Philistine power, there was a period of about forty years that brings us down to the beginning of the monarchy with the coronation of King Saul and later King David's reign.

With the death of Gideon, all pretense of a centralized government collapsed. The Canaanites, Ammonites and most of the Philistines dominated Israel for most of a generation. Samuel, the final judge, restored limited centralization. His judgeship gave way to the monarchy of Saul.

Judges 3—16 form, for the most part, a continuous narrative of the history of Israel under the judges.

Judges 11:26 is essential for establishing the chronology of the book. You may have wondered how we came up with dates.

The key to the chronology of judges is Judges 11.

Judges 11:26, “While Israel dwelt in Hishbon and its villages, in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities along the banks of the Arnon, for three hundred years, why did you not recover them within that time?” From the time that Israel entered into the land until this time when Jephthah overthrew the Ammonites was a period of three hundred years. Note here that we dated from the entrance into the land under Joshua, 1403 B.C. Three hundred years later brings us down to 1103 B.C., the time that Jephthah overthrew the Ammonites. It provides a basis for dating the material. By dating Jephthah's government, we can date the others from that. We can go forward and backward and date everyone from Jephthah because with him we have a date that dates us back to the time of the entrance into the land. That ties in with the Exodus.

Judges 1—2 and 17—21 are basically inset chapters. They serve to give a flavor of life in those days. You had a situation that sometimes bordered on anarchy. That's made plain at the end of the book of Judges.

Judges 21:25, “In those days there was no king in Israel and every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” That was the problem. Everyone was simply doing his own thing.

Judges 3:1, “Now these are the nations which the Lord left, that He might test Israel by them, that is, all who had not known any of the wars in Canaan.” This explains much of the problems for Israel. The more Israel mixed and mingled with the world, the more like the world they became, even to the point that God withdrew His protection. Instead of Israel overcoming the world, they were overcome by their own carnal desires to be like the world. There is an important lesson to learn from the book of Judges.

Verse 4, “And they were left, that He might test Israel by them, to know whether they would obey the commandments of the Lord which He had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.” Why did God allow some of the Canaanite tribes to remain behind? They were to prove Israel by them. But notice the problem.

Verses 5-7, “So the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites. And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons: and they served their gods. So the children of Israel did

evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God and served Baals and Asherahs.” God made sure that they had an alternative if they chose to use it. When God calls us and begins to work with us, He does not remove all the temptations and all of the problems. We remain living in the world around us. One of the reasons we go through some of these things is to demonstrate what are our priorities, are we going to obey the Commandments of the Lord or not? What happened here? What did Israel do? They began to compromise.

I think it is important to understand the tactics of Satan the devil as he seeks to subvert the people of God. There are various tactics that we have noted throughout. One of the tactics that he is most adept to using is that of *compromise*. We are surrounded by the world, and we begin to compromise, a little thing over here, a little thing over there, and something else. We begin to mix and mingle and become part and parcel with the world until our values become watered down.

Now here we see intermarriage being a problem. We look at two aspects of it. One, the spiritual aspect and what happened when Israel began to marry other nations. You begin to involve yourself in unions that are not based and oriented in serving God. The principle here is why *God tells converted Christians that they are not to become unequally yoked* (II Corinthians 6:14). That’s the principle as to why it’s wrong to date outside the Church. It simply leads to compromise and leads to involving yourself in situations that are going to pull you down and pull your values away. So part of the problem is religious, it led them into a spirit of compromise.

Another part is not only did Israel lose their spiritual identity, but they would eventually lose their physical identity. This is a matter of concern to God because God established the separate human families. God established the identities of the various branches of the human family, and Israel began to lose their identity—physically, culturally, spiritually and in every way. If this circumstance had continued on, without God’s intervention, they would have lost their identity as a people and would have dropped from the pages of history. Well, God in His mercy allowed them to find themselves in a “jam.”

Verse 8, “Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served Cushan-Rishathaim eight years.” Isn’t it

interesting how when hard times come, people begin to think about God? Sin is for the good times when living is easy. When the going gets rough, that’s when people begin to say, ‘Oh, God, please deliver me.’

What was the old joke they had back in World War II? —There weren’t any atheists in foxholes. About the time somebody was floating around on a life raft in the Pacific, there really weren’t any atheists out there. All of these philosophical ideas someone might have had kind of disappeared. People were making promises right and left, ‘I’ll do anything, just please get me out of here.’

We note in Judges 1:1, “Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass...” This is the setting. After the death of Joshua and the elders that outlived him died, Israel went further and further afield. They didn’t last. They lasted until the water got hot again. Remember the last thing Joshua told them. He warned them what they were going to do, and sure enough, they did it.

Verses 27-28, “However, Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; for the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land. And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites under tribute, but did not completely drive them out.”

You see, they thought they had come up with a better idea. Instead of driving them out, ‘why don’t we keep them here and make slaves of them.’ That was not what God told them to do, and it became a never-ending source of problems. It led them into various problems and compromises.

Judges 2:7, “So the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord which He had done for Israel.”

Verse 10, “When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel.” That was the generation that had known the wandering.

Verses 12-15, “And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger. They forsook

the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. Wherever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for calamity, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed.”

Verses 16-18, “Then the Lord raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the Lord; they did not do so. And when the Lord raised up judges for them; the Lord was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord was moved with pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them.” He delivered them out of the hand of the enemies because He felt sorry for them.

Verse 19, “And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way.” This is the story over and over in the book of Judges—Israel went astray. When Joshua and the elders died, Israel went astray. They were oppressed; God allowed them to be punished and then had mercy on them and raised a judge. But they never really got the point; as soon as the judge was not around to enforce it, then away they went, over and over, the ups and downs of history. How short a time lessons are retained! Lessons don’t last very long. We see it in history and we see it here in the book of Judges.

I think, brethren, we had better do well to take heed to ourselves. Understand! God inspired these examples for a reason. God has allowed us to learn certain lessons in this age, today in His Church. We kid ourselves if we think that lessons are permanently implanted. The tendency of human nature is to forget the lesson. And if we forget the lesson, we repeat the mistakes. It is important that we continue to take heed to ourselves, to go back and to learn from the lessons that God has allowed us to experience.

We note here as we did in Judges 1:28 what Israel did in regard to the Canaanites in the land. They made tributaries of them. They didn’t

totally drive them out, and they were a source of trouble ever after. What did God say the results of Israel’s treatment of the Canaanites would be?

Judges 2:2, ““And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars. But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this?””

Verse 3, ““Therefore I also said, ‘I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.’”” God said, ‘Look, you didn’t listen to what I said, and therefore I am not going to entirely drive them out. They are going to be here as thorns in your side.’ The result was going to be strife, and the idolatry of the Canaanites would serve as a snare.

Verses 16-19, “Then the Lord raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the Lord; they did not do so. And when the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way.”

These four verses summarize the history of the rest of the book of Judges. When you read vv. 16-19 of Judges 2, you have the summary of the whole story. God would raise a judge and deliver them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. They wouldn’t listen to the judge, and they would soon enough go into idolatry again. When the judge was dead, they went all the way and corrupted themselves. This cycle is repeated over and over and over. Now we find that God allowed the Mesopotamians to come in and oppress them for eight years—and then God raised up the first judge.

We read in Judges 3: 9-11, “When the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them: Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the Lord delivered Cushan-

Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Cushan-Rishathaim. So the land had rest for forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died.” Again notice what happened. They learned the lesson for how long? –For about a generation. Othniel, the first judge, was the nephew of Caleb; he was the son of Kenaz who was Caleb’s younger brother. He judged Israel for this period. Israel had rest, we are told, for forty years.

We emphasize, going through the book of Judges, this point of entering into God’s rest. *Obedience leads to rest.* Entering into God’s rest, God gave them rest from the inhabitants around. This term “rest” is important because the Apostle Paul, back in Hebrews, uses it. It applies to the Sabbath and to the Millennium, of which the Sabbath is a type. It is all tied in together. Realize that what God gave Israel was a physical type of what we have in store for us.

As we come through the story, we find that the children of Israel did evil.

Judges 3:12-14, “And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord. Then he gathered to himself the people of Amon and Amalek, went and defeated Israel, and took possession of the city of palms. So the children of Israel served Eglon king of Moab eighteen years.” He gathered together allies; he smote Israel and oppressed them for a period of eighteen years.

Verses 15-24, “And when the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for them: Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a left-handed man. By him the children of Israel sent tribute to Eglon king of Moab. Now Ehud made himself a dagger (it was double-edged and a cubit in length) and fastened it under his clothes on his right thigh. So he brought the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. (Now, Eglon was a very fat man.) And when he had finished presenting the tribute, he sent away the people who had carried the tribute. But he himself turned back from the stone images that were at Gilgal, and said, ‘I have a secret message for you, O king.’ He said, ‘Keep silence!’ And all who attended him went out from him. And Ehud came to him (now he was sitting upstairs in his cool private chamber). Then Ehud said, ‘I have a message from God for you.’ So he arose from his seat. Then Ehud reached with his left hand, took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly. Even the hilt went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for

he did not draw the dagger out of his belly; and his entrails came out. Then Ehud went out through the porch and shut the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them. When he had gone out, Eglon’s servants came to look, and to their surprise, the doors of the upper room were locked. So they said, ‘He is probably attending to his needs [KJV, “covers his feet”] in the cool chamber.’”

Ehud managed to get right in there where he was. He told Eglon he had a message for him and stabbed him. We are told that Eglon was fat and couldn’t get the dagger out. Eglon was a pretty good-sized fellow. Ehud left him in there and escaped. Since he closed the door, they were figuring he was going to the bathroom. That’s what the term “cover his feet” means. That is a King James euphemism for “going to the toilet.” So they figured that was what must be going on.

Verse 25, “So they waited till they were embarrassed, and still he had not opened the doors of the upper room. Therefore they took the key and opened them. And there was their master, fallen dead on the floor.” Finally they got worried about him and decided to go in, and when they came in, he was dead.

You read these stories. That’s why I said at the beginning, to understand it you have to put yourself in the circumstance of the Wild West, the shootouts and all of the kinds of things that were going on back and forth. You had an absence of strong law and order enforced. You had champions; you had heroes who kind of rose up, came in, stepped out and took action. God would utilize that individual to restore a certain amount of independence or law and order, but it never really solved the problem.

I think it is interesting that recently there was a circumstance where the modern nation of Israel launched an attack against one of the leaders of the PLO over in North Africa. They marched right in, assassinated him and left. You have to understand that from their standpoint, they literally read the book of Judges for strategy. They didn’t read it for spiritual lessons; they read it for strategy. They considered themselves in the same circumstances, and they read it for strategy. See what they did, they went in and did the same thing. They read it strictly from a carnal standpoint. What works? Obviously it does work from that standpoint because it suits God’s purpose. We find the same things over and over and over. The book of Judges is the bloodiest book of the whole Bible.

The bottom line of the book of Judges is the end of the book, the last verse. This is the bottom line. This is why the book of Judges reads the way it does.

Judges 21:25, “In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” *That’s the key to understanding the whole book.* Everybody did his own thing. God saved Israel in spite of themselves. God had a job, a purpose and a promise He had made to Abraham. He utilized individuals who did all kinds of things.

Verse 30, “So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest for eighty years.”

Judges 4:1-3, “When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth Hagoyim. And the children of Israel cried out to the Lord; for Jabin had nine hundred chariots of iron, and for twenty years he harshly oppressed the children of Israel.”

Verses 4-5, “Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountain of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.” She was a prophetess. God gave revelation through her.

Verses 6-8, “Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, ‘Has not the Lord God of Israel commanded, saying, “Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor; take with you ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun; and against you I will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his multitude at the River Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hand”?’ And Barak said to her, ‘If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.’”

Let’s understand. “Barak,” whose name meant “lightning,” was the son of “Abinoam,” whose name meant “the son of sweetness.”

Notice Judges 5:7, “...until I, Deborah, arose, arose a mother in Israel.” Deborah arose as a mother in Israel. Notice the state of things. Israel had sunk to the place that God said, ‘You are like a bunch of little kids.’ It was in a sense to shame the men of the nation who had so abdicated their responsibility that God said, ‘I am going to raise a woman as a mother in Israel, to take you by the hand and lead you because you are acting like a bunch of little kids, a bunch of little Momma’s

boys. You need Momma to come and take you by the hand because you are not acting like men.’

Here was Barak who was raised up to do a job and Barak said, ‘Oh, I don’t know; I’m not going to go up unless you are going to go up with me. If you’ll go up and hold my hand, I guess I’ll go.’ Deborah was so disgusted.

Judges 4:9, “So she said, ‘I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.’ Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.” ‘If you are that much of a weakling,’ she said, ‘you’re not going to get any honor out of it. You’re not going to kill the enemy general; he’s going to die at the hands of a woman.’

This is a picture of the state of things in Israel. The nation had sunk to a point where there was no proper masculine leadership, and it is to the shame of the nation that they were in that state. This is what happens when you get away from God. There wasn’t the kind of courage, boldness and proper kinds of masculine leadership that should have been there.

God said, ‘All right, I’ll show you. I’ll raise a righteous woman who is the everlasting shame of the men involved. A woman who will exemplify more courage and trust in Me than any of you men. I will use her like a mother to take you by the hand and lead you up there.’ It was to evidence the state of things. It shows God used Deborah like a mother to Israel.

As we go through the story, Jael (a woman) was the one who actually killed the general Sisera (vv. 17-21).

Judges 5 is the song of Deborah.

Judges 5:31, “Thus let all Your enemies perish, O Lord! But let those who love Him, be like the sun when it comes out in full strength. So the land had rest for forty years.” Undoubtedly there were lessons learned in some of this.

We find Barak listed in Hebrews 11:32 as one of the men of faith. He didn’t start off as a man of faith. That’s one of the things to understand.

Many of those you find listed in Hebrews 11 as men and women of faith didn’t start off as men and women of faith. They started off fearful, cowardly and timid, with all kinds of apprehension, all kinds of things. God worked with them and brought them to a point where they came to trust Him and to walk with Him.

Again there is a lesson there. Sometimes we read the story of these individuals and think they were just born walking tall, born heroes. The heroes of Hebrews 11 were not born heroes. *They were*

made heroes through the working of God in their lives.

God worked with Barak. Obviously, there was a lot of change that took place in Barak from the time that he was so timid that he said, 'Not me, no way, unless you hold me by the hand and take me up there.' Can you imagine a successful general saying that? Think of generals that have led the armies of this nation; can you imagine them telling their mother or some woman, 'If you take me by the hand and lead me up there, if you will stand there next to me, I guess I'll go and fight the enemy.' That's ridiculous. Can you imagine General Patton doing something like that or General MacArthur or various ones.

This is the state of things. God took people who didn't have what it takes naturally, and He supplied their needs. Hebrews 11 tells us many of these individuals, out of weakness, were made strong. God didn't take them because they were the strongest, most bold and courageous people around. Sometimes He took them because they were the weakest, and He showed what He could do.

Things lasted and the land had rest for forty years.

Judges 6:1, "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. [Kind of like a broken record, put it on and play it back every chapter.] So the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years." The Midianites would wait until the Israelites had sown a crop and the crop was about ready to harvest, then they would come up with the Amalekites and the children of the East. They just came up and harvested the crop (vv. 2-5).

These were terrorist raids. Again, go back to the situation and think of some of the Indian raids in the Old West. The settlers would come in and have their little community, and the Indians would come down on the warpath to terrorize the place, burn it down and send everybody scurrying for cover. This is basically what was going on, and frankly, some of these people they were fighting against were very much akin to some of the Indians. In fact, some of the North American Indians are actually descended from the Hittites. So you find a number of similarities. You find the same people in the same situation doing the same kinds of things.

We find that Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and they cried out to the Eternal (v. 6).

Verses 7-10, "And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried out to the Lord because of the Midianites, that the Lord sent a prophet to the

children of Israel, who said to them, 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel: "I brought you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage; and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. Also I said to you, 'I am the Lord your God; do not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But you have not obeyed My voice.'""

Verse 11, "Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites." So Gideon is back here hiding behind the winepress with a little dab of wheat, kind of beating it out, looking around, afraid the Midianites would come down and discover what he was doing.

Verse 12, "And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, 'The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!'" And Gideon said, 'WHO, ME?'

Verse 13, "And Gideon said to him, 'O, my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles, which our fathers told us about, saying, "Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?" But now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.'"

'If the Lord is with us, why has all of this befallen us, and where are all the miracles we heard about?'

Verses 14-15, "Then the Lord turned to him and said, 'Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?' So he said to him, 'O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh and I am the least in my father's house.'"

He said, 'My family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. Not me, you got me mixed up with somebody else. I can't do it.'

Verse 16, "And the Lord said to him, 'Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.'" God said, 'Look, I am going to be with you.'

Verse 17, "Then he said to Him, 'If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me.'"

So Gideon offered a sacrifice and brought out the sacrifice and the fire came out of the rock and consumed the flesh (vv. 18-21).

Verse 22, "Now Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the Lord. So Gideon said, 'Alas, O

Lord God! For I have seen the Angel of the Lord face to face.” Just about that time it dawned on him that not everybody reached out his staff and fire came up out of the rock. About this time it was kind of impressive. So he got scared again. ‘Oh, no, I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face.’

Verse 23, “Then the Lord said to him, ‘Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die.’” He was told he wasn’t going to die.

Verses 24-25, “So Gideon built an altar there to the Lord, and called it The-Lord-Shalom. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. Now it came to pass the same night that the Lord said to him, ‘Take your father’s young bull, the second bull of seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the wooden image that is beside it.’” God told him to take his father’s young bullock and use it to pull down that altar of Baal and cut down the grove.

Verses 26-30, “and build an altar to the Lord your God on top of this rock in the proper arrangement, and take the second bull and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the image which you shall cut down.’ So Gideon took ten men from among his servants and did as the Lord had said to him. But because he feared his father’s household and the men of the city too much to do it by day, he did it by night. And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, there was the altar of Baal, torn down; and the wooden image that was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was being offered on the altar which had been built. So they said to one another, ‘Who has done this thing?’ And when they had inquired and asked, they said, ‘Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing.’ Then the men of the city said to Joash, ‘Bring out your son, that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the wooden image that was beside it.’” They said, ‘Bring out your son because we want to kill him.’

Verse 31, “And Joash said to all who stood against him, ‘Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him? Let the one who would plead for him be put to death by morning! If he is a god, let him plead for himself, because his altar has been torn down!’”

Joash said, ‘Why would you plead for Baal? Let him take care of himself. If he’s a god, let him plead for himself. Somebody threw his altar down; let him take care of it himself.’

Verse 32, “Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, ‘Let Baal plead against him, because he has torn down his altar.’” Gideon was

nicknamed “Jerubbaal,” which meant “let Baal plead.”

Verses 33-34, “Then all the Midianites and Amalekites, the people of the East, gathered together; and they crossed over and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon; then he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites gathered behind him.” He said, ‘Now what have I gotten myself into?’

Verse 36, “Then Gideon said to God, ‘If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said....’” ‘Give me a sign.’

Verses 37-38, “look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said.’ And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water.”

He put out a fleece and there was going to be dew just on the fleece and everything else was going to be dry. Well, God worked that miracle to encourage him, and then Gideon looked at it and thought, ‘Maybe that was an accident. Let’s try it again.’

Verses 39-40, “Then Gideon said to God, ‘Do not be angry with me, and let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew.’ And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground.” He said, ‘This time let’s let the fleece be dry and everything around it be wet.’ It happened.

Judges 7:1-2, “Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley. And the Lord said to Gideon, ‘The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, “My own hand has saved me.”’”

God told Gideon to get the people together. Gideon got them together and God told him the people were too many. ‘You have too many, too big an army.’ Now Gideon didn’t think he had one big enough, but God said, ‘I think your army is a little big.’

Verse 3, “Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, “Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.” And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand

remained.” God told him to get them all together and tell anybody who is scared to go home, so twenty-two thousand left and ten thousand remained. The ten thousand that stayed were the ones that were too scared to admit they were scared. Two-thirds of his army left. Now he thought the army was a little on the small side; but when two-thirds of them got up and left, it’s kind of like when Travis drew the line at the Alamo and nobody stepped over. You kind of get the state of things. When Gideon drew the line, two-thirds of them left. This would tend to make you a little nervous.

Verses 4-6, “And the Lord said to Gideon, ‘The people are still too many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, that of whom I say to you, “This one shall go with you,” the same shall go with you; “This one shall not go with you,” the same shall not go.’ So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, ‘Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink.’ And the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water.”

God told Gideon he thought he still had too many. So he brought them down to the water. When they got down there to drink, God told him to separate them. All of those that got down and lapped water like a dog put them on one side and put the others on the other side. So when they put them together, they had nine thousand seven hundred that drank water like people and three hundred that lapped water like a dog.

Verse 7, “Then the Lord said to Gideon, ‘By the tree hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the other people go, every man to his place.’” God told him, ‘By the three hundred that have lapped will I save you. Take the three hundred that lapped water like a dog and stick them over here. That’s your army. Send the others home.’ So they left. Gideon, needless to say, was a little on the nervous side.

Verses 10-11, “‘But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant, and you shall hear what they say; and afterward, you hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp.’ Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outpost of the armed men who were there.”

Verses 13-14, “And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his

companion. He said, ‘I have just had a dream: To my surprise, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian; it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed.’ Then his companion answered and said, ‘This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; for into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp.’”

God had him go down to the valley where the Midianites were to eavesdrop. When he eavesdropped on the Midianites, he was shocked because he found they were more scared of him than he was of them because they had been having dreams.

Verse 12, “Now the Midianites and Amalekites, all of the people of the East, were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude.” Gideon saw these guys, and it looked like a bunch of grasshoppers covering the hillside. He thought, ‘Oh, no, I have three hundred that lap water like a dog. God sent the other thirty-one thousand seven hundred home, and He left me with three hundred that lap water like a dog. And I have this bunch out here that I am supposed to take care of.’

Verse 15, “And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel, and said, ‘Arise, for the Lord has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand.’” Gideon was encouraged; God was really going to take care of this.

Verse 16, “Then he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man’s hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers.” God had him divide the three hundred into three companies.

Verses 18-19, “‘When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.”’ So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that were in their hands.”

When Gideon blew the trumpet, they broke the pitchers, and all these lamps looked like a campfire. It looked like the Midianites were surrounded by three hundred companies of men, but it was just three hundred men—not three hundred companies of men, just three hundred scattered around. All of a sudden just out of nowhere, when they broke the pitcher, the

Midianites saw lights and it was like, ‘Oh no, we are being attacked.’

Verse 20, “Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers—they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing—and they cried, ‘The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.’”

Verses 21-22, “And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled. When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the Lord set every man’s sword against his companion throughout the whole camp; and the army fled to...” God sent a spirit of confusion in the ranks. The Midianites and Amalekites fell on top of each other and began to butcher away until they wound up virtually wiping themselves out. God gave Gideon three hundred men to defeat the whole Midianite empire. It shows what God can do. God wanted Israel to realize He was delivering them.

As we come down, we find the elders of Succoth whose attitude had been rotten to Israel.

Judges 8:4-6, “When Gideon came to the Jordan, he and the three hundred men who were with him crossed over, exhausted but still in pursuit. Then he said to the men of Succoth, ‘Please give loaves of bread to the people who follow me, for they are exhausted, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.’ And the leaders of Succoth said, ‘Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give bread to your army?’”

Verse 16, “And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with the he taught [disciplined] the men of Succoth.” When Gideon came back, he gave them a little “frontier justice.” He gave them a whipping with thorn switches. They got the point when it was all over.

Verses 22-23, “Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, ‘Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian.’ But Gideon said to them, ‘I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord God shall rule over you.’” He said, ‘I am not going to do it.’

Verse 28, “Thus Midian was subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted their heads no more. And the country was quiet for forty years in the days of Gideon.”

Judges 9:1-2, “And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem, to his mother’s brothers, and spoke with them and with all the family of the house of his mother’s father, saying, ‘Please speak in the hearing of all the men of Shechem: “Which is better for you, that

all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal reign over you, or that one reign over you?’” Remember that I am your own flesh and bone.”

After Gideon’s death, his son Abimelech tried to take over. He wanted to be king. It was at the death of Gideon that marked the collapse of centralized administration. Abimelech tried to take over in the area where the Canaanites were. This lasted for a few years until they were overthrown.

Verses 56-57, “Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech, which he had done to his father by killing his seventy brothers. And all the evil of the men of Shechem God returned on their own heads, and on them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.”

Judges 10:1-3, “After Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola the son of Puah ...He judged Israel twenty-three years; and he died and was buried in Shamir. After him arose Jair, a Gileadite; and he judged Israel twenty-two years.” Following Abimelech’s overthrow, you had Tola and Jair.

Judges 11:1-3, “Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, but he was the son of a harlot; and Gilead begot Jephthah. Gilead’s wife bore sons; and when his wife’s sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out, and said to him, ‘You shall have no inheritance in our father’s house, for you are the son of another woman.’ Then Jephthah fled from his brothers and dwelt in the land of Tob: and worthless men banded together with Jephthah and went out raiding with him.”

We read of Jephthah. He was an individual who had a rough life. He was an illegitimate son and was not accepted by the others in the family. He fled from his brethren. It was kind of a bandit crowd—Jesse James and his band of men—that’s what you had. You have to really get the picture of the book of Judges. That is what you had. You had a breakdown of law and order and centralized administration of authority. You had shootouts and gangs and Indian wars. That’s what you had all the way through the book of Judges.

Verses 4-8, “Now it came to pass after a time that the people of Ammon made war against Israel. And so it was, when the people of Ammon, made war against Israel, that the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob. Then they said to Jephthah, ‘Come and be our commander, that we may fight against the people of Ammon.’ So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, ‘Did you not hate me, and expel me from my father’s house? Why have you come to me now when you are in distress?’ And the

elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, 'That is why we have turned again to you now, that you may go with us and fight against the people of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.'

Jephthah put things together. He was going to fight against the Ammonites who were oppressing Israel. This would be the area on the east side of the Jordan River. Then we read of his foolish vow.

Verses 30-32, "And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord, and said, 'If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.' So Jephthah advanced toward the people of Ammon to fight against them, and the Lord delivered them into his hands."

He smote them throughout this whole area and subdued them (v. 33).

Verse 34, "When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, there was his daughter, coming out to meet him with timbrels and dancing, and she was his only child. Besides her he had neither son nor daughter." About this time he realized what a stupid thing he had vowed.

The statement is made, as we read down, of exactly what happened.

Verse 39, "And it was so at the end of two months that she returned to her father, and he carried out his vow with her which he had vowed. She knew no man..." On the basis of Jewish tradition is the fact that she actually never married. She was basically shut up after this period of time.

Verses 39-40, "...And it became a custom in Israel that the daughters of Israel went four days each year to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite."

Verse 37, "Then she said to her father, 'Let this thing be done for me: let me alone for two months, that I may go and wander on the mountains and bewail my virginity, my friends and I.'" The indication was that she was not literally put to death, but in the figurative sense, she never married. This is at least the traditional Jewish understanding of it. Whether that is exactly what happened or not, it simply leaves it as an unclear statement. But I think it demonstrates the state of things in some of the individuals. You read about Jephthah and the problems that existed.

Judges 12:4, "Now Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead and fought against Ephraim..." They even had civil war.

Verse 7, "And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead."

In the aftermath of this, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon judged for a short period of time (vv. 8-15). On the one hand, Israel was fighting the Canaanites, and on the other hand, they were fighting the Ammonites.

Judges 13:1, "Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years." The Philistines were in the south and the west. Israel fell under Philistine power for forty years, which would be from the death of Gideon until the death of Samson.

Verses 2-5, "Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children. And the Angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, 'Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat any unclean thing. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.'"

We pick up the story of Samson. Samson's story contains quite a bit up to chapter 16. Samson was a Nazarite from his mother's womb and was given the power of supernatural strength as a result of that. This was the basis; Samson was to be under a Nazarite vow, and God gave him a gift of supernatural strength. Samson may have been the strongest man.

Samson liked riddles. I could give you a riddle: who was both the strongest and the weakest of the men that you read of? It would have to be Samson. He, on the one hand, was very strong, and in other ways, he was very, very weak. He was very weak in character. His great weakness, of course, was his affinity and lust for Gentile women.

Judges 14:1-3, "Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, 'I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.' Then his father and mother said to him, 'Is there no woman among the daughters of your

brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?’ And Samson said to his father, ‘Get her for me, for she pleases me well.’”

“She pleases me well.” The Hebrew is, “She is right in my own eyes.” Remember, that’s the whole story of Judges, “every man did that, which was right in his own eyes.”

His father said, ‘Look, can’t you find someone of your own people?’ And Samson told him, ‘No, she’s the one that’s right in my own eyes. She’s the one that I want.’ With this kind of attitude, Samson was an individual whom God had to deal with to bring him to a certain point. Samson was a big brawling Irishman, a Danite. Samson had a problem; the problem was this affinity that he had for these women.

You find that, up until the end of his life, the only time Samson fought against the Philistines was when he avenged himself. One of the lessons that we need to learn is that *God can sometimes use people in spite of themselves*. God sometimes uses carnal individuals to accomplish His work. They do it for the wrong reasons and motives, but God has a result that he wants to come out. God was going to deliver Israel. He utilized Samson and worked to teach Samson a lesson in the meantime. Samson ultimately learned that lesson. Samson trusted his strength. Yet, in reality, in the things that were really important, Samson was very, very weak. He kept going back to this weakness time after time.

Samson got mad because he wanted this woman. She was obviously not the kind of person he should have married, but Samson wanted her. He saw her and he liked her. Samson proposed a riddle. He put a contest with these Philistine men. They wanted to win; so they put pressure on his wife to tell them what the riddle was.

Judges 14:16, “Then Samson’s wife wept on him, and said, ‘You only hate me! You do not love me! You have posed a riddle to the sons of my people, but you have not explained it to me.’ And he said to her, ‘Look, I have not explained it to my father or my mother; so should I explain it to you?’”

She wept before him and said, ‘You don’t love me.’ She nagged away until he told her (v. 17). She explained the riddle to the Philistine men, and they won the bet.

Verse 18, “... And he said to them: ‘If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle!’” He knew what his wife had been up to.

Verses 19-20, “Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily, and he went down to

Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle. So his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father’s house. And Samson’s wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man.” He was mad and didn’t go back; so they gave his wife to someone else.

Judges 15:1-2, “And after a while, in the time of wheat harvest, it happened that Samson visited his wife with a young goat. And he said, ‘Let me go in to my wife, into her room.’ But her father would not permit him to go in. Her father said, ‘I really thought that you thoroughly hated her, therefore I gave her to your companion....’”

A little while later, Samson decided he was going to go and make up, and he found out that his wife was now living with somebody else. A really fine situation he’d gotten himself involved with. So now he’s mad again. When he got mad, he was ready to take vengeance. So he caught three hundred foxes, took firebrands and tied these foxes’ tails together. He put a firebrand in the midst of the two tails and turned them loose (vv. 4-5). They burned up all the corn of the Philistines, and the Philistines were mad. So you have this kind of strife going back and forth.

Verse 15, “He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it.”

Verse 20, “And he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines.”

Judges 16:1, “Then Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her.” This was the way he was.

Verses 2-3, “When the Gazites were told, ‘Samson has come here!’ they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. They were quiet all night, saying, ‘In the morning, when it is daylight, we will kill him.’ And Samson lay low till midnight; then he arose at midnight, took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.” So he tears the gates off when they try to lock him in. You know the story.

Then he meets up with delightful Delilah, and again the same old thing. She, of course, betrays him and he’s taken prisoner. His hair is cut, and now God allows him to learn a lesson.

Judges 16:21, “Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison.” They took Samson and put out his eyes. For a period of

time, they tied him up to a gristmill like an ox to push this thing around and grind the grain. While he was in that state, undoubtedly, he had a lot of time to think. He couldn't even look at anything. He was blind and was tied up. All he could do was walk in a circle all day long, pushing this big heavy stone around and around.

If you've ever seen these old gristmills, they had a grinding stone, one on top of another. They would have a post attached to it and would usually have an ox that would simply walk around and around. Well, they had Samson tied to it, and all he could do was walk around and around in a circle, grinding grain, blind—day in and day out, month in and month out. He had a lot of time to think.

Finally they brought him in and were going to make sport of him (v. 25). All the leadership of the Philistines was there in this temple (v. 27).

Verse 28, "Then Samson called to the Eternal, saying, 'O Lord God, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes.'" Samson had come to a point of repentance. God gave him the strength, and he collapsed the temple. He pushed the two center supports out, and when they collapsed, the whole roof fell in and everybody there was slaughtered (vv. 29-30). This put a stop, temporarily, to the power of the Philistines.

That really runs the story, in terms of chronology, through Samson who was contemporary with Samuel. We will pick up that story in Samuel.

Joshua chapters 17—21 give us some insets.

Joshua 17 talks about a man from Mount Ephraim whose name was Micah. He decided he was going to hire a priest. He met up with this fellow (v. 9).

Joshua 17:10, "Micah said to him, 'Dwell with me, and be a father and a priest to me, and I will give you ten shekels of silver per year, a suit of clothes, and your sustenance.' So the Levite went in." He was going to hire a preacher for himself. It shows you the situation. 'Boy, I am going to be in good shape now; I am going to have a Levite being my priest.'

Verse 5, "The man Micah had a shrine, and made an ephod and household idols; and he consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest." He had made some little idols. He had his sons doing the job, but when he saw a real live Levite come along, he thought, 'Well, I'll hire one of those.'

Joshua 18:1, "In those days there was no king in Israel..." So they came along and met up with this priest and said, 'Hey, come with us.'

Verses 19-20, "And they said to him, 'Be quiet, put your hand over your mouth, and come with us; be a father and a priest to us. Is it better for you to be a priest to the household of one man, or that you be a priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?' And the priest's heart was glad..." He said, 'Boy, I have a better job.' He got a calling to a little better church.

Kind of reminds you, if you have ever associated with some of the Protestant churches, you can always tell when the preachers knew that God was calling them. That was when they got a bigger church with a better salary offered to them. They could always hear the Lord's voice then. They knew He was calling when the salary went up and the church was a little bit bigger. They knew He must be in it. That was the situation here.

The tribe of Dan went into idolatry right at the very beginning. This was the situation.

Verses 30-31, "Then the children of Dan set up for themselves the carved image; and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, and his sons were priest to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. So they set up for themselves Micah's carved image which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh." This was the situation.

The term "Manasseh" in v. 30, if you look it up in any of the commentaries, is not Manasseh in the original. It is Moses. Gershom was Moses' son. This is Moses' grandson. The Jews were so embarrassed about that, they added a little "n" up at the top, not as a part of the word, but just as like an addendum. So when they read it in the synagogue, they would read Manasseh instead of Moses. They preserved in the text Moshe, but they inserted the letter up above the word. When they read it, they read it as Manasseh because they felt like it was an embarrassment to Moses to have his grandson be the first one to go into idolatry. So they decided to amend it. But if you go back and check the genealogy, Gershom was Moses' son, and any of the commentaries will bring that out.

Judges 19:1, "And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel..." You find this situation. It describes the religious state of things. The Levites weren't doing their job. That is made plain in chapters 17—19.

In Judges 20, you had serious problems of homosexuality that had become apparent, and

almost the whole tribe of Benjamin was wiped out because of that.

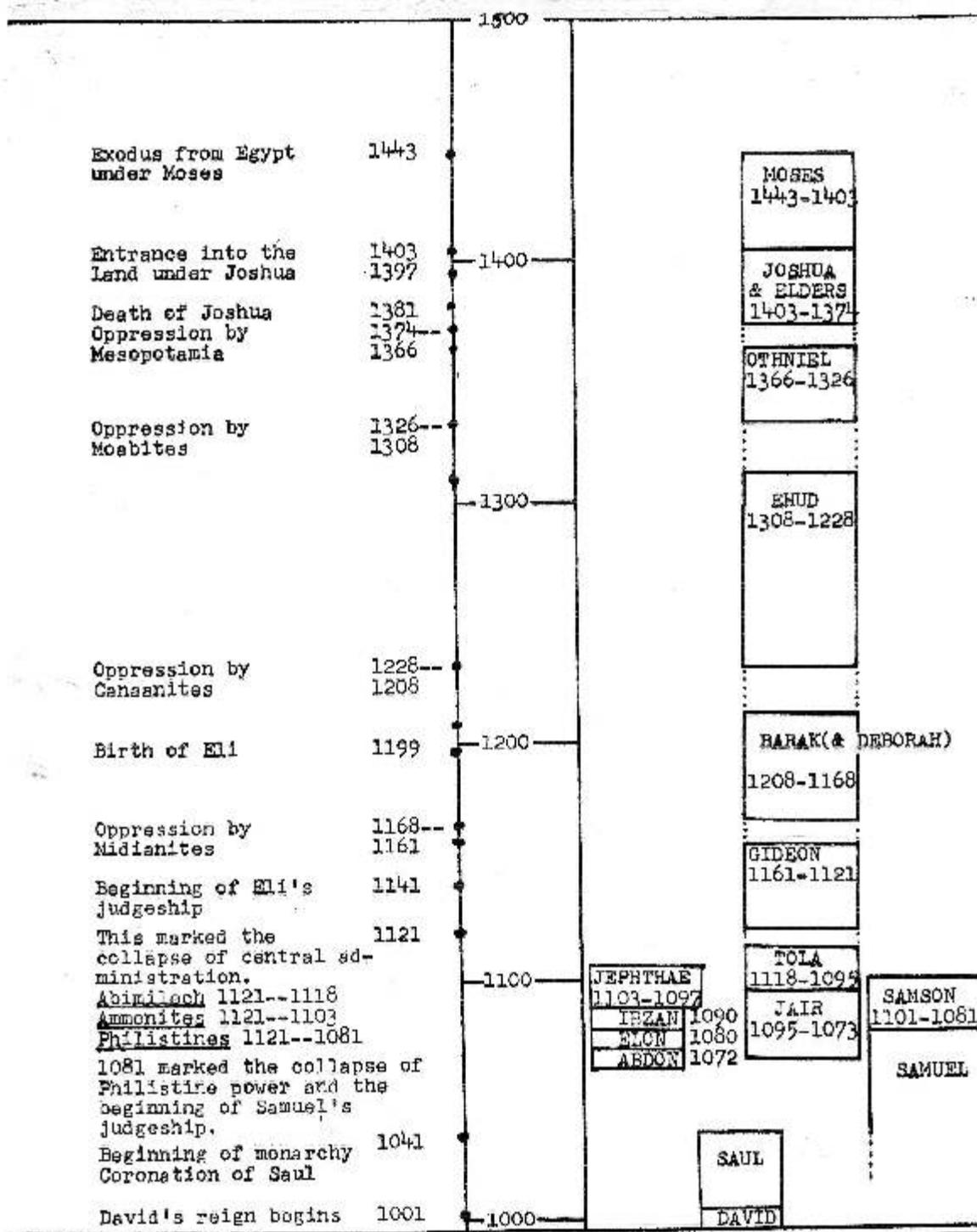
You find, in Judges 21, a kind of conclusion to the story; the survivors of the Benjamite raid were allowed to go down and take wives. There was just the confusion, the strife and anarchy, all of the problems that existed in the nation.

The summary of the whole thing was Judges 21:25, “In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” People were simply doing their own thing. They did what pleased them. They were not out to please God; they were out to please themselves. That kind of state of things describes the confusion and strife of the book of Judges over and over.

There are lessons that we have to learn, lessons of government. What happens, what are the results, when there isn’t strong leadership? There is anarchy and things tend to fall apart. There are lessons of human nature, history, many, many lessons that are to be derived from the book of Judges.

To really get the picture, you have to put yourself back in the concept of the Wild West, the frontier, because that’s what it was. It was the settling of a nation, the time of the pioneers. It was the time of the carving out of a nation. It was analogous to the time early in the history of this country when the settlers were coming in, fighting the Indian wars and all of the strife and turmoil that went on among and between them. That’s the story of the book of Judges. They were people who had not learned the lesson that God had for them, and God allowed certain things to become apparent.

With this we have now completed the five books of the law and the books of Joshua and Judges. We will now go through Samuel, Kings and Chronicles in kind of a harmonized version. Samuel and Kings are chronological; the story starts in I Samuel and continues through the end of II Kings. Chronicles parallels Samuel and Kings and tells the story from a different vantage point. As we go through, we are going to go through by sections. The first portion will deal with the first nine chapters of Chronicles and the first fifteen chapters of I Samuel which is basically the history of Israel between the end of the book of Judges and, let’s say, the time of Eli and Samuel, and on up to just prior to David’s kingship. So it will give us—as we begin to go through that section and over the course of the next few Bible studies that we will complete—an overview of the historical survey of the Old Testament.



Chronology of Judges

Bible Study # 20 Questions

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

Judges

1. What did Israel do regarding the Canaanites in the land?
2. What did God say the result of Israel's treatment of the Canaanites would be?
3. In what four verses does God summarize the story of the rest of the book of Judges?
4. Who was the first judge God raised up and how long was his reign?
5. Who was the woman judge and why did God use her in that way?
6. What happened to Israel after the death of Deborah and Barak?
7. How did God overthrow the Midianites?
8. How did Gideon teach the leaders of Succoth a lesson?
9. What was Jephthah's rash vow?
10. Which judge did God raise up to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines?
11. What special vow was he under from his mother's womb and what special power did he have as a result?
12. What was Samson's great weakness?
13. How did Samson finally break the power of the Philistines?
14. What was the ancestry of the "preacher of fire" mentioned in Judges 17?
16. What statement summarizes the entire problem of the book of Judges?

Bible Study # 21
July 12, 1988
Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—I Samuel 1—15 and I
Chronicles 1—9
(Chart at end)

I & II Samuel and I & II Kings are a story flow. They are known as the four books of the kingdom—the First Book of Samuel, otherwise called the First Book of the Kings; the Second Book of Samuel, otherwise called the Second Book of the Kings; the First Book of the Kings, commonly called the Third Book of the Kings; the Second Book of the Kings, commonly called the Fourth Book of the Kings. They were one book that consisted of four volumes. Samuel and Kings were written to continue the historical information after Joshua and Judges.

Chronicles is different. It covers the same material, but covers it in a different way. Chronicles serves as a supplement to Samuel and Kings, not a replacement. **To give you a story flow, we are harmonizing Samuel, Chronicles and Kings.**

The thing you note about Chronicles is that it was written at a much later time than Samuel and Kings. Samuel and Kings had already been completed. Chronicles was prepared in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, at the close of the Old Testament period to summarize the history of the Old Testament. It was written from a priestly standpoint centered at Jerusalem.

I & II Samuel deal with material concerning Saul and David. Chronicles zeroes in on a handful of kings. Chronicles tells us very little about the northern kingdom—Israel is only mentioned in passing. The history of the reign of King David is focused on.

Then we focus in on Solomon, Jehosophat and Josiah. It focuses on specific periods in history to emphasize parts of the story that had not been deemed that important two hundred years earlier when Samuel and Kings had been written.

In Chronicles the historical events are presented from a religious angle, a priestly standpoint. To remind the Jews of their patriarchal origins, it gives a summary of genealogies. It summarizes information that was necessary from a historical standpoint, information that would have been otherwise lost. It served to remind the Jews of their patriarchal beginnings by tracing the genealogies all the way back to Adam.

One of the things important in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah was to establish lineage. It was

important that this documentation be presented in a right way. The line from which the Messiah would come had to be documented.

Chronicles is devoted to the reign of King David. It centers in on Jerusalem as God's chosen city and the dynasty of David as God's chosen line of kings. Chronicles focused in on the Covenant God made with David. It served to point out to the Jews the falseness of the Samaritan's claim which said the worship of God did not have to be centered in Jerusalem. Remember the question the woman at the well asked Christ?

John 4:20-23, "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation if of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.'" This argument was still going on at the time of Christ.

Romans 3:1-2, "What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God." The Jews were the ones responsible for preserving the Hebrew (Masoretic) text. This is where you look for the authoritative information, not the Samaritan text.

Chronicles was written to emphasize to the people at the time between the testaments (the fifth century B.C. to the time of Christ, a four hundred to five hundred year period), whom they needed to look to. It was written during a time of competing claims of who represented God. It was written to explain to the Jews from generation to generation why it was they needed to look to Jerusalem and the authority there as representative of God, and not the authority somewhere else that may claim they represented God.

Samuel wrote the early part of I Samuel, basically that part on up until his death. It was continued by others in prophetic office. Isaiah is credited among the Jews as writing part of it. Jeremiah evidently put the finishing touches on it.

Samuel and Kings along with Joshua and Judges constitute that part known as the **Former Prophets**. They give us a narrative of the history of Israel and Judah. All history has been

prophecy, and all prophecy will be history. It's just a matter of your time frame.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the twelve Minor Prophets are the **Latter Prophets**.

Chronicles gives a summation of the whole Old Testament. Ezra wrote it at the time of the restoration. The book of Ezra picks up the story where Chronicles leaves off.

I Chronicles 2, 3, and 4 give a lot of detailed information on genealogy. The Jews were coming back from Babylonian captivity. They needed to know where their roots were—the connection they had with the past. From the time Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah (the first captivity) until the time when the Jews began to return was basically seventy years. (It has been seventy years since World War I, and people don't have a clear memory). The Jews were dislocated and taken to Babylon. The younger generation was coming back, the younger people who were born in Babylon. It was their grandparents who had come from Judah. The younger generation was coming back to Judah. This was an arduous trip.

Some portions of the Bible have had more importance for certain periods of time. We wonder why all these genealogies are stuck in there. It is perhaps more important for us to understand Matthew 24 than to understand the intricacies of I Chronicles 23 and 24. But for the Jews, it was very important. All portions of the Bible are important—they all have importance, but sometimes some parts had greater importance at certain periods of time. Matthew 24 would not have been important to them; it was not even written.

The Jews that returned needed a sense of continuity; how were they related to the generations that came before. It provides us a framework of understanding. It gives us some details that do have significance in prophecy and details how the Bible fits together.

I Chronicles 5:1-2 is important, "Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel—he was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright; yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph's—"

There was a distinction between the birthright and the scepter. This is spelled out. It was information that would have been taken for granted, but now it needed to be spelled out. That needed to be clarified or people simply would not have understood.

I Chronicles 6 provides information concerning the Levites, the genealogy of the Levites.

I Chronicles 7-8 list various tribes, the genealogy of Saul (8:33).

I Chronicles 9:1, "So all Israel was recorded by genealogies, and indeed, they were inscribed in the book of the kings of Israel...."

Verses 2-34 go back and give us the story of things they reconstituted in the temple. These things had been established for many years, but there had been a break for many years. These things were actually established all the way back to King David and Samuel. By the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, you are well over a hundred years after the final destruction of Jerusalem. People came on the scene and simply didn't understand. (We don't understand the way things were functioning during the time of the War Between the States.)

I Samuel 1:1 (KJV), "Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim-Zophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, and Ephrathite." He is called an Ephrathite.

In I Chronicles 6:27, his genealogy is given. He was a Levite, not an Ephraimite. It means "Ephrah," the ancient name for Bethlehem. I call it to your attention because in some cases it is translated "Ephraimite" (NKJV, "Ephraimite").

Verses 3-5, "This man went up from his city yearly to worship and sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Shiloh...And whenever the time came for Elkanah to make an offering, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughter. But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although the Lord had closed her womb."

Verses 10-12, "And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish. Then she made a vow and said, 'O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of your maidservant and remember me, and not forget your maidservant, but will give your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head.' And it happened, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli watched her mouth." Hannah vowed a vow. He would be a Nazarite from his mother's womb.

Verse 17, "Then Eli answered and said, 'Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him.'"

Verse 20, "So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and

called his name Samuel, saying, 'Because I have asked for him from the Lord.'"

Verse 24, "Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh, And the child was young." He was probably four years old before he was completely weaned. He was brought to the temple in Shiloh,

Verses 25-28, "Then they slaughtered a bull, and brought the child to Eli. And she said, 'O my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood by you here, praying to the Lord. For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition, which I asked of Him. Therefore I also have lent him to the Lord.' So they worshiped the Lord there." He grew up there and was a servant to Eli.

I Samuel 2:18, "But Samuel ministered before the Lord, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod." He served there in the tabernacle from boyhood up.

At this time we come across a real problem, the situation with Eli.

I Samuel 2:12, "Now the sons of Eli were corrupt [KJV, "sons of Belial"—sons of the devil]; they did not know the Lord."

Verses 13-17, "And the priests' custom with the people was that when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged flesh-hook in his hand while the meat was boiling. Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; and the priest would take for himself all that the flesh-hook brought up. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who sacrificed, 'Give meat for roasting to the priest, for he will not take boiled meat from you but raw.' And if the man said to him, 'They should really burn the fat first; then you may take as much as your heart desires,' he would then answer him, 'No, but you must give it me now; and if not, I will take it by force.' Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord."

The Scriptures say they were the sons of the devil, reprobates. They were not following the instruction that God had given the Levites. They were misappropriating what belonged to God. They came in and took what they wanted, generally the best part and before they burned the fat. They weren't interested in serving God. They were interested in what they could get.

What kind of respect do you think people had for the priesthood and the tabernacle? People abhorred it. It gave people a bad attitude. Were the people in authority setting the right example? No. What would you have done if you had lived at the time of Eli? Go out and worship Dagon? These things are here for our admonition.

There were people in the 1970s that used the excuse about what some people in high places were doing to just go off and do something else. The point is God will take care of the problem. You don't follow the lousy example. As Christ said, respect the Pharisee's authority, but do not after their works (Matthew 23:2-3). They are not practicing what they preached. If somebody is a hypocrite, that is human nature. What if what the hypocrite said was right? Do what he said that was right, but don't do what he did, Christ said.

Verses 22-24, "Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. So he said to them, 'Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear, you make the Lord's people transgress.'" He said, 'Now you boys know better than that; you are setting a bad example.' But he didn't do anything about it. You know what God had to say about that?

Verse 29, "'Why do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded in My habitation, and honor your sons more than Me, to make yourself fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?'" God said, 'You honor your sons above Me. You have placed them above Me. They should have been taken out and stoned. You have allowed this situation to continue on and on and on.' Eli was not doing these things himself, but he tolerated it. He made excuses for them.

God allowed it to go on for years before he did something about it. God prepared someone—Samuel. They were slain by the Philistines (4:11). When Eli heard the news, he fell backwards and died from a heart attack (4:18).

I Samuel 3:19-20, "So Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the Lord." God placed Samuel there. God will deal with things, but He will do so in His time.

What would you have done if you had been there? Yes, keep your eyes on your daughters; take your offering. If the priests steal, God will

take care of it. God is capable of taking care of Himself. That priesthood was blotted out forever. God can take care of things. These events parallel the time of Judges.

Eli and Samson were contemporaries. Even if you don't have anyone to look up to and respect, even in that kind of situation, here was Samuel. It's possible to do what you ought to do even in the context of others who are not. Samuel did not use the excuse to go and do what Eli's sons were doing. He grew up in that circumstance, and he believed what was taught at the temple, not what was practiced.

When Samuel was a little boy about age ten or twelve, God ceased talking to Eli who was the high priest. This was a terrible insult to the high priest.

I Samuel 3:1-6, "Then the boy Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was rare in those days [KJV, "the words of the Lord were very precious"]; there was no widespread revelation. And it came to pass at that time, while Eli was lying down in his place, and when his eyes had begun to grow so dim that he could not see, and before the lamp of God went out in the tabernacle of the Lord where the ark of God was, and while Samuel was lying down to sleep, that the Lord called Samuel. And he answered, 'Here I am!' So he ran to Eli and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' And he said, 'I did not call; lie down again;' and he went and lay down. And the Lord called yet again, 'Samuel!' So Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' And he answered, 'I did not call, my son; lie down again.'" Samuel thought it was Eli talking.

Verses 7-8, "(Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him.) And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. Then he arose and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you did call me.' Then Eli perceived that the Lord had called the boy." It dawned on Eli that God was talking to Samuel.

Verses 11-14, "Then the Lord said to Samuel; 'Behold, I will do something in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them. And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.'" Finally, God told Samuel what He wanted him to tell Eli.

Verse 18, "Then Samuel told him everything, and hid nothing from him. And he said, 'It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him.'"

Verses 19-21, "So Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the Lord. Then the Lord appeared again in Shiloh. For the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord."

Samuel had a reputation as he grew up. He was different than the others. He had the respect of the people because he did what he was supposed to do. *In the midst of corruption, he quietly did what he had to do.* It is an important message for all people at all times. God puts these things here and shows us how we ought to conduct ourselves if we ever find ourselves in these circumstances.

I Samuel 4:3, "And when the people had come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, 'Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord from Shiloh to us, that when it comes among us it may save us from the hand of our enemies.'" They regarded it as a good-luck charm.

Verse 7, "So the Philistines were afraid, for they said, 'God has come into the camp!' And they said, 'Woe to us! For such a thing has never happened before.'" They were superstitious about the ark. They remembered the Egyptians (v. 8).

Verses 10-11, "So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent. There was a very great slaughter, and there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. Also the ark of God was captured; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died."

Verses 15-18, "Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were so dim that he could not see. Then the man said to Eli, 'I am he who came from the battle. And I fled today from the battle line.' And he said, 'What happened, my son?' So the messenger answered and said, 'Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has been a great slaughter among the people. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead; and the ark of God has been captured.' Then it happened, when he made mention of the ark of God, that Eli fell off the seat backward by the side of the gate; and his neck was broken and he died, for the man was old and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years."

I Samuel 5:1-4, "Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon and

set it by Dagon. And when the people of Ashdod arose early in the morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the earth before the ark of the Lord. So they took Dagon and set it in its place again. And when they arose early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. The head of Dagon and both the palms of its hands were broken off on the threshold; only the torso of Dagon was left of it.”

Dagon had fallen off his throne. It had bowed down to worship and fell over. Only the stump was left.

Verse 5, “Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor any who come into Dagon’s house tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.” Ever heard of it being bad luck to step on a threshold? This is where that came from; it became a pagan custom.

Verses 6-7, “But the hand of the Lord was heavy on the people of Ashdod, and He ravaged them and struck them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory. And when the men of Ashdod saw how it was, they said, ‘The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for His hand is harsh toward us and Dagon our god.’” They decided they didn’t want the ark to stay there.

Verses 8-12, “‘Therefore they sent and gathered to themselves all the lords of the Philistines, and said, ‘What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?’ And they answered, ‘Let the ark be carried away to Gath.’ So they carried the ark of the God of Israel away. And so it was, after they had carried it away, that the hand of the Lord was against the city with a very great destruction, and He struck the men of the city, both small and great, and tumors [KJV, “emerods”] broke out on them. Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. So it was, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, ‘They have brought the ark of the God of Israel to us, to kill us and our people.’ So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, ‘Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go back to its own place, so that it does not kill us and our people;’ For there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. And the men who did not die were stricken with the tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven.”

They decided they didn’t want the ark to stay there.

I Samuel 6:1, “Now the ark of the Lord was in the country of the Philistines seven months.” It was there seven months. How do we get rid of it? They could understand a little bit. They said,

‘We’d better send it back with a trespass offering along with it.’

Verses 4-7, “Then they said, ‘What is the trespass offering which we shall return to Him?’ They answered, ‘Five golden tumors and five golden rats, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines. For the same plague was on all of you and on your lords. Therefore you shall make images of your tumors and images of your rats that ravage the land, and you shall give glory to the God of Israel; perhaps He will lighten His hand from you from your gods and from your land. Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He did mighty things among them, did they not let the people go, that they might depart? Now therefore, make a new cart, take two milk cows which have never been yoked, and hitch the cows to the cart; and take their calves home, away from them. Then take the ark of the Lord and set it on the cart; Then send it away, and let it go. And watch: if it goes up the road to its own territory, to Beth Shemesh, then He has done us this great evil. But if not, then we shall know that it is not His hand that struck us; it was by chance that it happened to us.’ Then the men did so, they took two milk cows and hitched them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home. And they set the ark of the Lord on the cart, and the chest with the gold rats and the images of their tumors. Then the cows headed straight for the road to Beth Shemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and did not turn aside to the right hand or the left...”

They didn’t know where their calves were. Can you imagine a cow not turning to the left or right? Sometimes God uses things in a humorous way to illustrate a point. These two old cows had enough sense to follow God’s instructions, just as God used the donkey to talk to Baalam.

Verses 15, “The Levites took down the ark of the Lord and the chest that was with it, in which were the articles of gold, and put them on the large stone. Then the men of Beth Shemesh offered burnt offerings and made sacrifices the same day to the Lord.”

Verses 18-21, “even as far as the large stone of Abel on which they set the ark of the Lord, which stone remains this day in the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh. Then He struck the men of Beth Shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord. He struck fifty thousand and seventy men of the people, and the people lamented because the Lord had struck the people with a great slaughter. And the men of Beth Shemesh said, ‘Who is able to stand before this

holy Lord God? And to whom shall it go up from us?' So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath Jearim, saying, 'The Philistines have brought back the ark of the Lord; come down and take it up with you.'"

They treated the ark with a lack of reverence. Not even the Philistines had treated the ark with reverence. The Israelites should have known better. The Levites surely realized that God had warned the Israelites that death would come to any who looked into it or touched it except by its carrying poles on the shoulder. There was a lack of reverence. The ark represented God's throne. Such disrespect was bound to bring on an awful penalty.

I Samuel 7:1-13, "Then the men of Kirjath Jearim came and took the ark of the Lord, and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and consecrated Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the Lord. So it was that the ark remained in Kirjath Jearim a long time; it was there twenty years. And all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord. Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, 'If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you, and prepare your hearts for the Lord, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.' So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and served the Lord only. And Samuel said, 'Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you.' So they gathered together at Mizpah, drew water, and poured it out before the Lord. And they fasted that day, and said there, 'We have sinned against the Lord.' And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah. Now when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel had gathered together at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines. So the children of Israel said to Samuel, 'Do not cease to cry out to the Lord our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines.' And Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord. Then Samuel cried out to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him. Now as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the Lord thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them that they were overcome before Israel. And the men of Israel went out to Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and drove them back as far as below Beth Car. Then Samuel took a stone and set it up

between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer, saying, 'Thus far the Lord has helped us.' So the Philistines were subdued, and they did not come anymore into the territory of Israel. And the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel."

Verse 15, "So Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life." I would call your attention to something here. When Samson collapsed the walls of the Philistine temple, it marked the collapse of the Philistine power and the beginning of Samuel's judgeship. Samson and Samuel were contemporaries.

I Samuel 8:1-7, "Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beer-sheba. But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes and perverted justice. Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, 'Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make for us a king to judge us like all the nations.' But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, 'Give a king to us.' So Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, 'Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.'" Samuel's sons were not following his example.

Notice the logic. The reason they wanted a king was to be like everyone else. God took it personally. God said, "They have rejected Me." Notice what Samuel told them.

Verses 11-18, "And he said, 'This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots...He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers. And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves and give them to his servants. He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. And he will take your men-servants and your maidservants and your finest young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the Lord will not hear you in that day.'"

'You are going to have the draft, a big government bureaucracy, a big income tax and you will gripe about those things throughout the

rest of your history.’ Ever hear of the fourth tithe (vv. 15, 17)? This is what the king started. This is where the income tax started. By the time of Solomon, it was so oppressive that the people were ready to revolt. The people are still complaining about all these things.

Verse 18, “...the Lord will not hear you....” ‘You wanted it; you got it. You want to be like the nations, you will get all the problems the nations get.’

I Samuel 9:1-2, “There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish...And he had a son whose name was Saul, a choice and handsome young man. There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.” From Saul’s shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people, probably about seven feet tall. He was taller than anyone else in the country.

Verse 21 shows how Saul first met Samuel, “And Saul answered and said, ‘Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak like this to me?’”

I Samuel 10:1, “Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him and said: ‘Is it not because the Lord has anointed you commander over His inheritance?’” Saul was anointed.

Verses 21-22, “When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was chosen. And Saul the son of Kish was chosen. But when they sought him, he could not be found. Therefore they inquired of the Lord further, ‘Has the man come here yet?’ And the Lord answered, ‘There he is, hidden among the equipment.’”

He went and hid in the closet. He didn’t want to get in front of anyone. He had somewhat of an inferiority complex. Instead of learning to place confidence in God, Saul dealt with his problems the wrong way. Moses had a low opinion of himself and his abilities, but Moses learned to get out of the way and let God work. Saul had a low opinion, but he got in the way and tried to cover his feelings of inferiority by bluffing. He wound up in a horrible state with demon problems, and he died of his own hand. A person who has this kind of problem can go two ways. Moses handled it properly. Saul was an example of an individual who did not do so.

Verse 24, “And Samuel said to all the people, ‘Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen, that there is no one like him among all the people?’

So all the people shouted and said, ‘Long live the king!’” We have Saul’s coronation. The people were sent away (vv. 25-26).

I Samuel 11 tells the story of Saul getting stirred up to action and going out and winning the battle.

I Samuel 11:14-15, “Then Samuel said to the people, ‘Come, let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there.’ So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal. There they made sacrifices of peace offerings before the Lord, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.” Saul was confirmed king; all tribes were united under Saul’s leadership. They rejoiced greatly.

In I Samuel 12, Samuel begins to recount the history and to remind them of the ups and downs.

Verses 12-13, “‘And when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, “No, but a king shall reign over us,” when the Lord your God was your King. Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen and whom you have desired. And take note, the Lord has set a king over you.’” God gave them an impressive-looking king. He looked like a king should look. God gave them what they asked for. Later God chose a man after His own heart (I Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). David was not impressive on the outside but on the inside.

Verses 19-25, “And all the people said to Samuel, ‘Pray for your servants to the Lord your God, that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves.’ Then Samuel said to the people, ‘Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart. And do not turn aside, for then you would go after empty things, which cannot profit or deliver, for they are nothing. For the Lord will not forsake His people, for His great name’s sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you His people. Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way. Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king.’”

The first half of Saul’s reign was active; the second half was inactive. I Samuel 13 was the twenty-year period of his active reign.

The second twenty-year period was an inactive reign.

I Samuel 13:2-3, “Saul chose for himself three thousand men of Israel. Two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in the mountains of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent away, every man to his tent. And Jonathan attacked the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. Then Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, ‘Let the Hebrews hear!’”

Verse 5, “Then the Philistines gathered together to fight with Israel...”

Verses 6-9, “When the men of Israel saw that they were in danger (for the people were distressed), then the people hid in caves, in thickets, in rocks, in holes, and in pits. And some of the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling. Then he waited seven days, according to the time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. So Saul said, ‘Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me.’ And he offered the burnt offering.”

We come to the first great sin that Saul committed as king. Samuel was late. The point was Saul should have waited, even if everybody left and there was nobody but Saul and God. He offered the burnt offering himself, which was contrary to the Law.

Verses 10-12, “Now it happened, as soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, that Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might greet him. And Samuel said, ‘What have you done?’ And Saul said, ‘When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash, then I said, “the Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the Lord.” Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering.’”

Just about the time he was finished, Samuel showed up. ‘You were late; so I thought I would take over.’

Verses 13-14, “And Samuel said to Saul, ‘You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you. For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be

commander over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.’” His kingdom was not to continue.

I Samuel 14:24, “And the men of Israel were distressed that day, for Saul had placed the people under oath, saying, ‘Cursed is the man who eats any food until evening, before I have taken vengeance on my enemies.’ So none of the people tasted food.”

Verse 27, “But Jonathan had not heard his father charge the people with the oath; therefore he stretched out the end of the rod that was in his hand and dipped it in a honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his countenance brightened.” Jonathan ate some honey. You begin to see the erratic way Saul begins to function. This is a situation that shows some of the things of his character and leadership.

Verses 29-30, “But Jonathan said, ‘My father has troubled the land. Look now, how my countenance has brightened because I tasted a little of this honey. How much better if the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies, which they found! For now there would not have been a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?’”

Verses 43-45, “Then Saul said to Jonathan, ‘Tell me what you have done.’ And Jonathan told him, and said, ‘I only tasted a little honey with the end of the rod that was in my hand. So now I must die!’ And Saul answered, ‘God do so and more also; for you shall surely die, Jonathan.’ But the people said to Saul, ‘Shall Jonathan die, who has accomplished this great salvation in Israel? Certainly not! As the Lord lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day.’ So the people rescued Jonathan, and he did not die.”

Verses 47-48, “So Saul established his sovereignty over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, against the people of Ammon, against Edom, against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines. Wherever he turned, he harassed them. And he gathered an army and attacked the Amalekites, and delivered Israel from the hands of those who plundered them.”

Verse 52, “Now there was fierce war with the Philistines all the days of Saul. And when Saul saw any strong man or any valiant man, he took him for himself.”

I Samuel 15:1-3, “Samuel also said to Saul, ‘The Lord sent me to anoint you king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts: “I will punish what Amalek did to Israel, how he

laid wait for him on the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.”” The Lord said, ‘Smite the Amalekites; don’t spare anything.’ What happened?

Verse 9, “But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.” He took Agag the king alive. He destroyed what he didn’t want.

Verses 10-11, “Now the word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying, ‘I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments.’ And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the Lord all night.” The Lord said, ‘It makes Me sorry I ever made him king.’

Verses 13-15, “Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, ‘Blessed are you of the Lord! I have performed the commandment of the Lord.’ But Samuel said, ‘What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?’ And Saul said, ‘They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the Lord your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.’” Saul said, ‘We are going to sacrifice them to God.’

Verse 17, “So Samuel said, ‘When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the Lord anoint you king over Israel?’”

Verses 20-21, “And Saul said to Samuel, ‘But I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal.’” He said, ‘I have obeyed, but maybe not in every detail. The people took of the spoil.’

Verses 22-23, “Then Samuel said: ‘Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and

idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king.’” To obey is better than sacrifice.

Verse 24, “Then Saul said to Samuel, ‘I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voices.’” Saul was not a leader but a follower.

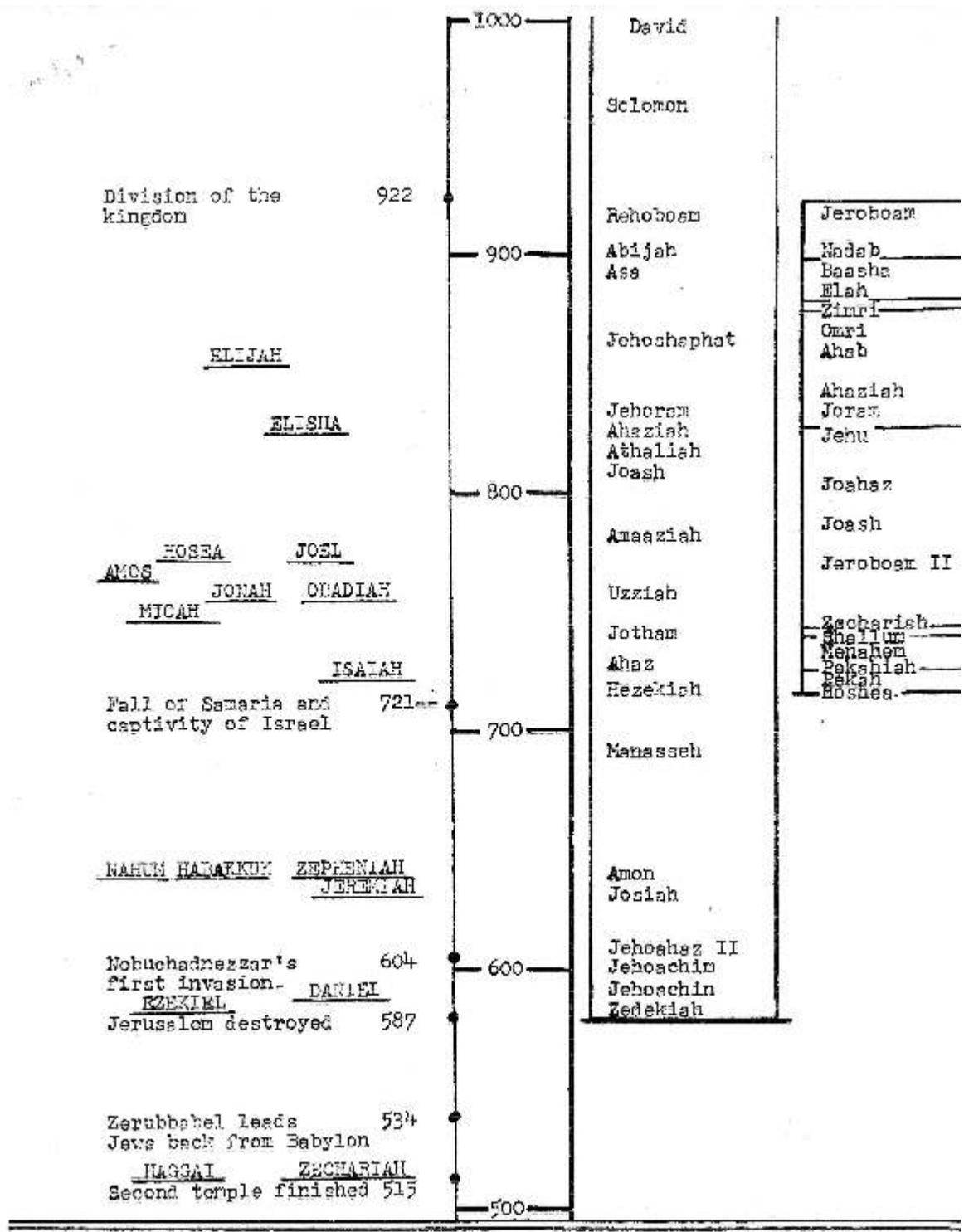
Verses 32-33, “Then Samuel said, ‘Bring Agag king of the Amalekites here to me.’ So Agag came to him cautiously. And Agag said, ‘Surely the bitterness of death is past.’ But Samuel said, ‘As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women.’ And Samuel hacked Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.”

Samuel executed Agag himself. Saul had not only let him live, but he had let some of his family get away because later on in the book of Esther (3:1), you read of “Haman the Agagite.” There would never have been that problem if he had done what he was told.

Verse 35, “And Samuel went no more to see Saul until the day of his death. Nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul, and the Lord regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.” Saul didn’t follow instructions. That was the real key, the real problem. He didn’t do what God told him to do. He had his own ideas, his own approach.

Perhaps we can get an overview of this, as people sought to take things into their own hands to solve the problems. Realize human nature remains much the same generation to generation to the extent that we learn the lessons that are recorded here. What Samuel did, what Saul did and how we might respond to certain things that happen in our lives. This is an overview of God working with Israel.

I Samuel will be completed next Bible study, and then we will begin to get into II Samuel.



Chronology of Kings and Chronicles

Bible Study # 21 Questions

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

I Chronicles 1—9 and I Samuel 1—15

1. What do the books of Chronicles give us?
2. Where is the most detailed genealogy of Judah and his descendants given?
3. What scripture plainly shows the division of the scepter and birthright promises?
4. Where are details given about the Levites—their genealogies and their inheritance?
5. What were the circumstances of Samuel's birth?
6. What was Eli's great sin?
7. In what way did the Israelites show superstition regarding the ark?
8. What was the result?
9. What happened to the Philistines when they got the ark?
10. What momentous events happened twenty years after the great military debacle which saw Philistia triumph over Israel?
11. What problem caused trouble in Samuel's later life leading the people to request a king?
12. What was God's reaction to the people's request?
13. What was the real reason the people wanted a king?
14. What were Saul's physical characteristics?
15. What was Saul's opinion of himself at the beginning?
16. What did Saul do after his coronation? What event stirred him to action?
17. What was Saul's first great sin after becoming king?
18. What foolish vow did Saul make? What was almost the result?
19. What great sin did Saul commit regarding the Amalekites?
20. What were the consequences?

Bible Study # 22
July 26, 1988
Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—I Samuel 16—31 and I Chronicles 10

We are covering the remainder of I Samuel. The chapters this evening **introduce one of the most central characters in the entire Bible, and that is David.** More space is devoted to David than to any other man, with the exception of Jesus Christ. The latter half of I Samuel **deals with his being chosen as king and to the death of Saul.** David's life can be divided into four component parts: David the shepherd boy, David the hero, David the outcast and David the king. We will, this evening, **focus in on David the shepherd boy, David the hero and David the outcast.**

We are introduced to David the shepherd boy as he is caring for his father's sheep and as a skillful musician playing for the king. Later as a teenager about eighteen years of age, David is the slayer of Goliath the great warrior, then the son-in-law of Saul. He went very quickly from David the hero to David the outcast, going to Ahimelech and later collecting a following. After his encounter with Saul, David dwelt among the Philistines, the point at which Saul is killed. The final thirty years of David we will cover next Bible study.

Now why did God spend so much time on the life of one individual? Undoubtedly, there are characteristics that God wants us to focus upon, that He wants us to understand and appreciate. He greatly valued David. God said David was a man after His own heart. I think that would be quite a compliment. And to say that of me or you, that is quite a compliment, a wonderful thing to have said. Why was David such an outstanding man after God's own heart? I think his most outstanding characteristic is his absolute faith in God to properly govern and to vindicate him.

We learn in I Samuel the lesson that is expressed in Psalm 34:19, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all." That was a lesson that David learned. That is a lesson that we may learn through example in this portion of I Samuel. *The lesson of this section is the importance of patient faith, to trust God to solve problems His way.* —Patient faith.

I was reminded of the context of when I first went through this portion of material. It was a time about thirteen years ago in Corpus Christi, 1975-1976. For those of you who were around in

that time, you would recognize how appropriate and important the topic of patient faith was. We were going in a direction that was ungodly. What do you do? You patiently trust God to solve problems His own way, as David did.

How important is the topic of patient faith? When everything around you is ungodly, what do you do? It was interesting what David's approach was when he was on the run from Saul. It is interesting what David did in that context. Saul wanted to "nail David's hide" to the wall, literally. He ducked; he stayed out of Saul's way. He did not provide Saul a target to shoot at. What do you do when those in authority are after you? Seek to avoid a confrontation.

The second thing was what he didn't do. He didn't take it into his own hands to overthrow Saul. He didn't try to resolve the problem by using human reasoning. He committed it into the hands of Him who judges righteously. Sometimes we find ourselves "under the gun" by someone wicked in authority. You don't provide a target and you don't try to overthrow them.

I Samuel 16:1, "Then the Lord said to Samuel, 'How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons.'" Samuel mourned for Saul. God said, 'How long are you going to mourn for Saul; I want you to go to Jesse's house.'

Verse 2, "And Samuel said, 'How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.' And the Lord said, 'Take a heifer with you, and say, "I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.'" Samuel said, 'If Saul hears of that he will kill me.' It shows how far Saul had gotten from God. He would have killed God's prophet. He wouldn't have had any hesitation. God said to just go and tell him you are there to sacrifice for Me which he was.

Verses 3, "Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; you shall anoint for Me the one I name to you."

Verse 5, "And he said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice." Then he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and invited them to the sacrifice.'" Jesse and his sons were called to the sacrifice.

Verse 6, "So it was, when they came, that he looked at Eliab and said, 'Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him.'" When Samuel saw Eliab, the oldest, he said, 'That is he; he has to be the one. You can look at him, a striking fellow.'

Verse 7, “But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’” God said, ‘Didn’t you learn that lesson the first time around when we anointed Saul? Just because he looks like a king, doesn’t mean he is a king. Don’t be impressed by outward appearance. The Lord sees what man doesn’t see. The Lord looks on the heart.’

Verse 10, “Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, ‘The Lord has not chosen these.’” Seven sons came before Samuel; he said, ‘Not this one’ every time.

Verse 11, “And Samuel said to Jesse, ‘Are all the young men here?’ Then he said, ‘There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep.’ And Samuel said to Jesse, ‘Send and bring him. For we will not sit down till he comes here.’”

‘Well, there is the youngest, the baby in the family.’ They didn’t even think to call him in. ‘He is tending sheep.’ Samuel told Jesse, ‘You go get him; we will not eat until he gets here.’

Verse 12, “So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the Lord said, ‘Arise anoint him; for this is the one!’” “Ruddy” means “red hair and freckled face,” not what is thought of as typically Jewish like the royal family. That strain in Judah came through the family of David. He was not the one they would have noticed and that Samuel would have picked out.

Verse 13, “Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah.”

Verses 14-15, “But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him. And Saul’s servant said to him, ‘Surely, a distressing spirit from God is troubling you.’” An evil spirit with God’s permission troubled him, not that God afflicted him. There comes a point at which, if we open ourselves up to that influence through various moods and things, we become receptive to Satan’s influence. Saul didn’t handle his problems in a proper way and he became receptive to Satan’s influence. Because of the moods and attitudes that he allowed himself to dwell on, he became less and less receptive to God’s influence and more and more receptive to Satan’s influence. How do you become more

receptive to Satan’s influence? –When you begin to reflect the moods and attitudes of Satan.

The basis is that God looked on the heart. Saul may have looked like a king; David didn’t. During this time Saul was having these problems. He was subject, increasingly, to demon influence taking advantage of these attitudes. So it was decided that they would seek out a skillful musician.

Verse 16, “‘Let our master now command your servants, who are before you, to seek out a man who is a skillful player on the harp; and it shall be that he will play it with his hand when the distressing spirit from God is upon you, and you shall be well.’” It was decided that they would seek out a skillful musician.

Verses 17-19, “So Saul said to his servants, ‘Provide me now a man who can play well, and bring him to me.’ Then one of the servants answered and said, ‘Look, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a mighty man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a handsome person; and the Lord is with him.’ Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, ‘Send me your son David, who is with the sheep.’”

Verse 21, “So David came to Saul and stood before him. And he loved him greatly, and he became his armor bearer.” They brought David before Saul.

Verses 22-23, “Then Saul sent to Jesse, saying, ‘Please let David stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight.’ And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him.”

Do you know why the distressing would depart from him? Why did David, playing on a harp, make a difference? This is a very important scripture to understand as to why some music should not be listened to. Music sets a mood. I can create any mood I want to by the music I play. I can make you happy, sad, excited or discouraged. I can soothe you and relax you, stir you up, motivate you—any mood I want with the right music. There is music to create a frenzied feeling; music to make you march to go to war. It not only affects the mind, but it also affects the nervous system. You can see blood pressure changes and heart rate changes. It sets a mood and atmosphere. It affects the emotions.

What happened? Saul would sit and nurse grudges, feel sorry for himself and go into rages. He was getting more and more off balance.

Before he got so bad, someone who was a beautifully skilled musician played, and it changed his mood. It was soothing. It put him in a different frame of mind. It put him in a better mood and created a positive atmosphere, a beneficial effect.

As time went by and Saul didn't deal with the root of his problem, these things that were beneficial finally came to a point where it was no longer enough. You have to ultimately deal with the root of the problem. If you don't deal with the root of the problem, then eventually these things lose their value. The music no longer did the "trick."

Realize that the same things apply today. We allow ourselves, our families and children to be continually tuned into the wrong kind of influences, the wrong kind of spirit influences. Parents don't realize the extent that many rock groups are into demonism and the occult. If you look at some of them and they look like a bunch of demons, they obviously are not going to tune you into the right thing.

Philippians 4:8, "Finally brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things."

It is important for us to realize that the mood and the atmosphere that is created by music are very important. It is not only the words. The words are important, but it is also the music and the beat itself. Music has an emotional impact. There is a range and different music for different occasions, festive and somber occasions. There is nothing wrong with that variety. The result should be positive, uplifting and focusing in on what is right and good and harmonious, as opposed to that which is depressing.

Perhaps a matter of months or a year or two goes by.

I Samuel 17:1-4, "Now the Philistines gathered their armies together to battle, and were gathered together at Sochoh, which belongs to Judah; they encamped between Sochoh and Azekah, in Ephes Dammim. And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and they encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in battle array against the Philistines. The Philistines stood on a mountain on one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. And a champion went out from the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, from Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span." The Philistines gathered their armies together

and came out to challenge the Israelites. They had a champion; his height was six cubits and a span. He was a minimum of nine feet six inches. He may have been eleven or twelve feet. He weighed hundreds of pounds, maybe five hundred pounds.

Verses 5-7, "He had a bronze helmet on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. And he had bronze greaves on his legs and a bronze javelin between his shoulders. Now the shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his iron spearhead weighed six hundred shekels; and a shield-bearer went before him." He had armor alone that weighed in the neighborhood of two hundred pounds and a spear that weighed about twenty pounds.

This went on for a period of about forty days (v. 16).

Verses 12-14, "Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem Judah, whose name was Jesse, and who had eight sons. And the man was old, advanced in years, in the days of Saul. The three oldest sons of Jesse had gone to follow Saul to the battle...David was the youngest. And the three oldest followed Saul. But David occasionally went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem." David was too young to go into the military.

Verse 17, "Then Jesse said to his son David, 'Take now for your brothers an ephah of this dried grain and these ten loaves and run to your brothers at the camp.'" Jesse sent David to bring provisions for his sons.

Verse 23, "Then as he talked with them, there was the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, coming up from the armies of the Philistines; and he spoke according to the same words. So David heard them." David got there just in time to hear Goliath. David's response was totally different than anyone else.

Verse 26, "Then David spoke to the men who stood by him, saying, 'What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?'" David said, 'Who is this uncircumcised Philistine to challenge the armies of the Living God? Who does this guy think he is?'

Verses 28-29, "Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger was aroused against David, and he said, 'Why did you come down here? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your pride and the insolence of your

heart, for you have come down to see the battle.’ And David said, ‘What have I done now? Is there not a cause?’” They told him, ‘Hush; he might hear you and eat you for a breakfast snack.’

Verses 30-32, “Then he turned from him toward another and said the same thing; and these people answered him as the first ones did. And when the words, which David spoke, were heard, they reported them to Saul; and he sent for him. Then David said to Saul, ‘Let no man’s heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.’” David was not intimidated.

Verses 33-35, “And Saul said to David, ‘You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are not but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.’ But David said to Saul, ‘Your servant used to keep his father’s sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard, and stuck and killed it.’” David was not afraid of anything. He said he killed a lion and a bear to get back his lambs. ‘I have never run from anything in my life. When I was a teenager I went after a bear and got my lamb back.’

Verse 36, “‘Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he had defied the armies of the living God.’” He said, ‘This uncircumcised Philistine is going to be like one of them.’

Verse 37, “Moreover David said, ‘The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.’ And Saul said to David, ‘Go, and the Lord be with you!’” David had confidence; His confidence was in God. He walked with God even as a young boy, as a teenager. He had a confidence and a boldness that God appreciated.

Do you realize how much it went against the grain for David to have to wait all those years for God to do it? He was impetuous to go out and do something. God wanted to “season” him before he became king. God said, ‘you trusted Me when I acted instantly, can you trust Me if I wait twelve years? When you were facing a lion or a bear and you prayed to Me, I backed you up. You trusted Me when I acted immediately, but can you trust Me if you don’t know when I am going to act?’ For some people taking action is very difficult. David was the opposite; he tended to act quickly. When he was faced with a

problem, he was ready to go charging off and doing something. How does God go about making us into God? He knocks off everything that doesn’t look like God. God doesn’t always work with us in the same way.

Verse 42, “And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, ruddy and good-looking.” So David, a little red-haired freckled-face boy, went out there to meet the Philistine.

Verse 43, “So the Philistine said to David, ‘Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?’ And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.” He cursed David by his gods.

Verses 45-46, “Then David said to the Philistine, ‘You come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!’ Then David said to the Philistine, ‘You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.’” They are going to know the determination of the battle is not who has the most swords. David stepped out with faith and confidence.

Verses 48-49, “And it was so, when the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, that David hastened and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. Then David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone; and he slung it and struck the Philistine in his forehead, so that the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the earth.” The rock had knocked him out.

Verse 51, “Therefore David ran and stood over the Philistine, took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it. And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.” He cut off his head. It scared the Philistines to death.

Verse 52, “Now the men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted, and pursued the Philistines as far as the entrance of the valley and to the gates of Ekron. And the wounded of the Philistines fell along the road to Shaaraim, even as far as Gath and Ekron.” Then they chased the Philistines.

Verses 55-58, “Now when Saul saw David going out against the Philistine, he said to Abner, the commander of the army. ‘Abner, whose son is this youth?’ And Abner said, ‘As your soul lives,

O king, I do not know.’ And the king said, ‘Inquire whose son this young man is.’ Then, as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. And Saul said to him, ‘Whose son are you, young man?’ And David answered, ‘I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.’”

Some have wondered why Saul didn’t recognize him. Perhaps a year had passed since Saul had last seen him, but how much attention does someone in Saul’s position pay to someone in David’s position, playing music?

I Samuel 18:1-4, “And it was so, when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Saul took him that day, and would not let him go home to his father’s house anymore. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt.” David and Jonathan really took to each other, a very close friendship; they became very close friends.

Verses 5-9, “So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and behaved wisely. And Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul’s servants. Now it had happened as they were coming home, when David was returning from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women had come out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy, and with musical instruments. So the women sang as they danced, and said: ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.’ Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, ‘They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?’ So Saul eyed David from that day forward.”

Who was out to get whom? He suspected David of what he was out to do. So often those who are accusing are guilty of those things. He had an accusing attitude. He figured David had the same attitude he had.

Verse 10, “And it happened on the next day that the distressing spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied [announced or proclaimed] inside the house. So David played music with his hand, as at other times; but there was a spear in Saul’s hand.” Saul brooded about problems. He

let it “eat away” at him and fester. He allowed a root of bitterness that ate him away.

Verse 11, “And Saul cast the spear, for he said, ‘I will pin David to the wall with it.’ But David escaped his presence twice.” He tried to kill David. Soothing music was no longer sufficient to solve the problem.

Verses 12-16, “Now Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, but had departed from Saul. Therefore Saul removed him from his presence, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the Lord was with him. Therefore, when Saul saw that he behaved very wisely, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.” Saul was afraid of David. He could see that God was with him. David did what he was supposed to do, and the more he did, the more Saul became afraid.

Verse 17, “Then Saul said to David, ‘Here is my older daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife. Only be valiant for me, and fight the Lord’s battles.’ For Saul thought, ‘Let my hand not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him.’”

Verse 19, “But it happened at the time when Merab, Saul’s daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given to Adriel the Meholathite as a wife.” Saul promised him the older daughter and then gave her to someone else.

Verses 20-21, “Now Michal, Saul’s daughter, loved David. And they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. So Saul said, ‘I will give her to him, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him.’ Therefore Saul said to David a second time, ‘You shall be my son-in-law.’”

Verse 25, “Then Saul said, ‘Thus you shall say to David: “The king does not desire any dowry but one hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to take vengeance on the king’s enemies.”’ But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.”

He wanted David to kill some Philistines. Saul thought David would get killed. Saul was becoming more and more jealous. He was not a man of his word. He put stipulations on the marriage of David and Michal that would have caused David’s death. He kept changing even though he had promised. Saul feared David because he was loved by the people (I Samuel 18:16).

I Samuel 19:4-5, “Now Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father, and said to him, ‘Let not the king sin against his servant, against David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his works have been very good toward you. For he took his life in his hands and killed the Philistine, and the Lord brought about a great salvation for all Israel. You saw it and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood, to kill David without a cause?’” Jonathan tried to speak good things about David to his father.

Verse 6, “So Saul heeded the voice of Jonathan, and Saul swore, ‘As the Lord lives, he shall not be killed.’” He would vacillate back and forth. He would say he was going to do better and then would go back.

Verses 9-10, “Now the distressing spirit from the Lord came upon Saul as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand. And David was playing music with his hand. Then Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he slipped away from Saul’s presence; and he drove the spear into the wall. So David fled and escaped that night.” Then, again, he tried to kill him. David escaped (v. 12).

Verse 18, “So David fled and escaped, and went to Samuel at Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and stayed in Naioth.” Samuel had a school of the prophets there; “*Naioth*” means “schoolhouse” in Hebrew.

Verse 20, “Then Saul sent messengers to take David. And when they saw the group of prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as leader over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied.”

Verse 24, “And he [Saul] also stripped off his clothes and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they say, ‘Is Saul also among the prophets?’” Saul began to rant and rave, carry on and lay down naked. The word “naked” means “unclothed,” in the sense of being without his royal armor. He was just really carrying on, and that lead people to deride him more.

I Samuel 20:1, “Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and went and said to Jonathan, ‘What have I done? What is my iniquity, and what is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life?’”

Verse 5, “And David said to Jonathan, ‘Indeed tomorrow is the New Moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king to eat. But let me go, that I may hide in the field until the third day at

evening.’” This was a family occasion similar to Thanksgiving.

Verse 6, “If your father misses me at all, then say, ‘David earnestly asked permission of me that he might run over to Bethlehem, his city, for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.’” David’s absence from the household was going to be noticed because he was the son-in-law.

Verses 12-14, “Then Jonathan said to David: ‘The Lord God of Israel is witness! When I have sounded out my father sometime tomorrow, or the third day, and indeed there is good toward David, and I do not send to you and tell you, may the Lord do so and much more to Jonathan. But if it pleases my father to do you evil, then I will report it to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. And the Lord be with you as He has been with my father. And you shall not only show me the kindness of the Lord while I still live, that I may not die.’” David and Jonathan put this thing together. He knew what Saul’s attitude was going to be.

Verse 15, “But you shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever, no, not when the Lord has cut off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.” Jonathan was not jealous. That is a real friend when someone else is going to get something that they would have gotten. He said, ‘Remember our friendship when you become king.’

Verses 18-23, “Then Jonathan said to David, ‘Tomorrow is the New Moon; and you will be missed, because your seat will be empty. And when you have stayed three days, go down quickly and come to the place where you hid on the day of the deed; and remain by the stone Ezel. Then I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I shot at a target; and there I will send a lad, saying, “Go, find the arrows.” If I expressly say to the lad, “Look the arrows are on this side of you; get them and come”—then, as the Lord lives, there is safety for you and no harm. But if I say thus to the young man, “Look, the arrows are beyond you”—go your way, for the Lord has sent you away. And as for the matter which you and I have spoken of, indeed the Lord be between you and me forever.’” David planned to escape when it became apparent that Saul was not going to relent.

I Samuel 21:1, “Now David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. And Ahimelech was afraid when he met David, and said to him, ‘Why are you alone, and no one is with you?’” Then David fled for the fear of Saul to Achish the king of Gath (v. 10).

Verses 12-15, "Now David took these words to heart, and was very much afraid of Achish the king of Gath. So he changed his behavior before them, feigned madness in their hands, scratched on the doors of the gate and let his saliva fall down on his beard. Then Achish said to his servants, 'Look, you see the man is insane. Why have you brought him to me? Have I need of madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?'" They chased him off.

I Samuel 22:1-2, "David therefore departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. And when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him. And everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him. So he became captain over them. And there were about four hundred men with him."

David escaped to Adullam. The group that David gathered at the cave is the same bunch that gathered at the Alamo and various places. For instance, at the Alamo, there were people that came and didn't want to miss the fight. David collected a band of malcontents trying to get out of debt, a rough bunch. They had a tremendous amount of respect for David and looked to him. That was kind of the core that became his mighty men.

Verse 9, "Then answered Doeg the Edomite, who was set over the servants of Saul, and said, 'I saw the son of Jesse going to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub.'" This Edomite went back and told, and Saul sent soldiers back down there.

Verse 11, "Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests who were in Nob. And they all came to the king."

Verse 13, "Then Saul said to him, 'Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, in that you have given him bread and a sword, and have inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as it is this day?'"

Verses 16-17, "And the king said, 'You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's house!' Then the king said to the guards who stood about him, 'Turn and kill the priests of the Lord, because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled and did not tell it to me.' But the servants of the king would not lift their hands to strike the priests of the Lord." Saul sent word and the soldiers came in.

The Israelite soldiers were reluctant to kill the priests.

Verse 18, "And the king said to Doeg, 'You turn and kill the priests!' So Doeg, the Edomite turned and struck the priests, and killed on that day eighty-five men who wore a linen ephod." Doeg slew eighty-five people.

Verse 19, "Also Nob, the city of the priests, he struck with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and nursing infants, oxen and donkeys and sheep—with the edge of the sword."

Verses 20-21, "Now one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David. And Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the Lord's priests." It shows, again, how far Saul had gone. Once he had gone that far, then nothing could stop him.

I Samuel 23:16-18, "Then Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God. And he said to him, 'Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Even my father Saul knows that.' So the two of them made a covenant before the Lord. And David stayed in the woods, and Jonathan went to his own house." This shows David's and Jonathan's friendship.

I Samuel 24:2-4, "Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men on the Rocks of the Wild Goats. So he came to the sheepfolds by the road, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to attend to his needs. (David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave.) Then the men of David said to him, 'This is the day of which the Lord said to you, "Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you.'" And David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe."

The men were saying to David, 'Look, God has delivered him in your hands.' David wanted to make a point; so he cut off the skirt of Saul's robe. He cut the bottom part of it off.

Verses 5-6, "Now it happened afterward that David's heart trouble him because he had cut Saul's robe. And he said to his men, 'The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord.'" David's attitude changed after it happened; he admitted that he was wrong to do something to embarrass Saul. He was the Lord's anointed.

Verses 7-9, “So David restrained his servants with these words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul. And Saul got up from the cave and went on his way. David also arose afterward, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, saying, ‘My lord the king!’ And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed down. And David said to Saul: ‘Why do you listen to the words of men who say, “Indeed David seeks your harm?”” He told Saul he was sorry. Do you want to know why he is a man after God’s own heart? He was willing to admit error. He said, ‘You think I am trying to get you; I could have killed you.’

Verse 10, ““Look, this day your eyes have seen that the Lord delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me to kill you. But my eye spared you, and I said, “I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord’s anointed.”” I will not lift up my hand against you.

Verse 12, ““Let the Lord judge between you and me, and let the Lord avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you.” He said, ‘God’s going to take care of you, but I am not.’

Verses 16-17, “So it was, when David had finished speaking these words to Saul, that Saul said, ‘Is this your voice, my son David?’ And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. Then he said to David: ‘You are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil.” Saul was sorry and was going to do better.

Verse 22, “So David swore to Saul. And Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.” Saul went to his home, but David realized that he was not to be trusted. He just went to another cave.

I Samuel 25:1, “Then Samuel died; and the Israelites gathered together and lamented for him, and buried him at his home in Ramah. And David arose and went down to the Wilderness of Paran.”

Verse 4, “When David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep.”

Verse 7, ““Now I have heard that you have shearers. Your shepherds were with us, and we did not hurt them, nor was there anything missing from them all the while they were in Carmel.”” David had disciplined his men and provided law and order and protection in the area.

Verse 9, “So when David’s young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in the name of David and waited.” They said, ‘Nabal you have benefited from us being here,

being protected from the Philistines and marauders.’

Verses 10-11, “Then Nabal answered David’s servants and said, ‘Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men when I do not know where they are from?” He refused to give food to David and his men.

Verse 13, “Then David said to his men, ‘every man gird on his sword.’ So every man girded on his sword, and David also girded on his sword. And about four hundred men went with David, and two hundred stayed with the supplies.” David was incensed. He was a man of action, and he had to learn to wait on God.

In this, Nabal’s wife, Abigail was there to try to run interference for him (vv. 14-18).

Verse 23, “Now when Abigail saw David, she hastened to dismount from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground.”

Verse 25, ““Please, let not my lord regard this scoundrel Nabal. For as his name is, so is he: Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. But I, your maidservant, did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent.” She brought stuff to David and said, ‘Please don’t come in and do this thing you are thinking of doing.’

Verse 36, “Then Abigail went to Nabal, and there he was, holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal’s heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; therefore she told him nothing, little or much, until morning light.” Nabal had a drinking problem. A point you might consider, you don’t ever try to talk to somebody when they are loaded. Abigail understood that. We can see Abigail’s wisdom.

Verse 37, “So it was, in the morning, when the wine had gone from Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became like a stone.” She waited until he sobered up. It scared him so badly that he had a heart attack and fell over dead. David didn’t take matters into his own hands. God dealt with it.

Verse 39, “So when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, ‘Blessed be the Lord, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and has kept His servant from evil. For the Lord has returned the wickedness of Nabal on his own head.’ And David sent and proposed to Abigail, to take her as his wife.”

I Samuel 26:1-2, “Now the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, ‘Is David not hiding in the hill of Hachilah, which is opposite Jeshimon?’ Then

Saul arose and went down to the Wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the Wilderness of Ziph.” Years had gone by, and everybody knew that Saul and David were really “on the outs.” They recognized David was an enemy of Saul.

I Samuel 28:4-5, “Then the Philistines gathered together, and came and encamped at Shunem. So Saul gathered all Israel together, and they encamped at Gilboa. When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly.” We find the situation that as the battle continued with the Philistines, Saul was going out to fight against Achish.

Verses 6-7, “And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets. Then Saul said to his servants, ‘Find me a woman who is a medium at EnDor.’” He was so far off the track; he decided to go to a witch to bring up Samuel. You can see how bad he had gotten by this time.

Verses 9-11, “Then the woman said to him, ‘Look you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the spiritists from the land. Why then do you lay a snare for my life, to cause me to die?’ And Saul swore to her by the Lord, saying, ‘As the Lord lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing.’ Then the woman said, ‘Whom shall I bring up for you?’ And he said, ‘Bring up Samuel for me.’” He became frightened and went to the witch to bring up Samuel.

Verse 13, “And the king said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, What did you see?’ And the woman said to Saul, ‘I saw a spirit ascending out of the earth.’” The picture here is of someone ascending out of the earth.

Verse 14, “So he said to her, ‘What is his form?’ And she said, ‘An old man is coming up, and he is covered with a mantle.’ And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground and bowed down.” She thought it was Samuel, but this is not what happened.

The woman was the one who saw something and she described it to Saul. Saul assumed it to be Samuel. This was simply a demon spirit that the witch saw, a lying spirit, no different than the kind of things in séances.

Verses 17-19, ““And the Lord has done for Himself as He spoke by me. For the Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, namely David. Because you did not obey the voice of the Lord nor execute His fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore the Lord had done this thing to you this day. Moreover the

Lord will also deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines. And tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The Lord will also deliver the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.” We see the situation; he was told he was going to die.

What finally happened, I Samuel 31:2-3, “Then the Philistines followed hard after Saul and his sons. And the Philistines killed Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul’s sons. Now the battle became intense against Saul; and the archers hit him, and he was severely wounded by the archers.”

Verse 4, “Then Saul said to his armor bearer, ‘Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and thrust me through and abuse me.’ But his armor bearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell on it.” Saul committed suicide.

Verse 5, “And when his armorbearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword, and died with him.”

The parallel account in I Chronicles 10:13-14, “So Saul died for his unfaithfulness [KJV, “transgression”] which he had committed against the Lord, because he did not keep the word of the Lord, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance. But he did not inquire of the Lord; therefore He killed him, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse.”

You see here the very tragic end of King Saul, and the story of the introduction to David and the role he was to play in God’s plan and purpose for him. I think there is a lot to learn here from this example of the story of Saul and David. Realize that God teaches us not just by Commandment, “thou shalt and thou shalt not,” but by example. That is why so much of the Bible is taken up showing examples. What we want to learn is how they handled things properly and what mistakes were made. If we read the examples, we can learn how to handle circumstances and things that happen to us.

Bible Study # 22 Questions

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

I Samuel 16—31 and I Chronicles 10

1. What provides a striking instance of how far Saul had gotten away from God?
2. What was the basis of God's choosing David over any of his brothers? How did this choice contrast with that of Saul?
3. What size was Goliath and what size was his armor?
4. What was David's attitude when he heard Goliath's challenge?
5. When did Saul's jealousy of David really begin?
6. What evidence do we have that Saul was not a man of his word?
7. Where did David go when Saul sought to kill him?
8. Explain I Samuel 19:24.
9. In what way was Jonathan an example of a truly unselfish friend?
10. Where did David plan to escape to in order to be protected from Saul?
11. What was the result of his going there and in what circumstances did he leave?
12. How did David collect a following?
13. What happened to the high priest who had aided David?
14. What was David's attitude toward Saul?
15. What did Nabal do? What did his name mean?
16. How did Abigail use wisdom?
17. What did David do to get Saul to cease pursuing him? What do you suppose made the difference in the way the Philistines received him now as opposed to the first time he went to them?
18. What did Saul do when he became frightened?
19. Explain what Saul really saw.
20. What finally happened to Saul?
21. Why did he die as he did?

Bible Study # 23
August 23, 1988
Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—II Samuel 1—20 and I
Chronicles 11—20

This evening we **are continuing our historical survey of the Old Testament**. We are focusing quite a bit on King David. In reality, two whole Bible studies in this series, the last Bible study and this one, **focus almost entirely on King David**. There is a reason for that. Next Bible study we will get the concluding matters pertaining to David and the beginning of Solomon's reign. These sections dealing with King David are very important. *They provide a background for the future history of Israel; and in reality, they provide a background for all of prophecy.*

There are lessons here for the individual in the example of David and others whose lives are mentioned and detailed here. If we are going to learn from someone's example, it is important to see what the person or various individuals did. Then you are able to read God's reaction to what they did and gain insight.

There is the broad grouping of the law, the Prophets and the Writings. Notice the difference by which we're taught. All through we're taught God's law, but in the books of the law—the first five books—we are given direct statements, "thou shall do this, thou shall not do that." There is a direct statement of law. Of course, there are also some examples, and we went through that, but there are many direct statements of law. We are taught in that way.

Now in this section, the Prophets' section (this is the historical portion of the Prophets), we are taught and instructed not primarily by any direct statement or Commandment. Direct statements or Commandments are virtually not given in this section. What we have, *continually in this section, are the examples of individuals, what people did and how God reacted to what they did.*

As we continue the outline of King David's life from last Bible study, basically, we would outline David's life in four sections: David the shepherd boy, David the hero, David the outcast, and David the king. Last Bible study we focused on David the shepherd boy, David the hero, and David the outcast. This evening, we **are focusing in on David the king**. We ended with the death of Saul last time, and we pick up the story in II Samuel. We will go through the first

20 chapters of II Samuel this evening. There is a parallel account in I Chronicles 11-20.

We start out with David's lamentation for Saul and Jonathan. Then we focus in on David ruling over Judah. David did not immediately become king over all Israel. Rather, David was acknowledged as king over Judah from Hebron. Then David captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites after about seven years of reign over Judah from Hebron—then he began to reign over all Israel, over all twelve tribes.

We then note David bringing the ark into Jerusalem. The ark had been in various places since the time that Israel had brought it through the wilderness in the tabernacle. There wasn't one permanent sanctuary. Shiloh was the location for a period of time. The ark was at various locations, but now David brought it into Jerusalem.

Then we find God making a covenant with David, called the Davidic Covenant. It is an important section. It becomes very important for prophecy to understand the special covenant God made with David. We notice the boundaries of David's kingdom being extended and established.

Then we focus on David's sin with Bathsheba, the story of Amnon's crime and Absalom's subsequent rebellion. Next is David's sin in numbering Israel, Adonijah's rebellion, David's charge to Solomon and finally the death of David.

From a prophetic standpoint, II Samuel 7:12-16 is one of the most important sections of Scripture because we have the promise that God made to David, that David's dynasty would go on forever. This obviously ultimately looks forward to the Messiah because notice here in II Samuel 7:16, "And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." That obviously goes on into the future. Forever is a long time.

What did we find stated of the Messiah in the book of Luke when the angel announced the birth of Jesus to Mary?

Luke 1:32, "He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give Him the throne of His father David." Jesus Christ is going to sit upon David's throne. That's what it says in Luke 1:32. Jesus Christ the Messiah is going to sit upon the throne of David, and He is going to reign forever. This is based on II Samuel 7:16 where God told David, "your throne shall be established forever." This is obviously a promise that has overtones of the

Messiah because if the throne is to be established forever, then it has to ultimately be inhabited by someone other than just a simple human being. It is ultimately going to be occupied by Jesus Christ. That's what the angel told Mary prior to His birth, that He would sit upon the throne of His father David and His Kingdom would continue forever (Luke 1:33).

Is Christ, right now, sitting upon the throne of David? I think it's important to understand that, and you can prove very clearly that Jesus Christ is not sitting on the throne of David right now. Notice what it says here in Revelation 3:21, Christ's message to the Laodicean Church.

Revelation 3:21, "To him who overcomes, I will grant [future tense] to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame [past tense] and am sat down [present tense] with My Father on His throne."

Christ is going to sit on His throne, and whose throne is it? It's going to be the throne of David. He is going to sit on the throne of David and those that overcome will sit on that throne with Him. 'As I also overcame and am [presently] sat down with My Father—God the Father—in His throne.' Christ, right now, is not sitting on the throne of David; He is sitting with God the Father on the Father's throne in heaven.

David's throne was not in heaven. David's throne has never been in heaven. David's throne is a throne on the earth over Israel, and ultimately to expand out to rule over all the earth. Christ overcame; He conquered and as a result, was seated with the Father on the Father's throne. Those who overcome will sit with Him (future tense) on His throne when he returns to occupy that throne. Then we will also be able to sit with Him on that throne.

That's what He says in Matthew 25:31, "When the Son of man shall come [future tense] in all His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory."

Verse 34, "Then shall the King say to them on His right hand, 'Come you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"" When Jesus returns in glory, He is going to sit upon the throne of His glory, which is the throne of David. He's coming back to sit upon a throne that does exist. He's not coming back to a non-existent throne. He's coming back to a throne that does exist; otherwise, how could He occupy it. If the throne of David ceased to exist thousands of years ago, how can it be said that Christ is coming back to sit upon that throne?

That's a remarkable prophecy in II Samuel 7:16. In fact, we might note what God told David through Nathan the prophet.

II Samuel 7:12-16, "When your days are fulfilled and you shall rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name [this is referring to Solomon]; I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever."

God specifically told David, 'Look, I am going to establish your descendants upon a throne forever. If they sin, if they transgress, I will correct them, punish them and chasten them. I am not saying they won't be dealt with if it's needed, but what I am promising you is I will not take my mercy from them in the way I took it from Saul when I just simply removed his family from the kingship. Regardless of what they do, I am not going to break the promise I am making to you. I will punish them if they need it, but I am not going to take my mercy from them.'

We have here the basis of understanding this promise God made David. On the basis of this, we have to realize the throne of David has to exist as a literal throne somewhere on the earth today and be occupied by descendants of David ruling over modern descendants of ancient Israel. That throne has to exist. It did not cease at the time King Zedekiah was taken, had his eyes put out, was led away in chains to Babylon, and the city of Jerusalem and the temple were burned. That was not the end of the dynasty of King David because God had made a promise, and God's word stood sure.

God punished the descendants of David at various times through history, but that dynasty has continued down until today. And, of course, that dynasty does exist and is currently occupied by Queen Elizabeth II, sitting on the throne of David. She is a direct descendant of King David.

That dynasty was preserved as Jeremiah the prophet took of Zedekiah's daughters and went from the Middle East to Ireland. One of the daughters, prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, had married a son of the high king of Ireland. She married him; the two of them and a child

that they had went with Jeremiah the prophet and others traveling from Jerusalem to Ireland in the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem. That royal house was the royal house that ruled as the high kings of ancient Ireland from Tara for many centuries until the throne was overturned in 841 A.D. by Kenneth MacAlpin who was the king of Scotland and a descendant of that royal house.

The insignia or the symbol of that stone was Jacob's pillar stone, that physical rock of the covenant. This physical symbol of the covenant was removed from Tara and taken to Scone in Scotland. Subsequently for several centuries, the kings of Scotland were crowned on it, and then at a later date, King Edward I of England who was a descendant of that royal house, moved the stone from Scone to London. When Jesus Christ returns it will finally be taken back to Jerusalem as the sign of the throne of David.

As we go through the book of Kings, we will notice that the kings in Jerusalem were crowned on the pillar, on that same stone. We will notice some insight into that a little later in this series of Bible studies. I think it is important to focus in on this set of scriptures because it is a key to understanding Bible prophecy—and it's rooted right here.

One of the greatest lessons that can be learned, just in terms of personal lessons and examples, comes from the aftermath of David's sin with Bathsheba. It is clearly shown that sin hurts; sin has physical consequences. You can repent, be sorry, have regret and genuine repentance, but there are physical consequences that inevitably follow. The more serious the sin is the more serious the physical consequences. When God removes our sin and forgives us, He does not erase all of the physical consequences that are the result.

We find here examples of what happened in the aftermath in David's family. David's conduct and example during the years his children were growing up left much to be desired, and he reaped headaches by the ton even though he afterward repented of his earlier conduct. There were problems that he had during the formative years of his children that had an impact, and he reaped those consequences during those latter years. God records that. He does not gloss over all of the mistakes that some of His servants made. God tells us that David was a man after His own heart. There was a certain attitude, there were certain things that were a part of David's character that God placed great value on, but David had certain problems. God does not hide

those or gloss over them; He records them so that we might see and learn.

Now as we go through this section in II Samuel, one of the things that we notice is David's reaction to the death of Saul. His reaction was one of grief.

II Samuel 1:17-18, "Then David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and Jonathan his son, and he told them to teach the children of Judah the Song of the Bow; indeed it is written in the book of Jasher." The book of Jasher was a historical book. It was simply a secular record that was available that gave details that are not preserved in the biblical account. At the time that the biblical account was written, you will find a number of references in these historical books referring you to secular sources that people of that day were familiar with. In other words, it's as though we might write a summary account of something today and then in that summary account, refer you to various secular sources where you could go for more details if you wanted them.

David honored and respected Saul, right up to the end. He respected and honored Saul's office. Saul is an individual who certainly didn't conduct himself as worthy of a lot of honor or respect. David's honor and respect was not grounded on the basis that Saul was such a wonderful, deserving fellow. It was based on the premise that Saul was God's anointed. God had set Saul in a high office, and that office was to be respected.

We run into an apparent discrepancy in the account of Saul's death as it is given in II Samuel 1 by comparison to I Samuel 31. We might note that and understand.

In II Samuel 1:1-10, "Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David had returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had stayed two days in Ziklag, on the third day, behold, it happened that a man came from Saul's camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head. So it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the ground and prostrated himself. And David said to him, 'Where have you come from?' So he said to him, 'I have escaped from the camp of Israel.' Then David said to him, 'How did the matter go? Please tell me.' And he answered, 'The people have fled from the battle, many of the people are fallen and dead, and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also.' So David said to the young man who told him, 'How do you know that Saul and Jonathan his son are dead?' And the young man who told him said, 'As I happened by chance to be on Mount Gilboa,

there was Saul, leaning on his spear; and indeed the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. Now when he looked behind him, he saw me and called to me. And I answered, 'Here I am.' And he said to me, 'Who are you?' So I answered him, 'I am an Amalekite.' He said to me again, 'Please stand over me and kill me, for anguish has come upon me, but my life still remains in me. So I stood over him and killed him, because I was sure that he could not live after he had fallen. And I took the crown that was on his head and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them here to my lord.'"

We find that Saul had told his armor bearer in I Samuel 31:4-5, "Then Saul said to his armor bearer, 'Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and thrust me through and abuse me.' But his armor bearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell on it. And when his armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword, and died with him."

We get the idea from I Samuel 31 that Saul committed suicide and II Samuel 1 that the Amalekite killed him. There are two explanations. One is simply that the Amalekite lied that he came there and saw Saul lying there dead. He recognized the body because of the royal insignia that Saul had on, and he thought that this was a good chance for him to move "one up." He would grab these things off the body and bring them to David and say, 'I have killed your enemy. He's your enemy; he was after you and was trying to get you. I came on him; he was fallen out there, and I finished him off. I brought you these things to give them to you because I am saying by this that I recognize you as the next king.' He thought, 'Boy, I will probably be rewarded—he will probably think this is great.' But David didn't think so.

II Samuel 1:14-16, "And David said to him, 'How was it you were not afraid to put forth your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?' Then David called one of the young men and said, 'Go near, and execute him!' And he struck him so that he died. So David said to him, 'Your blood is on your own head, for your own mouth has testified against you, saying, "I have killed the Lord's anointed.'"" David had this fellow executed.

This ought to answer the question, by the way, that some have asked in recent days about euthanasia, so called "mercy killings." It has been debated in the press of recent days if that is all right.

Either one of two things happened: Either the Amalekite lied or Saul had certainly fallen on his sword as it says in I Samuel 31, but perhaps he managed to botch that like he did everything else and did a halfway job of suicide. Seeing that Saul had fallen on the sword, the armor bearer committed suicide. Then when this Amalekite came walking along, Saul had maybe managed to miss a vital spot and was lying there wounded, not yet dead. The armor bearer had only thought that he was dead. He saw him fall on the sword, but maybe it didn't pierce all the way through. That's certainly a possibility. The Amalekite came along and saw Saul wounded himself, but not actually having finished himself off, and he went ahead and did it.

Whether that was the case or whether he simply exaggerated to get a reward, it is apparent here that God does not approve of so-called "mercy killings." And David, acting as God's representative, didn't approve of that. There is certainly a great deal of difference between actively taking a life and, on the other hand, withholding the type of extreme measures that much of the current medical technology has sought to foist off on people. You can't equate at all the matter of actively taking a life, whether it is by injection or some other sort of thing and of someone who is an innocent victim, who is lying there in pain as Saul was. Saul even asked the guy to finish him off, but that doesn't matter. Your life doesn't belong to you; it belongs to God. You don't have the right to take it, nor does anyone else.

God did give the charge to the civil government that whosoever sheds blood by man, shall his blood be shed. God gave that charge to Noah in the aftermath of the flood. It's repeated in Romans 13:1-4 that God has set the civil government to bear the sword and to execute vengeance against those who perpetuate crime and violence. But that is talking about constituted authority, not somebody who takes it upon himself to go out and do that.

Of course, we as Christians are ambassadors and are not part of that constituted civil authority. We are not involved in that from a standpoint of actively taking part, but you certainly gain from this some insight that this is not God's way. That is not to say that if somebody gets sick, you can't equate the refusal to be hooked up on all kinds of artificial support systems, things that never were a part of anything God designed or established, but simply represent man's technology. You can't equate that with an active taking of life, whether by a doctor or by someone else. Again,

there's certain insight into God's perspective into some of these things that we can see.

Saul ends up as a very tragic figure. Saul was a man who sought to solve his problems his own way. Even at the end, what did Saul do? He turned to a witch and then tried to commit suicide when it didn't work out his way. Nowhere did Saul ever truly repent and turn to God.

You might make the contrast, Samson had to go through some tragic things and learn some tragic lessons, but at the end, what did he do? He prayed to God. He went to God and said, 'Oh God, please be merciful, give me a chance to at least make up for my lack of what I've done in carrying out the job You gave me to do.' He came to see himself and asked God for His mercy and forgiveness. God extended that. Saul never did repent. He just continued to bumble along and try to solve his own problems his own way and ended up in a tragic way.

II Samuel 2:1, "It happened after this that David inquired of the Lord, saying, 'Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?' And the Lord said to him, 'Go up.' David said, 'Where shall I go up?' And He said, 'To Hebron.'"

Verse 4, "Then the men of Judah came and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah...."

Verse 11, "And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months."

Verses 8-10, "But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, took Ishosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim; and he made him king over Gilead, over the Ashurites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, over Benjamin, and over all Israel. Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. Only the house of Judah followed David."

In the meantime there was a descendant of Saul who was crowned king over the northern tribes of Israel. His name was Ishbosheth, the son of Saul.

II Samuel 2:8, Abner, the son of Ner—his name is kind of an unusual name. "*Ab*" in Hebrew means "father," so his name literally translated meant "father of Ner, son of Ner." Abner was the captain of Saul's host, the commanding general. He took this son of Saul who had survived and made him king over the areas of Northern Israel. This man was set in place and reigned over Israel two years.

The House of Judah followed David, and David was king in Hebron seven years and six months.

Then we see the account of the battle that takes place; there was fighting back and forth, and Joab was the commander of King David's troops. Abner was the commander of the other troops (vv. 12-16).

Verse 17, "So there was a very fierce battle that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David."

One young man who was a brother of Joab was a very fast man. It describes him as light of foot as a wild roe (v. 18). In other words, he could run like a deer. He really would have been an Olympic star. And he pursued after Abner (v. 19). Seeing he was on his heels, Abner finally turned and killed him (vv. 20-23).

II Samuel 3:1, "Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. But David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker." Then it gives an account of some of David's sons (vv. 2-5). There came to be a falling out between Abner and Ishbosheth (vv. 6-8).

Verses 9-10, "May God do so to Abner, and more also, if I do not do for David as the Lord has sworn to him—to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba."

Verse 20, "So Abner and twenty men with him came to David at Hebron. And David made a feast for Abner and the men who were with him." They had a meal, sat and ate and discussed the matter. When the time came for them to leave, Joab came out from David and told Abner he had a message. So when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside.

Verse 27, "Now when Abner had returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him privately, and there stabbed him in the stomach, so that he died for the blood of Asahel his brother."

Verse 28, "And afterward, when David heard it, he said, 'My kingdom and I are guiltless before the Lord forever of the blood of Abner the son of Ner.'" Joab very treacherously killed Abner to get revenge because of the slaughter of his brother. When David heard it, he was really upset and disgusted at this. There was a difference in something that took place in battle and a treacherous assassination. It gives a little insight into Joab's character.

Joab was a valiant man; he was a fighter, a real go-getter in a lot of ways. Joab was a very self-willed individual. He was going to do whatever he wanted. If Joab agreed with what the boss said, he would do it; if he didn't, he would still

do what he wanted to do. He could be very treacherous and very sneaky. David proclaimed mourning for Abner and gave him a state funeral. He said, ‘this is terrible; this is no way to treat this man—we were not at war.’

Verse 36, “Now all the people took note of it, and it pleased them, since whatever the king did pleased all the people.” David became very popular. Whatever the king did, it pleased the people, and they understood that David had no part in the slaughter of Abner.

II Samuel 4:1-2, “And when Saul’s son heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost heart, and all Israel was troubled. Now Saul’s sons had two men who were captains of troops. The name of one was Baanah and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin....”

Verse 4, “Jonathan, Saul’s son had a son who was lame in his feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel; and his nurse took him up and fled. And it happened, as she made haste to flee, that he fell and became lame. So his name was Mephibosheth.”

Jonathan had a son who was crippled. These individuals, who were trusted servants of Ishbosheth, came in while he was lying down for a nap at noon. They came in as though they were bringing something and smote him in the stomach (vv. 5-6).

Verse 7, “For when they came into the house, he was lying on his bed in his bedroom; then they struck him and killed him, beheaded him and took his head, and were all night escaping through the plains. And they brought the head of Ishbosheth to David at Hebron, and said to the king. ‘Here is the head of Ishbosheth the son of Saul your enemy, who sought your life; and the Lord has avenged my lord the king this day of Saul and his descendants.’” They actually beheaded him and brought this gory thing to David in Hebron, saying, ‘We have brought you the head of the son of your enemy Saul.’

Notice what David told them when they came to him.

Verses 9-10, “Then David answered Rechab and Baamah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said to them, ‘As the Lord lives, who has redeemed my life from all adversity, when someone told me, saying, “Look, Saul is dead,” thinking to have brought good news, I arrested him and had him executed in Ziklag—the one who thought I would give him a reward for his news.’” He said, ‘He thought he would have a reward for his good news. He was coming

to get a reward, telling this tale, bragging about having killed Saul and thinking I was going to reward him. I executed him because he committed murder. He slaughtered the Lord’s anointed.’

Verse 11, “‘How much more, when wicked men have killed a righteous person in his own house on his bed? Therefore, shall I not now require his blood at your hand and remove you from the earth?’” They thought they would be rewarded. They had treacherously slaughtered their master. They had assassinated him, brought his bloody head to David and said, ‘Hey, now you can be king over the whole nation. We have finished off your enemy and the son of your enemy.’

David said, ‘If I would execute a passerby who killed the king, how much more when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed. You who he trusted, you did a thing like this. If I executed this Amalekite that finished off Saul, you think I am going to let you go free? You guys are nothing more than common murderers. You sneaked in and murdered a man while he was asleep in bed. And you come here thinking I am going to reward you?’

Verse 12, “So David commanded his young men, and they executed them, cut off their hands and feet, and hanged them by the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth and buried it in the tomb of Abner in Hebron.”

II Samuel 5:1-3, “Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and spoke, saying, ‘Indeed we are your bone and your flesh. Also, in time past, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and brought them in; and the Lord said to you, “You shall shepherd My people Israel, and be ruler over Israel.’” So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord. And they anointed David king over Israel.’ He had already been anointed king over Judah (II Samuel 2:4).

Verse 4, “David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years.”

Verse 5, “In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah.” Now we come to the point where he became king over all the land.

Notice one thing—God tested him. God said David was a man after His own heart. What are some of the characteristics that we know? David was a man that valued loyalty. David did not

appreciate treachery. God values loyalty; He places great value on it.

The capital at Jerusalem is established.

Verses 6-7, “And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who spoke to David, saying, ‘You shall not come in here; but the blind and the lame will repel you,’ thinking, ‘David cannot come here.’ Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David).”

Let’s notice a parallel account.

I Chronicles 11:4-8, “And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, which is Jebus, where the Jebusites were, the inhabitants of the land. Then the inhabitants of Jebus said to David, ‘You shall not come in here.’ Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David). Now David said, ‘Whoever attacks the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain.’ And Joab the son of Zeruiah went up first, and became chief. Then David dwelt in the stronghold; therefore they called it the City of David. And he built the city around it, from the Millo to the surrounding area. Joab repaired the rest of the city.”

Jerusalem spread out from there, but that was the original portion of the city. Every city has its original settlement and then spreads out. Well, Jerusalem spread out from this castle, this fortification on Mount Zion.

The situation was that David put siege around the city, and Joab was the one that came up with a way to get in. Joab figured it out and was the first one into Jerusalem. He went up first and he was the chief. He did so by climbing through the shaft that connected Jerusalem with its only water supply at that time, which was known as the virgin’s pool (II Samuel 5:8). They diverted it and climbed up through this water shaft. They went in through the pool, climbed up through the shaft, got into the city, and were able to open the gates.

You read here of the exploits of these mighty men of David. This bunch of men that followed him was a tough bunch of hombres. They were outlaws and outcasts and everything else, but what they had in common was honor, respect and loyalty that they had for David. They had gathered themselves to him while he was hiding in the cave of Adulla.

In II Samuel 6:1, we find the bringing in of the ark. David gathered together Israel.

II Samuel 6:3, “So they set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill, and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart.”

Verse 5, “Then David and all the house of Israel played music before the Lord on all kinds of instruments made of fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrum, and on cymbals.” They were playing instruments of music, and there was great celebration, a parade and a march—all of the “hoopla.”

Verses 6-7, “And when they came to Nachon’s threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzzah and God struck him there for his error [irreverence]; and he died there by the ark of God.” When they came to Nachon’s threshing floor, the ark kind of wobbled on the cart, and Uzzah put out his hand to steady it. When he did, he was struck dead.

There was a reason for that. To begin with, they weren’t doing what God had instructed. God had given instructions in the law how the ark was to be carried. There were poles it was to be carried with, and the Levites were to carry it on their shoulders. So they had completely disregarded the instructions. They had not gone back and followed the instruction. The instruction in the law was to not touch the ark or you died. The ark is holy and sacred; don’t treat it carelessly.

There was a lesson that needed to be made. The real problem got back to the fact that the leaders used human reason to determine the manner of bringing in the ark instead of doing things as God commanded. God allowed this to happen and this example to be recorded that we might have impressed upon us the absolute importance of doing what God says, the way He says to do it.

If God says carry it on poles, don’t stick it on a cart and figure that ought to do. If God says the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God, don’t figure the first day ought to do just as well. If God says do something, do it the way He says it. Don’t use human reasoning: ‘I don’t see what difference it makes; this should do just fine. God should be satisfied with this.’ That really is not wise thinking, and this example is recorded here. We read of this tragedy that occurred.

Then David began the construction of a palace there in Jerusalem.

I Chronicles 14:1, “Now Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, with masons and carpenters, to build him a house.” He obtained the materials and the craftsmen from Hiram king of Tyre up in the area of modern day Lebanon.

A short time later, in II Samuel 7:1-3, “Now it came to pass when the king was dwelling in his

house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies all around, that the king said to Nathan the prophet, 'See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains.' Then Nathan said to the king, 'Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you.'" David told Nathan he was living here in this palace that he had and the ark of God was reposing in a temporary dwelling. 'I think we ought to build a temple.' Nathan thought that was a good idea, but God very quickly told him, "No."

Verses 4-5, "But it happened that night that the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying, 'Go and tell My servant David, "Thus says the Lord: 'Would you build a house for Me to dwell in?'"'"

Verses 11-16, "...Also the Lord tells you that He will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever."

David's desire to build a temple after his own palace was made plain in II Samuel 7:1-3, but God, in the aftermath of that, said, 'No, you're not going to build the temple. You're not going to build a house for Me, but I am going to build a house for you.' Then we went through the promise of the Davidic covenant, the promise that God made to David of establishing his family forever.

We are going to note in the next Bible study the reason why God didn't let David build the temple. It doesn't state it right here, but the reason was that David was a man of much blood. David had shed much blood. David was a man of war, and that was something that God was just not going to allow David to do. Solomon was a man of peace, and God allowed Solomon to be the one to build the temple. David prepared for it.

David continued to show his loyalty to the memory of Jonathan.

II Samuel 9:1, 3, 5, 7, 13, "Now David said, 'Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for

Jonathan's sake'...'There is still a son of Jonathan who is lame in his feet'...Then King David sent and brought him out of the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo Debar...So David said to him, 'Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat bread at my table continually.'...So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem, for he ate continually at the king's table. And he was lame in both his feet."

David wanted to find out if there was any of the family of Saul left. When he found out Mephibosheth, the little crippled son of Jonathan was still alive; he brought him to the palace and sought to reward him and to provide for him.

In II Samuel 10, we find the story where the king of Ammon died and David was going to send representatives to the funeral (vv. 1-2). This young upstart son decided maybe these guys were spies, and he was going to show them how tough he was and humiliate them. He held them up to public ridicule and made a mockery out of them; and in that sense, insulted not only them, but insulted the nation (vv. 3-4).

If the United States sends an ambassador somewhere and that ambassador is treated in a wrong way, that is not an insult to him as a person so much as it is an insult to the nation because he is there not representing himself, but the nation.

II Samuel 10:5, 7, "When they told David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, 'Wait at Jericho until your beards have grown, and then return.'...Now when David heard of it, he sent Joab and all the army of the might men." David dealt with it. He sent in the army and dealt with the Ammonites (vv. 8-19). This is the way he retaliated, dealing in a carnal world with carnal people. This was the thing these people understood.

There was a time when basically the U.S. government followed this example, and we didn't have many ambassadors mistreated. If something like this happens every time your ambassador gets mistreated, there are not very many countries that "pick on" your ambassador. This is the case.

In II Samuel 11, we focus in on one of the most serious things David got into—that was the sin with Bathsheba. You know the account and how he saw Bathsheba out on her rooftop bathing (v. 2). He decided to see if Bathsheba would come over to the palace (v. 4). He arranged this rendezvous and the adultery that took place. That

was compounded because Bathsheba turned up pregnant (v. 5). Because her husband Uriah was off in battle, it was going to be very apparent that it wasn't his child.

So David began to compound sin with another, thinking, 'Well, I can cover it up.' It was not just the original sin; it was the cover up, kind of like Watergate. This was kind of the Watergate of ancient Israel. He was going to have a cover up. 'I am going to get Uriah back here to spend the night at his home, and then when the child is born, nobody will know (v. 6). Well, the baby will be just a few weeks premature; nobody will be the wiser.' But as generally happens with cover ups, something goes awry.

Uriah was a soldier's soldier. He decided, no, he wasn't going to go back home and stay with his wife because all the rest of the men were out in battle (v. 9). Then David really became desperate and scared and compounded his sin even further when he gave Uriah a message to take back to Joab. The message said, 'Look, when you get in the fiercest battle, put Uriah in the front of the battle. Then you withdraw the rest of the men' (vv. 14-17). He thought, 'Put Uriah in a situation where he is going to get killed in battle to get rid of him. Let him get killed, and then as soon as it is appropriate, I will marry the widow. This will cover up the whole thing and nobody will be the wiser.' Well, of course, that's not the way it worked.

In II Samuel 12:1-7, Nathan confronts David with the seriousness of what he had done. As he went through and told the story, he ended up finally by pointing his finger and saying, 'You, Oh king, are that man' (v. 7).

I'll bet you could have heard a pin drop in there. There is no doubt that everybody all around, all the servants and guards had been gossiping about what had been going on for weeks. When you think you are hiding something and nobody knows, believe me, everybody around there who worked in the palace knew—all the guards and the maids. You can imagine something like that would spread like wildfire. Everybody was gossiping. Nobody would say it in front of the king, but they all knew what was going on. They weren't totally dumb. Ever notice sometimes people think they are going to put something over on someone. It doesn't generally work. David had gone to all this stuff to try to hide and cover up his sin. He hadn't covered it up from anybody. And then his sin was exposed in front of everyone publicly.

But one of the major reasons David was a man after God's own heart is recorded in his reaction

to that. Time after time you read, particularly when someone was in a high office and they were confronted with the seriousness of what they did, they got mad at the one who confronted them. 'Boy, I'll fix you; I'll throw you in jail. I'll kill you.' That was Saul's reaction and the reaction of various kings. David didn't do that. David knew he was wrong and admitted it.

If you want to read David's reaction, go to Psalm 51. That's David's psalm of repentance, and you won't find one instance of self-justification there. David offered God no excuses. He didn't say, 'Yeah, I know I made a mistake, but she was at fault too. She shouldn't have been up there on that roof with her clothes off.' He offered no excuses. He didn't try to say other people have done the same thing and that Uriah was a clod or this or that—and Bathsheba tempted me. David offered no excuses.

In II Samuel 12:13 he said, "Then David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord....'"

Psalm 51:4, "'Against You and You only have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight....'"

Go through Psalm 51 and read it. Contrast it with someone who was confronted with sin, going all the way back to Adam and Eve. What's the normal human reaction: blame somebody else, make excuses, try to justify yourself. 'Yeah, I know, but "so-and-so" did it, too. And they did worse than what I did. They made me do it, etc.'

David offered no excuse. Go through and read Psalm 51. I think it is a very important key to understand the importance of that reaction. What was the penalty David suffered? The penalty was that the sword was never going to depart from his house (v. 10). He was going to pay a penalty for this physically. He was going to find himself ensnared in things that were just going to go on and on.

By the time of II Samuel 13, David's kids are just about grown. Since David had all these various women, he had a bunch of children who were only half brothers and sisters. There began to be a lot of problems. One of the problems was one of the daughters, Tamar. She was a very beautiful daughter, and one of her half brothers, Amnon, wanted her (vv. 1-2). He wanted to have her. Finally, he tricked her into a situation and raped her (vv. 3-14). She turned him down and said, 'No, I don't want to have anything to do with you' (v. 12). Her brother Absalom was so infuriated by what Amnon had done that he murdered his half brother and wound up fleeing (vv. 23-34).

Years went by. Joab entreated David to forgive Absalom and let him come back.

II Samuel 14:23-24, “Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. And the king said, ‘Let him return to his own house, but do not let him see my face.’ So Absalom returned to his own house, but did not see the king’s face.” David wouldn’t have anything to do with him, but he let him come back. Absalom came back and was plotting vengeance.

II Samuel 15:2-6, “Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate. So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, ‘What city are you from?’ And he would say, ‘Your servant is from such and such a tribe of Israel.’ Then Absalom would say to him, ‘Look, your case is good and right; but there is no deputy of the king to hear you.’ Moreover Absalom would say, ‘Oh, that I were made judge in the land and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice.’ And so it was, whenever anyone came near him to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him. In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.”

Absalom began to set about trying to ingratiate himself to the people and to take over. He tried to win the hearts of the masses with political maneuvers; he had a conspiracy going to ultimately stage a coup and capture control of the government. He was going to overthrow his father.

Verses 12-14, “Then Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David’s counselor...and the conspiracy grew strong, for the people with Absalom continually increased in number. And a messenger came to David, saying, ‘The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom.’ So David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, ‘Arise, and let us flee; or else we shall not escape from Absalom. Make haste to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly and bring disaster upon us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword.’” Absalom finally launched a revolution. Undoubtedly, one of the major things that affected David was he realized the consequences where his whole family was unraveling, and David lacked heart to fight against his son. He didn’t want to do that; he felt like he had brought all these things on himself. So he fled Jerusalem rather than have the city destroyed in some kind of battle. David was looking to God to somehow give him some kind of relief from this.

When we go through the battles and the situations related in chapters 16, 17, and finally in chapter 18, we find the circumstances of Absalom’s death. David had given instructions that he didn’t want Absalom killed, but what did old Joab do? He always did whatever Joab wanted to do. Absalom had long hair and only cut it once a year. He was racing through the woods trying to get away and got tangled up in an oak tree (KJV, 18:9). As the result, he couldn’t get out of the brush and was dangling up there. Someone went and told Joab, and Joab came up there and murdered him (vv. 10, 14-15). He just stabbed him through. Joab figured that was what needed to be done, and he did it.

One of the things you note here, Joab didn’t have any compunctions about doing what he wanted, whether that was the instructions or not. Joab figured David was wrong. He said, ‘This kid’s a punk; he ought to be executed. He’s a troublemaker; I never should have brought him back here.’ So we see this situation.

Let’s conclude here by noting some of the greatest strengths and weaknesses of David and contrasting them with some of the greatest strengths and weaknesses of Joab.

David evidenced many positive characteristics: faith, loyalty, zeal and wholeheartedness. I think these were certainly some of the most outstanding characteristics that David evidenced. He showed great faith, great loyalty, a tremendous amount of zeal and wholeheartedness in what he did. Perhaps his greatest failing was as a family man. He had a weakness in this area and a weakness for women. He did, frankly, a poor job of childrearing. Part of the problem was that he often allowed emotion to rule him. Rather than his head ruling the heart, his heart rules the head. You see, that is the problem.

God has given us both. God has given us a mind and He has given us emotions. We are a combination of mind and emotion, of head and heart, but when the heart rules the head, you have trouble. The head is intended to rule the heart. It’s not emotionless rule, but it is a matter that when we act on impulse and act emotionally to things rather than thinking it through, we are going to suffer the consequences.

The result of this impulsiveness and emotionalism that was often there led to a lack of consistency and got David into some problems. It caused him to get involved in things that had long-term consequences. He exemplified a tremendous amount of faith, loyalty, zeal and wholeheartedness; God greatly honored and

appreciated David for these qualities. But God does not gloss over the weaknesses of David. David had many family problems, and we will note some of those a little bit further. David learned many of those lessons, but by the time David really got the point, most of his kids were pretty well grown. He couldn't go back and undo what he had done. Many of these things David taught Solomon, and undoubtedly, a lot of it is reflected in what Solomon says in the book of Proverbs. Solomon was the son of David's old age. Solomon was young; he was just a teenager when he sat on the throne. The other children were much older and had gotten into trouble as a result of David being too busy to tend to things at home.

Joab also had great strengths and weaknesses. He had tremendous courage and personal bravery. You couldn't find anyone more courageous and brave, but he had a treacherous streak. Perhaps his greatest failing was his inability to carry out orders properly. He was stubborn and insisted on doing things his own way. He was self-willed. He was right and the world was wrong. If he thought he was right, he didn't care if the boss said otherwise—he was going to do it his way. That led him to an untimely end.

As we look at some of this, it is important that we realize that God has a reason for recording both positive and negative characteristics, the strengths and the weaknesses of these individuals. God wants us to learn from these examples. We gain insight and learn lessons if we are able to read and see ourselves in some of these things. We can see things that we have done, and to the extent that we look and learn from the examples of others, we don't have to make the same mistakes and reap the same consequences.

Here we set the stage with the expanding out of Israel and the firm establishment of the throne. We set the stage for Israel to reach its height, its pinnacle, under the time of King Solomon. We will go into some of that in the next Bible study as we see what advances as God has created a nation under the rulership of King David and his descendants. With that we will be concluded this evening.

Bible Study # 23 Questions

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

II Samuel 1—20 and I Chronicles 11—20

1. What was David's reaction to the death of Saul?
2. Explain the apparent discrepancy between the account of Saul's death in II Samuel 1 and that in I Samuel 31.
3. Where was David's original capital and how long was he there?
4. What were the circumstances of Abner's death?
5. How did David react to the death of Ishbosheth?
6. Which of David's men first broke into Jerusalem and how did he?
7. What tragedy happened at the time of the bringing in of the ark? Why?
8. From where did David obtain the materials and craftsmen to build his palace?
9. What was David's desire after he had built his own palace?
10. What promise did God make to David?
11. How did David show his loyalty to the memory of Jonathan?
12. How did Hanun the son of Nahash misunderstand David's intentions? What were the results?
13. How did David compound his sin with Bathsheba?
14. What was the penalty that David suffered for his sin?
15. What Psalm in the Bible is the result of David's repentance of his sin with Bathsheba?
16. Why did Absalom have to flee Israel?
17. How did Absalom seek to overthrow his father?
18. What were the circumstances of Absalom's death?
19. Analyze the greatest strengths and weaknesses of David.
20. Analyze the greatest strengths and weaknesses of Joab.

Bible Study # 24
October 11, 1988
Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—II Samuel 21—24, I Kings 1—11, I Chronicles 21—29 and II Chronicles 1—9

Last Bible study we were in II Samuel and the life of David. This evening we **are primarily focusing in on King Solomon**. It was during his reign that Israel reached its height and was the recipient of the choicest bounties of heaven. His kingdom stretched from the Euphrates to Egypt. Ezion Geber was an industrial city. The kingdom of Solomon set astride all the great trade routes of Europe.

The first part of King Solomon's reign was, in reality, a type of the millennial reign. The name "Solomon" means "peace." One of the statements made of the reign of Solomon and characteristic of it was that "each man under his vine and under his fig tree" (I Kings 4:25).

Micah 4:4, "But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid...." It refers to the Millennium.

It was a time of abundance, wealth and prosperity in ancient Israel. Solomon hired and contracted Phoenician sailors. They even conducted expeditions to the new world. The Phoenician alphabet was very similar to the Hebrew. So literally, Solomon's navy had a worldwide impact. Solomon's navy left out of a port on the Red Sea and three years later came back to a port on the Mediterranean Sea. They circumnavigated the earth. Solomon's fleet returned every three years.

The story of Solomon's life from God's perspective is found in Ecclesiastes. In the midst of blessings and prosperity, there are also potential problems. This section and the parallel account in Chronicles is the time that we find the building of the temple. The tabernacle had been situated in various locations, but at this time there was a permanent structure built. David had desired to build it. He had been a man of war, and because of certain things, God did not want him to build it.

There was a courtyard that enclosed the temple itself, and then you had the temple. To get an idea of the temple, the actual inner part was a rectangular that measured ninety feet by thirty feet. The Holy of Holies was actually a cube thirty feet by thirty feet by thirty feet. The Holy Place measured sixty feet by thirty feet by forty-five feet. Surrounding the temple on two sides

and the rear were rooms or apartments. Remember when Christ made the statement, John 14:2, "In My Father's house are many mansions...." He called the temple "the Father's house." There were three stories with thirty-three rooms per floor. There were entrances from the front side. The roof of the temple proper was forty-five feet. The roof of the apartments on the sides and rear was thirty feet. The porch rose to a height of one hundred eighty feet. This great columned porch in front was set in a great courtyard, which was many times larger than the temple itself. In the court were the brazen laver and the altar of sacrifice. The back half would be in the inner court and was located about half way behind the two great columned porch. The priests' hall and the Israelites hall consisted of the very finest of things.

Let us get on into our material.

II Samuel 23:1-5, "Now these are the last words of David. Thus says David the son of Jesse. Thus says the man raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel: 'The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me: "He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain." Although my house is not so with God, yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For this is all my salvation and all my desire; will He not make it increase?'"

Verse 8, "These are the names of the mighty men whom David had:" It gives their acts of valor accomplished.

II Samuel 24:1, "Again the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, 'Go number Israel and Judah.'"

I Chronicles 21:1, "Now Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel." God wanted the nation to trust Him, not trust in the military. Satan incited him and stirred him up to do that.

II Samuel 24:3-4, "And Joab said to the king, 'Now may the Lord your God add to the people a hundredfold more than there are, and many the eyes of my lord the king see it. But why does my lord the king desire this thing?' Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab and against the captains of the army. So Joab and the captains of the army went out from the presence of the king to count the people of Israel."

Verse 10, “And David’s heart condemned him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the Lord, ‘I have sinned greatly in what I have done; but now I pray, O Lord, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly.’” David was feeling guilty about it. He knew he had done the opposite of what God would want him to do.

Verses 12-13, “Go and tell David, ‘Thus says the Lord: ‘I offer you three things; choose one of them for yourself, that I may do it to you.’” So Gad came to David and told him; and he said to him, [1] ‘Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? Or [2] shall you flee three months before your enemies, while they pursue you? Or [3] shall there be three days’ plague in your land? Now consider and see what answer I should take back to Him who sent me.’”

God gave David a choice, and “none of the above” wasn’t one of the choices. Not many of us have a chance to choose our trial.

Verse 14, “And David said to Gad, ‘I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man.’” He chose three days of disease epidemics. He would rather take his chances of falling into the hands of God. He would rather be dependent upon God’s mercy than man’s mercy.

Verse 16 (KJV), “...the Lord repented him of the evil and said to the angel...” What does that mean “the Lord repented”? Did God make a mistake? No, let’s understand these words. “Repent” literally means “to be sorry” and the word “evil” is a word that means “adversity, calamity or affliction.” What it means is that God felt pity. He looked down and had pity and mercy on what was happening.

Verse 16 (NKJ), “And when the angel stretched out his hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented from the destruction....”

Verse 17, “Then David spoke to the Lord when he saw the angel who was striking the people, and said, ‘Surely I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand, I pray, be against me and against my father’s house.’”

‘It is my fault. Let it be against my family. Spare them.’ Where do you ever find Saul saying it is his fault? Ever see people where it was never their fault, always somebody else’s fault. Everything they encounter is somebody else’s fault. There was the inability to repent and change from the mistakes because he never took responsibility for anything. David made mistakes, but he took responsibility for those

mistakes, and he repented and grew. God was preparing him for a job. God has an overview of things. Why do we do things this way? God knows what He is doing and what He is accomplishing. He is far more concerned about the long-range outcome on out into eternity.

Verses 18-25, “And Gad came that day to David and said to him, ‘Go up, erect an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.’ So David, according to the word of Gad, went up as the Lord commanded. Now Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming toward him. So Araunah went out and bowed before the king with his face to the ground. Then Araunah said, ‘Why has my lord the king come to his servant?’ And David said, ‘To buy the threshing floor from you, to build an altar to the Lord, that the plague may be withdrawn from the people.’ Now Araunah said to David, ‘Let my lord the king take and offer up whatever seems good to him. Look, here are oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing implements and the yokes of the oxen for wood. All these, O king, Araunah has given to the king.’ And Araunah said to the king, ‘May the Lord your God accept you.’ Then the king said to Araunah, ‘No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price, nor will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which cost me nothing.’ So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. And David built there an altar to the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the Lord heeded the prayers for the land, and the plague was withdrawn from Israel.”

I Kings 1:1, “Now King David was old, advanced in years; and they put covers on him, but he could not get warm.” David had loss of body heat; he had health problems.

Verse 5, “Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, ‘I will be king’; and he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him.” He figured he was next in line.

Verse 6, “(And his father had not rebuked him at any time by saying, ‘Why have you done so?’ He was also a very good-looking man. His mother had borne him after Absalom.)” He was a spoiled brat. His father had never put his foot down. Many of the problems David encountered later in life with his children came from his child rearing. He was entangled with various women. When a person is not really fulfilling his responsibilities at home, they try to make it up to their kids by giving them things instead of their time. They try to compensate by giving them things. His kids had not been properly

disciplined, and by the time he learned his lesson, they were grown. David couldn't turn the clock back twenty-five years. He never called Adonijah into account for what he did; he was a spoiled brat who thought he could do what he wanted to do.

Adonijah was the younger brother of Absalom. David was dying and there began to be a power struggle. Adonijah was trying to take the kingdom. This was not God's intention. It was apparent that God had already chosen Solomon. Solomon was a young teenager at this time; he was not even grown. God had made plain to David through the prophet that it was to be Solomon.

Verses 33-35, "The king also said to them, 'Take with you the servants of your lord, and have Solomon my son ride on my own mule, and take him down to Gihon. There let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel; and blow the horn, and say, "Long live King Solomon!" Then you shall come up after him, and he shall come and sit on my throne, and he shall be king in my place. For I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and Judah.'"

Solomon is brought in and seated on the throne while David is yet alive. David did not wait until after he died for Solomon to be anointed as king. It was important that the succession be established before the leader died. If the selection is not clear, then you are going to have confusion, and we know who the author of confusion is.

Verses 50-52, "Now Adonijah was afraid of Solomon; so he arose, and went and took hold of the horns of the altar. And it was told Solomon, saying, 'Indeed Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon; for look, he has taken hold of the horns of the altar, saying, "Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.'" Then Solomon said, 'If he proves himself a worthy man, not one hair of him shall fall to the earth; but if wickedness is found in him, he shall die.'"

I Kings 2:1-2, "Then the days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon his son, saying: 'I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man.'" He charged Solomon. He is talking to one who is still a young teenager. He is talking to a young person who is going to be taking the throne.

Verses 3-4, "And keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of

Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn; that the Lord may fulfill His word which He spoke concerning me, saying, "If your sons take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul," He said, "you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'" He gives him some final advice as to how to handle certain problems (vv. 5-9).

Verses 10-11, "So David rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David. The period that David reigned over Israel was forty years; seven years he reigned in Hebron, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years."

I Chronicles 22:1-5, "Then David said, 'This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of burnt offering for Israel.' So David commanded to gather the aliens who were in the land of Israel; and he appointed masons to cut hewn stones to build the house of God. And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails of the doors of the gates and for the joints, and bronze in abundance beyond measure, and cedar trees in abundance; for the Sidonians and those from Tyre brought much cedar wood to David. Now David said, 'Solomon my son is young and inexperienced, and the house that is to be built for the Lord must be exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorious throughout all countries, I will now make preparation for it.' David made abundant preparations before his death."

Verses 6-9, "Then he called for his son Solomon, and charged him to build a house for the Lord God of Israel. And David said to Solomon: 'My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build a house to the name of the Lord my God; but the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "You have shed much blood and have made great wars; you shall not build a house for My name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in My sight. Behold, a son shall be born to you, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies all around. His name shall be Solomon, for I will give peace and quietness to Israel in his days.'" "Solomon" is derived from "Shalom" which means "peaceful."

Verses 10-12, "He shall build a house for My name, and he shall be My son, and I will be his Father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever." Now my son, may the Lord be with you; and may you prosper, and build the house of the Lord your God, as He has said to you. Only may the Lord give you wisdom and understanding, and give you charge concerning Israel, that you may keep the law of the Lord your God." He continually reminded

him, 'Obey God, put God first, keep the Commandments, and God will bless you and back you up.'

Verses 13-14, "Then you will prosper, if you take care to fulfill the statutes and judgments with which the Lord charged Moses concerning Israel. Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be dismayed. Indeed I have taken much trouble to prepare for the house of the Lord one hundred thousand talents of gold and one million talents of silver, and bronze and iron beyond measure, for it is so abundant. I have prepared timber and stone also, and you may add to them." He did all of these things to prepare. There were millions of dollars in gold in today's prices.

I Chronicles 23:1-5, "So when David was old and full of days, he made his son Solomon king over Israel. And he gathered together all the leaders of Israel, with the priests and the Levites, Now the Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years and above; and the number of individual males was thirty-eight thousand. Of these, twenty-four thousand were to look after the work of the house of the Lord, six thousand were officers and judges, four thousand were gatekeepers, and four thousand praised the Lord with musical instruments, 'which I made,' said David, 'for giving praise.'" Talk about a choir, a gigantic orchestra and choir of four thousand.

Verse 6, "And David divided them into divisions [courses] among the sons of Levi..." They couldn't crowd in and do this all at one time, so David divided them into courses. There were twenty-four courses (I Chronicles 24:18). Each course served for two weeks and rotated, and then they all served together during the Festival seasons. It would take in the whole year. They could rotate through.

Understand this and look at the book of Luke.

Luke 1:5, "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth." Zechariah was ministering in the temple in his course, which was the eighth course (division) of Ahijah. The Sabbath-to-Sabbath rotation began the first Sabbath of Nisan. Course one served the first week; course two, the second week. All priests served during the three annual Festivals, so all the divisions served the week of Passover. Course three served the fourth week; course four served the fifth week, etc. The course Abijah was on duty was at the beginning of the ninth week. The following

week was Pentecost, so he would have remained for the tenth week as well.

In vv. 23-24, when his course was finished he went home. John the Baptist was conceived shortly afterwards. Nine months later would be spring.

In v. 36, John was six months older than Jesus Christ, thus Jesus was born in the fall. You can derive the time of Christ's birth within a few weeks, through the courses, another proof that Christ was clearly born in the fall. It's a matter of putting together what the Bible itself gives.

I Chronicles 24 lists the divisions of the priests and the various functions. Things needed to be organized and David is trying to get things organized prior to his death.

I Chronicles 25 names the musicians to go with the twenty-four divisions.

I Chronicles 26 lists the gatekeepers.

I Chronicles 27 details the military divisions, the leaders of tribes and other officials.

I Chronicles 28:1-11, "Now David assembled at Jerusalem all the leaders of Israel: the officers of the tribes and the captains of the divisions who served the king, the captains over thousands and captains over hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and possessions of the king and of his sons, with the officials, the valiant men, and all the mighty men of valor. Then King David rose to his feet and said, 'Hear me, my brethren and my people: I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had made preparations to build it. But God said to me, "You shall not build a house for My name, because you have been a man of war and have shed blood." However the Lord God of Israel chose me above all the house of my father to be king over Israel forever, for He has chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father, and among the sons of my father, he was pleased with me to make me king over all Israel. And of all my sons (for the Lord has given me many sons) He has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel. Now He said to me, "It is your son Solomon who shall build My house and My courts; for I have chosen him to be My son, and I will be his Father. Moreover I will establish his kingdom forever, if he is steadfast to observe My commandments and My judgments, as it is this day." Now therefore, in the sight of all Israel, the congregation of the Lord, and in the hearing of our God, be careful to seek out all the commandments of the Lord your God, that you may possess this good land, and

leave it as an inheritance for your children after you forever. As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever. Consider now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary, be strong, and do it.’ Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the vestibule, its houses, its treasuries, its upper chambers, its inner chambers, and the place of the mercy seat.” He gave him all this instruction.

Verse 13, “also for the division of the priests and the Levites, for all the work of the service of the house of the Lord, and for all the articles of service in the house of the Lord.” He gave him the courses of the Levites.

Verses 19-20, “‘All this,’ said David, ‘the Lord made me understand in writing, by His hand upon me, all the works of these plans.’ And David said to his son Solomon, ‘be strong and of good courage, and do it; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord God—my God—will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord.’”

I Chronicles 29:1-2, “Furthermore King David said to all the congregation: ‘My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced; and the work is great, because the temple is not for man but for the Lord God. Now for the house of my God I have prepared with all my might....’” Solomon was the only one of David’s children that God chose to work through. David had prepared all these things.

Verses 7-9, “They gave for the work of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand of iron...precious stones...Then the people rejoiced, for they had offered willingly, because with a loyal heart they had offered willingly to the Lord; and King David also rejoiced greatly.”

Notice what David prayed to God after this. Verses 10-15, “Therefore David blessed the Lord before all the congregation; and David said: ‘Blessed are You, Lord God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty, for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In

Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You. For we are aliens and pilgrims before You, as were all our fathers; our days on earth are as a shadow, and without hope.’”

‘We thank you God for the chance to give an offering because everything we have is Yours.’ When we give an offering, we give God what He has already given us. So we see the end of David’s reign here.

Verses 26-28, “Thus David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel. And the period that he reigned over Israel was forty years; seven years he reigned in Hebron, and thirty-three years he reigned in Jerusalem. So he died in a good old age, full of days and riches and honor; and Solomon his son reigned in his place.”

II Chronicles 1:3, “Then Solomon, and all the congregation with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon; for the tabernacle of meeting with God was there, which Moses the servant of the Lord had made in the wilderness.”

Verses 6-7, “And Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before the Lord, which was at the tabernacle of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it. On that night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, ‘Ask! What shall I give you?’” God gave to Solomon a vision that night, and said, ‘Ask whatever you want, and I will give it to you.’

Verse 10, “‘Now give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this great people of Yours?’” Solomon, of course, asked for wisdom. He lacked wisdom, but one thing he wanted was wisdom to be the king.

Verses 11-12, “And God said to Solomon: ‘Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked riches or wealth or honor or the life of your enemies, nor have you asked long life—but have asked wisdom and knowledge for yourself, that you may judge My people over whom I have made you king—wisdom and knowledge are granted to you; and I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings have had who have been before you, nor shall any after you have the like.’” ‘You didn’t ask for riches, long life, etc. I am going to give you great wisdom and many other things.’ Wealth increased tremendously.

II Chronicles 2:1-2, “Then Solomon determined to build a temple for the name of the Lord, and a royal house for himself. Solomon selected seventy thousand men to bear burdens, eighty thousand to quarry stone in the mountains, and three thousand six hundred to oversee them.” This describes the work force put together to build the temple and royal house.

II Chronicles 3:1-2, “Now Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. And he began to build on the second day of the second month in the fourth year of his reign.”

Chapters 3 and 4 give details about the temple.

Chapter 5 is the dedication of the temple.

II Chronicles 6:16, “Therefore, Lord God of Israel, now keep what You promised Your servant David my father, saying, “You shall not fail to have a man sit before Me on the throne of Israel, only if your sons take heed to their way, to walk in My law as you have walked before Me.”” God’s promise to Solomon, there will not fail to have one to sit on the throne of Israel.

II Chronicles 7:8-9, “At that time Solomon kept the Feast seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great congregation from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt. And on the eighth day they held a sacred assembly, for they observed the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days.” The dedication of the temple and the eighth day they made a solemn assembly.

Verse 11, “Thus Solomon finished the house of the Lord and the king’s house; and Solomon successfully accomplished all that came into his heart to make in the house of the Lord and in his own house.” God warned Solomon not to turn away.

Verses 14-22, “if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place. For now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. As for you, if you walk before Me as your father David walked, and do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgments, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom, as I covenanted with David your father, saying, “You

shall never fail to have a man as ruler in Israel.” But if you turn away and forsake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods, and worship them, then I will uproot them from My land which I have given them; and this house which I have sanctified for My name I will cast out of My sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations. And as for this house, which is exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and say, “Why has the Lord done thus to this land and this house?” Then they will answer, “Because they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and embraced other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore He has brought all this calamity on them.”” God warns Solomon not to turn away.

I Kings 4:21, “So Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the [Euphrates] River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt...” Solomon reigned from the Euphrates River to the Egyptian border. He ruled over a tremendous area.

Verse 24, “For he had dominion over all the region on this side of the River from Tiphshah even to Gaza, namely over all the kings on this side of the River; and he had peace on every side all around him.” He ruled over everything west of the Euphrates and had peace on all sides.

Verse 25, “And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.” This is a picture of the Millennium.

Verses 29-33, “And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. Thus Solomon’s wisdom exceeded the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men...and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five. Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish.” He was an expert. He could tell you about everything from plants to shrubs, fish and creeping things. He knew about everything.

Verse 34, “And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.” He had a tremendous reputation. He excelled everyone everywhere. God gave Solomon exceptional wisdom and knowledge.

I Kings 5 describes some of the things that occurred.

I Kings 6:1, “And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord.”

We come to a verse that is important in establishing the chronology of the Bible. The reason this is essential, this verse put together with Exodus 12:41, “And it came to pass at the end of four hundred thirty years—on that very same day—it came to pass, that all the armies of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.” The four hundred thirty years began with the confirming of the covenant made with Abraham when he was ninety-nine years old (Genesis 17:1-10). If you didn’t have this verse, you would have to wade through the book of Judges and some of the judges overlap. The fourth year of Solomon was the four hundred eightieth year of the Exodus. Then you can add the forty years of David and Saul, the wandering in the wilderness and the time you have for all the judges to fit in. From the time of Solomon’s reign down to the time of the captivity is an easier way to document it. Then we have I Kings 6:1 that gives you the time that elapsed between the Exodus and King Solomon. With those two verses you can jump back almost a thousand years in chronology.

Verse 7, “And the temple, when it was being built, was built with stone finished at the quarry, so that no hammer or chisel or any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built.” I want to quickly call your attention to that. God had the temple made as a pattern of something spiritual. What is God doing now? He is building a spiritual temple.

Ephesians 2:20-22, “having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.”

Peter tells us we are living stones.

I Peter 2:5, “you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” When is that temple going to be assembled? It will be assembled in the resurrection. All the rough edges are being hammered off now. When the stones got to the construction site, it fit. It was cut to order. God is

not going to squeeze us in there. He is knocking off the rough edges now. Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone. Everything else has to start around that.

I Kings 6:38, “And in the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month, the house was finished in all its details and according to all its plans. So he was seven years in building it.” It was finished in seven years.

I Kings 7:1, “But Solomon took thirteen years to build his own house; so he finished all his house.” He was building his own house thirteen years.

I Kings 8 is a parallel account of the dedication of the temple as noted in Chronicles.

I Kings 9:4-9, ““Now if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgments, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, “You shall not fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.” But if you or your sons at all turn from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and this house which I have sanctified for My name I will cast out of My sight. Israel will be a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And this house will be exalted; yet everyone who passes by it will be astonished and will hiss, and say, “Why has the Lord done thus to this land and to this house?” Then they will answer, “Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore the Lord has brought all this calamity on them.”””

Verse 10, “Now it happened at the end of twenty years, when Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the Lord and the king’s house....”

Verse 26, “King Solomon also built a fleet of ships at Ezion Geber, which is near Elath on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom.” Phoenician sailors.

Notice something that I think is interesting; notice what the Queen of Sheba noticed about the people around Solomon.

I Kings 10:8, ““Happy are your men and happy are these your servants, who stand continually before you and hear your wisdom.””

Verses 6-7, “Then she said to the king: ‘It was a true report which I heard in my own land about

your words and your wisdom. However I did not believe the words until I came and saw it with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard.” Generally, you hear something and it gets stretched. But she found out she had not even heard everything. ‘It is better than I thought.’

Verse 22, “For the king had merchant ships [ships of Tarshish] at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the merchant ships came bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and monkeys.” Tarshish is the area of Spain.

Verses 23-24, “So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. And all the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart.”

Verses 25-27, “Each man brought his present; articles of silver and gold, garments, armor, spices, horses and mules, at a set rate year by year. And Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; he had one thousand four hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedars as abundant as the sycamores which are in the lowland....” Silver was so plentiful it had almost lost its value. He had tremendous wealth and prosperity; everything was going for him.

Ever notice so many times when people have everything going for them, this turns out to be a problem. It gets their eyes off God. And that is what has happened to this nation. God has given us everything. God has given us the choicest bounties of heaven. Have we really appreciated it and given God the credit?

All of this leads us up to the rest of the story and that is what we begin to notice in chapter 11.

I Kings 11:1-4, “But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, ‘You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. For surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.’ And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David.” He had a thousand women, and his wives turned away his heart after other gods. His mind began to get on

pleasing them and was pulled in a thousand ways. It goes to show that a person can have a gigantic blind spot. He had a weakness and indulged himself.

Verses 5-8, “For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord, as did his father David. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.” They wanted him to build places for them.

God was angry.

Verses 9-10, “So the Lord became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the Lord commanded.” God saw the problem coming and warned him not to go after other gods.

Verses 11-12, “Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, ‘Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do it in your day, for the sake of your father David; but I will tear it out of the hand of your son.’” He said, ‘I am going to rend the kingdom from you and give it to your servant—not in your lifetime but at the time of your son.’

Verse 13, “‘However I will not tear away the whole kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of my servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.’” God said, ‘All right, I am going to remove the blessings. I will not do it one hundred percent because of your father.’ There began to be problems here in the later years of Solomon. What we find prophesied is going to happen. His son, Rehoboam would only reign over Judah.

Verses 26-39, “Then Solomon’s servant, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite from Zereda, whose mother’s name was Zeruah, a widow, also rebelled against the king. And this is what caused him to rebel against the king; Solomon had built the Millo and repaired the damages to the City of David his father. The man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valor; and Solomon, seeing that the young man was industrious, made him the officer over all the

labor force of the house of Joseph. Now it happened at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite met him on the way; and he had clothed himself with a new garment, and the two were alone in the field. Then Ahijah took hold of the new garment that was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces. And he said to Jeroboam, 'Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: "Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give ten tribes to you (but he shall have one tribe for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel), because they have forsaken Me, and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the people of Ammon, and have not walked in My ways to do what is right in My eyes and keep My statutes and My judgments, as did his father David. However I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, because I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of My servant David, whom I chose because he kept My commandments and My statutes. But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand and give it to you—ten tribes. And to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may always have a lamp before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Myself, to put My name there. So I will take you, and you shall reign over all your heart desires, and you shall be king over Israel. Then it shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will give Israel to you. And I will afflict the descendants of David because of this, but not forever.'"

Verses 40-43, "Solomon therefore sought to kill Jeroboam. But Jeroboam arose and fled to Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon. Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon? And the period that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. Then Solomon rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David his father. And Rehoboam his son reigned in his place." Rehoboam reigned over Judah.

II Chronicles 8 and 9 give the account of the Queen of Sheba coming to Jerusalem, the end of Solomon's reign and his death in II Chronicles 9:30-31.

There are a lot of lessons to gain. If you want to get some insight into Solomon's experiences, go to the book of Ecclesiastes. Solomon could not take God's word for it. The way to prove God's way is to do it. Do it and see if it works.

Malachi 3:10, "'Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and prove [test] Me now in this, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.'"

The way Solomon tried to prove God's way was to go out and do the opposite, and then he wanted to see if he got the curses. Solomon's experiments were to see if there was some other way. Solomon lived his life and at the end said, 'Fear God and keep His Commandments; that is what it's all about' (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Solomon lived a life of experience. He said, 'There is nothing you can do that I haven't already done—nothing on a grander scale.'

The Bible contains the ups and downs of those with whom God was working, and written down as examples for us. We can look, learn and understand; we are able to grasp the things that God is doing and are able to understand what God was accomplishing in these people's lives. We can go through Solomon's life and understand these lessons. We don't have to "reinvent the wheel" and do it the hard way. In many ways, Solomon's life is a very sad account of an individual who had so much going for him, and yet he began to look into the wrong places for fulfillment and satisfaction. It should give us some insight as to the pitfalls.

Solomon's reign also shows parallels to the Millennium. A lot of prosperity and abundance can be a dangerous thing. We can never take prosperity for granted. It is a matter of being thankful and appreciative.

If we allow ourselves to begin to compromise, we are on a dangerous road. It leads to compromise in other areas. Solomon's entanglements with all these women began a path of compromise. Once you start compromising, you are going in a direction that leads to more and more compromise.

It sets the stage for the period of history that we are going into next, the time of the divided kingdom and the ups and the downs. This sets the stage for it. This is how the nation got into this. Blessings come from God. God gives them and God can remove them.

From this we have the closing period of King David's reign and somewhat of a perspective of the time of King Solomon. We are going to

finish the book of I Kings next time. Go through and read it. If there are areas where you have questions, make note of them. The idea is to give you an overview, a survey, of this period of Bible history.

Bible Study # 24 Questions

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

II Samuel 21—24, I Kings 1—11, I Chronicles 21—29 and II Chronicles 1—9

1. Who moved David to number Israel?
2. Explain II Samuel 24:16.
3. What do we learn about David's relationship with Adonijah that sheds light on David's childrearing practices and the reason for much of his subsequent problems with his children?
4. Who did all of the preparation work for the temple, blueprints, saying in of material, etc?
5. When were the Levites and the priests divided into courses?
6. What did Solomon request from God?
7. What were the extensions of Solomon's kingdom and to what was his reign likened?
8. What verse is essential for establishing the chronology of the Bible?
9. What was very unusual about the operations at the temple construction site?
10. Who manned Solomon's navy? What evidence is there that they might have circumnavigated the world?
11. What outstanding characteristic did the Queen of Sheba notice about the people around Solomon?
12. What are we told that reveals the extent of Solomon's wealth?
13. What weakness led to Solomon's downfall?
14. What punishment did God prophesy to come as a result of Solomon's sin?
15. How long did Solomon reign over Israel?

Bible Study # 25
October 25, 1988
Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—I Kings 12—22, II Kings
1—2, II Chronicles 10—20
(Chart at end)

I have another sheet that I will pass out to you that I think will also aid in the material that we are covering this evening. We are continuing our Bible study, our historical survey of the Old Testament. We are completing the first book of Kings. The handout we are passing out is a chronology of the kings of Judah and Israel. We are getting more into the historical section with the completing of the book of I Kings and **going into quite a bit of detail on the history of many of the kings of Israel and Judah in the aftermath of King Solomon's death.** I think this particular chart will be of help to you.

If you will notice, this chart covers approximately a five hundred-year period. It begins at the time of King David and comes down through David and his son, Solomon. We spent several Bible studies going through the material about Saul and David and then the last time on Solomon. We note that in some of these areas, God spends a lot of time. There are a lot of details that are given on the lives of certain individuals, and then as we come down, speed picks up. God devotes a lot less space and attention to certain of these individuals. We are going to cover some of this tonight.

The date 922 B.C. was a significant date because that date reflected the death of King Solomon and the division of the kingdom. Israel, of course, was twelve tribes. They had been united under the kingship of Saul who was the first king. And then we have the death of Saul. If you remember, there was a temporary split in the kingdom because the northern ten tribes clung to the dynasty of Saul for a period of seven years. They went along for a while under the dynasty of Saul. Judah recognized David as king. He had been the one who had been anointed king by Samuel at an earlier time. Judah recognized David as king while the northern tribes recognized the dynasty of Saul. This continued along for about seven years then there was reconciliation after the assassination of Saul's son by some of his servants. The ten tribes sent emissaries down to David and said, 'Look, we would like to reunite the kingdom. We would like for you to be king over all of us.'

So the entire twelve tribes were reunited under David. David reigned forty years. We went through the ups and downs of his life and many of the lessons that God would have us to draw from that. We saw that at the time of David's death, God chose David's son Solomon to sit on his father's throne. Solomon inherited that throne. God made a covenant with David, a covenant of a perpetual kingship. God made a promise to David that if his descendants did not obey Him and did not follow the covenant that God had made, He would deal with them. He would punish them. God would punish them with the rod of men, but God would not deal with them as He dealt with Saul and remove His mercy from him. So there was a distinction. God said He would not take away the kingship from David's dynasty. God had made a promise; 'I have made a covenant with you, but on the other hand, I will punish them if they do not obey.' God would deal with them. God admonished Solomon. Solomon, of course, in his later years got into a variety of problems. Solomon's "chickens came home to roost," so to speak.

We pick up the story this evening with the death of Solomon. Solomon's son Rehoboam is to be the next king. Now, what we find is that what Solomon sowed was reaped by his son. It's important to realize that what we do can certainly have implications, not only for us, but also for those who come after us.

I Kings 11:42-43, "And the period that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years, and he slept with his fathers and was buried in the City of David. And Rehoboam his son reigned in his place."

I Kings 12:1, "Rehoboam went up to Shechem, for all Israel had gone to Shechem to make him king."

Now there was a man with whom Solomon had trouble. He was a servant of Solomon, had gotten into problems and had proved to be a "thorn in the side," as far as Solomon was concerned. His name was Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. He had been exiled to Egypt (vv. 2-3). When he heard about the death of Solomon, he decided he was going to come back. He was going to come in and, in effect, run for election. He was going to try to get in on the action. He knew that Solomon had control over things that he could not overthrow; but now there was a period of transition, and Jeroboam was going to come back and see what he could "stir up."

Verses 4-5, "'Your father made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on

us, and we will serve you.’ So he said to them, ‘Depart for three days, then come back to me.’ And the people departed.”

What you had here was the same thing that people have been griping about ever since. If you heard the news, it’s what they were griping about in the legislature today—and that’s taxes. People have been complaining about high taxes. You remember when the people requested a king? Remember we went through that in I Samuel 8. When the people requested a king and Samuel was upset, God said, ‘Look, Samuel, give them what they have asked for. They have not rejected you; they have rejected Me. But you tell them what it’s going to be like to have human government.’

Remember Samuel told them three things that they were going to complain about. He said, ‘Look, you are going to complain about the taxes because the first thing he is going to do is lay on a heavy levy. He is going to start taxing you, and it is going to increase. So you are going to gripe about the taxes. He’s going to institute the draft and have big armies and military spending, and he’s going to draft your sons to be soldiers. You are going to complain about that. Thirdly, he’s going to establish this great big bureaucracy, and he’s going to have all these people, this giant court, that’s going to be big government. You are going to complain about that.’

God said, ‘When you complain, I’m not going to listen because I’ve already told you this is what you’re getting into.’ And the people said, ‘No, we want a king so that we can be like all the nations.’ They wanted to be just like everybody else.

Of course, nobody today has ever said that. You’ve never heard any of your children say that, have you? ‘Why, everybody has one; everybody does it. Why can’t we be just like everybody else?’ That’s what Israel said. There’s nothing new under the sun. It’s the same old excuses that have probably run back since the Garden of Eden. There’s nothing new. That’s what Israel said, ‘Oh, we want to be just like all the nations.’ So the result of it was that God gave them a king.

It started out where Saul instituted taxes. They increased and increased, and by the time of Solomon’s death, the taxes were high. What you have here is the original tax revolt. They came and demanded lower taxes—Proposition 13 or whatever you want to call it. They were going to have lower taxes.

Verse 6, “Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who stood before his father Solomon

while he still lived, and he said, ‘How do you advise me to answer these people?’” Rehoboam consulted with the old men that had been advisors to his father.

Verse 7, “And they spoke to him, saying, ‘If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever.’” They told him, ‘Look, you are young; you are just coming into power. What you’d better do is show yourself reasonable. They have a reasonable request. You’d better show yourself reasonable; be easy with them. You’ll find that if you give in to them on this, later on they’ll give in to you on other things. This is a reasonable request, and one that you had better accede to.’

But Rehoboam didn’t like what they told him. How many times people want their own way; they want to hear what they want to hear. He had originally talked to these older and wiser men who had a lot of experience, and they gave him some good advice. Because they didn’t tell him what he wanted to hear, what did he do?

I Kings 12:8-11, “But he rejected the counsel which the elders gave him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him. And he said to them, ‘What counsel do you give? How should we answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, “Lighten the yoke which your father put on us?”’ Then the young men who had grown up with him spoke to him, saying, ‘Thus you should speak to this people who have spoken to you, saying, “Your father made our yoke heavy, but you make it lighter on us”—thus you shall say to them: “My little finger shall be thicker than my father’s waist! And now, whereas my father laid a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges [scorpions]!”’”

He went and hunted up his buddies, the young men who had grown up with him, his old drinking buddies, his old, old buddies. ‘Hey, what do you guys think I should do?’ Well, they told him exactly what he wanted to hear. They said, ‘Man, you go out there and tell those guys, “My father chastened you with whips, but I am going to chasten you with scorpions. You think you had it rough under him. You want your taxes lowered; I’m going to raise them. I’m going to really “put it to you.” You’d better not mess with me; I’m tough. I’m in charge around here.”’

All you need is somebody who is young and immature to really be insecure, and he has to go around and prove to everybody that he’s in charge. Ever notice that? It happens maybe even

in a job. You're working under somebody; he's some fresh young guy just out of school, and he's never worked on the job before. But he knows it all because they taught it to him where he went to school. If you don't think he's in charge, just give him a chance to tell you because he wants to make sure everybody knows that he's the boss and he's in charge. This is often a problem of those who lack certain maturity, a certain seasoning, a certain experience because they really don't have that security and experience in what they know and in their authority. They feel like they have to prove something to everyone. Every time someone makes a suggestion, they take it as a challenge, and they have something to prove.

Well, this was Rehoboam's problem. He got all of his young buddies, and they agreed with him. The people had a very simple answer.

Verse 16, "Now when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying: 'What portion have we in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Now, see to your own house, O David!' So Israel departed to their tents." All of a sudden, instead of ruling over twelve tribes, he was ruling over two. If it hadn't been for God's mercy, he wouldn't have had those either. God makes it plain that it was because of His promise to King David, grandfather of Rehoboam. God in His mercy caused it to work out where Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to Rehoboam, the house of David because that was the territory where Jerusalem was located. They weren't loyal so much to Rehoboam as they were loyal to the memory and the dynasty of David.

Verses 20-21, "Now it came to pass when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had come back, they sent for him and called him to the congregation, and made him king over all Israel. There was none who followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only...."

It's interesting how the more things change, the more they remain the same. Ever stop to think that basically this nation started out with the thirteen colonies. What did they do? They rebelled against the House of David over the issue of high taxes, the same old thing. It's interesting. From the time that Israel rebelled against the House of David and established their independence, they lasted as a nation just over two hundred years. The time of the rebellion was 922 B.C. The time of the captivity was 721 B.C. So it was approximately two hundred years.

Interesting! Doesn't particularly prove anything, but it makes an interesting parallel.

Jeroboam immediately wanted to consolidate his rule in the ten tribes. What did he start out by doing? He used human reasoning. What did he think was going to ensure his control? He started thinking, 'Now, if the people go down to God's temple in Jerusalem every year for the Feast and for various Festivals, after a while, they are going to get nostalgic for the House of David. They are going to start thinking about those things and are going to get over being mad at Rehoboam. They are going to go to Jerusalem three times a year for the Festivals, and chances are, they are going to get rid of me' (vv. 26-27). This was his reasoning.

'What I need to do to secure my throne is to make a break with the religion.'

So being the man of the people that he was, he said, 'Now look, you folks have had it rough. I am the reform candidate.' Ever notice, everybody that comes along, they are always the reform candidate. Everybody is going to make it better than those crooks before them. I don't care which crook gets elected; he is always going to be better than his predecessor. Nobody ever promises, 'I am going to make it worse. You elect me and I am going to make it worse. You think the guys before me messed it up; just elect me and I am going to have this thing so fouled up it's going to take twenty years to get it straightened out.' Nobody ever says that. We have some that do it over the course of time; I think that is just obvious.

Jeroboam comes alone and says, 'It's been too rough on you. You've had to go all the way to Jerusalem to worship God. You don't have to do that. I am going to build two temples. We are not just going to have one like they have in Jerusalem. We are going to have one at Dan in the north and one at Bethel in the south—just take your choice' (vv. 28-29). 'And we are going to put two golden calves, one in the north and one in the south, so you can see what you're worshiping. These are your gods' (v. 28).

Remember the golden calf (Exodus 32)? That's what brought them up out of Egypt, right? Really smart! And then he decided he needed a priesthood that he could control because the priests, the Levites, were educated. They were skilled in the law of God, and they weren't going to put up with this stuff. He couldn't control them. They weren't beholden to him. What did he do? He decided he would fire all of God's true ministry, get rid of the priests and the

Levites, and would hire the lowest of the people (v. 31).

I Kings 12:28-31, “Therefore the king took counsel and made two calves of gold, and said to the people, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!’ And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one in Dan. He made shrines on the high places, and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi.”

He didn’t want the Levites who were educated in the law of God and understood God’s way. He went out and hired the people who couldn’t get a job doing anything else, the least educated. They were the ones who were the least capable of being hired, and they preached whatever he wanted them to. He hired them; he could fire them. They didn’t know a whole lot, one way or the other. They were glad to preach whatever the “doctrine of the moment” was. They would be glad to preach it. They would preach anything for a price.

Now notice what Jeroboam did next.

Verse 32, “Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like unto the Feast which is in Judah....”

Now I want to ask you something. Have you noticed anything last night and tonight? It’s a full moon. It’s exactly one month since the Feast. You know what this means? This would be the beginning of Jeroboam’s feast. You know when that would climax, when it would end? A few days right after the weekend when we have an occasion coming up called Halloween.

Now let me ask you something. You know what the word “October” means? Any school kid learned what the word “October” means; it means “eighth.” The word “octopus” refers to “eight arms.” “October” means “eighth month”; “November” means “ninth month”; and “December,” “tenth month.” This should tell people something because they count December as being the twelfth month, not the tenth month. That tells you the year didn’t originally end in December. March was the beginning of the year. The year began in the spring, even on the old Roman calendar. And the months were numbered September—the seventh, January—the eleventh, and February—the twelfth. Then they moved the year ending back two months, but they kept the same names. Let people scratch their heads and try to figure that one out.

Where did Halloween come from? Where did it originate? It originated with the Druids, with the Celts in Northwestern Europe. Who were those people? They were the descendants of the House of Israel. What do we find them observing when they got to Northwestern Europe? We find them observing Jeroboam’s feast in the eighth month. What does it focus on? It is a time of emphasis on graves being opened up, all of these things coming up out of the graves—nothing but a satanic counterfeit. It’s a Satan-inspired counterfeit of the Last Great Day and the events connected with the Feast of Tabernacles. It’s the remnant of Jeroboam’s feast of the eighth month. People go right along.

People want to know if Halloween is mentioned in the Bible. Yes, right here—Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month. Just because something is mentioned in the Bible doesn’t mean the Bible approves of it. It mentions idolatry in the Bible. It mentions a lot of things in the Bible. Jeroboam introduced his own version, a new and improved version. It was *not* a new and improved version.

One thing Jeroboam did not grasp, and all the would-be dynasty builders of Northern Israel never grasped, was the lesson of Psalm 127.

Psalm 127:1, “Unless the Lord builds the house, the weary builders toil in vain....” Jeroboam tried to build his own house and tried to establish his own dynasty; it collapsed. It came to an end within a couple of generations.

Saul tried to establish his own house. He was going to wipe out the opposition; he was going to establish his own dynasty—and God ended it.

David set out to build a house for God, not something for himself. God told David, ‘Because you have some sins, some things you have done, I am not going to let you build a house for Me. Your hands are stained with blood; I have forgiven you, but there are certain physical penalties that you are going to have to pay. I am not going to allow you that privilege of building a house for Me, I am going to let your son do that. But I tell you what I am going to do because I see your heart and your attitude. You want to build something for Me; I’m going to build something for you. You want to build a house for Me; I am going to build a house for you—a dynasty. I will establish it and it is going to endure forever.’ And so we see that. God established David’s dynasty.

I Kings 13 is a very crucial chapter. It is the account of God sending a prophet to Jeroboam to warn Jeroboam of what is going to happen. God

worked a miracle through this individual as a warning to Jeroboam of the seriousness of what he was doing in departing from God. Of course, Jeroboam did not learn the lesson and refused to heed it and went on his way.

Notice the chart. It comes down from David to Solomon and Rehoboam. You see the parallel picking up with Israel, Jeroboam. We find that Jeroboam's dynasty was only Jeroboam and his son, Nadab. Nadab was overthrown and another dynasty, Baasha and his son Elah came in. They didn't last but a few years; then in a very, very quick overthrow, a matter of days, Zimri launched himself as king. He was in turn overthrown by Omri who set up one of the great dynasties or one of the most enduring dynasties of Northern Israel. Ahab, Omri's son is perhaps the most famous. Now Omri founded the most significant dynasty of Northern Israel.

We are coming down to the parallel of that. Rehoboam was succeeded by his son Abijah for just a short time, and his grandson Asa ruled for a number of years. Then Asa's son Jehoshaphat was a king that ruled for a lengthy period. That corresponded with some of the time of Omri and Ahab. This gives us the parallels.

If you will notice opposite that, you will find that this was the time of Elijah and Elisha. Elijah came on the scene about the time that Jehoshaphat ruled and Omri became king in Israel. Elijah was God's prophet for a number of years. Elijah came on the scene perhaps fifty or sixty years after the split in the kingdom. Elijah came into prominence as God's prophet, probably about fifty or sixty years after the death of King Solomon. We see him and then later Elisha, whose ministry continued on for a period of time. We are not going to go any further this evening than around the time of Jehoshaphat and Ahab.

So you can kind of get a picture of it, I'd like to make a few comments about Omri. Omri founded the most significant dynasty in Northern Israel. His son Ahab intermarried with the Phoenicians and introduced Baal worship into Israel and indirectly into Judah. One of the children of Ahab and Jezebel intermarried with the royal line of Judah. We will note some of the problems that came in a little bit later with the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. We'll notice that in the next Bible study.

Now Omri built Samaria. Samaria became the capital city of Northern Israel and is identified throughout the rest of Scriptures and prophecy as the symbol of the northern kingdom. Omri built that, and Israel achieved a certain prominence

during the reign of Omri. Omri achieved such fame that the nation of Israel actually came to be called by his name.

I want to quote to you from Langer's Encyclopedia of World History: "The Assyrians called Israel after his name Khumri." "Bathomri"—"Bath" means "house." The House of Omri is the name that came to refer to the nation of Israel. Now that is very significant because the name in Assyrian would be spelled Khumri and the Assyrians continued to use this name for Israel. This is the name that Israel carried into captivity as far as the Assyrians were concerned. This is the name that the Assyrians used for them.

History of France, Vol. I (a detailed history from the earliest years) makes the statement that the Kymrians, also spelled Cimmerians, migrated into Europe from the area of the Black Sea during the period of about 700 B.C. to about 300 B.C. Now the area of the Black Sea is the area where the Assyrians took the Israelites when they took them into captivity. They took the northern tribes into captivity in 721 B.C. They settled them up in the area between the Black and Caspian Sea.

Volume I of the History of France states that shortly after that, the Cimmerians or Kymrians (which was the Assyrian name for Israel, going back to Omri) began to migrate into Europe from the area of the Black Sea about 700 B.C. The bulk of them came in about 300 B.C. We will go into some more of that in a later Bible study, but it interesting that here's where that name came from and why it came to be applied to Israel.

Interestingly enough, as I was mentioning earlier on Halloween, that's the people you find celebrating Halloween, the festival that is a continuation of the pagan religion that Jeroboam had introduced.

We are also going to get into some things on Elijah this evening. Elijah was raised up by God to do a work of restoring the true religion in Israel. Elijah was raised up, primarily, as God's prophet to Northern Israel fifty or sixty years after the split as things began to deteriorate. Several generations went by; actually, you had the third generation by the time of Elijah. There were elderly people alive who remembered the time of Solomon and all of that, but the generation who had any firsthand knowledge, memory of the temple of Solomon and the teachings of true religion, would have been people certainly into their seventies and eighties by the time Elijah came onto the scene. We are looking at a generation that was beginning to

pass from the scene, and everyone younger than that really didn't have firsthand knowledge. So the nation had gotten further and further away from the knowledge of the truth; more and more paganism began to come in.

God raised up Elijah to do a work of restoring the knowledge of the true religion in Israel. Elijah stands out as the greatest of the prophets. We notice that he founded three schools or colleges. They were schools of the prophets to train his disciples. You can show, as well, that he visited and counseled with kings and world leaders. He was completely uncompromising in his obedience to God. We are told that he was to be a type of the one who would come prior to the coming of the Messiah, one who would come in the spirit and power of Elijah. John the Baptist did that before the first coming of Christ.

We saw here in I Kings that Jeroboam got rid of the priesthood of God and sought to replace them with his own priesthood. Let's notice the parallel account back in II Chronicles 11.

II Chronicles 11:13-15, "And from all their territories the priests and the Levites who were in all Israel took their stand with him. For the Levites left their common lands and their possessions and came to Judah and Jerusalem, for Jeroboam and his sons had rejected them from serving as priests to the Lord. Then he appointed for himself priests for the high places, for the demons, and the calf idols which he had made." All the priests and Levites left Northern Israel and came down to Rehoboam in Jerusalem.

There is one thing I would like to call your attention to here in II Chronicles 11. We went through the story of Solomon's life last time. Solomon is a tremendous example when it comes to the fact of how much more your example counts than your advice. Solomon gave excellent advice. The book of Proverbs is basically the advice that Solomon gave to his son. That's the way it starts out.

Proverbs 1:1, 8, "The proverbs of Solomon... 'My son, hear the instruction of your father.'" Have you ever thought about that? Proverbs is what Solomon wrote to Rehoboam. He gave him advice on how to be wise. Did Rehoboam follow any of it? No. There's a lot of advice that Solomon gave Rehoboam in the book of Proverbs about avoiding immorality. Notice here what we are told about Rehoboam.

II Chronicles 11:21, "Now Rehoboam loved Maachah the granddaughter of Absalom more than all his wives and his concubines; for he took

eighteen wives and sixty concubines, and begot twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters."

Verse 23 (KJV), "...and he desired many wives." He had a bunch and wanted more. Would you say that he followed his father's example? He just wasn't rich enough to do it on as grand a scale as old Dad. He did the best he could; he tried. Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. Rehoboam couldn't begin to measure up to that, but he desired many. He regretted he had to stop where he did; he just ran out of money. What was the consequence to Rehoboam? What kind of shape did Rehoboam wind up in? Solomon gave Rehoboam some excellent advice; but Rehoboam didn't follow Solomon's advice—he followed his example.

That should be an important lesson to all of us as parents. I don't care how good your advice is; your example is going to carry a lot more weight. We might as well learn that and "chalk it up," whether we like it or dislike it. It's a fact of life that our example is going to have a lot more impact than our advice.

As we continue on the main story thread, we come down to I Kings 14.

I Kings 14:1-2, "At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam became sick. And Jeroboam said to his wife, 'Please arise, and disguise yourself, that they may not recognize you as the wife of Jeroboam, and go to Shiloh. Indeed, Ahijah the prophet is there, who told me that I would be king over this people.'" Jeroboam was very concerned, and we find that, interestingly enough, Jeroboam sent his wife to a prophet of God. He didn't send her to one of the priests of the high places. When he wanted some accurate information, he went to one of God's servants.

Verse 4, "And Jeroboam's wife did so; she arose and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. But Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were glazed by reason of age." Ahijah was very elderly by this time. He very likely had some kind of cataracts or something of that sort. God revealed to him who was coming. Ahijah told her that this son would die; he explained what was going to happen as a result of Jeroboam's sin (vv. 7-16).

Verse 20, "The period that Jeroboam reigned was twenty-two years. So he rested with his fathers. Then Nadab his son reigned in his place."

Verses 22-24, "Now Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they committed, more than all that their fathers had done. For they also had built for themselves high places, sacred pillars,

and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree. And there were also perverted persons [KJV, "sodomites"] in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel." We find that Rehoboam wasn't a particularly good king either because he allowed Judah to build high places.

Verses 25-26, "Now it happened, in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem. And he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house; he took away everything. He also took away all the gold shields which Solomon had made."

Verse 30, "And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days." Most people today, if they saw the headlines of Judah and Israel going to war, wouldn't know what that meant. They would think that was a contradiction of terms. How could the Jews be fighting Israel? Well, that's what happened. Jews only refer to the tribe of Judah, the area where Rehoboam ruled. Israel referred to the ten tribes.

In v. 31, Rehoboam died. He died prior to Jeroboam; he died during Jeroboam's eighteenth year.

I Kings 15:1-3, "Now in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam the son of Nebat, Abijam became king over Judah. He reigned three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maachah the granddaughter of Abishalom. And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him; his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David." His son Abijam reigned three years, and he did all the bad things that his father had done.

Verses 4-5, "Nevertheless for David's sake the Lord his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, by setting up his son after him and by establishing Jerusalem; because David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." God was still merciful because of David's sake. David had done that which was right.

Verse 8, "So Abijam rested with his fathers ...then Asa his son reigned in his place."

Verse 9, "In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa became king over Judah."

Verse 11, "Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did his father David." Asa did a lot of good things.

Verse 12, "And he banished the perverted persons [sodomites] from the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made." Asa was a young man during the time of Solomon's last years. He remembered Solomon. He had seen the mess that his father and grandfather had made. Evidently Solomon had learned certain lessons during the final time of his life that are written in the book of Ecclesiastes. Asa had, perhaps, been impressed with some of those things and had seen certain results, learned certain lessons, and now he begins to turn things around.

The first thing he does is to get rid of the sodomites, to stamp out the immorality in the land and to remove the idols. He removed his grandmother (who was queen mother) from office because she had made an idol in the grove (v. 13), and he destroyed her idol.

Verse 14, "...Nevertheless Asa's heart was loyal to the Lord all his days." He had, basically, a good attitude toward God.

Verse 16, "Now there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days." There was continual strife between Asa and the king of Israel who had succeeded the house of Jeroboam.

II Chronicles 14:2-7, "Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God, for he removed the altars of the foreign gods and the high places, and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the wooden images. He commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to observe the law and the commandment. He also removed the high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah, and the kingdom was quiet under him. And he built fortified cities in Judah, for the land had rest; he had no war in those years, because the Lord had given him rest. Therefore he said to Judah, 'Let us build these cities and make walls around them, and towers, gates, and bars, while the land is yet before us, because we have sought the lord our God; we have sought Him, and He has given us rest on every side.' So they built and prospered." They built up and fortified the cities and increased the army.

Verses 8-9, "And Asa had an army of three hundred thousand men from Judah who carried shields and spears, and from Benjamin two hundred and eighty thousand men who carried shields and drew bows; all these were mighty men of valor. Then Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and three hundred chariots, and he came to Mareshah." The Ethiopians came with this gigantic army. Asa had built up this great army,

but when he saw how heavily outnumbered he was, he cried out to God.

Verses 11-12, “And Asa cried out to the Lord his God, and said, ‘Lord, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude. O Lord You are our God; do not let man prevail against You!’ So the Lord struck the Ethiopians before Asa and Judah, and the Ethiopians fled.” God intervened and smote the Ethiopians, and Asa won the battle.

Now we find that Asa had some problems. There are lessons that can be learned.

II Chronicles 16:1-3 “In the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah and built Ramah, that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. Then Asa brought silver and gold from the treasures of the house of the Lord and of the king’s house, and sent to Ben-Hadad king of Syria, who dwelt in Damascus, saying, ‘Let there be a treaty between you and me, as there was between my father and your father. Here, I have sent you silver and gold; come, break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel, so that he will withdraw from me.’”

Primarily, Asa’s problems revolved around the issue of faith. Asa had a good attitude; he wanted to obey God, and he made a number of reforms in the land. But Asa lacked faith.

When the king of Israel was going to come up against Judah, he built up a fortified area that was going to control entrance and access right on the main highway, the main trade route coming into Judah. Ramah was kind of a Berlin Wall of that day, a “checkpoint Charlie”—everybody had to come through this fortified stronghold that he had made in order to get out or come in. Asa became nervous and worried about that. Instead of going to God the way he had earlier when the Ethiopians had invaded, he got silver and gold out of the treasury of the Lord’s house and decided to cut a deal with the king of Syria. He got scared and compromised. He got this money out of the temple because that was the only quick access to cash that he had. He thought he’d take this money and pay off the king of Syria. He would get him to make a league with him, and they would “gang up” on the king of Israel.

God sent His servant, a prophet, Hanani, to Asa.

Verse 7, “And at that time, Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said to him: ‘Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the Lord your God, therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your

hand.’” God sent his servant, a prophet, Hanani to Asa and said, ‘Because you relied on the king of Syria and did not rely on the Lord your God, this thing is not going to profit you. You are going to find that the king of Syria is going to turn out to be your enemy, too.’

Verse 9, “‘For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars.’” You didn’t trust God. You took it upon yourself to solve it your own way. You looted the money out of the temple treasury and hired allies. You are just going to have a mess.

Verse 10, “Then Asa was angry with the seer, and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him because of this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at that time.” Asa got mad. He didn’t like to be corrected; he didn’t like to being told he was wrong. It made him so mad that he threw the prophet in jail and began to be harsh to some of the people. He resented being corrected. Isn’t that human nature? He was going along fine, but now he lacks faith and does something he shouldn’t have done. God sent His ministry, His prophet to correct him, and Asa resented it. He got mad.

Verse 12, “And in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa became diseased in his feet, and his malady was very severe; yet in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but the physicians.” Then Asa got sick; he was diseased in his feet. He didn’t seek the Lord, but he went to the physician.

It would have been kind of embarrassing (the prophet had been rotting in jail for a year or two now) to bring him out and ask him to pray for him so that God would heal him. ‘I’ll show him; I don’t have to ask God to heal me. I’ll just go to the doctor, and that will take care of it.’

Verse 13 simply says, “So Asa rested with his fathers; he died in the forty-first year of his reign.” Asa died; that was the end result. Who showed who? He was going to do it his way.

I think we see that Asa had some positive points; he got rid of the sodomites, tore down the idolatrous groves and even removed his grandmother from being queen. He built up the fenced cities of Judah. Judah prospered during his reign. Asa’s basic attitude was that he wanted to do what was right. But Asa had a problem. His problem was one that all of us encounter from time to time—and that is a lack of faith. And Asa compounded his problem of a lack of faith. When he was corrected over something that he did, under the temptation and weakness of the

moment, instead of really repenting, he got mad. Since he resented being corrected, he compounded his problem. He got further away from God than ever. When he got sick, he didn't call on God and God didn't heal him. He called on the doctor and he died. That's the story of Asa. There are lessons to learn.

In I Kings 16, we go back to the main story flow we are following.

I Kings 16:16, "...So all Israel made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that day in the camp."

Verses 23-26, "In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king over Israel, and reigned twelve years. Six years he reigned in Tirzah. And he bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver; then he built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, Samaria, after the name of Shemer, owner of the hill. Omri did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all who were before him. For he walked in all the ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin, provoking the Lord God of Israel to anger with their idols."

Omri did various things and was responsible for having built the capital city of Samaria, but he continued to disobey God. You can follow down in the chart to keep straight who was king over which group. We have Omri king over Israel, and when Omri died, his son became king.

Verses 28-31, "So Omri rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria. Then Ahab his son reigned in his place. In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel; and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him. And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him."

Ahab came along and had the distinction of making Jeroboam look good. You think you have somebody bad until you have somebody worse come along; then all of a sudden, it makes the predecessor look pretty good. 'Oh, for the "good old days"—it wasn't as bad as I thought it was.'

The best thing Ahab ever did was what Jeroboam did, and he went downhill from there. Bad enough, but he married Jezebel, the daughter of the king of one of the Phoenicians. You

remember Jezebel? She's quite well known. You can read about Jezebel all through the rest of the Bible. She's become a symbol of everything God hates. If you could take everything God hates in a woman and wrap it up in one person, you would have Jezebel. There are several men that you come across who are described as everything God hates in a man. Jezebel stands out as a really exceptional case.

I Kings 17:1, "And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, 'As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word.'" About this time, Elijah shows up and comes to Ahab. He says, 'It's not going to rain anymore. God is going to shut off the spigot.' So Elijah left.

Verses 2-4, "Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.'" "

Verses 6-7, "The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook. And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land."

Verses 9-11, "'Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you. So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, 'Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink.' And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, 'Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.'" He said, 'I am hungry; would you bring me a little piece of bread—bring me something to eat.'

Verse 12, "Then she said, 'As the Lord your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.'" She said, 'I don't have anything cooked; all I have is a handful of meal in the barrel and a little oil in a cruse. I am gathering up these two sticks, and I am going to go and make one little cake, a piece of fried bread, kind of like a piece of hot water bread or something. I am going to make that, and my son and I are going to eat it. Then we are going to die because we don't have anything else to eat. There's no food to be found, and we don't have any way of getting any food.'

Verse 13, “And Elijah said to her, ‘Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son.’” Elijah said, ‘Don’t be afraid. Do what you were planning to do, but before you and your son eat, before you make up what you have for him, pinch off a little bit and make some for me. Bring it to me and then feed your son and yourself.’ Now here’s an example of faith. She didn’t look at him and say, ‘You’re crazy, why should I feed you?’

Verse 14, “‘For thus says the Lord God of Israel: “The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth.’”” Wonder if she believed him?

Verses 15-16, “So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days. The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke by Elijah.” That barrel just always had meal in it. You couldn’t scrape the last bit out no matter how much you took out. No matter how much oil you poured out, there was still oil in there.

Verse 17, “Now it happened after these things that the son of the woman who owned the house became sick. And his sickness was so serious that there was no breath left in him.” He was sick to the point of death.

Verse 18, “So she said to Elijah, ‘What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?’” ‘Have you come here, and is God going to visit all my sins on me now?’ In her anguish, it looked like her son was dead.

Verse 19, “And he said to her, ‘Give me your son.’ So he took him out of her arms and carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed.” He carried him up into the loft, a little cubbyhole up on the roof where Elijah slept, laid him on his bed and prayed to God (vv. 19-21).

Verse 22, “Then the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived.” God restored his life.

Verse 24, “Then the woman said to Elijah, ‘Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is the truth.’” God provided for Elijah and used Elijah in working this miracle, sustaining this woman and using that as an example of faith. There’s an example here, there’s a lesson. You put God first and God will supply your needs. God supplied

that woman’s needs because she was willing to put God first, even when all physical evidence said there was no way she was going to come out ahead by giving some of it away. You don’t have enough for yourself; why are you going to give some of it away?

God is the Most High God. He is the Owner of the Universe. He owns heaven and earth. It all belongs to Him. God doesn’t need what we have. It’s for our benefit that God allows us to have a part, and God uses certain things to teach us certain lessons. God could have fed Elijah some other way. It wasn’t that he was dependent on that woman, but He wanted the woman to learn a lesson of faith. She stepped out on faith to trust God, and God provided her needs. God could have provided Elijah’s needs some other way, but He did it for the benefit of the woman and for an example for us that we can learn.

Let’s continue. I Kings 18:1-4, “Now it came to pass after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, ‘Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth.’ So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab; and there was a severe famine in Samaria. And Ahab had called Obadiah, who was in charge of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly. For so it was, while Jezebel massacred the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah had taken one hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave, and had fed them with bread and water.)” Obadiah had risked his own life. Jezebel had launched the inquisition against anybody who was trying to obey God.

Verse 5, “And Ahab had said to Obadiah, ‘Go into the land to all the springs of water and to all the brooks; perhaps we may find grass to keep the horses and mules alive, so that we will not have to kill any livestock.’” Ahab and Obadiah were coming out of the city. They were looking for any water to keep the horses and mules alive. It had gotten down to the point there was just nothing. It was drying up.

Verse 6, “So they divided the land between them to explore it; Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.”

Verses 7-9, “Now as Obadiah was on his way, suddenly Elijah met him; and he recognized him, and fell on his face, and said, ‘Is that you, my lord Elijah?’ And he answered him, ‘It is I. Go, tell your master, “Elijah is here.”’ Then he said, ‘How have I sinned, that you are delivering your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me?’”

‘What have I done that you are going to get me into this kind of trouble.’

Verse 10, “As the Lord your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to hunt for you; and when they said, “He is not here,” he took an oath from the kingdom or nation that they could not find you.” Notice what he said. Elijah was a man who was known to the rulers of his day. Ahab went around to all of the kingdoms, every nation and kingdom in the known world, anywhere around there. Ahab sent his servants there to find out if Elijah was there, and they came and took an oath from the king.

Now if Elijah had been unknown to all these people and not traveled and met some of these people, they wouldn't have known who he was. They would have come in there and asked if Elijah was there. They would have said, ‘I don't know; never heard of him. How should I know if he is here; a lot of people come through here. We got people traveling through every day.’ Elijah was known in all of the surrounding kingdoms. He was known to all of the surrounding governments.

Obadiah says, ‘There is no nation or kingdom anywhere around here within traveling distance that Ahab hasn't sent looking for you. Man, has he ever been looking for you! You told him it wasn't going to rain and you left. And it hasn't rained since. He's mad.’

Verse 12, “And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from you, that the Spirit of the Lord will carry you to a place I do not know; so when I go and tell Ahab, and he cannot find you, he will kill me. But I your servant have feared the Lord from my youth.”

‘All I need is to go tell him that I've found you. If I come back and the Spirit of the Lord has carried you away and you're not here, do you know what he's going to do? Chop my head off! He's going to think I'm pulling a joke on him, and he's not going to think it's very funny. I have feared God from my youth. I have tried to do what was right; please don't get me in trouble.’

Verse 13, “Was it not reported to my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the Lord, how I hid one hundred men of the Lord's prophets, fifty to a cove, and fed them with bread and water?” He said, ‘Don't you know that I am the guy who hid the prophets when Jezebel tried to kill them all?’

Verses 14-15, “And now you say, “Go, tell your master, ‘Elijah is here,’” and he will kill me.’ Then Elijah said, ‘As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely present myself to him today.’” Elijah said, ‘I am not going to get

you in trouble. I'm going to wait, and you go tell him.’

Verses 16-17, “So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah. Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, ‘Is it you, O troubler of Israel?’” Ahab said, ‘Are you the guy that caused all this trouble?’ You know what Elijah said?

He looked him in the eye and said, v. 18, “And he answered, ‘I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and you have followed the Baals.’” Elijah said, ‘I am not the cause of the problem; you are, buddy. You have forsaken the Commandments of God and gone to follow Baal. I tell you what I want you to do.’

Verse 19, “Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.” He said, ‘I want you to gather all Israel unto Mount Carmel. Get all the prophets of Baal together, all four hundred fifty of them, all these that are Jezebel's “hangers on.” Get your crowd together, get all Israel up to Mount Carmel; I have something.’

Verse 21, “And Elijah came to all the people, and said, ‘How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.’ But the people answered him not a word.” ‘Why are you vacillating, why are you wobbling back and forth?’

Verses 22-26, “Then Elijah said to the people, ‘I alone am left a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God who answers by fire, He is God.’ So all the people answered and said, ‘It is well spoken.’ Now Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, ‘Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare it first, for you are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it.’ So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, ‘O Baal, hear us!’ But there was no voice; no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they had made.”

They really “cut up.” They were really “getting down” with it, beating the tambourines, clanging

the gongs, jumping up and down, whooping, hollering and shouting. This commotion lasted all morning.

Verse 27, “And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, ‘Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.’” He was making fun of them. He said, ‘Cry aloud you guys; better speak up. He’s not going to be able to hear you.’ They had been shouting their lungs out all morning. Really whooping it up. Talk about a “tarry meeting.”

They were “tarrying” all morning and weren’t getting anything. ‘Cry loud; he’s god isn’t he? He’s really up there, isn’t he? I know what it is, he’s taking to somebody—he’s on the telephone, and you are just going to have to wait until he finishes his conversation. Or he is pursuing [the New English Bible gives a more literal translation, maybe he had to go to the bathroom] or maybe he took a trip. I know what it is, he is asleep—he’s taking a nap, and you guys better wake him up.’ Well, needless to say, they didn’t appreciate Elijah’s helpful suggestions.

Verse 28, “So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them.” They were really worked up. By this time, they were slashing themselves; they fell over and the blood gushed out.

Verses 29-30, “And it was so, when midday was past, that they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention. Then Elijah said to all the people, ‘Come near to me.’ So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down.” Elijah told the people, ‘All right, we have had enough of this foolishness. You guys have provided entertainment all day; come over here.’

Verses 31-34, “And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, ‘Israel shall be your name.’ Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed. And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, ‘Fill four water pots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood.’ Then he said, ‘Do it a second time,’ and they did it a second time; and he said, ‘Do it a third time,’ and they did it a third time.”

They just absolutely soaked and saturated everything.

Verses 36-38, “And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, ‘Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel, and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.’ Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench.” When God sent it, He didn’t light a little match that could hardly light. WHOOSH, it came down out of heaven, this great big burst of fire and absolutely incinerated like a nuclear blast in miniature. Just a blackened crater remained there.

Verse 39, “Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, ‘The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!’” It really “shook them up.”

Verse 40, “And Elijah said to them, ‘Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!’ So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there.” Elijah had the prophets of Baal taken out and executed.

Verse 41, “Then Elijah said to Ahab, ‘Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain.’” Elijah told Ahab he’d better get up and get going, get something to eat and leave in a hurry because there is the sound of abundance of rain.

Verse 42, “So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees.” It gives the account of the rain, the cloud that came, and we have the end of the drought (vv. 43-45).

I Kings 19:1-2, “And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, ‘So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.’” Jezebel got upset. All her prophets were killed. She sent out word, ‘I am going to get you; I am going to chop off your head before the sun sets.’

Have you ever noticed the extent to which you can find yourself going from a spiritual high to a spiritual low? Ever had some time when you were really on a “high,” and boy, you have faith

to handle something. Then all of a sudden, something else comes up and you get scared. Where did all your faith go?

Here was Elijah having gone through all of this, and he gets the word Jezebel is after him. He takes off running and gets out there; he is all depressed and upset. He says, 'God, why don't you just let me die. Nothing is going to work out right. I am as good as dead' (v. 4).

God encouraged him and, in fact, sent him down to Damascus to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria (v. 15) and then to anoint Jehu to be king over Israel (v. 16). So God continued to use Elijah. And what is he doing here? He's going to kings and various rulers. He had a very prominent place.

I Kings 21:1-3, "And it came to pass after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which was in Jezreel, next to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. So Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, 'Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house; and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money.' And Naboth said to Ahab, 'The Lord forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!'"

Naboth had a vineyard and Ahab wanted it. He said he'd like to buy the vineyard, but Naboth said, 'No, I don't want to sell it. It's been in the family for generations—an old family property—I just don't want to sell it.' Ahab said he would give him a better one. 'I will pay you cash or trade you and give you another one.' Naboth said, 'No, I appreciate it, but I don't want to sell. I want to keep it.' So what did Ahab do?

Verse 4, "So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, 'I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.' And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food." This shows Ahab's maturity—like a little spoiled child. Jezebel came in and said, 'What's wrong?' He said, 'Naboth won't sell me his vineyard.' She said, 'Is that all the problem? I'll take care of that.' So she wrote a letter and said, 'Let's kill this Naboth character and get rid of him.'—And she did (vv. 5-13). God was very displeased (vv. 18-22).

I'd like to point out something, just as a matter of law in Israel. Israel was different than the Gentile nations around. Israel was never established as an absolute monarchy. Israel was a constitutional monarchy. For instance, the king could not force one of his subjects to sell

property; it was their property. The property came down in the family, and the king didn't have any right to confiscate it, even in payment. If Naboth didn't want to sell the property, it was legal for him to keep it. The king was under certain requirements of law. He was not absolute in the way that was the custom of the Gentile nations around. Jezebel didn't worry about the law, one way or another. But God dealt with her. God sent a message by Elijah and told Ahab that he was responsible for killing Naboth because he had let his wife do it.

Verse 19, "'You shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the Lord: 'Have you murdered and also taken possession?'" And you shall speak to him, saying, "Thus says the Lord: 'In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours.''"

Verse 21, "'Behold, I will bring calamity on you. I will take away your posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every male in Israel, both bond and free.'" He said, 'I'm going to wipe out your family.'

Verse 22, "'I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam...because of the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and made Israel sin.'"

Verse 27, "So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning [KJV, "went softly"]." — Kind of tip toed around for a little while.

Verses 28-29, "And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 'See how Ahab humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days; but in the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house.'" God said, 'Ahab is kind of a wimp, a jerk and a lot of other things, but it really "shook him up." I am not going to "land on him" quite as hard as I told him I would, at least not immediately.' Ahab repented of sorts. It was very apparent, as you read the story, that he was a very weak character, a very weak-willed character. He never had the gall to stand up to do what was right at all.

Verses 23-25, "'And concerning Jezebel the Lord also spoke, saying, "The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel." The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Ahab and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field.' But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedly in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up."

Now we pick up the story of Jehoshaphat, who was the king of Judah at this time.

I Kings 22:2, “Then it came to pass, in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went down to visit the king of Israel.” He was coming down to visit with Ahab. Jehoshaphat was a nice guy, a good king.

Verses 41-42, “Now Jehoshaphat the son of Asa had become king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem...” His reign overlapped Ahab’s reign and down to the reign of Ahab’s son.

Verse 43, “And he walked in all the ways of his father Asa. He did not turn aside from them, doing what was right in the eyes of the Lord...”

Verse 44, “Also Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel.” They quit all the fighting. He sought to get rid of the sodomites (v. 46).

To pick up a little bit more of the details of Jehoshaphat, turn back to II Chronicles 17.

II Chronicles 17:2-6, “And he placed troops in all the fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah and in the cities of Ephraim which Asa his father had taken. Now the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the former ways of his father David; he did not seek the Baals, but sought the God of his father, and walked in His commandments and not according to the acts of Israel...And his heart took delight in the ways of the Lord; moreover he removed the high places and wooden images from Judah.”

Verses 7-13, “Also in the third year of his reign he sent his leaders, Ben Hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethaneel, and Michaish, to teach in the cities of Judah. And with them he sent Levites: Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zedadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobadonijah—the Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, the priests. So they taught in Judah, and had the Book of the Law of the Lord with them; they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people. And the fear of the Lord fell on all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat...So Jehoshaphat became increasingly powerful, and he built fortresses and storage cities in Judah. He had much property [KJV, “business”] in the cities of Judah; and the men of war, mighty men of valor, were in Jerusalem.”

Jehoshaphat was basically a good king. He followed all the good examples of his father, Asa. He went even further. He got the Levites working to teach the Jews God’s ways and to perform their responsibilities as teachers and

judges. God blessed him greatly. But Jehoshaphat also had a problem. His biggest problem seemed to revolve around getting “tangled up” with Ahab.

II Chronicles 18:1, “Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance; and by marriage he allied himself with Ahab.” Jehoshaphat was a nice guy, a peaceable sort of guy. He liked to be friends with everybody. He found it difficult to believe bad things about people. ‘Well, you know old Ahab; maybe if I can just kind of hang around old Ahab, I can be a good influence on him and kind of encourage him.’

A lot of Ahab’s problem was that he was weak. He was not as utterly corrupt in the way that Jezebel was. He was just weak; he would never stand up for what he knew was right. He had a certain respect even for God’s prophet. He certainly had a respect for Elijah, even though he didn’t follow through on what he should have done. He was a very weak-willed character.

Jehoshaphat seemed to think he could be a good influence on him. That kind of thing never works out that way. All it did was get Jehoshaphat entangled, and Ahab tried to use and manipulate him.

You have the story here where Ahab had conned Jehoshaphat into coming down and helping him out in a war. Jehoshaphat said, ‘Well, I am ready to go out to battle, but I want to talk to God’s prophet first’ (v. 4).

Verse 5, “Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, four hundred men, and said to them, ‘Shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?’ And they said, ‘Go up, for God will deliver it into the king’s hand.’”

Remember Ahab had called in all these others, prophets of the false god, and they whooped and hollered and put on their little show.

Verse 6, “But Jehoshaphat said, ‘Is there not still a prophet of the Lord here, that we may inquire of Him?’” ‘Yeah, but I really want to talk to a prophet of God. Don’t you have one around close by?’ Ahab said, ‘Well, we have one, Micaiah the son of Imla, but I don’t like him because he never says anything good to me’ (v. 7).

‘When I call my prophets and tell them I want to do something, they smile and say, “Bless you, my son, go ahead and do it; everything will be okay.” They tell me things I like to hear and make me feel good. It doesn’t matter what I want to do, they are always in favor of it. But this Micaiah, he never has anything good to say. Anything I want to do, he doesn’t like.’

And Jehoshaphat said, 'Please, don't say things like that (v. 7); just go ahead and call him.'

Verse 8, "Then the king of Israel called one of his officers and said, 'Bring Micaiah the son of Imla quickly.'"

When the soldier came to get Micaiah he said, 'Look, he's already asked everybody else and everybody's told him what he wanted to hear. Everybody told him to go to battle; now don't come in here and be a spoilsport like you usually do. Tell him what he wants to hear.'

Verses 13-14, "And Micaiah said, 'As the Lord lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak.' Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, 'Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?' And he said, 'Go and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand!'" Micaiah walked in and said, 'Yeah, king go on down.' The king couldn't believe it. Ahab sat back and said, 'Now, wait a minute; haven't I always told you to tell me the truth' (v. 15)? He had never told him to tell him the truth, but he liked to think that he had. Micaiah looked at him and said, 'All right, I am going to tell you the truth.'

Verse 16, "Then he said, 'I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd.' And the Lord said, 'These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace.'" Micaiah told the king, 'You are going to go out there to battle all right, but you are going to get killed.' And Ahab turned around to Jehoshaphat and said, 'Didn't I tell you; he never has anything good to say' (v. 17).

Notice what a con man Ahab was and what a gullible sort Jehoshaphat was. He was just a nice guy, the kind of guy that was very easy to get along with. He didn't like to cause trouble.

Notice what happened.

Verse 29, "And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'I will disguise myself and go into battle; but you put on your robes.' So the king of Israel disguised himself, and they went into battle." Ahab tells Jehoshaphat he is going to disguise himself, just in the off-chance this guy knows what he is talking about and somebody is aiming for him. 'I am going to disguise myself and go to battle. You go ahead and put on your robes, put on your crown; you go out there looking like a king. I am just going to "stick on" some old clothes and go out to battle.'

Jehoshaphat should have wised up to that. 'What does he think? Me, put on my robes and go out there, and he's going to put on some old clothes and go sneaking out there. Who are they going to be shooting at?' But he just found it difficult to

believe anything bad about anybody; he obliged and went out there.

Verse 31, "So it was, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, 'It is the king of Israel!' Therefore they surrounded him to attack; but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him, and God moved them to turn away from him." Just like old Ahab had figured, they were ready to come down on Jehoshaphat. When he got into trouble, he cried out to God, 'Oh, God, what have I gotten myself into?' And God helped him. God had mercy on him. All these guys left. And sure enough, somebody shoots a bow and what does it do? It hits Ahab (v. 33). So that's the story.

II Chronicles 19:1, "Then Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned safely to his house in Jerusalem." God told him to "stay put"—don't go back to Israel and get tangled up in that anymore.

In II Chronicles 20, Jehoshaphat did many positive things, but he kept having problems getting suckered into deals with Israel.

II Chronicles 20:35, "After this Jehoshaphat king of Judah allied himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted very wickedly."

In v. 36, he talked him into a deal. 'Let's go into a partnership and build a navy. We will sail it from your port, Ezion-gaber.' Sure enough, Jehoshaphat probably put up most of the money, provided the port, and who knows what all he got conned into. They built this great big navy and were going to send it out, but God sent a storm and sank the whole navy (v. 37). It wasn't able to make it to Tarshish.

Here's a lesson. Get yourself tangled up with people not trying to obey God, and you are going to have trouble. Jehoshaphat, in his own personal life and in what he personally had responsibility for, was a very faithful man. But he was a "nice guy," found it hard to say "no" to anybody and kept getting suckered in. He felt sorry for the kings of Israel, thinking he could be a good influence on them, and maybe they would "come along." But they kept suckering him in. They kept using him and setting him up for one thing after another.

This is a story that I think is important for us to grasp because there are lessons of life that we can learn from the interaction of people.

Let's just briefly summarize here in the first couple chapters of II Kings which is the end of the story of Elijah, at least at this point.

II Kings 2:1-2, "And it came to pass, when the Lord was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from

Gilgal. Then Elijah said to Elisha, 'Stay here, please, for the Lord has sent me on to Bethel.' And Elisha said, 'As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!' So they went down to Bethel."

Verse 3, "And the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha..."

Verse 5, "And the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho came to Elisha..."

What you find as you go through here, this refers to three schools or colleges (if you want to use our modern terminology) for the prophets or sons of the prophets that Elijah had established at Gilgal, Bethel and Jericho. They were "sons of the prophets" or students of Elijah. God was getting ready to end Elijah's ministry. (His life didn't end until a little later.)

We find mentioned in v. 9, "...Elijah said to Elisha, 'Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?' And Elisha said, 'Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.'" The "double portion" had reference to the birthright portion, an inheritance. A double portion was the birthright portion. In that sense, the sons of the prophets collectively were the heirs of Elijah. They were his spiritual heirs. Elisha was the one who was going to, in that sense, take over and occupy that office. While all the sons of the prophets were the collective heirs of Elijah, Elisha received the double portion, the birthright portion. In other words, God empowered all of them; but Elisha, in a very special way, in a way that made him stand "head and shoulders" above all the other prophets, the other students of Elijah.

This didn't mean that Elisha had twice as much of God's Holy Spirit as Elijah did because Elijah was singled out as the great prophet. Even John the Baptist is one who came in the spirit and power of Elijah; he didn't come in the spirit and power of Elisha. Elijah was the great prophet, but Elisha was his heir. And in that sense, he is pictured as getting a double portion, referring to the birthright portion.

Verses 14-15, "Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?' And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over. Now when the sons of the prophets who were from Jericho saw him, they said, 'The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha....'" God performed a special miracle in intervening. God intervened and made it very obvious to all of his people as to who was taking Elijah's place. Elisha stood out. God worked through Elisha in a special way,

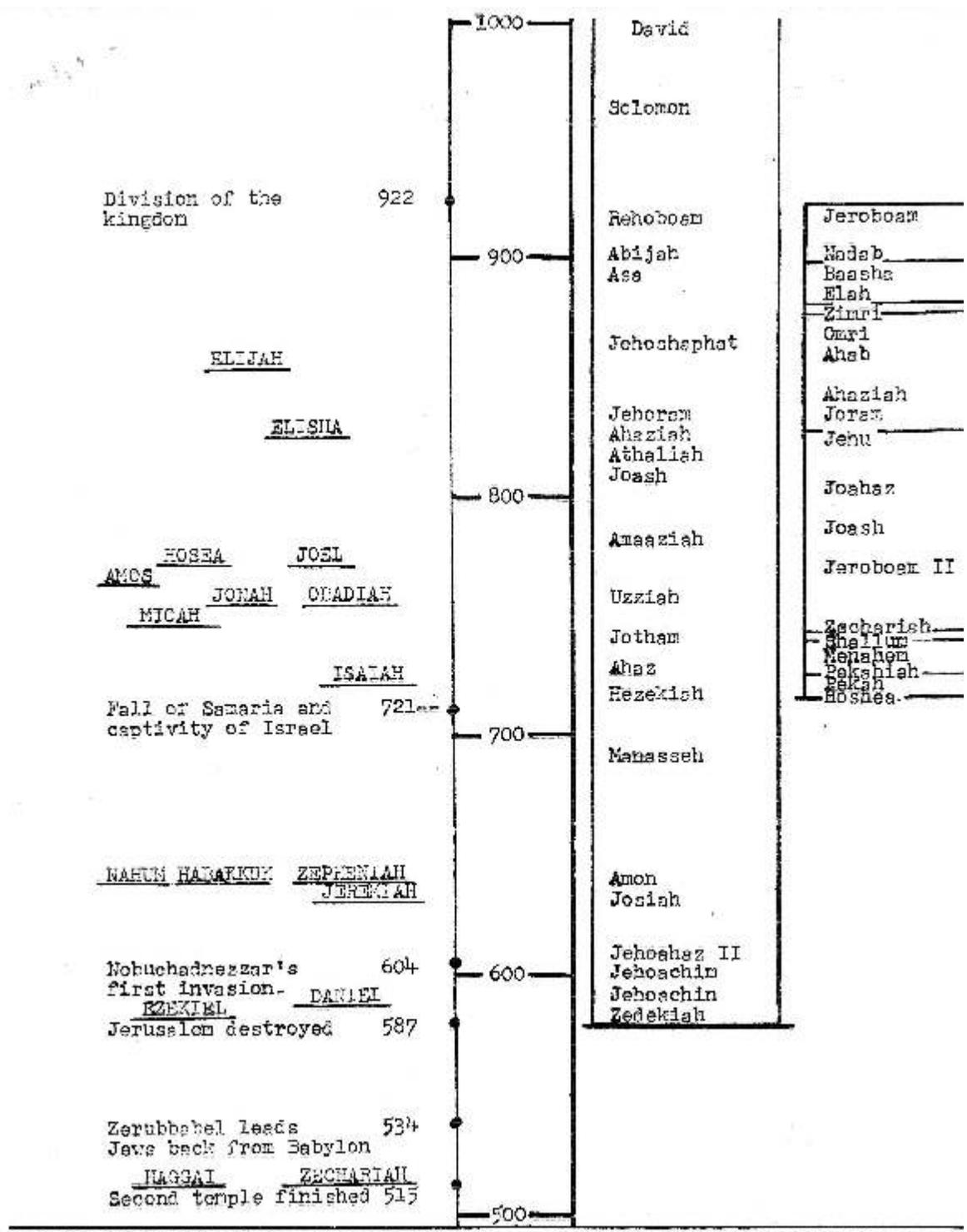
in the same way He had worked through Elijah. In a time of transition, God always makes it plain.

There is one thing to comment on.

Verse 11, "...and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." There are three heavens mentioned in the Bible. Heaven can refer to the heaven of the earth's atmosphere where the birds fly and the clouds are. It can refer to outer space where the sun, moon and the stars are. Or it can refer to what is called the third heaven (II Corinthians 12:2), the heaven of God's abode.

The heaven into which Elijah was taken by a whirlwind would have been the heaven of the earth's atmosphere. A whirlwind is something that exists in the earth's atmosphere. We will notice in the next Bible study that Elijah simply left. God simply, in a supernatural way, caught up Elijah and removed him to a different place.

We covered a lot of material this evening, but hopefully, in chart form, the historical portion will make it a little easier for you to follow and to keep up with all of these names. We have all these names back and forth, but it kind of gives you an idea as to the time flow. It is one of the things that we want to go through as we go through the material that is in this survey of the Old Testament.



Chronology of Kings and Chronicles

Bible Study # 25 Questions

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

I Kings 12—22, II Kings 1—2, II Chronicles 10—20

1. Why did the people threaten revolt against Rehoboam?
2. What foolish thing did Rehoboam do?
3. What foolish thing did Jeroboam do that insured that his kingdom would not prosper?
4. What happened to the Levites and priests in Northern Israel?
5. What positive things did Asa, king of Judah, do?
6. What were his weaknesses?
7. Which king built Samaria and established the most dominant dynasty in the history of Northern Israel?
8. How did Ahab compare with the other kings of Israel?
9. How did God preserve Elijah during the famine?
10. Where did Ahab seek to find Elijah? What does this tell us about Elijah?
11. What was Ahab's response when Elijah told him what God was going to do to him for stealing Naboth's vineyard?
12. What were the positive things about Jehoshaphat's reign over Judah?
13. What were the problem areas?
14. What happened to Jehoshaphat's plans for a great naval expedition? Why?
15. Where were the three colleges that Elijah established?
16. Explain the meaning of "double portion" in II Kings 2:9.
17. Which heaven is referred to in II Kings 2:11?
18. How did God make evident to those following and obeying Him who Elijah's successor actually was?

Bible Study # 26
November 8, 1988
Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—II Kings 3—25 and II
Chronicles 21—36
(Chart at end)

This evening we **are covering the final period of the history of Israel and Judah.** It is a time where there are a lot of parallels, a lot of things that certainly parallel to our time today. If you noted last Bible study, we came down to, basically, the end of the life of Jehoshaphat and Ahab—the time period of eighth century B.C., a time period that witnesses the emergence in Israel and Judah of a commercial civilization and of great material prosperity. The commercial civilization that began to take place in Israel and Judah reached a height as far as material prosperity. There are some interesting comments in the Soncino Commentary, which is a Jewish commentary on the Old Testament. In their commentary on the book of Micah, they bring out the fact that the eighth century did witness the emergence of a commercial civilization of great material prosperity in Israel and Judah. Its foundations were laid in the peace and security in the reign of Jeroboam II.

I am going to refer to these kings if you want to look at your chart and follow along on this; otherwise, you will get lost with the names of all these kings. On the far right hand side of your chart are the kings of Israel. You will notice Jeroboam II that is written towards the bottom. Contemporary with him was Uzziah of Judah.

“The lengthy reigns of Jeroboam II and Uzziah were for Israel and Judah, respectively, a time of peace and security. They won the extension of the borders of their kingdoms from Damascus to the Red Sea and from the desert to the Mediterranean. This gave the Hebrew states command of all of the major trade routes of ancient days, everything that came across from Mesopotamia across to Egypt. The Hebrew states were sitting astride the major trade routes.

It was, however, a civilization that displayed all of the evils of a society making haste to be rich. Extremes of wealth and poverty, which had been impossible in an agricultural society based on the biblical system of land tenure, became evident everywhere. The pursuit of commerce encouraged the development of cities and city life. With the exchange of goods and the exchange of ideas, new religious cults, standards

of luxury and splendor and materialistic aims of living, which heretofore had been foreign to Israel, were introduced from Syria and Egypt.”

I was reading a phrase from the Soncino Commentary’s introduction of the book of Micah. Their description of the eighth century B.C. and what it saw, as far as the historic development of Israel and Judah, could have been said about the twentieth-century United States. You see, in the twentieth century, this country went from a primarily agricultural nation to an industrial commercialized nation. We went from an agricultural rural nation to an urban nation. We have seen, as a result of that, the change and the transformation in society. We have seen extremes of wealth and poverty, down to many of the things that confront us today that are characteristic of an urban commercialized society, in a way that those extremes do not characterize an agricultural society. I bring out that parallel because when you read the history of eighth-century B.C. Israel and Judah, you are reading what seems like the history of twentieth-century America and Britain.

Now understand it’s in the eighth century B.C. If you look on your chart, which prophets were during the eighth century? The eighth-century prophets were Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah and Isaiah towards the end of it. You are looking at some of the primary prophets who wrote books of prophecy. They were writing during that time. In other words, they had a message for their society that also had implications for our society today. That’s why God preserved the message.

Now the reason why the message for that society has parallels and implications for our society today is because our society parallels. There are societies that had the same problems, and as a result, they are going to have the same conclusion.

Events began to develop rapidly about sixty years before the collapse of Israel. It was during this time that God’s work of warning the people to repent reached a peak. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah and Isaiah all prophesied during this time period, the final sixty years of the history of Northern Israel.

Notice the time leading up to the time of God’s intervention, God’s punishment—the captivity that God allowed to come on the nation Israel. What led up to that was the greatest period of prophetic activity in the history of Old Testament Israel and Judah. The most concentrated dosage of prophetic activity took place at that time. God had a warning and a

witness go out. There is a parallel. What Israel went through at that time certainly parallels what is happening to the United States during the twentieth century.

Now let's take note of the story. We will pick it up in II Kings 3. This is right after Elijah's ascension in a whirlwind.

II Kings 3:1, "Now Jehoram the son of Ahab became king over Israel at Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years." We find that Jehoram, the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria. Ahaziah had succeeded Ahab; then Jehoram very quickly succeeded Ahaziah. God was not pleased with him. God was not pleased with anything that came from Ahab and Jezebel. Jehoram was not quite as bad as his father and his mother. He put away the image of Baal (v. 2), but he continued to follow the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat (v. 3). There were problems; there was strife; and so there were difficulties.

Right after Ahab's death, the Moabites rebelled (v. 5), and Jehoram was again going to sucker good old Jehoshaphat (v. 7). You remember Jehoshaphat was a nice guy always willing to do a favor for somebody. Well, Jehoram said, 'Hey, Jehoshaphat, since Dad died the Moabites have rebelled against me. Why don't you send an army and come help me out?'

In v. 7, Old Jehoshaphat said, "...I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses." 'Anything I have, you can have. I'll give you the shirt off my back.' Sometimes you meet people this way. They're nice people, but they're just a little bit gullible and easily taken advantage of. They are so obliging that it is very difficult for them to say no. They get themselves in some "jams." Jehoshaphat was somewhat that way.

Verse 11, "But Jehoshaphat said, 'Is there no prophet of the Lord here, that we may inquire of the Lord by him?'" And one of the servants of the king of Israel answered and said, 'Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who poured water on the hands of Elijah.'" So again Jehoshaphat honored and respected God. Before they went out to battle he wanted to know if there was a prophet of God they could inquire of. He was told that Elisha was there and Elisha was told.

Verse 13, "Then Elisha said to the king of Israel, 'What have I to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and the prophets of your mother.' And the king of Israel said to him, 'No, for the Lord has called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab.'" Elisha told Jehoram, 'What have I got to do with you?

Why don't you go to your mother's or father's prophets? I don't have anything to tell you; you might as well go to Jezebel's prophets. I don't have any use for you.'

Verse 14, "And Elisha said, 'As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, surely were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you, nor see you.'" He said, 'I would not look toward you. I wouldn't so much as give you the time of day if it weren't that I have respect for Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. Out of respect for him, I will answer the question. But if it were just you asking, Jehoram, I wouldn't tell you the time of day.' So anyway, you go through the story.

II Kings 4 is an account of several miracles that took place, showing what Elisha did. We see in vv. 1-7 where Elisha performed a miracle to allow an indebted widow to pay off her creditors. The oil multiplied and she was able to sell it and earn money.

II Kings 4:1, "...the creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves.'" Elisha asked, 'What do you have?' She said, 'All I have is a little oil' (v. 2). And he told her to borrow pots and pans—borrow everything you can "rake and scrape" that will hold oil. Get everything that the neighbors have. Everything that you can borrow, get and then start pouring oil (v. 4). She started pouring oil and the oil kept pouring and pouring until she filled up every pot and pan that she had, and everything that any neighbor had—everything around. When she ran out of pots, she ran out of oil (vv. 5-6). She sold the oil and paid off the debts (v. 7). God has all kinds of ways of providing things.

As we continue here in chapter 4, we read of the woman who befriended Elisha (v. 8), an elderly couple and the child that they had as a result of God's special blessing (vv. 14-17). We read of his subsequent death (vv. 18-20) and then the miracle that Elisha performed of restoring the child to life (vv. 32-35).

In II Kings 5, we have an interesting story of Naaman who was the captain of the host of the king of Syria. Now the Syrians had raided Israel at various times and had taken away a number of various Israelites captive; there was a little servant girl that had been taken away who was a servant in the household of Naaman. The little girl was an Israelite (v. 2). Naaman was a great favorite of the king of Syria. He was the captain of the host. Naaman came down with a dreaded disease. He came down with leprosy for which there was no known cure (v. 1). This little girl told Naaman one day, 'I wish you were

down in Israel because there is a prophet in Israel that I know could cure you' (v. 3). Well, Naaman was willing to try anything, so he went to talk to the king of Syria, and the king of Syria gave him a letter that was addressed to the king of Israel.

II Kings 5:5-6, "So the king of Syria said, 'Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel.' So he departed and took with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. Then he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which said, 'Now be advised, when this letter comes to you, that I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may heal him of his leprosy.'" He addressed this letter to the king of Israel and said, 'I am sending my favorite servant down there, and I understand that you have somebody that can cure him of leprosy. I want you to take care of him as a favor to me.' Well, needless to say, when the king of Israel got this letter, this scared him to death.

Verse 7, "And it happened, when the king of Israel read the letter, that he tore his clothes and said, 'Am I God, to kill and make alive, that this man sends a man to me to heal him of his leprosy? Therefore please consider, and see how he seeks a quarrel with me.'" He said, 'That guy is trying to pick a fight with me. Here he is sending this general down here; he's got leprosy and expects me to cure him. What am I going to do with him; I can't cure him. He's sending him down here expecting me to do something.'

Verse 8, "So it was, when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, 'why have you torn your clothes? Please let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.'" When Elisha heard about it, he was somewhat irate. Elisha sent word to the king and said, 'Let him come to me. You may not have any faith, but evidently the Syrians have more faith than you do because they sent this guy here to get cured. You're standing over there wringing your hands and figuring that it's impossible. The Syrians haven't any knowledge of the true God; at least they had enough faith to give it a try.' They were told this little servant girl had far more faith and understanding than the king because she said, 'I know God can heal you, and He has a servant, a prophet, down in Israel.'

Verse 9, "Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, 'Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean.'" Naaman came near to Elisha's

house. Elisha didn't even come out. He sent his messenger out, and he instructed Naaman to go and wash in the Jordan seven times.

Verses 11-12, "But Naaman became furious and went away and said, 'Indeed, I said to myself, he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy. Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?' So he turned and went away in a rage." Now Naaman immediately became very upset, very irate. Do you know why he was irate? Because God didn't do it the way he expected it to be done.

Naaman was wrath. Look what he says. He says, "...indeed I said to myself..." He had already figured it out. Have you ever jumped to conclusions in your mind; have you ever figured out how you thought God was going to do it? He thought this man was going to come out here and would call upon the name of his God with a big hoopla, making a great sound and going on and on—something impressive—and his leprosy would disappear. But he sent his servant out and told him, 'Go wash in that old muddy Jordan River seven times.' Naaman thought, 'What good is that going to do? I have a whole lot of better rivers than that back where I come from. I don't need to wash in the Jordan. Boy, I am insulted.'

Verse 13, "And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, 'My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, "Wash, and be clean"?' His servant said to him, 'Look, if the prophet had given you some difficult terrible task to perform, some great arduous difficult task and said "if you will perform this you will be healed," wouldn't you have gone and done it? Well, yeah. All he asked you to do was something simple. Why don't you try it? What can you lose?'

Verse 14, "So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

He went down and washed in the Jordan seven times, and, you guessed it, he was totally healed. Why? It was an act of faith, an act of obedience. What difference does it make whether you wash in the Jordan or whether you go back and wash in a river in Syria? Well, the difference it makes is that God said it made a difference to Him. God said to wash in the Jordan. He didn't say go back and wash in the Tigris or the Euphrates or

anything else. He said, 'Wash in the Jordan.' What difference does it make? The difference is whether you are doing what God said or not. That's the difference.

It's like what difference does it make whether you keep Sunday or Saturday, just as long as you keep a day. What difference does it make? Or any number of things, what difference does it make? The question, brethren, is whether it makes a difference to God. See, that's the question.

People look at it and say, 'I don't see what difference it makes.' Of course, they don't see what difference it makes. Naaman didn't see what difference it made whether he washed in the Jordan. But I'll guarantee no other river would have washed him clean. Not because of any magic quality inherent in the Jordan River, but because he did what God said.

There's an important lesson here. God answers, but He doesn't always do it the way expected. In fact, Naaman was so "tuned in" to looking for an answer coming from a particular direction, that he was all upset and almost didn't recognize the answer when it came because God didn't do it the way he had expected.

Do we put limitations on God sometimes? We get God all figured out, put Him in a box and get it all figured out how God has got to do this. If for some reason or another God doesn't do it the way we expect, we think, 'What is this? God "slipped up"; somehow He didn't get it right.' Oh, God got it right. He did it the way He chose to do it.

Naaman came back, and you know what he wanted to do? He wanted to pay Elisha for what he had done (v. 15). You know what Elisha did? He did the same thing God's servants down through the centuries have done. He said, 'No, we don't charge for what we do.' That's quite a contrast to certain churches some of you have come out of. They charge for everything. They charge you to pray for you; they charge you for all kinds of things. That's not God's way.

Christ said in Matthew 10:8, "'freely you have received, freely give.'" Elisha would not accept payment, but then, of course, the servant of Elisha, his eyes got big when he saw all that money. He decided that maybe if Elisha didn't want it, he would take it (vv. 20-24). And that proved to be a very fatal mistake on his part.

Verse 27, "'Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever. And he went out from his presence leprous, as white as snow.'" That was a very serious matter.

It was something that should not be looked at in a light way.

As we continue, we find in chapter 6 the story of another miracle.

II Kings 6:8, "Now the king of Syria was making war against Israel...."

Verses 14-15, "Therefore he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, 'Alas, my master! What shall we do?'" 'What shall we do, we are surrounded!'

Verse 16, "So he answered, 'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.'" Elisha said, 'No problem. There are more with us than are with them.' His servant said, 'You haven't looked outside yet; you're sitting here in the house. You haven't looked out the door; what do you mean, 'more with us than are with them'? They have us surrounded.'

Verse 17, "And Elisha prayed, and said, 'Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.' Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." Elisha prayed and asked God to perform a miracle—to open this servant's eyes to allow him to actually see the spirit realm. And you know what he saw? He saw all the mountains round about covered with horses and chariots of fire. Now that's a whole lot more impressive than anything the Syrians had. There are times that we would be absolutely shocked and amazed if our eyes could be opened in that way, and for a brief moment, have a glimpse of the spirit realm. Elisha had a reaction and a response of faith because he knew God; he walked with God. He knew God's power; he trusted God. So he was not overcome with fear and hand-wringing because he knew that he was the servant of the Most High God.

II Kings 6:24-25, "And it happened after this that Ben-Hadad king of Syria gathered all his army, and went up and besieged Samaria. And there was a great famine in Samaria...." There was a great famine right on down to the point that it came to literal cannibalism (vv. 28-29). The king was very quick to want to blame it on Elisha.

Verse 31, "Then he said, 'God do so to me and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat remains on him today.'" He said, 'Boy, I am going to chop off Elisha's head. He got us into all of this.'

Verse 32, “But Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. And the king sent a man ahead of him, but before the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, ‘Do you see how this son of a murderer has sent someone to take away my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door. Is not the sound of his master’s feet behind him?’” Elisha referred to this son of Ahab and Jezebel as “the son of a murderer.”

II Kings 7:6-7, “For the Lord had caused the army of the Syrians to hear the noise of chariots and the noise of horses—the noise of a great army; so they said to one another, ‘Look, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to attack us!’ Therefore they arose and fled at twilight, and left the camp intact...and they fled for their lives.”

Verse 10, “So they went and called to the gatekeepers of the city, and told them, saying, ‘We went to the Syrian camp, and surprisingly no one was there, not a human sound....’”

Verse 16, “Then the people went out and plundered the tents of the Syrians....” A miracle was performed; the Syrians fled and all of their provisions fell to Israel.

But notice the attitude—blame the problems on God’s prophet, God’s servant.

I would like to call your attention to something we had discussed last time—the matter of Elijah being carried away into heaven in a whirlwind. This is not the third heaven of God’s abode, nor the second heaven of outer space, but the first heaven of the earth’s atmosphere of the clouds and the birds. The first heaven of the earth’s atmosphere is where a whirlwind would normally go. He was taken up and removed, set down somewhere else, and continued to live for a period of time. We are not told how long.

Notice additional proof that Elijah’s life was not ended at that time; he continued to live here on the earth.

We noted in II Kings 3:1, “Now Jehoram the son of Ahab became king over Israel at Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years.” Jehoshaphat was still king of Judah after the time that Elijah was taken up and Elisha had succeeded as God’s chief prophet. We saw a little bit further in II Kings 3 that Jehoshaphat was still the king of Judah at the time when Elisha had taken over as God’s chief prophet (vv. 11-14). Now let’s take note of that and turn to II Chronicles.

II Chronicles 21:1, “And Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the

City of David. Then Jehoram his son reigned in his place.” Now this is one of the reasons you need the chart because you will find that at this particular time in history, the kings of Israel and Judah had basically the same name, which serves to confuse things more than they are already confused. In most people’s minds, they are already confused; and when you have all the kings with the same names, it gets even more confusing. So you can consult the chart here. If you want to make it even more confusing, they were all kin to one another. Would you like exact family relationships? You would get really confused here. Anyway, Jehosaphat died and his son Jehoram reigned in his stead.

Verses 5-6, “Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, for he had the daughter of Ahab as a wife; and he did evil in the sight of the Lord.”

Notice what happened.

Verse 12, “And a letter came to him from Elijah the prophet, saying....” There was a letter to him from Elijah. Not Elisha, but Elijah! Elijah had been taken up in a whirlwind years before. Here comes a writing to Jehoram.

Verses 12-13, “...from Elijah the prophet, saying, “Thus says the Lord God of your father David: Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father, or in the ways of Asa king of Judah, but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and have made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot like the harlotry of the house of Ahab....”

He said, ‘You’ve done all these things, and here’s what is going to happen to you.’ If Elijah was where most people think he was, this was the original airmail. This letter had a long trip to get there—definitely the original airmail—which it was not. Elijah was simply somewhere else. He was taken up, removed. The work that God had for him to do there was completed. What did he do in the remainder of his life? Well, the only insight that is given was God used him to deal with at least this king. Perhaps God used him to go to other kings. We don’t know exactly what God had for him. But I would call your attention to that.

Now we come to the conclusion of the dynasty of Ahab. God doesn’t have a lot of good things to say about Ahab.

II Kings 9:5-8, “...‘I have a message for you, O commander.’ And Jehu said, ‘For which one of us?’ And he said, ‘For you, commander.’ Then he arose and went into the house, and he poured

the oil on his head, and said to him, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel: “I have anointed you king over the people of the Lord, over Israel. You shall strike down the house of Ahab your master, that I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel. For the whole house of Ahab shall perish: and I will cut off from Ahab all the males in Israel...”’

We find a man by the name of Jehu; he has as his dynasty, to wipe out the dynasty of Ahab. Now if you look on the chart under the kings of Israel, you will find that Jehu took over. He ended the dynasty of Ahab. How did God cut off the dynasty? Well, we find here the story of how Jehu wiped out Ahab’s dynasty in Israel as well as all the priests of Baal and he made himself king (II Kings 9:24—10:28).

Let me call your attention to something about Jehu. Jehu was famous for something.

II Kings 9:20, “And the watchman reported, saying, ‘He went up to them and is not coming back; and the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi for he drives furiously!’”

Jehu was famous for his style of driving. He drove furiously. The watchman was standing on the city wall and saw some dust. He said, ‘I can’t tell who it is, but it must be Jehu. Nobody around here drives like that, wheeling that chariot around the corner on one wheel with all of the dust turning up.’

Verse 21, “So Joram [Jehoram] said, ‘make ready.’” Better get out of the way; here comes Jehu. Jehoram was going to go out there to meet him.

Verse 22, “Now it happened, when Joram [Jehoram] saw Jehu, that he said, ‘Is it peace, Jehu?’ So he answered, ‘What peace, as long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft are so many.’”

Verse 24, “Now Jehu drew his bow with full strength and shot Joram [Jehoram] between his arms; and the arrow came out at his heart, and he sank down in his chariot.” He drew a bow and shot Joram (Jehoram); he killed him and came into town.

Verse 30, “And when Jehu had come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she put paint on her eyes and adorned her head, and looked through a window.”

Now Jezebel is one of these outstanding characters; we find a little bit about her in v. 22, “...as long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft are so many.”

God used Jezebel, Queen Jezebel, as literally the personification of everything God hates in a

woman. In fact, he uses her as a type of the great whore of Revelation 17. Remember the great whore is described as committing fornication with the kings of the earth, making all nations drunk with the wine of her fornication. That’s what Jezebel did literally. She wielded power by committing fornication with the kings of all of the surrounding areas. The whoredoms of Jezebel—she literally practiced whoredom. She committed whoredom with the kings of the earth. God used her as a type; in fact, if you go back to Revelation 2, you will find that God describes the false church under the person of Jezebel.

In Revelation 2:20, He tells the Thyatira era, “‘I have somewhat against you because you permit that woman Jezebel [referring to the Church in the Middle Ages], to seduce My servant.”” The reference, of course, is to the Catholic Church that is personified as Jezebel. Revelation uses the personification of a woman, a queen who commits fornication with the kings of the earth and who wields power by entering into illicit relationships with various kings. That’s the way she wielded her power. That’s the way Jezebel did. Jezebel absolutely personified everything God hates in a woman, and He uses her as a type of that throughout the book of Revelation.

“Jezebel”—we have all heard the term, a term that we grew up with. You never took it as a compliment if somebody called you a “Jezebel,” did you? If you knew anything about the Bible, you knew that was not what you wanted to be called. You did not want to be called a “Jezebel.” Well, God does not have a lot of good to say about Jezebel.

In fact, Jezebel evidently considered herself a great beauty and must have been considered so by the various kings around because they all wanted to commit fornication with her. She was getting all decked out for Jehu (II Kings 9:30), but Jehu told the servants to throw her down. So they picked her up and heaved her out of the window. She fell down (v. 33), and of course, it killed her. It was a very gruesome thing.

Verse 34, “And when he had gone in, he ate and drank. Then he said, ‘Go now, see to this accursed woman, and bury her, for she was a king’s daughter.’”

When they went to bury her, they found no more of her than the skull, the feet and the palms of her hands because the dogs had eaten the flesh of Jezebel. Jezebel came to a very gruesome, gory conclusion, a very ugly ending. I think that it serves to show that God singled her out for an especially gruesome conclusion.

Here is a woman who is concerned with outward beauty, and God's concern was with inward beauty. Jezebel may have looked good on the outside—evidently the kings of the earth thought so; but as far as God was concerned, she was a very ugly person in terms of character and everything that she represented. She came to a very gruesome and ugly end.

Again, we are given a little bit of insight as we go through these accounts of various ones that are focused on, and the influence that different ones had. Now, Jezebel's influence continued because her daughter, Athaliah had married Jehoram, the king of Judah. So Jezebel's daughter, who was somewhat a "chip-off-the-old-block," was down in Judah as the Queen, even though Jezebel was dead.

II Kings 10:1, "Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria...."

Verse 7, "So it was, when the letter came to them, that they took the king's sons and slaughtered seventy persons...." Jehu had Ahab's seventy sons killed, and it was a real bloodletting.

Verses 26-29, "And they brought the sacred pillars out of the temple of Baal and burned them. Then they broke down the sacred pillar of Baal, and tore down the temple of Baal and made it a refuse dump to this day. Thus Jehu destroyed Baal from Israel. However Jehu did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin, that is, from the golden calves that were at Bethel and Dan."

Verse 36, "And the period that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty-eight years."

In the meantime, in Judah, Jehoram the king of Judah had died, and his son Ahaziah had become king. Ahaziah was the son of Jehoram and Athaliah.

Now in II Kings 11 Ahaziah died (v. 1). Ahaziah was the grandson of Jezebel and Ahab. Because of intermarriage, the family of Ahab and Jezebel was ruling in Judah, as well as in Israel. Well, they were wiped out in Israel; all of the seventy sons of Ahab were killed. Now, the grandson Ahaziah died. When he died, Athaliah decided that she would be king, and she was going to murder all of her grandchildren. Nice woman, real "chip-off-the-old-block" of dear mother.

II Kings 11:1-3, "When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal heirs. But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's sons who were being murdered; and they hid him and his nurse

in the bedroom, from Athaliah, so that he was not killed. So he was hidden with her in the house of the Lord for six years, while Athaliah reigned over the land."

In the seventh year, the high priest called in the leaders (v. 4), and said, 'All right, enough is enough. The rightful heir to the throne of David is now seven years old; we are going to bring him out, coronate him and get rid of this wicked woman.' So he placed the guards in strategic places, and Jehoiada the priest then brought in little Joash.

Verse 12, "And he brought out the king's son, put the crown on him, and gave him the Testimony, they made him king and anointed him, and they clapped their hands and said, 'Long live the king!'"

Verses 13-14, "Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the escorts and the people, she came to the people, into the temple of the Lord. When she looked, there was the king, standing by the pillar according to custom, and the leaders and the trumpeters were by the king. All the people of the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets. And Athaliah tore her clothes and cried out, 'Treason! Treason!'"

If you will check it in some other translations, it is, "stood on the pillar, as the manner was." You know what this is describing? You will find this referred to in several occasions where coronations of kings are described. The kings and queens of the house of David are still crowned on the same pillar. Jacob's pillar stone, which was taken through the wilderness, was taken down into Egypt and brought back out by the Israelites at the time of the Exodus. It journeyed with them through the wilderness. It was set up as the pillar of testimony. The kings were crowned, coronated, on that pillar. When Athaliah came in and saw Joash standing on the pillar as the manner was, she knew what had happened. He had been coronated. When she saw this child standing on the pillar, she recognized the pillar; she knew he had been coronated. She rent her clothes and cried "treason, treason." Well, she was the one guilty of treason.

Verse 16, "So they seized her; and she went by the way of the horses; entrance to the king's house, and there she was killed." She was taken out of the temple and executed.

Of course, Jacob's ancient pillar stone is to this very day the symbol of the throne and upon which the kings are coronated. The present Queen, Queen Elizabeth, was coronated sitting on this pillar stone. If you have ever been to Westminster Abbey, you may have seen that

pillar stone there under the throne. There is a sign there identifying it as Jacob's pillar.

Verse 21, "Jehoash was seven years old when he became king."

Now as we come down, we find the story of Elisha's death.

II Kings 13:14, "Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die...." I just call to your attention—Elisha got sick and died. He was evidently an elderly man. It was not a matter that Elisha lacked faith. God used Elisha to perform some of the most tremendous miracles of the Bible, but God designed this physical life to be temporary. The time came when Elisha got sick and he died.

Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed for men to die once...."

In II Kings 14, we pick up the story of Azariah. Azariah is the name by which he is referred to in v. 21. He is also known as Uzziah (II Kings 15:13; II Chronicles 26:1).

II Kings 14:23, "...he reigned forty-one years."

Verse 25, "He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord God, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Atah Hopher."

He was contemporary with God's prophet Jonah. This was a time when Israel and Judah reached their height of power. They expanded; they reached their height of commercial prosperity during the time of Uzziah, the king of Judah and Jeroboam II, king of Israel. But economic, material and commercial heights and heights of morality, ethics and righteousness were two totally different things. The nation prospered materially, but the nation degenerated and deteriorated spiritually. We see that within a short time, problems began to come.

After the death of Jeroboam (v. 29), we find that it was really a matter of about forty years that saw just complete collapse. Israel went from its height to captivity in a lifespan, a generation, which is not unique, and certainly, even parallels our time.

In II Kings 15, we find that there was a rapid succession of kings. There was a lot of political instability. The nation became virtually paralyzed. There was an absence of strong leadership. It was just a turnover, one after the other—a time of instability. Of course, the Assyrians came in and originally put the land under tribute, exacted taxes and eventually came in and laid waste to Samaria. They took Israel into captivity and ultimately put an end to the

nation of Northern Israel—the northern ten tribes.

We have the story of the conclusion of the history of the northern ten tribes.

II Kings 17:6-7, "In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and they had feared other gods."

Verses 10-18, "They set up for themselves sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree; And there they burned incense on all the high places, as the nations had done whom the Lord had carried away before them; and they did wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger, for they served idols, of which the Lord had said to them, 'You shall not do this thing.' Yet the Lord testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets, namely every seer, saying, 'Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets.' Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the Lord their God. And they rejected His statutes and His covenant that He had made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He had testified against them; they followed idols, became idolaters, and went after the nations who were all around them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them that they should not do like them. So they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger. Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone."

Verses 21-23, "For He tore Israel from the house of David, and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel from following the Lord, and made them commit a great sin. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not

depart from them, until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day.” Right on down to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, when the Old Testament canon was completed, Northern Israel was still carried away. They were settled in the land of Assyria; specifically, they were settled in the cities of the Medes by the river Gosan.

If you want to check a map, you will find that is an area between the Black and the Caspian Sea. The southern shore of the Black Sea is way up at the top away from the Tigris/Euphrates valley. Babylon is down at the bottom right near the Persian Gulf. The Jews, one hundred fifty years later, were taken to Babylon. They were not taken up to the cities of the Medes, which was a totally different empire. The Israelites were taken, not to Babylon, but were taken by the Assyrians and settled in the cities of the Medes up by the river Gosan—in other words, up there on the southern shore of the Black Sea.

It should not come as a surprise that we read in history of the Celtic people who invaded Europe originated from the southern shore of the Black Sea. Basically, they invaded Europe in two waves, one around 700 B.C., which was the initial wave right after the captivity. The main wave was almost four hundred years later. There was a specific prophecy of that. We will get into that at a little later time.

When Alexander the Great overthrew the empire of the Medes and the Persians in 331 B.C., the Israelites who had been taken captive were freed. That is when the main Celtic invasion of Europe took place. The time around 330 B.C. to 300 B.C. is when they swarmed across the Black Sea and into Europe. Now it was prophesied in the book of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 4:5) that Israel would be in captivity three hundred ninety years. Well, from the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C. until Alexander conquered the Medes and the Persians in 331 B.C. was exactly three hundred ninety years. Exactly three hundred ninety years when Alexander conquered the Medes and Persians, the Israelites were freed; they crossed the Black Sea and invaded Europe. If you read your history, that’s when the Celts came into Europe, and that’s where they came from. It’s very easy to trace historically.

Verse 23, “until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day.” Notice here that God removed them.

Verse 24, “Then the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities.” So he brought in these Babylonians and settled them in the areas where the Northern Israelites had been deported from.

Then these Babylonians decided they needed some instruction in the god of the land because in the intervening time that the land had lain unpopulated, wild animals had multiplied greatly. They came in being superstitious. They decided that what they needed was some instruction about the God of the land (vv. 25-26).

So the king of Assyria told them to carry back one of the priests whom they had brought from there, and he would teach them the manner of the God of the land (v. 27). Now don’t you know that he was going to do a good job teaching them God’s truth! What was this priest? He was one of the ones who had been the priest of the high places, one of the lowest, the priest of the golden calf. He was one of the ones that Jeroboam had put into office (I Kings 12:31)—so what was he going to teach them? He was going to teach them the same kind of paganism that Israel had been having. The only difference was that they used God’s name. They used the name of the God of Israel when they built this golden calf and did all of these things. They paid lip service to the God of Israel, to YHWH, but they practiced all these pagan things.

Verse 28, “Then one of the priests whom they carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the Lord.” Notice what it says. We are told that one of these priests came back, and he taught them how they ought to fear the Lord. And don’t you know he did a good job.

Verse 29, “However every nation continued to make gods of its own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in the cities where they dwelt.”

Verse 32, “So they feared the Lord, and from every class [KJV, “of the lowest of the people”] they appointed for themselves priests of the high places who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places.” Evidently, the priest showed them where they were supposed to get their priests.

Verses 33-34, “They feared the Lord, yet served their own gods—according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried

away. To this day they continue practicing the former rituals; they do not fear the Lord, nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances, or the law and commandment which the Lord had commanded the children of Jacob, whom He named Israel.”

Verse 41, “So these nations feared the Lord, yet served their carved images; also their children and their children’s children have continued doing as their fathers did, even to this day.” At the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, that’s what they had to say about the Samaritans. This is the origin of the Samaritans. When the Northern Israelites were taken into captivity, the Assyrians moved in Babylonians and settled them in that area. Bringing back one of the Israelite priests, they now had a “hodge-podge” religion. They kept their old pagan Babylonian religion with all of their idols, but now attached God’s name to it. That was what the Samaritans were doing. They paid lip service to God and the Bible, but they worshiped their same old idols—same old paganism.

Does that ring a familiar bell? Are you familiar with any particular religion that has made quite a practice of preserving whatever pagan tradition the people were already doing, and just attaching a new name to it—attaching a good Bible name to it? Take for example, down in Mexico, the great shrine of our lady of Guadalupe, which is the great shrine in Mexico. It is quite a famous Catholic shrine. If you study the history of Mexico, you’ll find that shrine has been around a long time; it antedates the coming of the Spaniards. It had been the shrine of the goddess worshipped by the Aztecs. When the Spaniards came into Mexico, the priests decided to sprinkle a little water, and everybody became Catholic. They decided they all liked this shrine; they were all used to coming here worshipping this goddess. That was fine—keep on doing exactly the same thing, at the same place, use the same old stuff, but now it’s not what it use to be—now it’s Our Lady of Guadalupe. We will sprinkle a little water, and all of a sudden, she’s got a new name. But it’s the same old thing.

When you come into the New Testament, you read of the animosity of the Jews and the Samaritans.

John 4:9, “...‘How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me a Samaritan woman?’ For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.” Here is where it came from. The reason why the Jews didn’t like the Samaritans was because they knew what the Samaritans were. Remember what Christ told the Samaritan woman?

Verse 22, “‘You worship what you do not know, we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.’” Christ settled the argument as to where you look for and who preserved the truth.

Romans 3:1-2, “What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.” The Samaritans didn’t preserve the truth; the Jews did. They preserved the Old Testament, and they preserved the truth.

In Acts 8, we read of one, Simon, known in history as Simon Magus, Simon the Magician, Simon the Sorcerer, who was the chief religious official of the Samaritans (v. 9), and to whom they all gave heed (v. 10). Maybe we will go into a Bible study on it, but in reality, what you find is that as the Jews were dispersed throughout the Mediterranean world, the Jewish community served as the nucleus around which the true Church of God was built. Even in the Gentile cities, it was converted Jews who knew the law, had access to the Scriptures and served as the nucleus of the Church. The Gentiles were added in around it because this was where there was access to the knowledge of the truth, the Scriptures.

We find that even Paul, who was the apostle of the Gentiles, came to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles. By having a stable core of people who were familiar with the law, as the first ones in the Church, it was much simpler when others who came out of other backgrounds were added in. There were already people, membership in the Church, who were culturally attuned to the Bible and to the principles of the law, and other new members coming in acclimated themselves to it. That was the logical way to do it, and that is the way God is.

But there was another church that had its beginning a couple of years later, one that had its beginnings in Samaria, with one Simon the Sorcerer. Interestingly enough, there had been, as a result of some of the conquest of Alexander the Great, a limited dispersion of the Samaritans. There were major Samaritan colonies in two areas—Rome, Italy and Alexandria, Egypt. These colonies in Rome and Alexandria became the centers of the church that Simon the Magician, the Sorcerer, sought to build with himself as the head. That gets into another story, but the origin, II Kings 17, is a critical chapter. There is very important information that is preserved there.

II Kings 18:1-4, “Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of

Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden images and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan." Hezekiah was a very zealous man.

Now turn back to II Chronicles 29 and we'll get a little insight into something that occurred right at the time of the fall of Northern Israel after the Assyrians had come in and successfully invaded. II Chronicles 29:1, "Hezekiah became king when he was twenty-five years old, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem..." This was a time of great reforms, they repaired the temple, and they had the Scriptures being preached (vv. 3-36). Now notice what he did.

II Chronicles 30:1-11, "And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the Lord God of Israel. For the king and his leaders, and all the congregation in Jerusalem had agreed to keep the Passover in the second month. For they could not keep it at that time, because a sufficient number of priests had not sanctified themselves, nor had the people gathered together at Jerusalem. And the matter pleased the king, and all the congregation. So they resolved to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, that they should come to keep the Passover to the Lord God of Israel at Jerusalem, since they had not done it for a long time in the prescribed manner. Then the runners went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the king and his leaders, and spoke according to the commandment of the king: 'Children of Israel, return to the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; then He will return to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. And do not be like your fathers and your brethren, who trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, so that He gave them up to astonishment, as you see. Now do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the Lord; and enter His sanctuary, which He has sanctified forever, and serve the Lord our God, that the fierceness of His wrath may turn away from you. For if you return to the

Lord, your brethren and your children will be treated with compassion by those who lead them captive, so that they may come back to this land; for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn His face from you if you return to Him.' So the runners passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun; but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them. Nevertheless some from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem."

There were a handful, a few from Asher and Manasseh and Zebulun that humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. There were a handful that came down there, but basically, Hezekiah's messengers were laughed at and scorned. There was the final warning and witness to Israel—repent. It was in the context of coming to observe God's Festivals. They were told to come up to Jerusalem to observe God's Festivals; repent and God will be merciful. They did not respond, and the Assyrian army came in and took them all captive.

II Chronicles 31:1, "Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke the sacred pillars in pieces, cut down the wooden images, and threw down the high places and the altars—from all Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh—until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned to their own cities, every man to his possession."

Verses 4-7, "Moreover he commanded the people who dwelt in Jerusalem to contribute support for the priests and the Levites, that they might devote themselves to the Law of the Lord. As soon as the commandment was circulated, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of grain and wine, oil and honey, and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything. And the children of Israel and Judah, who dwelt in the cities of Judah; brought the tithe of oxen and sheep; also the tithe of holy things which were consecrated to the Lord their God they laid in heaps. In the third month they began laying them in heaps, and they finished in the seventh month."

In other words, at Pentecost they began bringing their tithes in, and it was finished by the seventh month—the Feast of Tabernacles—when the final harvest was finished. There was revival that took place. When real revival took place, the people started obeying God. They started keeping the Festivals; they started tithing; and

they started doing the things that people do when they are repentant.

Verses 20-21, “Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and true before the Lord his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered.” God was very pleased with Hezekiah.

We have already commented on where the tribes of northern Israel were taken into captivity. They were taken to the cities of the Medes, primarily between the areas between the Black and the Caspian Sea. Babylonians were brought in to the former land of Israel. They were known as the Samaritans, taking their name from the capital city. We are told about the religion of the Samaritans. It was the same old Babylonian Mystery religion that they had been following all along, but now they added a new ingredient—they began to call it all by the name of the true God. One of the Northern Israel priests was brought back to Samaria to teach them the manner of the God of the land. We have seen that Jeroboam’s approach to religion was also preserved.

In terms of Hezekiah, let’s notice what we are told is God’s analysis of Hezekiah.

II Kings 18:5-6, “He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any who were before him. For he held fast to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses.” Hezekiah was a very faithful and righteous man. He obeyed God and did what God said, and he did with his whole heart. There is no king of Judah that excelled him in that. What did he do when the Assyrians invaded? We get an example here of how he handled problems.

The Assyrians were going to come in to deport Judah. They had already deported Israel.

II Kings 18:31, “Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: “Make peace with me by a present and come out to me; and every one of you eat from his own vine and every one form his own fig tree, and every one of you drink the waters of his own cistern.”” They were promising the Millennium German style. The Assyrians said, ‘Look, we’ll take you away to a land like your own. We’ll take you to a nice place. We are going to deport you to these concentration camps; but they’re going to be nice places, and you will like it. Just come on out of

the city, open the gate and come on out nicely. We will load you into cattle cars and transport you to these nice places that we have, and everybody will live happily ever after. Now, why don’t you nice Jews come on out.’ So this was the story. It doesn’t change a whole lot once you’ve read it. You just repeat the same thing. There is nothing new under the sun.

The solution was that Hezekiah came in to God, and he prayed before God.

II Kings 19:14, “And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord.” He received a letter from the hand of the messengers that demanded his surrender. He took it to the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord. He just spread the letter out and said, ‘Look God, You can read; You can see what these Assyrians are saying.’

Verse 19, “Now therefore, O Lord our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the Lord God, You alone.” So God said, ‘I am going to deliver you.’

Verse 20, “Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel: that which you have prayed to Me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard.’”

Verses 34-35, “For I will defend this city, to save it for My own sake and for My servant David’s sake.” And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people in the morning, there were corpses—all dead.” Now the dead corpses didn’t rise up and find out they were dead, but whoever was left rose up and found out. One angel, one army, God said it wasn’t hard at all.

Hezekiah went to God with the problem. He went to God, and he really spread out his problem before God.

Verse 36, “So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, and returned home, and remained at Nineveh.” (KJV, “Sennacherib the king of Assyria departed and went and returned and dwelt at Nineveh.”) You better believe he departed and went and returned. When he got up the next morning and found one hundred eighty-five thousand people dead, he was the only one left alive in his whole army. You better believe he departed and went and returned. I bet he hopped on the first horse and took off as fast as he could go. He didn’t stay around to investigate the cause of death. All he did was load it up and

move it out as fast as he could get there. I suspect that anybody in a similar circumstance would have also departed and went and returned very quickly.

In II Kings 20, Hezekiah became very critically ill. Again, he went to God and God healed him, God intervened (vv. 1-5). Hezekiah died (v. 21).

II Kings 21:1-2, “Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king...he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord has cast out before the children of Israel.” Manasseh was the opposite of his father. He did everything evil that he could. In fact, he was the most wicked king that ever ruled Judah. Manasseh is described and all his sins (vv. 3-16). Because of the sins of Manasseh, all of Judah was ultimately to be taken into captivity.

Verses 12-13, “therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel: “Behold, I am bringing such calamity upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whoever hears of it, both his ears will tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab; I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.”” That is pretty clean. God says, ‘I am going to clean house; I have put up with this until I am sick and tired of it.’ Well, Manasseh died (v. 18), and his son Amon ruled briefly (v. 19). Then Josiah who was eight years old, began to reign.

II Kings 22:1-2, “Josiah was eight years old when he became king...and he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.”

We find the parallel in II Chronicles 34.

II Chronicles 34:3-4, “For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images. They broke down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and the incense altars which were above them he cut down; and the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images he broke in pieces, and made dust of them and scattered it on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them.”

Verse 7, “When he had broken down the altars and the wooden images, had beaten the carved images into powder, and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem.” He went “all the way

out.” Everything that he could find that smacked of idolatry, he burned it and ground it to powder. Josiah was a young man and had all of the zeal of youth. He was very, very zealous and was the only thing that stood between Judah and going into captivity. God had respect to Josiah and Josiah’s reforms. He said, ‘All right, I have said what I am going to do, but I am not going to do anything as long as Josiah is alive because he is obeying with his whole heart. His attitude and actions are such that I appreciate, and I will spare and protect the nation throughout his life.’ You better believe that everybody prayed, ‘Long live the king,’ and meant it because the only thing that stood between the nation and destruction was King Josiah. God said, ‘This is the only thing good about the whole place, and as long as he is king, I will spare the nation. When he is gone, look out.’

II Chronicles 35:17-18, “And the children of Israel who were present kept the Passover at that time, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days. There had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of Samuel the prophet; and none of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as Josiah kept, with the priests and the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.”

Do you realize how long that had been? That had been over five hundred years. There hadn’t been anything as “all out” as what Josiah did. Now the difference between Josiah’s Passover and the great Passover of Hezekiah (II Chronicles 30) was that Hezekiah’s Passover had to be celebrated at the time of the second Passover rather than the proper date of the first month because of ceremonial uncleanness. So Josiah’s Passover excelled Hezekiah’s in that sense; it was more totally kept exactly the way God said it ought to be done.

Then Josiah died.

Verse 24, “...So he died, and was buried in one of the tombs of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.”

Verse 25, “Jeremiah also lamented for Josiah, and to this day all the singing men and the singing women speak of Josiah in their lamentations. They made it a custom in Israel; and indeed they are written in the Laments.”

You read some of the commentators and some of the commentaries. They say, ‘You know we wonder what this was.’ Well, if you go back in your Bible, the book that comes right after the book of Jeremiah—a little short book—is one that we don’t go to that often. Stuck in there between Jeremiah and Ezekiel is a book called

the “Lamentations of Jeremiah.” The book of Lamentations! It’s very obvious that’s where it comes from.

The laments that Jeremiah wrote were added to the Bible and made an ordinance in Israel and continues to be used. It is the book that the Jews read every year on the ninth of Ob, which is the fifth month of the Hebrew calendar. It comes approximately July/August. The ninth day of Ob is a fast day that the Jews observe in commemoration of the destruction of the temple. Interestingly enough, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple on the ninth day of Ob; centuries later when Titus and the Romans burned the temple in 70 A.D., they did it on exactly the same day. So now they had two reasons to lament. On the ninth of Ob they read the book of Lamentations. Lamentations was a lament written at the death of Josiah, a lament that looked forward to the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah that was going to come. The destruction that came on Judah and Jerusalem was a type of the Great Tribulation that will be the worst time of tribulation that ever comes.

So the book of Lamentation that we will go through at a later time in Bible study is a prophecy of the Great Tribulation. It was written by Jeremiah at the occasion of Josiah’s death, which signaled the onset of what really amounted to the Tribulation for Judah and Jerusalem—the destruction of the nation and captivity. The highlight of Josiah’s reign was the great Passover recorded in II Chronicles 35.

Let’s notice what happened after Josiah’s death. II Kings 23:29, “In his days Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went to the aid of the king of Assyria, to the River Euphrates; and King Josiah went against him. And Pharaoh Necho killed him [Josiah] at Megiddo when he confronted him.”

II Kings 24:1, “In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. Then he turned and rebelled against him.”

II Kings 25:1-3, “Now it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem and encamped against it; and they built a siege wall against it all around. So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. By the ninth day of the fourth month the famine had become so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land.”

Verses 6-7, “So they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and they pronounced judgment on him. Then they

killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, put out the eyes of Zedekiah, bound him with bronze fetters, and took him to Babylon.”

Verse 9, “He burned the house of the Lord and the king’s house; all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great men, he burned with fire.” Nebuchadnezzar invaded and conquered Judah; he burned Jerusalem and the temple; and he carried the Jews into captivity back to Babylon. We find the destruction that took place. By about 587 B.C. Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews were in captivity. We find the result of the nation having departed from God. Hopefully, this has given us somewhat of an overview.

Israel, of course, had been transported around 721 B.C. About one hundred twenty years later, 604 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar invaded and Judah was a vassal state. Finally they were destroyed and taken captive with Jerusalem in 587 B.C.

That brings us to the conclusion of Kings and Chronicles. We will pick up the story in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah in the next Bible study which will give us the overview of what happened during the Babylonian captivity, the return of the Jews from Babylon back to Jerusalem under Zerubabel, the rebuilding of the temple, the time of restoration that took place, and the conclusion of the Old Testament period. The Bible study following, we will have a study that will cover the time between the Testaments. We will go into the story of what happened between the end of the book of Nehemiah and the beginning of the book of Matthew. We will run through that historic sequence.

Hopefully, this series of Bible studies has enabled you to get a little more of an overview of the history of the Old Testament. But again, over and over, I would call your attention to the fact that these things are written down for our admonition. We need to study the history that is recorded in the Bible in order to get a God’s-eye-view of life and of everything. The Bible gives us a story of what man did and didn’t do from God’s perspective.

Any author writes a book from his own vantage point. We are all familiar with that. If you read the history of anything—any event, any war—depending on where you read it, you are going to get the story differently. The story that we study on World War II is a little different than what they study in Japan or Germany. For years the story of the events surrounding the war between the states was taught differently in Louisiana than it was taught in Massachusetts. That’s just

the way it is. It's just simply a matter that people tell a story from their own perspective. Now every author has his "ax to grind." Sometimes we read a book and know it is not entirely accurate; it's kind of from that author's viewpoint.

The Bible is a book that is entirely accurate because it is written from the only accurate viewpoint there is—that's God's point of view. We need to study the Bible in order to understand God's point of view. We grow up in a society and are affected by that society's point of view on any number of subjects.

In some ways, God teaches us by direct commands, "thou shalt/thou shalt not," but most of the teachings of the Bible are not direct command. Most of the teachings are by example, by illustration, by principle that is illustrated throughout the story. We need to study from that standpoint. That's what Paul told us in the New Testament. These things are written down for our admonition, and they're examples for us, written down for our admonition upon who the ends of the ages have come (I Corinthians 10:11).

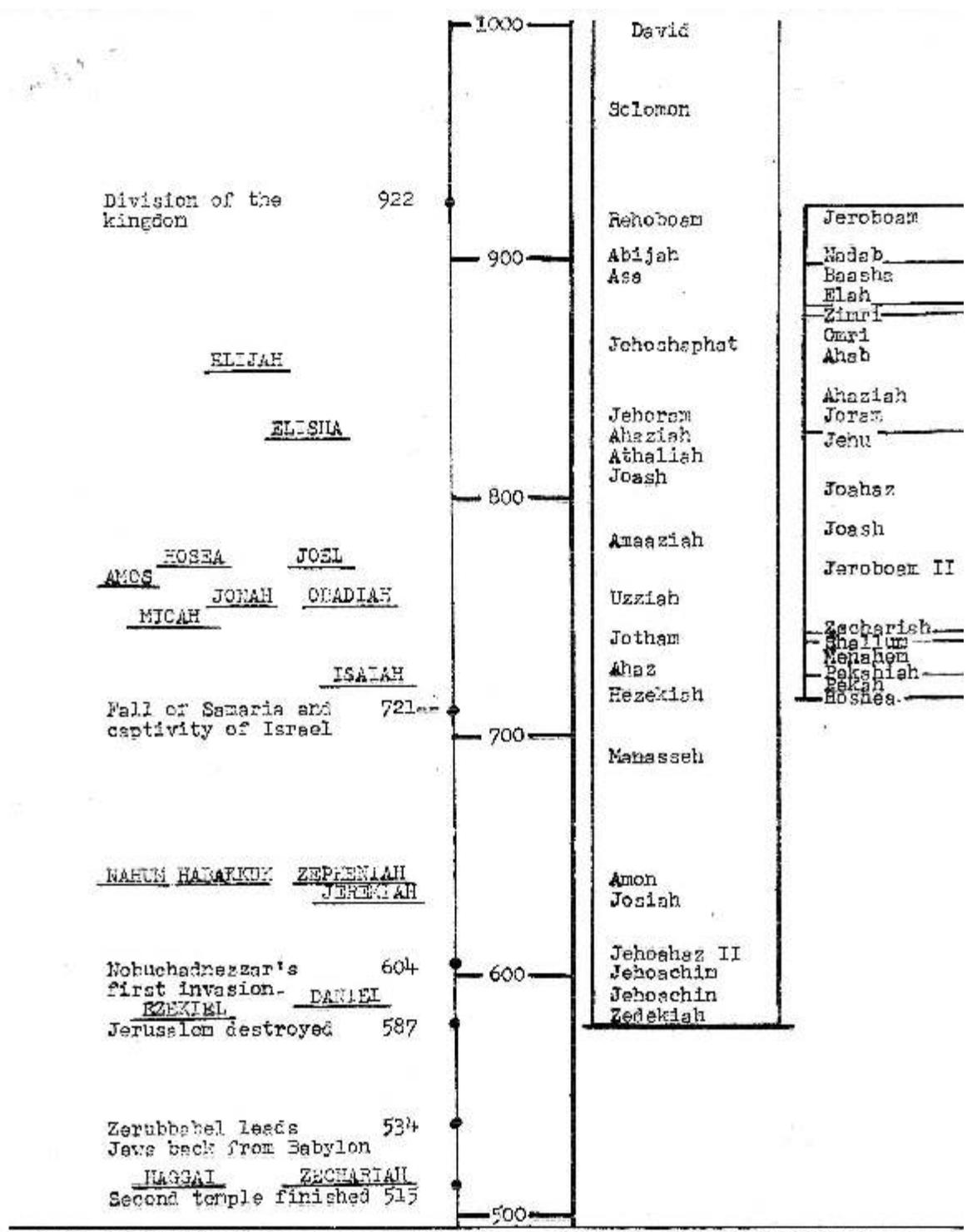
Throughout this study of the Old Testament, the historical characters we study—the story of these individuals, what they did, what they didn't do—we try to study it from a standpoint of finding out what God is pleased with, what God is displeased with, what certain attributes, what certain actions, what certain attitudes cause, what were the good results, what were the bad results, what were the strengths and weaknesses of all these individuals. As we study it from that standpoint, it's not a matter of simply dead history. It is a matter of reading of real people who went through real things, and one of the real, crucial reasons it's recorded for us.

We find as we go through that God's people, time after time, century after century, have confronted many of the same problems, same troubles and same temptations. Satan has sought to undermine and thwart things the same way over and over again. We are going to find that next time when we go through Ezra and Nehemiah.

If we study the Bible from that perspective, there is nothing new that will ever happen. Any problem, anything that comes up, there is precedence for it. You can find it, and you look to see how God wanted it handled. How should the people have handled it? How did those who were righteous and faithful to God handle it? We study it from that perspective so that if or when we ever find ourselves in a similar situation, we

will already know how to react and respond. It is an important way to study the Bible.

Too many times we study it, and it is just kind of a story that people go through and get bogged down with all the "begats" and all of the kings and all of this—and they miss the overview. It is there so that we can learn from the examples of others and not have to make all the same mistakes. The lesson of history is that very few ever learn anything from history. But we have the opportunity. God has given it to us, provided it for us. There are parallels all through the scriptures of what we are going through and will go through between now and the end of the age. We have to study the scriptures to find those parallels and apply them in a right way. Hopefully we have found some information of value as we have gone through this survey of the Old Testament. We will conclude the Old Testament with the next couple of studies.



Chronology of Kings and Chronicles

Bible Study # 26 Questions

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

II Kings 3—25 and II Chronicles 21—36

1. What miracle did Elisha perform to allow the indebted widow to pay off her creditors?
2. God's ministry does not accept "payments for services rendered" from individuals. What was Elisha's example in this regard?
3. Why would washing in the Jordan seven times cure Naaman of leprosy?
4. What was Elisha's reaction at finding that the Syrian army surrounded him?
5. What was the king's reaction on learning that the famine was so severe that the people were turning to cannibalism?
6. What proof do we have that Elijah was alive and living on the earth after he was taken away in a whirlwind?
7. How did God cut off the dynasty of Ahab?
8. Show that Jezebel was up to her old tricks right to the last.
9. What attempt was made to destroy the house of David and how was the attempt thwarted?
10. Which king of Israel presided over Israel's last period of greatness and prosperity?
11. What did Hezekiah do with regard to restoring the true worship of God?
12. What offered Israel their last chance to repent and be spared before they were taken into captivity?
13. Where were the tribes of Northern Israel taken in captivity?
14. Who came to inhabit the land of Northern Israel in their place?
15. What are we told about the religion of the Samaritans?
16. How does Hezekiah rank in comparison with other kings of Judah?
17. What did Hezekiah do when Assyria invaded Judah?
18. Whose sins were directly responsible for Judah being taken into captivity? What did he do?
19. What was the highlight of Josiah's reign?
20. What was the punishment that God finally sent on Judah?

Bible Study # 27
December 13, 1988
Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—Ezra and Nehemiah
(Chart at end)

Let's **look at some of the chronology of the invasions.** The last Bible study, we have been using this Chronology of Kings and Chronicles. You note that 604 B.C. is the time of Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion, and then there was a subsequent invasion a few years later in 592 B.C. That was the invasion that Daniel and Ezekiel went into captivity. Jeremiah was prophesying during that time. Finally in 587 B.C. the third invasion occurred that completely destroyed Jerusalem and burned Solomon's temple.

As we continue down through the story recorded in Daniel, it gives the story of what was happening in Babylon prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. The fall of Babylon was in 539 B.C. It was the Feast of Trumpets in 539 B.C. and it was the "handwriting on the wall" for Babylon (Daniel 5). Within a matter of five years the decree was issued by King Cyrus that allowed the Jews to return to rebuild Jerusalem in 534 B.C. Zerubbabel led the Jews back from Babylon. He was the governor appointed by the Persians. Haggai and Zechariah were prophets who flourished at that time. The book of Ezra starts out with that.

By 515 B.C., the second temple was completed. Only a tiny portion of the population returned. There were a lot of problems involved in building things up. There were external problems. When Northern Israel went into captivity in 721 B.C., the Assyrians deported all the Israelites and put in other people who were practicing the Babylonian Mystery Religion. These people were there when the Jews began to return. They immediately ran into problems.

From 515 B.C., there is a gap of time in terms of the story, and we don't pick up the story again until a generation later **when Ezra came in 457 B.C.**, fifty-eight years after the temple had been finished, basically a generation. From the time the temple was finished to the time Zerubbabel came was like from our time now back to the Great Depression—there were not a whole lot of people around who would have had a first-hand account of it. Ezra does not have control of the civil government. He has religious authority by the Persian king.

In 444 B.C. Nehemiah came back as the civil governor. He and Ezra joined together.

When the curtain rises with Ezra's return, the people are part and parcel with this society. Satan's efforts to destroy the work are evident in Ezra and Nehemiah. Satan had several methods of attacks. There was an attempt at a frontal assault. The Samaritans hired lawyers and put the whole work of God into receivership—a lengthy legal hassle. Zerubbabel won a reversal. When that didn't work, then there was a subtle infiltration to water down, to compromise, to destroy the work of God from the inside.

Ezra brought the temple scrolls back. Daniel had access to them. As Ezra comes on the scene, he brings these things back.

From the time Haggai and Zechariah preached until the time Ezra returned, that sixty-year period was the time during which Esther became Queen. This is what set the stage to enable Ezra to return. **Ezra and Nehemiah are responsible for canonizing the Old Testament.** Josephus wrote, "The prophetic spirit ceased among the Jews with the death of Ezra." Jeremiah had prophesied that Jerusalem would lay desolate for seventy years. So from Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion to the return of the Jews in 534 B.C. was exactly a seventy-year period. God allowed Cyrus to issue a decree that allowed the rebuilding of the temple. It is very apparent that the only ones who ever returned were the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and some of the Levites, not the ten tribes.

Let's start with **Ezra**.

Ezra 1:5, "Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priest and the Levites, with all those whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up and build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem." These went back.

Ezra 2:2, "Those who came with Zerubbabel were Joshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel." Zerubbabel is mentioned in Matthew and Luke. He was in the direct ancestry of Jesus Christ and a direct descendant of David; it starts with Joshua, and it goes through the various other ones.

Verse 64, "The whole congregation together was forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty." Just over forty-two thousand returned out of the original four million.

Ezra 3:1-6, "And when the seventh month had come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem. Then Joshua, the son of Jozadak and

his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel and his brethren, arose and built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God. Though fear had come upon them because of the people of those countries, they set the altar on its bases; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, both the morning and evening burnt offerings. They also kept the Feast of Tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings in the number required by ordinance for each day; and afterward they offered the regular burnt offering, and those for New Moons and for all the appointed Feasts of the Lord that were consecrated, and those of everyone who willingly offered a freewill offering to the Lord. From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord had not yet been laid.”

To institute daily sacrifices, all that has to be done is to consecrate an altar. I went through a sermon on the Middle East and stated that daily sacrifices would have to be instituted. It doesn't take long to consecrate an altar. A temple doesn't have to be built.

Verse 8, “Now in the second month of the second year of their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, Joshua the son of Jozakak, and the rest of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all those who had come out of the captivity to Jerusalem, began work and appointed the Levites from twenty years old and above to oversee the work of the house of the Lord.” They told them, ‘Let us get started.’ So they began the building. There were a few elderly people who came back who remembered Solomon's temple and its glory (v. 12). It was not nearly as impressive.

Those who returned were of Judah, Benjamin and Levi. The leaders of the return were Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest.

Ezra 4:1-2, “Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the descendants of the captivity were building the temple of the Lord God of Israel, they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers' houses, and said to them, ‘Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do; and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.’” They said, ‘We are good Christians just like you. Let us join together.’

Verse 3, “But Zerubbabel and Joshua and the rest of the heads of the fathers' houses of Israel said to them, ‘You may do nothing with us to build a

house for our God; but we alone will build to the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us.’” The Samaritans suggested, ‘Let us build with you; let us all be in this thing together.’ Did the Samaritans worship God the way He wanted? –No, of course not.

In II Kings 17 they used God's name, but they kept worshipping the same old idols. They served their graven images to this day—right on down to our day. Zerubbabel, Joshua and the heads of the fathers said, ‘You are not with the program. We are not on the same wavelength. We are not compatible.’ They refused to become unequally yoked together.

Ezra 4:4-5, “Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building, and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.” They hired lawyers.

Verse 6, “Now in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.” They began to make accusations.

Verses 11-13, “This is a copy of the letter that they sent him—To King Ahasuerus from your servants the men of the region beyond the River, and so forth: Let it be known to the king that the Jews who came up from you have come to us at Jerusalem, and are building the rebellious and evil city, and are finishing its walls and repairing the foundation. Let it now be known to the king that, if this city is built and the walls completed, they will not pay tax, tribute, or custom, and the king's treasury will be diminished.”

They are trying to make it sound bad. They are trying to make it sound terrible. That rebellious city, they are rebuilding it. How did he know that they were not going to pay their taxes? He didn't know. He was just accusing.

Verses 16-23, “We inform the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls are completed, the result will be that you will have no dominion over the region beyond the River. Then the king sent an answer: To Rehum the commander, to Shimshai the scribe, to the rest of their companions, who dwell in Samaria, and to the rest in the region beyond the River. Peace, and so forth. The letter, which you sent to us, has been clearly read before me. And I gave the command, and a search has been made, and it was found that this city in former times has made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been fostered in it. There have also been mighty kings over Jerusalem, who have ruled over all the provinces beyond the River;

and tax, tribute and custom were paid to them. Now give the command to make these men cease, that this city may not be built until the command is given by me. Take heed now that you do not fail to do this. Why should damage increase to the hurt of the kings? Now when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem against the Jews, and by force of arms made them cease."

Now they had their court order and came charging in with all their troops.

Verse 24, "Thus the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem ceased, and it was discontinued until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia." They shut the work down. They got a court order.

Ezra 5:1-2, "Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. So Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Joshua the son of Jozadak rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them." Zerubbabel rose up to do the work.

Verses 3-4, "At the same time Tattenai the governor of the region beyond the River and Shethar-Boznai and their companions came to them and spoke thus to them: 'Who has commanded you to build this temple and finish this wall?' Then, accordingly, we told them the names of the men who were constructing this building." They went to subpoena the record. It wrangled through court for the next few years. Finally the decree came in. They made all their pronouncements (vv. 8-10).

Verses 11-13, "And thus they returned us an answer, saying: 'We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the temple that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and completed. But because our fathers provoked the God of heaven to wrath, He gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this temple and carried the people away to Babylon. However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to build this house of God.'" We had an order from Cyrus.

Ezra 6:1-3, "Then King Darius issued a decree, and a search was made in the archives, where the treasures were stored in Babylon. And at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of Media, a scroll was found, and in it a record was

written thus: In the first year of King Cyrus, King Cyrus issued a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem: 'Let the house be rebuilt, the place where they offered sacrifices; and let the foundations of it be firmly laid, its height sixty cubits and its width sixty cubits.'" Darius makes a search. Finally when the answer came down and was settled, it settled on the side of God's work.

There is an amazing parallel here in Ezra. Those who remember back in 1979, this case here is a very remarkable parallel. One of the things you learn is that Satan is not original. He uses the same old tactics again and again. What should we do when we find ourselves in circumstances like this? Like Zerubbabel, court order or no court order, we have to do the work of God.

Verses 14-16, "So the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the command of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. Now the temple was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius. Then the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites and the rest of the descendants of the captivity, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy."

Verse 19, "And the descendant of the captivity kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month." This was 515 B.C.

Between chapter 6 and chapter 7 there is an almost sixty-year gap.

Ezra 7:1, "Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah...." We are looking here at Artaxerxes.

Verse 6, "this Ezra came up from Babylon; and he was a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given. The king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him." Ezra was a priest.

Verses 10-14, "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel. Now this is the copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave Ezra the priest, the scribe, expert in the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of His statutes in Israel: Artaxerxes, king of kings, To Ezra the priest, a scribe of the Law of the God of heaven: Perfect peace, and so forth. I issue a decree that all those of the people of Israel and the priests and Levites in my realm, who volunteer to go up to Jerusalem, may go

with you. And whereas you are being sent by the king and his seven counselors to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, with regard to the Law of your God which is in your hand.”

Ezra was allowed to carry back the official temple scrolls released from Babylon. Artaxerxes was the son of Ahasuerus who was the husband of Queen Esther. The one who issued the decree was a stepson of Esther, and he had a favorable attitude toward the Jews. He now issued some favorable decrees.

Verse 18, “And whatever seems good to you and your brethren to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, do it according to the will of your God.” He gave them “carte blanche” to do whatever they had to do.

Verse 21, “And I, even I, Artaxerxes the king, do issue a decree to all the treasurers who are in the region beyond the River, that whatever Ezra the priest the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, may require of you, let it be done diligently.” That is pretty much of a carte blanche. ‘Whatever this guy needs, you give it to him.’ We have here the return of Ezra. We notice that Ezra was a priest, and his attitude on his return was that he was coming back to teach the law and restore the Scriptures to their central place (v. 10).

Ezra 8:21-23, “Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions. For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, ‘The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him.’ So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.”

They got ready to leave and were heading across this “no man’s land” with these marauding raiders, and what they really would like was to have a transport of soldiers to protect them. ‘We are sitting ducks. But how can I go back and ask for this help? I have just told him how great and powerful God is. I am embarrassed that I don’t have the faith like I said.’ So he called a fast. God’s ministers have wrestled with the same emotions and feelings that we do.

Ezra 9:1, “When these things were done, the leaders came to me, saying, ‘The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, with respect to the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the

Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.’”

One of the great sins that Ezra discovered was that intermarriage had taken place. The Jews had intermarried with the Samaritans and others in the land. They were on the verge of losing their identity as a separate, identifiable people. Where did the problem start?

Verse 2, “For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, so that the holy seed is intermingled with the peoples of those lands. Indeed, the hand of the leaders and rulers has been foremost in this trespass.” People follow their leaders. They all got in line. Not every single person, but throughout history they always followed by and large as a group. People tended to follow their leader. So when the princes and rulers began to mix and mingle, others did too. Ezra was very concerned with this. This was a major problem.

Literally, the identity of God’s people was at stake—religiously, ethnically and culturally. The Jews would have ceased to exist. If Satan can’t subvert God’s plan one way, he always tries another way. God has always wanted His people to maintain a separate identity from the world. They were a nation state as well as a Church. It was important to God that they preserve their identity. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob placed great emphasis on who their children married that the identity of the people be preserved.

In Deuteronomy 32:8-9, God separated the people by geographical boundaries: the Himalayan Mountains, Sahara Desert, Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, the biggest obstacles you could put in Satan’s path. He has been busily trying to get around it. Satan stirs up people to do the opposite of what God tells them to do. It seems inborn. Whatever God wants you to do, Satan stirs you up to do the opposite.

What he commanded them to do about it: Ezra 10:3, “Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the counsel of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.”

Drastic measures had to be taken. Let me point out here that this is a practice among the Jews that is causing problems today. If your mother is Jewish, then you are considered a Jew, not if your father is a Jew. That is the reason Ezra made them put out the Gentile wives. Even if the father was Jewish, the children were not considered Jewish. That is the basis on down to this day. They were sent away from Judah.

Ezra had come back in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. **Nehemiah**'s background was that he was a cupbearer to the king. **God used Nehemiah to clean house.**

The grandson of the high priest did not put away his pagan wife. As time went by, people resented the fact of what those at the top were getting by with. They complied, but they were not convinced and did not internalize these values. They went along with the rules, but they never got the point.

Understand something. If all you do is go along with the rules and don't get the point, then sooner or later you will go back. It is the change on the inside—not changing what we are but what we think. If what I am on the inside becomes different, than the actions on the outside are going to be different. It was going to take more than someone coming back to preach and teach.

This was the nation that Jesus was to be born into over four hundred fifty years later. The Scriptures had to be preserved. This was going to be the basis of the Church being raised up. Having an identifiable people that are obeying the law would serve as a nucleus when Jesus Christ came. It was an attempt to derail the entire future of the purpose and plan of God, to water down, dilute and destroy the Scriptures of God.

There were different personalities in the kings. Some were stronger and more disciplined. They all had their strengths and weaknesses. Nehemiah was a very strong-willed man. He was perhaps as strong a ruler—a strong and determined ruler—as ever ruled the people of God. He was a man who meant business. He was very determined. He was a strong-willed man who was needed for a very difficult time. There was nothing wishy-washy about Nehemiah. He was sent back as their governor.

Nehemiah 5:14, “Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year until the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the governor's provisions.”

Nehemiah 2:5, “And I said to the king, ‘If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it.’” He requested the job from the king and got it. He was given leadership and authority.

Verses 9-10, “Then I went to the governors in the region beyond the River, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of

the army and horsemen with me. When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard of it, they were deeply disturbed that a man had come to seek the well-being of the children of Israel.” Sanballat was the leader of the Samaritans; Tobiah was his assistant.

Verses 15-16, “So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned and the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work.” The rulers didn't know what he was doing.

Verses 17-18, “Then I said to them, ‘You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach.’ And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me. So they said, ‘Let us rise up and build.’ Then they set their hands to do this good work.” The city had really never been completely rebuilt. The city was still laying waste. There was debris. The population was sparse; the gates had not been replaced.

Verse 19, “But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed us to scorn and despised us, and said, ‘What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?’” They made fun.

Verse 20, “So I answered them, and said to them, ‘The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem.’” ‘You don't have anything to do with it. We don't want you around here.’

Nehemiah 3 describes some of the layout and the details of repairing the city.

Nehemiah 4:1-3, “But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews. And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria and said, ‘What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish—stones that are burned?’ Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, ‘What ever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall.’” They were making fun. All these ideas expressed.

Verses 6-8, “So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. Now it happened, when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and the gaps were beginning to be closed, that they became very angry, and all of them conspired together to come and attack Jerusalem and create confusion.”

Verse 11, “And our adversaries said, ‘They will neither know nor see anything, till we come into their midst and kill them and cause the work to cease.’”

Verses 16-18, “So it was, from that time on, that half of my servants worked at construction, while the other half held the spears, the shields, the bows, and wore armor; and the leaders were behind all of the house of Judah. Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction and with the other held a weapon. Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet was beside me.” Nehemiah was determined. ‘We are going to build this wall if we have to stand guard.’

Verses 21-23, “So we labored in the work, and half of the men held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared. At the same time I also said to the people, ‘Let each man and his servant stay at night in Jerusalem, that they may be our guard by night and a working party by day.’ So neither I, my brethren, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me took off our clothes, except that everyone took them off for washing.”

‘We never even got undressed when we went to bed. We were on guard. We kept right there at the wall. We changed clothes in order to wash the ones we had on.’ You see the kind of determination that Nehemiah had. He was going to build this wall, and he was not going to give them a chance to tear it down.

Nehemiah 5 is a backdrop for the book of Malachi. Malachi prophesied during this time. Malachi 3:9, “‘You are cursed with a curse because you have robbed Me.’” Notice the background. What was the curse they were cursed with?

Nehemiah 5:1, “And there was a great outcry of the people and their wives against their Jewish brethren.”

Verses 3-4, “There were also some who said, ‘We have mortgaged our lands and vineyards and houses, that we might buy grain because of

the famine.’ There were also those who said, ‘We have borrowed money for the king’s tax on our lands and vineyards.’” They had to mortgage their land for food. They had to borrow money to eat and pay taxes.

Verse 5, “...‘and indeed we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters are brought into slavery already. It is not in our power to redeem them, for other men have our lands and vineyards.’” They were selling their children into servitude. When Malachi said they were cursed with a curse, they were.

Verse 7, “After serious thought, I rebuked the nobles and rulers, and said to them, ‘Each of you is exacting usury from his brother.’ So I called a great assembly against them.” Some were taking advantage of those who had less.

Verse 14, “Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year until the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the governor’s provisions.” He didn’t even take the salary he was paid, and he told the people they had better not be in it for what they could get.

The wall was completed but the gates were not complete.

Nehemiah 6:1-3, “Now it happened when Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and that there were no breaks left in it (though at that time I had not hung the doors in the gates. That Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, ‘Come, let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of Ono.’ But they thought to do me harm. So I sent messengers to them, saying, ‘I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?’” They said, ‘Let us meet together.’ Nehemiah answered, ‘I have too many important things to do.’

Verse 5, “Then Sanballat sent his servant to me as before, the fifth time, with an open letter in his hand.” He kept trying to get to Nehemiah, to lure him off.

Verse 6, “It is reported among the nations...that you and the Jews plan to rebel; therefore, according to these rumors, you are rebuilding the wall, that you may be their king.”

Verse 8, “Then I sent to him, saying, ‘No such things as you say are being done, but you invent them in your own heart.’” He said, ‘You just made it up.’

Verse 9, “For they all were trying to make us afraid, saying, ‘Their hands will be weakened in the work, and it will not be done.’”

‘You are just trying to weaken the work.’ They were trying to undermine things.

Verses 15-16, “So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Elul, in fifty-two days. And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God.”

Verses 17-18, “Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah and the letters of Tabiah came to them. For many in Judah were pledged to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shechaniah the son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah.” Intermarriage occurred here among the Jews, even some of the leaders.

Nehemiah 7:1-5, “Then it was, when the wall was built and I had hung the doors, when the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed, that I gave the charge of Jerusalem to my brother Hanani and Hananiah the leader of the citadel, for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many. And I said to them, ‘Do not let the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot; and while they stand guard, let them shut the doors and bar them; and appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, one at his watch station and another in front of his own house.’ Now the city was large and spacious, but the people in it were few, and the houses were not rebuilt. Then my God put it into my heart to gather the nobles, the rulers, and the people, that they might be registered by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of those who had come up in the first return....” God inspired him to call people in to increase the size of the city.

Nehemiah 8:1-5, “Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the congregation, of men and women and all who could hear with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate, from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. So Ezra the scribe stood on a

platform of wood which they had made for the purpose...And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it all the people stood up.”

He opened the Book in the sight of all the people. They all stood up and Ezra blessed God (v. 6).

Verse 8, “So they read, distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.” That is the way God’s ministry preaches.

Verse 9, “And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, ‘This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn nor weep.’ For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law.” This was on the Feast of Trumpets; that is what we teach today.

Verses 16-18, “Then the people went out and brought them and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, or in their courtyards or the courts of the house of God, and in the open square of the Water Gate and in the open square of the Gate of Ephraim. So the whole congregation of those who had returned from the captivity made booths; and sat under the booths for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day the children of Israel had not done so. And there was very great gladness. Also day-by-day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the Feast seven days; and on the eighth day there was a sacred assembly, according to the prescribed manner.”

The people kept the Feast of Tabernacles. It was more thoroughly done than since the days of Joshua.

We find a covenant, pledging their faithfulness in Nehemiah 10:29, “they joined with their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse and an oath to walk in God’s Law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and His ordinances and His statutes—.” God’s law contains both blessings and curses. If you walk in it, you are blessed; if you walk against it, you are cursed.

Verses 30-31, “that we would not give our daughters as wives to the peoples of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons; that if the peoples of the land bring wares or any grain to sell on the Sabbath day, we would not buy it from them on the Sabbath, or on a holy day; and that we would forego the seventh year’s produce and the exaction of every debt.” There was not to

be intermarriage and or selling of wares on the Sabbath. 'We will keep the Sabbath; we will not be involved in business.'

Verse 37, "to bring the firstfruits of our dough, our offerings, the fruit from all kinds of trees, the new wine and oil, to the priests, to the storerooms of the house of our God; and to bring the tithes of our land to the Levites should receive the tithes in all our farming communities." The covenant involved an agreement to faithfully obey the Law, to not intermarry, to keep the Sabbath faithfully, to tithe and to give offerings.

Nehemiah 13:6, "But during all this I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king. Then after certain days I obtained leave from the king."

Nehemiah was gone for a while, and then he came back after twelve years. I want you to understand and focus on this a little bit. Here was Nehemiah insisting on all these reforms, and then he was gone for a period of time. You know what he found? He found Eliashib had prepared a room in the temple for Tobiah, the leader of the Samaritans.

Verses 7-8, "and I came to Jerusalem and discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, in preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me bitterly; therefore I threw all the household goods of Tobiah out of the room." He came in there and said, 'What in the world is going on here?' He started picking up stuff and heaving it out. He thought he had gotten rid of these people. How deep do you think the reform was?

Mr. Herbert Armstrong drew a lot of analogies and emphasis on these things. There was a seven-year period in 1979 to 1987—seven years in which he emphasized over and over again that God had brought him back to get the Church back on the track. Here God brought Nehemiah back to get things back on the track. Nehemiah was gone, and some of the people obviously had not entirely gotten the point. The leader of the Samaritans had moved in. Nehemiah cleaned house.

Verses 10-12, "I also realized that the portions for the Levites had not been given them; for each of the Levites and the singers who did the work had gone back to his field. So I contended with the rulers, and said, 'Why is the house of God forsaken?' And I gathered them together and set them in their place. Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain and the new wine and the oil to

the storehouse." Nehemiah began to organize things.

Verse 15, "In those days I saw in Judah some people treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them about the day on which they were selling provisions." They were harvesting on the Sabbath.

Verses 16-19, "Men of Tyre dwelt there also, who brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and sold them on the Sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, 'What evil thing is this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath.' So it was, at the gates of Jerusalem, as it began to be dark before the Sabbath, that I commanded the gates to be shut, and charged that they must not be opened till after the Sabbath. Then I posted some of my servants at the gate, so that no burden would be brought in on the Sabbath day."

They had set up shop outside the gate. He said, 'Why are you doing it outside the wall? If you do it again, I will lay hands on you (v. 21).' They got the point. 'No more "Mr. Nice Guy," I mean business.'

Verses 23-25, "In those days I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people. So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, 'You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves.'"

He jerked up a few of them, knocked them around and explained to them what they were to do. He made it very plain to them.

Verses 27-28, "'Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women?' And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was a son-in-law of Sanbalat the Horonite; therefore I drove him from me." He "ran him out of town on a rail." He was in line to be high priest. This had been the "fly in the ointment" all along. Nehemiah finally saw it. What happened was that Sanballat built a temple

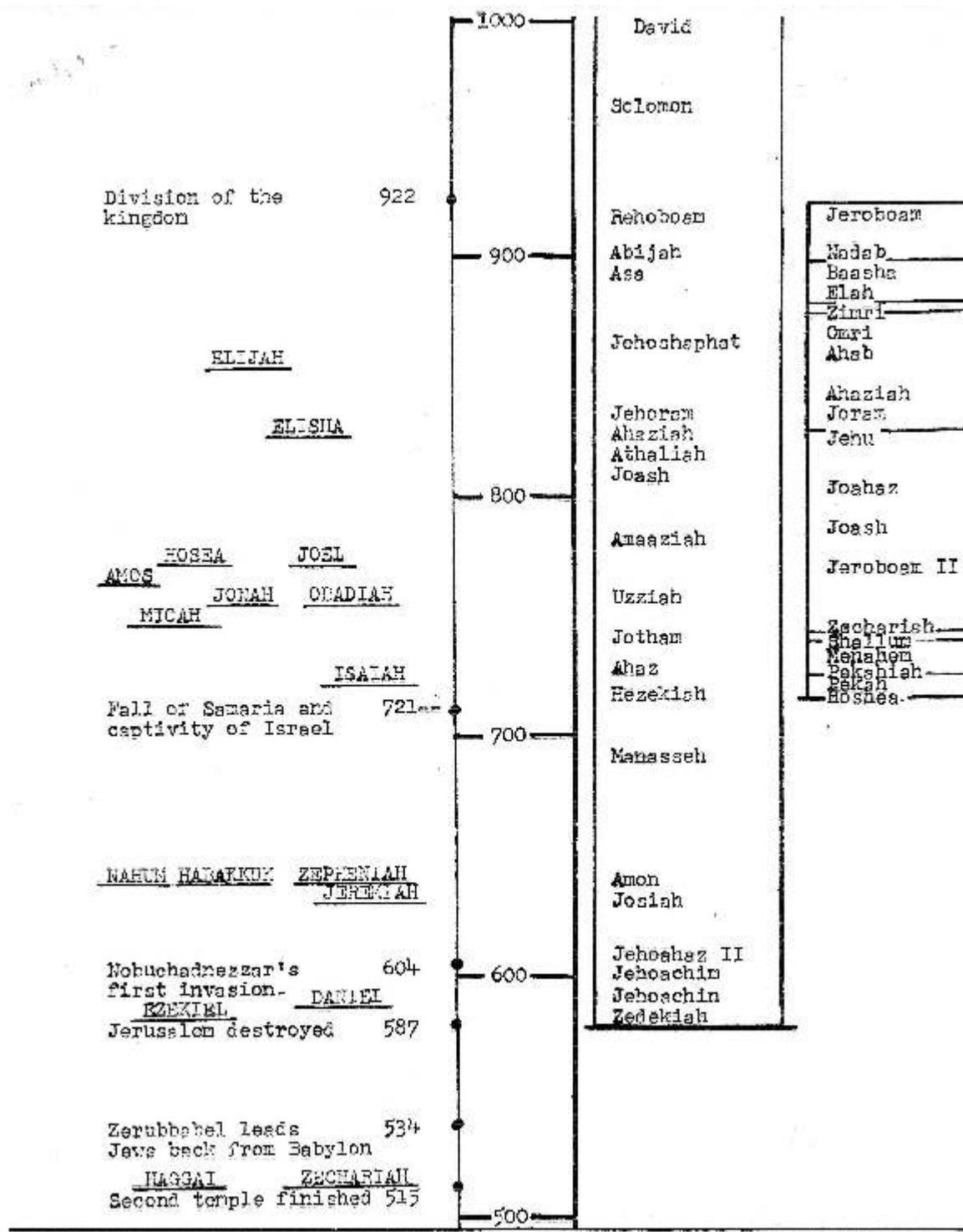
on Mt. Gerizim. He said, 'We will put you in business up here.'

Now when you read the story in John 4, the woman at the well said, 'our fathers worship in this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem ought men to worship.' Remember that statement she made? On Mount Gerazim was the false temple that Sanballat had built for this renegade priest. 'You Jews say it ought to be in Jerusalem.'

John 4:20-22, "'Our fathers worshiped on this mountain [Mt. Gerizim], and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you shall neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.'" 'You Samaritans worship you know not what.' He made it plain to her who had preserved the Scriptures.

Nehemiah 13:29-31, "Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites. Thus I cleaned them of everything pagan. I also assigned duties to the priests and the Levites, each to his service, and to bringing the wood offering and the firstfruits at appointed times. Remember me, O my God, for good!" Nehemiah was used by God to clean house. It was an important job that took a man of a unique temperament and approach to be able to do something like that. Nehemiah was the one that did that and stood out in that way.

There aren't any questions to be passed out for next time. I will go over and discuss some things leading up to the New Testament. This has been a historical survey. Hopefully, it has given you a little insight, and it is important for us to learn the lessons for us today.



Chronology of Kings and Chronicles

Bible Study # 27 Questions

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

Ezra and Nehemiah

1. What proclamation did Cyrus make?
2. Which tribes are stated to have returned to Jerusalem?
3. Who were the leaders of the return?
4. What did the Samaritans suggest when they saw the Jews return and begin to build the temple? What was Zerubbabel's reaction?
5. What was Ezra's background? What was his attitude in returning?
6. What was one of the great sins that Ezra discovered that the Jews had been engaging in prior to his return?
7. What did he command them to do about it?
8. What was Nehemiah's background? What capacity did he return to Jerusalem in?
9. Who was Sanballat?
10. What was the work that Nehemiah finished?
11. What happened on the Feast of Trumpets after the walls of the city were finished?
12. How did the people keep the Feast of Tabernacles?
13. What covenant did Nehemiah lead the people in signing? What were the main things that they agreed to.
14. What two great sins did Nehemiah find the Jews engaging in? How did he deal with it?

Bible Study # 28
December 27, 1988
Mr. John Ogwyn

Between the Testaments

We have been going through the Old Testament from the standpoint of an historical survey. In other words, we're not going through every book of the Old Testament, but going through the story flow of the history of the Old Testament starting with the book of Genesis, coming down through the five books of Moses, through Joshua and Judges, through the story of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles as has been put together. Then we went through the books of Ezra and Nehemiah which pick up the story from the time of the Babylonian captivity until the conclusion of the story that we have directly recorded in our Bibles.

After the death of Ezra and Nehemiah, the completed Old Testament, as the Jews had preserved it, was delivered into the hands of the Great Synagogue which was presided over by the high priests. The Great Synagogue was the Great Assembly. We are told in the book of Nehemiah that Nehemiah brought together a great assembly (5:7), and he presided over it.

After his death, it was presided over by the high priests. This was the group that was charged with responsibility of maintaining the reforms that Ezra and Nehemiah had brought together and accomplished. There is reference in the book of Nehemiah to these things and to the specifics. Some of the genealogies, the lists of names we went into (which we did not focus on in detail) delineate who was involved in the Great Assembly. Ezra, you remember, brought back the copy of the Law (Ezra 7:14), the Scriptures, from Babylon, and as he brought back those Scriptures from Babylon, he was responsible for teaching them to the Jews who had returned. This set the stage. They had all those problems. The Great Assembly was left with the responsibility for maintaining the reforms.

There were other events going on in the world that affected what was happening with the Jews and what was happening in Judea. The Persian Empire under which the Jews had gained independence continued along for a period of time, basically for a generation after the death of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Malachi would be contemporary with Ezra and Nehemiah. The book of Malachi was the last book that was written and added in. By 400 B.C., the canon of the Old Testament was completed.

The Persian Empire continued on over the course of the next seventy years. By the time seventy years has passed, we have a generation that has come into leadership that only know of Ezra and Nehemiah by what they have heard from others. They were as far removed from Ezra and Nehemiah as we are removed from World War I.

The events of World War I certainly affected us; there are a handful of people left who have firsthand memory. There are others who have secondhand memory, who heard stories told by their parents and people who went through it. But you see, after seventy years even those people are less and less.

The generation that was on the scene in leadership positions when Alexander the Great overthrew the Persian Empire was as far removed from Ezra and Nehemiah as we are removed from World War I. Alexander the Great had a tremendous impact on the ancient world at that time and a major impact on the events that shaped the world into which Jesus Christ came.

What we want to do this evening is **to set the stage for the story that we are going to encounter next Bible study when we go into the New Testament and do a survey of the Gospels and Acts. What we find are the events that shaped the society into which the Messiah came.** One of the events that greatly shaped this was the rule of Alexander the Great.

The events of between the Testaments are told in the Bible. They are not directly told in the Bible, but they are told in prophecy in the book of Daniel. We might just notice very briefly in the book of Daniel.

In Daniel 8, Daniel saw in vision. He is writing prior to the time and around the time that Babylon fell in 539 B.C., before the Persian Empire came to power and right around the time that Babylon fell. Daniel saw a vision (v. 1).

Daniel 8:3-5, "Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no beast could withstand him; nor was there any that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great. And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes." The goat had one great horn. This was a rather unusual

looking goat. The horn protruded out from between his eyes.

Verses 6-8, “Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power. And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand. Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven.”

This was an unusual thing. When you break a goat’s horn off, you don’t see four little sprouts come out, but this is what happened with this particular goat. It goes on into some other things, but let’s notice the interpretation.

Verses 20-22, “The ram which you saw, having the two horns—they are the kings of Media and Persia. And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king. As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power.”

What we find here is the story when the empire of the Medes and the Persians is going to come in and conquer. Then they would be overthrown by an empire from the west—an empire that was going to move with great force and speed—the empire or kingdom of Greece. That was typified in that “large horn”; it is one significant king, the one that was the founder of the Empire, Alexander the Great. He was going to sweep across and absolutely destroy this ram, the empire or kingdom of the Medes and the Persians. But then this great horn, this king, Alexander the Great, was going to be broken off. And rather than his empire being perpetuated by his son and grandson, it would be broken off and would be split into four divisions with each ruled over by a king—by one of his generals as it actually was. And that was the case. Let’s go on a little bit further.

Daniel 11:2, “And now I will tell you the truth: Behold, three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than them all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece.” This refers to Xerxes. Xerxes would be the one to stir up everyone against Greece.

Verses 3-4, “Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do

according to his will And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these.” And then it describes a king of the South (v. 5), and it talks about a king of the North (v. 13).

What we have as you go through Daniel 11 is a story that comes down to a fight between a king of the North and a king of the South. Let’s get the picture. Alexander’s empire conquered the known world. It spread across from Greece. He swept across Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), came down through Palestine, conquered the area of Judah, came all the way down into Egypt and conquered Egypt. He spread across to the Euphrates River to ancient Babylon, into Persia, all the way into India. He got all the way to Afghanistan, the area of India and Afghanistan.

Certain of the Afghan tribes trace themselves back and are descendants from some of the soldiers of Alexander the Great. They are a bunch of fighters, and they have been fighting ever since. Nobody has ever been able to do anything with them, as the Russians have learned to their dismay.

You read of the British Empire at its height, and the most that the British were ever able to do with the Afghans was to put soldiers at the Kybur Pass and to keep them from coming into India. They had a very similar escapade in Afghanistan as the Russians did, and they finally decided the simplest thing to do was to get out of Afghanistan, just guard the Pass and not let them get out—keep them there. They are a rough bunch when it comes to that.

Alexander’s Empire spread across all the way to India. He conquered the northern part of India, the part he wanted, and up to the border that is now Afghanistan. He left soldiers and spread across the whole Middle East. He united the whole Middle East, everything from Greece to India.

You see, the Persian Empire had not gone that far west. The Persian Empire had extended up to portions of India. Alexander conquered even more of India than the Persians had. The Persians had a great Empire. Alexander had smashed their empire, and he did it in just a few years. Basically, it took ten years for Alexander to conquer the world, from 333 B.C. when he crossed the Dardanelle from Greece into Turkey. And in ten years he was dead. He was thirty years old and he was obviously a remarkable

individual to have been able to “stir up” things to that point.

But when he died, there was no one person to take his empire. Very quickly, within a few years, it split into four divisions and was led by his four generals: Ptolemy, Seleucus, Cassander and Lysimachus. These were the four particular generals that split it. It was prophesied in the book of Daniel that this would happen. Daniel was writing before the fact. In a matter of a few decades, the empire consolidated to where Seleucus in the North ruled the area of what is modern-day Syria across to Babylon. Ptolemy ruled Egypt in the South. This is north and south from the standpoint of Jerusalem, the normal way directions are given in the Bible—from the standpoint of Jerusalem. What’s east and west is different if you are in China, as opposed to if you are in the United States or Europe. Directions are a matter of where you are in relationship to other things.

The portions of Alexander’s Empire that had long-term impact on the Jews were the areas of Seleucus to the north and Ptolemy to the south. These are outlined in Daniel 11. The details of the king of the North and the king of the South pushing at each other back and forth are recorded. We are not going to go through the details of Daniel 11, but we will at a later time. It actually records in advance all of the struggles back and forth.

Now if you look at a map and look at the area to the north where Syria stretches across to Babylon and look at the south to where Egypt is, what’s in the middle? What’s between them? – Jerusalem, the area of the Jews.

Now what do you think they fought over? It didn’t take them long to start fighting. They wanted to expand their territory. Well, what is in the middle? Jerusalem. So when they were going to fight, what were they going to fight over? Who was going to rule that? It was a matter that if Ptolemy was going to move north and try to fight against Seleucus, the kingdom of the North, then he had to go through Jerusalem to get there. And if the Seleucuses were going to come to the south to fight and try to conquer Egypt, they had to come through Jerusalem to get there. So what it amounted to, the Jews caught it in every direction. Every time they came through, the Jews got caught in the middle.

This set the stage for events that greatly affected them and shaped the world into which Jesus Christ came. There were events that resulted from Alexander’s coming on the scene. One of the major events that resulted from Alexander’s

conquest was that the Greek language and culture were diffused throughout the known world, all the way across to India. Each of these four kingdoms that came up was still a Greek kingdom. The Ptolemys who ruled Egypt were Greek. The last of the Ptolemys was Cleopatra. She’s probably the best known. You’ve heard the story of Anthony and Cleopatra. She committed suicide, and the Romans swallowed up her kingdom. She was the last of the Ptolemys. She was not Egyptian in the ethnic sense. She was Greek. The Ptolemys were Greek. They were descendants of one of Alexander’s generals who conquered that area and ruled it.

The Seleucus ruled from Syria to Babylon. The capital was at Antioch in Syria. They named it after themselves. Antiochus was one of the most popular names that all of these kings up in the north had. We’ll talk about one in a few minutes whose name was Antiochus Epiphanes which means “Antiochus of the glorious appearing.” He obviously had a high opinion of himself. He must have thought he looked pretty good. He plays a role in both Bible history and Bible prophecy.

So the stage was set. The Greek language and culture spread across the known world. This set the stage for the New Testament because what is the New Testament written in? It is written in Greek. That was a common language that most educated people could speak by the time of the New Testament. That’s why the apostles could go into different areas of the world and communicate in the Greek language. Wherever the Apostle Paul would travel, he could communicate in Greek. Not to say that he didn’t speak other languages. The New Testament was written in Greek, and the Christian community (scattered throughout a wide area at that time) could understand it because the Greek language was the language of education. People spoke their native language, but in addition, if they were educated, if they went to school, they learned Greek. It became the language of education, of trade and commerce in much the same way the spread of the British Empire and the English language in the nineteenth century set the stage for God’s work today.

The diffusion of the English language throughout the world meant that God’s work could go to the world in English and reach educated people throughout the world, whose native tongues would have been languages we wouldn’t have known or wouldn’t have had a way to gain access to. Then, as educated people in those societies learned the truth and came into the

Church, speaking and having knowledge of English, they also spoke the native language of their country. It opened the way for the work to go out in other languages.

The widespread use of English, as well as other colonial languages, set the stage. We could go first in English to a great deal of the world. What we couldn't reach in English could generally be reached in French. Portions of the non-English parts of the Caribbeans and the non-English part of Africa could be reached in that way by the French language, and then the Spanish language, again as a result of colonial empires throughout the areas of Latin America.

So in three languages, the vast majority of nations could be impacted. God set the stage for that. God determined the bounds. We are told God has made of one blood all people that on the face of the earth do dwell and has determined the bounds of their habitations and the times appointed (Deuteronomy 32:8; Acts 17:26). So God has a great time plan.

The Greeks came on the scene and spread across the world. They spread knowledge of the Greek language and culture. Then within a very short time, it came down to a Greek kingdom in the North and a Greek kingdom in the South—and the Jews were caught in the middle.

Now Alexander the Great played a role. I want to read to you a few comments from the Jewish historian, Josephus. He was one who wrote contemporary with the Apostle Paul, a priest of the priestly family in Jerusalem. He was a general in the war of the Jews against the Romans. He was taken captive by the Romans, and therefore lived to write an account. He gives a very good historical account of many of these things. There are a number of comments that he makes. We can pick up the story at the time of Alexander.

Let me read you a comment on Alexander the Great in Josephus, Antiquity of the Jews, Book 11, Chapter 8, 4-7, "Alexander, when he had taken Gaza in Egypt, made haste to go up to Jerusalem; and Jaddua the high priest, when he heard that, was in an agony and under terror, not knowing how he should meet the Macedonians, since the king was displeased with him." So Alexander (this is about 331 B.C., about seventy years after the time of Ezra and Nehemiah) is on his way to Jerusalem. He has conquered Egypt and now is coming to Jerusalem; the high priest is scared because he knows Alexander is mad. He determines what he should do.

So they decided the best course was to bring out a copy of the book of Daniel and to show

Alexander what was said about him. They figured they needed to do something to get on his "good side." We are told, "When the book of Daniel was showed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that he was the person intended and as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude. The next day he called them and asked what favors they pleased of him. Whereupon the high priest desired that they might enjoy the Laws of their forefathers and pay no tribute on the seventh year. He granted all that they desired. When they entreated of him that he should permit the Jews in Babylon and Media to enjoy their own laws, also he willingly promised to do hereafter, as they desired."

Then we are told, "The Samaritans seeing that Alexander had so greatly honored the Jews determined to profess themselves Jews. For such is the disposition of the Samaritans, as we have already elsewhere declared that when the Jews are in adversity, they deny that they are of kin to them, and then they confess the truth, but when they perceive that some good fortune has befallen them, they immediately pretend to have communion with them, saying that they belong to them and they derive their genealogy from the posterity of Joseph."

That is the illustration that is made in the book of Revelation, "that say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie and are of the synagogue of Satan" (Revelation 3:9). That is an illustration to the Samaritans and what they have always done, as Josephus records, even back in ancient history, back to the time of Alexander.

I read the portion in Daniel that applies to Alexander the Great. He was coming in and he was mad. They said, "We better show him something; we better show him something to get on his "good side." He's going to fight the Persians. We will bring out and say, "Here are our sacred books and you are mentioned in there. Let us show you what it says."

So they showed him there that the king of Greece is going to smash the king of Persia; he was rather pleased with that and was sure that he was the king of Greece there mentioned. I am sure they stopped at the right part of the verse and didn't go on down to show him that he was going to be broken and that his empire would be divided. It is a matter of knowing where to stop reading. You don't necessarily read the whole thing. They read to him the good part, and he was so pleased with it that he agreed to let them out of paying taxes every seventh year because if

they were keeping the Sabbatical year, they wouldn't have anything to pay taxes with.

The Samaritans thought this was a good idea. They didn't keep the Sabbatical year, but they liked the idea of getting out of paying taxes. So they sent word down to Alexander that they were Jews, too. Josephus brings out that whenever something goes well for the Jews, the Samaritans say, 'We are all in this thing together.' But when something goes bad for the Jews, the Samaritans say, 'Hey, we don't have anything to do with these people. We are not kin to them. We don't know them.' So this is the background. Josephus goes on through many of these events.

The high priest that is mentioned in the book of Ezra and Nehemiah is the one Josephus mentions.

Nehemiah 12:1, "Now these are the priest and the Levites who came up with Zerubbabel..." It goes through and names them. This is in the days of Jeshua.

Verses 10-11, "Jeshua begot Joiakim, Joiakim begot Eliashib, Eliashib begat Joidad. Joiada begot Jonathan, and Jonathan begot Jaddua." Jaddua is the one Josephus mentions that met Alexander the Great. His successor is called Simon the Just because of his kind disposition toward God. Simon the Just was high priest from about 309 B.C. to 280 B.C. This brings us down to within about two hundred eighty years of the birth of Christ. The great synagogue founded by Ezra lasted until the time of Simon. Simon the Just was considered by the Jews as the last righteous high priest. In the aftermath of his death, there were events that took place.

By this time we are getting quite a ways down from direct contact with the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Simon was a young fellow, a young man at the time of Alexander the Great. The high priest at the time of Alexander the Great was one who had been born about the time of the death of Ezra and Nehemiah. You have a certain amount of continuity, but what happened by this time?

The Greek culture had spread and the tendency of people is to try and be like the world, to try and blend in and be part of the society. The Greek language and culture had begun to have great impact upon the Jews. The high priest had gotten involved in a lot of politics back and forth. They were ruled from Egypt by the Ptolemys. Then they got the idea of quitting paying taxes to the Ptolemys. This didn't go over too well because there was warfare back and forth. By 198 B.C., Syria had moved in and taken Judea from Egypt.

The situation continued to degenerate because of the negative influence that had come in and the fact that much of the priestly families were involved in politics and were looking for worldly power. It got to the point where there was a literal fight between two brothers for the high priesthood. They allied themselves with different factions.

Jason became high priest in 175 B.C.; he was a Hellenist. A Hellenist was one that accepted Greek culture—in other words, pagan culture. He managed to usurp the priesthood from his brother. They fought on it, and then a Benjamite purchased the priesthood from the Syrian ruler. Then Jason got it back around 168 B.C., which is when the Syrians led by Antiochus Epiphanes came down to fight against the Egyptians.

They were going to conquer the Egyptians. They were always fighting back and forth. They got down there to conquer Egypt, and the Roman fleet met Antiochus Epiphanes. The Romans told him to turn around and go back where he came from because they weren't going to let him invade Egypt. He turned around, but he was mad and wanted to take it out on somebody. So he decided the simplest thing to do was to go back through Jerusalem and see if he could kill a few Jews, which he did.

He came through and he was mad for several reasons. He was mad at the Jews in general because they stood in the way. Alexander spread the Greek language, but he did something else. He also spread the Babylonian Mystery Religion. He took the priests from the schools in Babylon and scattered them throughout his empire. His idea was to create one world, one language, one religion, one race and one people. That's why his soldiers were left behind in India and near Afghanistan. The idea was to create one world, but it was one world the devil's way.

In the succession of the Babylon system, the succession of world ruling empires that Daniel describes, the devil has his plan for one world. God is going to create one world under Jesus Christ. The devil has always tried to create one world, going back to Nimrod and the Tower of Babel. Coming all the way down, the devil has in mind to create one world, the beast system. The beast power in the future is going to have their attempt to create one world, but one world under the devil's sway and the devil's influence.

Alexander spread the Greek language and culture and the Babylonian religion. These Babylonian priests were scattered throughout his empire. The Jews who were keeping the law of God stood in the way. They didn't blend in. They didn't

worship the same god, and they didn't follow the same customs. Everybody else went along with it. These guys were the "fly in the ointment." They were the ones that weren't doing what everybody else was doing. They weren't with "the program."

Antiochus Epiphanes didn't like that. So he decided that he was going to come to Jerusalem and teach the Jews a lesson. He was going to take their temple and destroy the Scriptures. He was going to set up an idol of Jupiter Olympus in the Holy Place. He was going to sacrifice a pig on the altar, and he was going to put "his man" in as high priest. He was going to make the Jews follow the same religion that everybody else was following. He was going to have one world.

When you go through the succession here in Daniel 11, it talks about the king of the North and the king of the South; it goes back and forth. We pick up the story.

Daniel 11:21, "And in his place shall arise a vile person, to whom they will not give the honor of royalty; but he shall come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue." –A vile person, this is Antiochus Epiphanes. Since Seleucus, the previous king, didn't leave an heir, his brother came in and drove out Illedorous and obtained the kingdom. He flattered his way in. This is Antiochus Epiphanes.

Verse 22, "With the force of a flood they shall be swept away from before him and be broken, and also the prince of the covenant." Prince of the covenant would refer to the Jewish high priest.

Verses 23-24, "And after the league is made with him he shall act deceitfully, for he shall come up and become strong with a small number of people. He shall enter peaceably, even into the richest places of the province [Galilee and lower Egypt]..." He's going to do various things.

Verses 28-30, "While returning to his land with great riches, his heart shall be moved against the holy covenant; so he shall do damage and return to his own land. At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter. For ships from Cyrus [KJV, "Chittim"] shall come against him [The ships of Chittim are the Roman fleet. Chittim was the ancient term for southern Italy; Sicily is the modern term.]; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage [The Roman fleet came and kicked him out of Egypt. He was mad and went back. What was he going to do? Take it out on the Jews!]. So he shall return and show

regard for those who forsake the holy covenant."

He comes back and enters into a league with apostate Jews who turn their back on the religion of the Jews.

Verse 31, "And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation."

He stopped the daily sacrifice and placed there the abomination that made desolate. What he did was set up an abomination that led to desolation or destruction. The abomination was the statue of Jupiter Olympus, and they offered a pig on the altar. This was an abomination that desecrated the temple, and it led to the desolation of Jerusalem.

Verse 32, "Those who do wickedly [the Jews who forsook the truth] against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery [they were going to get in good with him]; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits."

In the New Testament, Jesus spoke of an abomination of desolation that is going to take place in the future (Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14).

He said, 'When you shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet.' Daniel spoke of an abomination of desolation. It was one that had taken place in 168 B.C., one hundred sixty-eight years before Christ. But Jesus said there would come again an abomination that would make desolate, that would lead to the destruction of Jerusalem prior to His return. So there is an event that is to happen in the future, of which this event that happened in the past was a type. Antiochus Epiphanes, this vile person that had attained the kingdom by flattery, the one who came in and stopped the daily sacrifice and set up the abomination that made desolate, is the type of the final beast of Revelations 17 (and other places). It happened in history, but it is also prophecy.

When you understand about Antiochus and some of the things that he did, you are also getting a picture of the future. His idea was to have one world, one society, one language, one religion, and everybody will be happy if we all get together. Isn't that what is going to be said in the future by the beast and the false prophet? And who are they going to want to persecute? –Those that don't want to fall in line and don't want to get with "the program." That's why they are going to attack physical Israel, and they are

going to attack the true Church. They are going to persecute God's people because they will not want to join "the program."

This is what is shaping up. There is going to come together in Europe a final seventh revival, that final tenth horn. The seventh head of Revelation 17, that final full revival of the old Roman Empire is going to come together. Babylon the Great is going to come together, and once again, it's going to attempt to enforce one world and one religion. They are really going to persecute those that don't go along with "the program," those that don't blend in, that don't fit in.

This is exactly what Antiochus tried to do. He came to Jerusalem, and he was doing these things. I want to read to you a little bit of a historical account of it—a firsthand historical account—the book of Maccabees. This is not part of Scripture, and it was never intended to be. It was, rather, a historical book that the Jews preserved, but they never considered it Scripture. They simply considered it part of an historical account similar to Josephus. It provides a firsthand account.

I Maccabees 1:11-45, "And there came out of them a wicked root, Antiochus, surnamed Epiphanes, son of Antiochus the king. In those days there went out of Israel wicked men who persuaded many, saying, 'Let us go and make a covenant with the nations around about us, for since we departed from them we have had much sorrow'...So they built a place of exercise in Jerusalem according to the customs of the heathens [a Greek gymnasium]. They made themselves uncircumcised. [They went to the point that they tried by an operation to actually disguise the fact that they had been circumcised—the sign of the covenant God made with Abraham. They didn't want to be identified as the people of God.] They forsook the holy covenant and joined themselves to the heathen and were sold to do mischief. Now after that Antiochus had smitten Egypt...he returned again and he went up against Jerusalem with a great multitude. He entered proudly into the sanctuary and took away the golden altar, the candlestick of light and all the vessels and he made a great massacre and spoke very proudly. They shed innocent blood on every side of the sanctuary and defiled it. The inhabitants of Jerusalem fled because of them. The city was made a habitation of strangers. The sanctuary was laid waste like a wilderness. Antiochus wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, that everyone should leave his laws so all the heathen

consented to his religion and sacrificed unto the idols and profaned the Sabbath."

So what did you have? You had a falling away.

Verses 46-60, "The king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the cities of the Jews that they should follow the strange laws of the land and he forbade burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings and said they should profane the Sabbath and the Holy Days...and whosoever would not do according to the commandment of the king, he should die. Many of the people gathered unto them, everyone that forsook the law, and they committed the evils in this land. And in the fifteenth day of the month, Kessla, they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar and built idol altars throughout the cities of Judah on every side. Whosoever was found with any book of the Testament, or if any consented to the law, the king's commandment was that they should be put to death."

This is a type of the Great Tribulation. What Antiochus did historically was a type. Daniel prophesied of it.

Daniel 11:31-32, "...They shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation. Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits."

I Maccabees 1:65-67, "Howbeit many in Israel were fully resolved and confirmed in themselves not to eat any unclean thing. Wherefore, they chose rather to die that they might not be defiled with meats and that they should not profane the holy covenant, so they died."

I Maccabees 2:1-23, "Now in those days there arose Mathias, the priest, the son of John, the son of Simeon, a priest. He left Jerusalem and dwelt in Modine. He had five sons, the last of which was Judah, called Machabeus. Now this decree went out and Mathias said, though all the nations that are under the king's dominion obey him and fall away everyone from the religion of their fathers and give consent to his commandment, yet will I and my sons and my brethren walk in the covenant of our fathers. God forbid that we should forsake the law and the ordinances. We will not hearken unto the king's word to go from our religion either to the right hand or to the left. When he had left speaking these words there came one of the Jews...."

Now what had happened was they sent in the king's officers to each city to make the people come forward and bow down to an idol and kiss

the toe of the idol. The idea was that they were going to make everybody agree. They came into this little village of Modine where Mathias the priest was. He was an elderly man. They called him up first, 'Now you, all right, you go up first, and then everybody else will come in behind you.' Well, when they told him he goes first, he said what I just read—'everybody else can do it if they want to, but I am not going to depart from the law of God.'

Verse 23, "And when he had left speaking, there came one of the Jews in the sight of all to sacrifice on the altar according to the king's commandment." There's always somebody, one of these "chicken hearted" trying to get in good with them.

Verse 24, "Now when Mathias saw this he was inflamed with zeal, his reins trembled, neither could he forebear to show his anger according to judgment, wherefore he ran and slew him upon the altar." This, needless to say, created a little bit of a furor.

Verses 25-28, "And the king's commissioner who compelled men to sacrifice, he killed at that time, and the altar he pulled down. Thus dealt he zealously for the law of God like as did Phineas under Zamri, and Mathias cried throughout the city with a loud voice, 'whosoever is zealous of the law and maintains the covenant let him follow me,' so he and his sons fled to the mountains and left all that they had ever had in the city." They went out.

Verse 70, "[Mathias] died..."

I Maccabees 3:1, "Then his son, called Judas Macabaeus rose up in his stead." Judas went forth and finally recaptured the city. He captured Jerusalem from the Syrians and won independence. He cleaned out the temple and rededicated it to the worship of God. He established his brother as high priest. This was the first Maccabees that ruled. They became known as the Maccabee family.

The Jews to this day celebrate this event for eight days. It is called Hanukah (also Hanukkah or Chanukah). You've heard about it. It generally takes place beginning the twenty-fifth day in December, which is the tenth month of the Jewish calendar, the month Kislev. This is the time when the temple was rededicated. It is called the Feast of Lights or Feast of Dedication.

You read of it in John 10:22. Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication. The Hebrew name is "*Chanukah*," which is the term we hear. A lot of Jews in this country kind of observe it as a pseudo-Christmas, but it has no connection with Christmas at all. It goes back

to the time that the Maccabees cleansed the temple and rededicated it. It is a Feast of Dedication.

This is what was spoken of in Daniel when he says:

Daniel 11:31-32, "...they would defile the sanctuary fortress; then shall take away the daily sacrifice, and place there the abomination of desolation. And such as do wickedly against the covenant and corrupt by flatteries, but the people who know their God shall be strong and carry out great exploits." Well, the people that did know their God were strong and did exploits. That was the Maccabees, and they cleansed the temple.

The Jews fought on, and finally by 141 B.C., Jewish independence was achieved from Syria. Simon Maccabee was high priest. John Hircanus who was of the Maccabee family succeeded him. His son who was high priest from 134 B.C. to 104 B.C. is considered by the Jews to be the last righteous high priest.

There are events that occurred in the time of John Hircanus. It is, basically, at this time that the Sadducees and the Pharisees arose as sects that came to power. The Pharisees were basically laymen. They were not of the priestly families. They saw the situation that had existed and the extent to which the priests had been corrupt. The Maccabees had kicked out the corrupt priesthood and installed themselves. They were of the priestly line, but it was not a direct father-son succession. They were of the priestly families, but they had to expel the corrupt high priests and establish themselves.

Because of the situation that arose, this group of people had the idea that they wanted to enforce and make sure that things did not get back like it had been. They felt the priests needed somebody to keep an eye on them, so this group of Pharisees began to arise. The Pharisees' theory was to put a hedge about the law. They began to enact all kinds of traditions to enforce a strict separation. They were kind of a reform party that came in. Josephus tells a little bit about them.

The priests were basically identified with the Sadducees. The Sadducees took the Scripture and said, 'Look, we accept the authority of Scripture, but we don't accept the authority of oral tradition.' The Sadducees were never a large popular party. They were more restricted to the priesthood.

When John Hircanus died, his son Judas became high priest, and he also proclaimed himself as king. He was both the civil ruler and the

religious ruler of the land. This continued down a little bit.

Josephus, ‘The Antiquity of the Jews,’ xiii, vi, 1, “Now when their father Hyrcanus was dead, the eldest son, Aristoples, intending to change the government into a kingdom, for so he was resolved to do, first of all put a diadem on his head....” He made himself the king.

Let me read a little bit about John Hyrcanus or about the Pharisees from Josephus. John Hyrcanus had been at an earlier time a Pharisee as the Pharisees had first arisen. They had been allied with him, but he left.

Josephus, xiii, x, 6-7, “...he made him leave the party of the Pharisees, and abolished the decrees that they had imposed upon the people...the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are written in the Law of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them...He [Hyrcanus] was esteemed by God worthy of three privileges, —the government of his nation, the dignity of the high priesthood, and prophecy; for God was with him....”

He is considered to be the last of the righteous high priests. Aristoples made himself king, and then his son Alexander took over and ruled as king in his stead and died in 76 B.C.

Now when Alexander died, his widow Queen Salome was left.

I want to read to you a statement from Josephus, xiii, xvi, 1, “...when she [Salome, the wife of Alexander] had taken the fortress, acted as her husband had suggested to her, and spoke to the Pharisees and put all things into their power....” Now in the New Testament, we read where Jesus made the statement:

Matthew 23: 2, “The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat.” Have you ever wondered how the scribes and Pharisees came to sit in Moses’ seat? This is how. In 76 B.C. Queen Salome delivered the religious authority over the nation to the Pharisees. It really makes a transition.

If you really want a parallel in terms of eras of the Church, the Maccabees makes a parallel with the Philadelphia Church—the context and the description of what the Maccabees did parallel the sixth era. And really, as you go through the eras of the Old Testament Church, they represent the sixth period or era. They were succeeded by the final era, the seventh one, which was the domination of the Pharisees, which lasted from 76 B.C. until the time of the New Testament Church.

It was the Pharisees who were in Moses’ seat at the time when Christ came on the scene. They

had gotten in Moses’ seat, having been placed there by the Maccabee family but after several generations had basically gotten away from that zeal. Finally, the widow of the Maccabee king, to perpetuate herself in power, gave the Pharisees religious control over the nation. Within a short period of time (this was in 76 B.C.), by 63 B.C., the Romans came in and established their rule. Less than thirty years later Herod was set up as king by the Romans. He was king when Jesus Christ was born.

The story that we have is a story of ups and downs. It is a story of the spread of Greek influence, Greek religion (Babylonian religion with a Greek overlay), Greek culture and Greek language that spread throughout the known world at that time. There was a constant bickering back and forth (with the Jews in the middle) between the Greek kingdom of Syria to the North and the Greek kingdom of Egypt to the South. This bickering went back and forth.

As more and more of the Jews had gotten away from God, they entered into an alliance with Antiochus Epiphanes, who came in and launched what was really a type of the Great Tribulation. The result was the Maccabees and the cleansing of the temple, a certain revival that took place that lasted for basically a long generation and began to trickle out. Finally, by 76 B.C., the kingdom was basically turned over to the Pharisees to govern the religious affairs of the nation, and it set the stage for the world into which Jesus Christ came.

The Romans came in and picked up the pieces and governed things from a civil standpoint. The Pharisees governed religiously. They came in with their own ideas and traditions. They were going to solve the problem using human reason.

You have these ups and downs, these revivals, these departures. The tendency has always been for people to begin to compromise with the world, to try to be like the world, to try to blend in as Satan tries to get in his influence, to water down the law of God, to get people to kind of back off of real zealous obedience to the law.

Time after time, God has raised someone to make sure that the truth was preserved. It was in this context that Jesus the Messiah was born, coming with the good news of the Kingdom of God. Not an earthly kingdom that was going to be set up as one of the competing governments of this world, but a government that God was going to establish.

I hope that in going through some of this material, we’ve gained a little bit of insight

into the story flow of the Old Testament and even the time between the Testaments. While it is time between the Testaments, it is also covered in the Bible because Daniel covers it through prophecy in Daniel 8 and 11. We see the ups and downs that culminated in the time of Jesus Christ.

We are going to pick it up next Bible study. We will start a new series. Having completed this Old Testament series, we will start into a new series on the New Testament.

Bible Study # 29
January 10, 1989
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Gospels and Acts Series—Introduction to the Survey of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

This evening we will get into a brand new series. We have been in the Old Testament for quite a while. We have gone through a historical overview of the Old Testament and focused in on the historical flow going through the historical books of the Old Testament. We will, at later times, come back and pick up the books that we did not cover going through this survey of the Old Testament. Last Bible study we came up to the time between the Testaments.

This evening we are going to start in the New Testament, and we **are going to begin a new series—a survey of the Gospels and Acts**. This is a fourteen-part series that will take us through the four Gospels and Acts. As we go through the four Gospels, we are going to go through them in a harmonized fashion. In other words, we are not going to go through the Gospel accounts one at a time, but rather we are going to go through the account and get the story flow.

On the study questions, you will be directed as to what portions or verses in each book we will be going through and where the questions are derived from. As we go through the story, it will give you a kind of a historical flow to focus in on the Gospel accounts. We will follow it up with the book of Acts, which really follows the sequence.

The material that we have gone through prior to now really sets the stage for what we will get into this evening because ultimately the whole Bible focuses on, centers on, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the One who was promised, the Savior of the world, the One who is ultimately to return as Lord of lords and King of kings. The entire Bible focuses in on Him, whether looking forward to or looking back in retrospect.

We went through a series of Bible studies on the canonization of the Bible, and one of the things that we noted was the way that the Jews count the books. They count the books as being twenty-two books in the Old Testament, and when you look at the New Testament, there are twenty-seven. It's interesting. If you take the four Gospels and Acts—five books—you have twenty-two on each side: twenty-two books of the Old Testament and twenty-two books of the New Testament that come after the Gospels and Acts. So, if you were looking at it like a seesaw

or something balanced, you have the center, the heart and core with everything balanced on either side. The center is Jesus Christ: the story of Jesus Christ and His personal ministry, and the extension of that, as He worked through the apostles as reported in the Acts of the apostles.

Let's look into the way in which the world was prepared for the introduction of Jesus Christ, for the coming of the Messiah. God knows where He is going and He knows what He is doing. God made sure that the world was prepared for the coming of Jesus Christ and for the message that He brought.

Let's look at five specific ways in which God ensured the world was prepared, to set the stage, for the coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the New Testament Church.

(1) The first way in which God saw that the world was prepared for the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of the New Testament Church was what is called the "Diaspora" or the dispersion, the scattering of the Jews over the known world. The scattering over the whole known world was vital to the preparation of the establishment of the New Testament Church. Wherever the Jews went, copies of the Scriptures and knowledge of God's law also went. In the areas they settled, synagogues were established, and after a period of time, even many of the Gentiles were exposed to the teaching of the Bible.

God knows where He is going before He ever gets started. God had a plan and a purpose. Revelation 13:8, "...the Lamb of God [Jesus Christ] was slain from the foundation of the world." In other words, from the time that God began His plan for man, He had in mind a plan that certainly included the need for a Savior. God foresaw these things. God's whole plan outlined in the Holy Days was thought out. God didn't set about building things by starting out by just kind of stumbling through.

God knew that Jesus Christ was going to come, Galatians 4:4, "...when the fullness of time had come..." He knew when, just as God knows now.

In Acts 1:7 Jesus said, "...It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority." God knows the second coming and the first coming. God set the stage.

One of the things he allowed to happen was the dispersion of the Jews. When the Babylonians (Nebuchadnezzar) took the Jews captive, there began a scattering and a settling of the Jews in various areas. The bulk of the Jews were in

Babylon, but afterward, particularly with Alexander the Great and the time after that, the Jews scattered. Most of the Jews never came back to Judea. Some came back under Zerubbabel, and others came back under Ezra and Nehemiah. There were groups of Jews and colonies of Jews that returned, but most of the Jews never returned to Judea. Just as today, most of the Jews do not live in the land of Israel. The Jews dispersed and settled in groups in various cities.

Over a period of several hundred years, particularly from the time of Alexander the Great on to about a three hundred-year period, there came to be sizable Jewish communities in virtually all the major cities in the Roman world. Now where there was a Jewish community, there was a synagogue. Where there was a synagogue, there was a copy of the Scriptures—there was a scroll of the Scriptures.

We take for granted the availability of the Bible, but you have to realize in that day the only copies of the Book that existed were handwritten copies. Therefore, you didn't have a lot of copies. There now were, in major cities, copies of the Scriptures; there came to be certain knowledge of this people, of their religion, of their God and things that they did. This scattering served as the basis later on when the New Testament Church was going to be built.

Where did the Apostle Paul go when he went into the cities of the Gentile world? Where did he start out? He always went into the synagogue and preached there first. That way the nucleus of the Church was people that knew the law; they were familiar with the Sabbath and were familiar with the Bible.

The first converts in any of the Gentile areas were Jews and Gentiles who attended synagogue services, so-called proselytes, Gentiles impressed with the Jewish religion. The nucleus was people who knew and understood the law and had access to the Scriptures. Then as others who came from a totally pagan background came to be converted, there were others in the Church who already had a certain understanding of the law. It was the logical way to build something. This scattering of the Jews was something important. This Diaspora was one of the ways in which the world was prepared for the introduction of the Messiah and His message.

(2) The Greek language was virtually a universal language at this time due to Alexander's conquest. Because of the Greek emphasis on education, literacy reached a high point for the ancient world. There were more people who

could read and write in the Roman world at this time than was the case for many centuries thereafter.

When you go through the Middle Ages, it got down to a point where very few people could read. The average person couldn't read or write. In fact, you don't have to go back very long ago in our time that there were many people who could not read or write at all. If they could, it was in a very limited fashion. That was very common. You don't have to go back very far where educational opportunities were not available even in this country. You go back in the 1800s and most people simply could not read or write.

The Greek period of time was really the high point of literacy in the period of ancient history. The Greeks placed a lot of emphasis on education. Obviously, there were a lot of wrong ideas that were a part of Greek education, but they did value education.

The Greek language had spread very widely because of Alexander's conquests. It was a second language in almost any of these countries. So what did that mean? What was the value of that? What it meant was that most people at this time could read and write. The Scriptures were more accessible to them. They were able to read Paul's letters and the letters that the other apostles wrote, letters that make up much of our New Testament.

Much of our New Testament was letters that were sent out. What good is a letter if nobody can read it? So it was necessary for people to be able to read. God ensured that there was this spread of the Greek language. In what language were they going to be written? They were written in the Greek language. They wrote letters to places that weren't in Greece. Paul could write to the Romans in Italy, and he could write in Greek. James could write to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, and he could write in Greek. You could have letters written to churches in widely scattered areas; they could be written in Greek, and people could understand it. It may not have been their first language, but Greek was a language that most people who had an education could read and write. It provided an almost universal language; you had a degree of literacy that enabled people to utilize the Bible.

(3) A third way in which the world was prepared was the relative peace and stability which the Roman Empire provided along with a system of Roman roads which facilitated travel. This opened a way for the proclamation of the Gospel over a wide area. In most periods of history, you

had all these little nations, little kingdoms, and they were all fighting one another. You couldn't go from one place to another, without somebody knocking you in the head, killing you and stealing what you had. How were you going to get there?

You don't have to go back very far in the history of this country when roads were few and far between. In 1928, when Huey Long came in as governor of Louisiana, there were less than one hundred miles of paved roads in the state.

The Romans built thousands of miles of paved roads in the Roman Empire. Not graveled roads, we are talking about paving. The Romans built roads that were so substantial that there are Roman roads that are still in use today. You have places in Spain and in Italy where they are still using roads that the Romans built. The Romans were tremendous engineers. They put curbs and drains on these roads; they got the pitch as to the elevation of the road where the rain would shed. They came in and dug down, cleared it away, tamped the earth, and put in crushed rock. They built right on up to where on top was paving stone—and there were thousands of miles of that. In fact, you could travel in the whole Roman Empire.

The speed with which you could travel from one area to another was not duplicated again until after the middle of the 1800s. Julius Caesar could travel on Roman roads from a city in Switzerland to Rome, Italy in four days. They even had way stations along the way. Every twenty miles you could change horses for official Roman business; you could go at full horse speed on a good paved road for carriages and chariots. There were mileage posts all over the Empire. There are a few you can still find. There is an old saying, "all roads lead to Rome." They literally had the best system of roads that existed until you get into the twentieth century.

So, what does that mean? The Romans thought they were doing that to move their armies. But how do you think the apostles were able to travel and go from one end of the Empire to the other—all the way from Britain, through France, Spain, Italy, across through Greece and Asia Minor, and on into the Middle East, down into Egypt and as far as Babylon—over a vast area. Because you had the Roman Empire, you didn't need passports or papers. The Romans ruled with an iron hand. It was safe to travel because the Romans policed it. Roman garrisons were all along the way so you could safely travel all over Europe and the Middle East and as far as India. There was Roman law. Paul was a Roman

citizen; wherever he went, that Roman citizenship was good and it was recognized.

Roman roads made it possible not only to travel, but you had mail service. This facilitated communication as much as what could have been done prior to the invention of modern electronic technology, steam engines and things of that sort. You would have to come all the way to the middle of the 1800s before you could even begin to duplicate it. In terms of the roads, you really didn't have the equivalent until this century.

The Romans were builders. They were engineers. The Roman Empire set the stage. It provided a period of relative peace and stability. It centered at the time of the first century, the time when things were at their height. The first two-thirds of the first century was a time when the Church was growing, when there was a need—and here it was—a situation that wasn't duplicated until our time.

(4) A fourth way in which the world was prepared for the coming of the Messiah and His message was the fact that the bankrupt pagan mythology of the Gentile world had ceased to be strongly believed, particularly by those with any degree of education. The mystery religions of the East were gaining prominence in the areas of Greece and Rome, as well as more traditional areas of Babylon. The point is many people had ceased to be satisfied with what traditional religions had to offer.

We have all heard of the old pagan mythology. Maybe in school you had to study about Greek or Roman mythology. You've heard about Zeus, Athena, Mars, all the Greek gods or the Roman gods and all the various things. What you come up to is, by this point in history, most educated people had ceased to believe mythology as being real. They still told the old stories and went through a lot of the ceremonies, but it was obvious that this really did not answer the questions that people wondered about. It was bankrupt. Pagan mythology had simply ceased to provide the answers people were looking for.

It was a time of great religious turmoil. Many of the so-called mystery religions of the East had begun to spread. People were searching. They had ceased to be satisfied with what traditional religion offered. So it set the stage. At a time when people were questioning, there was certain curiosity.

(5) Because of at least a limited understanding of Daniel's seventy-week prophecy given in Daniel 9:24, many of the Jewish religious leaders were expecting the Messiah in that generation. Many Jews were restive because of their subservient

status to the Romans and eagerly anticipated the coming of the Messiah who would free them from the yoke of foreign domination. This was what the Jews were looking at. They looked at all of the prophecies in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah and Zechariah, and they said, 'When the Messiah comes, He is going to run out the Romans.' They liked that idea.

The Romans may have built roads and policed the areas, but they were foreigners, and in many ways, harsh taskmasters. They allowed a certain level of freedom on the local scene, but they didn't allow independence. That was very important to the Jews. So, they were expecting the Messiah, but they were expecting Him to come and take action when He came—as far as overthrowing the Romans. The Jews were expecting something in that generation.

Daniel had made a prophecy of seventy weeks to be determined. He talked about sixty-two weeks plus seven weeks from the time that the decree to rebuild Jerusalem went forth. From this decree issued by Artaxerxes in 457 B.C., there would be sixty-nine weeks until the Messiah, the Prince, would come. Sixty-nine weeks equal four hundred eighty-three days or four hundred eighty-three years (a day for a year). If you move forward from 457 B.C. four hundred eighty-three years, you come to 27 A.D.

The Jews did not fully understand what all that portended, but it was obvious that something was going to happen right around that time. Jesus began His public ministry in 27 A.D. That's when He made His public appearance as the Messiah. We would date the prophecy to begin at the time that Jesus made His appearance and was baptized by John the Baptist. Then the final seventieth week was His ministry. He was cut off in the midst of the week, three and one-half days or three and one-half years. He was cut off in the midst of the week literally because He was crucified on a Wednesday. He was cut off in the middle of a prophetic week in that His ministry, instead of lasting seven years, it only lasted three and one-half years. This means that there is three and one-half years left which will undoubtedly be the first three and one-half years of the Millennium when He will conclude His ministry to Israel and will set the stage to expand out into the world.

The Jews had a certain limited understanding of that. That's why Herod quizzed the wise men (Matthew 2). The Magi came, and Herod wanted to know where the Messiah was going to be born, the One who was going to be King of the Jews. Herod, of course, thought that he was king.

It kind of disconcerted him when he found out someone else was going to be king. Here are these guys that had come all the way from the East, probably from the Parthian Empire. They had made this journey, coming here looking for somebody, and they weren't looking for Herod. That made him a little nervous. He called the Jewish religious leaders and wanted to know some answers; they were able to tell him that there was a certain expectation that they had around that time. God had set the stage for the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of the New Testament Church.

We look at the Gospels, and there are four of them. Have you ever asked yourself why? Why four? You have Matthew. Why do you need Mark, Luke and John? Why are there four Gospels? Are they identical? Do they all say the same thing? If they don't, why don't they? Why does some have certain information and others have other information?

The four Gospels are the account of Jesus Christ's life and His ministry. We have four distinct accounts. There is a purpose and logic as to why it was handled the way in which it was. The Gospel accounts take their name from their authors. Matthew wrote Matthew, etc.—that's pretty obvious. Now who were these four individuals? Mark and Luke weren't apostles. Matthew and John were of the twelve. Where did they come in? Why were they the ones?

Matthew was one of the original twelve apostles. He was also called Levi; he was probably of the tribe of Levi. He was an educated Jew from Palestine, a Roman tax collector, obviously an educated man. This was a position that demanded a certain amount of education. Because of his occupation, he would have been very unpopular with people. Tax collectors aren't really popular today; they were less popular then. Back then they didn't get a salary; it was a commission job. You got a percentage of the take, which gave you a lot of incentive to be kind of strong on tax collecting. The Romans didn't care as long as they got theirs. Matthew left this job and accepted the opportunity to be one of the twelve.

His Gospel was the earliest written, about 45-50 A.D. It was evidently the only one of the Gospels to have been written originally in a language other than Greek. *Matthew was probably originally written in Hebrew with a Greek translation. It was written primarily for use in Palestine among the Jews there in Judea.* The copies that have come down to today were written in Greek—undoubtedly, translated into

Greek by Matthew himself. It was written in Hebrew for a Hebrew audience. It was written for the Jewish audience there in Judea, with a translation made so it could be utilized outside the area of Judea.

Matthew, in many ways, is the Jewish Gospel. It deals with the King and the Kingdom. The term “Kingdom of heaven” is used in the book of Matthew thirty-three times. Have you ever wondered why Matthew talks about the Kingdom of heaven, and Mark, Luke and John talk about the Kingdom of God? There is a reason.

The Jews had developed such a consciousness during this time between the Testaments, particularly after the Maccabees revolt and the time the Pharisees came to the fore. The idea was to put a hedge about the law to make sure nobody even got close to breaking the law. They developed an almost superstitious type of awe and respect for God’s name; they wanted to make sure they didn’t use the name of God in vain. So the way to not use God’s name in vain was to not use God’s name. They got to where they would not pronounce the name of God.

Anywhere you see in the King James Version of the Bible the name “LORD” in all capitals or “GOD” in all capitals is translated from the original Hebrew “YHVH.” Hebrew is basically written with just the consonants and not the vowels. We are not entirely sure of how to pronounce it. The reason we are not sure how to pronounce it is that the Jews quit pronouncing it. Whenever they would read the scriptures orally, every time they would come to that name, they would substitute the word “Adoni,” which is the Hebrew word for Lord. They used it as a euphemism for God’s name, just as a title of respect.

Even today, a Jew, instead of saying, “Praise be to God” or something of that nature, he would use the Hebrew phrase “Barach Hasheem” which simply means “Blessed be the Name.” They wouldn’t pronounce the name; they would say, “Blessed be the Name.” The Jews did not use the term “Kingdom of God”; they used the term “Kingdom of heaven” as a euphemism. It was the Kingdom of God ruled from heaven, so came the common term among the Jews. When the Jews discussed the Kingdom, they always used the term “Kingdom of heaven.” That is why they always used it. When Matthew wrote a Gospel to the Jews, he used the terminology that was common. That was what the Jews in Judea used. That was the term they used and that was why they used it.

So, you find throughout the book of Matthew the use of the term “Kingdom of heaven” where other Gospels were written to a wider audience. They were written to areas outside of Judea, and they used the term that was the most commonly used term. There is nothing wrong with the term “Kingdom of God.” In fact, Mark, Luke and John all use it. Matthew simply used the term that the Jews were accustomed to using. “Kingdom of heaven” is used thirty-three times in Matthew out of regard for Jewish sensibilities. The Jews normally referred to the term “Kingdom of heaven” rather than “Kingdom of God.”

Matthew introduces Jesus Christ as the son of David. He quotes His legal genealogy through Joseph. When Matthew gives the genealogy, he gives the legal genealogy and traces it back to David and to Abraham. Matthew traces the genealogy back no further than Abraham because to Abraham were the promises made, and the promise of the scepter confirmed through David. So Matthew has no need to trace it back further than that, but he does trace it back that way to accentuate the fact that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of David.

Matthew quotes the Old Testament sixty-five times. There are sixty-five Old Testament quotations in Matthew—just chock-full—because it was written to people who were very familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures.

The terms “righteous” and “righteousness” are used more often in Matthew than in the other three Gospels put together.

Matthew alone tells of the Jew’s request that Christ’s blood be upon their heads. Remember that? Pilate was getting ready to wash his hands and he said, ‘Look, He is innocent; I don’t want this righteous man’s blood be upon me.’ And the mob said, ‘His blood be upon us.’ Matthew records that (Matthew 28:11-3). He’s the only one that did, but he was writing to them and wanted to make sure that they understood the enormity of what they had said. So he mentions that specifically.

Matthew was the only account that tells of the sealing of the stone when Christ was crucified—the sealing of the stone, the setting of the guard and the fabrication of the story that the disciples came and stole the body while the guard slept (Matthew 28:11-13). Matthew mentioned that because he was writing to an audience that was familiar with the story. That was a story that had been widely circulated.

The Pharisees wanted a sign that He was the Messiah. Jesus told them the only sign He would

give them was that He would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:38-40). That was a sign; in a unique way, it was a sign to the Pharisees, the Jewish religious leadership. You know why it was such a special sign to them? Because when Jesus was buried, they went to Pilate and said, 'Look, this schemer has said He is going to rise from the dead. You know what's going to happen, Governor? His disciples are going to come and steal the body and spirit it away. They are going to tell the story that He rose from the dead, and we are going to have more trouble than we have now. So what we want you to do is to set a guard on the tomb, and we are going to seal it' (Matthew 27:63-66).

What is meant that they sealed it? It is like an official document that is sealed. The Post Office puts a seal on registered mail; if you open the letter, it will be apparent because you have broken the seal and it will show. That's what they did at the tomb. They rolled this big flat stone there in the front and placed the Governor's seal there; if anybody came in and moved it, it would be apparent that they moved it. They placed a guard there to make sure nobody did. And you know what happened? He rose anyway. He was gone.

Who knew for a fact that the disciples didn't come and steal Him away? Well, the guard and the Pharisees knew it. The Jewish religious leaders knew it because they told the guard to tell the story that he went to sleep, and the disciples came and stole the body while he was asleep. If the Governor heard the story, the leaders would make sure he didn't get in trouble with him (Matthew 28:11-15).

They bribed the guard. Now if you bribe somebody to tell a story, who knows if they are telling a story? The guy that paid the bribe and the guy who took the bribe, those are the two that know. The people that hear it may not know, but if I bribe you to do something, there are two of us that know that you aren't telling the truth—you and me.

So Christ being in the tomb three days and three nights was, specifically, very uniquely a sign to the Jewish religious leadership because they knew the truth. They had the evidence, and they had fabricated this story. Matthew told that. His is the only one of the Gospel accounts that mentions it because he is writing to the audience of people who had firsthand knowledge and memory. Matthew was writing within fifteen years after Christ's crucifixion and ascension.

Remember 1974? You remember events that happened then? Sure you do. That's not that long

ago. It would be very difficult to falsify something like that because you have too many people who are alive who have firsthand knowledge and memory. He gives some of these specific details that have specific relevance to his audience.

He is the only one who mentioned the fact that when Christ rose from the dead, many of the saints who had died and were buried also rose (Matthew 27:52-53). There were a number of people who had died prior to Christ's death who were resurrected. Some had been dead for hundreds of years and some who recently had died. If you attended a guy's funeral last month, you saw him dead in the coffin. All of a sudden, the guy comes walking up. When they pick you up off the floor and kind of revive you, you realize something unusual has happened. This was not the normal course of events. These were the saints. It was a witness to the resurrection.

It had happened fifteen years earlier; the story on that was still circulating around. People had heard about some of these things. Matthew gives the details. These were incidents that would have had particular interest and benefit to Jewish readers there in Judea. Matthew gives those things.

Matthew chapters 1—4 are basically chronological chapters.

Matthew chapters 5—13 are topical. In other words, Matthew deals with what Christ said on a subject. He may introduce what Christ said. He is going along telling the story. For instance, in the Sermon on the Mount, he gives what Christ said, not only at that moment, but the other things Christ said on that subject are put in at that time. These are topical. They may have a general chronological flow, but they are topical. When he dealt with a subject, he told you what Christ said on that subject, even though He may have said part of it in the story flow and part of it six months later, etc. Matthew kind of gives you what He said on a subject.

Matthew 5, 6 and 7 give greater details. This had particular significance for a Jewish audience because this was Jesus Christ in the role of Lawgiver. Remember the scripture we focused on back in the early part of the Bible study?

In Deuteronomy 18:15, the canonization was when Moses said that, "the Lord your God will raise up unto you a Prophet like unto me. One who will give law." Then at the end of Deuteronomy we are told that no prophet has arisen like unto Moses. The Old Testament concluded as Ezra and the scribes working with him provided and gave the final copies of the

Old Testament and put it in final form. They could state that the Prophet like unto Moses had not yet arisen.

Matthew points out who that prophet like unto Moses was. Jesus Christ came as a lawgiver, and in the Sermon on the Mount, He is giving law. Over and over again He said, 'It has been said unto you of old time, you shall not do this, etc...but I say unto you....' He modified. He changed. He gave law. Matthew gives greater details and focuses on the Olivette Prophecy which had specific relevance.

Matthew chapters 14—28 are again chronological. Matthew gives the most detailed account of Christ's teaching on the Mount and of the Olivette Prophecy in Matthew 24.

Mark's Gospel, primarily, represents Peter's account. Mark was Peter's companion, disciple and his assistant. All ancient tradition treats the Gospel of Mark as Peter's account. John Mark, who was the author of Mark, was a cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10). He was from Jerusalem. His mother Mary lived in Jerusalem, and her house was used as a meeting place for the Church (Acts 12:12). Tradition states that the upper guest room, at which Christ and the twelve held the Passover, was located in that house, in John Mark's mother's house.

He was a teenage boy at the time. This certainly fits with the evidence that Mark, himself, was the young teenager who fled naked from the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:51-52). It mentions the account of the young boy who was there in the house. He heard Christ and the disciples leave after the Passover service, and he wanted to go out and see what was going on. He just wrapped a sheet around himself and sneaked out of the house to follow them. He got out there trying to see where the action was and he saw the action, all right! Here came the Romans, and he saw all that happen. All of a sudden, one of the soldiers looked over there in the bushes and saw this person crouching down. They grabbed for him. When they grabbed the sheet, he turned loose of it and took off running, which was a smart thing to do, but rather embarrassing. So, when he told the story in the book of Mark, he told the story, but he left out his name. That's a firsthand account that basically only the author would know.

He had certain firsthand impressions, but they were the impressions of a young boy, of a teenager. It's interesting that in *Mark's account*, the stress is continually on what Christ did, more than on what He said. The miracles are stressed quite a bit in the book of Mark. These were

things that certainly would have impressed a young person the most.

Mark was Peter's traveling companion. Peter, in the latter period of his ministry, had his headquarters in Babylon (I Peter 5:13), which was the capital of the Parthian Empire. It had a large Jewish community; a considerable portion of the remnants of the twelve tribes was in the area of the Parthian Empire—those that had not already migrated to Britain. Peter was in Jerusalem for perhaps the first ten or twelve years of the New Testament period. But even prior to that time, he had begun to leave.

By the time you pick up the ministerial conference (Acts 15) in Jerusalem in 49 A.D., James was the chief apostle in Jerusalem. Peter came in and out, but he was not based in Jerusalem. By the early to mid-40s A.D., Peter had left Jerusalem and only returned periodically. He was primarily based in Babylon. This is where his epistles were written from.

In I Peter 5:13, he says, "She [the Church] who is in Babylon..." Babylon was the capital of the Parthian Empire. It had a very large Jewish community, and it was an area where there were many of the ten tribes that had not yet migrated from the Parthian Empire into Europe. Mark was there with Peter.

That is mentioned in I Peter 5:13, "...and so does Mark my son."

Mark's Gospel was written at Peter's direction. It was primarily written and circulated in the areas of Peter's ministry. It was probably written about 60 A.D. The scope of Mark's Gospel corresponds to that of Peter's address at Caesarea, as recorded in Acts 10:34-43. The narrative abounds with details of time, place, circumstances and the feeling and manner of Jesus and the others mentioned. Greek scholars state that the language of Mark is "clean, vigorous, direct speech of the sturdy middle-class." The style is very simple. The stately periods of the classics are wholly absent. The narrative is commonly terse and concise. The descriptions are wonderfully vivid.

Mark throughout portrays Jesus as the servant of the Lord. Much is said about the Servant (Isaiah 42:1; Isaiah 52:13). Go back and look at those prophecies. Mark is a Gospel of deeds. The word "*euthus*," which is rendered "straightway" or "immediate," is used forty-one times in Mark—five times as many as are used by the other three writers put together. Mark's entire Gospel is in chronological order and stresses action and deeds. It is the account that records the vivid impressions on a teenage boy with the details

and general outline supplied by Peter. It was written primarily to circulate in the areas where Peter was preaching—the Israelite areas, the areas where there was a Jewish community outside of Judea and the area where the twelve tribes were.

Luke, on the other hand, was Paul’s traveling companion. Just as Mark was written at Peter’s direction and utilized in the Churches where Peter was primarily ministering, Luke was Paul’s traveling companion and represents Paul’s account. It was written for circulation in the Greek speaking Gentile world to which Paul was commissioned to preach.

Luke was a highly educated Greek, probably from Antioch. He was a physician. *His account is written in the classical, historical style of the day. He refers to many historical illusions.* Luke is the one that tells you that Christ was born when Caesar Augustus was emperor, when Tiberius was Governor of Caesarea. He records those historical details written from the standpoint of a Greek historian. He is the one who gives the chronological details. Theophilus (Luke 1:3), who was a wealthy nobleman, must have played the part of patron and paid the cost of production of the Gospel because it is dedicated to him, as was standard practice in the classical Greek world. It was intended for the public, especially the Greek public. From the beginning it was written in that vein.

Luke stresses the humanity of Christ. He traces the genealogy all the way back from Mary to Adam. Matthew traces it back to Abraham and stops because as far as the Jews were concerned, that was as far as you needed to go. Luke traces it back to Adam, stressing that Jesus was the Son of man and the Promised Seed—the Seed that was promised to Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15). Luke traces it back that way, going back to the common ancestry that everyone has. Luke emphasized that Christ was the Son of man as well as the Son of David.

In Luke 2:10, he’s the one who speaks of “...good tidings of great joy which shall be for all people.” Luke is the only one who mentions that. It is only in later retrospect of Paul’s ministry that the full implications of that statement came to be understood. The glad tidings, good news, were for all people, everybody regardless of ethnic origin. Luke is the only one that quotes Isaiah 52:10, “...all flesh shall see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:6). Luke emphasizes some of those things. In Luke, Christ is pictured as the Redeemer (Luke 1:68; Luke 24:21).

Luke was probably written during the time that Paul was in prison in Caesarea, which would put it about 58 A.D. It was written to circulate in those areas.

All of these three accounts, Matthew, Mark and Luke, were written within the first thirty years of the New Testament period. There was nothing written immediately because the twelve were expecting the end at any moment. That was kind of the thinking—‘any day now, any day.’

In Acts 1:6, when Christ got ready to ascend from the Mount of Olives, the disciples questioned, “...Lord will You at this time going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?” ‘Right now?’ Undoubtedly Peter was the one that asked the questions; he was never afraid to speak up.

They were expecting it at any moment, so there obviously wasn’t any need to write a bunch of things down because they expected it was going to happen in just a few days or a few months. Some of the earliest converts liquidated property and pooled all their money together. Nobody wanted to leave Jerusalem and go back home because they just knew it was all going to come together quickly. But twelve to fifteen years later, it was apparent that things were going to go on a little longer than what was anticipated. By this time you begin to have adults coming on the scene who really didn’t have firsthand memory of those events, even in Judea. It began to be necessary, so Matthew wrote the first account.

At the time he wrote, the whole Church was primarily centered there in Judea. It had not really begun to spread outside Judea. The Church’s decision on circumcision was not made until several years later, so the real mushrooming growth of the Church outside of Judea had not really occurred to speak of. Matthew’s account was needed in Judea because the account was written from a Jewish view point by a Jew living in Judea.

But as the Church grew and growth mushroomed, Peter was in Babylon ministering over a wide area with the twelve under his direction. Paul was traveling throughout the Gentile areas. As things progressed, perhaps twelve to fifteen years after Matthew had written his Gospel, there became greater need. Paul and Peter each had one produced under their direction that stressed details that were important to be understood by the people to whom they were ministering. They wrote Gospels that stressed things that they felt needed to be stressed in their areas. Then by the time we come to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., three

of the Gospels existed—Matthew, Mark and Luke.

The Gospel of **John** was the last written. It was written almost thirty years after all of the apostles were dead. John wrote in the late 90s A.D. John's perspective was quite different. At the time Peter, Paul, Matthew and the others were doing what they were doing, Jerusalem hadn't been destroyed. The Church was centered in Judea, and clearly, the Jewish element predominated. The questions involved questions of the law.

By the time John wrote in the late 90s, the Jerusalem Church had fled Jerusalem. It was destroyed, and the Jews were scattered. All of the original apostles were dead. There were heresies coming into the Gentile world. John had totally different things to address. Questions had arisen that simply never had even been an issue forty to fifty-five years before when the others were writing. John was written much later.

John closed the canonization of the New Testament by adding his own five books to the twenty-two that had previously been canonized by Peter. We noticed that when we went through the series. John wrote one more Gospel account in order to meet certain needs of the time. There were certain problems that were engendered by Simon Magus and the Gnostic heresies that were sweeping the Church at that time. John's epistles and his Gospel were written to meet this necessity. *John emphasizes the divine nature of Jesus Christ. He emphasizes the teaching of Christ, particularly in regard to the Holy Days.*

It's interesting. John doesn't start out by giving you the genealogy from Abraham or from Adam.

John starts out in John 1:1-3, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, without Him was not anything made that was made." John starts out by going back to the very beginning showing that the One that we know as Jesus Christ was from the beginning—He was God. Because there were problems around that time, and that was not something clearly understood, many of the heretics were teaching all kinds of crazy ideas. John dealt with some of those things.

If you go through the book of John, nearly the whole book of John centers around what Jesus said and did in seven Festival seasons. We could go through a sermon sometime just showing you how we can find several Passovers, Feast of Trumpets, Feast of Tabernacles, the Last Great

Day, Pentecost, as well as some Passovers and Unleavened Bread seasons.

John does not give the same information the others gave. There wasn't any need to go back through and retell it. He skips the Sermon on the Mount and the Olivette Prophecy; there wasn't any need to give that information. Matthew had given it in detail. Mark and Luke had added the details of any clarification that was needed in addition to Matthew. John didn't need to give that. He focused in on what Christ said, did and taught in the context of the Holy Days and the Festivals.

John uses the expression over and over again, the "Feast of the Jews." He emphasizes the fact that Jesus observed the same days the Jews observed because by this time, the Holy Days were coming to be questioned. In some of the Gentile areas, they were trying to downplay the necessity of keeping the Festivals. John emphasized that Jesus kept them over and over. John is the only one who gives a detailed account of the teaching of Christ to the apostles on the night of the final Passover. The others describe in detail the physical actions that took place. John describes what Jesus said. He doesn't go into detail about the bread and the wine—Matthew, Mark and Luke had already given that—but John gives you in detail what Jesus said.

John wrote from Ephesus in the 90s A.D. He was writing to the whole Church. He emphasized deep spiritual things. John was an elderly man, probably around ninety years of age when he wrote this—comparable age to Mr. Herbert Armstrong in the last years of his life. Mr. Armstrong also wrote with an emphasis on very deep spiritual things.

I mentioned the Holy Days. Just to give you an idea: John 2-3 relate to the Passover; John 4 to Pentecost; John 5 to the Fall Festivals, particularly Trumpets; John 6 to Passover and Unleavened Bread; John 7:1-36 relates to the Feast of Tabernacles; John 7:37 through chapter 10 relate to Christ's teaching on the Last Great Day; and John 11-19 focus on Christ's final Passover. As you go through, you have this outline.

John emphasizes the things that Christ taught. He gives us the message that Christ gave on the various Festival seasons so that we might have a deeper understanding of the New Testament implications of these days. John recorded Christ's teaching on these occasions. It was something skipped over by the others, but it was an issue by the time that John wrote.

We have what each one adds in. God used different men writing from different backgrounds, different perspectives, writing to different audiences at different times over the period of about a generation to record the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Each one adds in details. Because of circumstances, they emphasized certain details in different ways so we are able to have an overview and a balanced picture. No one Gospel, while it contains a tremendous amount of useful and necessary information, gives as balanced a picture as all four taken together. I hope that we can gain a little bit of insight as to why there are these four.

We are going to begin going through the Gospel accounts. Matthew will be the one that we will perhaps refer to quite a bit for the story flow and some of the details he adds in. But we are going to go through everything in all of them. We are going to go through *in survey fashion*. You will notice on the study questions that I give you the verses from each book so you won't need a harmony of the Gospels, per se. If you have one, fine. This will take you through step by step and will point out the scriptures that overlap. We will start going through that next time.

To give you an idea of what we will cover, we will cover the beginning portion, the equivalent of the first four chapters of Matthew. In other words, we will cover from His birth up to prior to the Sermon on the Mount. Then following that, we will cover the time period from the time of the Sermon on the Mount through Passover 29 A.D., covering about a year of Christ's ministry. Christ's ministry stretched from the fall of 27 A.D. to the spring—Passover 31 A.D.

Next Bible study will basically cover from Christ's birth up through the first six months of His ministry, which would bring us to Passover of 28 A.D. Then in the second series we will cover the next year, from Passover 28 A.D. to Passover 29 A.D., which will be basically the equivalent of Matthew 4—9. As you begin to get into the latter part of Christ's life, we begin to get more and more details, so we will begin to go a little more slowly. I think it will be helpful to go through and get a little bit of an overview, step by step, of the life and the ministry of Jesus Christ stretching on into the ministry of the New Testament Church.

[Editorial Comment: Both the New King James Bible (NKJV) and A Harmony of the Gospels in Modern English (MEV) are used in the Gospels Series unless otherwise indicated.]

Bible Study # 30
January 24, 1989
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Gospels and Acts Series—Matthew 1—4:11;
Mark 1:1-13; Luke 1—4:13; John 1—2:12

The Bible study material we **are focusing on this evening is the events surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ and immediately thereafter.** The events that surround the birth of Christ are often read over and not properly understood.

To begin with, God prophesied many of the details of the coming of the Messiah centuries before—details involving time and place. God brought about these events, right on down to moving the Gentile king Caesar Augustus to institute a special taxing system so as to bring Joseph and Mary to the right place at the right time.

Think about that for a little bit. Caesar didn't know why he got this brainstorm as a new way of taxing people. All he knew was kind of like "a little bird" told him something. An idea popped into his head, 'You know what I could do? I'll bet there are people who are evading taxes. We need to crack down on taxes. What we need is this system where we make everybody go to their home city, the city to which their particular clan is attached. We will take a census, and in the process of this census, we will tax everyone.'

Generally, one of the main reasons for taking a census is to see that nobody evades their taxes. So Caesar Augustus came up with this great idea at this particular time. He may have thought it was just to raise more money. But, in reality, God stirred him up to do that to make sure that Joseph and Mary were at the right place at the right time. God worked through circumstances to bring about fulfillment of the prophecies that prophesied that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem.

The birth of the Messiah—think about the way that Christ's birth was announced. To begin with, the angels announced the birth to shepherds in a distant field. The result was that these shepherds journeyed into Bethlehem looking for the newborn Messiah. What do you think they did? They were stopping people all along the way and inquiring where they could find the newborn Messiah. You better believe this set the whole city of Bethlehem astir. Everything was in an uproar because of these shepherds. The angels didn't tell them exactly where it was; they had to

hunt through the city, which means you get the whole city abuzz. Within the next couple of days, they probably had Jerusalem "abuzz," too.

I might mention in terms of the "manger"—most people misunderstand and the traditional pictures are generally incorrect. There have been a number of recent things that have shown, from archeology and archeological excavations, the way that houses were commonly constructed. It shows that the common way of construction involved the use of a big room and stalls for animals off this room. The barn and the house were, in that sense, built together, but not in the sense that the animals wandered through the living quarters of the people.

I have some pictures from a recent article in Biblical Archeological Review showing some things that they had excavated. It was a fairly compact arrangement where the center structure was the main room, the main courtyard. Approximately where the beams are, there would be several pillars, and there would be an upstairs. It was kind of an enclosed courtyard area down there where cooking fires would be and various things of this sort. Over in the courtyard where the pillars came up, a low wall—kind of a half wall—would be divided into stalls for animals. Generally, they would have cobblestones in there with cracks between them where the stalls could be washed down. The floor of the main courtyard would be clay. It was tamped down until it was solid, but it was basically a dirt floor. Then there would be stairs leading up to a second floor where there would be bedrooms over the stalls. In the winter when they would bring the animals in, the animals would be in their stalls that were divided off from the rest of the house. That served to actually provide heat for the house because it was closed in, and the animals were down there.

If you have ever been in a barn and there were cows in several of these stalls, you would realize what an amount of body heat they could give off in this small confined space. The heat would tend to rise, and that had a very heat-conserving effect for the bedrooms that were on the upper story. This is still done in the Middle East and portions of Europe where the houses and the barns are kind of built together. Most of the living quarters are upstairs, and they keep the animals downstairs. During the summer and most of the spring and fall, the areas where the animals were kept during the winter are cleaned out and are pretty well empty. They may put the animals in part of the time or bring them in to milk, but

generally they are just kept there during the winter or when they needed to be fed.

It was a time when the animals were still abiding in the fields. Even by night they were not being bought in. This was a time when Bethlehem was heavily crowded, and as a result of that, these stalls in the lower part of the house were rented out to handle this great influx of people. Since the inns had been over crowded, private individuals were renting out a room or a place in their homes. This area downstairs which is attached to the dwelling (where the animals would have been kept in the winter) was part of what was being rented out. That, undoubtedly, was where Christ was born—in one of those circumstances.

The shepherds coming in and inquiring over the city ensured that the news was going to spread like wildfire among the common people of Bethlehem. A little while later, maybe a month or six weeks later, wise men from the East came. They came before Herod inquiring about the birth of the Messiah. Herod summoned the whole Sanhedrin. He was all upset. He didn't know what was going on; he demanded of them where the Messiah would be born, and they had to give testimony. The witness from the wise men, the Magi, was an announcement to the officials of the Jewish nation. The very top officials, the whole Sanhedrin and the Roman appointed king had a witness that the Messiah was born. The Sanhedrin had to acknowledge where.

Let's notice Matthew 15:24, "But He answered and said, 'I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'" If you note here, this is the story of the Canaanite woman who came and wanted Christ to heal her daughter. Christ had not come to deal with the world as a whole. He said, 'I am not come to deal with the world as a whole.' He said, 'I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' That certainly included the Jews. His ministry for those three and one-half years was primarily to the Jews.

What about the other ten tribes? They are the lost sheep of the house of Israel. How did they become aware of the birth of their Messiah? They did and there is a clear answer on that. Matthew talked about these wise men from the East. The East, as spoken of by Matthew, refers to the area east of the Euphrates River, which was ruled by the Parthian Empire in the last century. It was on the border of the Roman Empire. The lost ten tribes, the Israelites, were the rulers of the Parthian Empire, which had risen to power about two centuries earlier. The

Magi were the leading wise men and counselors of the king. They saw a star and followed it (as prophesied in Numbers 24:17) until coming to Jerusalem. Because of their prominence, they had no trouble coming before King Herod and giving a witness to him and to the Jewish religious leaders. After their return to Parthia, it served as a witness to the ten tribes.

It is interesting. The tradition of the Eastern churches is that there were twelve Magi. The tradition of three, as we know it, originated in Rome, but ancient tradition and all Eastern tradition hold that there were twelve—one from each of the tribes of Israel. These wise men came to do homage to the Messiah on behalf of the ten tribes in exile and to serve as a witness to the religious leaders of the Jewish nation, as well as the Roman government of Judea. God set the stage for the proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom by evidencing that the Messiah had truly arrived.

This was added to by the testimony of elderly Simeon and elderly Anna in the temple. Remember the story when Jesus was brought to the temple to be presented to God? This was forty days after His birth according to the laws of purification as brought out in Leviticus 12.

In Luke 2:25-31, we are told at this point, "And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the Law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: 'Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.'"

You can imagine a crowd gathered around here. Simeon is a very well-known elderly man and highly respected. This testimony spreads.

In vv. 36-37, there was Anna, a prophetess, a very elderly woman who had been married for seven years and had been widowed for eighty-four years. She was a very elderly woman who lived there in the temple complex. You can imagine that Anna had been well known for decades. Everyone who came to the temple was

very familiar with Anna. God had given miraculous revelations to her.

Interestingly, it had probably been a hundred years since the Urim and the Thummin had worked for a high priest because they had so departed. At this point in time, God wasn't answering the high priest. The only one that we have record of that God was revealing anything supernaturally through was this elderly widow who lived in the temple by the name of Anna. The way God chose to work certainly was a witness and a condemnation to the hypocrisy of the Jewish religious leadership. You can believe she was well known; she was recognized. Everyone who had come into the temple for decades, Anna was there. She lived there in the temple complex for many, many years.

She came over and began to speak to Mary and Joseph. A crowd gathered around, as people do. Everybody wants to know what's going on, 'Hey, what's happening?' They see a bunch of people gathered over there, and they go stick their ear in to see what's happening. So this testimony was given.

God testified in many, many ways. God never leaves His people without a witness of the truth when the time comes for Him to intervene in human affairs. God makes it plain where He is working if we simply have the wit to look and to see.

We are going to go through the Gospels, and you can follow me in your Bible. I **am going to primarily utilize a harmony of the Gospels**. I will give you reference as to where I am going. The starting place, if we harmonize the Gospel accounts, is the Gospel of John because it starts in the beginning.

John 1:1-3, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." The universe and all things were created and came into being through His power and authority. Without Him, not even one thing came into existence which has been created.

Verses 4-5, "In Him was life and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend or overcome it." Who was actually the One who did the creating recorded in the Old Testament? It is very apparent it was none other than Jesus Christ. The One who was in the beginning was the Word, the Spokesman. He was with God and He was God. We are given clear record of that.

Verse 14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." It is very apparent that the Word was none other than Jesus Christ. It was testified of by John the Baptist and others that the very One who did the creating recorded in the Old Testament was the One that we know as Jesus Christ. That is made plain in John 1:1-3. Now as we follow the account down, Luke gives the details.

Luke 1:5-6, "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division [KJV, "course"] of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." This is some information that we would often tend to read over. What important information are we able to derive from learning that "Zacharias was of the course of Abijah"? We are actually able to arrive at the approximate time of the birth of Christ as a result of that information.

Luke 1:5, "...of the course of Abijah..." When we go back to I Chronicles 24, we learn that David divided the priesthood into twenty-four courses or divisions. Since there became so many priests, they couldn't all get into the temple and carry out the functions. As the priesthood grew, there were too many of them. Generation after generation the family of Aaron increased. At first there were a few of them. It started out just being Aaron and his sons; after a while, there were dozens of them, scores of them and finally, hundreds of them. It got to where there needed to be some organization. There were too many of them to function all at once, so they were divided up in the time of David into twenty-four courses.

The course of Abijah, we are told in I Chronicles 24:10 was the eighth course. Each course served in the temple for two weeks a year. Twenty-four courses at two weeks each would be forty-eight. Forty-eight weeks were accounted for. Then we have the Festival weeks—the weeks surrounding the week of Passover/ Unleavened Bread season, the week around Pentecost, and the two weeks of the Feast of Tabernacles which fill in the whole year. Each course served in the temple for two weeks a year in addition to the three festival seasons.

They started with the first course, which began serving the first of the sacred year, two weeks

prior to Passover. The second course worked the second week; then all of the courses would serve for a week for Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. Then the third course would serve for a week, and so it would go.

From Luke 1:8-24, we can go through how many weeks into the year we were. I have a little chart here that brings it out. We are looking at the spring of 5 B.C. The first course began serving at noon on the Sabbath on the first day of Abib, the first day of the sacred month, which was coincidentally a Sabbath. They began serving at noon on that Sabbath that coincided with the first day of the sacred year, which was April 8th in 5 B.C. The second course began serving a week later at noon; then two weeks after that, all the courses served for Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. Coming on through, we would track it on down as to when all of the courses would begin serving at Passover. The courses would serve all the way to the third week. Then the third course would begin its service at noon on the Sabbath, which would be the 22nd of Abib or April 29th. Then that's when the third course would end; the fourth course would begin at noon on the 29th of Abib. It would just continue down to where the eighth course would begin serving at noon on the Sabbath, June 3rd. They would serve all through that first week of June, and then the following week was the week of Pentecost when all of the courses would be serving. Zacharias would have been free to leave after noon on the Sabbath of June 12th. That brings us to the last half of June 5 B.C., which would be the probable two weeks during which Elizabeth conceived.

Remember the account where Zacharias the priest entered into the temple, saw a vision and the angel told him, "Your wife is going to conceive a child." Well, if we would track it through, we could lay out these courses. We would find that when his term in the temple service was over and he would have returned home, we have an approximate two-week period that we would allot and say that Elizabeth conceived fairly soon.

Then we track it through as to the months of her pregnancy. When Mary is told that she is with child of the Holy Spirit, that she has conceived Jesus, she is told also about Elizabeth.

Luke 1:36, "Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren." So this brings us, if we track it through, to December. The angel Gabriel was sent to the

Virgin Mary. The power of the Holy Spirit enveloped Mary, and she was impregnated with Jesus Christ. Mary visited Elizabeth at the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy. Her sixth month would end right around the end of December. We have an overlap of Mary's first month of pregnancy with Elizabeth's seventh month of pregnancy as being the same. What it comes down to, John the Baptist was six months older than Jesus Christ.

We can calculate from the time of the course of Abijah, the time that Zacharias was in the temple and the subsequent conception of his wife. We would come all the way down to March when John the Baptist was born; Jesus was born about six months later in the fall. We can track back to the time when the course of Abijah would have been serving in the temple, come forward nine months from that, and we're at John the Baptist's birth. We come forward six more months, and we're at the birth of Jesus Christ. It is kind of a technical, drawn-out thing, but it is a point. If we put the whole story together and go back to I Chronicles 24 to get the layout of it, we are able to clearly see the way that it would work out.

We are also shown from Luke 1:15 that John the Baptist was going to be under a Nazarite vow from his mother's womb.

Luke 1:15, "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." John the Baptist was under a Nazarite vow. You can go back to Numbers 6 and read a little more about that.

At this point, I would like to call your attention to something interesting. Did you ever notice the extent to which Zacharias and Mary both reacted similarly when informed by Gabriel of the approaching birth of their sons? Yet they were dealt with in a different way. Let's notice.

Luke 1:5-10, "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division [KJV, "course"] of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years. So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole

multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense.”

I think I have mentioned before that the burning of incense in the temple was symbolic of the prayers of the saints. Revelation 5:8 makes that plain. The Jews had adopted a custom of considering an hour of prayer at the time of the morning and evening sacrifice. They took one of the coals from the altar of sacrifice, took it inside the temple and put it in the golden censer. Then they put incense on these live coals taken from the altar of burnt sacrifice. This symbolized the prayers of the saints. The Jews had adopted this custom. When you read of “the hour of prayer” (v. 10 and Acts 3:1), that’s what you’re talking about—the hour of the morning and evening sacrifice. Well, people were outside praying and Zacharias was performing the ritual.

Luke 1:11-12, “Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.” You better believe it. Here he was walking in there with his incense going through his thing, and all of a sudden, he looked up. Out of nowhere was this great, powerful, brilliant, shining being totally clothed in white. You can imagine Zacharias was absolutely stunned. He had never seen anything like this before, and terror seized him.

Verses 13-19, “But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He [John] will go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.’ And Zacharias said to the angel, ‘How shall I know this? For I am an old man and my wife is well advanced in years.’ And the angel answered and said to him, ‘I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings.’”

The angel asked, ‘What do you mean, how are you going to know if that’s true? I am Gabriel, who do you think I am? Do you just normally run into somebody standing in there by the incense altar in white shining brilliance?’

Verse 19, “...‘I am Gabriel who stands in the presence of God and was sent to you and bring you these glad tidings.’” Gabriel said, ‘You want a sign? I am going to give you a sign. You are going to be struck dumb.’

Verse 20, “‘But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time.’” Gabriel said, ‘I’ll give you a sign, all right. You won’t be able to say anything until all of this is over with. That will be sign enough for you.’

Verse 21, “And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple.” All the people outside were expecting Zacharias; after a while, this was dragging on, and people began wondering what happened.

Verses 22-24, “But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless. And so it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house. Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months....”

Then we are told, v. 26, “Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,” So Gabriel returns.

Verses 27-29, “to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, ‘Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!’ But when she saw him, she was troubled [awestruck] at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was.”

Again, the same reaction—just absolutely shocked and dumbfounded. What is this!

Verses 30-34, “The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.’ Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’”

Mary said, ‘I am a virgin.’ Now again, she asked the question just as Zacharias did, ‘How do I know this is going to happen? How can this be? I am an old man, and my wife is an old woman.’ The angel dealt with Zacharias a little more abruptly. ‘I will give you a sign.’ Mary asked,

‘How can this be? There must be some mistake here; I am a virgin.’ The angel then explained.

Verses 35-38, “And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.’ Then Mary said, ‘Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her.”

I think it is interesting in reading the account to just understand there was a difference in the way God dealt with an elderly priest whom God expected to know a little better, to exercise a little more faith and not to question in that way. God dealt with him a little more abruptly because he should have known better than to ask a question like that. Here was Mary, a young girl of age nineteen or twenty; the angel dealt with her very patiently and explained everything to her in more detail. I think that one of the points we get from this is that God does not always deal with everyone exactly the same way. God expects a little more of some than others. He expected a greater level of understanding from an elderly priest than He did from a young girl who was maybe nineteen or twenty years old. So, to one He gave a little more detailed explanation; the other one, He dealt with a little more abruptly. Gabriel said, ‘Zacharias you shouldn’t have asked a question like—“how shall I know this?” You shouldn’t have expressed that kind of doubt. You’ve been around long enough Zacharias that you should have known that, if I say something that is the way it is. Where are all these questions coming from?’

Genealogy of Jesus Christ: Luke 3:23-38 and Matthew 1:1-17.

Now let’s take note of the genealogies given in Luke 3 and Matthew 1. The genealogies are different. Luke gives the natural genealogy. He gives the genealogy of Mary and traces it all the way back to Adam. Matthew gives the legal genealogy, which would be the genealogy of Joseph. Joseph was the legal father (though not the literal father), and he traces it back to Abraham, the one to whom the promises were made.

It is made plain if you go through Matthew’s account.

Matthew 1:1-3, “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham who was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Pharez and Zerah by Tamar....” It goes right on down.

Luke 3:23, “Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the *son of Heli*.” If you will notice, the word “son” is in italics. Matthew 1 is worded differently, “so and so” begat “so and so.” It is a literal description of somebody born to somebody, and somebody else born to them, and somebody else born to them. It is a literal step-by-step genealogy, one after another.

Here in Luke 3, we run up against different names. In reality, Joseph was simply the son-in-law of Heli. There is no evidence that Heli had any sons. We know that he had several daughters. Salome, the wife of Zebedee, the mother of James and John, was a sister to Mary and a daughter of Heli. The wife of Alphaeus was another sister. James, the son of Alphaeus was one of the apostles. One thing that a lot of people don’t realize is several of the apostles were first cousins to Jesus. These were people who had connections in that way.

So, if Mary only had sisters, when she married, of course, it would be someone in her tribe. She was of the tribe of Judah. She married in the tribe of Judah, and her husband would have been accounted as though he were a son and would have inherited property from her father.

You can go back to the book of Numbers (Numbers 27:1-7; 36:6-7) and notice the legal requirements in terms of property inheritance. Where there were no sons, the daughters inherited as though they were sons. If they married within the tribe, in effect, their husband equated with a son, legally. So Luke uses the term “Joseph of Heli” as “son,” as it is supplied in italics, but it could just as clearly have been “son-in-law,” which is really the sense of it.

Luke traces the genealogy differently than Matthew. Luke traces it back through the natural genealogy through Mary’s family; Matthew traces the legal genealogy through Joseph’s family.

Christ had claim to the throne of David in both directions. He was a descendant of David from both of these. What did the angel tell Mary concerning the destiny of the Son that she was to bear? In Luke 1, we noticed here a few moments

ago that the angel told Mary that she would bear the Messiah who would inherit the throne of David and rule over an everlasting Kingdom. This child is going to be called the Son of God. Luke 1:32-33, “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” This very clearly shows that Jesus was born to be a King and to sit on a literal throne. Now what was the mission of John the Baptist? That’s made plain here.

Luke shows in Luke 1:17, “He [John] will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

We go on a little further; John was born.

Luke 1:63-64, “And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, ‘His name is John.’ And they all marveled. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God.”

Verses 68-75, “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to our father Abraham: to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.”

Zacharias was speaking to John.

Verses 76-80, “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.’ So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.”

We have the description of what God was going to do through John the Baptist. John was a cousin of Jesus. He was a little more distant cousin of Jesus. He would have been a second cousin. His mother Elizabeth and Mary were first cousins.

Undoubtedly, since Elizabeth was described as a daughter of Aaron, she was of the priestly line. Mary’s mother was, undoubtedly, a sister to either Elizabeth’s mother or father. In other words, Mary’s mother was of the priestly family of Levi and Aaron and married Heli who was of the royal line of David. Mary, on her mother’s side, traced her genealogy back through Aaron and Levi; on her father’s side, back to David. That’s why she and Elizabeth were cousins even though Elizabeth was of the priestly line. John the Baptist and Jesus would have been related; their mothers would have been first cousins. John was raised up to give a message.

Again, notice how God prepared a witness. You can imagine how word of this big event that occurred in the temple—the priest having seen a vision—you can imagine how that spread. Because this occurred right around the time of Pentecost, you had people there from all over. Word like this must have spread like wildfire. This would have been big news. It set the stage. We can clearly see that the wise men did not come at the time of Christ’s birth.

Matthew 2 shows the account of the coming of the wise men.

Matthew 2:11 makes it plain that Mary and Joseph were already abiding in a house by the time they arrived, “...when they came into the house...”

In v. 16, Herod was not taking any chances. When he realized that the wise men had not come back and told him where the child was, he sent word out to put to death all the boys in Bethlehem and surrounding areas who were two years old and younger. This was according to the time in which he had diligently inquired of the wise men, based on the time that the Magi had seen the star. The star hadn’t appeared when Jesus was born. It had appeared *prior* to that time and brought them in that direction. The star, undoubtedly, was an angel.

People talk about “star” or “comet.” Have you ever seen a comet go and stand over somebody’s house? You see this thing up there? It takes weeks and months to go across the sky and it finally stops over the top of somebody’s house—one that appears and disappears. You’ve never seen a comet like that, have you? A star, as we think of a star, how can you tell if that star is on top of somebody’s house? You go out and look up, and say, ‘Boy, that star is right above this building.’ If you were somewhere else, you’d look up and think, ‘That star is right above that building.’ How could you tell? Obviously, it was

an angel. All they had to be was just a slight distance away and could see a bright shining light—and they would follow.

Stars are used as symbols of angels. You can read that in Revelation 12:4. This angel who manifested himself that way, all they could see was the bright light, but it was close and vivid enough that they could tell where it was and where it was standing over. That was the way in which they were led.

Herod realized that he had been “had.” He didn’t want to go worship the Messiah, ‘Oh, go find Him and come back and tell me where He is so I, too, can go and worship Him.’ Herod didn’t want to go and worship anything. He didn’t worship anything but himself.

Josephus tells us about Herod’s death. Herod had a very gruesome death. I won’t even go into all the details, but it was a very gory disease in which God really visited retribution on him. A type of maggot consumed him; just a very gory, gruesome death consumed him. Josephus records how Herod died.

Joseph and family returns to Nazareth:

Matthew 2:23 and Luke 2:39.

Where did Jesus grow up? Matthew 2:23 makes it plain that He grew up in Nazareth and was called a Nazarene—not a Nazarite, as of the Nazarite vow. Christ wasn’t a Nazarite. He was a Nazarene and grew up in Nazareth, a little village in Galilee.

There is proof that the Being who dealt with men in the Old Testament in a visible manner (in other words, talked with Adam, walked with Enoch, ate with Abraham, wrestled with Jacob) was not the Father. That’s made plain in John 1.

John 1:18, “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” This shows very clearly that no one has ever seen the Father at any time. Any time in the Old Testament when you read of God manifesting Himself, it had to have been the One that became Jesus Christ because no one has seen the Father at any time. The Father has not manifested Himself. Jesus came to reveal the Father. Jesus Christ was the Word, the Spokesman and the One who dealt with man.

Ministry of John the Baptist: John 1:6-18, Luke 3:1-6, Matthew 3:1-4 and Mark 1:1-3.

As we read these parallel accounts, all of them start out with the story of John the Baptist, and how John the Baptist came for a witness and a testimony.

John tells us in John 1:6-8, “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.”

Luke adds in the detail, Luke 3:1, “Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene.”

Scholars have calculated the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar in several different ways. The method of reckoning that Luke used to record is not clearly indicated from the context. But throughout all of his account, Luke uses the Jewish method of reckoning time and events. It would be consistent for him to use the Jewish method of reckoning in this case—using a spring-to-spring calculation.

It was Biblical for the priests to begin their priesthood at the beginning of age thirty. This is found in Numbers 4:3 as well as v. 30. It is a historical fact that the priesthood under Moses began to function in the first month of the second year out of Egypt, when the tabernacle was set up. This was the only method of reckoning used by priests. Since John the Baptist was the son of a priest, he would have begun his ministry when he became thirty years of age. This means he would have had to begin his ministry no later than the time of Passover, 27 A.D. This would have given him at least a six-month ministry preparing the way for the Lord. He would have continued until just before the Feast of Pentecost in 28 A.D., at which time he was cast into prison.

This is the time when, Luke 3:2, “...the word of the Lord came to John, the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.”

In v. 3, we are told, “And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”

There is one thing I would like to point out, to illustrate. The Jews understood and had a concept of what we term “baptism.” They had what they termed “*mikvah*,” which had reference to immersion in water, to the ritual purifications and washings. That was what a woman went through, the rites of purification; that’s what the priests went through prior to entering into the temple. It was gone through at certain times, any time someone was ceremonially unclean.

Now when a Jewish baby boy was born, the baby was circumcised and was then considered an heir of the promises, but if a Gentile converted to Judaism, there was something else that was added. He not only had to undergo circumcision, but he had to undergo the “*mikvah*”—the ritual washing, the ritual immersion, to purify him, in a sense, from the uncleanness. The Jews viewed themselves inherently clean because they were the sons of Abraham. But everybody else was unclean. They were familiar with immersion, but they looked upon it as something that was necessary for Gentiles if they became ceremonially defiled. They felt, that for them, it was not an inherent need because they were, in a sense, born clean.

John’s message really shook them to their socks. John’s message was the fact that they were unclean, too. You have to be baptized. You have to have your sins washed away. That had never dawned on them before. They thought they were inherently “one up” on everybody else. All they needed was circumcision (the sign of the Covenant), and they were inherently clean. John came preaching the baptism of repentance, performing, in a sense, this priestly ritual, but saying, ‘You Jews, you Pharisees, you Sadducees—you’re just as dirty. You’re just as polluted; you’re just as much sinners as any Gentile that you have ever converted or immersed. You better repent and be baptized or you’re not going to be forgiven.’

This is the context in which John preached baptism. People wonder where he came up with baptism. It was an adaptation of something. The Jews had never understood it as having applied to them. They viewed everybody else as having a problem, but they were okay. John broke the news to them that, no, they weren’t. That was news to them. They had thought they were clean, but John made it plain that they weren’t.

John’s baptism to repentance: Matthew 3:5-12, Mark 1:4-8 and Luke 3:7-18.

When the religious leaders came to John for baptism, it’s recorded in Matthew 3:6-7 that John was baptizing those who came to him acknowledging and confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said:

Matthew 3:7, “...‘Brood of vipers!’ [You bunch of snakes. Now the snake was a symbol of the devil, so it was not a very complimentary term.] Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?’” He really kind of took the hide off of them. ‘Look, which rock did you slither out from

under? Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? You “snake in the grass”!’

Verse 8 states that if you want to be baptized, go and produce evidence worthy of repentance. Prove a change in your attitude and your life; go and bring forth fruits worthy for repentance. Let me see some changes; let me see you shape up. Change as an evidence that you are really repentant if you want to be baptized.

The only reason they wanted to “get on the bandwagon” was because everybody acknowledged John as a prophet. You can imagine—the event that had occurred at the time of John’s birth was known. Everybody in Jerusalem, everybody who was there, had been aware of these things when John had been born. They had been in expectation of this, and when he made this appearance, it really created a stir.

Notice briefly a couple of other things. Notice John’s advice to soldiers and to tax collectors. People came to John when they wanted to be baptized, and they asked him what to do.

In Luke 3:12, the tax collectors said, “...‘Teacher, what shall we do?’” What is the evidence of repentance?

John told them in v. 14, “...‘Collect nothing above what’s been appointed to you.’” ‘Be honest. You can collect taxes, but you need to be honest, be scrupulously honest. Don’t cheat people.’

Soldiers asked him in v. 14, “...‘And what shall we do?’....” The Roman army didn’t have conscientious objector status; you were a soldier. John told the soldiers, all right, “...‘Do violence to no man’” (KJV). Now that’s a difficult order for a soldier because you may find yourself in a situation that requires faith. If you’re not going to do violence to any man, you may find yourself in a situation where you are going to get killed because you’re brought out there and told to fight. John told them, ‘If you are going to repent, then you have to do violence to no man. You don’t falsely accuse anyone; you don’t misuse your status. You be satisfied with your wages. You make the best of it; treat people fairly, and do violence to no one.’

Verse 16, “John answered, saying to them all, ‘I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.’” John said he baptized with water, but One mightier than he was coming who was going to baptize in a different way, which was to baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Christ's baptism: Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-23 and John 1:28-33.

As we continue the account, we find in Luke 3:21 that Jesus came to be baptized at the beginning of His ministry.

Verse 23, He was baptized at thirty years of age, which would have been in the fall of 27 A.D. John had begun his ministry in the spring of 27 A.D. Jesus appeared there in the fall of 27 A.D., and there was a miraculous display.

Luke 3:22 mentions it, "And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, 'You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.'" This was a very miraculous event to point out the uniqueness of this.

The first miracle that Christ worked is clearly shown and referred to in John 2:1-11, the turning of water into wine.

Christ tempted by the devil: Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13 and Luke 4:1-13.

What Jesus did right after His baptism, prior to the formal beginning of His ministry, is recorded in greatest detail in Matthew 4.

Matthew 4:1-2, "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards He was hungry." This was necessary before He could begin His proclamation of the Gospel message because before He could begin announcing the good news of the Kingdom of God, He had to qualify to be King over that Kingdom by overcoming Satan. Adam, who had the first opportunity to rule the world, yielded to Satan and accepted his government. Jesus Christ showed that He would not yield to Satan, but would be totally yielded to God. He would resist and overcome Satan by the power of God.

These events occurred between the fall of 27 A.D. when Jesus made His first public appearance and the spring of 28 A.D. when He came into the temple for the first cleansing of the temple.

I might comment on a couple of things. One of the things made plain in John 1 is that many of the disciples that Jesus later dealt with were previously disciples of John the Baptist. Peter and Andrew were John the Baptist's disciples.

John 1:35-42, "Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples and looking at Jesus walking and he said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God.' The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, 'What do

you seek?' They said to Him, 'Rabbi' (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), 'where are You staying?' He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour). One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus...."

You get this account of those that Jesus began to deal with.

We will go through the calling of the apostles in greater detail at a later time. Some of this material we will come back and summarize from a little different standpoint, but I think this gets us started.

There is a lot that is packed into the Gospel accounts. I think, hopefully, over the course of the next few Bible studies, we will come to more clearly see the real impact of some of these things—many of which we have read before. But I think as we really study into them, we will find that God has packed a lot into the Gospel accounts.

We will pick up from there next time and perhaps be able to summarize a few more comments on a little bit of what we covered this evening. I have some questions for the next Bible study, which will primarily concentrate on the Sermon on the Mount and related material. With that, we will conclude this evening.

Bible Study # 30 Questions

SURVEY OF THE GOSPELS AND ACTS SERIES

Matthew 1—4:11; Mark 1:1-13; Luke 1—4:13; John 1—2:12

1. Who was actually the One who did the creating recorded in the Old Testament?
2. What important information are we able to derive from learning that Zacharias was of the “course of Abijah”?
3. What vow was John the Baptist evidently under from birth?
4. Zacharias and Mary both reacted similarly when informed by Gabriel of the approaching birth of sons, yet they were dealt with quite differently. Why?
5. What differences are there in the genealogy as given by Luke and by Matthew?
6. What did the angel tell Mary concerning the destiny of the son that she was to bear?
7. What was the mission of John the Baptist?
8. Give evidence that the “wise men” did not come at the time of Christ’s birth.
9. Where did Jesus Christ grow up?
10. Give proof that the Being who dealt with man in the Old Testament in a visible manner (talked with Adam, walked with Enoch, ate with Abraham, wrestled with Jacob, etc.) was not the Father.
11. What was the approach of John the Baptist when many of the religious leaders came to his baptism?
12. What was John’s advice to soldiers who came to him?
13. What miraculous display did God give at the time of the baptism of Jesus Christ?
14. What is the first recorded miracle that Jesus Christ performed?
15. What very important thing did Jesus Christ do following His baptism and prior to the formal beginning of His ministry?
16. Why was this necessary before He could begin His proclamation of the Gospel message?

Bible Study # 31
February 28, 1989
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Gospels and Acts Series—Matthew 4:12—9:17; Mark 1:14—2:22; Luke 4:14—5:39; John 2:13—4:54

This evening we are continuing our survey of the Gospels and Acts. We are near the beginning portion of that. What we **are covering this evening has to do with the events in the life of Christ from the time of the Passover of 28 A.D. until the Passover of 29 A.D.**

Christ began His public ministry in the fall of 27 A.D., the time of His baptism by John the Baptist. John was preaching by the River Jordan. Jesus appeared there, was baptized by John and was pointed out by John to the multitudes.

Shortly thereafter, Jesus and some of His disciples left. They went back to Cana of Galilee where His first public miracle was performed—the turning of the water into wine at the wedding feast. A short time after (we are not told exactly how long) Christ left and went into the wilderness. He was gone for a considerable period of time. He spent forty days in fasting and prayer. At the end of that time, He was tempted by Satan the devil. Remember the account of the temptation that occurred? It was very shortly after that incident, as we approach the beginning of the spring of 28 A.D., where we pick up the story this evening.

Jesus publicly began His ministry by suddenly appearing in the temple in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover season of 28 A.D. The first six months of His ministry were used for private teaching. During that time, He was baptized and made initial contact with His disciples. I might bring out that some of Christ's disciples had known Him and He had known them going all the way back to childhood because, in several cases, they were actually cousins of His.

It is made plain, for instance, that James and John (who were brothers) were the sons of Zebedee and Salome. Salome was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. So, we find that James and John were first cousins of Jesus. There is another mentioned, James, the son of Alphaeus. It is mentioned that his mother, as well, was a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. So there were several of the disciples that He had, undoubtedly, known all the way back to childhood.

There were others that He had previously had contact with. Andrew (Peter's brother) and several others had been with John the Baptist. John the Baptist had accumulated quite a number of disciples. A "disciple" is simply "a learner, a student, someone who is seeking to learn the lessons that someone else is teaching." We are given the example, for instance, that Andrew, the brother of Peter, was there with John the Baptist. He had spent at least a certain amount of time there. John the Baptist pointed out Jesus as the Messiah to Andrew and acknowledged Him as such when He came to be baptized.

What we have, as we will find a little bit later, is Jesus coming where Peter and Andrew were and saying, "Come and follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." This was not an occasion such as is portrayed in one of the movies, where He comes by and kind of transfixes these two fellows with this hypnotic stare. Then they get this kind of blank look on their faces, drop their nets and just kind of walk out as though they were hypnotized. That was not the situation at all.

These were people who had known Him, had known of Him, were familiar with the ministry of John the Baptist and had some initial contact with Him. Some of those who were there with John the Baptist followed Him back to Cana of Galilee. Some saw that miracle of turning water into wine and returned to their business. They had their own lives; they had their own businesses. For the most part, they were self-employed. They had taken off some time and had spent time there listening to John the Baptist. They had spent some time there as a disciple of his.

There came a point, right here at the beginning of this material that we are going to go through this evening, where Jesus told some of them, 'I want you to come and follow Me full time.' They knew who He was and believed that He was the Messiah. They didn't fully understand the role of the Messiah. They were expecting that He would restore the Kingdom to Israel right away. The disciples came out of a variety of backgrounds.

As we pick up the story this evening, Jesus begins His public ministry during the Feast of Unleavened Bread of 28 A.D. We find that immediately prior to Passover, Jesus came to Jerusalem and He showed up at the temple. Now what is the temple called in Scripture? How did Jesus refer to the temple? He referred to it in John 2:16 as "His Father's house."

What do you do with your house immediately prior to Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread? You clean it up, don't you? What did He do to His Father's house right before Passover? He cleaned it up; He unleavened it in the spiritual sense. There is a reason as to why Jesus began His ministry this way.

John 2:13-16, "Now the Jews' Passover was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money-changers stationed around. Then after making a scourge of cords, He drove out every one of them from the temple, including the sheep and the oxen; He poured out the coins and threw over the tables of the money-changers. And He said to those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Do not make the house of My Father a house a house of merchandise!'"

Let me call your attention to a prophecy in the book of Malachi.

Malachi 3:1-2, "'Behold, I send My messenger, and he [John the Baptist] will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,' says the Lord of hosts. 'But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like Fullers' soap.'"

You know what refiner's fire and Fullers' soap do, don't you? A refiner's fire is what you use to refine metal so you can skim off the dross. A fullers' soap will take the dirt, the hide and anything else off of you. It's kind of like "Eagle Eye." Some of you remember old "Eagle Eye" soap. That's about what you are looking at. Pretty strong stuff! It will take anything out—and that's what it says Christ's coming was like. He was going to show up and He was going to clean house—and that's what we find here.

Some of those in the temple had come up with a real gimmick to make a little money on the side. If you came to the temple, you were supposed to offer a sacrifice. That's why the people would come there to the temple. They would offer sheep, goats, doves and various things. Where were you going to get them? If you didn't live right there in Jerusalem, you would have to buy them. You weren't going to drive your sheep hundreds of miles from some far away place. Jews were coming there from all over making pilgrimages. Plus, you not only had to offer the animal, but the animal that you offered had to be

approved by the priest as being without spot or blemish—a perfect specimen.

Some had come up with the idea that there was a lot of money to be made in selling these animals for sacrifice. What they did was sublet the concession to sell animals there in the temple. In fact, 'if you don't buy one of my animals, if we look long and hard enough, we can find some kind of spot or blemish on yours. We can find something wrong with it, and it won't do. That one has dirt under its hoof; you can't offer that one. You have to get one of these over here.'

They had a real gimmick going. They had turned it into a real moneymaking thing. You had to buy the animal from them. And you can bet their prices were higher than what you'd pay out of town. Not only that, but they had come up with another deal. They said, 'This money people come in here to spend, that's pagan money. It has pagan inscriptions; it has the picture of the Roman emperor who proclaims himself as god [it was just regular money of the Roman Empire]. Being that's pagan money, we can't put that pagan money into the temple treasury. Tell you what we are going to do; we are going to have some money exchange. We are going to have our own money. This will be good, righteous money. And you can only spend it right here in the temple. Now, we will sell you our money that you can put into the temple treasury, and you can buy these sheep and goats in here. If you want to make an offering, you have to use our money; we won't accept this pagan Roman money. You give it to me and I will exchange it.'

They considered the money too pagan to put into the temple treasury, but not too pagan to put into their pocket. They really had a deal going—a real moneymaking operation—and some of the priests were getting a "rake" of it. They were subletting all this stuff. All of it was contrary to the law, but after all, who was enforcing the law? They were! There's nothing new under the sun. We also have seen plenty of approaches by those who were supposed to be enforcing the law around here over the years.

This was the situation: Jesus showed up and cleaned house. 'Get this stuff out of here!'

Matthew 21:13, "It is written, 'My Father's house is supposed to be a house of prayer for all nations, but you've made it a den of thieves.'" Tables were flying, coins went scattering and sheep and goats started taking off for the gate. Jesus came here and He did this—and it really stirred things up. They said, 'Who do You think

You are, doing this?' If you will notice, nobody tried to arrest Him.

In fact, in just a matter of a few days later, in John 3:1-2, "There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to Him, 'Rabbi [teacher] we realize and can tell You are a teacher come from God [a teacher sent by God], because no one is capable of doing these miracles which You are doing, unless God be with Him.'"

Jesus came and He performed certain miracles. Very clearly, God's stamp of approval was there. The religious leaders did not like it. They resented it, but they knew that He was not just somebody that showed up on His own authority. They considered Him at the least a teacher from God or a prophet because of the miracles that He worked.

Verse 3, "Jesus answered and said to him [Nicodemus], 'Truly, truly, I say to you, except a man is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.'" Nicodemus was very puzzled by this. He thought this was a very unusual way to open a conversation. He said, 'That doesn't make sense.'

Verse 4, "Nicodemus asked Him, 'How can it be possible for a man to be born when he is old? Is he able to enter a second time into the womb of his mother, and be born?'"

Nicodemus understood the meaning of the term "born again" and because he understood the meaning of the words, he scratched his head and he said, 'It doesn't make any sense.'

Jesus then went on to explain, v. 6, "'That which has been born of the flesh is flesh; but that which has been born of the Spirit, is spirit.'"

Verse 5, "...except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God!" What are we told in I Corinthians 15:50? Paul tells us that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.

In v. 53, he says this mortal will put on immortality.

John 3:6, "'That which has been born of the flesh is flesh...'" Every one of us has been born of the flesh and we are flesh. If you don't think so, just take the hatpin test. Stick your finger and see if you don't bleed or if you don't hurt. You're flesh! You and I right now are flesh and blood. We have been born of the flesh.

In I Corinthians 15:50, Paul explains, "...flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." The Kingdom of God is eternal; it is going to last forever. What good is something that is going to

last forever do for me in the state I am right now? I am going to get old, deteriorate and I am going to die. A few years will go by and I will be gone, and this eternal inheritance will still be there. The only way that an eternal inheritance is going to do us any good is if we are transformed from flesh and blood that deteriorates, decays, grows old and eventually dies. We must be transformed from mortal to immortal. That's what Paul explained in I Corinthians 15.

I Corinthians 15:51-52, "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep [we're not all going to die because Christ is going to come back when some are still living], but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye..."

Paul says when Christ descends, that is all going to take place.

I Thessalonians 4:16-17, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." Try rising up right now and see how far you rise. You may stand up out of your chair, but that's about as far as you get. You can jump and you come right back down. You clear the ground a few inches and that will be it. But that's not going to be the state of things when we are changed, when we are transformed.

John 3:6, "'That which has been born of the flesh is flesh, that which has been born of the Spirit is spirit.'" Jesus explained that to Nicodemus.

John 3:3, "'...except a man is born again he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.'"

The miracles showed that Jesus was sent from God, and even the Pharisees recognized that. The miracles were a sign that God used to authenticate the genuineness of Jesus. Jesus went on and explained the matter of being born again. It's not simply an emotion or feeling. It's a rebirth, a birth into the spiritual realm just as we have been born into the physical realm. If we are going to inherit eternal life in the Kingdom of God, we are going to have to be born again, born a second time, not of a human mother, not into the physical realm of a physical flesh and blood human being, but born again—born of the Spirit as a born again son of God.

Notice a little bit later what Jesus taught about going to heaven.

John 3:12-13, "'If I tell you earthly things and you don't believe, how will you believe if I tell

you heavenly things? No man has ascended up to heaven, (except He who came down out of heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven).” John added that latter part as a parenthetical statement. John is, of course, writing the account maybe sixty years after it occurred. John adds in parenthetically, “except the One that came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven.” In other words, Jesus Christ came down from heaven and has ascended up to heaven and He is up there right now. John added that in to modify Christ’s statement because Jesus said, “No man has ascended to heaven.” That’s true, except, obviously, for Jesus Himself who came down from heaven and is right now in heaven. People talk about “when we all get to heaven.” According to John 3:13, no man has ascended up to heaven. Peter explained a little later in Acts 2:29, 34 that David wasn’t in heaven and in Acts 13:22, David was a man after God’s own heart. In fact, Jesus said, “no man has ascended up to heaven,” and it shows how opposite what most people think is in the Bible and what it really says. People think they get their religion out of the Bible, and when they start reading the Bible, what the Bible says is a lot different than what most people think it says. They think, ‘If the Bible says anything, it certainly says, “If you are good, you will go to heaven.”’

In John 2 and 3, Jesus’ message at that time was the message about Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. What did Jesus teach? The first thing He did was clean out the temple. He was teaching by example what it means to unleaven—to clean out, to get rid of sin, to get rid of that which pollutes or taints.

Then in John 3:16, He proceeded and He began to talk about how, “...God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Isn’t that the message of Passover? Jesus expounded, at that season, the message surrounding Passover.

Then, v. 22, we find that Jesus Himself left Jerusalem; he came into the area of Judea outside Jerusalem and stayed there baptizing. His disciples were the ones actually baptizing; this is made plain a little bit later.

John 4:1-2, “Therefore, when the Lord realized the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, (although, in fact, Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were).” Jesus did not personally baptize anyone. He had His disciples do that, I think, for obvious reasons. What would

be the tendency of people later on? If they had been baptized by Jesus, personally, the tendency would be to feel like, ‘My baptism is obviously better than yours because Jesus Himself baptized me, and you were only baptized by one of the disciples. Mine is kind of “one step up”.’

There were things He simply chose not to personally do. Since He couldn’t do it for everyone, He just had His disciples do it. It does express it in John 3:22 as though He was baptizing, but John 4:2 explains technically He was not personally doing it—His disciples were doing it. That shows that Christ’s disciples’ baptisms were counted as though He Himself were doing it. In other words, when we come to those who are Christ’s representatives, it is Christ working through them. Christ was working through the disciples, through His representatives; it was as though He Himself was doing it, even though He was not literally, physically present and doing so.

We might notice as we come down through scripture that this was prior to John’s being cast into prison.

John 4:3, “Then He left Judea and went again into Galilee.” If you look at a map, Judea is in the south; Samaria is in the middle and Galilee is at the top. Galilee is the area where Jesus grew up. It’s where the city of Nazareth is located, as well as the city of Capernaum and others.

There were two ways of going to Galilee. The Jews normally took the long way and went around because they did not like to go through Samaria. The Jews really looked down on the Samaritans in a “big way.” We discussed some things about the Samaritans at the end of our survey of the Old Testament; you can understand why there was a lot of antagonism. The Jews really looked down on the Samaritans as just “lower than dirt.” They didn’t want to associate with them, talk with them or even walk through their country if they could help it. But Jesus was not that way.

Verse 4, “But it was necessary for Him to pass through Samaria.” It was necessary for Him to pass through Samaria because He was on His way back to Galilee, and He wanted to get there. We are going to see that He was on His way back and wanted to be back in Nazareth in time for the day of Pentecost, for the services there. It was immediately prior to Pentecost as He came through Samaria. This was the most direct route. It only took a few days to go that way.

They came through and they came to the city of Sychar. Jacob’s well was located there (v. 5).

Verses 7-8, “A woman then came out of Samaria to draw water, and Jesus said to her, ‘Give Me a drink.’ Because the disciples had gone away into the city so they might purchase some food.” The Samaritan woman was shocked.

Verse 9, “Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, ‘Why do you, being a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, to give you a drink? Because the Jews have nothing whatsoever to do with the Samaritans.’” ‘Hey, Jews don’t want anything to do with Samaritans.’ She was really surprised that He would ask her to do Him a favor—‘please give Me a drink of water.’

Jesus continued and said, v. 10, “...‘If you knew the gift of God and Who it is that says to you, ‘Give Me a drink;’ you would have asked Him to give you a drink, and He would have given you living water!’” That didn’t make a whole lot of sense to her.

Verse 11, “The woman said to Him, ‘You have nothing with which to draw out the water, and the well is deep; where then did You get the living water!’” ‘What is this living water? You don’t have anything to draw with. The well is deep. How are you going to get any water?’

Jesus continued, vv. 13-14, and He began to expound to her about the Holy Spirit, which is the rivers of living water to which He had made reference.

And then He told her in v. 16, “...‘Go, call your husband, and come here.’”

Verses 17-18, “The woman answered and said, ‘I have no husband.’ Jesus said to her, ‘You have well said, “I have no husband,” for you have had five husbands, and the one who you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly.’” She kind of stammered around a little bit and said, ‘Well, you see, I am not married.’ Jesus smiled and said ‘You’re right; you are not. You have had five husbands and the one you are living with now is not your husband; so you have said the truth, you are not married.’

About this time, v. 19, “The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.’” She said, ‘Somehow, you know something about me that I didn’t tell you, something I had not planned on bringing up. This was not what I had in mind. Suffice it to say that I wasn’t married, but now you press for details. You are right—I have had five husbands and I am living with somebody right now.’

She said, ‘I think You must be a prophet. Now let’s change the subject here from my marriages and my husbands. Why don’t we kind of change the subject; we are getting a little bit personal

here. I just as soon not discuss the subject of my marriages. Tell you what—let me ask You a Bible question. There is this Bible question that I have really been wondering about.’

Verse 20, “‘Our ancestors worshiped in this mountain [Mt. Gerizim], and you *Jews* claim that Jerusalem is the only place where it has been ordained for people to worship.’” She said, ‘I have always wondered and wanted to know: where is the place that men ought to worship?’ Now, don’t you know, that was really the primary thing on her mind for a long time; obviously, she was a very devout woman, right? Human nature hasn’t changed. They are put on the spot, and immediately they start looking to see if there isn’t some way to change the subject.

Jesus told her in vv. 21-22, “...‘Woman, believe Me, the time is coming, when you shall worship the Father neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem! You Samaritans do not even know what you are worshiping because salvation is of the Jews.’” Jesus clearly shows that the Samaritans and the religious tradition that they had preserved were in error. We should not look to the Samaritans or to the text of Scripture that the Samaritans preserved as some kind of an authoritative guide.

Jesus made plain that the Jews were the ones that had preserved what was necessary (Romans 3:1-2). Salvation is of the Jews. They had preserved the correct information.

In vv. 23-24, He went on to explain that God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. What is Jesus doing? He is expounding the message of Pentecost—the message of God’s Spirit and the rivers of living water, worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

You can prove the time setting was immediately prior to Pentecost because of a statement a little bit later on.

In v. 31, “But in the meantime the disciples asked Him, ‘Master, will you eat?’ But He told them, ‘I have food to eat which you know nothing about.’ Therefore the disciples questioned one another, ‘Did anyone bring Him something to eat?’” In their minds they always took everything in a very literal, physical way.

Jesus said in v. 34, “...‘My food is that I should do the will of Him who has sent Me, and that I should finish His work.’” ‘You guys were hungry and the only thing you could think of was going into town and getting something to eat. That was what was primarily on your mind. What was primarily on My mind was doing the work.’

Verse 35, “Didn’t you say that it is yet four months, then the harvest comes? Listen, I tell you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields; because they are already white for harvesting.”

The harvest would have been at the beginning of the seventh month. That was the time of the great fall harvest. Four months earlier would have been at the beginning of the third month. Since Pentecost always comes in the first week of the third month, we are four months prior to the fall festival season, the fall harvest season. This would then put us in the late spring, the time of Pentecost—and that was Christ’s message here.

Verse 43, “But after the two days He left there, and went to Galilee.”

Verses 45-46, “Then when He came into Galilee the Galileans accepted Him, because they had seen everything He had done in Jerusalem during the Feast of Unleavened Bread; because they also had gone to the Feast. Now Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, the same place where He made the water wine. And there was a certain courtier of the king, whose son was sick in Capernaum.”

Now we are going to switch over to Luke 4, which picks up the account.

Luke 4:16, “He came to Nazareth (which is there in Galilee), where He had been brought up: and according to His custom and habit, He entered into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.” This certainly shows Christ’s custom regarding the Sabbath. What was His custom? Well, He went into the synagogue. He assembled with God’s people. This particular expression that is translated “the Sabbath day” is more literally translated from the Greek, “the day of the Sabbaths.” “Sabbaths” is plural; the “day of Sabbaths” or “the day of Weeks” was the Jewish name for Pentecost. So actually it was an annual Sabbath.

He stood up and read this portion of Isaiah (Isaiah 61:1-2; 49:8-9), which was a section of Scripture that was normally read at that time by the Jews as it is recorded here in Luke 4.

Luke 4:18-19, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal those broken in heart and spirit, to proclaim deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away the crushed and oppressed with liberty.”

Now this was the year of 28 A.D.; 29 A.D. was a Jubilee year in the Jubilee cycle. So in that sense, it was literally this special year, this acceptable year of the Lord, which was looked forward to. It

was prophetic of Christ and His ministry, His proclamation of liberty, because that’s what the Jubilee was physically in Israel anciently. It was the time when liberty was proclaimed throughout the land. Well, Jesus came to proclaim true liberty, and there was an outcry. People got upset because of this attitude, ‘Who do You think You are? Why we have known You since You were a little kid. Why we know Your mother, Your father and Your brothers and sisters. Who do you think You are?’

Verse 24, Jesus said a prophet is not without honor except in his own country. That’s the tendency of people, ‘How can you be anything important? I have known you for years. Therefore, that kind of automatically means that you can’t be anything very important because I know you.’ That’s the way people think. The crowd got very upset. Kind of a big mob scene developed, and He just passed through the middle of the crowd and got away.

Jesus goes to Capernaum: Luke 4:31-32 and Matthew 4:13-17.

He came down to Capernaum and taught them on the Sabbath; they were astounded at His doctrine because His message and His preaching were with authority.

We are told in Matthew 4:13, He left Nazareth and He came and lived in Capernaum. We will notice a little bit later the fact that He refers to a specific house, a specific home. Jesus came to Capernaum, and following that Pentecost, He began to proclaim and to preach there.

Matthew 4:17, “From that time Jesus began to proclaim and preach, ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is drawing near!’”

Jesus calls the disciples: Mark 1:16-20, Matthew 4:18-22 and Luke 5:1-11.

We find the account of His walking here by the Sea of Galilee, seeing Simon and Andrew, and telling them ‘follow Me; I am going to make you fishers of men.’

Then, in Mark 1:19-20 and Matthew 4:21-22, a little later He saw James and John, the sons of Zebedee; they left and followed Him.

Luke 5:10 makes plain that James and John were partners with Simon and Andrew. Andrew had been a disciple of John the Baptist. James and John were first cousins to Jesus. These were men who had known Him, had known things about Him, had known the uniqueness of Him, had seen certain of these things and had spent periods of time with Him in the past. They had been with Him on certain occasions such as the wedding feast at Cana. Now He comes and says, ‘I want

you to quit what you're doing and come and follow Me because I have a job for you.' They knew who He was, and they were prepared to make that commitment at that time.

Jesus casts out demons: Mark 1:21-28 and Luke 4:33-37.

Mark 1:21-27, Christ enters into the synagogue in Capernaum and heals the man with the demon.

Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law: Mark 1:29-31, Luke 4:38-39 and Matthew 8:14-15.

Mark 1:29-31, "And soon after leaving the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. And Simon Peter's mother-in-law was lying in bed sick with a fever, and immediately they spoke to Him concerning her. And He came to her, and took her by her hand, and lifted her up. Then the fever immediately left her, and she served them."

The Catholics teach that Peter was the first Pope, but he was not. It makes it very plain here that he was also married. He had a mother-in-law. How can you have a mother-in-law if you are not married? Christ healed her.

After the Sabbath, Jesus heals many: Mark 1:32-34, Luke 4:40-41 and Matthew 8:16-17.

Mark 1:32-34, "Then when evening came (when the Sabbath ended), they brought to Him all who were diseased, and those who were possessed by demons. And the entire city was assembled together at the door. So He healed many that were sick with various diseases, and He cast out many demons. But He didn't allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him." His fame spread far and wide as a result of these things. It's in this context of time that we come to what is called the Sermon on the Mount.

Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5, 6, 7 and Luke 6:20-49.

In reality, the Sermon on the Mount was really more of a private teaching to the disciples.

It is made plain in Matthew 5:1-2, "But seeing the multitudes He went up into the mountains and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him, and He opened His mouth and He taught them." So what is called the Sermon on the Mount is really more of a private teaching, as He was seated there on a mountain with His disciples gathered around Him in a small group; He was teaching them.

What is called the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5, 6 and 7) is essential in terms of understanding what the New Covenant is all about. When God made the Old Covenant with ancient Israel, Moses stood on the mountain and gave to those who had accepted the Old

Covenant (which was based on the Ten Commandments) the statutes and judgments (Exodus 21, 22, 23). The statutes and judgments were the application of the principles of the Ten Commandments to a physical people and to physical circumstances. It was the physical application of the principles of the law to a civil nation. That was the basis of the Old Covenant. Jesus in Matthew 5, 6 and 7 gives the basis of the New Covenant, the application of the spiritual principles of the Ten Commandments to a spiritual people.

He begins to teach, starting out by showing what real happiness is and where real blessings come from. The word "blessings" here is the Greek word "*makarios*," which can also be rendered "happy." People grasp after happiness; they search for happiness. They are looking for and pursuing happiness, but Jesus explains that what really leads to happiness and blessings is an attitude, a state of mind—a state of mind of being totally yielded to God, of having God's perspective, of recognizing your dependence on God, of recognizing and really desiring God's way, of being yielded and surrendered to God. That's what really brings happiness. When you are completely yielded and surrendered to God, there is a peace and a happiness that is produced.

Jesus makes plain in Matthew 5:17 that He didn't come to abolish or to destroy the law. People think Christ came to do away with the law. But Christ says, 'Don't think that I've come to destroy the Law or the Prophets.' So people immediately think the law's done away. Where do they get that? Jesus said, 'Don't think I am come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill.'—To fill it up to the full!

Isaiah 42:21, "...He will magnify the law and make it honorable."

Matthew 5:20, "...that except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees you shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of heaven." The scribes and Pharisees lived in outward conformity to the law. It is not simply to conform to the law. You have to be transformed and renewed in the way you think, on the inside. It is not enough to simply go through the motions of outward obedience. There needs to be a changed heart and mind to accompany it. We have to conform inwardly, as well as outwardly.

Jesus then continues and He begins to expand and amplify. He illustrates the principles of the law. Notice here as we go through.

In Matthew 5:21, I will just call your attention to, “You have heard that it was said by them of old time....”

Verse 22, “But I say unto you....”

Coming down in v. 27, “You have heard that it was said by them of old time....”

Verse 28, “But I say unto you....”

Verse 31, “It has been said of them of old times....”

Verse 34, “But I say unto you....”

Verse 38, “You have heard it has been said....”

Verse 44, “But I say unto you....”

Christ goes through and picks out six principles that He says, ‘This is what you have always understood; this is what has been taught. But I am telling you, I am amplifying and magnifying.’

Matthew 5:21-22, “You have heard that it was said to the ancients, “You shall not commit murder,” but whosoever shall commit murder shall be subject to the judgment. But I tell you, that everyone who is even superficially angry with his brother shall be subject to the judgment. You have heard that it was said to the ancients, Whoever shall say to his brother, “Raca,” shall be in danger of the council: but I tell you, Whoever shall say, “You fool,” shall be subject to the fire of Gehenna.”

The first thing He addressed was the matter of violence, anger, resentment and hostility to others. He expounded the commandment on murder. He said, ‘You have heard that you are simply not to kill; you are not to do violence to your neighbor; but I am telling you that is not enough.’ It is not enough to simply refrain from picking up a gun and “blowing him away.” You can’t hold this attitude of hostility or resentment. You can’t hold on to resentment.

Verses 23-24, when you bring your gift to the altar and then remember your brother has something against you, go be reconciled to your brother—and then come offer your gift. You have to be willing to make amends; you can’t hold on to those resentments and hostility. You can’t carry that around because the magnification of the commandment on murder says you don’t harbor the spirit of murder. A lot of people don’t commit murder simply for the reason they are scared of getting caught. They don’t want to go to prison. They have better things to do. Because they are afraid they will get caught, they don’t do it. God wants something that goes beyond just being scared of getting caught. He wants us to come to have an attitude that He has.

And then Christ continued and said in Matthew 5:27-28, “You have heard that it was said to the ancients, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I tell you that whosoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” ‘You are not supposed to commit adultery. You thought that simply meant that while you are married to this woman, you are not supposed to go out with another woman. Well, I am telling you that it is not enough. It involves the whole attitude of lust. You don’t let something get in your way of obedience to Me.’

Then He went on even further concerning the matter of divorce.

Verses 31-32, “It was also said, “Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.” But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.”

‘You thought it was a simple matter that if you wanted to get rid of your wife, you just give her a writing of divorcement, and that’s all there was to it. That’s what the scribes have told you, but I am telling you that if you do that [He is speaking here to His disciples] except for the cause of sexual immorality [Greek, “*porneia*,” “gross immorality”], you cause her to commit adultery.’ Christ showed here that in terms of His disciples, those who were His followers, the matter of divorce and remarriage was not something that He permitted. He didn’t permit His disciples to put away their mates.

Now Paul clarified the situation in I Corinthians 7 dealing with the Corinthians, where the question arose: what about circumstances that happened before you came into the knowledge of the truth? What happens about circumstances in your past before you became Christ’s disciple?

Paul explained in I Corinthians 7:17-24 that in a case like that, “every man abides in the situation where he is called.” You can’t go back and start ten years ago. You start where you are when you come into the knowledge of the truth. Christ is speaking to those who knew the truth, those who were His disciples. He said, ‘This kind of stuff that you’ve heard and you’ve done—that “won’t wash.” That is not what I intended from the beginning.’

Matthew 5:33-34, “Again you have heard that it was said to the ancients, “You shall not perjure yourself [swear], but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.” But I say to you, do not swear at

all....” ‘You’ve heard that you ought to perform your oath. I am telling you that this is not enough. You shouldn’t even be swearing because, by the very fact of swearing, you are making a distinction that, “Boy, I am really telling the truth this time.” Well, if you have to make such a big deal that you are telling the truth, what are you doing the rest of the time?’

Verse 37, Christ said, “...let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and your “No,” “No.”...” As His disciple, you don’t have to go around sticking your hand on a stack of Bibles swearing and calling on God to witness, ‘Man, I am really telling the truth this time!’ Just tell the truth! It’s not enough just to tell the truth when you swear that you are not lying. He says, ‘I expect you to tell the truth—period.’ You don’t have to make a big deal of it. If you open your mouth, whatever comes out must be the truth. That’s all it means—“yea,” “yea” and “nay,” “nay.”

Matthew 5:38-39, ““You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” But I say to you, do not retaliate with evil: but whoever shall strike you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.””

You’ve seen the bumper stickers, “Don’t get mad, get even.” Christ did not subscribe to that philosophy. That principle, “an eye for an eye,” as was given in the Old Testament was a principle of civil justice. In other words, it simply meant that the punishment had to fit the crime.

If you look in even fairly recent history, European history through the 1700s and early 1800s, you find some horrible punishments being meted out for some very minor crimes. Well, the principle that God gave to ancient Israel was “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” You don’t exact more than the value of the crime. It didn’t mean they gouged out eyes and teeth. If you go back, you find in Exodus 21-23 that there were actually fines that were levied. It was simply an expression that the punishment fit the crime.

What Christ is telling His disciples is, ‘Look, this does not apply in personal dealings. You don’t have some kind of personal vendetta to get even. You put your cause in God’s hands. That’s not a principle that carries over into private feuds and vengeance. Don’t have this attitude that nobody is going to get by with anything with me. Be peaceable. I am telling you that you need to have a peaceable attitude and be willing even to suffer loss to keep the peace.’

Verses 43-44, ““You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy,” but I am saying, love your enemies and

bless those who curse you; do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you, and persecute you.””

It’s not enough simply to love the ones that love you and hate everybody else. If you do that, you’re not “one up” on sinners. That’s no big deal; a lot of people do that. You have gangsters who like their friends and hate their enemies. You’re not “one up” on anybody else when you do that, but rather, have God’s attitude, which is the attitude of love and concern.

In v. 48, Christ magnifies and sums up, ““Therefore you shall become perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”” In other words, become like God. That’s what the New Covenant is all about—the law being written in our hearts and in our minds. Christ is amplifying and expounding it. Chapter 5 is dealing with the way we think and the way we are, which carries over into what we do.

In Matthew 6, He begins to deal with other matters. He deals with things we do—the outward displays of religion, the giving of alms, making offerings and prayer. Christ emphasizes things that are acts of worship need to be private acts of worship between you and God. When you are going to make a gift or give an offering, you do it privately. Don’t be as the hypocrites and sound the trumpet before you to make sure everybody is looking and then drop it in coin by coin. Religion was what they did to impress other people. Christ said your religion needs to be between you and God, not something you put on as a public display to impress others.

It’s the same thing with prayer. At the time of the morning and evening sacrifice (roughly at about 9 A.M. and 3 P.M.), a coal from the altar of burnt offerings was taken into the Holy Place and placed in the altar of incense. Incense was sprinkled on it and the odors of incense wafted up and filled the Holy Place into the Holy of Holies.

We are told in Revelation 5:8 this symbolized the prayers of the saints. The Jews understood that symbolism, and they came to regard the time of the burnt offerings as the hour of prayer. Some of the Pharisees took upon themselves the custom of making a point of praying at those particular times when that ceremony was being carried out in the temple. They thought, ‘Well, that symbolizes our prayers going before God, so we’ll make a point of praying at that time.’

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with that. The Pharisees, however, made such a fetish out of it that they would make a point of being out on

the street at that time. They started into these prayers because, after all, it was the hour of prayer. It was something they wanted, in effect, to impress everybody else with and make them feel kind of spiritually inferior—‘I’m praying, why aren’t you?’

Christ emphasized, ‘Look, when you pray, go to God; go in a private place.’ Now there are certainly examples of very brief public prayers. Christ on several occasions gave public prayers such as the blessing of a meal or invoking God’s presence at a particular occasion. In the Old Testament, you find Solomon doing that at the dedication of the temple. We find reference to it being done in the Church. But it was very brief public prayer offered by one on behalf of the congregation. It was not the prayer life of the individual. Christ was making reference to people who were doing what they did to be seen of men.

Christ went on to expound about prayer and said, ‘This is the way you pray; this is the way you do it.

Verse 7, “...don’t use vain and empty chants, as the pagans do...” So what do people do? They have taken what Christ gave to the disciples as an outline, and they memorize it and parrot it out. They just rattled it off and made a vain repetition out of it. There is nothing wrong with memorizing this piece of scripture any more than there is anything else. But when something is just repeated over and over in a meaningless fashion, like an “Our Father” or “Hail Mary,” just repeated over and over and over, it becomes meaningless. It is a vain repetition; that’s not what prayer is all about.

Prayer is communication with God. You’re talking to God. Christ told the disciples this is the way you do it. He gave them the outline, and people memorize the outline instead of filling in the details. They just parrot the outline over and over again until it becomes meaningless. He emphasized the way that we should go about it. We are to address God as our Father, praising Him, desiring and acknowledging our need for Him, His Kingdom and the time when His will shall be completely fulfilled on this earth. We pray about our needs and ask God for forgiveness. We ask God to help us to not be overwhelmed with sore trials, but rather, delivered from Satan’s power and influence.

He continued and expounded on the subject of forgiveness in Matthew 6.

Matthew 6:14-15, “Because if you forgive men their sins, your heavenly Father will forgive your

sins. But if you don’t forgive men their sins, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your sins against Him.” The matter of forgiveness is a very important matter to understand. If we want to receive forgiveness, we have to be prepared to give it out. We cannot go around holding a grudge, resentment and animosity, and then expect to receive God’s mercy and God’s forgiveness.

He continued and discussed fasting.

Verses 16-18, “When you fast, do not be as those sanctimonious pretenders, affecting a gloomy, mournful appearance; because they contort their faces in order that they may show off to men that they are fasting. Truly, I tell you, this is their reward. But when you are fasting, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not give the appearance to men that you are fasting, but rather, fast to your Father who is in secret: and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” Again, it is something that is to be private. It reflects our private worship to God.

He then emphasized the fact that where our treasure is, that’s where our heart is going to be.

Verses 19-20, “Do not store up wealth and treasure for yourselves upon the earth, where moth and rust spoil, and where thieves can burglarize and steal. But instead, store up wealth and treasure for yourselves in heaven, where neither moth nor rust spoil, and where thieves do not burglarize or steal: because where your wealth and treasure is, there is where your heart will be also.” There’s a balance in our attitude in terms of our service to God with the material and physical things.

There is recognition that, as it says in Matthew 6:33, “But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” Put God first and everything else will fall in place. It is not a matter that we don’t need physical things. It is just a matter of getting our priorities straight.

In Matthew 7:1-5, He showed the kind of attitude that we are to have—not a judging, condemning kind of an attitude.

He sums it all up here. The whole meaning of the Law and the Prophets is summed up.

Verse 12, “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” In other words, the whole point of God’s law is to treat people the way you want to be treated. It is a matter of love, outgoing concern

In v. 21, Jesus also went on to make plain that not everyone who says “Lord, Lord” is going to enter the Kingdom. There are those who think that all you have to do is say, “I believe.”

James brings out in James 2:19, ““You believe there is one God, you do well. But the demons also believe—and tremble.”” If all you do is to believe in God, you are not even “one step up” on the devil. He believes in God. He knows that. It is a matter that, in James 2:17-18, “faith without works is dead.”

Jesus brings out here in Matthew 7:21, ““Not everyone who calls Me “Lord, Lord” is going to enter into the kingdom of heaven, but only He who is doing and practicing the will of My Father who is in heaven.”” It’s not just a matter of saying “Lord, Lord”; it is a matter of obeying and serving God, of yielding and surrendering to God. That’s what’s involved. If we really believe God, we are going to surrender to Him.

Jesus went on to make a contrast between the way that leads to life and the way that leads to death.

Matthew 7:13-14, ““Enter in through the narrow gate, because wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction and many there be that go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and straight is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it.”” There is a distinction that God’s way—the pathway that leads to life—is a narrow pathway. The way that leads to destruction is very wide and broad because that’s the one that most are on. If you’re on the road that everybody else is on, you’re on the wrong road—that is kind of what it comes down to.

A lot of people think, ‘How can all these people be wrong?’ The question is not how can they all be wrong, the question is how can they all be right? Christ made plain that most people weren’t going to be on the right road. So if you’re on the road and you look around and, ‘Boy, everybody is headed this way,’ you better go back and look again at the road signs because you made a wrong turn somewhere. Christ makes a contrast. We can’t just do something because others are doing it. That’s one of the worse reasons in the world to do it. ‘Well, I saw everybody else do it. I saw them do it, and I thought I’d just do the same thing.’

Christ makes it plain we need to be doing what we are doing because we are trying to follow Him. We are trying to be like Him. When you make decisions and choices in your life, they need to be based on the fact that you are trying to become more like Christ, not more like the world

or more like somebody else. Jesus Christ is the One we are trying to copy. We are trying to emulate His attitude. We need to examine what we do, the way we are in comparison to Him. He’s our standard.

False prophets known by their fruit: Matthew 7:15-20 and Luke 6:43-45.

He warns us in Matthew 7:15, ““But be on guard against false prophets, who come to you dressed as innocent sheep but within they are extorting and ravenous wolves.”” The devil doesn’t show up with a little sign hanging around his neck saying, ‘I am the devil; I am here to deceive you.’ You can always recognize the devil because he has a red suit and pitchfork in his hand, right? He never shows up that way. He shows up as an angel of light (II Corinthians 11:14).

As the Sermon on the Mount concludes, we continue the account in Mark 2.

Mark 2:1, “And after some days He came back into Capernaum, and the news circulated that He was in the house.” In other words, the news circulated that He was back home again. That’s an indication that He had a house; he had His own home there in Capernaum. We saw earlier of a move that He made from Nazareth to Capernaum. When He got back to Capernaum, the news was that He was simply in the house. He was back at home. People knew where to come. It was a specific house where they expected Him to be.

Jesus heals on the Sabbath: Mark 2:3-12, Luke 5:17-26 and Matthew 9:2-8.

Mark 2:3-4, there were some who had a friend who was paralyzed, and they wanted to bring him in to have Christ heal him. But there were so many people crowding in that they couldn’t even get in. So they climbed up on the roof, cut a hole in it and let him down that way.

Now I think we understand that the kind of roofs they had were not our steep pitched Acadian-style roofs. Probably all five of them would have needed to be healed if that was the case. Somebody probably would have fallen off. Roofs are steep-pitched in this area because it is an area where there is a lot of rain. Capernaum was an area where there was very little rain, and they didn’t need a steep pitch on the roof. They generally had a flat roof, and they would use it as extra living quarters. Often that would be the case or, if you had a shady area, you could pitch kind of a little canopy up there. You could “catch” a breeze and it would be pleasant.

But anyway, they got up on top of this flat roof, dug back and let this guy down. Christ healed him.

Notice in v. 5, He told the man, "...your sins have been forgiven'...", and the Pharisees and scribes got all upset.

Verse 7, "'Why does this man speak blasphemies this way? Who is able to forgive sins except God?'" 'Who do You think you are to forgive sins?'

He said, v. 9, "'Which is easier to say to the paralytic: 'your sins have been forgiven you,' or to tell him, 'Stand up! Pick up your bed, and walk?'" When the guy got up and left, that kind of clenched the argument. See, it is easy to say, 'I forgive you and your sins are forgiven.' How do you know though that they speak with authority? Well, if they tell you, 'Rise, take up your bed,' and *you walk*. By "bed" He meant like a little bedroll. He was not talking about picking up your Sealy Posturepedic and putting it on your shoulder. It was like a sleeping bag or something. So that kind of clenched the argument as to 'whom do You think You are to forgive sin?' Obviously God was paying attention.

We might just notice here a couple of other things.

Matthew is called: Mark 2:13-14, Luke 5:27-28 and Matthew 9:9.

Mark 2:14-16 is when Levi (also known as Matthew) the son of Alphaeus was called.

Scribes and Pharisees accuse Christ: Mark 2:16-17, Luke 5:30-32 and Matthew 9:11-13.

Matthew 9:11-13, the Pharisees were upset when they saw Jesus going in and eating with Matthew and some of his friends. They asked, 'Why are you associating with these sinners?' Christ said He hadn't come to call the righteous (or actually those who thought they were righteous) to repentance, but those who knew they were sinners. Christ said, 'These people, by your definition, are sinners. They are the ones that need to repent. You don't need to repent; why should I take up My time with you? You don't think you have anything to repent of. You figure they have a lot to repent of; maybe I better tell them about it.' He just put it back on them because they were standing there always ready to carp and criticize because they were jealous. They resented the authority with which He spoke, and they felt like He was going to take away their following.

Parable of the wineskins: Mark 2:21-22, Luke 5:36-39 and Matthew 9:16-17.

In Luke 5:36-39, there is an interesting expression that is sometimes not clearly understood, "And also He spoke a parable to them: 'No one puts a new piece of cloth on an old garment; otherwise the new tears from the old garment, and the old does not agree with the new piece of cloth. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst open the wineskins and be poured out, and the wineskins will be destroyed. But new wine should be put into new wineskins, and them both are preserved together. Also, no one having drunk the old wine, immediately desires the new wine; because he says, "The old is better."'"

The wineskins were made out of leather and they stretched and expanded. The gasses and the fermentation process stretched them out. By the time it was over with, they had been used and the leather was set. It wasn't going to expand anymore; it would burst. Christ said to put new wine in new wine skins and both are preserved. No one having drunk the old wine immediately desires the new, as the old is better.

This is a parable. Christ gives a very important principle. You see, new truth can't be added to an old approach to life. The new and the old don't go together—it won't fit. People are more comfortable with the old because it is familiar, but when you learn God's truth, you can't simply patch it onto your old way of life. It is an entirely new way of life. You can't fit in a few elements of God's truth (the new wine, so to speak); you can't fit that in with the old way because it will just burst it asunder. It takes a new way of life to be conformable to God's truth.

I have already commented on the Sermon on the Mount in regards to Christ's office as Mediator of the New Covenant. The whole basis of the New Covenant is the amplification of the principles of the Ten Commandments applied to a spiritual nation. We find right here in the Sermon on the Mount that Christ amplified the principles in Matthew 5, 6 and 7, just as Moses in Exodus 21, 22 and 23 amplified the principles in terms of dealing on a physical basis with a physical, carnal nation.

The key word in Exodus 21, 22 and 23, over and over again, was the word "IF." If a man shall do such and such, this is what you do. That's what Moses had to be concerned with. Because the people didn't have a heart to obey, all these "ifs" were given. He finished giving the Ten Commandments, but what do you do if somebody does this or somebody does that? What do you do when this happens? You are

dealing with a civil nation. Well, if this happens, then this is what you do; if that happens, then you do this. It goes through Exodus 21, 22 and 23.

Now Christ in Matthew 5, 6 and 7 doesn't deal with all of these "what ifs" because this is a message directed to people whom God is writing His laws in their hearts and minds—people who have a heart to obey, people who are wanting to surrender to God. He explains the principle: this is what you are supposed to become. This is really the principle of the law magnified. This is what God was really driving at, not simply a list of, "this is what is going to happen if you do this, and this is what you do if you do that." It was a different approach given for a different people for different circumstances.

I hope this has given you a little bit of insight into this portion of Scripture—Passover 28 A.D. to Passover 29 A.D. We are one year and a half into Christ's ministry. We are going to pick it up next time at the Passover of 29 A.D. We are going to find that as we get further along, the scripture begins to go into more and more detail, and we will go into greater and greater lengths of detail on some of this.

Bible Study # 31 Questions

SURVEY OF THE GOSPELS AND ACTS SERIES

Matthew 4:12—9:17; Mark 1:14—2:22; Luke 4:14—5:39; John 2:13—4:54

1. What convinced the people that Jesus was the Christ? Did even the Pharisees believe that He was sent by God?
2. What does it mean to be “born again”?
3. What did Jesus Christ teach about going to heaven?
4. In what holy day season did Jesus talk to the Samaritan woman? In that context, what did He explain to her?
5. What was Christ’s custom regarding the Sabbath day?
6. Was the “Sermon on the Mount” really a sermon to the multitudes?
7. Explain Matthew 5:20.
8. How did Christ amplify the Commandment against murder?
9. Explain Matthew 5:29-30.
10. What are the only grounds on which a Christian can put away his mate and be free to remarry?
11. Is a Christian to exact vengeance when wronged?
12. What instruction did Christ give concerning prayer?
13. What instruction did Christ give concerning forgiveness?
14. How do we balance our attitude toward God and service to God with material and physical needs?
15. What verse sums up the whole meaning of the law and prophets?
16. Will everyone who says that he believes Jesus Christ is Lord enter into the kingdom?
17. How did Christ contrast the way that leads to destruction with the way that leads to life?
18. How did Christ answer the Pharisees’ complaint that He ate with publicans and sinners?
19. Explain the parable of the wine skins.
20. Explain the significance of the “Sermon on the Mount” in regard to Christ’s office as Mediator of the New Covenant.

Bible Study # 32
March 14, 1989
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Gospels and Acts Series—Matthew 8, 11, 12, 13; Mark 2:23—4:20; Luke 6:1—8:15; John 5

This evening we **are covering the period from the Passover of 29 A.D. until the Feast of Tabernacles of the same year, 29 A.D.** It was during this period of time that Jesus passed the halfway point of His three and one-half year ministry. We want to note some things concerning that this evening.

The last Bible study covered the time between the Passover 28 A.D. and the Passover 29 A.D. Remember Jesus began His public ministry at the fall festival season of 27 A.D. That was when He appeared where John was baptizing by the River Jordan. Jesus came there and was baptized by John. He remained there preaching for a short period of time. We are not told how long. Within a short period of time, He returned to Galilee and went to Cana for a wedding feast that is recorded. Then within a short period of time after that, His first public miracle is recorded. He left, went away into the wilderness by Himself, fasted for forty days and was tempted of Satan. He went through this period of time and returned from there; we picked up the story with His coming to Jerusalem at the Passover of 28 A.D., which was about six months after He had been baptized by John.

He made a very dramatic appearance in Jerusalem. He came in and chased the moneychangers out of the temple. We went through the whole thing. You remember the whole story. Last Bible study we focused in on that time period. We picked it up there as He cleansed the temple. Then He began that period of privately teaching of His disciples.

Now understand that Jesus had more than twelve disciples. There were twelve of the disciples that were ordained as apostles. We will note that this evening. A disciple was anyone who followed Him. At the end of His public ministry, the time that is recorded in Acts 1, there were one hundred twenty acknowledged followers—one hundred twenty disciples or students. Out of that one hundred twenty, there were twelve that He singled out and ordained as apostles.

Remember the story in Acts 1, after Judas had committed suicide and Simon Peter and the rest of the eleven were gathered in the upper room.

They said they needed someone to take Judas' place and that it needed to be someone who was with them from the beginning. So they singled out two individuals, as recorded in Acts 1, who they said had been with them from the beginning. In other words, the two had been among the disciples; they were not one of the twelve, but were disciples or students. They had been there, had seen the things that Jesus had done and had heard firsthand the things He had said. In that sense, they could testify as an eyewitness of the resurrection and of the things that had transpired.

During this year we have the private teaching to His disciples, the Sermon on the Mount and various things that are recorded.

We pick up the story this evening around the time of the Passover 29 A.D. This was about a year and a half after Jesus had begun His public ministry. We will focus on a six-month period of 29 A.D. The bulk of this time Jesus spent in Galilee.

The religious establishment, the Pharisees and particularly the Sadducees (the priestly group), was centered in Jerusalem. If you look at a map, you find there are three areas that make up what we call the Holy Land. There was in the southern part around Jerusalem the province of Judea. North of Judea was the Roman province of Samaria; north of Samaria was the province of Galilee. These three taken together plus some territory on the other side of the Jordan River make up the ancient kingdom of Israel.

Later when they split after Solomon's death, it consisted of Judah in the south and the kingdom of Israel in the north. Israel was taken into captivity; then a little over a hundred years later, Judah was taken into captivity. Judah (the Jews) was the only ones that ever returned. They came back and they settled, not only in the southern area around Jerusalem, but gradually, as time went on, they spread out and settled in some of the other areas that had been anciently the territory of Israel.

The areas of Samaria and Galilee were both parts of what had been the territory of the northern tribes. The northern tribes were moved out. Babylonians were brought in to take their place and were settled there by the king of Assyria (II Kings 17). These Babylonians became known as Samaritans, taking their name from Samaria, which was the capital city of ancient Israel. In our Old Testament series, we studied them and the great antipathy that was present between them and the Jews. The Jews

really looked down on and despised the Samaritans. There had been various problems in the past.

Then north of Samaria there was an area of Jewish settlement known as Galilee. Now the Jews in Judea tended to look down on Galilee and Galileans. The Jews in Judea were a very exclusivist group. They really looked down on anyone else. In Judea they did not have a lot of contact with non-Jews. They didn't have to, other than some of the Roman occupation troops and things of this sort. They really had very limited contact with non-Jews.

Galilee was an area where the population was a little more diverse. There were Jewish settlements, Jewish communities predominantly, but there was a significant Gentile settlement in the area. It tended to be more involved in direct trade and commerce. There was a lot more contact with non-Jews. The Jews in Judea kind of looked down on the Galileans. They viewed or compared the territory of ancient Israel to the temple. They compared Jerusalem to the Holy of Holies, Judea as being the Holy Place, and they called Galilee the court of the Gentiles. This was kind of the area on the periphery.

So they had a kind of disparaging, patronizing attitude toward the Galileans. That's not uncommon because you can go around the world and can find that virtually anywhere you go, whoever is there, they have someone else they look down upon. That seems to be human nature. People want to look for somebody they can look down upon. So the Jews, who looked down upon a number of people, looked down upon the Jews who lived in Galilee. They looked down on the Jews who lived in Diaspora even more because they were really in contact with the Gentiles.

You have to kind of get the picture of it and realize when Jesus came in and began to preach. In John 1:46, they said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth [Galilee]?" That was kind of their attitude. If it was of any value, certainly it originated in Judea and in Jerusalem. Anything of value, anybody who knows anything originates from right there. 'I mean, obviously, if this guy knew very much, He would be one of us. How could He be anything of value; He comes from way up there.'

We have regional and sectional conflicts in our nation and our society today—same thing. Human nature is basically the same all the way down. Jesus knew that when He began to spend a lot of time in Jerusalem and Judea; He was going to very quickly come into really strong conflict

with the religious leaders because He was going to be right there in their territory, on their turf. And it wasn't going to be long before they were going to resent it—and how! They were jealous of Him because, as they viewed it, He came in and did these things, said these things that people were impressed with. They flocked to hear Him, and they ignored them as religious leaders.

They worried, 'We are going to lose our status, our position. We have a good thing going. We are the ones that everybody looks to. Then He comes in here and people start paying attention to Him, acknowledge Him and want to listen to Him. They are impressed with Him. He performs these miracles and preaches these powerful sermons; we don't like the effect it is having on the people. What's more, we are afraid that He is going to stir up something, and the Roman government is going to intervene because He is talking about a Kingdom of God. He is talking about being the Messiah, or people are talking about that and saying that He is the Messiah. All we need is something that provokes the Romans, and they will send in troops. They will "smash" us and we are out of a job. We don't want that!'

Jesus knew that when He started spending a lot of time in Jerusalem and Judea, a crisis was going to come to a head very quickly. The result was that Jesus did not stay there in Jerusalem a great deal of the time of His ministry. He would come up there for the holy days, would be there for periods of time and then He would leave—just be gone out of the way. He would be up in Galilee and other areas, preaching and teaching, but He was kind of out on the periphery.

The Jews tended to think that anything of significance had to be going on where they were. It's kind of like today. The power centers in our nation are Washington, D.C. and New York City. People who are part of the Eastern power establishment tend to view anything going on in (as they would view it) the "backwater" areas of the country, well, that can't be of any significance. If it were important, it would be going on right there in Washington or New York. How can something of value be going on in Lafayette, Louisiana? Nothing of value could be going on there because, after all, they are the ones who are where the center of power and money and control and everything else is. People tend to have that kind of shortsighted outlook. That's true in our time today, and it's true in other times, other societies. It's the nature of things.

During the time that we are going to cover this evening, Jesus was going over Galilee, city by city. Galilee, although it was looked down upon, was really the richest part of Palestine. Palestine at the time of Christ was divided into Judea, Samaria and Galilee. Alfred Edersheim in his classic work, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, quotes various ancient sources to prove that Galilee had upwards of two hundred forty cities and towns of fifteen thousand inhabitants or more. Josephus points out that it was a rich area that teemed with agriculture. The climate was described as being the best in Palestine, and there were great forests in that area at that time—dissimilar to what it is today. Anciently the whole land was a land flowing with milk and honey.

As a result of misuse and as a result of God's removal of His blessing, various problems came in. And, of course, we have seen parallels in more modern times. As an area is denuded of its forests, the patterns of rainfall change, the climate tends to change and various problems come in. Things have changed since then, but at that time, Galilee was really the richest area agriculturally in Palestine.

The Sea of Galilee, which was there, was famous for its abundance of fish. The entire area was a rather prosperous commercial area. Caravan routes came through there. It was an area that had a lot of contact with the Gentiles. This is where Christ grew up, and it is also the area where He spent a great deal of His public ministry.

During the time period we are covering this evening, shortly after the Days of Unleavened Bread in 29 A.D., the twelve apostles were selected from among Christ's disciples and ordained. Now, we should take note of the apostles and who they were. Sometimes if you have seen some of the movies, they really don't give an accurate view. It shows one of the accounts we will read this evening of Christ walking by and seeing **Peter and Andrew**. He tells them, 'Come and follow Me; I will make you fishers of men.' As that kind of thing is introduced in the movie, you see Him come by and kind of "lays eyes" on these guys—transfixes them with a stare. It's almost as though there is a hypnotic effect; they drop what they are doing and follow off.

Well, it wasn't that way. He had known Peter and Andrew for a period of time. Andrew and Peter both knew Him. Andrew, in particular, had been a disciple of John the Baptist and was there when Jesus was baptized. John had pointed out Jesus to His disciples. Andrew followed Him because

John had pointed Him out. Plus, Peter and Andrew (who were brothers) were in a fishing partnership with James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

James and John were the sons of Zebedee and their mother's name was Salome. Salome was a sister to Mary, the mother of Jesus. So that meant that James and John were first cousins of Jesus Christ. They had known about Him from the time of early childhood. Since they did not grow up in the same town, we don't know exactly how much contact they had. But, undoubtedly, they had some contact, particularly at festival times, as they would tend to travel together to Jerusalem to the Feasts and things of that sort.

So they certainly knew who He was and there was a contact there. On occasion they had spent time with Him, had listened to Him and had been with Him. By the time He told Peter, 'come, follow Me and I will make you fishers of men,' Peter and Andrew had been with Him on a number of occasions, had heard Him preach and had probably been there at Cana of Galilee and had seen the turning of the water into wine. They had heard the Sermon on the Mount; they had been with Him from time to time at various occasions.

They were in business for themselves and would be gone for periods of time, but they were there spending time with Christ when He was in the locale. They were students as well as disciples, but they had not turned their back on their business. So at this point Jesus told them, 'I have something in store for you that will go beyond what you are doing. You need to leave that and come follow Me full time.' By that time, they knew enough and were convinced enough that they were prepared to do so.

We read also of **Philip** who was a native of Bethsaida. He was a friend of James, John, Peter and Andrew; he was also a disciple of John the Baptist.

Bartholomew was also known as Nathaniel. Bartholomew is really a surname. "Bar" in Hebrew or in Aramaic (which is virtually the equivalent of Hebrew) signifies "son of." "Bartholomew" means "the son of Tholomey or Tholomew." The term "bar" was commonly used, like where Jesus referred to Peter as "Simon Barjona." That just meant "Simon, the son of Jonah." So Bartholomew or Nathaniel, as he was also called, was a native of Cana. Philip introduced him to Jesus Christ.

We are not told much about **Thomas** in terms of his background. According to tradition, he was born in Antioch.

Matthew is also known as Levi. He is described as the son of Alphaeus. He was a tax collector from Capernaum. We have two other individuals who are referred to as the sons of Alphaeus. There is no specific mention of **James**, the son of Alphaeus, and Judas (not Iscariot), also known as **Thaddaeus or Lebbaeus**. He is called Labbaeus Thaddaeus in one case or Judas (not Iscariot). That particular Judas that is mentioned here and James, the son of Alphaeus, were bothers.

There was a third brother in the group; **Simon** the Zealot was also a brother of James, the son of Alphaeus. This particular Simon, Judas and James were the sons of Alphaeus. Their mother was another sister of Mary, the mother of Christ. So, those three were also cousins. Simon the Zealot is called Simon the Canaanite in one account. The term “Canaanite” in that context refers to “a political faction”; it was a nationalist faction. The Zealots were out to overthrow the Roman government.

Now, note here, the people that Christ called. Christ called individuals out of a wide variety of backgrounds. They came out of divergent political backgrounds. Christ’s disciples did not remain in those backgrounds. They did not remain involved in politics. Simon didn’t keep trying to go out and overthrow the Roman government. If you want the two extremes, you have Simon the Zealot and Matthew who was a Roman tax collector.

Now the Jews really resented Roman occupation. They resented that greatly because, as they viewed it, they said, ‘Look, God gave this land to us. Who are these pagan Romans coming in here “lording it” over us? They really think they are something; but really they are nothing because we are the chosen people, and God gave this land to us. These pagan Romans are coming in here “lording it” over us and oppressing us and taking taxes.’ They really resented that anyone would do such a thing. So they despised Jews who worked in cooperation with the Roman government.

For a parallel, go back in American History to the time of the reconstruction after the War Between the States. Nobody was hated worse in the South than the group called the “Scalawags”—Southerners who collaborated with the Carpetbaggers because they could see that was the way to success and money. Their own people hated them because they viewed

them as a collaborator, a “turncoat.” You can look at other parallels and examples of history. That’s one that would be more familiar to us, but you can look at other parallels.

Nobody is more unpopular than someone who is viewed as a traitor to his own. ‘You have turned your back on us, your own people, and you are in collaboration with those that we view as the enemy.’ They actually hated them worse than they did the enemy. ‘The enemy is from outside and came in—we can understand that. But you—you are a “turncoat”.’ That’s the way Matthew was viewed.

You have to understand how the Jews looked down on what they called the “Publicans.” “Publican” simply meant “someone who held public responsibility, public office, an employee of the Roman government,” which meant that they were in continual contact with the Romans. They were viewed as collaborators with the Roman government, plus the fact that many or most of the tax collectors were notorious for being crooks.

The Romans operated on a principle that the tax collector was paid on a percentage basis. The more he collected, the more he made, which gave incentive to be an industrious tax collector. Because the Romans wanted to make sure they got “theirs,” they figured the best way was to pay the guy on a percentage basis. That way he would get a lot more for them. The more he got for them, the more he got for himself, which you can imagine did not endear the tax collector to the people.

So you had on that extreme one such as Matthew. On the other hand, you had Simon the Zealot who was a really revolutionary firebrand type. That’s what the Zealots were; they were kind of an ultra nationalist movement. They used everything from guerilla tactics and techniques to drive out and overthrow the Romans. They were involved in various methods of political propaganda and attempts to stir up and incite rebellion. They were ready to go to war to drive out the Romans.

So Jesus’ disciples came from both ends and all in the middle. God calls His people out from a variety of backgrounds. Every one of us comes from a variety of backgrounds, perhaps even a variety of political backgrounds. Some may have no interest whatsoever in politics; others may have been very involved on the one side or the other. God calls us out. And that’s just it—we are called out (John 6:44).

Christ's disciples did not continue to stay enmeshed in that world's system. Simon the Zealot had to learn; Matthew had to learn. All of them had to learn that there was a Kingdom coming. It was the Kingdom of God. It was not going to be set up by some revolutionary overthrow; it was not going to be voted in; and it was not going to be this or that. It was going to be established by the power of God.

So Christ called His disciples from a variety of backgrounds.

The final one, **Judas Iscariot**, was the treasurer of the group. He was called the "keeper of the bag" (KJ, John 12:6; 13:29) (NKJ, "money box"). That meant he was the treasurer. I would call that to your attention; I think we should see that God sometimes allows things.

Sometimes we wonder why God is allowing this. Sometimes people get upset because they think, 'well, surely God wouldn't allow this.' Well, Judas was there, right at the top. He was one of the twelve apostles for three and one-half years. He held a position of responsibility and trust. He was the keeper of the bag; he was the treasurer. Not only was he the treasurer, he was also a thief.

Now that's not speculation. It says so right there in John 12:6. Remember the story when the woman bought the ointment to pour on Christ's feet and Judas got upset. He asked, 'Why was this stuff wasted? This is extravagance; this is waste—and it's ridiculous. This stuff should have been taken out and sold; we could have gotten money for it and given it to the poor. And here you let this woman just waste it, pour it out here on Your feet.'

Boy, he was all upset. He thought that was terrible and, undoubtedly, some of the others standing around thought, 'Yeah, that's a good point, why wasn't it sold? I'll bet we could have gotten a lot of money for that and given it to the poor and helped people.'

John adds in the parenthetical thought in v. 6. John 12:6, "This he said, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box [keeper of the bag]; and he used to take what was put in it" That's why he said it. Sometimes what people say and what their motive for saying it is entirely different. John adds that in when he tells the story in retrospect—that way you don't think that Judas was this altruistic guy. Yeah, he sounded that way. He didn't say, 'Give it to me so I can steal it.' No, he said, 'This stuff should have been taken and sold, given to the poor and helped all

these people.' He didn't say it because he cared for the poor; he said it because he was the treasurer and was planning on "skimming some off the top." He was a thief.

The point I would like to make is: do you think Jesus knew that Judas was up to "no good" on some of that? Of course He did.

He confronted the woman at the well in Samaria and asked her where her husband was. She said, 'Oh, I am not married.' And He said, 'Right, you are! You've had five of them, and the one you are living with now, you haven't gotten around to marrying. It's good that you tell the truth. You definitely are not married.' Jesus could look into the hearts of people. He knew and could discern the motives.

Of course He knew that Judas was stealing. And you know, the situation dragged on and on for a period of time until finally, in God's time, it was dealt with. There's an important lesson to learn from that: *God does not solve problems based on our time schedule.* There's nothing you know about that is going to be news to God; nothing you've found out that is going to be a shock to God—'Man, I wouldn't have known that if you hadn't told Me.'

Anything that is going on, even a sparrow that falls to the ground, God knows. There is nothing that happens that is news to God. God knows and God doesn't operate on our time schedule. You see, that is a matter of walking and living by faith, of trusting God to do what He says He will do, when He chooses to do it. That is a very important lesson that all of us must learn.

Jesus shows He is Lord and Master: Luke 6:1-5, Matthew 12:1-8 and Mark 2:23-28.

Luke's account makes it plain when it happened. The others don't. The others simply refer to a Sabbath in which Jesus was walking through the grain fields, but Luke makes plain the time setting.

Luke 6:1, "Now it occurred on the second first Sabbath [the second Sabbath of the first rank], that He passed through the grain fields; and His disciples were picking heads of grain, rubbing them with their hands and eating them." Now the term "the second first Sabbath" (KJV, "And it came to pass on the second Sabbath after the first...") is a very ambiguous thing. What in the world is that? The more literal translation would be "on the second first Sabbath." Now what is that? What are the Sabbaths of first rank? Those are the annual Holy Days. A reference to a Sabbath of first rank would be one of the annual Sabbaths, one of the "high-day Sabbaths" as the

Jews termed them. The “second first Sabbath” would be the second annual Holy Day, which would be the Last Day of Unleavened Bread. This is the time setting—on the second Sabbath of first rank, which was the second annual Holy Day of Unleavened Bread.

They were passing through the grain fields and His disciples were picking ears of grain. They weren’t out harvesting. They had spent the night in a house outside of the walled city, and that morning they walked a short distance into town. That’s normally the way people got around in those days. They didn’t hop into their car to go three blocks. They walked. And when they walked, it was normally on a footpath other than some of the main Roman roads that connected the major cities. It was a footpath because all that traveled it were people going back and forth by foot. So here was a little pathway that went from the house where they had stayed going into the town, a pathway that cut through a grain field.

Some of you remember back before all of the highways were fixed up the way they are now with all the road-grading equipment and everything. There were a lot of times the connection between houses out in the country was a small path, a bridle or footpath, maybe a wagon path. It was usually fairly narrow and kept clean by people walking back and forth or people riding an animal or pulling a wagon back and forth. If there was a field of grain next to it, it was right up there at the edge of the path.

They were walking down the path and were reaching out plucking off some heads of grain, rolling them around in their hands, getting the grains off and eating it. There was nothing illegal about that.

Deuteronomy 23:24-25: “‘When you come into your neighbor’s vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes at your pleasure, but you shall not put any in your container. When you come into your neighbor’s standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor’s standing grain.’”

The law made specific arrangement for the fact that a stranger, a sojourner, was welcome as they were walking down the road to anything that was out there at roadside that they could pluck off. They could not harvest in the sense of going out and gathering things to take someplace else, but what they ate as they walked along was permissible. So there wasn’t a problem with that. It was not a matter of stealing; there wasn’t a law of God involved.

What was involved was one of the traditions of the Pharisees, the Rabbis. The fourth commandment says you are not to work on the Sabbath. Well, the Rabbis had asked the question, ‘what is work?’ You and I ought to know what work is, but they wanted to get technical about what work is. So they finally defined thirty-nine different categories of work that were prohibited on the Sabbath. And each of those thirty-nine types was sub-divided into other groups. So this came under the prohibition of harvesting on the Sabbath. Anything over three heads of grain consisted of harvesting. They had to define harvesting. You shouldn’t harvest. Well, all right, how much is harvesting? They had it figured out.

In Nehemiah 13, Nehemiah reprimanded them because they were coming in bearing burdens on the Sabbath. They were hauling their agricultural produce into Jerusalem. Nehemiah reprimanded them because they were not to be bringing in these burdens on the Sabbath. So when the Rabbis got through with it, they asked, what constitutes a burden? They finally concluded that anything over the weight of three dried figs consisted of a burden that you should not bring in because you were transporting agricultural produce. They had to “nail it all down.”

You understand now why so many of the top lawyers are Jewish. They have a proclivity for very detailed, technical-minded approaches to things. They have a real proclivity to be technically minded; they had become so technically minded here that, as lawyers often do, they were “straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel.” They missed the whole point of it; they were worried about defining every little thing.

But it gets back to whether or not we have a heart to obey. Is the question we ask, ‘How close can I get to what God really wants?’ Or is it, ‘How close can I get to the edge and not get “zapped?”’ How close can I get to the edge and God not strike me with lightning?’

‘I really don’t want to get sent to the lake of fire or anything, but I want to make sure that I don’t do anything more than I have to. I want to be right on the edge, dabble my toe over in the cesspool [that is this world] and get just as close as I can but stay out of trouble. I want somebody to draw a line, and I will get right up to it with my toe on it.’

That’s not the way God wants us to be. It’s a matter of our attitude, of our approach. Are we trying to be as much like God as we can be or are we trying to see how much we can get by with

without getting into trouble? These are two totally different approaches.

Well, the approach they had taken that led into all of these lines being drawn was people really didn't have a heart to obey. They didn't want to do anything more than they had to. The Pharisees said, 'Well, I'll tell you what we will do. We will draw these arbitrary lines and we will really "rope them in." We will attach so many "do's" and "don'ts" that they won't even be able to get close to breaking the law because we will hedge them about.' It reflects an attitude.

Jesus said in Matthew 12:7, "'But if you had only known and understood what this means, "I desire mercy, and compassion and not sacrifice," then you would not have condemned the guiltless.'" Not the guilty, but the guiltless.

If you had understood the principle, the spirit of the law, if you had understood what God meant when He said, 'I want mercy and sacrifice.' God is more concerned with an inward attitude that is displayed by outward action, than He is by somebody who simply goes through the motion of outward ritual and conformity. 'What you see is what you get!' There is a contrast, a play on the symbolism.

Jesus utilized that time period and emphasized a part of the spiritual lesson. A little later we find He was in the synagogue and was teaching. Notice why they watched Him; they watched Him to see if He would heal on the Sabbath.

Man with withered hand healed: Luke 6:6-10, Mark 3:1-5 and Matthew 12:9-13.

Luke 6:7, "And the scribes and the Pharisees were carefully watching Him to see whether or not He would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find an accusation and complaint against Him." They were doing it so they could have an accusation. They were looking for a chance to accuse. They were not concerned about helping someone.

Jesus pointed out an example to them recorded in Matthew 12:11-12, "But He answered them, 'Which man shall there be of you, who shall have one sheep, and if this sheep fall into a pit on the Sabbath, shall not take hold of it and pull it out? How much better then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.'" "If you have a sheep that's stuck in the pit, you pull him out. Here this man has his right hand all withered and crippled; Christ reached out and told him, "Be healed." He knew that they were watching. They were looking for an excuse to accuse. We see their attitude. They hated

Him because they felt He was a threat to their domination over the people.

Jesus prays and selects twelve disciples: Mark 3:13-19 and Luke 6:12-16.

As we continue the account, Mark 3:13-16, "And He went out to a mountain and He called to Him those He had chosen: and they came to Him. And He ordained and appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power and authority to heal diseases and to cast out demons. And He gave Simon an additional name, Peter." Peter is always mentioned first; he was the leader of the twelve. In every listing that you find of the twelve apostles, Simon Peter's name is always mentioned first. We find here the listing of them. We have already gone through that.

We find here how Christ went about selecting them. He went out to a private place. He prayed all night. He was facing a momentous decision. Luke 6:12-13 mentions that He prayed all night in prayer to God concerning the selection of these twelve, going over each one of them, talking about it and discussing it with the Father before making that very important decision. He ordained them as apostles, sent them out to preach and gave them authority to heal and to cast out demons.

Jesus heals the centurion's servant: Luke 7:2-10 and Matthew 8:5-13.

Luke follows more of a direct chronological account. Matthew tends to be topical; he deals with topics or subjects and lumps things together with only the very most general regard for chronology. It's just that he is writing from a different standpoint.

Luke 7:2-5 brings out that there was a centurion, a Roman soldier, who had a servant who was sick and about to die. This Roman soldier was very concerned about his servant. He was a man that had come to have a certain regard for the Jews. He had knowledge of the Jewish religion, what the Jews sometimes termed a "proselyte of the gate." In other words, he was not fully converted into Judaism, but he was one who would frequent the synagogues and would seek to learn these things. The Roman soldier heard about Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to ask Jesus to come and heal his servant.

These elders came to Jesus and said, 'Look, this man is a very deserving man. He loves our nation. He's been very favorable to us; he built a synagogue for us. We wish you would come and do as he asks.' Jesus went with them, and when

he was fairly close to the house, the Centurion sent friends to Him.

Verses 6-8, "...saying to Him, 'Lord don't trouble Yourself because I am not worthy that You should even come under my roof. Furthermore, neither did I consider that I was worthy myself to come to You. But just give the command and my servant shall be healed. Because I also am a man appointed under authority, and having soldiers under me: and I command this one, "Go," and he goes, and this one "go" and he goes; and to another, "Come," and he comes; and to my servant, "Do this," and he does it.'"

He said, 'I understand how authority works. I don't deserve for You to come into my house. I don't feel worthy to even come up and talk to You face to face, and I certainly don't deserve the honor that You would bestow in doing that. I don't need that because I understand authority. You don't have to come over here because I know You have authority, and all You have to do is give the word. I may not understand a lot of things, but one thing I understand—I understand authority. I am a Roman soldier and I know how authority works. If you have authority, you say it and it is done.'

They didn't put things to a vote in the Roman army. Authority was absolute. When they said go, you went. There was no question about it. You didn't ask to know why you were supposed to go. You took off. This Roman Centurion said, 'I understand authority and I know You have authority. So, really, all that is needed is You just give the word and my servant is going to be healed.'

Verse 9, "But when Jesus heard these things, He was amazed: and turning to the crowd that was following Him, He said, 'I tell you, I have not found even in Israel such great faith.'" He marveled. He said, 'You know, I have never met an Israelite that had this kind of faith. Here this Roman soldier has an understanding of faith that puts to shame all the rest of you.' He told His disciples and all of those that were there, 'You know this Roman soldier understands what faith is all about—he grasps that.'

There is an important lesson to learn here, a lesson of what faith is all about. Faith really gets back to the confidence that God can and will do what He says He will do. The Centurion had confidence. So often we get our eyes on "the around" and lose sight of the power of God. We live in an age in which we are surrounded with all of the things that man can do, all of the glitter

and glamour of man's technology. We are so surrounded with what man can do that we lose sight of what God can do.

Jesus made the observation in Luke:

Luke 18:8, "...when the Son of man returns shall He find faith on the earth?" He gives the indication that He wouldn't find very much.

I think we have to understand, we have to realize, that we live in a faithless age. Maybe part of it is that of all the ages that didn't understand authority, ours is probably the chief. There is a correlation of the understanding of authority and faith. Nobody understood it better than this Roman soldier. We, perhaps, live in an age that has less faith, as well as an age that understands authority less, than any other age. It shouldn't surprise us that there is a little bit of a correlation here. Christ pointed this out, and this example is set down in the Bible to give us some insight as to what faith is all about.

In Matthew 8:10, as He was talking to the Centurion, Christ told some of the Pharisees around them, "...I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"

Verses 11-12, "And I say to you, that many shall come from East and West and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of heaven. But the children of this Kingdom shall be thrown into the outer darkness..."

He looked around and said, 'You think you have it made. Let Me tell you something; you see that example over there, that Roman centurion. Understand something—when the Kingdom comes, you are going to find that there are people from the east and west and north and south, from all over the world. You are going to find people of every background who come and sit down with Abraham in the Kingdom because they're the children of faith—like this Roman Centurion. You're going to find people of every background, people from all over, who are going to be there with Abraham. Some of you think you have it made because of your physical origin, but you are going to find yourself on the "outside looking in" because God looks on the heart.'

God looks on what we are, not simply on what we have or whatever the external trappings are. God looks on the heart, and that is very important.

Scribes and Pharisees accuse Jesus: Mark 3:22-27 and Matthew 12:24-30.

They accused Christ of casting out demons by Beelzebub, and He showed what a ridiculous statement that was.

We note in Matthew 12:30, “‘Anyone who is not with Me is against Me; and anyone who doesn’t gather with Me, scatters.’”

Christ had been talking here beginning in v. 25, “...‘that a kingdom divided against itself is brought to ruin and desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.’” This should certainly show that Christ is not seeking to work through two or more competing organizations. God is not the author of confusion (I Corinthians 14:33). Jesus said every kingdom divided against itself is going to fall. Now the Kingdom of God is not going to fall; God is not working through various competing, differing, bickering organizations. He simply doesn’t do that. A kingdom divided against itself is going to fall. Jesus said, “If you are not with Me, you are against Me, and if you don’t gather with Me, then you scatter.” So again, we have an important lesson. We have an insight to help us realize that God is not divided in such a way as that.

Jesus warns of unpardonable sin: Mark 3:28-30 and Matthew 12:31-37.

Christ then went on to discuss the subject of the unpardonable sin and warned the Pharisees. Let me summarize it. Sin is unpardonable it because it is not repented of. It involves a willful hardening of the heart and mind against the workings of God’s Holy Spirit. That’s why it is called blasphemy against the Holy Spirit because the Spirit is the agency by which God works with our mind. When a person becomes so hardened against God’s Spirit, there is simply no longer a means to bring them to repentance.

Christ warned the Pharisees because they knew better than what they were saying. They were very upset and were accusing Him of things out of jealousy and resentment. He knew that they knew better. He told them, ‘Look, you are hardening your heart and mind and you had better be careful.’

He mentions in Matthew 12:32 concerning this unpardonable sin that, “‘...it will not be forgiven him, neither in this age nor in the coming age.’” Now that singles out this sin. It says it won’t be forgiven now or in the future. That shows, of course, that some sins will be forgiven in the age to come.

The Catholic Church takes that verse and uses it to support purgatory—the idea that you can pay your way out in the world to come—which is taken out of context. They put it together with another couple of verses, which are also out of context, and use this to support the concept of prayers for the dead and the concept of

purgatory. Many of you have come out of that background. You should be aware of the two or three verses they use to support that doctrine. This is not saying that you can say so many masses for someone and somehow help them to work their way out of purgatory because the key to being forgiven is repentance. The individual must repent. It talks about “in the world to come” or “the coming age,” not simply that you go on living after you’re dead. Ecclesiastes 9:5 says the dead know not anything. You don’t know anything until you’re resurrected, until you’re brought back to life.

The Protestant world says, ‘Boy, when you die that’s it—your fate is sealed.’ Well, they’re not right either. This verse certainly shows that there will be sins forgiven. In fact, everything except the unpardonable sin can be forgiven in the age to come, in the time of the resurrection. That is, as we understand it, the White Throne Judgment period.

Christ then went on to give a sign to the Pharisees.

Matthew 12:39-42, “And answering He said, ‘A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign shall not be given to it, except the sign of Jonah the Prophet. Because in the same way that Jonah was in the belly of the great fish three days and three nights; so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. The men of Nineveh shall stand in the judgment with this generation and condemn it...The Queen of the South shall stand up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it...’”

That is the age to come. It is the time of judgment when the men of Nineveh and the Queen of the South are going to be resurrected at the same time when that generation, with whom Christ dealt with, was going to be resurrected.

So that’s the context, but notice this sign. “No sign except the sign of the prophet Jonah, three days and three nights.” Do you know why that sign was uniquely a sign to the Pharisees and the religious leaders? In a special way that was the sign of Christ’s Messiahship to them. Now think about it.

Remember Matthew 27:57-66. When Jesus was crucified, Joseph of Arimathea got the body, took it and quickly buried it before sunset. The Pharisees and some of the chief priests went to Pilate and said, ‘We have a request to make. This deceiver while He was alive said that He would rise from the dead. Now what we are afraid of is that His disciples are going to come and steal the

body and then claim He is raised from the dead. Then the latter condition of things will be worse than the beginning. We are really going to have a mess on our hands. What we need to do, at all costs, is to prevent that from happening. What we request from you, Pilate, is that you will give us a detachment of troops. We will set a guard on the tomb and we will seal the rock—nobody is going to be able to get in and steal that body. We will guarantee that. We'll have these soldiers there.' Pilate said, 'Fine, take them.' So they ensured that nobody broke in and stole the body—and nobody did. But the body was still gone. You see, they had the witness of their own soldiers they had placed there to guard the tomb. The soldiers told them, 'Hey, this earthquake occurred and the rock rolled back. He's been resurrected. He's gone. Nobody came and stole the body.'

Remember what the Pharisees told them? Matthew 28:13-14, "saying, 'Tell them, "His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept." And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure.'" They said, 'Look, now don't you tell anybody. You tell the people that you went to sleep, and while you were asleep, the disciples came and stole the body. If Pilate hears of it and you get into trouble, we will take care of it and make sure that nothing happens to you.'

Verse 15, "So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day." That story went abroad.

Now, if you worked up a lie with someone, other people may hear it and may not know if it's true or not. But there's two people that know it's a lie—you and the guy you bribed to tell it. So Christ being in the grave three days and three nights was a witness, a sign, to them in a unique way because they had the witness of their own soldiers who were there to testify He came out the same time He said He would. So it was, in a very direct sense, a sign to them.

John the Baptist hears of the works of Jesus:
Luke 7:19-23 and Matthew 11:2-6.

We continue on in Matthew 11:2-3, "Now when John was in prison, he heard about the works of Christ; and when he sent two of his disciples, they asked Him, 'Are You the One who should come, or should we look for another?'" Now understand, John had known and acknowledged Christ to be the Messiah, but he had not fully understood all of the Old Testament prophecies. All of a sudden something happened that he

hadn't anticipated. He was put in jail, and it looked like he was going to be executed. And Jesus hadn't done anything. The Kingdom was not restored and nothing was being done to stop it. John began to wonder, and, even more likely, his disciples were wondering if maybe they had misunderstood something. So he told them, 'Well, you go ask Him. Is He the Messiah; is He the One that everything points to or is He simply another forerunner? Is someone coming after Him?'

Verses 4-5, "Jesus answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.'" Jesus then simply pointed to the works that He was doing. He told them to go and tell John what they saw and what they heard, and in that sense, strengthen and encourage John in that final trial that he went through.

Verses 7-11, Jesus began to talk about John and the role that he served.

In Matthew 11:12-15, He said, "'But from the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of heaven is taken by violence, and the violent seize it. Because the law and all the prophets prophesied until John. And if you're willing to receive it, he is Elijah, who was prophesied to come. Anyone who has ears to hear, let him hear!'"

There's an interesting comment on these verses in the Adam Clark Commentary. It says, "The tax gatherers and heathen, whom the Scribes and the Pharisees think has no right to the Kingdom of God, filled with zeal and earnestness, seize at once on the proper mercy of the Gospel and so take the Kingdom as by force from those learned doctors who claim for themselves the chiefest places in that kingdom." An earnestness of violent intensity is necessary to make it into the Kingdom. That's the point! It takes earnestness. You have to thrust in, to really mean it, to go after it with everything in you.

Then he says in v. 13, "...The law and all the prophets prophesied until John..." Prior to John the Baptist, only the Old Testament message was proclaimed. Since that time, the Gospel of the Kingdom was preached and the opportunity to be a part of the Kingdom was now extended. It began to be extended when John began to preach and to proclaim repentance. He was the one who came in fulfillment of the prophecy in Malachi, in the "spirit and power of Elijah."

Luke 1:17, “He [John the Baptist] will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah....” This was prior to the first coming of Christ.

Are the intellectuals the ones that find it easiest to understand God’s plan and purpose? Not at all!

Matthew 11:25, “...Jesus said, ‘I praise You and fully agree with You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the self-esteeming intellectuals and prudent ones and have revealed them unto babes.’”

In other words, those who viewed themselves as the educated, the elite who looked down on everyone else, they really did not understand the truth. Some people think the scholars are the ones you have to look to. If all it took was scholarship to understand the truth, why didn’t the scribes and Pharisees understand it? All you would need to understand the truth would be the ability to read Greek and Hebrew. Greece is full of people who speak Greek and they read it, too. If they read the New Testament, they read it in Greek. It is all “Greek” to them because that is what they speak and read. How many of them understand the truth? How many of them keep the Sabbath? How many of them are converted?

The scribes and Pharisees spoke and read Hebrew. When they studied the Old Testament, they studied it in the original Hebrew. How many of them understood what it was talking about? The point that I make is that it takes a lot more than simply knowing the Greek and the Hebrew to understand the Scriptures. If it didn’t, then why aren’t all the scholars the ones who are converted?

In fact, if you want to read some of the craziest, most “crackpot,” asinine, idiot theories in the world, look up some of the great scholarly writings on the subject of the Bible. You will find every “crackpot” idea that has ever occurred to the mind of man. They look back in the book of Genesis or the first five books of the Bible and find that some verses use the name YHWH and some use the name ELOIHM. Some verses contain certain priestly instructions to the priests. The book of Deuteronomy goes back and restates a lot of things to the final generation that had been stated earlier. Instead of being able to understand what that’s all about, they come to the conclusion that Moses must not have written that. They conclude that must have been written by five different people. They come up with all of these crazy ideas.

They don’t understand and Christ simply said, ‘Father, I thank that You have hidden these

things from the wise and prudent ones.’ In other words, the ones who think they are wise and prudent, the self-esteeming intellectuals, those who really think they know it all. You’ve hidden it from them and revealed it to babes. You’ve revealed the truth to people they look down upon. They look down on people like you and me. ‘What do these guys know—we’re the great scholars; we know it all.’ Well, in a few years they are going to find out how much they know.

All the arguments about the Greek and Hebrew are going to be moot because Christ is going to come back in power and glory and the argument is going to be settled. About that time, none of them standing there are going to want to be arguing about the Greek. So it’s a matter of realizing that understanding the truth is something that comes because God’s Spirit is working with you.

It says in Psalms 111:10, “...a good understanding have all they that do Your Commandments.” The key to understanding is your willingness to obey God, having a humble, teachable attitude, a child-like spirit. Part of the problem with the intellectuals is that they get so “bent out of shape” trying to reason themselves astray.

A child takes things literally. Most of us have had children. You tell something to a little child, and they take it literally. And sometimes they can come out with some statements that just embarrass the “fire” out of you—at just inappropriate times. It’s just a very simple, child-like approach. You say it and they believe it. Babes, just simple-minded enough that if God says that’s what it is, then we say, ‘Well, that’s what it is.’

God makes a promise. We believe it and we reach out and claim it. Then there are those that reason around, reason astray, and get all bogged down in all these things. We never want to lose that child-like simplicity. When God makes a promise, when God tells us that He is our—whatever He is—our Sustainer, our Healer, our Creator, our Ruler, our Master, our Lord, you want to believe those things. Simply take Him at His word and have that simple child-like approach, that child-like teachability, that very simple approach.

Let’s summarize here. We note the feast of the Jews.

John 5:1, “After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.” This was the fall festival season. Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Verse 19, "...Jesus answered and said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son is able to do nothing by Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing, because whatever the Father does these same things the Son does in exactly the same way.'" Jesus did not come to do away with His Father's law. He did not come doing His own thing. This makes plain that Jesus Christ followed the Father completely and totally.

In terms of judgment, is the Father the One that is going to judge us?

In John 5:22, Jesus said, "'The Father judges no one, He's given responsibility of all judgment to the Son.'"

Verse 27, "'and He has given Him authority and power also to execute judgment because He is the Son of man.'" The authority to judge was given and delegated to Jesus Christ. He is the One that came and lived life as a human being; God committed judgment to Him as the One responsible for that judgment.

Matthew 19:28 makes plain that we can share in that role of judgment. It talks about the twelve apostles sitting on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. So judgment is assigned out by God to Christ and those who will rule and reign under Christ.

Let's note John 5:45, "'Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father, there is one who accuses you already, Moses, in whom you claim to trust and have hope.'" In other words, that generation paid lip service to recognition of Moses as God's prophet. They stood guilty because they weren't doing and believing the very things taught by Moses whom they claimed to follow and believe.

Christ said, 'I don't have to accuse you; Moses accuses you'—the first five books written by Moses. He said, 'Moses accuses you. Moses has left a written record. You pay lip service. You acknowledge it to be the Word of God, but you don't do it. So you stand accused by the very one that you acknowledge as being God's prophet. You don't acknowledge Me, but acknowledge Moses—fine. I don't accuse you; Moses accuses you because you're not doing what Moses said. You do not believe the prophecies he gave. You're not keeping the laws he gave.'

Notice that the whole setting here in John 5 is the setting of the fall festival season, the time of God's judgment, the time when those in the graves will come forth.

John 5:28-29, "'Don't be amazed at this because the time is coming in which all that are in the

graves shall hear His voice, and they shall come out of the graves....'" The whole setting here of John 5 is the fall festival season, the time of the Feast of Trumpets.

As we continue, Luke 8:1 makes plain, "And afterwards it happened that He made a tour through every city, city by city and village by village, preaching and proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God; and the twelve were with Him." He was going through making a tour city by city, village by village. He was going through every place, step by step.

Parable of the sower: Matthew 13, Mark 4 and Luke 8.

We are beginning to get into many of the parables that are recorded. He began to teach the parables. The parable of the sower and the seed is the one that He is teaching here.

Note in Matthew 13:10-11, why He taught in parables, "But the disciples came to Him and said, 'Why do You speak to them in parables?' And He answered them, saying, 'Because it has been given to you to know and understand the mysteries of the Kingdom, but to them it is not given.'" They hear it but they don't understand it.

Verse 15, "'Because the heart of this people have grown corrupt, and their ears have become insensitive and dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed....'" They don't understand. They don't get it. Because they don't really have a heart to obey, it's just simply not being made clear to them.

The parables served two purposes. They obscured the truth from those with whom God was not working, but once you have the key to the parable, it makes the truth plainer. The parables make the truth more understandable to us because we have the key.

Notice Matthew 13:18, "'Therefore hear the parable of the sower.'" Then Jesus begins to go through and explain the parable he told them earlier (vv. 3-8). It is an illustration that those with whom God is not working, those who don't have the key, don't understand it—it just goes in one ear and out the other. If God is working with you, opening your mind and calling you, you have the key to understanding. It made the truth more understandable to those with whom God was really working.

The parable of the sower is explained. Matthew 13:18-23 shows basically the different categories of people that hear the Gospel. The word goes out.

Verse 19, a lot of it falls by the wayside. Millions of people come into contact with the telecast, with the magazine or however it reaches them; it goes in one ear and out the other. It never takes root. That's the seed that fell by the wayside and the birds gathered up.

Verses 20-21, then there is that which takes root in rocky stony ground.

Verse 22, that which falls in the thorns and the thistles.

Verse 23, finally, that which falls in good ground and bears fruit. The last three categories would be the ones that we would be concerned about because if you are here, then obviously the word took some root.

Now notice the three categories. Christ explains it.

He said, vv. 20-21, "And he who was sown on the rocky place, this is the one who hears the word, and right away receives it with joy; but he has no root in himself, so this is only temporary: when tribulation or persecution comes along because of the word, in a short time he falls away."

The one that fell on the stony ground, that's the ones that hear the truth, that hear the word and with joy they receive it. They get all excited; it's all emotion, but they have no depth of root in themselves. When persecution comes because of the word, they wither. You have the stony ground, the hard ground. The problem is that there is a lack of root structure. The root system is what gives staying power to the plant. Here are people that are shallow. It's all on the surface; it's all emotion. They emotionally respond very quickly, but they haven't really proven anything. They don't really know it and know that they know it! They haven't deeply proven it to themselves. The result is when things happen, problems arise and difficulties come, they wither away. They don't have staying power because they're not deeply anchored and rooted in the truth. Their roots are shallow. It's "spur-of-the-moment" and emotion; it doesn't have staying power. That's the first pitfall of the two pitfalls Christ warned about. One is not being deeply enough rooted in the truth, being too shallow.

The other is where it falls in the ground. The thorns and the thistles come up and gradually choke it out.

Christ said in [Matthew 13:22](#), "And he who was sown among the thorns, this is the one who hears the word; and the cares and distractions of this world, and the delusions of wealth, completely strangle the word, and he becomes unfruitful."

The cares of this life gradually come in, choke it out and prevent it from being fruitful. What happens, other things get in the way; other things compete for time, attention and resources.

We plant a garden, and we all have to fight the battle of the weeds and all the things that come up. Ever had tomatoes come up and choke out all your weeds? Somehow or other it never works that way. If something is of value, you have to tend it. It takes work. You don't have to plant your weeds and water them. I never had trouble getting weeds to grow. They just grow. Just leave them alone, don't do anything, and they'll grow. And if you leave it alone, they'll choke out everything else. The point is that the cares of this life will crowd in; we only have so much time, so much attention and so many resources. These things crowd in, they compete, they choke it out, and finally the plant never bears any fruit.

Verse 23, the final category is that it's in good ground and brings forth fruit—some more, some less. But it's fruitful.

So Christ warned us. He says that the word takes root. Two things you have to be concerned about: (1) It better take deep root, not be shallow and on the surface, but deeply rooted where you can stick through the hard times, the tough times. (2) You better keep your garden weeded because if you don't, the cares of this life will come in and they will choke it. This is a very important parable that Christ gave.

Christ showed right here in [Matthew 13:17](#) that we have a more clear understanding of things that the prophets only vaguely comprehended. [Matthew 13:17](#), "Because of a truth I am telling you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see what you are seeing, but have not seen; and to hear what you're hearing, but did not hear." God has revealed, and we have the opportunity to understand things that the patriarchs of old didn't. It's more clearly explained and understood. That is plain.

You can go to the book of Daniel. Daniel didn't understand many of his own prophecies. These things were "sealed up, shut up, until the time of the end" ([Daniel 12:9](#)). Christ made it plain. He explained things in detail that many of the prophets and righteous men of the past had only dimly seen.

There's an awful lot that is packed into what Jesus taught and preached. As we go through this series, we come to these parables. We are going to be spending a pretty good bit of time over the next couple of Bible studies in going into the details of many of these things that Jesus taught

and said. Many of the details of these messages are recorded. The period this evening basically brought us up until the fall festival period, from the Feast of Unleavened Bread of 29 A.D. to the fall festival period of 29 A.D.

Next time we will pick up the story where we left off, which would be in the late fall of 29 A.D. following the festivals up until the time just before the Passover of 30 A.D. That will bring us up to the final year of Christ's ministry. One of the things we will note as we go through is that the further that Christ's ministry progresses, the more details are given—we have more details of what He said and taught.

Go through the chapters we are going to be covering next time. Review it in detail. I think that will conclude it this evening.

Bible Study # 32 Questions

SURVEY OF THE GOSPELS AND ACTS SERIES

Matthew 8, 11, 12, 13; Mark 2:23—4:20; Luke 6:1—8:15; John 5

1. Did Jesus break the Sabbath by plucking ears of grain?
2. Why did the Pharisees watch to see if Jesus would heal on the Sabbath?
3. How did Christ go about selecting the Twelve? What job did He choose them for and what authority did He give them?
4. What lesson did Jesus use the example of the Centurion's faith to teach His hearers?
5. Prove from Matthew 12 that Christ is not seeking to work through two (or more) competing organizations today?
6. What was the only sign of Christ's Messiahship to the Pharisees?
7. What was Christ's response when John's disciples came to him seeking to know whether He was indeed the Messiah?
8. Explain Matthew 11:12-15.
9. Are the intellectuals the ones who find it easiest to understand God's plan and purpose?
10. Prove from John 5 that Jesus Christ did not come "doing His own thing."
11. Will God the Father serve as the judge of mankind?
12. Explain John 5:45.
13. Why did Jesus Christ teach in parables?
14. What was the meaning of the parable of the sower?
15. Do we understand more than the prophets of the Old Testament?

Bible Study # 33
March 28, 1989
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Gospels and Acts Series—Matthew 8, 9, 10, 13, 14; Mark 4:21—6:29; Luke 8:16—9:9

Christ had a perfect sense of timing. He recognized that the message He was preaching, the miracles He was working and the things He was doing were going to bring things to a real “head” with the religious leadership in Jerusalem. They resented what He was doing. The more they were exposed to the full force and impact of His message, the more they were going to resent and dislike it, the more they would be driven to do the things they ultimately did that resulted in His death. Jesus came to Jerusalem to preach. But what we will note is that until the final few months of His ministry He was only in Jerusalem occasionally. He was primarily there at the festival season. Apart from that, He covered other areas—areas that were on the periphery. In other words, He timed it to where He would conclude His ministry in Jerusalem because He knew that the full force of persecution was going to come on Him once He was in Jerusalem on a regular basis.

Word of what He was doing traveled out. Certain of the religious leaders even came out from Jerusalem to check up on Him, but they did not feel as threatened when what He was doing was primarily in the areas that they would look on as the “boondocks.” They were not as concerned with it. It did not bother them in the same way as once He began the thrust of His ministry right there in Jerusalem.

During most of this period that we **are covering this evening, He was in Galilee covering the cities there, city by city.** One of the things that we **are going to note is the extent to which we get into parables.** This evening and the next Bible study as well, we will have a lot of focus on parables that Jesus gave. Parables actually serve both to clarify and to obscure. That may sound contradictory. We find through this time that Jesus was preaching in parables.

Parable of the sower: Matthew 13:1-9, Mark 4:1-9 and Luke 8:4-8.

Matthew 13:3, “And He preached many things to them in parables, saying, ‘Now the sower went out to sow.’” He preached the parable of the sower.

Parables clarify and obscure: Matthew 13:10-17, Mark 4:10-12 and Luke 8:9-10.

The disciples asked Him, Matthew 13:10, “...Why do You speak to them in parables?” Jesus was telling these stories, examples, and illustrations; the disciples asked Him the question, ‘Why are You continually giving these illustrations?’

Verses 11-15, “...Because it has been given to you to know and understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given...This is the reason I speak to them in parables: because in observing, they do not see; and in listening, they do not hear, nor do they understand. So that in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, “In listening you shall hear, and in no way understand; and observing you shall see, and in no way comprehend: Because the heart of this people has grown corrupt, and their ears have become insensitive and dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and they should hear with their ears, and they should understand with their heart, and they should be converted, and I should heal them.””

Mark 4:10-11, “But when He was alone, those in his company with the twelve asked him about the parable. And He said to them, ‘to you it has been given to know and understand the mystery of the Kingdom of God: but to those who are without, all things are done in parables.’”

Explains parable of the sower: Matthew 13:18-23, Mark 4:13-20 and Luke 8:11-15.

Then Jesus began to explain the parable of the sower. He began to define for them what this illustration meant. Get the point! There are several things we learn from this. If you were to ask most religious people why Jesus taught in parables, they would say He was trying to make the meaning clear and used all these rural illustrations. No, it didn’t! The parable makes it clear in only one way. The only way is if you have the *key* to understanding what the parable is talking about. Jesus gave that key to His disciples.

He told the story about the sower and the seed, which was a nice story. The people must have thought there must be a point to this. But they didn’t really get the point. You wouldn’t understand exactly what the meaning was until Jesus went through and defined “the seed is the word of God, and the sower goes forth to sow.” He went through and defined what each category of the parable was. What it amounts to is God deals with everyone in His own time, in the time that is best for that individual. And unless God

opens our minds to understand, then we simply don't understand.

God is not trying to call everyone at this time. If God is desperately trying to call everybody and get everybody saved right now, then you have to conclude that He has failed because the vast majority of human beings who have lived and died on this earth have never even heard the name of Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:12, "...there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." You look at all the millions of people in Africa and Asia who have lived and died over the centuries, and you have to conclude that the vast majority of human beings that have drawn breath on this planet have never even heard about Jesus Christ, much less comprehended the message He came to bring.

If there's been a great contest between God and the devil, the devil has been winning. If God has been doing His best for the last two thousand years, how many people believe and practice the message Jesus taught? —A very tiny minority of human beings by any stretch of the imagination.

God has a time schedule, and it's not God's purpose to open the eyes of the whole world to see things right now. God knows they are not prepared to act and follow through. Most people are simply going to have to learn a lesson of human experience and "bottom out" before they are convinced that there's no way to make the devil's way work.

The world, in effect, has been on a six thousand-year experiment trying to see if there isn't some way to make the devil's way work. Over the course of time we have tried every "ism," every political, economic, social, religious system that you can devise. People have tried all kinds of things, and none of them have really produced long-term satisfaction.

Jesus came teaching, preaching and speaking in parables. For those whom He was calling, for His disciples, He went beyond His public message. He spoke publicly and there was a point to what He said. But people understood it only on a certain level. Those that He was working with, He began to open up their minds to understand and began to explain further. The parables do make the meaning clear if you understand the point of what He is talking about, if you have the key to understand what the parable is about. And it is recorded for us here. We don't have to use our imagination, wondering what that parable meant—maybe it meant this or that. Jesus

defined what it meant. We are going to see quite a few of the parables as we go through here.

Mark and Luke are more chronological. Matthew skips around. Matthew followed chronology in only the most general of terms, but Matthew gives the most detailed account of what Jesus said on many of these occasions. Mark's account is more abbreviated, but is more directly in chronological story flow. Matthew tends to group everything Jesus said on a particular subject. He tended to organize his book by subject matter. When he would come to a particular point that Jesus taught, He would go through in a very general chronological sense; he would tend to bring in not only what Jesus said on the subject on that occasion, but things that Jesus said on that same subject at other occasions. So Matthew gives you the most detailed picture of Christ's teaching on a particular subject, but you don't always know exactly *when* He said it. You get the context of when He said it more clearly from Mark and Luke; you get more details of what He said from Matthew. That's why there are different Gospels. They tell the story from different standpoints. God used the natural proclivities of these individuals, and the way they organized the story gives us a more full and complete picture.

Let's go into the material that we have to cover this evening. Jesus had gone through the parable of the sower and the seed. We have commented on that one before.

Secrets revealed; nothing hidden: Mark 4:21-23 and Luke 8:16-17.

Mark 4:21-23, "And He asked them, 'is a lamp brought in so that it may be put under a basket or under the bed? Rather, isn't it put upon the lamp stand? Because there is nothing hidden which shall not be exposed and revealed, neither has any secret thing taken place, but that it shall be brought into the light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!'"

The point Christ was bringing out was that some of these teachings that He gave about the parables were private teachings for the disciples at that time; it was not intended to be permanently hidden. God is going to open the understanding of these things to everyone, but He is simply going to do so at the time that is best for them. You don't have a lamp and put it under a bushel basket or a bed. Christ was not teaching these things for the purpose of permanently obscuring it from the masses. It was His purpose that all things are ultimately going to be revealed and made clear. Certain things are not yet for

public understanding, but the ultimate purpose is for all to understand. Those of us who have an advance opportunity to understand and grasp these things will have more required of us. God expects more of us because we have an advance opportunity.

We are responsible for what we hear: Mark 4:24-25 and Luke 8:18.

Jesus went on in Mark 4:24, “And He said to them, ‘Pay attention to what you hear; with whatever standard of measure you measure it, it shall be measured to you. And to you who hear, more will be given and added.’” He tells us that we are responsible for what we know. In a sense, the knowledge of God is dangerous knowledge. It’s dangerous if we don’t act upon it and use it.

Explaining parables to disciples: Matthew 13:36-43 and Mark 4:33-34.

Matthew 13:36, “When He dismissed the multitudes, Jesus went into the house. His disciples came to Him, saying, ‘Expound to us the parable of the tares of the field.’” They heard the illustration and the example that He gave, but they didn’t really grasp the point He was getting at. He left the crowd to draw their own conclusion; the disciples asked Him to clarify it for them.

Verses 37-42, “And He said, explaining to them, ‘the one who sows the good seed is the Son of man; and the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the sons of the Kingdom; but the tares are the sons of the evil one; And the adversary who sowed them is the devil; and the harvest is the completion of the age; and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and are totally consumed in the fire; this is exactly the way it shall be at the completion of this age. The Son of man will send out His angels and they will gather out of His Kingdom all sins and wickedness [KJV, “all things that offend, and them that do iniquity”—all things that cause offense, all things that are causes of scandal, all those breaking and transgressing God’s laws] and all those who live and practice lawlessness. And they will be cast into the furnace of fire, and there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

What are we told here? Jesus said that the Kingdom of heaven is compared to a man sowing good seed in his field, and the enemy came and sowed tares in among the wheat.

Now that’s important to understand. In years past there were problems in the Church. One of the reasons that some became offended and even left as they saw certain problems is because they did not understand the parable of the tares. They saw

individuals—in some cases in fairly high places—that certainly were sources of scandal and offense. They became bothered and offended, even to the point that they left because they really didn’t grasp the point. If they had really understood the parable of the tares, they never would have done that. They would have recognized that Jesus Himself specifically said that the devil was going to sow a few tares in among the wheat. So why should we be shocked if we find a tare here and there? God permitted it. It serves as a test. Here’s what people lose sight of.

The bottom line is not impressing people, fooling people and kind of putting one over on everyone else. The bottom line is *God knows*. And when all is said and done, it’s not other people’s opinion that counts. When the end of the age comes, the angels are going to be sent out with specific instructions; they are going to gather out the tares.

He drew the analogy of the field. You have to understand the way that fields were sown in that time. They didn’t use some of the modern agricultural techniques. Seed was broadcast. They did not have the drill seed planter. Basically seed was broadcast on a field. In the early stages when it began to come up, it was hard to tell which was which. If you went out and started to try and pull up the tares, you could wind up pulling up good wheat. You didn’t always know. The easiest thing was that as it began to mature, the real thing brought forth fruit and the tares didn’t. As they matured and developed, it became very apparent which was the wheat and which were the tares. The tares were gathered out and burned, and the wheat was gathered into the barn. Christ used that analogy.

Then He defined it for the disciples. It was not a matter of putting an interpretation on it. Jesus defined it as to when it was and who the enemy was. He described that there was going to be a few tares sown in among the wheat and some wouldn’t be gathered out until the end came. But the point is God knows.

We need the perspective of faith to realize that God is not shocked and surprised at the turn of events. God’s not sitting up there wringing His hands wondering what to do. If we grasp this point, then we are prepared to deal with things as they come and with problems as they come. We don’t know everything or every detail of everything we are going to go through from now until the end of the age, but I think what we have to understand is that God has allowed things we

have gone through for the purpose of teaching us lessons.

There will be other trials and some of them may even be similar. We don't know every detail. We know the broad outline and the way the story ends, but we *are to learn lessons using the principles of scripture* so that we can understand how we need to deal with things when they arise and not be caught short. These examples and illustrations are for our benefit so we can know how we should handle it and so we can realize that there are tares. They are defined as those that offend and cause scandal, those that do iniquity and practice lawlessness—a lawless approach. They don't have the deep regard for the law of God. God knows. So, we see this parable of the tares.

Let's look here in this context. In Matthew 13, Christ gave another parable: vv. 31-33, He compared the Kingdom to a mustard seed, and then, v. 33, to leavening. The basic point was that what God does among people starts out very small and grows and grows. He compares the Kingdom first to a mustard seed and then to leavening. A mustard seed is a very tiny seed that grows up to a gigantic shrub. The leavening is something that just a little bit is put in with the flour and spreads until it permeates the entire dough. So He drew the analogy that the Kingdom of God, what God is doing among people, starts very small. It will ultimately spread out to great magnitude and great size, and it will ultimately permeate everything because that's the way God's truth, His government, the expansion of it, will ultimately permeate everything.

Isaiah 11:9, "...for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Isaiah 9:7, "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end...."

Jesus went on speaking in parables and explaining these things to the disciples.

In Matthew 13, He drew other parables.

Verse 44, He compared the Kingdom of God to hidden treasure, and, vv. 45-46, to a pearl of great price. The truth of God's Kingdom is compared to a priceless possession that someone really grasps the value of, and they are willing to forsake everything in order to have hold of it. He compares it to a merchant man seeking beautiful pearls; he finds one exceedingly precious pearl and liquidates everything he has to get that one because he knows that it has greater value than everything else that he has. He sells the rest of

his stock in order to get this one because this one is that pearl of great price.

Or there is someone who finds hidden treasure buried in a field; they go and sell everything else so that they can buy that field because they know that the treasure hidden there is of greater value many times over than everything else they have. He draws an example, 'Look, if you really knew that there was a treasure hidden on this acre of ground that was of untold wealth, you would liquidate everything you had in order to buy that acre. You would raise the money to buy that acre because you would know that the treasure hidden there was tremendously more than all the rest of it.' If we really grasp the value of God's Kingdom and God's calling, then we realize there is no price to be put upon it.

Here He compares the Kingdom to a fisherman's net.

Verses 47-50, "Again, the Kingdom of heaven is compared to a dragnet cast into the sea, that gathered together fish and sea creatures of every kind: which, when it was filled, was dragged up on the shore; and when they sat down, they gathered the good into containers, and the worthless they threw away. This is the way it shall be at the completion of the age: the angels shall go out, and shall separate the wicked from among the righteous, and shall throw them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." There will be a sorting out process.

As we follow the story flow, we have the illustration in Matthew 8.

Matthew 8:18-22, "And when Jesus saw the great throngs of people around Him, He commanded to leave for the other side of the sea. Then a scribe came to him, and said, 'Teacher, I will follow you wherever You may go.' But Jesus answered him, 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of heaven have nests; but the Son of man does not have any place where He may lay His head.' And another of his disciples said to Him, 'Allow me first to go and bury my father.' But Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me; and let the dead bury their own dead.'"

What did He mean by that? You shouldn't go to funerals or what? That was not the point of it at all. Here was someone who was a disciple, a student of His, and in effect said, 'I believe these things, but let me put off acting on it. Let me go and bury my father.' The idea was, 'I am going to stay at home and take care of things and run the farm as long as my father is alive. Once he is dead, well, then I will come and do these things.'

And Jesus said, "Let the dead bury their own dead." The reference is to the fact that there were other relatives who were likened to being spiritually dead who could take care of the physical duties, but there were none of those that could fulfill the spiritual duties. In effect, this young man was using the fact that he had an elderly father at home as an excuse to not act on the calling that Christ had given him. Christ was saying, 'Let the spiritually dead bury the dead; let them take care of these responsibilities. You have plenty of others in the family who can fulfill those responsibilities, but they cannot do what you are called to do right now.' The man was offering excuses as to why he could not act on the calling he had been given now. He said, 'I'll do it later, after my father is dead—after a few years on down the road.' Jesus wants us to have a sense of urgency. He wanted those He was dealing with at that time to have a sense of urgency, not kind of thinking, 'Well, sometime in the remote distant future I will do these things.'

As we continue on through the account from Mark 4:35-38, we find that as evening was come, He pushed out in the boat into the sea after dismissing the multitudes, and a violent wind storm came up. The waves battered against and over the boat and filled it with water. And He was asleep on a cushion in the stern. They aroused Him and said, 'Master, we are dying; aren't You concerned? We are about to perish.'

Mark 4:39-41, "Then He got up and He rebuked the wind, and He commanded the sea, 'Silent! Be quiet!' And the wind ceased and there was great calm. And He said to them, 'Why are you so afraid? How is it you don't have faith?' And they were terrified with great fear, and said one to another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?'"

'What's wrong, fellows, don't you have any faith?' It really impressed them.

This must have been quite a storm. A number of disciples were fishermen. They were men who were accustomed to the sea. They had been out on the sea and had been in boats. They had spent their lives that kind of way. They were not easily frightened every time a little wind blew and the waves came up on the sea. These men had spent their lives on the sea. If this storm was enough to scare them and they were losing control of the boat, you know that it was severe. Because they couldn't understand how He was sleeping through all of this, they finally woke Him up. 'We are about to die and here You are sleeping.'

He asked, 'What's wrong; don't you fellows have any faith?' No, they didn't have a whole lot, that's true.

Jesus Christ had a total, deep, complete awareness of God and God's power. He had that closeness, that proximity to God. When He was confronted with something, He reached out in faith and in confidence—He knew God was there. At that point in time, God wasn't that real to the disciples. Faith and sight are opposite.

Hebrews 11:1, "...faith is the evidence of things not seen...." People base what they believe on what they can see. That is not the most significant evidence. We are willing to take people's word; yet when it comes down to taking God's word, sometimes we really have to puzzle about it and kind of work up faith. Do you work up faith every time your paycheck comes? God's word we can count on.

Jesus casts out legion of demons: Luke 8:26-39, Mark 5:1-20 and Matthew 8:28-34.

They crossed over from the west side of the Sea of Galilee over to the southeast coast of the Sea of Galilee to the area of Decapolis. Decapolis was the Roman province or section that had a certain amount of Jewish settlement, as well as a large portion of Gentiles. This was the area of the Gadarenes. They crossed the Sea of Galilee, and there was a certain man there who had been possessed by demons for a long time.

Luke 8:27-29, "...a certain man from the city met Him, who had been possessed by demons for a long time, and wasn't even wearing clothes, and didn't live in a house, but lived in tombs in the graveyard. But seeing Jesus he screamed out with a loud voice, prostrated himself before Him, saying, 'What have I to do with You Jesus, Son of the Most High God, I beg you that you don't torment me!' For He was commanding the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (Because countless times it had seized him; and he had been bound up with chains and shackles, and had been kept under guard. But he would break the bonds...)"

There was an incredible supernatural strength when someone was possessed that way.

I remember various incidents. One that comes to mind is of a young woman, a fairly small young woman in a very similar situation, in terms of being possessed and going into these things. In one particular case when this came to a head, it was all they could do for four strong men to restrain her. It was everything they could do trying to restrain her, and they couldn't entirely do that in terms of trying to hold her down. Any

one of them would have probably weighed twice what she did. There was an incredible amount of strength, and yet when the demon was cast out, the problem was resolved.

That kind of thing is described here. When the demon would take over and seize this individual in terms of overt action, the kind of strength and things displayed frightened people and they were scared.

Verse 30, “And Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name?’ And he said, ‘Legion’ because many demons had entered into him.” He was actually possessed of more than one demon.

Verse 31, “And he pleaded with Him that He would not command them to go away into the abyss [the place of restraint and torment for Satan and the demons].” They said, ‘Look, our time isn’t up yet.’ They kind of panicked. The demons recognized Jesus. They knew who He was. They, of course, were fallen angels who had followed Lucifer (who had become Satan). They knew exactly who He was. They panicked when they saw Him. They knew He exercised the authority of God. They said, ‘Our time isn’t up yet; You aren’t going to put us into the abyss are You?’ No, He was not going to do that. He was going to make them come out of that individual.

So they asked Him permission, vv. 32-33, ‘If you cast us out of him, let us go into these swine.’ He did not forbid them to do that. They did and that served to panic the pigs to the point that they went charging down and over the cliff into the sea.

Verse 35, after Christ cast out the demons, the people came out and saw the man clothed and of a sound mind sitting at the feet of Jesus; it just scared them to death. They couldn’t believe it. Here was the guy completely sane. This kind of situation that we have here certainly represents God’s power over demon spirits. They have to be subject to God’s power.

Verse 37, a lot of the people around were so upset and panicked by the power that Jesus had displayed in terms of casting the demons out that they asked Him to please leave. They were scared to have Him around.

Verses 38-39, Christ told the individual to go back home (not to come with Him), and to tell the things that God had done. We find that this man, who was undoubtedly well known and had quite a bit of notoriety, went through that area. As he bore testimony of what Jesus had done, that had quite an impact on the people around.

Jesus returns to other side of sea: Luke 8:40, Mark 5:21 and Matthew 9:1.

Christ crossed back across the Sea of Galilee from Decapolis into Galilee.

Mark 5:21, “And when Jesus came across in the boat to the other side again, a great multitude was assembled to Him: and He was by the sea.”

Jarius requests healing for daughter: Luke 8:41-42, Mark 5:22-24 and Matthew 9:18-19.

We pick up the story here of Jairus. In Luke 8:41-42, a man came, whose name was Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, and asked Christ to come and please heal his twelve-year old daughter who was dying.

Woman is healed of hemorrhage: Luke 8:43-48, Mark 5:25-34 and Matthew 9:20-22.

As Jesus went, we find in Luke 8:43, a woman who had a constant hemorrhage for twelve years. She had spent everything she owned on physicians and doctors and could not be healed by any of them.

Mark 5:26, “...she had suffered many things under the hands of many physicians, and all her means of support had been spent; and she didn’t benefit in any way, but instead became worse.”

Jesus worked very few miracles in Nazareth except, we are told, Mark 6:4-5, that He laid His hands on a very few sick folk and they were healed. This woman came up and God honored her faith.

Luke 8:48, “...‘your faith has healed you...’” You evidenced that faith.

Jarius’ daughter dies and brought back to life: Luke 8:49-56, Mark 5:35-43 and Matthew 9:23-26.

After this healing as Jesus was walking to Jairus’ house, someone came and said:

Luke 8:49-50, “And while He was speaking, one came from the ruler of the synagogue, saying to him, ‘Your daughter has died; don’t trouble the Master!’ But hearing this, Jesus answered him, saying, ‘Don’t be afraid: only believe, and she shall have her life restored!’” He said, ‘Look, don’t bother; there’s no point in coming because the daughter is dead.’ Jesus said, ‘Only believe, have faith, have confidence.’

Verses 51-52, “And when He entered into the house, he didn’t allow anyone to go in with Him, except Peter, James and John and the father and mother of the child. And they were all weeping and mourning over her. But he said, ‘Stop weeping! She is not dead, but only sleeps.’” There were all these people in there carrying on, and Christ sent them out; He got them out of there with all of their goings-on.

Verses 54-56, “But after He sent everyone out of the room He took her hand, and called out

saying, 'Child get up!' And immediately her spirit returned, and she got up: and He directed that something to eat be given to her. And her parents were amazed and awestricken: and He commanded them to tell no one what had happened."

Matthew 9:27-30, "And as Jesus was leaving there, two blind men followed Him, loudly calling after Him and saying, 'Have compassion and mercy on us, Son of David!' But after He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him and Jesus said, 'Do you believe and have faith that I am able to do this?' And they answered Him, 'Yes, Lord!' Then He touched their eyes and said, 'According to your faith be it done to you,' and their eyes were opened..." Again, we see the matter of faith.

Verses 32-33, "And as they were leaving, suddenly they brought a man who was dumb, and was possessed by a demon. And when the demon had been cast out the dumb man spoke. And the multitudes were amazed..." This was incredible to them. In this particular case, this man had been demon possessed and Christ cast out the demon.

Verse 34, the Pharisees were very upset. Some people were impressed with the things that were going on. This really electrified the whole place.

Verse 34, "Then the Pharisees said, 'He casts out demons by the prince and chief ruler of the demons.'" They said He was in league with the devil. This was their attitude.

Verses 35-38, "And Jesus went all around to all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and healing every disease and every bodily weakness among the people. But seeing the multitudes He was moved with compassion for them, because they were wandering about, as sheep not having a shepherd. Then He said to the disciples, 'Truly the harvest is great, but the workmen are few. Beseech and supplicate therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He may send out workmen into His harvest.'" Jesus' attitude toward the multitudes was one of compassion. He had compassion as He looked and saw people wondering around not knowing the way to go. They were disoriented in their lives. They needed someone to guide and help them. Jesus had an attitude of compassion.

A prophet has no honor in his own country: Mark 6:1-6 and Matthew 13:54-58.

Mark 6:1-3, "And He left there, and came to His own country; and His disciples followed Him. And when the Sabbath came, He started to teach

in the synagogue. But when many heard Him teaching, they were startled, and said, 'Where did this man get these things? And what kind of wisdom is this, which has been given to Him, that even such miracles are performed by His hand? Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? And aren't His sisters here with us?' And they were offended at Him."

They were saying, 'Who does this guy think He is, coming in here doing all these things? Why we know Him. He is the carpenter. I remember when He built that house down the road. Why His mother lives over there across the village. Why we know her—been knowing her for years—and we know His brothers. How can He be anything great?' Notice the attitude of people: 'I have known Him all of His life.' What does that prove? I don't care who it is; somebody has known them all his life.

Verses 4-6, "But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet has honor and respect everywhere, except in his own country, and among his own relatives, and in his own family.' And while He was there He was not able to do many miracles, except He laid His hands on a few sick folk and healed them. And He was amazed at their disbelief and lack of faith..."

Again, we see the factor of faith in miracles. Faith is a pre-requisite to experiencing God's miracles; a lack of faith is a barrier. Even Jesus Himself could do very few miracles because people lacked faith. They didn't trust.

We have to recognize the extent to which we are in an age which Jesus characterized in Luke.

Luke 18:8, "...when the Son of man returns shall He find faith on the earth?" We live in an age that is so impressed with the things that man can do that it's lost sight of the things that God can do. An age that is so impressed with the power and ingenuity of man, that it's lost sight of how much greater is the power and ingenuity of God. It's very hard because faith is a simple thing, a child-like quality; the more sophisticated people get, the harder it is, seemingly, to have faith. It sounds like such a simplistic answer, yet we are told this in Hebrews.

Hebrews 11:6, "...without faith it is impossible to please God..." Faith is a very important matter. It is simply a matter of taking God at His word—of believing God.

In Mark 6:3, one thing that we should also note is that it is very clear that Jesus had brothers and sisters. This would come as a shock to a lot of people because according to Roman Catholic

teaching, Mary was a perpetual virgin. That does not come out of the Bible at all. She had at least six other children. There are the four brothers that are mentioned, plus sisters (plural, that means a minimum of two). So she had at least seven children. She could have had more depending on if there were more than two girls. That's what it says right here. Saying Mary was a perpetual virgin is just a matter of human tradition that people had, but it is not based on what the Bible says.

Jesus sends out the twelve apostles: Matthew 10:1-4, Mark 6:7-13 and Luke 9:1-6.

We pick up the story.

Matthew 10:1, "And when He called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave to them power and authority over the unclean demon spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every bodily weakness."

Verses 2-4, He enumerates the twelve and then Jesus commanded them.

Verses 5-11, "These twelve Jesus sent out, and commanded them, saying, 'Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not go into any city of the Samaritans: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand." Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out the demons. Freely you have received, freely give. And provide no gold, silver, nor money in your money belts, nor a bag of provisions for the way, nor two coats, nor extra sandals, nor a walking staff: because the workman is worthy of his food. And into whatever city or village you enter, search out who is worthy in it; and remain there until you leave.'" He gave them instructions.

Verse 16, "'Listen, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves: therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves.'" As Jesus sent them out, the commission He gave to the twelve is made clear. They were to go to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. At a later time, the Apostle Paul was called as the apostle to the Gentiles, but the twelve were not sent primarily to the Gentiles. Their responsibility was to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.

Why is it that the twelve disappeared from view in the book of Acts a few years after the day of Pentecost? We read of Paul, but we don't read of where Thomas went, or Phillip, or John, or Andrew, or even Peter. We have a little bit of insight into where Peter went. We are told Paul went into the Gentile areas. Why did the twelve disappear from view? One of the main reasons is

they were sent to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, and if God had clearly recorded where they went, then everybody would have known where the House of Israel was. Now we can piece together historical records, and it's a very intriguing tale. Perhaps we can go into it at a later Bible study. But that's where the twelve went—to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.

They started out by going through the land of Judea in kind of a warm-up, but the real thrust of the commission was where they went in the future. Christ sent them out and told them not to make provision and to go forth.

Understand a little bit as to the setting. How did you reach large crowds at that time? There wasn't mass media or television or radio. When someone would come into town, they would announce a public meeting and people would gather in a village square. So the disciples, as they would go out two by two (Mark 6:7), would go into these villages. They would announce a meeting and people would come around. This was the way they would go to the public. And of those who heard them, if someone responded and wanted to find out more, they would ask them to come over to their house and have a meal, etc.

Christ said, 'If you get a response and somebody has questions, you go over there. You will be provided for. Don't feel badly to take their hospitality. A workman is worthy of his hire.' He told them not to put a charge on what they did. Freely you have received; freely give (Matthew 10:8).

God's Church or ministry does not charge for any of its services—funerals, weddings or whatever. Whatever it is, the principle is "freely you have received, freely you give." You can't put a price on the truth of God. We don't sell the literature. We put no charge on the services we render.

Some of the specific instructions that Jesus gave of not providing any expense money and things of that sort, we will find later on toward the end of His life as He prepared to send the disciples out after His death that He then modified those instructions. He told them, 'When I sent you out before, did you lack anything?' And they said, 'No.' He said, 'Now I am going to send you out, and this time I want you to provide for those things.' We will get into that a little later.

Christ emphasized that He was sending them out as sheep among wolves.

Matthew 10:16, 'Use your head; be wise as a serpent, but harmless as a dove. Don't go out doing damage to people, mistreat or do things

that are going to take advantage of people in a wrong way. But be smart; use your head. Don't be gullible; don't be naive.

Realize people will deliver you up. You'll wind up being accused of things.'

Verses 18-20, "And you shall be brought before governors and kings on account of Me, for a witness against them and the nations. But when they deliver you up, do not be worried or anxious about how you shall speak or what you shall say: because it shall be given to you, at that very instant, what you should say. Because it is not merely you who are going to speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in and through you.'" 'If you are put in that kind of position, I will inspire you at the right time. I will put the words in your mouth.'

Verses 21-23, "But the brother will betray his brother to be killed; and the father, the child; and children will rise up against their parents and will cause them to be killed. And you will be hated by all people because of My name. But he who endures to the end, he shall be saved. But when you are persecuted in this city, flee into another: because truly I tell you, you shall not have finished preaching in the cities of Israel, until the Son of man appears at His coming.'" That is looking all the way down to our day.

Verse 25, "It is quite sufficient for the disciple if he become as his teacher; and the slave, if he become as his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call those of his household?" 'Don't worry about it if people criticize you. They have called Me Beelzebub; what do you think they are going to call you? They haven't liked Me; so what do you think they are going to think of you.' They criticized Jesus Christ and accused Him of being in league with the devil. We shouldn't be surprised if we are criticized.

People are sometimes amazed. They have written these things about the Church and say we are a cult. Well, what did they say about Christ? We shouldn't be surprised that people come out and misstate what we believe, take things out of context and accuse us of all kinds of things. They accused Him. We are certainly not entitled to any better treatment than what He received. If people took exception to someone who was perfect, and Jesus was, how much easier is it going to be for them to take exception to us, who are not perfect? If you can find fault with somebody who's perfect, you can be sure the world can find fault with somebody else. They found fault with

Him, so it's no trouble to find fault with the rest of them because they are not perfect.

Verse 27, "What I tell you in darkness speak in the light: and what you hear in the ear preach it from the housetop.'" You proclaim boldly what I have told you.

Verse 28, "And you should not be afraid of those who can kill the body, but are not able to kill the life: but rather you should fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in Gehenna.'" Some misunderstand this. Some have used this verse to prove there's an immortal soul. Is that what it says? It talks about the fact that God will destroy both body and soul. So whatever the soul is, it is something that can be destroyed in Gehenna fire. It doesn't say anything about it being immortal. It describes it as something that will be destroyed or that can be destroyed in hell fire. The point is Christ told them not to worry about what people can do, don't be concerned and primarily focused on people and what some human being can do.

You had better be concerned about God and what God can do. Human beings can kill your body, but God will ultimately resurrect you. What you had better be concerned about is not the first death, but the second death. That is the one that not only destroys the body, but it destroys the "psyche." In other words, it destroys that aspect of the person that is the person, the individuality.

There is nothing conscious about the soul apart from the body. There is nothing immortal in that sense. It is used here to refer to that unique individuality that sets apart every individual that God preserves a record of. When they are resurrected they have the memory and the mind restored. Resurrecting someone is not simply a matter of recreating a body that looks like that person because what is it that makes you, you? Your mind, character, personality, and memories—it's all of the unique things that set you apart, your individuality. God maintains a record of that. A human being can take your life, but God will ultimately restore that life in a resurrection. Jesus said don't be worried about human beings; the most they can do is kill you with the first death. But what you'd really better be concerned about is God. God can render the second death, which is the destruction not simply of the body, but of any potential for eternal life. Destroying your individuality, your psyche, destroys your potential for life eternal. So in effect, don't be impressed with people and what

they can do. Be impressed with God and what He can do.

Verse 34, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” If Christ came to bring peace on earth, He certainly failed. Some of the most horrendous bloodlettings that have ever occurred in the history of mankind have occurred in the last two thousand years. He is going to come and bring peace, but He didn’t bring peace at His first coming. In fact, He said, ‘I didn’t come to bring peace, but a sword.’ What does that mean?

As a result of following Christ, people are sometimes going to be alienated from family members—even parents and children. There are times, that in order to follow Christ, you are going to be alienated from those human beings that are closest to you. In some cases you are going to have strife as a result of obeying Christ; persecution can come by family members.

Verse 37, “Anyone who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.” –Putting other people before God. God will not take second place—not to father, mother, husband, parent, child or whomever. The first commandment is you shall have no other gods before the true God. Whatever we put first is our god. God says, ‘I won’t take second place.’ God wants first place or none at all.

Verse 38, “Anyone who does not take up his cross and deny himself to the point of death, and follow after Me, is not worthy of Me.” Jesus said, ‘Take up your cross, deny yourself and follow Me. If you don’t do that, you are not worthy of Me. You have to be willing to pick up the load and follow the way I lead, if you want what I offer.’

God’s way of life is not a matter of convenience. On the one hand, Jesus said, ‘Come unto Me all you that are heavy laden and I will give you rest’ (Matthew 11:28). God’s way is a way of release from many of the burdens of this world, but we also have to realize that it is not simply a matter of convenience to be a Christian. Christ did not promise us a convenient religion where everything would always be simple and everybody would think it is just wonderful because you are trying to obey God. That’s not the way it is.

The one point we want to recognize is if we do get persecuted, we want to make sure it is persecution for righteousness sake. Every person who is persecuted doesn’t mean they are persecuted for righteousness sake. Sometimes

they are persecuted because they brought trouble upon themselves, they shot off their mouth when they should have kept it quiet or they did certain things when they shouldn’t have. We want to make sure we are doing what God says so that any persecution that comes is there because of our obedience and not because of our disobedience.

Jesus said if you set your attention on trying to save this physical life, you will lose it. If your top priorities are trying to hold on to physical life and physical possessions, you are going to lose it. If that is the most important thing to you, and if you are trying to hold on to the things in the “here and now,” it will go through your fingers. If you are willing to sacrifice everything for God’s sake, in the long run you’ll prosper.

Matthew 10:39, “He who seeks to save his life shall lose it and he that loses his life for My sake shall find it.” People who set their priorities on the physical, holding on to the “here and now,” are going to find this age passing away, and the things that have been so important to them crumbling to dust. But if our priorities consist of God and His way, we have a hold of something that will never pass away. It’s not that we shouldn’t take care of and be wise stewards with whatever God has blessed us with, but it is a matter of priorities. What comes first in our life?

Jesus went on to tell His disciples in Matthew 10:40, “Anyone who receives you receives Me; and anyone who receives Me, receives Him who sent Me.” He said the way they treat you is really the way they treat Me. And the way they treat Me is the way they treat the Father. So we show respect to God and to Jesus Christ by the way in which we treat those whom God sends. It’s a matter that the disciples were sent forth and represented Jesus Christ. They were sent forth and commissioned by Him. Respect that was shown to them was not simply to them as individuals, but it really was respect to the One who sent them.

There is the same principle today when an ambassador is sent by the United States to a foreign nation. The way our ambassador is treated is considered the way this country is treated. If our ambassador is treated with respect, that is a token of respect to this country. If our ambassador is mistreated or abused, that is considered an insult to the nation, and in some cases, has been a ground for war because an ambassador was abused. The way you treat an official emissary of this country is taken

personally. It is either an insult or a compliment to the nation. It's the same principle here.

Herod thinks Jesus is John the Baptist resurrected: Matthew 14:1-2, Mark 6:14-16 and Luke 9:7-9.

Matthew 14:1-2, "At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and told his servants, 'This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead, and because of this the mighty miracles operate powerfully in him.'" Herod, when he heard about all these things, being the superstitious sort that he was, thought John had come back from the dead to haunt him. You remember the story.

How John the Baptist is beheaded: Matthew 14:3-11 and Mark 6:17-28.

John the Baptist had been put in prison. Herod's wife Herodias was very upset. She was angry with John the Baptist because John called things what they were. There had been this immoral situation going on—wife swapping and all that kind of thing. John the Baptist called her by what she was and didn't make any "bones" about it; this really upset her. Herod didn't particularly like it, but he knew John was telling the truth and was kind of scared of him. He figured John was a prophet from God and had a certain kind of superstitious respect, not to the point that he was ready to act on it, but 'this guy has something.' But Herodias was so angry that Herod had to put John in prison.

Then Herod had his birthday party, a big blowout; everybody was getting drunk and carrying on, and Herodias' daughter Salome was dancing. Now she was not a six-year old doing a tap dance. You read the account. It becomes very obvious that this was a very sensual type of thing. Here he was with his drinking buddies, all about "half-crocked," and here she came out doing one of these seductive dances—probably Middle East belly dances kind of a thing. Old Herod was getting so "beside himself" that finally he said, 'Hey, what do you want?' You get an idea of the corruption and immorality because her mother put her up to this. Her mother got her to seduce Herod, her own husband, in order to get her own way. You get an idea of the morality of the ruling family.

Verse 8, "But her mother instigated her to demand, 'Give me, here on a platter, the head of John the Baptist.'" Her mother had already told her what to ask for. She said, 'I want the head of John the Baptist on a platter,' and Herod was kind of "caught on the spot."

Matthew 14:9, "And the king was grieved and upset, but because of the oath and because of those who were with him at the table, he commanded that it be given to her." It bothered him. He knew that he shouldn't do that, but he had already "stuck his foot in his mouth." He had said this and everybody there heard it. Now he felt he couldn't back down.

Verse 10, "Then he gave orders, and had John beheaded in prison." He sent somebody out to execute John the Baptist. A little later when he heard about Jesus, he thought John the Baptist was back from the dead to haunt him (Matthew 14:1-2). This was the conclusion he leaped to. He was somewhat of a superstitious sort. He figured God was going to "get him." God did deal with him a little later. That provides an interesting story as to what God finally did and the way Herod met his end.

I think we have an overview here. That brings us up to the point of where we are going to be next time, which is the feeding of the five thousand. This brings us up to the Passover of 30 A.D. This brings us up to the final year of Christ's ministry. One of the things we will note is that the further along we go, the story begins to slow down and go into greater and greater detail. As we started out, we found that events were told in more broad and general terms; now it is going into more and more details.

So next time we will pick it up in the Passover season of 30 A.D., continue on through to the time through the summer of 30 A.D., and then right before the fall festivals. So we will continue to go through this series on the harmony of the Gospels.

Bible Study # 33 Questions

SURVEY OF THE GOSPELS AND ACTS SERIES

Matthew 8, 9, 10, 13, 14; Mark 4:21—6:29; Luke 8:16—9:9

1. Explain Mark 4:21-24.
2. In what way is the Kingdom of God like a mustard seed, like leaven?
3. What is the meaning of the parable of the tares? What does this have to do with certain problems and offenses that occur in the Church?
4. Does Matthew 8:22 mean you should not go to funerals? What does it mean?
5. Who was Legion and what happened to him? What was the reaction of the people in this area to what happened?
6. In what way was the woman with an issue of blood an outstanding example?
7. What was Christ's answer to the two blind men when they requested healing?
8. What was Jesus Christ's attitude toward the people?
9. What was the attitude of people in Nazareth to Jesus Christ? Did He work many miracles there? Why?
10. Where did Christ commission the twelve apostles to go?
11. Prove from Christ's commission that while on the one hand we are to freely give the message we have without charge, that it is right and proper that we take free-will donations from interested listeners.
12. How should we expect to be treated by the world for doing God's Work?
13. What should be our attitude if we are brought before government authorities because of doing the Work?
14. Explain Matthew 10:28.
15. Did Christ come to bring peace on earth? Explain.
16. Who did Herod think Jesus Christ was?
17. What had happened to John the Baptist?

Bible Study # 34
April 11, 1989
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Gospels and Acts Series—Matthew 14:13—17:23; Mark 6:30—9:32; Luke 9:10-45; John 6:1—7:1

Let's focus on the material we are covering this evening. We **are covering events between the time immediately before Passover in 30 A.D. and the fall festival season of 30 A.D. We are covering approximately a six-month period. Jesus remained primarily in the area of Galilee, entirely outside of Jerusalem and Judea.**

We pick up the story in John 6. In this particular occasion, all four of the Gospels have a parallel account.

The feeding of the five thousand: John 6:1-13, Mark 6:30-44, Luke 9:10-17 and Matthew 14:13-21.

They all start out with the account of the feeding of the five thousand. Now John brings in a detail that the others don't. John focuses in very specifically on the holy days and festivals of God. John emphasizes the holy days and festivals because he is writing at a much later time when some were beginning to question whether or not God's festivals really needed to be kept. John was writing in the 90s A.D. At the time Matthew, Mark and Luke wrote, the Church was primarily Jewish and there really wasn't any question on the holy days; they did not make any special comment on them.

John focused the entirety of his Gospel on the things that Jesus said and did in the context of the festival seasons.

John makes plain in John 6:4, "And the Passover, a Feast of the Jews, was near."

Verses 5-9, it was in that context that Jesus looked up and saw a multitude coming toward Him. He saw this group of people there and He said to Philip, 'Where are we going to get all of the food to feed these people? Where are we going to get enough loaves?' He asked Philip that, not because He didn't know what to do, but He wanted to see what Philip would say. Philip's eyes got big and he asked, 'Feed them? Man, two hundred coins worth of bread isn't sufficient for them; each one would just get a little bitty piece. There is no way we can feed this large a crowd.' Andrew said, 'We've already checked, and the only thing we can come up with, the only food out here, is this one little kid whose mother sent

lunch with him. He's the only one who has anything, and all he has is five little barley loaves and two small fishes. What good is that going to do?'

Jesus had an attitude of compassion. We find that the multitudes had followed them, and it was late in the day.

Luke 9:12 tells us that the twelve had already come to Him saying, 'You better send them home so they get something to eat and find provisions and lodging in the surrounding area because this is out in the wilderness.'

We are told there were approximately five thousand men. It doesn't say exactly how many women and children there were, but this is in addition to the women and children (Matthew 14:21). Chances are the group was predominantly male, but there would have been a number of families that would have been included as well. The point is it was a very large group, and the disciples didn't see any way to feed them. Jesus had mercy; He had compassion. We find that He took the loaves and fishes, gave thanks, divided it among the disciples and the disciples distributed it to those who were sitting.

In John 6:11-12, we are told that when it was all over with, they collected twelve baskets of leftovers. So they wound up with a whole lot more leftover than they started out with. Generally, your "start-out-with" is a lot more than your leftovers, but this time the leftovers way outnumbered the "start-out-with." There was a lot more. It was a miracle. It is interesting to note a couple of things.

Luke 9:14-15, "Because they were approximately five thousand men. And He told His disciples, 'Make them sit in groups of fifties.' And they did so, and made everyone sit down."

In Mark 6:39-40, we are told, "And He commanded all of them to sit down by groups on the green grass. And they sat down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties." Notice the first thing Christ did was to organize the group. God's not the author of confusion. He had a big group here and He was going to feed them. The first thing He did was He organized it.

Notice one other thing He did.

John 6:12, "And when they were full, he told His disciples, 'Gather up the fragments which are left, so nothing will be lost.'" Notice that they didn't trash the place. He didn't walk away leaving a mess behind. I think it is a very small point, but it is one of those areas that give us a little insight into the way that Jesus Christ did things. Sometimes I have come into a bathroom,

and you see water splashed all over the place. Particularly in a public rest room, you see paper towels all over the floor, and the place has just been trashed. People made a mess. Can you imagine Jesus Christ crumpling up His paper towels and just throwing them on the floor and leaving the place a wreck?

It's just a couple of things to show insight into His character. When He finished feeding the group, they cleaned up the area. They made sure no mess was left. Remember when they came into the cave and found the burial garments, they found the napkin for His head folded separately (John 20:7). Ever stop to think about that? He didn't just leave it in a crumpled heap when He left. He took the time for a mundane task of folding it up and leaving it neatly behind.

You might say, 'What difference does it make? I'd be so excited to leave that I'd just leave the napkin lying in a heap on the floor.' Well, maybe you would, but He didn't. It was simply a point of character that when Jesus Christ left something, he left it neat and clean. It's one of those things that give us insight as we read the Bible. There are all kinds of lessons; there are little lessons and big lessons to draw.

One of the things that we see by example and illustration is simply ways of doing things. We gain insight from that in terms of points of character, and we realize that it is something we can put into practice.

We have had problems even here in our Church hall. Deacons and ushers have a job trying to clean up the mess that's been left behind on the floor. Can you imagine coming in behind Jesus Christ where He had been sitting to clean up the mess He left behind? I know it's generally the children, not the adults, but isn't that a good opportunity to start with a little child—'okay, now let's pick up. You have this mess here; we can't go off and leave this mess.' It's a good opportunity to teach them that you don't leave the place trashed when you go away expecting that somebody else will come in behind you.

Jesus goes up into a mountain to pray: John 6:14-17, Mark 6:45-46 and Matthew 14:22-23.

After this Jesus sent the disciples across the sea and He went off into the mountains.

Matthew 14:23, "And when the multitudes were dismissed, He went up into the mountain to a private place to pray...."

He wanted some time by Himself. He wanted some time to pray. The disciples had gone ahead of Him.

Jesus walks on the water: John 6:18-21, Mark 6:47-49 and Matthew 14:24-27.

John 6:18-20, we are told the sea was turbulent and they had been rowing about three miles; all of a sudden they were terrified. They looked up, and it looked like somebody was walking toward them. And sure enough there was. Needless to say, this really frightened them when they saw somebody walking. Jesus called out to them and said it was He.

Matthew adds in a detail that the others omit.

Matthew 14:28-31, "Peter answered Him and said, 'Lord, if it is You command me come out to You upon the waters.' And He said, 'Come!' And when Peter climbed out of the boat, he walked upon the waters, to go to Jesus. And seeing the tumultuous wind, he was exceedingly afraid; and as he began sinking he yelled out, saying, 'Lord, save me!' And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand, and grabbed hold of him, and said, 'O you of little faith! Why did your thought waver?'"

Peter started walking, and then all of a sudden after a few steps, he looked down at that water, looked out there at all the wind and the waves. He thought, 'What am I doing; I can't do this.' Just about that time, sure enough, he couldn't. Glug, glug and down he went. Christ reached out His hand and pulled him up. He asked, 'Why did you doubt, Peter? Why did you waver?'

Now understand that Peter at least had a little more "going for him" than the others. He was the only one that even tried. You say Peter doubted, didn't have faith. Well, how far have you walked on water? I dare say he's gone more steps on water than any of the rest of us have. So we can't cast stones.

There is a point here. When did he get into trouble? —When he took his eyes off of Christ and on to what he could see around. That is the lesson of faith.

Hebrews 11:1, "...faith the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen..." If you can see it, touch it and taste it, that doesn't take faith because you have physical evidence. Faith is spiritual evidence. As long as Peter kept his eyes on Christ, he didn't have a problem. When he took his eyes off of Christ and looked on the around, he had problems. The immediate conclusion of when you look at the around is this is impossible, and there goes faith down the drain. This is a very important lesson: as we keep our eyes on God, on Jesus Christ, on the promises of God, we are focusing on that which will never fail or let us down. As we get our eyes

on what we can see and on the around, as we start focusing in on the other things, then we are focusing on things that will mess us up.

John 6:22-25, the rest of the crowd wanted to come over, too. They waited there for Christ and figured they would catch Him when He got ready to cross. They waited and He never did cross. Finally some of them went over. We're told that they got on board boats and came to Capernaum looking for Him. When they found Him, they asked, 'How did You get here? We were watching. We didn't see you take a boat. We saw the disciples leave without You. How did You get here before we did?' Well, He didn't tell them. But He did tell them this.

Verse 26, "Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I tell you, you are not seeking Me because you have seen miracles, but because you ate of the bread and were satisfied.'" He said, 'I know why you are looking for Me. It's not because you have seen a miracle or heard a message. You are here because you ate an enjoyable meal. I fed you and you'd like to get fed again.'

Verses 27-35, "'Do not labor and work for the food which is perishable and temporal. But work and labor for the food which remains and endures throughout eternity, and for eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you: because God the Father has sealed Him with His own stamp of approval.' Therefore they asked Him, 'What should we do in order to work the works of God?' Jesus answered and told them, 'This is the work of God, that you should have complete trust and faith in Him whom the Father has sent!' Therefore they said to Him, 'Then what miracle will you do, so that we may see, and may believe and have faith in You? What are You going to perform? Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness; as it is written, "He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.'" Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread out of heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread out of heaven. And truly the bread of God is He who comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.' Then they said to Him, 'Lord, always give us this bread.' But Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life....'"

Notice the context is the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. The miracle in the feeding of the five thousand occurred immediately prior to Passover. Now by this time, He is back in Capernaum, and it may very well be the message He gave on the first holy day. It's very possible and it's certainly in the context of the Passover

and the Days of Unleavened Bread that Jesus began to explain that He is the bread of life. So when we take of that unleavened bread at the Passover as well as throughout the Days of Unleavened Bread, we understand that it is not enough simply to get rid of leavening—we have to replace it with something. Jesus Christ is the bread of life. It is not enough to simply try to get rid of the old habits, the old ways of thinking and the old ways of doing things that have characterized us in this world. We need to have Jesus Christ in us. We need to replace the old things with something new, with something positive, with something right. We need Jesus Christ living His life in us. He, we are told, is the source of our spiritual nourishment and survival.

He says, v. 35, "'I am the bread of life. Anyone who comes to Me shall never hunger....'" Well, many of the Jews began to be upset because they didn't understand what He was talking about. They began to be offended, so He told them in John 6:44, "'No one is able to come to Me except the Father who has sent Me draw him and I will resurrect him.'" Only those that the Father draws can come to Christ.

And then He went on to tell them in v. 48, "'I am the bread of life.'"

Verses 50-51, "'But this is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that anyone may eat of it, and not die. I am the Living Bread that comes down out of heaven! If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live into the ages of eternity; and the bread which I shall give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.'"

Verse 53, "...'except you eat of the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you cannot have life in yourself.'" In other words, 'you have to take Me in.' You have to consume, to absolutely take in Jesus Christ in His entirety. We are told He gave His life; He gave Himself—it was a total and complete sacrifice. We are to live by and through Him.

Verse 59, "These things He said, teaching in Capernaum in the synagogue." If He were teaching in the synagogue, it would have undoubtedly been on a Sabbath or holy day. In the context, it was most likely the first Holy Day of Unleavened Bread. He was giving a message on "What is this Bread?" He had just performed a miracle of multiplying the loaves, and now He began to explain that there was a spiritual analogy.

Verse 60, “After hearing this, many of His disciples said, ‘This is a hard and difficult message. Who is able to understand it?’”

Verses 66-68, “From that time, many of His disciples went back, and didn’t follow Him any longer. Therefore Jesus asked the twelve, ‘Are you also desiring to go away?’ Then Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!’”

Many of those who were listening to His message were offended. Some began to go back and not follow any longer. Peter and the rest of the twelve didn’t really understand the point Jesus was getting at. They didn’t entirely understand what He was saying, but what they did know was that He had the truth. Peter said, ‘I may not understand what You are doing or the point You are making on this. This may strike me as a little strange, but I am not going to go away. Where would I go?’

Once you’ve found the truth, where are you going to go? This principle and the understanding of this certainly have helped some to endure and to make it through some tough times. Sometimes in the past when certain problems and things beset the Church, there was the realization as Peter had: ‘Well, Lord, where are we going to go; you have the truth.’

John 7:1, “And after these things Jesus was traveling throughout Galilee: because He did not desire to travel through Judea, since the Jews were plotting to kill Him.” So He remained in Galilee through this period of time.

Man’s tradition; washing of hands: Mark 7:1-13 and Matthew 15:1-9.

Mark 7:1, “And then the Pharisees and some of the scribes, came from Jerusalem, gathered themselves together to Him.” News of what Jesus was saying and doing was traveling far and wide. He was not coming down to Jerusalem, so they came to where He was. Some of them were very upset.

We are told in v. 2, “But when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled and supposedly unholy hands, that is, unwashed hands, they criticized and found fault.” Now this really “bent them out of shape.” They had many traditions of this matter of eating with washed hands. With them it wasn’t simply a matter of hygiene; it was a matter of ritual purity. They viewed the problem was when they came into contact with other people, with sinners. That was just terrible. Before they would touch food that would go into their mouth, they had to make sure their hands were washed. They didn’t want to

come into contact with sinners. They had made a fetish out of some of the principles of washings and carried it to an extreme. In some cases they had taken the rituals of Leviticus that applied to the priesthood coming into the temple and had sought to apply it to individuals in their own home at their own table. That was literally the point they had gone to. The table was analogous to the altar, and the individual was to be as holy and undefiled as the priest. This was their thinking; they had taken it to such extremes in all of this. It really “bent them out of shape” when Christ’s disciples were not following all these rituals. They approached Christ about it.

Verses 5-9, “Then the Pharisees and the scribes demanded of Him, ‘Why don’t Your disciples conduct their lives according to the tradition of the elders, instead of eating bread with unwashed hands?’ But He answered them by saying, ‘Isaiah has perfectly prophesied concerning you, hypocrites, sanctimonious pretenders; for in this manner it has been written, “These people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain they worship Me, teaching for doctrine man-made religious precepts, injunctions and commandments.” As a result you have completely left out the commandment of God, and you cling to and follow the traditions of men, such as the washing of pots and cups: and you do many things like this.’ And He told them, ‘It is true, you have completely rejected and repudiated the commandment of God, in order that you may practice and observe your own traditions!’”

Christ said that the Pharisees were hypocrites. They paid lip service to God, but their actions belied their words. They elevated the importance of their own human tradition above the actual law of God. That still characterizes most of man’s religions to this day—most of what passes as Christianity. People would rather cling to human tradition than to observe the commandments of God. They elevate that human tradition.

Unwashed hands do not defile: Mark 7:14-16 and Matthew 15:10-11.

Mark 7:14-16, ““And when He had called all the multitude to Him, he said to them, “Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: There is nothing from outside the man, which entering into him, is able to defile him: but the things which go out from of him, these are the things that defile the man. If anyone has an ear to hear, let him hear.””

What comes out of man defiles: Mark 7:17-23 and Matthew 15:12-20.

In Mark 7:17-19, "...the disciples asked Him about the meaning of the parable. And He said to them, 'Are you also without understanding? Don't you comprehend that anything which enters into the man from outside is not capable of defiling him? Because it doesn't enter into the heart and mind of the individual, but into the stomach, and goes out of the body into the sewer, purifying all the food.'" In other words, what you eat, what goes into your mouth doesn't enter into your heart and mind. It goes through the digestive system and is eliminated, passed out into the sewer and is gone. It's simply a matter of time and it passes through the body. That is not what defiles and makes you spiritually unclean. Verses 20-23, "And He said, 'Those things which proceed out of the man, these actually defile and profane the man. Because from inside the hearts and minds of men emanate evil reasonings and imaginations, adulteries, sexual debaucheries, murders, thefts, covetous desires and impulses, wickedness, deceit, evil permissiveness, an evil eye, blasphemy, haughtiness, pride, and foolishness! All these evils proceed from inside of the man, and defile him.'"

It's our attitudes, our thoughts and our covetous desires. It's the wrong thinking that is the problem. Some have tried to take this totally out of context and quote this account as proof that Christ did away with the laws of clean and unclean meats, which is absolutely ridiculous. There isn't any suggestion here of eating unclean foods. The subject is not even under discussion. It was the subject of the tradition of the elders, of human customs that the Pharisees paid great service to. The subject had to do with washing the hands, and Christ made plain that this was the case.

When you go back to the account in Acts 10, Peter was confronted with the sheet containing the unclean animals; you remember what he said?

Acts 10:14, "'Not so Lord, I have never eaten anything common or unclean.'" Now Peter was with Christ for three and one-half years, and there was nothing here at any time that made him think that he should eat unclean food. He had never eaten it with Jesus, so it was very plain that Jesus was not doing that.

Christ heals the daughter of a Gentile woman:
Mark 7:24-30 and Matthew 15:21-28.

Mark 7:24-30 tells us He went to the area of Tyre and Sidon and He came into a house. He didn't want anyone to know that He was there, but word

did spread. A woman who heard it appeared with her little daughter who had an unclean spirit. The woman, we are told, was a Greek, a Syrophenician by race. (She was referred to as a Canaanite in Matthew 15:22.) In other words, the term "Greek" is referred to in this context as simply being "a Gentile, a Greek speaker." Specifically, she was a Syrophenician or Canaanite. This had reference to tracing back to the Phoenicians who were descendants of Canaan. She came in and desired that He cast the demon out of her daughter.

She evidently had certain knowledge of Him. Recognize, of course, that the people who lived here in this area were not normally those who practiced the religion of the Scriptures. They were of pagan background. Jesus Christ came specifically and His ministry was to His own—the Jews. He did not come ministering and taking His message out to other areas. Later, He sent the disciples out to these other areas. But God does things in an orderly and organized way.

It was God's purpose and plan to start with Israel, particularly with the Jews. They had retained the Scriptures, the knowledge of the law of God; therefore in terms of building the Church, it needed to be built around a group that was familiar with, understood and had access to the law—that group served as a nucleus. Then once it was established with them, it would begin to spread out and include others; eventually spread worldwide. But there was a logical reason as to why you start where you do. If you start with a group of people where the nucleus is totally unacquainted with the law and does not have access to the Scriptures, you have engendered confusion before you ever get started. Christ's ministry, we are told in the book of John, specifically and uniquely came to His own. His own received him not (John 1:11). But His ministry was to them. It was not here in Tyre and Sidon.

So this woman came in. He, perhaps, had come to visit an individual because certainly there were Jews who lived there a short distance away. He had come into someone's home, and He had sought to keep His presence private. He was not trying to get something started among the Gentile population there in that area. But this woman had heard and had certain knowledge. She came there.

Christ, at first, made a statement to her.

Verses 27-29, "But Jesus said to her, 'First let the children be satisfied [I have come to the Jews, the children of Israel]: because it is not

proper to take the children's bread, and cast it out to the dogs.' But she answered and said to Him, 'Yes, Lord! Yet even the little dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.' And He said to her, 'Because of this answer, go; the demon has gone out of your daughter.'" The demon was gone out and the problem was solved. There was an attitude of humility.

I think it is interesting to note that perhaps the greatest example of faith and the greatest example of humility that our attention is called to in the New Testament were both evidenced by Gentiles. You know what was said of the Roman centurion that Christ pointed out to His disciples, 'I have never seen this kind of faith, no, not in Israel' (Matthew 8:5-13). This woman had an attitude of humility. Christ, in that sense, was testing her. His ministry was not primarily to the Gentiles.

Some Gentiles had a kind of magical or superstitious approach, and anybody that they heard of and would view as having some kind of magical powers and connection with the gods, they would just add in to their collection. They worshipped many gods. They weren't picky. Christ was not going to get involved in that kind of situation. He was not there to deal with her and that group of people. But because of her persistence, humility and faith, He dealt with her. In a sense, she was dealt with ahead of time because she evidenced persistence, faith and humility. The example is preserved for us.

I think we need to recognize that we live in a society that does not value humility. Can you imagine the response that Jesus would have gotten with a statement like this in our society? This would not have been a very popular response, but there is a lesson here. God values things that people don't value. God values humility; our society and modern end-of-the-century America do not value humility as being something important. Why no! You have to demand your rights. Don't let anybody tell you anything. You just go charging on and insist on your way. You don't take anything off of anybody. And certainly don't have a humble approach. Well, God values humility, and this woman evidenced that humility. Christ was impressed and touched by her humility, her faith and her persistence; her daughter was healed.

We find that Christ continued to work these healings and these miracles. Mark 7:31-37 mentions Christ healing a deaf man.

Matthew 15:31, "So that the multitudes were awestruck when they saw the dumb speaking, the

maimed made whole, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel."

Jesus feeds the 4,000: Matthew 15:32-38 and Mark 8:1-9.

Matthew 15:32, "But when Jesus called his disciples to Him, He said, 'I am moved with compassion and mercy towards the multitude, because they have continued with Me for three days already, and have nothing to eat. I am not willing to send them away fasting, because they might faint on the way back.'" Again, He had an attitude of compassion in dealing with people. He cared about people and was very much concerned with human beings and their problems, their difficulties and frailties.

Verse 38, "Now those who had eaten were four thousand men, in addition to women and children." Here we have another account of feeding four thousand men in addition to women and children.

The Pharisees demand a sign: Matthew 15:39-16:1-4 and Mark 8:10-13.

Matthew 15:39, "Then after dismissing the multitudes, He boarded the boat, and came into the area of Magdala."

Matthew 16:1, "Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, tempting Him, demanding that He demonstrate a sign from heaven for them." They said, 'How do we know You are whom You say you are?'

Verses 2-3, "But He answered them, 'When evening comes, you say, "Fine weather tomorrow, because the sky is red." But in the morning, "A storm is coming, because the sky is overcast." You hypocrites, sanctimonious pretenders! You know how to discern the outward appearance of the sky, but the signs of the times you cannot discern.'" "

He told them, 'You can observe the signs of nature; you can tell whether it's going to rain or not—but you don't see the signs of the times.

Verse 4, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; but a sign shall not be given to it, except the sign of Jonah the prophet.' Then He left them, and went away." They were going to have that sign impressed upon them in a special way within a matter of months.

Leaven (doctrine) of the Pharisees: Matthew 16:5-12 and Mark 8:14-21.

Matthew 16:5, "And when His disciples arrived at the other side, they noticed that they had forgotten to take loaves." They had forgotten to take any food with them. They just got on the

boat in a hurry and had forgotten to take any bread.

Jesus made the comment, v. 6, "...‘Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’" Jesus took advantage of physical circumstances to make a point, and His disciples always tended to take everything He said in a very literal, physical way. Many times He was speaking in a figurative sense.

Verse 7, "But they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘He said this because we did not take loaves.’" Immediately they began inquiring about what He meant; ‘maybe He didn’t want us to buy any bread from the Pharisees.’ They were all murmuring about this.

Verses 8-12, "And knowing this, Jesus said to them, ‘Why are you reasoning among yourselves, O you of little faith, because you haven’t brought loaves? Don’t you comprehend or remember the five loaves for five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered up? Nor the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered up? How is it that you do not comprehend that I did not speak to you concerning bread, in warning you to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees?’"

He asked, ‘What are you guys talking about? Do you think I am worried about where we are going to get bread? Didn’t I just get through feeding four thousand people, and didn’t I feed five thousand a little earlier? You think I am standing here worried about where I am going to get bread and not want you to buy it from the Pharisees.’ Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but to beware of the teaching and doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

We are told in Luke 12:1 that the leaven of the Pharisees is hypocrisy. He was using leaven in a spiritual sense. He was contrasting the leaven of the Pharisees with the bread of life. We are to partake of the bread of life, and we are told to avoid the leaven of the Pharisees. That is the spiritual lesson we need to have on our minds through the Days of Unleavened Bread as we studiously avoid the leavened bread.

We can get so meticulous in trying to remember, ‘No, I can’t have a doughnut. No, I can’t have a hamburger.’ We are thinking and concentrating on this. The spiritual lesson is we need to be spending just as much time throughout the year thinking and concentrating on avoiding the leaven of the Pharisees as we do on trying to avoid physical leaven for seven days. Just as we make it a point to acquire unleavened bread and

eating it through the Days of Unleavened Bread, in the same way, we need to be conscious of partaking of the bread of life, Jesus Christ, throughout our lives. Make it a point to avoid the leaven of the Pharisees and partake of the bread of life. The physical action we go through needs to impress upon us what we need to be doing spiritually.

Jesus’ Church built on the Rock: Matthew 16:13-18, Mark 8:27-30 and Luke 9:18-21.

Matthew 16:13, "And when Jesus came into the area of Caesarea Philippi, He questioned His disciples, and asked, ‘Whom do men claim the Son of man to be?’" He asked, ‘Who do people think I am?’

Verse 14, well, different people had different opinions. Some thought he was John the Baptist. Herod evidently thought that. He was kind of a superstitious sort. He thought that John the Baptist had come back to haunt him. That was his opinion. Some said they thought He was Elijah based on the prophecies in Malachi. Some said He was Jeremiah. Why did they say Jeremiah? Why not? It just shows that people have an opinion.

It may not make sense, may be ridiculous, may not have any point in it, but they have an opinion. ‘Oh, I think “so and so”’ —A “man-on-the-street” poll. What does that prove? Sometimes you need to take a look at what street you take the poll on—Skid Row or Wall Street. You can have a wide variety of opinions that could be brought out. But the point is people have opinions, and just because they have opinions doesn’t mean that their opinion is valid. People take a Gallup poll. ‘Who do you think this guy is?’ Everybody had an opinion, but their opinions weren’t right. They didn’t know. But not knowing has never kept people from having an opinion. Far be it from them to let lack of knowledge get in the way of having an opinion. So Christ asked and He got different ones mentioning different things that they had heard people say.

Verses 15-17, "He asked them, ‘But whom do you claim Me to be?’ Then answered Simon Peter, saying, ‘You are the Christ [the Messiah], the Son of the living God.’ And answering, Jesus said to him, ‘Blessed are you Simon Barjona [Simon, the son of Jonah], because flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but My Father who is in heaven.’"

‘You didn’t get this from listening to the man on the street. Flesh and blood hasn’t told you this. You didn’t get this from what other people said,

but My Father, which is in heaven, has opened your mind to really understand and grasp this.’

Verse 18, “‘And I also tell you, that you are Peter [which means “a stone,” and refers to Peter. Aramaic, “*Cephas*,” “a little rock or stone”; Greek, “*petros*”]. You are Peter [Greek, “*petros*,” “a little stone, rock”] but on this rock [Greek, “*petra*,” “a great massive rock,” and refers to Christ Himself] I will build My Church, and the mouth of the grave [the gates of hell—Hades] is not going to prevail against it.”

In other words, ‘I am going to build My Church, and it is not going to be swallowed up in death. It’s going to continue to exist.’ Whom did Jesus Christ build the Church upon? He built it upon Himself.

We are told in Ephesians 2:20 that the Church is built upon the foundation of the prophets and the apostles, Jesus Christ being the Chief Cornerstone.

Now Peter described in I Peter 2:5 that we are all living stones. In a sense, what He told Peter was, ‘You are a “chip off the old block”—you have a certain rock-like quality.’ He had nicknamed him Peter or “rock” at an earlier time. ‘You have certain qualities; you have certain rock-like qualities. You reflect that and on this ROCK, I will build My Church.’

It is interesting if you look at the location of Caesarea Philippi. Just prior to entering Caesarea Philippi, there is a huge cliff that dominates the scene. At the base of the cliff, during the time of Jesus, a major spring gushed out from under the cliff. It was one of the sources of the Jordan River. It’s interesting. Here is the stream of living water where they were standing. Right there outside of Caesarea Philippi was a great cliff, a great rock, a “*petra*” that dominated the scene, and down at the base, there was a stream that gushed out from the base of the cliff that fed the Jordan River. There was a stream of living water and in that sense, flowing water.

It really kind of set the stage as Christ drew on the physical things that they could see to explain that He was building His Church. He was going to build it with Himself being the chief cornerstone. He was the ROCK on which it was built, and it would never be swallowed up. The disciples, of course, were going to play a part. They were part of the foundation. The prophets and the apostles make up the foundation built around and upon the chief cornerstone, which was Jesus Christ.

Then He went on to tell the twelve apostles in Matthew 16:19, “‘...I am giving you the keys of

the Kingdom of heaven. Whatever you may bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

“Binding and loosing” was a common legal term used among the Jews. It referred to, specifically, decisions made by the religious arm of the Sanhedrin, called by the Jews, “The Great Beit Din” or “The Great House of Judgment.” It is in this situation, sitting in the “Great Beit Din,” that the Pharisees sat in Moses’ seat. Remember when He told the disciples that the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat (Matthew 23:1-4)?

Look at Luke 11:52, when Jesus told the doctors of the law, “‘Woe and misery to you doctors of law because you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.’” When He’s talking about the keys of the Kingdom, He’s talking about the keys that unlock the knowledge necessary to go in. He told the apostles, ‘I am giving you the keys of the Kingdom.’ A little later He rebuked the lawyers; He rebuked the keepers of the law—the ones who supposedly had the keys.

He said, ‘You have taken away the key of knowledge. You have locked it up where people can never understand it. Not only have you not acted on it, you have obscured the truth from others who were sincere and looking for it. Instead of unlocking things to their understanding, you have locked them up and made it a closed book’ (Luke 11:52).

He told the apostles that He was giving them the keys. He was giving them what they needed to unlock the knowledge of salvation, and He gave them authority to make binding and loosing judgments. If circumstances arise where the law had to be applied in situations and circumstances, they would have had to make decisions. They would be responsible to God for those decisions. There is a responsibility that those who make the decisions have before God.

Jesus rebukes Peter: Matthew 16:22-23 and Mark 8:32-33.

Christ was clearly not making Peter the infallible Pope. All you have to do is go down a few verses. Christ began to speak about how it was necessary for Him to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things.

Matthew 16:22, “‘And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘God will be merciful to You, Lord. This will not happen in any way to You.’”

He said, ‘Let’s forget about this. This is not going to happen. I am not going to let anybody

do anything like that to You. This is not going to happen.’

Verse 23, “But turning to Peter, He said, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me: because your thoughts are not on the things of God, but on the things of men!’” Christ asked, ‘What are you talking about? Get behind Me Satan. You don’t know the things you are talking about. You don’t know what spirit you are because your thoughts are not the things of God.’ So again it shows here that there was nothing infallible in terms of Peter. Peter was a servant of God and one that God used.

You must lose your life: Matthew 16:24-27, Mark 8:34-38 and Luke 9:23-26.

Matthew 16:24-25, “Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come in My footsteps and follow after Me, let him utterly disown himself, let him take up his own cross and let him follow Me. Because whosoever may desire to save his life shall lose it; but whoever may lose his life for My sake shall find it.’”

He emphasized that if you put “saving your own hide” first, you are going to lose out. He said if the greatest emphasis is on taking care of yourself, you are going to find that you are going to lose out even on what you are trying to do. If your greatest emphasis is on serving God and Jesus Christ, you are going to find God will take care of you. If you try to take care of yourself, you are going to get overwhelmed. If you put your emphasis on doing what God said and let God take care of you, He will certainly do so.

Vision of the transfiguration: Matthew 16:28-17:1-9, Mark 9:1-10 and Luke 9:27-36.

Let’s notice as we come down.

Matthew 16:28, “‘Truly I tell you, there are some of those standing here who will in no way experience death, until they have seen the Son of man coming in His Kingdom.’” What does He mean by that? All you have to do is go to the very next verse. There is a chapter division here in Matthew. There is not one in Mark 9:1-2, which gives the same account. Man added chapter divisions at a later time. They were added in just to try to make the scriptures more manageable. They went through and divided into chapters and verses and putting numbers on them. Generally, they are very helpful, but occasionally they obscure the point by making a break where there is really a single thought flow. This is an example.

Matthew 16:28, “‘...there are some of those standing here who will in no way experience

death, until they have seen the Son of man coming in His Kingdom.’”

Matthew 17:1-9, “Then after six days He took Peter, James and John and brought them to a high mountain away from the rest of the disciples. And he was transfigured in their presence: and His face shined as the sun, His clothing became brilliant and white as the light. And suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to be talking Him. Then, speaking up, Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord it’s good for us to be here. If You desire let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses and one for Elijah.’ While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud enveloped them. And then a voice out of the cloud said, ‘This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found delight, and whom I have sanctified; listen to Him.’ When the disciples heard it, they prostrated themselves on their faces, and were exceedingly terrified. Then Jesus came, touched them, and said, ‘Get up and do not be terrified.’ When they looked around, they saw no one except Jesus alone. And as they were descending from the mountain, Jesus commanded and charged them, saying, ‘Tell the vision to no one, until the Son of man is resurrected from the dead.’”

It was a vision—that’s all. Moses and Elijah were not literally resurrected at this time. But in vision they saw the Kingdom. They saw Him coming in His Kingdom. They saw Him in His glorified state with Moses and Elijah standing there.

What does that signify? What are we going to be in the Kingdom? We are going to be kings and priests. Moses was the one through whom God established civil government among human beings. God used Moses to establish His kind of civil government. God used Elijah to restore the knowledge of the true religion in Israel and to establish an educational system. There were three schools of the prophets. God used Elijah and Moses in those ways.

We see, in effect, Christ coming in His Kingdom. Here is Moses through whom God organized human civil government, and here is Elijah through whom God established an educational system and restored the knowledge of the true religion. The disciples are standing here with Christ, and they were given in vision insight to see what it’s going to be like in the Kingdom. Undoubtedly, Moses and Elijah will occupy very high positions. Perhaps Moses will be the one who will be over all of the civil government. Perhaps Elijah will be the one who will be over

religion and education. Certainly, religion and education will be tied together in Tomorrow's World because in God's scheme of things, they are very much intertwined. Religion, properly understood, is education, and education has to be based on the true religion. So perhaps Elijah will be the one that will coordinate all of that. That at least could be speculated upon based on Matthew 17.

This is a vision. Peter quotes it later on back in II Peter 1:16-19, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. We also have the prophetic word made more sure...."

The "we" at the time Peter wrote that, referred to Peter and John. James had died years earlier. These two, Peter and John, were actually the ones that God used to put together the New Testament as we have it. This set them aside in a special way. They were given a certain insight into the future into what God has in store for those who are going to be in His Kingdom and in His Family.

John the Baptist type of Elijah: Matthew 17:10-13 and Mark 9:11-13.

Then a little later, kind of in the aftermath, His disciples brought up the subject of Elijah. Matthew 17:10, "But His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?'" They had been discussing earlier the fact that they believed Him to be the Messiah, and they asked, 'What is this prophecy about Elijah that the scribes talk about?'

Verses 11-13, "And answering them, Jesus said, 'Elijah shall truly come first, and shall restore all things. But I tell you, that Elijah has already come, and they did not know or recognize him; instead they did to him whatever they intended and desired.' Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them concerning John the Baptist."

Now notice that He makes a reference here in vv. 11-12, "'Elijah shall truly first come and shall restore all things [future].' And He also said, 'Elijah has already come [past]....'" John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17). John the Baptist fulfilled that before the first coming of Jesus Christ. He fulfilled that prophecy.

In Malachi 4:5-6, "'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.'" Christ was coming again, coming a second time, coming as King of kings and Lord of lords.

I think that when we look at things, certainly many of us have felt very clearly that God raised up Mr. Herbert Armstrong back in the 20s and 30s to do the work of Elijah and to restore the knowledge of the true religion in Israel. That's what He did. He restored the knowledge of the true religion in Israel to make a people ready and prepared for the Lord. The Church had always existed, but God raised up and revived a work to be done by His Church—in bringing Mr. Herbert Armstrong among His Church and raising him up as His servant in the latter days. God raised up a servant in the spirit and power of Elijah to do that work of which we are, let's say, the result and the continuation of the work that God began in this modern age through Mr. Armstrong. God used him to restore that work.

Jesus casts out deaf and dumb spirit: Mark 9:14-27, Matthew 17:14-18 and Luke 9:37-42.

Mark 9:17-22, "Then someone out of the crowd answered and said, 'Master, I have brought to You my son, who has a dumb spirit...And I asked your disciples, that they might cast it out; but they didn't have the power to do it.' Then He answered him and said, 'O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me.' And they brought him to Jesus. But when the spirit saw him, immediately it threw him into convulsions; and he fell down on the ground, rolling about and foaming at the mouth. And He asked his father, 'How long has it been doing this with him?' and he said, 'From childhood.' And frequently it has thrown him into fire and into water, seeking to destroy him: but if you are able to do anything, please help us, have compassion on us!'" Jesus had compassion.

Verses 23-27, "And Jesus said to him, 'If you are able to believe all things are possible to anyone who believes.' And immediately crying out, the father of the little child, with tears streaming down, said, 'I do believe, O Lord; but help my unbelief.' Then as Jesus saw that a multitude was running and surging together around Him, He rebuked the demon spirit, saying to it, 'You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and you may never enter into him again.'

And after screaming, the spirit threw him into convulsions; then it came out. And the boy became as if he were a corpse; so much so that many said, 'He is dead!' but Jesus took him by the hand, and raised him up; and he stood up."

Faith comes through prayer and fasting: Mark 9:28-29 and Matthew 17:19-21.

A little later, Matthew 17:28-29, "And when He came into a house, His disciples asked Him privately, 'Why was it that we were not able to cast him out?' And He answered them, 'This type cannot go out by anything except prayer and fasting.'" That was the key of faith. The disciples lacked faith.

That's what it said in Mark 9:19, "...'O faithless generation....'" They lacked the faith to cast the demon out. Why did they lack the faith? They lacked the faith because they were not close enough to God.

That's the point. How do we grow in faith? Well, one of the ways is by drawing close to God in prayer and fasting. When we draw close to God in prayer and fasting, we increase our faith; we build our faith. Mark 9 gives the lesson or key to healing faith.

This account brings us right up to the point that we are going to be next time as we pick up the story in John 7 of the Feast of Tabernacles. This was the Feast of Tabernacles of 30 A.D., which brings us up to within six months of the end of Jesus' human life and ministry. As we have gone through, we have noted how, as we close in on the end of Christ's ministry, the account begins to go into greater and greater detail. Increasingly, God focuses in on that detail and on what Jesus said and did. There are many, many lessons that we can derive. There are many things that we can gain insight into—insights into the things that Jesus Christ taught, things that He said, things that He did, things that give us a basis by which we can live our lives, things we can put into practice in our lives and the things we must do.

Next time we will pick up at the Feast of Tabernacles 30 A.D. This will conclude the Bible study for this evening.

Bible Study # 34 Questions

SURVEY OF THE GOSPELS AND ACTS SERIES

Matthew 14:13—17:23; Mark 6:30—9:32; Luke 9:10-45; John 6:1—7:1

1. About how many people did Christ feed from the five barley loaves and the two small fishes? Was there a confused melee when the feeding took place? Explain.
2. What promoted Peter to begin to sink instead of continuing to walk on the water?
3. What did Christ mean “I am the bread of life”?
4. Who can come to Christ?
5. How did Christ characterize the religion of the Pharisees in Mark 7?
6. Explain Mark 7:18-19. Does it mean that Christ was doing away with God’s law of clean and unclean meats?
7. Explain the exchange between Christ and the Syrophenician woman with the demon-possessed daughter.
8. Explain Matthew 16:6.
9. Explain Matthew 16:18.
10. Explain Matthew 16:19.
11. Was Christ here making Peter the infallible Pope? Prove from context.
12. Explain Matthew 16:28.
13. Who was the Elijah that prepared the way for the first coming of Christ?
14. What important key to healing faith did Christ give in Mark 9?

Bible Study # 35
May 9, 1989
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Gospels and Acts Series—Matthew 17:24—18:35; Mark 9:33—10:1; Luke 9:46—12:59; John 7:2—10:21

We are picking up the story immediately prior to the Feast of Tabernacles of 30 A.D. This study focuses on the things that Jesus said and did, particularly during the Last Great Day. It is interesting to the extent that John focuses in on the actions of Jesus in conjunction with the holy days. This is what we are looking at this evening. Most of His ministry, prior to this time, has been in Galilee. We see that there has been an increase in the time that He is spending around Jerusalem. Once He started spending very much time teaching and preaching in Jerusalem, it was going to bring Him into a confrontation with the religious leaders because of their jealousy against Him.

We pick up the story in John 7:2, “Now the Feast of the Jews was approaching, the Feast of Tabernacles.” There was a reason why He used the term “Feast of the Jews.” John was writing about thirty years after the other apostles were gone. He was writing after the disappearance of Peter, Paul and those of that generation. The other Gospels had already been written. The holy days were not really an issue at the time the rest was written. The keeping of the holy days was not an issue one way or another. At the time John wrote, at the end of the first century, there had already begun to arise certain heresies after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. He emphasized over and over that Jesus observed the same days the Jews observed.

Verses 3-5, “Then His own brothers said to Him, ‘Leave here, and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. Because no one does anything in secret, but seeks to be known by the public. If You do these things, reveal and show Yourself to the world.’ For even His own brothers did not believe in Him.”

Think for a moment. They had grown up with Him. How difficult would it have been for you to accept that your brother was God in the flesh? Jesus was maybe two or three years older than James. James was the oldest, next to Christ. They were playing with Him, working with their Dad, and helping in the carpentry business. It was a very difficult thing for them. They had admired

and respected Him, but “God in the flesh!” That was kind of a “tall order;” it had not really sunk in. They did believe after the resurrection. When He appeared to them after the resurrection, they had no question. Then the reality hit them. But at this point, they just didn’t really believe these things and understand them.

The only statement Jesus ever made concerning the Feast of Tabernacles was in v. 8, “...as for you, you go up to this Feast of Tabernacles....”

I Corinthians 5:8, “Therefore let us keep the Feast....” –The Days of Unleavened Bread.

Hebrews 4:9, “There remains therefore a rest [a Sabbath keeping] for the people of God.” The New Testament is very plain. “...Go up to the Feast....” Some people say the New Testament doesn’t say anything about keeping the holy days. Where does it say to keep Christmas? Where did you ever see that? The world can’t find where it says to keep Easter, Christmas or Sunday.

John 7:10, “But when His own brothers had gone up, then He also went up to the Feast, not publicly, but secretly.” He went up secretly.

Verse 11, “Now the Jews were searching for Him at the Feast, and asked, ‘Where is He?’” The Jews were looking for Him; He knew what they were up to. Actually, they had a contract out on Him. But they were not going to risk a public confrontation. They viewed Him as a threat. They wanted to get rid of Him. He knew if He went up the way everybody was expecting, it would create problems. He just kind of got lost in the crowd. And suddenly, there He was there in the temple in the middle of the crowd.

Verse 14, “But about the middle of the Feast, Jesus went up into the temple and was teaching.” Then it was a little late for them to do anything. They would have had to do it in full view, and they didn’t want to take that risk.

Verse 24, “Judge not according to the outward appearance, but judge righteous judgment.” This is the crux of the Feast; it pictures the Millennium. What are we going to do in Tomorrow’s World? We are going to judge the world. What is going to be the basis? Righteous judgment! That is the trouble of serving on the world’s juries and courts. They want to make decisions based on technical matters, on the form of things. Christ said judge righteous judgment based on motive and intent. This is what He emphasized during the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast looks forward to that time of righteous judgment.

Verses 25-31, “Therefore some of those of Jerusalem said, ‘Isn’t this the One they are seeking and plotting to kill? And look, He is preaching publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. When did the rulers truly recognize that this is indeed the Christ? But we know this Man, where He is from. And the Christ, whenever He may come, no one will know where He is from.’ Then Jesus called aloud in the temple, as He was teaching, and said, ‘You both know Me, and you know where I am from. I have not come of Myself alone, but He who sent Me is true, whom You do not even know. But I know Him: because I am from Him, and He has sent Me.’ Therefore they were seeking to take Him: but no one laid his hands upon Him, because His hour had not yet come. But many of the people believed and had faith in Him, and said, ‘The Christ, when He comes, will He do more miracles than these which this Man has done?’”

Verses 37-39, “And in the Last Day, the Great Day of the Feast, Jesus stood up and called aloud, saying, ‘If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink! Anyone who believes and has complete faith and trust in Me, as the Scripture has said, Out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.’ But He said this concerning the Spirit, which those who were believing in Him were going to receive: because the Holy Spirit had not been given, since Jesus was not yet glorified.” Jesus was speaking concerning the Holy Spirit.

It is interesting if you understand the ceremony that took place at the temple on the day that began the Last Great Day. It was the pouring out of water drawn from the well of Siloam. The priests utilized a particular verse in Isaiah.

Isaiah 12:3, “Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” The Jews had at least an insight and certain understanding because the Last Great Day looks forward to a time when everyone who is spiritually thirsty will have access to the waters of salvation. Jesus, by what He said and did, explained the meaning of the Last Great Day, the eighth day of solemn assembly.

Jesus began His teaching by illustrating the fact that this pictures a time when everyone who is spiritually thirsty will have access to the waters of salvation. That is not the case right now.

John 6:44, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” The White Throne Judgment is the time when all who spiritually

thirst will be able to come. The Holy Spirit will be available to them.

People were disputing with one another. Some of the officers had gone out there and wanted to take Him.

John 7:43-53, “Then a division occurred among the people. And some of the officers wanted to take Him; but not one of them arrested Him. Then the officers returned to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they asked them, ‘Why didn’t you bring Him?’ The officers answered, ‘Never has a man spoken as this Man speaks!’ The Pharisees answered them, ‘Have you also been deceived? Have any of the rulers and leaders believed in Him, or have any of the Pharisees? But this multitude which does not understand or know the law is accursed.’ Then Nicodemus (he was the one who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, ‘Does our law judge and condemn the Man unless we hear from the Man Himself first, and we understand what He is doing?’ They answered and said to him, ‘Are you also from Galilee? Search and see, that a prophet has never come out of Galilee!’ And every man went to his own house.” This is the evening portion of the Last Great Day.

John 8:1-2, “But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. And early in the morning [morning of the Last Great Day] He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and began teaching them.” There was a crowd that gathered around.

Verses 3-6, “Then the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman to Him who had been caught in adultery; and after displaying her in the middle of them, they said to Him, ‘Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such persons. Therefore what do You say?’ But this they said, tempting Him, that they might be able to accuse Him....” They were tempting Him. They were going to argue with anything He said. They had long since ceased to exercise the penalty that the law required. If Jesus had opted out on the side that it was too harsh, then they would have accused Him of ignoring the law. But if He said to stone her, they would have tried to make Him look unjust.

Verses 6-8, “...But Jesus leaned forward, and with His finger wrote on the ground. But as they continued asking Him, He lifted Himself up, and said to them, ‘The sinless one among you, let him throw the first stone at her!’ And again He leaned forward, and wrote on the ground.” He could have written names and dates.

Verse 9, “But after hearing that, and being convicted by their own conscience, they went out one by one, beginning with the eldest, until the last....” They began to slink away.

Verses 10-11, “Then Jesus lifted Himself up, and seeing none of the accusers, but the woman, He asked her, ‘Woman, where are your accusers? Didn’t anyone condemn you?’ And she said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you. Go, and never sin again like that!’”

The evening portion He taught about the Holy Spirit; we will have free access to the Spirit. The next day, the day portion, what was He going to teach them? What was going to occur on the Last Great Day? He was going to sit in judgment. People would be brought before Him in their sin. What was He going to tell them? ‘Go and sin no more! I am going to give you a chance to change.’

Then He began to speak about being the light of the world and about judgment.

Verse 12, “Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows Me shall never walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.’”

Verses 15-16, “‘You judge according to the dictates of human nature; I judge no one with that standard! And if also I judge, My judgment is absolutely true: because I am not alone, but I and the Father who has sent Me.’” The Pharisees began to get very upset. They didn’t like what Christ was teaching them. They didn’t like what He was teaching the crowd about judgment and His position.

Verses 30-31, “As He was speaking these things, many believed on Him. Then Jesus said to the Jews who believed on Him, ‘If you continue in and live by My word, truly you are My disciples.’” That is what makes you a disciple of Christ—if you continue in His word. Many think all you have to do is believe, but He says, ‘If you continue in My word, then you are My disciple and you have to endure to the end’ (Matthew 24:13).

John 8:34-36, “Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, that everyone who is practicing sin is a slave of sin. Now the slave does not live in the house forever. The Son lives forever, into the ages of eternity. Therefore if the Son shall set you free, you shall truly be free.’”

Verses 41-44, “‘You practice and do the works of your Father!’ Then they said to Him, ‘We have not been born from fornication. We have one father, even God!’ Therefore Jesus said to

them, ‘If God were really your Father, you would love Me: because I proceeded forth and came from God; neither have I come of My own self, but He has sent Me. Why don’t you understand My speech? Because you are not able to hear or understand My word. You are of your father, the devil, and you love to practice and execute the lust of your father! He was a murderer from the very beginning, and did not live by or remain in the truth, because there is not truth in him. Whenever he tells a lie, he is speaking from his own heart: because he is a liar, and the father and instigator of it!’”

Those are pretty strong words. ‘You are of your father the devil. You are a “chip-off-the-old-block.” He was a murderer from the beginning; a liar and the father of the lie.’ They were ready to murder Him for this.

Verse 59, “Then they picked up stones to stone Him: but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple, going through the middle of the crowd, and in this way escaped.” There was a crowd.

John 9:1-2, “And as He came along, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Master, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’” He was blind from birth. People were asking what happened.

Verse 3, “Jesus answered, ‘Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but this man was born blind so that the works of God might be demonstrated in him.’”

Verse 6, “After saying these things, he spit on the ground, and made clay out of the spittle, and applied the clay to the blind man’s eyes.”

Verses 7-12, “And He told him, ‘Go and wash in the pool Siloam,’ which is interpreted, Sent. Then he went, and washed, and returned seeing. Now the neighbors and those who had seen him before, when he was blind, said, ‘Isn’t this the one who was sitting and begging?’ Some said, ‘He is the one:’ but others said, ‘He is just like him.’ He said, ‘I am the one!’ Then they asked him, ‘How were your eyes opened?’ He answered and said, ‘A man called Jesus made clay, and applied it to my eyes, and told me, “Go to the pool of Siloam and wash:” and when I had gone and washed, I received sight and could see.’ So they asked him, ‘Where is He?’ He said, ‘I do not know.’”

Verse 14, “Now it was the Sabbath when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.” It was the Sabbath and the Last Great Day. This was a weekly Sabbath as well. The Pharisees became

upset. They were accusing Christ of breaking the Sabbath because He had performed this healing. Verses 15-19, "Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight; and he told them, 'He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I see.' Therefore some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.' Others said, 'How can a man be a sinner, and perform miracles?' And there was a division among them. They asked the blind man again, 'What do you say concerning this Man, because He opened your eyes.' And he said, 'He is a prophet!' Therefore the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had actually been blind, and had received sight and could see, until they called the parents of the man who could now see. And they asked them, saying, 'Is this really your son, whom you claim was born blind? Then how is it that he is able to see now?'"

Verses 20-21, "His parents answered them and said, 'We know that this man is our son, and that he was really born blind. But how he is able to see now, we do not know; and who opened his eyes, we do not know. He is of legal age. Ask him: he can speak for himself.'" If you want to know any more than that, you ask him.

Verses 24-27, "So they called in the man who had been blind a second time, and told him, 'Give glory to God. We are sure and know that this man is a sinner.' Then he answered and said, 'I do not know if He is a sinner. But one thing I do know: that I was blind, and now I see.' But they asked him again, 'What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?' He answered them, 'I have told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you wish to hear about it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?'"

'I already told you and you don't want to hear it.' These were frightening words.

Verses 28-30, "Therefore they ridiculed him, saying, 'You are His disciple; but we are Moses' disciples and followers. We know that God spoke to Moses: but this Man, we do not even know where He is from.' The man answered and said to them, 'Truly this is a marvelous and wonderful thing, that He opened my eyes, and yet you do not even know where He is from.'"

'This is a marvelous thing. He opened my eyes and you don't even know where He is from.'

Verse 32, "'It has never been heard of, that anyone has opened the eyes of one who had been born blind.'" He really told these guys off.

Verses 33-41, "'If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.' They answered and said to

him, 'You were born entirely in sin, and are you teaching us?' So they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and after finding him, He asked him, 'Do you believe and have faith in the Son of God?' He answered and said, 'Lord, who is He, that I may believe and have faith in Him?' And Jesus said to him, 'You have also seen Him, and the One who is speaking with you is He.' Then he said, 'Lord, I do believe and have faith;' and he worshipped Him. And Jesus said, 'For judgment I have come into this world, so that those who do not see might be able to see; and those who see might become blind.' And those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things, and they asked Him, 'Are we also blind?' Jesus told them, 'If you were really blind, you would not have any sin: but now you claim, "We can see"; therefore your sin remains and continues!'"

Jesus healed the blind man on the Last Great Day. What, again, is going to happen on the White Throne Judgment? The spiritual blindness of the whole world is going to be removed. In Tomorrow's World, He is going to remove the spiritual blindness of the whole world. Those who really don't see are not held accountable. He made it plain that people are responsible for what they know. He told the Pharisees that they had knowledge and they were held accountable (v. 41). Those who see and don't act on what they see are going to be held accountable. Those who don't see will not be held accountable. The point is not whether you are immersed in water and spiritually blind. God is going to give every person a chance to see and understand the truth. It is not a matter of a first or second chance. God looks on the heart. He knows whether the person sees and understands. Nobody ever plays games with God.

John 10:1-7, "'Truly, truly I tell you, anyone who does not enter in through the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, he is an extortioner, a thief and a robber. But he who enters in through the door is the shepherd of the sheep. The doorkeeper will open to him; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calls every one of his own sheep by name, and leads them. And when he brings his own sheep out, he goes out in front of them, and the sheep follow him: because they know and understand his voice. But a stranger they will never follow in any way, but will run away from him: because they do not know or recognize the voice of strangers.' Jesus spoke this allegory to them: but they did not understand those things which He was speaking

to them. Therefore Jesus again said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, that I am the door of the sheep.'"

Verse 9, "I am the door...." He emphasizes again.

Verses 10-12, "The thief does not come except that he may steal, extort, kill and destroy: I came so that they might have life, and might have life more abundantly! I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. But the hired servant, who is not the Shepherd, and the sheep are not his own, when he sees the wolf stalking the sheep, leaves the sheep all alone, and escapes and runs away: and the wolf seizes some of them and drags them away, and scatters the rest of the sheep." The hireling is simply in it for the money, for pay. He is not going to put his life on the line.

Verses 14-16, "I am the Good Shepherd, and I know and understand those who are My own and I am known and understood by those who are My own. Just as the Father knows Me, I also know and understand the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep. I also have other sheep, which are not of this fold: it is also ordained and necessary for Me to bring those to Me, and they will hear My voice: and there shall be one flock, and one Shepherd."

We are the sheep of God's pasture, but He has other sheep in the Last Great Day. We are the ones who teach as Jesus taught. He has others that He has not yet called. This doesn't represent the end of what God is doing. It is the beginning, the starting point. It's not a bunch of competing sheepfolds. There is only one way in. It is through Jesus Christ. He is the door. Christ made it plain there is one way. 'It is through Me, I am the door. You don't get to the Father but through Me; I have other sheep.' He shows the quality of the Good Shepherd.

Verse 15, "Just as the Father knows Me, I also know and understand the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep." He knows the sheep. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. There was the spiritual standpoint.

This basically concludes the teachings of Christ on the Last Great Day.

John 7, 8, 9 and 10 has a lot packed in them which ties in with the spiritual emphasis of the Last Great Day. John preserved the details of Christ's teaching in this information because it emphasizes the spiritual lessons to be learned from the festival.

Dispute among disciples: Matthew 18:1-5, Mark 9:33-37 and Luke 9:46-48.

Matthew 18:1, "At that time the disciples came to Jesus, asking, 'Who then is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?'"

Mark 9:34, "But they remained silent: because on the way they had been discussing among each other who would be the greatest." Who would be the most important when He sets up the Kingdom? You want to know who will be the greatest?

Matthew 18:2-4, "Then Jesus called a little child to Him, and He placed him in the middle of them, and said, 'Truly I tell you, unless you are converted, and become as little children, you shall in no way enter into the Kingdom of heaven. Therefore anyone who will humble himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven.'"

You want to know who will be the greatest? You won't even be there if you don't develop this child-like attitude of humility and dependence. A little child is dependent. He needs his Mother and Daddy. Let a little child get into trouble, and they want Mommy and Daddy.

We need to have this attitude toward God. We need to be going to our Father in heaven realizing how we need to walk with Him. When a child perceives danger, he wants to hang on to Mommy and Daddy. We need to have that relationship with God and need to be aware of how much we need Him. We must be aware of Him and have confidence in Him. We are to have an attitude that is teachable and humble, dependent on our Father in heaven. Christ brings out and shows us this attitude here.

Man casting out demons in Jesus' name: Mark 9:38-41 and Luke 9:49-50.

Mark 9:38-39, "Then John answered him, saying, 'Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, who doesn't follow us: and we prevented him, because he doesn't follow us.' But Jesus said, 'Don't try to prevent him....'" If someone has respect for God's word, God will deal with it. We should not be trying to undermine someone.

Warning of offending little ones: Matthew 18:6-14 and Mark 9:42-50.

Matthew 18:6, "But whoever shall cause one of these little ones who believe in Me to offend or sin, it is more profitable for him that a millstone [the size turned by a donkey] should be hung around his neck, and he be hung around his neck, and he be sunk down into the deepest part of the ocean." We should be conscious of our example that we do not conduct ourselves in a loose, permissive way. And somebody who is excited

about the truth ends up turned off because of God's people who know better, but are not doing better.

Mark 9:42-47, ““But whoever may cause one of the little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea. But if your hand should cause you to sin, cut it off: it is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having your two hands and for you to go away into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire: Where their worm doesn't die, and the fire is not quenched. And if your foot should cause you to sin, cut it off: it is better for you to enter into life lame, rather than having your two feet and for you to be thrown into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire: Where their worm doesn't die, and the fire is never quenched. And if your eye should cause you to sin, pluck it out: it is better for you to enter into the Kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having your two eyes and for you to be thrown into Gehenna fire.””

What does it mean? You don't let anything get in your way. Nothing! No matter how precious, how close to you or important, don't hold on to it at risk of losing salvation. The literal cutting off of a hand is a figure of speech—it does not stop sin. It was to emphasize that you go to lengths to get rid of sin. You don't hold on to sin.

Matthew 18:15-17, ““Now if your brother sins against you, go and admonish him between you and him alone. If he will listen to you, you have won back your brother. But if he will not listen, take one or two more with you, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. But if he fails to listen to them, then tell it to the church. And if he also fails to listen to the church, let him be to you the same as the heathen and the publican.””

‘Go to him, and then if he doesn't listen, take someone with you. Then if he doesn't listen, go to the Church. If he has to be disfellowshipped, God will back up those decisions.’

The term “binding and loosing” has to do with judgment and making judgmental decisions. If you have a problem with someone, the starting point is to try and settle it with that person if you can. Then get somebody to go with you, individuals that you mutually respect that you can sit down with. Sometimes it is just helpful to have a third party there, someone who can help you get it resolved. If you are not able to get the problem resolved, you go to the Church. You go to the ministry, and then the Church becomes officially involved. Then if the individual is

unwilling to listen, he has cut himself off. As a part of the Church, we have to recognize that authority.

Verses 18-20, ““Truly I tell you, whatever you shall bind on the earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I tell you, that if two of you on earth may come to an agreement concerning any matter, then whatever they shall ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. Because where two or three are assembled together in My name, I am there among them.”” Christ said He will back you up.

Verses 21-22, ““Then Peter came to Him and said, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I have to forgive him? Even as many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I tell you, not just until seven times: but until seventy times seven!’” Peter wanted to show that he had gotten the point. He would be willing to forgive him seven times if his brother sins against him—Christ said seventy times seven.

Verses 23-27, ““Therefore the Kingdom of heaven will be compared to a man, a king, who decided to compute his accounts with his servants. And after he had begun computing, there was brought to him one debtor, who owed ten thousand talents. But when he did not have anything to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, also his wife and his children, and everything, as much as he possessed, and payment to be made. Then the servant prostrated himself, and worshipped him, saying, ‘Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay everything to you!’” And being moved with compassion and mercy, the lord of the servant released him, and forgave him the loan.”” He was going to write off the debt.

Verses 28-30, ““But when that same servant left, he went out and found one of his fellow-servants, who owed him a hundred coins; and he seized him, and choked him, demanding, ‘Pay what you owe me!’” Therefore his fellow servant prostrated himself at his feet, and pleaded with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything!’” But he would not listen: instead he went and threw him into prison, until he would pay everything that was owing.”” He had the guy thrown in jail. He was going to get his.

Verses 31-33, ““But his fellow-servant, when they saw what things had taken place, were extremely distressed, and went and related to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord called him in, and said to him, ‘You evil and wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt

because you begged me. Shouldn't you also have had compassion and mercy on your fellow-servant, as I had compassion and mercy on you?"

They went and told the king. He said, 'You wicked servant; I forgave you everything you owed [ten thousand talents], shouldn't you have had compassion on this guy who owed you a dollar?'

Verses 34-35, "And his lord was furious, and handed him over to the tormentors, until he would pay all that was owing to him. In the same way will My heavenly Father also do to you, unless each one of you from your heart forgives your brother his offenses and sins."

Forgive your brother from the heart. You want God to keep tally on you? 'I am going to "zap" him.' How long does it take you to get up to four hundred ninety (seventy times seven)?

The point is we go to God and ask for forgiveness. He stands ready to forgive us; and if we are going to expect to be a partaker of God's mercy, we better expect to have mercy. We can't stand there having an unforgiving attitude. Maybe a person has to bring forth some fruits before they can be trusted, but you should be willing to give him an opportunity to show those fruits. It is a matter of having a merciful attitude; when you see they have changed, you give them a chance. You don't hold a grudge, a vengeful, retaliatory kind of attitude—I am going to "fix" you! If we want God to forgive us, we need to forgive others. Christ was giving an example of this.

Jesus passes through Samaria: Luke 9:51-56, Matthew 19:1-2 and Mark 10:1.

Matthew 19:1, "...He left Galilee, and came into the area of Judea on the other side of the Jordan."

Luke 9:51, "...He absolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem." He was going back to Jerusalem. We notice that Christ was beginning to come back to Jerusalem more and more.

Verse 52, "And He sent messengers ahead of Him. And they came into a village of Samaritans, to prepare for His arrival." He passed through a village of the Samaritans.

Verses 53-54, "But they did not welcome him, because His face appeared as though He would go to Jerusalem. And seeing their reaction, His disciples James and John said, 'Lord, would You desire that we should call fire to come down out of heaven, and destroy them, as Elijah also did?'"

"The sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17), they were a stormy bunch. They had some things to learn. Christ didn't let things "get" to Him. He didn't brood and let it ruin His whole day.

Verse 62, "But Jesus told him, 'No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back on the things left behind, is fit for the Kingdom of God.'"

Luke 10:1-3, "Now after these things the Lord appointed and authorized seventy others also, and sent them two and two ahead of Him into every city and place where He Himself was about to come. He therefore said to them, 'Truly the harvest is bountiful, but the workmen are few. Therefore pray and make supplications to the Lord of the harvest that He may send out workmen into His harvest! Go! But listen, I am sending you out as lambs among wolves.'"

Verses 4-7, "Carry neither purse, nor bag, nor sandals: and greet no one along the way. And into whatever house you may enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' And truly, if a son of peace be there, your peace will come upon him: but if not, it shall return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking the things supplied by them: because the workman is worthy of his hire. Do not go from house to house!"

They were to go into those cities and teach. They would come into these villages where there was a public gathering area, and they would gather a crowd who was interested. Those who were interested would invite them into their home. He told them they were to enter into the village, make plain what they were there for, and when they were invited to someone's home, they were to stay there and not go from house to house. A long time ago this was the way you reached people.

Even in this country prior to the time of radio and TV, this was the only means to reach people. This was a little bit of entertainment. Today, you don't get the same response at all. Politicians did that, too. The way to reach the people now is through the mass media. Everybody is pursuing their own business. But there was a time years ago that was how you got the community together. We don't go from house to house and try to "cram it down their throats." They went to the public, and if they wanted to hear more, they invited you to their home.

Verse 14, "But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the Judgment, than for you."

Verses 17-20, "And the seventy jubilantly returned, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are

subject to us through Your name.’ And He said to them, ‘I saw Satan falling as a streaking comet out of heaven. Listen! I am giving you the authority and power to trample underfoot serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall harm you in any way! Yet in this do not rejoice, because the spirits are subject to you: but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven!’”

Don’t be impressed by that. I saw Satan fall from heaven. What you need to rejoice about is that your names are written in heaven. Christ sent them to do this work.

Verses 25-28, “And then a certain doctor of the law stood up, tempting Him, saying, ‘Teacher, what should I be doing to inherit eternal life?’ And He asked him, ‘What has been written in the law? How do you read it?’ Then answering he said, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your being, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ And He said to him, ‘You have answered correctly. Be doing this and you shall live.’” That is right!

Verse 29, “But he was anxious to justify himself. So he asked Jesus, ‘And who then is my neighbor?’” Who is really my neighbor?

Verses 30-37, “And taking him up on the question, Jesus replied, ‘A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers and thieves, who stripped him of everything, and inflicted wounds, and escaped, leaving him lying there half dead. Now by coincidence a certain priest went down that same road: and even though he saw him, he passed by him on the opposite side of the road. And in the same way a Levite also, when he came to the same spot, came over and looked at him, then passed by on the opposite side of the road. But a certain Samaritan journeying along came to him, and seeing him, was moved with compassion and mercy. And he went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring wine and oil on the wounds; then he put him on his own animal and brought him to an inn, and personally took care of him. And the next day as he left, he took two coins, and gave them to the innkeeper, and told him, “Take care of him; and whatever additional expense you may have, I will repay you on my way back.” Now then, which of these do you think has been the neighbor to him who fell among the robbers and thieves?’ And he answered, ‘The one who showed compassion and mercy towards him.’ Jesus therefore said to him, ‘Go, and practice the same thing!’”

Who is your neighbor? Your neighbor is whomever you come into contact, whomever you are able to help.

Verses 38-42, “And it happened that as they proceeded on their way, he went into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. Now she had a sister called Mary, who also sat down at Jesus’ feet, listening to His message. But Martha was distracted from listening, because she was doing all the serving; and she came up and said, ‘Lord, aren’t you concerned that my sister has left me alone to do all the serving? Would You ask her to help me?’ But answering, Jesus said to her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are overly concerned and anxious about many things. But one thing is needful: and Mary has chosen the good and beneficial part, which shall not be taken from her.’” Martha was very concerned about the physical things. She needed to sit down and listen to what was being said.

Luke 11:1-4, “And it happened that as He was praying at a certain place, when He stopped, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.’ And He told them, ‘When you pray, say, “Our Father, who is in heaven. Your name is sanctified and holy. Let Your Kingdom come. Let Your will be done: as in heaven, so also let it be upon the earth. Give us day by day our needed bread. And forgive us our sins; as we ourselves also forgive everyone indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from the evil one.”’” The disciples wanted Him to teach them about prayer; He begins to teach the key to answered prayer.

Verses 5-13, “Then He said to them, ‘Who among you would have a friend, and would go to him at midnight, and ask him, “Friend, lend me three loaves; because a friend of mine has just arrived from a journey to visit me, and I have nothing that I can give him to eat.” But from inside he would say, “Do not disturb me! The door has been shut already, and my children are in bed with me; I am not going to get up and give you anything!” I say to you, even if he would not get up and give him anything, merely because of being his friend, yet because of his importunity and insistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs. And I tell you, Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. Because everyone who *asks* will receive; and anyone who *seeks* will find; and anyone who *knocks*, to him it will be opened. And which of you who is a

father, if your own son asks for bread, will you give him a stone? If also he asks for a fish, will you give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or also, if he should ask for an egg, will you give him a scorpion? Therefore if you, being evil by nature, know how to give good gifts to your own children: how much more will the Father who is in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" We have to follow through—the key is persistence.

Verse 14, "And He was casting out a demon, and it was dumb. And it happened that after the demon was cast out, the dumb and mute man spoke and the multitudes wondered." He cast out the demon.

Verses 24-26, "Afterwards, when the unclean spirit has gone out from a man, it wanders through dry and barren places, seeking and searching for rest; but not finding any, it says, 'I will return into my former abode which I left.' And it comes back, and finds it unoccupied, swept, and ready for possession. Then it goes and brings seven other demon spirits with it, more evil than itself; and they enter in, and possess him, and live there and the last condition of that man becomes worse than the first." When you get rid of something negative, you have to put in something positive. The man had not filled his life with something positive. They weren't involved with the positive. We have to fill our minds with what is right and good.

Verse 29, "And as the multitude grew larger, He began to say, 'This generation is evil and wicked. It is seeking after a sign; and a sign is not going to be given to it, except the sign of Jonah the prophet.'"

Verses 37-44, "Now as He was speaking, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. And he entered and sat down. But the Pharisee, seeing that he sat down, began wondering why He had not washed before the dinner. But the Lord said to him, 'Now, you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish; but the inside of you is full of greed, plunder and wickedness. You fools, did not He who made the outside also make the inside? But you should rather be motivated from within to have real compassion and mercy; and then all things are clean to you. But woe and misery to you, Pharisees! Because you pay tithes of mint and rue and every little herb, but you neglect judgment and the love of God. It is necessary and binding on you to do these things of judgment and love, while not leaving those other things of tithing undone. Woe and misery to you, Pharisees! Because you

love the most important seats in the synagogues, and the greetings in the marketplaces. Woe and misery to you, scribes and Pharisees, sanctimonious pretenders! Because you are just like the unseen tombs, which men walk over without even knowing it.'" He rebuked the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. That was their great sin. They were hypocrites. You clean the outside of the cup, but not the inside. You clean what people can see, but your attitude and motive on the inside is corrupt. You go through the outward motions.

Verses 45-46, "And one of the doctors of the law answered, saying to Him, 'Teacher, by saying these things you are also insulting us!' And he replied, 'Woe and misery to you also, the doctors of the law! Because you burden down man with burdens heavy to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of you own fingers.'" The lawyers misused the law. They paid lip service.

Verses 47-51, "Woe and misery to you! Because you enshrine the tombs of the prophets as monuments, and your forefathers killed them. So in reality, you bear witness that you consent to the works of your forefathers: because they truly killed them, and you enshrine their tombs as monuments! Also, because of this, the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute.'" So that the blood of all the prophets, poured out from the very foundation of the world, may be required of this generation. From the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias, who died between the altar and the temple. Truly I am telling you, it shall be required of this generation." They became a party to the death of every righteous man who ever lived from the time of Abel. He made that plain.

Luke 12:1, "...Then He began to say to His disciples first, 'Guard yourselves from the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.'"

Verses 4-5, "But I tell you, My friends, you should not be afraid of those who can kill the body, but after this are not able to do anything more. But I will show you whom you should fear: fear Him, who after He has killed also has the authority and power to throw you into Gehenna fire! Truly I am telling you, fear Him!" Be afraid of what God can do to you. You better be a lot more concerned about pleasing God.

Verse 10, "And anyone who shall say a word against the Son of man, it will be forgiven him: but anyone who has blasphemed against the Holy Spirit of the Father, it will not ever be forgiven."

The Holy Spirit is the power by which God works with you. We become so hardened by our outlook that we are not receptive.

Verse 15, “Then he told them, ‘Be careful, and keep yourselves from greed and covetousness: because no one has life in the abundance of the things which he possesses.’”

Verse 21, “‘This is the way it will be for the one who treasures up possessions for himself, and is not rich toward God.’” It’s not in the abundance of what you possess. What is really important is that your primary possession needs to be rich toward God.

Then He addressed the subject of worrying. Realize that there is a lot more to life than what you see.

Verses 22-30, “And He said to His disciples, ‘Because of this I tell you, don’t be worried and anxious about your life, what you should eat; nor for the body, what you should put on. The life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens: because they do not plant nor harvest. They have no storehouse or granary; but God feeds them. By how much more, then, are you more excellent and precious than the birds? And which one of you, by worrying or by power of intellect, is able to add one cubit to his stature? Therefore if you are not able to do even the very least, why do you worry about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow. They don’t labor nor do they spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed as richly as one of these! But if the grass, which is in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into an oven, is so beautifully clothed by God, wouldn’t He much rather take care of you, O you of little faith? But you, don’t be all wrapped up in seeking and striving for what you may eat, or what you may drink, and do not be overanxious and worried: Because all the nations of the world seek and strive after these things....’” This is what the world is all wrapped up in.

Verses 30-32, “‘...Now your Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek the Kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added to you. Do not be afraid, or fear, little flock; because your Father is taking pleasure and delight in giving you the Kingdom.’” Don’t worry about if you will be in the Kingdom of God. Christ said don’t worry about those things. God wants you there. It is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. He is not trying to get you out. He is trying to get you in. Just hang on.

Verse 34, “‘Because where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.’”

Luke 12:35-37, “‘Let your loins always be girded tightly, and your lamps always burning brightly; And be like men waiting and ready for their Lord, whenever He shall return for the wedding feast; that when He returns and knocks, immediately they may open to Him! Blesses are those servants, who when the Lord returns shall be found diligently watching! Truly I say to you, that He shall invite them to sit down at His table, and will come and serve them.’” Be ready, stay alert waiting for your Lord. Be found “so doing.” That is the way to be blessed—to be “so doing.”

Verses 40-44, “‘And you therefore be ready. Because in the hour you don’t expect, the Son of man is coming.’ Then Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, are You speaking this parable to us, or also to everyone?’ And the Lord answered, ‘Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the Lord will place in charge over His household, to give out the measure of food in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom His Lord when he comes will find doing this very thing. Truly I tell you that He will put him in charge over all His possessions.’” That is the one that is going to be put in charge.

Verse 45, “‘But if that servant should reason in his heart, saying, ‘My Lord delays His coming;’ and begins to beat and abuse the menservants and maidservants, and to eat and drink, and becomes a drunkard.’” He will be caught by surprise. He has the attitude of ‘the Lord delays His coming.’ He is being abusive to others and getting caught up in the lifestyle of this world.

Verses 51-53, “‘Do you think that I came to give peace on the earth? No, I am telling you; but rather, division! Because from this time forward there will be five in one household, three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son, and son against father; mother against daughter, and daughter against mother; mother-in-law against daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.’” He did not come to bring peace, but division. Sometimes it even creates problems in families.

Verses 54-56, “‘And he said, also to the multitudes, ‘When you see the clouds rising up from the west, immediately you say, ‘A shower is coming;’ and so it happens. And when a south wind is blowing, you say, ‘It is going to be hot;’ and it happens. You hypocrites, you know how to discern the appearance of the earth and the sky; but how is it that you do not discern this time?’”

You look at the sky and can discern, but you can't discern the reality of the times. Look and see what is really going on. This is an important lesson that we have here.

This Bible study brings us up to the Feast of Tabernacles, up through the beginning of December. We pick up the story next time of Jesus being in Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication. As you get closer and closer to the time of the crucifixion, the scriptures begin to zero in on detail. The last part of His life is the most thorough. There is a lot packed in there as we see the things that our Savior did and taught.

Bible Study # 35 Questions

SURVEY OF THE GOSPELS AND ACTS SERIES

Matthew 17:24—18:35; Mark 9:33—10:1; Luke 9:46—12:59; John 7:2—10:21

1. What command did Jesus Christ give concerning attendance at the Feast of Tabernacles?
2. How did Christ tell us we are to judge?
3. Why did Christ come up to the Feast secretly?
4. What lesson did Christ teach on the evening which began the Last Great Day?
5. What are some of the lessons that Jesus Christ taught about the meaning of the Last Great Day by His actions and teachings on that day?
6. What makes one truly a disciple of Christ?
7. What are several characteristics that Christ gave of the good shepherd?
8. What was the teaching of Christ about who would be the greatest in the Kingdom?
9. Did Jesus literally mean in Matthew 18:8 that you should maim yourself? Explain.
10. What did Christ say to do if you have a problem with someone?
11. When He sent out the seventy to preach, did He want them to go from house to house knocking on doors and pestering people?
12. Who is our neighbor?
13. What key to answered prayer does Christ give in Luke 11?
14. What did Christ rebuke the Pharisees for in Luke 11?
15. What did He rebuke the lawyers for?
16. What is the leaven of the Pharisees?
17. What is the unpardonable sin?
18. Does God really want us in the Kingdom?
19. What did Christ say the attitude of many would be at the time of the end?
20. For what attitude did He say we would be blessed?

Bible Study # 36
May 23, 1989
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Gospels and Acts Series—Matthew 19;
Mark 10; Luke 13—19:29; John 10:22—12:11

What we are covering this evening is the time between Christ's journey to Jerusalem at the time of Hanukkah, the Feast of Lights or Dedication on December, 30 A.D., up until six days before the Passover of 31 A.D. We are looking at approximately three and one-half months.

He went to Jerusalem for the period of Hanukkah and went from there to an area near the Jordan River where John was first baptizing. From there Christ was summoned by Mary and Martha to Bethany (a small town near Jerusalem) at the death of Lazarus. Immediately there were some results of that tremendous miracle. It intensified persecution. It stirred up a hornet's nest. The religious leaders decided this Man was a threat, and they must get rid of Him. He went out to the Judean Desert prior to His journey back to Jerusalem for Passover.

When the miracles and works are poured out and intensified in that way, it is setting the stage for great persecution. This is one of the reasons why Jesus spent little time in Jerusalem except for the festival seasons. Christ knew what was going to happen, had to happen. Because of that, He handled things in such a way that it was only when the time came that He then made Himself available in that way and performed that miracle. It set the stage for things to happen.

The Feast of Dedication is not one of God's holy days. The only mention of it is in John 10:22. There is a reason for that, and I will point it out. It is one of the ways we can derive certain principles. It had its origin one hundred sixty-four years prior to the time of Christ (164 B.C.)—two hundred fifty years after the conclusion of the Old Testament Canon.

Remember, we went through the story of how the Greek ruler Antiochus Epiphanes had done everything he could to wipe out any vestige of God's truth. He prevented circumcision; he offered a pig on the altar; and he set up the abomination of desolation. He did everything he could to show his contempt for the religion of God. Mattathias, an aged priest, drew his sword and slew the apostate Jew; the Maccabean revolt began. Then in 168 B.C., just over three years later, the cleansing took place. Judas

Maccabaeus, the son of this priest, overthrew the Syrian generals and restored Temple worship. The Jews thereafter celebrated this occasion.

In John 10:22-23, Christ was going there for the celebration, their national holiday. It is akin to July 4th or Thanksgiving Day. It was a celebration of independence from the Greeks and a time to memorialize their thanks and appreciation to God for their deliverance—for rescuing them. One of the things we derive from that statement in John 10 is the fact that it is not wrong to take note of national holidays, as long as those days do not commemorate in their origin something that is negative or of pagan origin. That is part of the way we study the Bible. We seek to derive principles from the Bible and how God views some things. Does He mention something in a positive or negative way? In the way He mentions it, we are able to derive what God thinks of it. That is a good rule of thumb. It helps us deal with questions that come up in our own lives today.

Luke 13:10-13, "And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath day. And there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years, and she was hunched over, and completely unable to lift herself up. Then Jesus, seeing her, called to her, and said, 'Woman, you have been set free from your infirmity.' Then He laid His hands upon her: and instantly she was made straight, and she glorified and thanked God." The woman was crippled and Christ healed her.

Verse 14, "But the rulers of the synagogue answered indignantly, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, and told the people, 'There are six days in which it is necessary and proper for men to work: in these days therefore come and be healed, but not on the Sabbath day.'" The Pharisees were indignant. They wanted to find fault with everything He did. If somebody was of that frame of mind, even if you were perfect, you couldn't please him. What about you and me? We are not going to please everyone. Even when you are perfect you can't please everybody.

He "pulled no punches." As things came to this point in time, it was time to speak very plainly. There was a time when He taught in parables. There was a time to lay a foundation and a time to be prepared to speak with boldness and "lay it all out"—"let the chips fall where they may."

The time is coming in this age when Christ's message is going to be proclaimed in greater power and boldness, and the power of God will be made manifest. That will result in persecution

on a level that will lead into the Great Tribulation. There are serious events that are going to occur that are not occurring right now.

Verses 15-16, “Therefore the Lord answered him, saying ‘You sanctimonious pretender, hypocrite! On the Sabbath doesn’t each one of you loose his ox or donkey from the manger, and lead it away to drink? And shouldn’t this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound these eighteen long years, be loosed from this shackle of the devil on the Sabbath day?’” Christ said, ‘You extend mercy to your animals. Of all your hypocrisy! You turn an ox loose to get a drink, and you want Me to wait until sundown to heal this woman.’

Verse 22, “And He went through, city by city, and village by village, teaching, and making progress towards Jerusalem.” Towards Jerusalem, on His way, step by step.

Verses 23-25, “And someone asked Him, ‘Lord, are there only a few who will be saved?’ But He answered them, ‘Labor and fight with zeal and diligence to enter in through the narrow gate: because many, I say to you, will desire to enter in, but will not be able. From the time that the master of the house shall get up and shut the door, and you shall stand outside and begin to knock at the door, saying, “Lord, Lord, open the door for us!” and answering He will tell you, “I do not know you, nor where you are from.”’” He went on to describe those who were going to be standing on the outside looking in.

Verses 26-27, “Then you will begin saying, “We ate and drank in Your presence, and in our streets You taught us.” But He will answer, “I tell you, I do not even know you, nor where you originated. Depart from Me, all you workers and teachers of unrighteousness and iniquity.”’”

Some of you are going to be told, ‘Depart from Me.’ He was speaking to some of the religious leaders of His day. They had a disregard and disrespect for the law of God. He said, ‘You teach lawlessness.’

Verses 28-30, “There shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth, when you shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the Kingdom of God, but you yourselves are cast out. And they shall come from the east and the west, and from the north and the south, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God. And listen, there are those who are last, who shall become the first; and there are those who are first, who shall become the last.” The Jews had a first opportunity. They had access to the Scriptures, and it was first preached to them. You

are going to see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom and every ethnic group, people that you look down on. You are going to find yourself on the outside. Some of those that are last will be first—those with the last opportunity or at a much later time. Those who have had a chance to be in have “blown it.”

This is an important principle for those who grew up in the Church. If you have grown up in the Church, you have had an opportunity to be in on the ground floor. If you have not valued that access you have through your parents and practice iniquity, you are going to find you are on the outside looking in. People God has called will be in the first resurrection; you will be “bringing up the rear” in the second resurrection or later. There is a principle here. We better take advantage of opportunities. We have an opportunity, a first opportunity, but if we don’t utilize it, it will slip from our grasp. It is important that we grasp that. The religious leaders did not grasp that.

Verse 34, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who have been sent to you; how often would I have gathered your children, in the same way a mother hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you rebelled.” He describes a mother hen and how she gathers her chicks in danger; they get up under her wings. Christ said, ‘I have that kind of protective feeling toward Jerusalem, but you don’t.’ That is a sad state of affairs.

In time sequence it was the Feast of Dedication. John 10:22, “And the Feast of Dedication was taking place at Jerusalem, and it was winter.” Verse 40, “And He departed again across the Jordan River to the place where John was first baptizing; and remained there.”

Luke 14:8-10, “When you are invited to a wedding feast by anyone, do not sit down in the first and most important place; since someone more honorable and distinguished than you may have been invited by him, and the one who invited both of you may come and tell you, “you will have to give your place to this one;” and then with embarrassment you may begin to take the very lowest place. But when you are invited, go sit down in the lowest place; so that when he who has invited you comes, he may say to you, “Friend, come up higher!” Then you will have honor instead of embarrassment in the presence of those who are sitting at the table with you.”

At a wedding, you don’t grab the most important spot or you might find yourself embarrassed. Someone else may come that the important spot

belongs to. Go sit at a lower place, and then maybe someone will come and ask you to take a better place.

Verse 11, “Because anyone who exalts himself shall be abased; and anyone who humbles himself shall be exalted!” Be willing to step back and not exalt yourself.

Verses 12-14, “And He also said to the chief Pharisee who had invited him, ‘When you make a dinner or supper, do not call your friends, nor your brethren, nor your relatives, nor your rich neighbors; since they will also invite you in return, and you will be paid back. But when you make a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind: and you shall be blessed; because they do not have the means to pay you back. Then you shall be rewarded in the resurrection of the righteous.’” It shouldn’t be simply a matter of inviting those who can return the favor, but those who can’t return the favor.

Verses 16-21, “But Jesus answered him, saying; ‘A certain man made a great supper, and invited many. And at the dinner hour he sent out his servant to say to those who had been invited, “Come; because everything is ready now.” And every one of them in the same attitude began excusing himself. The first one told him, “I have just purchased a field, and it is imperative that I go out and see it: I beg you to have me excused.” And another said, “I have just bought five teams of oxen, and I am going to inspect and test them out: I request, have me excused.” And another said, “I have just married my wife, and because of this I am unable to come.” And after returning, that servant reported these excuses to his master. Then the master of the house became angry, and told his servant, “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring back the poor, and the crippled, and the lame, and the blind.””

Those that were invited didn’t come. They didn’t appreciate and value that invitation. The result was that the servant was finally instructed to bring in the lame and the blind.

Verses 22-23, “And the servant said, “Sir, it has been done as you have commanded, and still there is room left.” Then the master told the servant, “Go out into the highways and through the hedgerows, and urge them to come in, that my house may be filled with guests.”” The point was that many of those who had first opportunity did not value that opportunity.

Revelation 3:11, “...let no man take your crown.” The point is that if we don’t respond to the opportunity that God provides us, God is not

going to be left empty handed. He will fill the place, but it may not be with us. This is a principle for all of us as well as our children. We are to deeply value the opportunities God gives; if we treat them cheaply and don’t value and appreciate it, God will ultimately fill it with someone else.

Luke 14:25-26, “Later, great multitudes were going with Him: and turning to them He said, ‘If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate [that is, love God more than] his own father and mother, and his wife and children, and his own brothers and sisters, and besides all of these, his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.’” Love much less than God, by comparison—even his own life. Obviously, God was not saying you should hate. We are to honor our father and mother and love all men, but by comparison to the love we have for God, what we have for others would be almost the comparison to hatred. Love much less by comparison. God will not take second place. He insists that He comes first. There is a commitment involved.

Verse 27, “And whoever does not carry his own cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.” This discipleship requires that we stand ready to forsake anything and everything in order to follow Him.

The parable of the lost sheep is given in v. 28, “Because which of you, desiring to build a tower, doesn’t first sit down and estimate the cost, to see if he has the means for its completion?” It emphasizes counting the cost. If we are going to be Christians, if we are to be disciples, we are to give our all. Many of God’s people have had to pay with their lives. The Bible is the obituary of many of the people of God who suffered martyrdom. God expects a commitment.

Luke 15:1-7, “All the publicans and sinners were gathering around to hear Him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were complaining and grumbling, saying, ‘This man welcomes and receives sinners, and eats with them.’ Then He spoke this parable to them, saying, ‘What man of you, if he has a hundred sheep, and loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and search for the one which is lost, until he finds it? And after finding it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And then he returns to the house, and calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, “Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep which was lost!” I say to you, that in exactly the same way, there shall be more joy in heaven over one sinner who is repenting, than

over the ninety-nine righteous ones who have no need of repentance.”

Verses 8-10, “Or what woman having ten coins, if she loses one, doesn’t light a lamp, sweep out the house, and meticulously search for it until she finds it? And after finding it, she calls her neighbors together, saying, “Rejoice with me; because I have found the coin which I lost!” In exactly the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who is repenting.”

Joy over one sinner who is repentant. When someone is baptized, that is an occasion of note. God is taking note and is watching; there is joy in the presence of the angels of God. That is what Jesus said and He should know. When you were baptized, it was a celebration of occasion in heaven. We don’t want to treat it cheaply and casually. It is of tremendous value.

Luke 15:11-15 is the parable of the prodigal son. “And He said, ‘A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, “Father, give me my share of the property.” So he divided the property between them. And a short time after that, the younger gathered together all that he had, and went away into a distant country; and there he squandered his property, and dissipated himself by unrestrained and debauched living. And after wasting everything he had, a raging famine swept throughout that country; and he began to be hungry and destitute. And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.”

He drank it up and threw it away. Hard times came. Finally he got a job feeding pigs. For a Jew, there could probably be no more humiliating job. Christ picked the job for him that would be horrible.

Verse 16, “And he was longing to fill his belly with even the husks which the swine were eating: and yet no one gave him anything.” Soon he began sharing their food.

Verses 17-19, “Then he came to himself, and said, “How many hired servants of my own father have an abundance of food, but I am dying with famine?” Then getting up, he said, “I will go to my father, and I will tell him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you. And I am no longer even worthy of being called your son. Make me the same as one of your hired servants.’”” After a while he came to the realization, ‘You know the hired help on my dad’s farm have it much better than this. I am going to swallow my pride and tell him, “I have

sinned against heaven and you. I am not asking to be back as a son, but would you please give me a job.”

Verses 20-24, “So he got up, and returned to his father. But while he was still at a distance, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion and mercy: and running out to meet him, he embraced him; then with emotion and excitement, he kissed him. And the son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you, and I am no longer of fit character even to be called your own son.” But the father told his servants, “Quickly bring the best robe, and clothe him; and give him a ring for his hand, and sandals for his feet. And go, bring the fattened calf, and kill it; let us have a feast, and celebrate: Because this, my son, was dead, but is alive again; and was lost, but is found!” And they began to celebrate.” The father saw him a long way off and made a great preparation.

Verses 25-27, “But the older son had been out in a field. And as he was coming closer to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of his servants over to him, and inquired what was the meaning of these things. And he told him, “Your brother has returned, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has returned to him safe and sound.”” The older son heard all the great festivities.

Verse 28, “But he became angry, and was not willing to go in. Therefore the father came out, and begged him to join the celebration.” He was in a pretty foul attitude about the whole thing.

Verses 29-30, “But answering he said to his father, “Look, for so many years I have served you, and not once have I transgressed your commandment: but never did you give me even a kid goat that I might celebrate with my friends! But when this son of yours returns, who has squandered your property with harlots, then you kill the fattened calf for him!””

‘I have done everything you wanted me to. You never even gave me a kid goat to celebrate with my friends. He has used his inheritance on harlots, etc.; now he is coming back. It’s not fair.’

I want to point out some things. The father loved the son enough to turn him loose and let him learn his lesson. The natural tendency of the parent is to bail out the child when he is in trouble, protecting him from the consequences of his actions. The father realized that until the son was brought down to a point of humility and surrender; he couldn’t be worked with. He had to leave it in God’s hands. He hit bottom. He

realized that anything was better than this. He returned with an attitude of humility. How did the father receive him? With open arms! He was happy, thrilled and glad to see him. It wasn't a lack of love. God loves us enough that He allows us to learn lessons.

The other aspect I would call your attention to—notice what he told his older son.

Verses 31-32, “But the father answered him, “Son, you are always with me, and everything that I own is yours. But on this occasion, it is right to celebrate and rejoice: because this your own brother was dead, but is alive again; and was lost, but is found!”” You notice they were not going to re-divide the inheritance. ‘Listen, everything I have is yours. It is all yours, but this is something special. We should celebrate.’

Even when you learn a lesson, it will never be simply as though you had never gone. There are penalties of life, some more serious than others. It wouldn't have been fair to take the property and divide it again. A person can learn lessons and repent, and God forgives; but sometimes you accumulate battle scars. They will always leave a scar.

We know our children are going to get nicks along the way, but we hate to see them get the battle scars. Forgiveness doesn't turn back the clock. You can repent deeply, and God will forgive you. But you can't go back and start over twenty years ago or five minutes ago. Again, this is an important principle. You can't go and sow your wild oats and come back and everything is okay. Yes, God will forgive, but there can be wounds and scars that can take their toll from which God would like to spare us.

Luke 16:1-2, “And he said also to His disciples, ‘There was a certain rich man, who had a hired administrator; and he was accused to the rich man of squandering his goods. Then he called his administrator and asked him, “What is this I am hearing about you? Give an accounting of your administration; because you cannot be my administrator any longer.”” He called him and said, ‘We are going to audit the books.’

Verse 3, “And the administrator said within himself, “What shall I do, because my master is taking the office away from me? I am unable to dig; I am ashamed to beg.”” He said, ‘What am I going to do?’

Verse 4, “I know what I will do, so that when I have been removed from the office, my master's debtors may welcome me into their house.”

‘I have a few days before the auditors come, and I am going to make provision for myself while I still have authority.’

Verses 5-7, “Then calling each one of the master's debtors, he asked the first one, “How much do you owe to my master?” And he said, “A hundred measures of oil.” And he told him, “Take your bill, sit down quickly, and write fifty.” Then another he asked, “And you, how much do you owe?” And he replied, “A hundred measures of wheat.” And he told him, “Take your bill, and write eighty.”” He slashed large amounts off their debts.

Verse 8, “And the master praised the unrighteous administrator, because he had acted shrewdly. For the sons of this world and society are in their own time more shrewd and wise than the sons of the light.” He praised him, not for the dishonesty, but for being shrewd. He was looking ahead. There is an expression, “give the devil his due”—he outsmarted me. They look ahead and make provisions. That is what this is saying. He did it in a dishonest way, but the basis of his actions was that he was looking down the road. The lesson is Christ said we also need to be thinking about what the future holds and making provisions for it.

Verse 9, “And I say to you, “Make friends to yourselves by the wise use of your physical wealth; so that when it fails, they may welcome you into the eternal dwelling.””

What is your best investment? The point is that anything in this world that may look like a good deal, don't kid yourself. There is no sure thing; it shall fail. What about money? Money is mammon, physical wealth. Utilize the physical resources in this world in a wise way, looking toward the future because there is coming a time when this economic system is going to collapse. But putting our hearts into this work, there is going to be dividends there.

There are those who will welcome us because of the tithes and offerings that allowed them to come into the knowledge of the truth. We came into contact with the work because others have given. The principle there is to learn a lesson from the unrighteous steward. He only thought in a temporary way, not in a long-term view. We also need to use the physical resources we have access to and get our priorities straight. We set the stage for something that goes way on beyond the here and now.

Verse 10, “Anyone who is faithful in the very least is also faithful in much: but anyone who in unrighteous and dishonest in the very least is also

unrighteous and dishonest in much.” If we are unrighteous in a little, we are unrighteous in a lot. Verse 11, “Therefore, if you have not been faithful with the unrighteous physical wealth, who is going to trust you with the true riches of God’s glory.” The point is to think ahead for a long-term view.

Verse 13, “No servant is capable of serving two masters: because either he will hate the one, and he will love the other; or he will follow one, and he will despise and reject the other. You are not capable of serving God and materialism.” We can’t choose two masters—around what does our life revolve?

Luke 16:19-21, “Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, and satiated himself daily in splendor and luxury. And a certain poor man Lazarus, who was laid at his porch, was covered with open sores. Now he was longing to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. But instead the dogs were coming and licking his sores.”

The rich man was living with every luxury, and Lazarus was a poor man. He was hungry, covered with sores and desired to have the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table. The dogs came and licked his sores. Get the contrast? A dog showed him more compassion than a human being—a pretty poor contrast when a human being has less concern for his neighbor than a dog has.

Verses 22-23, “And it happened that the poor man died, and he was carried away [at the resurrection of the just] by the angels into the bosom of Abraham. And the rich man also died and was buried. Then in the grave [at the resurrection of the wicked] he opened his eyes, and he became filled with fear and torment, when he saw Abraham in the distance, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

Many get very confused over this story. The idea they get was that Lazarus went to heaven and the rich man went to hell. Christ was not going into a detailed explanation. He summarized it. The poor man (Lazarus) died, and at some point after he died (we are not told how long), he “was taken by the angels to Abraham’s bosom.” That is an expression that refers to an intimate relationship with Abraham, where a mother carries a little child.

When was Lazarus taken by the angels to meet Abraham?

Matthew 24:30-31, “...And they shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His

angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, one end of heaven to the other.” He is going to send the angels, and they are going to gather together the elect. We live on a round earth, and everyone would be resurrected going in a different direction. But the angels go out to gather everyone together to meet over Jerusalem.

I Thessalonians 4:16-17, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

I Corinthians 15:52, “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

John 5:28-29, “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

Lazarus died, but the time is coming when he will come forth out of his grave when the just are resurrected. Lazarus is gathered into Abraham’s bosom. That is a figurative statement. Not that everybody is going to spend their time in heaven on Abraham’s lap.

Galatians 3:7, 29, “Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham... And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” When you are a Christian, you enter into a special relationship as a little child to the Father. God made the promise to Abraham. He is the heir of the whole world; he is going to inherit the whole world. We inherit through Abraham. He is the father of the faithful. This is a relationship likened to a child to the father. He was like a little child sitting there, holding him on his lap. Lazarus enters into this relationship at the resurrection.

Matthew 24:31, “And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

The rich man died, and we’re told that he is resurrected. As he opens his eyes (that means they were closed), all of a sudden he is restored to life. When he wakes up and opens his eyes, it

scares him. He sees the Kingdom of God in the distance. This is a picture of the third resurrection. There is no consciousness of the passage of time. Death in the scriptures is likened to sleep (I Corinthians 15:6). When you go to sleep, you are not aware of how much time has passed.

Luke 16:24, ““And crying out, he said, “Father Abraham, have compassion and mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip just the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue.””” The first thing he wants is a touch of water to his tongue. That is what happens when you really get scared. Your mouth becomes like cotton. If he were resurrected in the kind of hell people talk about, he would have wanted a fire truck. He saw the fire in the distance.

Verses 27-28, ““And he said, “I beg you, father, that you would send him to my father’s house: Because I have five brothers; that he may exhort and warn them, that they also may not come into this place of torment.””” He wanted someone to go and warn his family. He was not aware of the passage of time.

Luke 17:1-2, ““And He said to the disciples, ‘It is impossible but that offenses will not come: but woe and misery to him by whom the offenses come! It would be more profitable for him if a millstone turned by a donkey were hung around his neck, and he were plunged down into the depths of the ocean, than if he were to cause one of these little ones to be offended and stumble.’”” He warns of offenses.

Verses 3-4, ““Pay attention to what you are doing: and if your brother sins against you, admonish him; and if he repents, forgive him. But if he sins against you seven times in a single day, and turns to you seven times in a single day, saying, “I repent, I am sorry;” you shall forgive.”” The importance of forgiveness!

Verse 10, ““And you also, in the same way, when you have done all things commanded you, say, “We are unprofitable servants: because we have done only that which was our duty to do.”””

An unprofitable servant is one who has to have everything pointed out to him. He will only do his duty. The profitable servant is one who sees the big picture, understands and is going to carry it out. To the unprofitable servant, you have to point out everything. It takes two men to do one man’s work. You can turn a profitable servant loose and he will do it right. He thinks the way you think. He has the big picture. That is what God wants. God wants us to learn to think like Him. We are to have the mind of Jesus Christ

(Philippians 2:5). We become a profitable servant, one that God can count on. It is the measure of conversion. It goes beyond simply complying with the rules. The unprofitable servants didn’t understand. Nothing was ever internalized. When someone wasn’t there telling them what to do, they reverted back to the world. God wants more than that of us. Those who don’t have the big picture slip back into other things.

Verses 12-19, ““Now as He was entering into a certain village, there were ten leprous men who met Him, and they were standing off at a distance. And they raised their voices and shouted, ‘Jesus, Master, have compassion and mercy on us!’ And looking at them, he told them, ‘Go and show yourselves to the priests.’ And it happened that as they were going, they were cleansed and healed. But one of them, seeing that he was healed, turned back, and crying out with a loud voice was glorifying God; and he came, prostrating himself at His feet, giving thanks to Him, and he was a Samaritan. And answering, Jesus said, ‘Were not ten cleansed? But where are the other nine? Were not any found returning to give glory to God, except this stranger?’ And He told him, ‘Stand up and go your way. Your faith has healed you!’”” Ten lepers—only one was thankful.

Verses 20-21, ““And He had been asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come. He answered them, saying, ‘The Kingdom of God does not come with observation and speculation. Neither shall they say, “Look here!”’ Because look, the Kingdom of God is standing among you.”” (KJV, “the Kingdom of God is within you.”) Some think that is some feeling in your heart. Note who He was talking to; He was talking to the Pharisees. You don’t have to be looking and wondering about these things. Christ said, ‘I am your King, and I am in your midst.’ They needed to look to Him. He was the representative of it.

Verses 26-27, ““And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating, and they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the very day Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed all.”” He begins to talk about the end times.

Verses 28-34, ““Conditions will be similar to what was happening in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, and they were building. But on the very day that Lot went out from Sodom, it rained down fire and

brimstone from heaven, and destroyed all. This is exactly how conditions will be in the day the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, anyone who shall be on the housetop and his possessions are in the house, let him not come down to take them away; and anyone who is in the field, let him likewise not return to the things behind. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks and strives to save his life shall lose it, but whoever is willing to lose it shall preserve it. I tell you, in that night there shall be two in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left." One taken and one left.

Verses 35-37, "Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two men shall be working in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.' And answering they said to Him, 'Where, Lord?' And he told them, 'Where the body is, that is where the eagles will be gathered together.'"

What is He talking about? Christ drew two analogies—the days of Noah and the days of Lot. Everybody was pursuing his normal everyday activities oblivious to God's judgment. Noah and Lot were taken to a place of protection, and then it all broke loose. The time is going to come when there is again going to be a division, and there will be those taken, as Noah and Lot were taken to a place of safety. Everyone else is going to be oblivious to what is going on around them, and when they do see what's happening, it will be too late. It is not referring to the return of Christ. They will be oblivious right up to that time period, until the time that God makes a distinction and takes His people to a place of protection. Just as He did Noah and Lot, and then everything breaks loose. It is not referring to the return of Christ.

Read Revelation 8:7-13, "...the sun scorching, great earthquakes, etc." No one will be eating and drinking during that time.

Luke 17:37, "And answering they said to Him, 'Where, Lord?' And He told them, 'Where the body is, that is where the eagles will be gathered together.'"

Revelation 12:14, "...on the wings of a great eagle..." This is symbolic of the gathering of God's people. They wanted the physical details. But Christ said that is not important. If Christ gave all the physical details, they would get their minds on that. The body, the Church, everybody will wind up at the right place. We need to get our minds on the spiritual, and then God will take care of the rest.

Luke 18:1-8, "And He also spoke a parable to them, for the purpose of showing how it is

absolutely necessary for them always to pray, and not give up, or falter and get weak; saying, 'There was a judge in a certain city, who didn't fear God, and wasn't a respecter of persons. And there was in that city a widow; and she kept coming to him, saying, "Avenge me of my adversary!" And for a time he would not: but afterwards he said to himself, "Even if I don't fear God, and I am not a respecter of persons, Yet because this widow keeps causing me trouble, I will avenge her, otherwise her perpetual coming will wear me out." But the Lord said, "Listen to what the unrighteous judge says, And shall not God execute the avenging of His very own elect, who call out to Him day and night, though He is being patient with them and their problems? I tell you that He will speedily execute the avenging of them. In spite of this, when the Son of Man comes, will He truly find faith on the earth?"' Persistence!

Verses 9-14, "Then He also spoke this parable to some who were confident and boasted within themselves that they were really righteous, and held all others in contempt: 'Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee was standing and praying with himself this way, "God, I thank You that I am not like the rest of men, extortioners, unrighteous, adulterers, or even as that publican over there. I fast twice in every week, I tithe all things that I gain." But the publican, standing off at a distance, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his chest, saying, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the Pharisee: because everyone who exalts himself shall be abased; but anyone who humbles himself shall be exalted.'"

The self-righteous Pharisee and the publican! One didn't lift his eyes to heaven; the other said, 'I am glad I am not like everyone else.' Who do you think God heard?

John 11:14-16, "Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus has died! Moreover I rejoice for your sakes, in order that you may believe, since I was not there. But let us go to him.' Then Thomas, called Didymus, said to his fellow-disciples, 'Let us go also, that we may die with him.'" Notice Thomas said, 'that we may die with him.' Christ said, 'we are going to go to him.'

Verse 43, "Then after saying these things, He called with a loud voice, 'Lazarus come out here!'" Christ resurrected Lazarus. Notice the reaction of the Pharisees.

Verse 53, “Therefore from that day they plotted and schemed together, that they might kill him.” That clinched it in their mind. ‘This is something of a scale that we cannot deny. We have to get rid of Him.’

Verse 54, “So Jesus could no longer appear publicly among the Jews, but left there, and went into the countryside near the desert, to a city called Ephraim; and He stayed there with His disciples.” He no longer appeared publicly before them.

Pharisees question Jesus about divorce: Matthew 19:3-9 and Mark 10:2-12.

Matthew 19:3, “But the Pharisees came to Him, tempting Him, and saying to Him, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?’” The Pharisees were trying to trip up Christ.

Verses 4-7, “But He answered them, ‘Haven’t you read, that He who created them in the beginning made them male and female.’ And said, ‘Because of this a man shall leave father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife: and the two shall become one flesh. So then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has united and joined together, man is not allowed to separate.’ They retorted, ‘Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to divorce her?’” (Deuteronomy 24:1) They wanted to trick Christ into a technical argument.

Verses 8-9, “He answered them, ‘Moses allowed you to divorce your wives because of your hardheartedness: but from the beginning it was not this way. But I am telling you, whoever shall divorce his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and anyone who marries her that is divorced commits adultery.’”

There is a lot to learn from Christ’s answer. He never answered their question, ‘Is it okay to divorce your wife for any cause?’ He said, ‘If you are really interested in how many wives God wants you to have, see how many He made for Adam.’ He referred back to the beginning. ‘Moses allowed you because of the hardness of your heart. But from the beginning it was not so.’ Things he allowed carnal unconverted people to do should not be found among God’s people.

Verses 10-11, “His disciples said to him, ‘If this is the case of a man with his wife, it is not profitable to marry.’ But He said to them, ‘Everyone cannot receive this word, but those to whom it has been given:’”

‘Well, maybe we should not get married. That sounds pretty harsh.’

Jesus blesses little children: Matthew 19:13-15, Mark 10:13-16 and Luke 18:15-17.

Christ takes up the little children and points out that a child-like attitude is important.

Leave everything and follow Christ: Matthew 19:27-30, Mark 10:28-31 and Luke 18:28-30.

Matthew 19:27-29, “Then Peter answered and said to Him, ‘Look, we have given up everything, and have followed You. What then shall be for us?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Truly I tell you, those of you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And anyone who has left houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for the sake of My name, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life.’” Whatever is given up, you will be rewarded.

Matthew 20:1-15, remember the story of some who were hired just before quitting time. What is the point there? Some will have been called earlier in their life—twenty, thirty, forty years or more. Some are called only with six months or a year left in their life. Different ones come in at all stages—some at the beginning of their life and others in the twilight of their life and have only a short time. The outstanding example of that is the thief on the cross whose Christian life consisted of a few hours. But everyone will get eternal life. There is a reward that is given. Rewards in terms of responsibility are where the distinction is made, but not in terms of that basic distinction of eternal life.

Matthew 20:16, “‘In exactly the same way, the last shall be first, and the first shall be last: because many are called, but few are chosen.’”

James and John ask to sit at right and left hand of Jesus in the Kingdom: Matthew 20:20-24 and Mark 10:35-41.

Matthew 20:20-23, “Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Him, with her sons, worshipping Him, and was asking something from Him. And He said to her, ‘What do you desire?’ She said to Him, ‘Give the word that these two sons of mine may sit, one on your right hand, and one on your left hand, in Your Kingdom.’ But answering, Jesus said, ‘You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink of the cup which I am about to drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism which I am baptized with?’ They said to Him, ‘We are able.’ And He said to them, ‘Yes, truly you shall drink of My cup, and you shall be baptized with the baptism which I am baptized with: but to sit on

My right hand, and on My left, is not Mine to give, but to those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.” “To sit on My right hand and at My left is not Mine to give, but the Father’s.”

Luke 19:11-12, “But as they were listening to these things, He spoke an additional parable, because He was nearing Jerusalem, and they thought that the Kingdom of God was about to appear immediately. Therefore He said, ‘A certain nobleman traveled into a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then to return.’” Some thought the Kingdom would immediately appear. The nobleman traveled to a far country. There were things that had to happen yet. It was not going to immediately appear. He was setting the stage for the fact that there is something in between.

John 12:1-8, “Then six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, who had died, and whom He had raised from the dead. Now they had prepared a supper for Him there; and Martha was serving, and Lazarus was one of those who sat with Him, Then Mary took a pound of very expensive ointment of pure spikenard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the aroma of the ointment. But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, who was about to betray Him, said, ‘Why wasn’t this ointment sold for three hundred coins, and the money given to the poor?’ But he said this, not because he actually had concern for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the moneybag, and carried what was put into it. But Jesus said, ‘Let her alone! Toward the day of My burial has she kept it. Because you will always have the poor with you; but you will not always have Me with you.’”

Mary anointed Christ with precious ointment. Judas said this was waste and extravagance; this could have been sold and given to the poor. Notice what John said. John said Judas was a thief. Judas was the treasurer; that is why he said what he said. It sounded impressive to others. Yes, that is kind of wasteful. Judas had a problem and Jesus knew it. God allows a problem to exist for a while before He does anything about it.

Verse 9, “Then a great multitude of the Jews knew that He was there: and they came, not on account of Jesus only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom He had raised from the dead.” Here Lazarus came forth when Christ appeared. That was kind of hard to deny. When he was walking down the street, he was pointed

out as the one who was resurrected. He was quite a celebrity there.

Verse 10, “But the chief priests proposed that they might also kill Lazarus.” They were really indignant; ‘let us get rid of him, too.’ We can see this kind of mentality that they had.

The next Bible study we will focus in on the three to four days before the Passover when things really came to a head. That’s when “no punches are pulled,” and things won’t last very long. Remember when He told the Pharisees they were snakes in the grass? It didn’t last very long.

Bible Study # 36 Questions

SURVEY OF THE GOSPELS AND ACTS SERIES

Matthew 19; Mark 10; Luke 13—19: 29; John 10:22—12:11

1. What was Christ's justification for healing a woman of an eighteen-year infirmity on the Sabbath?
2. What did Christ teach in Luke 13 about entering into the kingdom?
3. What was Christ's attitude toward Jerusalem?
4. What was the meaning of Christ's parable of the Great Supper in Luke 14?
5. In Luke 14, what conditions did Christ lay down for the multitudes that were following Him?
6. Give proof that when we have a baptism there is a celebration in heaven at that time.
7. What is the meaning of the parable of the Unjust Steward?
8. Did Lazarus go to heaven when he died? Prove.
9. Explain Luke 17:21.
10. Does Luke 17:36 refer to the day of Christ's second coming? Explain the implications of this entire section.
11. Prove that Thomas was not the "world's greatest optimist."
12. What was the reaction of the Pharisees when they heard that Jesus Christ had resurrected Lazarus from the dead?
13. In Matthew 19 and Mark 10, we have an account of the Pharisees trying to trap Christ into a technical argument. What lesson do we learn here about how to deal with this sort of thing?
14. What reward will the twelve apostles receive in the kingdom?
15. Explain the meaning of the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20).
16. What example did Christ give because many expected the Kingdom to be established immediately?
17. Why was Judas upset with Christ's extravagance?
18. What was the attitude of the religious leaders toward Lazarus, who had been resurrected by Jesus Christ?

Bible Study # 37
June 13, 1989
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Gospels and Acts Series—Matthew 20:18—25:13; Mark 11:1—13:37; Luke 19:29—21:38; John 12:12—50

We are picking up six days prior to Christ's crucifixion in 31 A.D. We are picking it up at that point **and bringing it up to just before the crucifixion.**

Christ had been in Jerusalem in December at the Hanukkah celebration. He then went to Bethany, raised Lazarus from the dead and then went into the Judean Desert for a time. He did not come into the limelight until just a week before Passover. He used Bethany as a base of operations. He walked back and forth to Jerusalem each day. These trips began with His triumphant entry into Jerusalem and the final cleansing of the temple that took place. The different factions of the Jewish leadership were trying to trap Him; He denounced them. His address at the Mount of Olives came next. That brings us up to the time of the crucifixion.

John 12:1-3, "Then six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, who had died, and whom He had raised from the dead. Now they had prepared a supper for Him there; and Martha was serving, and Lazarus was one of those who sat with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very expensive ointment of pure spikenard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the aroma of the ointment."

There was a supper prepared. It was the occasion where Mary anointed His feet. If He came six days prior to Passover, that would be on the eighth day of the first month. We are looking at a Thursday (probably that Thursday evening) when a big supper meal was prepared. He probably got there during the day. The next morning (Friday morning) was five days before Passover.

Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem: John 12:12-19, Mark 11:1-10, Matthew 21:1-11 and Luke 19:29-40.

He left Bethany to start into Jerusalem. He gave them a job to do.

Mark 11:1-3, "And as they came closer to Jerusalem, into Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples, and said to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you: and immediately as you are entering into it, you will find a colt tied, which no one has ever

sat upon, When you have untied it, bring it here. But if anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it;' and immediately he will send it here.'"

'Tell them the Master has need of it and He will bring it back when He is finished.'

The people heard He was coming.

John 12:12-13, "...after hearing that Jesus was coming into Jerusalem, took branches of palms, and went out to meet Him, and were yelling out, 'Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel.'"

Verses 17-18, "The crowd that was with Him, when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, testified and witnessed about Him. On account of this also, the multitude went out to meet Him, because they had heard that He had done this miracle."

Just a matter of two or three months earlier, Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. Word had spread among the multitudes. Word had spread very widely. Lazarus was evidently a very prominent person, and many had probably come to his funeral. How long do you think it would take for news like that to spread? Many people had seen it. It really stirred up a furor. There had been many miraculous healings, and His teachings were well known; but when an event like this occurred, things were electrified.

A couple of months later, He came just a few days before Passover. People are ready to acknowledge Him as the Messiah. They didn't have any trouble acknowledging Him as the Messiah. What they had a problem with was that He didn't do things the way they thought He should.

The bulk of the prophecies about the Messiah related to the second coming. In the book of Isaiah, you would be hard-pressed to realize that there is about a two thousand-year break between the first and last part of the sentence. It wasn't even obvious to the disciples. They really hadn't grasped the time element nor did He clearly explain it to them. The people expected the Messiah as coming to heal the sick, etc., but also to chase out the Romans.

Isaiah 2:2-4, "...the Law will go out of Jerusalem and all nations will go up to Mount Zion and the Messiah is going to rule at Jerusalem." So they had it all figured out. The crowds came out to acknowledge Him.

John 12:19, "The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, 'Don't you see that we are gaining nothing? Look, the world is going after Him!'" The Pharisees did not like this. Christ received

this public acclaim in His entry into Jerusalem. Christ was not impressed with all the glitter and glamour and the things that they were impressed with, but He came with a realization of the destruction that was to come.

Luke 19:42, "...if you had known, even you, at least in this your day, the things which are for your peace. But now they are concealed from your eyes, and kept secret."

Matthew 24:2, "...Truly I tell you, there shall not be left here one stone standing upon another stone, which shall not be thrown down." As Jesus looked at the city, He recognized the absolute total destruction that was going to come upon the city in the lifetime of many of those people. They didn't grasp His message. He looked out and felt compassion for them.

Let us understand about His entry into Jerusalem. There was significance to that. Remember what occurred on the tenth day of the first month? The lamb was chosen out of the flock, set aside and utilized at the Passover. What did the Jews do if that day came on a weekly Sabbath, which this year it did? Their practice was that they went out into the field and whatever physical work was involved, in terms of dealing with the flock and getting a lamb, they did on the Friday. They didn't pen it up until the next morning, but the actual separation from the flock was done on that Friday. Who was the Lamb of God? Jesus Christ. At the same time that the lambs were being selected from the flocks in the fields by the farmers, Jesus was being acknowledged as the Messiah by the multitudes who lined the road.

Matthew 21:9, "...crying out, saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest.'" It is interesting the timing of it. He finally came to the temple about the time of sundown, at the time when the lamb would have normally been pinned up.

Mark 11:11, "And Jesus came into Jerusalem, and entered into the temple; but after looking around at everything, the hour already being late toward evening, He went out to Bethany with the twelve."

Jesus curses fig tree; casts out money-changers: Mark 11:12-19, Matthew 21:12-19 and Luke 19:45-46.

Mark 11:12-13, "And in the morning, after they had left Bethany, He was hungry. And from a distance, He saw a fig tree, which had leaves. And He went up to it, if perhaps He would find something on it. But as He came to it, He found nothing except leaves, because it was not the

season for figs." He spent the night in Bethany and early the next morning, on His way back, He saw the fig tree and cursed it. It was not the season for ripe figs. It was all green and leafy, but it was apparent that no fruit would be on it. It was not bearing fruit. It looked good from a distance. Since there was nothing but leaves, He put a curse on the fig tree. We will see what that symbolized.

Matthew 21:43, "Because of this I am telling you, that the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and it shall be given to a nation producing the fruits of the Kingdom of God."

That fig tree was symbolic of the nation. Outwardly it had the appearance of being viable, of being the people of God. The people of God are compared to a fig tree. It had the appearance, but it had no fruit being borne. That tree was being shriveled up and would be replaced by a viable, living tree that would bear fruit. It was fulfilled, in the sense, when the Old Testament Church was replaced by the New Testament Church.

Israel and Judah had ceased to bear fruit. He cursed two fig trees. One did not wither immediately, but the other one withered immediately. On the way in, on the Sabbath, one tree was cursed and another one was cursed on Sunday morning. It was symbolic of Israel and Judah. Israel withered over a period of time. It was a more gradual decline that occurred. Judah, in a moment, was taken away with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. God does not want something that gives a deceptive appearance. If we are going to claim to be the people of God, we better *be* the people of God and yield Godly fruit in our lives.

Mark 11:15, "Then they came into Jerusalem: and after Jesus entered into the temple, He began to throw out those who were selling and buying in the temple, and He turned over the tables of the money changers, and turned upside down the benches of those selling the doves." He entered the temple. What did He see there? He was absolutely infuriated by what He saw. He had probably taken note of it the evening before. He turned upside down the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those that sold doves.

You have to understand what a racket they were running. There was the necessity of offering sacrifices. The sacrifice had to be without blemish, approved and accepted by the priests. What had developed was a real racket. Some were not farmers, and some Jews were dispersed

all over the known world. They would come to Jerusalem. You brought your money and bought the animal there. But since it had to pass inspection (which put the priests in a position to run a racket), odds were they would find something wrong with it if you didn't buy it from them. And they commanded higher prices.

That was bad enough, but they also had moneychangers. What was on Roman coins? – Pagan pictures. They said they couldn't use this money in the temple. It had pagan insignias. They said, 'You can't use this money to buy an offering for God. We have a moneychanger table; we will exchange your pagan money for temple shekels. We set the exchange rate; you take the clean money and pay two prices for the sheep.'

They had a real racket set up here, and Jesus cleaned house. What do you do just before Passover? You clean house. Well, He unleavened His Father's House. He chased the cows and doves out. Some have misused this account for civil disobedience. He did not break the law. The priests were breaking the law, and they knew it. None of them went after Him. The only thing they did was to ask, 'What is the source of Your authority' (vv. 28-29)? But they didn't press that very far.

Verses 30-33, "The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or from men? Answer Me!' And they argued among themselves, saying, 'If we should say, 'from heaven;' then He would say, 'Why didn't you believe him?' But if we should say, 'from men;' then we would be afraid of the people: because everyone was convinced that John truly was a prophet. And replying, they said to Jesus, 'We do not know.' And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Neither am I going to tell you by what authority I do these things.'"

They didn't answer His question. 'If we say His authority was purely human, the people will be mad because the people accept John as a prophet. If we acknowledge to Him that this authority derived from God, He will say why didn't you follow him?' So they said they didn't know the answer. He had to do it authoritatively.

The people had greeted Him hours before, and He had worked miracles. God had placed His stamp of approval on Him to the point of raising the dead, and they had acknowledged Him just before He came in, took charge and really enforced the law. Everybody knew it was right. The people didn't have much love for the "shysters." They thought it was about time somebody did something about it. Even though

many didn't understand His office, they did recognize that He was a prophet of God. The religious leaders did recognize Him.

John 3:1-2, "There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, 'Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no man can do these signs that You do unless God is with Him.'"

Who was the "we"? Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin. There was no question of civil disobedience. He was exercising His lawful authority that God had placed His stamp of approval on—the authority the entire population had acknowledged hours previously. It was an exercise in lawful authority of a prophet of God and attested to by God. It set the stage for these events. He left, but there was tremendous resentment. After taking this authoritative action, He began to heal the sick.

Matthew 21:14-15, "And the blind and cripple came to Him in the temple; and He healed them. But when the chief priests and scribes observed the miracles which He accomplished, and the children shouting aloud in the temple, and saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David;' they were indignant." They hated Him. They began to plot His murder.

Mark 11:18, "Then the scribes and the chief priests heard about it, and they began plotting how they would kill him: because they were afraid of Him, since all the people were amazed and astonished at His doctrines and teachings." They resented Him greatly, but they were not going to challenge Him openly. He drove the cattle out, but there is no indication that He hit anyone. He had a very commanding presence. He meant business, and it was very obvious He meant business. They were mad because He had made them look bad.

In John 12:20-21, as we continue you see, "And there were certain Hellenist Jews among those who were coming up so that they might worship at the Feast. Then these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee; and they asked him, saying, 'Sir, we desire to see Jesus.'" We find that there were Hellenist Jews who had come up and wanted to see Jesus.

Verse 27, "Now my whole being is filled with turmoil and anxiety and what shall I say? 'Father, save and deliver Me from this hour'?" But this is the very reason and purpose I have come to this hour." He was filled with anxiety and turmoil because things were closing in. He prayed about it.

Verses 28-29, “‘Father, glorify Your own name.’ Then a voice came out of heaven: ‘I have both glorified My name, and will glorify it again!’ Therefore the people who were standing there, and heard this, said, ‘It has thundered.’ Others said, ‘An angel has spoken to Him.’” Some said they heard thunder or an angel spoke.

Verse 30, “Jesus answered and said, ‘This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes.’”

‘This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes.’ God publicly backed up the authority of Christ and showed His support and approval.

Verse 37, “But even though He had done miracles and signs in their presence, they still did not believe in Him.” The people believed on a certain level. If they saw a miracle, then they would believe. There is a lot more to faith than simply seeing a miracle.

One of the most outstanding miracles that occurred in this era of the Church was back at a time in the mid-50s; one of the last things Mr. Dick Armstrong did prior to his death in an automobile accident. A man was a total quadriplegic, and to be baptized, his entire wheelchair apparatus had to be put down into the water. He asked for Mr. Armstrong to pray for him. Mr. Armstrong prayed for him; he stood up and was healed. He served on the faculty, etc. You would look at him and never believe that he had been a quadriplegic. It was a case of “rise up and walk.” And yet, sadly, at a later time, he became embittered and eventually left the work and the Church. You would think that if you experienced something that dramatic, you would never leave.

In another incident, this young man called me up. His child was stricken with appendicitis. He was about one hundred fifty miles away. I told him I would pray where I was, and he could pray. The child was healed immediately. About twelve unconverted relatives showed up at services that week. They were greatly impressed for about two weeks. I could recount event after event, many, many over the years, things that happened instantly and people who were greatly impressed for a short time. That is the point. Faith has to be anchored to something more than a physical sign. You can’t find something more dramatic than the Exodus.

Here the people were shouting, “Hosanna, praise to God;” a few days later they were shouting, “Crucify Him.” They had a shallow belief. They were impressed with what they could see, but there wasn’t any depth. Faith is the substance hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. They

still didn’t really believe Him. They knew He was going to come and heal, but they also expected Him to send out the Romans and restore independence.

But what if Christ told them some things they didn’t want to hear? They weren’t prepared to believe that. They expected Him to fit in with what they wanted Him to do. And when He didn’t do it, they became upset. You can’t put parameters on God. When He doesn’t dance to your tune, you get mad. They became disillusioned and upset with Him. They weren’t willing to change their ideas. Christ knew that their loyalty was very fickle. They didn’t have depth of faith; what they had was superficial. They were impressed with Him, but they became quickly disillusioned when He didn’t meet their expectations.

There are some lessons to learn in that. Faith and confidence must go beyond some physical manifestation. I don’t care how impressive it is—it will fade.

Luke 19:47-48, “And He was teaching day by day in the temple; but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading people were seeking to destroy Him. But found no way that they might do it: because all the people were attentively listening to Him.” He came day by day into the temple. This was the problem. The people were paying attention.

Priests and Pharisees challenge Jesus’ authority: Mark 11:27-33, Matthew 21:23-27 and Luke 20:1-8.

Mark 11:28, “Then they asked Him, ‘By what authority do You do these things? And who gave you this authority, that You should be doing these things?’” They asked, ‘By what authority?’ That is when He asked them the question about John the Baptist. That was the response.

Verse 29, “And answering, Jesus said to them, ‘I will also ask you one question, and answer Me; then I will tell you by what authority I do these things.’” He answered them with a question about John the Baptist. He didn’t involve Himself in arguments. He just gave it back to them and left them on the spot.

We should answer people differently in different circumstances. If somebody asks a sincere question, they deserve an honest and sincere answer. But to ask a question to try to argue, you never found Jesus involved in that. He would answer them with a question or respond in a way that would squelch the argument. He didn’t bring it down to squabbling.

Matthew 21:28-31, “But what do you think about this? A man had two sons; and he came to the first one, and said, “Son, go work today in my vineyard.” And answering he said, “I will not.” But later he repented, and went to work. Then he came to the second son, and said the same thing to him. And answering he said, “Sir, I will go:” but he didn’t go. Now then, which of the two did the will of his father? They said to him, “The first one.” Jesus answered them, “Truly, I am telling you, that the publicans and the harlots are going into the Kingdom of God before you.””

This was the example that Christ gave of the parable of the two sons. One said, ‘Yes sir, I am on my way.’ But he didn’t go. The other said, “No,” but then felt bad and went. So which one did the will of the father? They had to acknowledge that it was the one that did it.

Verse 32, ““Because John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him: but the publicans and the harlots believed him. But you, having seen this, did not repent afterwards to believe him.”” A lot of them changed their lives. They went the other way. They believed what He said. ‘The harlots and publicans will enter the Kingdom before you. They turned their life around, but you didn’t.’ It became obvious which son they were, which son was the harlot and publican.

Parable of the vineyard: Mark 12:1-11, Matthew 21:33-44 and Luke 20:9-18.

Mark 12:1, “And He began speaking to them in parables. ‘A man planted a vineyard...and leased all of this out to farmers, and left the country.’” He let it out to keepers.

Verses 2-5, ““And he sent his servant to the farmers at the harvest, so that he might receive from the farmers the vineyard’s crop. But they took him, and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. Then again he sent another servant to them; but they stoned him, wounded him in the head, and, after insulting him, sent him away. And again he sent a third one, but they killed him; a great many others were also sent. They beat some, and they killed others.”” He sent his servants to collect the rent, and they robbed and mistreated them.

Verses 6-7, ““Therefore, he had one more to send, his own beloved son. Last of all, he sent him to them, saying, “They surely will have respect for my son.” But those farmers said among themselves, “This is the heir. Come now, let us get together and kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.”” He sent his son, and they said, ‘Let us kill the son. He is the heir.’

Verses 8-9, ““So they seized him, and killed him, and threw his body outside the vineyard. What therefore will the owner of the vineyard do? [Now what do you think he is going to do?] He will come and will destroy those farmers, and will give the vineyard to others!”” He will slaughter them. ‘You are right—that is what he is going to do.’

Verse 10, ““Didn’t you ever read this Scripture; “The stone which the builders rejected, this same one has become the head of the corner.””

Matthew 21:43, ““Because of this I am telling you, that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and it shall be given to a nation producing the fruits of the Kingdom of God.””

Verse 45, “But when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they knew he was speaking about them.”

‘Hey, fellows, you are the wicked husbandmen. You are the ones. You think God is going to let you get by with this? Every prophet God has ever sent, you and your forefathers have mistreated. Now you want to kill Me.’ They knew He was speaking about them.

Verse 46, “And they plotted against Him, to lay hold of Him; but they were afraid of the multitude, because they looked upon Him as a prophet.” They plotted against Him. They wanted to embarrass or humiliate Him. But they were afraid to come in with soldiers and arrest Him for fear there would be a riot.

John 12:42, “Although, truly, even among the rulers and leaders many believed in Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess it publicly, so they would not be excommunicated from the synagogue.” Many believed Him, but because of the Pharisees, they were afraid to confess it publicly.

Verse 43, “Because they loved the praise and flattery of men more than the glory and honor of God.” That was more important to them.

In Matthew 22:1-14, He compared the Kingdom of heaven to a wedding feast. Those who had first chance at the invitation didn’t value that invitation; others were invited in their stead. It refers to the Jews who had the first opportunity, and others took their place.

Spies are sent to trap Jesus: Mark 12:13, Matthew 22:15 and Luke 20:21.

Mark 12:13, “And they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, in order that they might trap Him in His speech.”

It was the Herodians that the Pharisees teamed up with. They were a political faction that backed Herod as king. Normally they were looked on as

renegades. Herod was a descendant of Esau, an Edomite. He had “finagled” the throne. He had married the widow of the last Jewish king. There is a saying, “politics makes strange bed fellows.” They all saw their office and status threatened. ‘This Man is a threat to us. If He gets rid of the Romans, the Herodians will be out of a job, and the Sadducees will be out of a job. This Man is a threat to us.’

Render the things of Caesar to Caesar: Mark 12:14-17, Matthew 22:16-22 and Luke 20:21-26.

Mark 12:14-15, “...Now then, is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, or not? Should we pay it, or should we not pay it...?” The Pharisees put the Herodians up to ask the trick question. The Jews did not want to pay tribute to the Romans. The Jews said, ‘God gave us this land.’ They paid the taxes, but they resented it and didn’t like it. They thought it was illegal—it wasn’t right.

People didn’t like to pay taxes then and still don’t now. But they paid them. They had to. There were the Roman soldiers. The zealots were on the fringe of society. The trick question was that they didn’t want to do that. They didn’t want to lose favor with the people. Either He will make the people mad or the Romans will come in and arrest Him.

Verses 15-16, “‘Should we pay it, or should we not pay it?’ But knowing their hypocrisy, he told them, ‘Why do you tempt me? Bring me a coin, that I may look at it.’ And they brought it to Him. And He asked them, ‘Whose image and engraving is this?’ And they replied to him, ‘Caesars.’” Christ said, ‘Give Me a coin. Whose picture is on this?’

Verse 17, “And answering, Jesus said to them, ‘Render the things of Caesar to Caesar, and the things of God to God.’ And they marveled at His answer.” He didn’t even define what belonged to Caesar and what was God’s. They let the issue drop. They were stunned at that answer. They didn’t know how to answer that.

Questions about marriage in resurrection: Mark 12:18-27, Matthew 22:25-33 and Luke 20:27-40.

Mark 12:18, “Then the Sadducees, who claim there is no resurrection, came to Him. And they questioned Him, saying;” The Sadducees came. They didn’t believe in the resurrection. They liked to argue with the Pharisees about the resurrection. They knew He taught about the resurrection. They came up with this far-fetched story about the seven husbands (vv. 19-22).

Verse 23, “‘Therefore in the resurrection, when they shall be resurrected, which one’s wife shall she be? Because the seven had her as wife.’” It wasn’t a question that bothered them because they didn’t believe in it.

Verses 24-25, “And answering, Jesus said to them, ‘Aren’t you therefore in error, not knowing or understanding the Scriptures, or the power of God? Because when they are resurrected from among the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels who are in heaven.’”

This is talking about the first resurrection. Since they didn’t believe in one, there was no point in going into the three. The fact is there is going to be a restoration of life.

Verses 26-27, “‘But concerning the dead, proving that they rise: haven’t you read in the book of Moses, in the section about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’ He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living...’” That is why He speaks of them that way. That is why He brings it up that way.

So they said, ‘Maybe we better ask Him because the Sadducees and Herodians didn’t fare very well.’ So they decided to ask Him which was the most important commandment.

Two Great Commandments: Mark 12:28-34 and Matthew 22:34-40.

Mark 12:28, “And one of the scribes, listening to them discussing this together, and perceiving that He answered them perfectly, began questioning Jesus, asking Him, ‘Which is the first commandment of all?’”

Matthew 22:36, “‘Master, which is the greatest commandment in the law?’”

When they asked Him, Christ said in vv. 37-40, “And Jesus answered him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your being, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second one is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Upon these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.’” He summarized the whole thing.

Mark 12:32-33, “And the scribe said to Him, ‘Correct, Master, You have spoken according to the truth, that God is One, and there is not any other God besides Him at all. And loving Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the being, and with all the strength, and loving one’s neighbor as himself, is greater than all the burnt offerings and the sacrifices.’”

Verse 34, “And when Jesus observed that he answered Him intelligently, He told him, ‘You are not far from the Kingdom of God...’” Christ took note of that man’s attitude. ‘That is right; that is the most important. You have really answered well.’ Christ told him, ‘You are not far from the Kingdom of God. If you keep that attitude of being impressed with the truth, you are heading in the right direction.’

Verse 34, “...And no one had enough courage any more to ask Him questions.” This took the “starch out.” Nobody wanted to ask the next question.

Some try to say that He replaced the Ten Commandments with the two, the principles on which every commandment hung. The first four tell you how to love God; the last six, how to love your neighbor.

Christ is son of David: Mark 12:35-37, Matthew 22:41-46 and Luke 20:41-44.

‘You guys have been asking Me questions.’

Mark 12:35-37, “Then Jesus asked, while He was teaching in the temple, ‘How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? Because David himself said, inspired by the Holy Spirit, “The Lord said to My Lord, sit at my right hand, until I make Your enemies as a footstool for Your feet.” Therefore if David himself calls Him “Lord,” then how can He be his son?’ And the great multitude gladly listened to Him.”

Matthew 22:46, “But no one was able to answer Him a single word, nor did anyone dare to question Him any more from that day on.” They couldn’t respond to that.

In Matthew 23, He begins to say, ‘woe unto the scribes and Pharisees’ over and over. He really begins to “nail their hides to the wall.”

Matthew 23:24, ““You blind guides, who filter out a gnat, but swallow a camel!””

Verse 33, ““You serpents, you offspring of vipers, how are you going to escape the judgment of Gehenna?”” ‘You are snakes’; He really told them what they were. ‘You are going to burn like fire.’ He “pulled no punches.”

Verse 35, ““So that upon you may come all the righteous blood poured out upon the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous, to the blood of Zachariah, son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.”” He summarized who was slain on the altar. They really became guilty of the murder of every righteous man because they stood ready to murder the One who sent all the others. He gave this scathing denunciation of the Pharisees, and then He left.

Olivet prophecy: Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21.

Matthew 24:1-2, “And walking out, Jesus went away from the temple; and His disciples came to Him, and pointed out the buildings of the temple to Him. But Jesus said to them, ‘Don’t you see all these things! Truly I tell you, there shall not be left here one stone standing upon another stone which shall not be thrown down.’”

Verse 3, “And as He was sitting upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, asking, ‘Tell us, when shall these things take place? And what is the sign of Your coming, and of the completion of the age?’”

‘We want to ask You about that. When is that going to be, the sign of Your coming and the end of the age?’ They thought this addressed the same subject, but in reality they asked Him two different questions: (1) Jerusalem would be destroyed and (2) then the end of the age.

Verses 4-14, “And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Watch out, and be on guard, so that no one deceives you! Because many are going to come in My name, saying “I am the Christ;” and they shall deceive the vast majority of people. But you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you be not afraid: because it is necessary that all these things occur, but the end is not yet. Because race shall rise up against race, and nation against nation, and there shall be famines, and plagues of diseases, and earthquakes in different places. But all these things are just a beginning of sorrows, devastations, and upheavals. Then they will deliver you up into tribulation, and will kill you. And you will be hated by all the nations for My name’s sake. And then many will be offended, and they will betray one another, and will hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will deceive the majority of all people. And because of lawlessness and sin shall be multiplied, the love of the majority of all people will grow cold. But anyone who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the habitable earth for a witness and testimony to all the nations; and then shall the end come.’”

The Olivet prophecy was spoken to the disciples. Verse 34, ““Truly I tell you, it is not possible for this generation to perish or die out, until all these things have taken place.”” Clearly, the generation to whom He was speaking did not live to see His return. The generation that is being addressed is the generation in whose lifetime these events were going to occur.

Verse 14, “And this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come.”

Verse 22, “And unless those days of tribulation had been shortened, there would not be any living thing left alive....” Now He is talking of events that are going to culminate in His return.

Verses 31-34, “And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. But learn this parable from the fig tree: when its branches have already become tender, and the leaves are budding out, you know that summer is near. In exactly the same way also, when you see all these things taking place, know that it is near, even at the doors. Truly, I tell you, it is not possible for this generation to perish or die out, until all these things have taken place.”

This is in the context of His return. The generation that sees these events will culminate in the lifetime of a single generation. It will occur quickly and not stretch out over centuries. It will happen in the lifetime of a single generation.

How long is one generation? Is your generation passed? It hasn't entirely; you are here. Whether you are twenty, forty, sixty or seventy, your generation has not passed because you are still here. It will be occurring in a lifetime of a single generation. We are simply looking at things that will not stretch out on toward the end of the next century. Things have been building.

When did the gospel go forth as a witness to the whole world—a worldwide impact? The true Church continued to exist, but the Gospel of the Kingdom did not go forth to the world in power until Mr. Herbert Armstrong was raised up. It didn't really begin to reach the world with worldwide impact until the 50s. It had begun to go out, but had not reached the world previously.

Verse 22, “...No flesh left alive.” That was not possible until the advent of the nuclear age. Until it became possible to annihilate life off the planet, it was a meaningless statement. Disease epidemics, earthquakes, etc., the other things have been characteristic of many times. They are not unique to prove that this is the end time. But this generation, the Gospel has gone out to the world for the first time and the ability to annihilate man off the planet—those are things unique to this generation. It will culminate in the lifetime of one generation.

Matthew 24:3, “And as He was sitting upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him, asking, ‘Tell us what is the sign of Your coming,

and of the end of the age?’” He gave these signs for the disciples. The world would not understand.

Luke 21:36, “Therefore keep watching at all times, praying that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things which are about to come to pass, and that you may be able to stand in the presence of the Son of Man!”

There are two types of salvation: physical and spiritual. (1) Pray that you may be accounted worthy to escape, to be saved physically from the tribulation and (2) to ultimately stand before the Son of Man. Christ warned of what would happen. The tendency was going to be to “go to sleep at the switch.” Over and over the warnings are that the tendency at the end time was to slow down and lose any sense of urgency.

We need to focus on the warnings because the warnings are for us. We need to see what is the likely tendency and that it doesn't have to happen to us. This age is going to be a lot more suited to producing Laodiceans than Philadelphians. We have a lukewarm, watered-down society, and the Church has always had the tendency to reflect the society around and its problems. Our society is a liberal, lukewarm, watered-down society; we have to be on guard against those influences.

Matthew 25:1, “Then the Kingdom of heaven will be compared to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom.” The virgins typify the Church.

Verses 2-5, “Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps, but did not take oil with them. But the wise took oil in containers with their lamps. But while the bridegroom delayed his coming, they all became drowsy and went to sleep.” They all slumbered and slept. The Church “went to sleep at the switch” in the first century.

Verse 6, “Then at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! The bridegroom is coming! Get ready to meet him!’” That was the beginning of the “midnight cry” when God raised up Mr. Herbert Armstrong back in the 20s and 30s.

Verses 7-8, “Then all those virgins got up, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; because our lamps are going out.’” There is a distinction of those who are wise and those who are foolish.

Verses 9-10, “But the wise answered, ‘No;’ explaining, ‘Perhaps there may not be sufficient for us and you: but go instead to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’” But as they went away to buy, the bridegroom came; and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding

feast: and the door was shut.” They ran out of oil.

Verses 11-13, “Then afterwards the other virgins came also, crying out, “Lord, Lord, open to us.” But answering he said, “Truly I tell you, I do not even know you!” Therefore watch, because you do not know the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man comes.” We have a responsibility to lay in a proper supply of God’s Holy Spirit.

We will break here. This brings us down to late Sunday afternoon prior to Christ’s observance of the Passover on Tuesday afternoon. Notice all the events and actions; the culmination of things came to a head very quickly. Ultimately, that will be so with this world. Things will come to a head and come to a head quickly. We are in a time that we’d better take advantage of. If we don’t use the opportunity to get spiritually prepared for the events ahead of us, we will be caught in a bad way. These examples are admonitions, and they are there for our benefit.

Bible Study # 37 Questions

SURVEY OF THE GOSPELS AND ACTS SERIES

Matthew 20:18—25:13; Mark 11:1—13:37; Luke 19:29—21:38; John 12:12—50

1. What miracle did Christ perform prior to His return to Jerusalem?
2. Did Christ ever receive public acclaim? Prove.
3. Why did Christ weep over Jerusalem while others rejoiced?
4. Did Christ ever curse a tree? Why? Give proof.
5. What kindled Christ's anger in the temple of God? What did He do? Did He strike anyone?
6. Was Christ within the law when He took the action referred to in question 5? Give proof.
7. Humanly, how did Christ feel about the ordeal that lay ahead of Him?
8. Why did a voice thunder out as Christ was praying (John 12)?
9. Because of the miracles and signs performed by Christ, the people believed in Him—True or False? Give proof.
10. Is it ever good to answer a question with a question? Did Christ ever do this? Explain.
11. What is the significance of the parable of the two sons?
12. What was Christ's purpose in relating the parable of the vineyard?
13. Did any of the religious leaders believe in Christ? If so, why didn't they state it publicly?
14. On what subject did the Pharisees try to trap Christ regarding His relationship to the Roman government?
15. As spirit beings, will we marry? Prove your answer.
16. Did Christ replace the Ten Commandments with Two Commandments? Explain.
17. Explain Matthew 24:34.
18. Was Matthew 24 intended for the general public? Give proof.
19. Prove from Matthew 24 that we are presently living in the end time.
20. Prove from Luke 21 that God offers two kinds of salvation.
21. In the parable of the ten virgins, what does the oil symbolize?

Bible Study # 38
June 27, 1989
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Gospels and Acts Series—Matthew 25:14—26:75; Mark 13:37—14:72; Luke 22:1-62; John 13:1—18:27

We are almost to the end of our survey—at least, the Gospel part of it. We will be getting into the book of Acts as we finish the Gospels. This Bible study and our next Bible study will complete the Gospels portion of it, and then we have three studies in the book of Acts.

We are picking up the story at the time just immediately before Jesus' final Passover. One of the things that I think we have seen is the way things have really begun to come to a climax at the very end of Christ's ministry.

One of the things to note is that Jesus had been in Jerusalem earlier. He had been there at the time of the Hanukkah celebration, which was in the latter part of December. He had been there at that time and a little while afterward, had come back. Lazarus had gotten sick and had died by the time Christ got there. Jesus had intentionally waited until He knew Lazarus was dead. Mary and Martha had sent word asking Him if He would please come. He came there, perhaps in January, maybe February, but probably right around the latter part of January. Lazarus had been dead and had been buried for several days. When Jesus came, He resurrected Lazarus. Needless to say, that created no small uproar.

Think of the timing. He waited. He didn't just show up when Lazarus was sick. Then people, who want to discount God's hand, could always say he just had the flu and would have gotten better anyway. He waited until Lazarus had been dead and buried and in the grave for days. Then there was no question.

Lazarus was a prominent member of the community. He lived in Bethany, which is right on the outskirts of Jerusalem within less than a mile of the city gates. We would think of it, really, as a part of town, but Jerusalem had definite walls—and Bethany was outside the walls. Lazarus was a prominent individual. He owned a home where he and his sisters lived. There had been a lot of people at the funeral. They knew he was dead. They had seen him buried. Jesus came and resurrected him. There were a lot of people there when Jesus came and Lazarus was resurrected. There were multiple witnesses to that, and it created no small stir.

You can imagine that word spread like wildfire. Remember, Jesus came to the tomb and told them to roll the stone back. Martha said, 'Don't do that; don't go in there. You don't want to open up the tomb because he's been dead for days—the place stinks.'

Well, He had them open it up. And I'm sure at that point there was no question that Lazarus was dead. Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth," and Lazarus came forth. Well, you can imagine that it created a tremendous furor in the area and word spread.

Jesus left immediately afterwards and went out to the Judean Desert where He was difficult to find. He went there for a period of time, out around the Jordan River, and out into the Judean Desert. He stayed out of the mainstream.

In the meantime over a period of weeks, word travels, news spreads, the story grows, and people are stirred up. This is the talk of Jerusalem because Jesus had been known. He had been there and miracles had been performed. He was an authoritative teacher. He was someone who had built a certain reputation. But when He did this, this was really the "final straw"—this was monumental. It created such a furor, at that point, many of the religious leaders began to plot how they could murder Jesus and get rid of Him. In John 12:10, they also wanted to get rid of Lazarus. They were not comfortable with having him walking around because that just kind of called attention to the fact that Jesus had raised him from the dead.

It was in this context that Jesus showed up six days before the Passover. In other words, if the Passover came on Wednesday, then He showed up on the Thursday six days before. He showed up sometimes during the day on Thursday, and by Thursday evening when the evening meal was fixed, you could imagine there was quite a crowd that had gathered around. Word began to spread, and it says, John 12:9, people came to see Jesus. They also came to see Lazarus. This was quite a thing. It had gotten a lot of people's interest. They had the meal that Thursday evening.

The next day, on Friday, Jesus sent the disciples for a donkey. They got the donkey, and He started riding into Jerusalem—the place went wild. They began putting palms down and throwing their coats down so that the donkey's feet wouldn't even touch the dust of the ground. This was the idea. This huge crowd was shouting, "Hosanna to the King." They were acknowledging Him as the Messiah.

But you also have to understand what their concept was of what the Messiah was going to do. What it talks about in Isaiah, Micah and all the other places is very plain. The Messiah is going to set up a Kingdom. He is going to set up a government. They had read those scriptures. They were chafing under Roman rule. So, in their mind, this had to be the Messiah. No one could teach and preach and do the miracles that He did and not be the Messiah. He did miracles, right to the point of having raised the dead. What more could the Messiah do? The Messiah was going to throw the Romans out and establish the Kingdom. So they were lining the streets, yelling and cheering and shouting. They were all excited. It is in this context that He came into Jerusalem.

Friday evening He came to the temple and saw the mess things were in. He left, went back to Bethany and spent the night. Sabbath morning He came back, and when He did, it was in that context that He walked into the temple.

He said, Mark 11:17, “‘It is written, My Father’s house shall be a house of prayer for all nations. You’ve made it a den of thieves.’” ‘Get this junk out of here!’ He started heaving tables here and there, cutting loose oxen, sheep and goats and flipping open dove cages. All of a sudden there was quite a scurry of activity.

Again, you can imagine how resentful people had been about the “rip-off” that was going on there in the temple with these priests running nothing more than just a “racket” with the sacrifices. You can imagine how people resented that. People always take note when those in authority are doing things like that. They resent it now, and they resented it then. So that was a very popular move. Everybody knew they shouldn’t have been doing it, but nobody had done anything about it. Nobody challenged the priests and the Pharisees on it.

The whole city had just gone wild acknowledging Him as the Messiah the previous day. Nobody was prepared to come up and arrest Him. No way! He was being acknowledged, at the very least, as a prophet and many were acknowledging Him as the Messiah. They had expectations. They had decided how God was going to act.

It is interesting, as we will note, how on the one hand, they believed Him, and on the other hand, they really didn’t. There really wasn’t faith because when He didn’t conform to their expectations when He didn’t do things exactly the way they thought that He would do it, the

mob very quickly turned against Him. It was only a matter of days that some of that same group were standing in a mob outside Pilate’s palace yelling, “Crucify Him, crucify Him.” Why the variation? He didn’t fit their image. He didn’t do things the way they anticipated it being done. They had it all figured out in their minds as to how He had to do it. And when He didn’t do it that way, they took great exception. Oh, they didn’t like that at all, but this hadn’t come up yet.

Of course, the Pharisees and the religious leaders all had a vested interest. He came in and they were in a panic at the reception He was getting. They very quickly got together as politicians do. You hear the saying, “politics makes strange bed fellows.” Well, it did back then the same as it does now. The Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians who normally can’t stand one another, got together. It was worse than the “left wing,” the “right wing” and the other “wings” in between. These were the various political factions. But they quickly got together. They had things divided up; each one had their sphere of influence. ‘But if this guy keeps muscling in, we are all going to be in trouble.’

So the Pharisees put the Herodians up to coming in and asking Him the questions. They came up there to confront Him on this issue of taxes. You remember He addressed that and very quickly put them in their place. They didn’t have any more questions to ask.

The Sadducees came and they had their trick question on the resurrection, which they thought was the real clincher. He very quickly put them in their place and they began to slink away.

Then the Pharisees showed up. They heard that the Sadducees and the Herodians had been put to shame, so they decided that they would try to show Him up. After a couple of statements from them, His response “took the wind out of their sails.” They didn’t have a whole lot of other comments to make.

This brings us up through Matthew 23 where they had asked Him, ‘Where do You get Your authority?’ And He said, ‘Let Me ask you one question—where did John get his?’ This really put them at a quandary because they didn’t know how to respond to that without antagonizing the crowd.

Then there was a question that came up—what’s the most important part of the law? He very quickly addressed that subject. He summed it up and explained the principles upon which the whole law hung: love God and love your

neighbor. That summarized everything there was to say on the subject. None of them had any response to that.

Now He begins to set the stage.

Matthew 23:2-3, “Saying, ‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit in the seat of Moses. Therefore whatever they may tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not according to their works: because they command, but do not practice it themselves.’”

And He proceeded to go through and tell them, Verse 33, “‘You serpents, you offspring of vipers, how are you going to escape the judgment of Gehenna?’” ‘You sons of snakes, you sons of the devil, you hypocrites, you are going to burn in hell fire.’ Boy, He began to really read them the “riot act.” There was no question. Needless to say, by the time He finished with that, a crowd had gathered around because He just really “laid it out to them.”

He told them, Matthew 21:43, “‘...the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of the Kingdom of God.’” They were in authority, but He was in ultimate authority as God in the flesh. Here they were purporting to represent Him as the God of the Old Testament. They had so distorted and abused the responsibility they had, that they really deserved to be corrected sternly and strongly. He told the people that as long as they occupy this office, you respect them in it. Listen to what they say, but don’t follow their example.

As I have mentioned before, that is advice that goes so totally “against the grain” when it comes to human nature. When people find out that someone is not practicing what he preaches, they immediately say, ‘That hypocrite!’ Well, yes, he is! He’s not practicing what he preaches. But then the response of human nature is, ‘Why should I do that? He doesn’t even do it himself. He’s been telling me to do that, and he’s been doing the opposite. Why, I am not going to pay any more attention to what he says.’

Isn’t that the response, so often, that people have? Christ said that even if he’s a hypocrite, if he tells you the truth, you do the truth; you just don’t follow his hypocrisy. His problem is not that he’s preaching the wrong thing and doing the right thing. His problem is he is preaching the right and doing the wrong. What people want to do is ignore the message and follow the example. Then they get mad because they think somebody’s gotten by with something they’ve wanted to get by with and didn’t dare try it. Then

they get resentful about it. Christ made it plain as to the perspective.

This was on a Sunday. This was the day of confrontation and when all these events had occurred.

Matthew 24:1-3, He left and went back out to the Mount of Olives. As they were leaving Jerusalem going back to Bethany, He went through the Olivet prophecy with the disciples.

Matthew 25, we pick it up that Sunday evening, or late Sunday afternoon as He is speaking to the disciples. We see here the parable of the ten virgins that Christ gave in the first thirteen verses of Matthew 25. It’s apparent that the ten virgins symbolize the entire Church.

Verse 5 describes them all “going to sleep at the switch.” The bridegroom delayed His coming, and they all slumbered and slept.

Matthew 25:6, “‘Then at midnight there was a shout, “Look! The bridegroom is coming! Get ready to meet him!’”” What do we have? Christ is giving a parable. It applies and is descriptive of what happened to the Church. The Church is described here and pictured as ten virgins. It became apparent that Christ did not come immediately as they expected that He would, and by the time the destruction of Jerusalem had come, it was apparent that the Messiah was not coming back in that generation. Effectively, the Church “went to sleep at the switch.” They all slumbered and slept. The Church continued, it existed, but they went to sleep—that sense of zeal and urgency was lost.

Then when God raised up Mr. Herbert Armstrong in the 1920s and 1930s, the midnight cry began to go out, “Behold the bridegroom comes.” Mr. Armstrong was raised up to cry out that, ‘Behold the bridegroom comes. Get ready to go meet Him. Be prepared.’ That, of course, was part of the commission of Elijah, of John the Baptist—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Then we come forward in our time now and the earlier part of this century. We find the story is that the virgins got up and began to trim their lamps. Then we find a distinction here—five were wise and five were foolish. There has been some speculation in terms of perhaps symbolizing the Laodicean and Philadelphia eras. There are various points, but certainly the point of it is that we had better be adequately prepared with God’s Spirit because that’s what is needed to be ready.

Then Christ gave the parable of the talents in vv. 14-30. The man called his servants and left

property entrusted to them. He gave to them on the basis of what they were able to handle. Then after a while he came back and evaluated what they had done. Two of the servants had been diligent. They had been faithful. One had been unfaithful, unprofitable. It's made apparent here that the difference between the profitable and the unprofitable servant was that the unprofitable servant was one that was incapable of carrying out the master's expectation. He needed total, constant supervision. He didn't think like the master thought. The two who took the five talents and the two talents went out and doubled it.

The term "talent" is an old English word. It is a translation of a word that has reference to "a unit of money." The "talent" was a unit of money in the Middle East at that time. It is simply an analogy of money having been entrusted to individuals who took and used what they had been given. They did things as the master would have done had he been there. And he was very well pleased. He was pleased at the way they had the big picture. They sought to be responsive to his way of doing things.

We have the contrast that is given of how we take and use what God gives us now and the growth that we bring forth. This determines our reward.

Look at the statement in v. 21, "...well done good and faithful servant, you've been faithful over a few things, I will appoint you over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

Right now, whatever our area of responsibility, it's over a few things. We have to learn to use them properly. Use the small opportunities we have right now, and God will ultimately give us great things in the Kingdom. It's a principle: if we're faithful with a little, we'll be faithful with much; if we are unfaithful on a small scale, we would be unfaithful on a grand scale. I saw a sign the other day that I thought had an interesting point. It said, "If you can't do great things, then do small things in a great way." That's part of what it's saying right here.

Most of the things we are involved in right now are not great earth-shattering, world moving events. The world news does not particularly take note of what you and I are doing in our daily lives. We are not making decisions that are impacting thousands and millions of people. Maybe we are only making decisions that impact us and our immediate family or a few people that work with us. What we do is on a small scale, but if we learn to do it right on a small scale, then we have the promise of greater things.

Christ says, 'I want to see that you are learning to be a faithful servant and that I can count on you to handle things the way I would handle it. I want to see if you're developing My mind. I want to see if you are learning to think like Me. You don't need somebody to just stand there and point out every single rule, and all you do is conform to the rules.' We must be transformed to think like God.

Now if the master had been over there and said, 'Take this dollar, go over here and do this with it; take that one, go over there and do this,' then I'm sure he would have carried it out. 'You take this one, go to the bank with it and deposit my dollar.' He would have probably done that. It didn't say he was a thief. He gave the man back what he had. He had buried it. It was just that he was incapable of exercising any independent thought or action unless somebody was standing there giving him a long list of rules, spelling out every detail. He simply couldn't take and apply the principles he had learned and do it the way the master would. He didn't do that.

As we come through, Matthew 25:31-32, Christ makes plain that when the Son of Man comes in all of His glory and all the holy angels are with Him, that's when He is going to sit on the throne of His glory. That's when He is going to separate the sheep from the goats. That is a judging process. Again an agricultural analogy is used.

If you have ever been around sheep and goats, you understand there is a distinct difference. They are not animals of the same temperament at all. It was a figure of speech that would have been easily understood to people at that time and to some of us who've had occasion to be around sheep and goats. Sheep are known for their willingness to follow the leader. Goats don't follow anyone. They tend to have a very definite mind of their own. We even use the expression of somebody being "stubborn as a Billy goat." All you have to do is have a Billy goat, and you realize how stubborn that is.

The distinction that Christ describes in Matthew 25 are those who willingly follow Him and those who are stubborn, self-willed and go their own way. What it ultimately comes down to is converted and unconverted. Are we willingly yielding ourselves and trying to follow Christ? The sheep follow the shepherd. Christ is the Good Shepherd. The sheep are the ones that try to follow Him. The goats are the ones that go charging off in their own direction, and if they are dragged back, they may come. But every time

you look around, they go wandering off somewhere else. They don't want to follow.

Christ went on to make it plain that He has not been ruling and judging during the last nineteen hundred years. He has been in heaven.

He says in vv. 31-32, "When He comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him"—that's when He's going to sit on the throne, and that's when He is going to judge the nations. The judgment process is going to begin at the second coming.

Verses 35-40, "Because I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; I was naked, and you clothed me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to see Me.' Then the righteous shall answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and fed You something? Or thirsty, and gave You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and took You in? Or naked, and clothed You? And when did we see you sick, or in prison, and came to You, and visited You?' And answering, the King will say to them, 'Truly I tell you, as long as you have done it to one of these, the very least of My brethren, you have done it to Me.'"

We demonstrate our real attitude toward Christ by the way we treat one another. You know, Christ takes it personally the way we treat one another. Look around. Anyone that we would consider the least of Christ's brethren, maybe they're someone who is elderly, maybe they're "this or that," maybe they're having a problem. Whatever the circumstance, do you realize that the way we treat them, Christ says, "inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you've done it unto Me."

He goes through and talks about this distinction of those that are going to say, 'I was hungry' or 'I needed help' or whatever it is. 'I needed a ride to Church'; 'I needed somebody to come and encourage me'; 'I needed somebody to help me' or do whatever. 'And you wouldn't come.'

They will say, 'Lord, we never saw You. Boy, if I had ever seen You needing help, why surely I would have come and done it!' He says, 'No, you didn't do it to the one of the least of these My brethren. You wouldn't go across the street to help him; you wouldn't do it to help him. If you didn't do it to him, you didn't do it to Me.'

When we serve one another, it is the same as if we have done it to Christ personally. Maybe you don't think of it that way. Jesus takes it personally the way we treat His brothers and sisters. That's what He calls us—His brothers

and sisters. He takes it personally. It is important that we have that concept in mind. The way we treat one another, Christ is taking it personally. It's as though He were there. The next time you do something for someone realize that as God looks at it, it is the same as if you had done it personally for Jesus Christ.

We read in the New Testament about different ones that did different things for Him. Sometimes we think, 'I wish I could have been there and could have done some of those things, had that contact, had the honor of serving Him a meal, giving Him a place to sleep, doing certain of these things'—whatever it may be. Realize that if you have done it to His brethren, you have done it to Him. He takes it personally.

Then on the other hand, if we have opportunities to do something for someone and we don't, then it's just like we didn't do it for Christ. We have to look at it that way. If that were Jesus Christ there, would I go do it? Would I help Him out? Would I be willing to serve? Would it be too inconvenient? That's the point that He goes through here, "inasmuch as you have not done it to one of the least of these My brethren, you didn't do it to Me." He takes it personally, and I think that is an important concept.

If you really grasp that, how would there be problems and friction? How would there be gossip? Would you say that about Christ Himself? Do you realize that if we go around and say bad things about people, we are doing it to Christ? We do things and we might as well be doing it to Him. It's an important concept. If we really grasp the extent to which Jesus Christ takes it personally, then we have that concept, and that's the way we treat one another. Treat one another exactly as you would treat Jesus Christ. That is a very important principle.

Two days before Passover: Matthew 26:1-5, Mark 14:1-2 and Luke 22:1-2.

Matthew 26:2, "You know that after two days the Passover takes place, and the Son of Man is to be betrayed and to be crucified." This would have been Sunday evening; one day later would have been Monday evening; two days later would have been Tuesday evening—and that's when Christ and the disciples kept the Passover. So, this is Sunday evening.

Verses 3-5, "Then the chief priests and the scribes and the elders of the people were assembled together in the court of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas. And they consulted together, in order that they might find a way to seize and arrest Jesus by deceit, and kill Him.

But they said, 'Not during the Feast [of Unleavened Bread], lest there be a riot among the people.'" They were afraid of a riot. They wanted to do it quietly. They wanted to betray Him, to get rid of Him "on the quiet." They did not want a public outcry. They were afraid of trouble.

Jesus is anointed in Bethany: Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9.

Matthew 26:6, "Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon..." That Sunday evening there was a dinner there at the home of Simon.

Verse 7, "A woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of ointment which was extremely expensive, and poured it on His head, as He was sitting at the table." You remember a few days earlier when He had gotten there, Martha had anointed His feet with oil and Judas had gotten very upset. Judas said, 'That's just wasteful and extravagant. Why this stuff could have been sold and the money given to the poor. It could have helped people. Look at that!' He began to talk around among some of the others and stir things up.

Well this time, this other woman came in and poured this ointment on His head; some of the disciples began to be indignant (v. 8). You can imagine Judas is the instigator of it. He had evidently stirred up a few others, and they began to think that it was awfully wasteful and extravagant. 'Why does He encourage extravagance like that?' You know what Judas' motive had been; John made it plain. He said Judas said all of this stuff, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief (John 12:6). He was keeper of the bag; he was the treasurer. He wanted it sold and the money put in the "pot" because he planned on "skimming" some off the top. That was the real motive. He wasn't interested in the poor, one way or the other. He had stirred things up, and it got some others stirred up.

People have done that. I remember years ago, Mr. Herbert Armstrong was getting ready to build the auditorium. There were people that were all upset. 'That's extravagant! Why does he have to go out and have that carpet specially made; I know some he can get on special down there at Wal-Mart. Why doesn't he put some of that in?' Well, he didn't do it that way. And I think anyone who has ever had opportunity to be out there and has seen it realizes that he did it just the way God inspired him to do it. In fact, if you really get back to it, the ones that were stirring it up were at the top, and they were

stirring because they had the same motives as Judas. They stirred up things down through the ranks and eventually some got bitter and accusative. It's unfortunate. When people start being accusative of things, you better kind of wonder what their motives are. Judas managed to get some upset.

Verse 11, Christ said, 'If you're so interested in the poor, you have plenty of opportunity to help them because they will always be here.'

Matthew 26:11, "...But you will not always have Me." I am not going to be here much longer.

Verses 12-13, "For this woman, in pouring this ointment on My body, did it toward My burial. Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel shall be preached in all the world, what this woman has done shall also be spoken of, for a memorial."

He said, 'Leave this woman alone; she's doing a good thing. This is going to be remembered. This is an act of faith on her part, and you will have plenty of opportunity to do other things.' Christ undoubtedly made it very plain. I suspect He looked Judas squarely in the eye when He said some of this and made it very plain what He was talking about because of the next thing we read.

Judas betrays Jesus: Matthew 26:14-16, Mark 14:10-11 and Luke 22:3-6.

Matthew 26:14-15, "Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priest, and said, 'What are you willing to give me, and I will betray Him to you?' And they agreed to give him thirty pieces of silver." Judas was a traitor. Christ didn't do things Judas' way. In fact, Christ saw through Judas, and instead of Judas repenting, he became resentful to the point that he thought, 'I'll fix you; I'll get even with you.' So he went.

Now why were the leaders willing to pay Judas this large sum of money? Thirty pieces of silver was a significant sum of money. They wanted to get Him, to arrest Him, but they did not want to try and seize Him at a public occasion because of fear that there might be a riot on their hands. As a result, they had been trying to lay wait for Him, but they never could catch Him. They wanted to seize Him privately, and Judas came and said, 'I will give you an opportunity. I will point Him out to you. I'll help you find Him privately, off away from the crowd.' That was what they wanted. They wanted to do what they did quietly. They were not prepared to try it in the temple or some place like that.

The disciples prepare for Passover: Matthew 26:17-19, Mark 14:12-16, Luke 22:7-13 and John 13:1.

Matthew 26:17, “Now on the first of unleavened [the first day of unleavening] the disciples came to Jesus, asking Him, ‘Where do You desire that we should prepare for You to eat the Passover.’” I commented on this prior to the Days of Unleavened Bread. The reference here, in what is called “the first of the unleavened” or “the first of the unleavened bread,” is not a reference to the first holy day of Unleavened Bread (the first day of the seven days of Unleavened Bread) because the first day of the seven days of Unleavened Bread is a holy day. It comes after the Passover.

It is very plain in Leviticus 23. Passover is on the 14th; the days of Unleavened Bread begin on the 15th—and the first day is a holy day. The expression “the first of the unleavened bread” or “the first of unleavened” was a term that referred to “the 13th day of the first month.” In this year, it would have been Tuesday.

The Jews’ custom was that after twelve o’clock noon on the 13th, no more leavened bread was to be made. No more dough was to be put out to rise. They began to clean and gather up things, to gather the leavening. Now, they continued to eat the leavened bread that they had, but there had to come a point you stopped baking it. You know, you don’t bake right up to sunset on the 15th. There is a cutoff point. Their cutoff point was at noon on the 13th. After that they didn’t bake more leavened bread. They would continue to eat what they had from noon on the 13th to noon on the 14th. After noon on the 14th they burned the leavening or it was consumed that afternoon, prior to sunset that evening.

Most of us do that. We dispose of our leavening at least a few hours before or sometimes the day before. Maybe you have a little bit you have saved back, and you finish it off that morning. Well, they did something similar. The 13th was known as “the first day of the unleavened” because it was the beginning of the time, from noon, that they could only bake unleavened bread. It can be confusing as you read through it without knowing that phrase. It’s just a little awkward.

They asked, ‘Where do You want us to prepare the Passover?’ He told them and they did. I know that there are some who say that Christ changed the time of Passover or some have said it in the past. I don’t know about saying it now, but some in the past have said that Christ changed the time of the Passover. I find it hard to reconcile that with the account that’s given right here.

The disciples brought it up. The clear implication from Matthew 26, Mark 14 and Luke 22 is they ate the Passover when they expected to eat the Passover. Can you imagine Jesus saying, ‘Go prepare the Passover’ the day before they had ever been doing it? ‘You know, we are going to eat Passover tonight.’ If they had always done it a night later, can you imagine Peter not saying, ‘Wait a minute, Lord, You are a day early, aren’t You? Why are we doing it tonight? That’s not till tomorrow night.’ Can you imagine Peter just letting it pass and not asking why? He asked for a whole lot less than that. That would have been pretty major.

There was never a “ripple,” never a question. It was never an issue. It never seemed to have come up. In fact, the disciples came to Him and said, ‘Where do You want us to prepare it?’ In fact, Peter and John were the ones that Christ sent. They didn’t have any questions. They weren’t surprised. They weren’t taken aback. It was just the normal course of things. They ate the Passover every year, and there is no indication here that they ate it any other time than when they expected to eat it.

It’s plain when you go through John’s account (John 19:14) that the Pharisees were observing it a day later than Christ did. I have no questions as to who knew the right time. Christ told Peter and John where to go and they did. Things were prepared; they went in to eat the Passover.

We will continue the account.

Matthew 26:20, “And evening came and He sat down with the twelve.”

In John 13:2-5, we will pick up the account, “And during supper (the devil having already put into the mind of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, that he should betray Him), Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God, and was returning to God; He rose from the supper, and put aside His garments; and took a towel, and secured it around His waist. Afterwards He poured water into a washing basin, and began washing the disciples’ feet, and wiping them with the towel which He had at His waist.” The clear implication from John 13 is that Jesus washed Judas’ feet.

I wonder if you have thought about that. Suppose you knew that somebody was a traitor, someone who purported to be your friend had sold you out and was collaborating with people who were going to murder you. How kindly disposed do you think you’d be toward that person? To really grasp the compassion, the mercy, the attitude,

and the willingness to serve, what about serving a “Judas”? It’s no big deal to serve somebody who is nice to you, somebody who is your best friend and always does good things for you. It’s easy to serve that person because you want to. You serve them; they serve you. What about serving a “Judas”? Do you feel much incentive to go out and serve a “Judas”? I don’t think any of us do. Christ got down and washed his feet. He had that attitude, that willingness to serve, that attitude of humbling Himself; He began washing the disciples’ feet. We went through the account at Passover. I won’t go into the details.

Judas dips the sop and then leaves: Matthew 26:21-25, Mark 14:18-21, Luke 22:21-23 and John 13:18-32.

Matthew 26:21, “And while they were eating, He said, ‘Truly I am telling you, that one of you shall betray me!’” It is plain that they were still eating the meal because different ones began to ask about it. This was upsetting.

John 13:24, “Then Simon Peter motioned to him [John] to ask who it might be that He was speaking about.” This was a Middle Eastern style banquet. The table was fairly low to the floor, and they were reclining on cushions. The meal was on the table. John was over there right up next to Jesus, and Peter was always curious. That’s why I find it hard to believe he wouldn’t have asked something about Passover. He immediately kind of motioned to John and said, ‘Ask Him who it is. Ask Him.’

Verse 25, “Leaning over on Jesus’ chest, he asked Him, ‘Lord, who is it?’”

Verse 26, “Jesus answered, ‘It is he to whom I shall give this sop, after dipping it.’ Then, after dipping the sop, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son.” Now it was customary that there were not a lot of utensils that were used. Bread, even unleavened bread, would have been broken off and dipped. Often some of the food was wrapped in it and dipped in the gravy. You might compare it to a tortilla. If you have gone to a Mexican restaurant, they bring out these tortillas, and you wrap some of the food in it, using it to hold the food. Well, that’s similar to what He did. He tore off a piece and wrapped a morsel of meat in it, dipped it in the gravy and handed it to someone. The dish was evidently there near Him. He just quietly said to John, ‘It will be the one that I hand this to.’ And He handed it to Judas.

Verse 27, “...Jesus therefore said to him, ‘What you are going to do, do quickly!’”

Verse 30, “After receiving the sop, he immediately went out....” Judas got up and left.

Verses 28-29, the others really didn’t grasp it; they thought that maybe Judas was being sent out to buy something for that evening or to give something to the poor—since he claimed to be so interested in them. They didn’t really grasp what had happened, but in reality, Judas had gone out to betray Him. This was during the meal portion.

Eating the unleavened bread: Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19 and I Corinthians 11:23-24.

Matthew 26:26, “And while they were eating, Jesus took the bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’” This makes it plain that it was at the conclusion of the meal, as the meal was drawing to a close, that Jesus then took the bread and the wine and gave a special significance. He took the bread, broke it and gave it to them; He said, ‘This is My body, broken for you.’

Verses 27-28, “And after taking the cup, and giving thanks, He gave it to them, saying, ‘All of you drink of it, because this is My blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’” He took the cup and said, ‘This is My blood shed for you.’ This was obviously something that was done in a special way at the end of the meal to give significance to it. Judas had gone by then. It was certainly appropriate that Judas was not there to partake of the symbols of Christ’s sacrifice because he didn’t really accept those symbols. He did not partake of that although he was present at the foot washing. Jesus was willing to wash his feet, but Judas did not partake of the symbols of the New Covenant.

In this context, there was a contention.

Luke 22:24, “And there was also an argument among them about this: which of them should be thought to be the greatest.” They got to arguing about who was the most important. Who’s going to have the greatest job in the Kingdom?

Verses 25-27, “And He told them, ‘The kings of the nations lord it over them; and those exercising religious authority over them are called benefactors. But with you it shall not be this way: but he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he who leads, let him be as he who serves.’” Christ made it plain that the real key to greatness is service and humility—willing to serve and not to exalt the self.

John 13:34, “A new commandment I am giving to you, for this purpose, that you should love one another; in the same way as I have loved you, this is the way you also should love one

another.” That’s the way. Not simply love. Our relationship with one another is not simply as neighbors. You are to love your neighbor as yourself. You are to deal fairly and equitably with him. Your neighbor is anybody you may come into contact with. Deal fairly and above board with all people.

But with the brethren, we are told that we’re more than neighbors—we’re brothers. We are not simply neighbors—we are family. Christ said, ‘This is the commandment that I am giving you. Don’t simply love your brother as yourself, love him the way I have loved you—with a sacrificing kind of love. We’re not commanded to love our neighbor that way. We’re commanded to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We deal with him the way we want to be dealt with. Treat him fairly. Treat him the same way we wish to be treated. That’s certainly expected. But we’re told with the brethren we are to even go beyond that. We need to have the kind of attitude that Christ Himself had.

Peter denies Christ three times: Matthew 26:31-35, Mark 14:27-31, Luke 22:31-34 and John 13:36-38.

Matthew 26:31, “Then Jesus said to them, ‘All of you will be offended because of Me during this night: because it has been written, “I will smite the shepherd, and the flock will be scattered abroad.”’”

Verse 33, “And answering, Peter said to Him, ‘Even if all should be offended in You, I will never be offended!’” Peter was quick to tell Him, ‘I don’t care who forsakes You; I don’t care who leaves or who does what. I will never back down. I will never turn away from You. I am prepared to go to the bitter end.’

Verse 34, “Jesus said to him, ‘Truly I tell you, that during this night, before the cock crows, you will deny Me three times.’” Christ said, ‘You don’t really know what you’re saying. Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.’

Verse 35, “Peter said to Him, ‘Even if it were needful for me to die with You, in no way will I deny You!’ And all the disciples answered in the same way.” Peter was just adamant; he knew he wouldn’t do that. Well, Christ knew he would because as I’ve mentioned before, there was a lesson Peter had to learn.

Peter had not come to realize that his strength was inadequate. We need more than what we can supply. We need God’s strength. Our strength is inadequate. Our strength can fail us. Peter learned that in a very humiliating experience. He learned that, and he simply didn’t make the

mistake of relying on his own strength anymore. He was clearly not converted at this time.

Luke 22:32, “‘But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail: and when you are converted, establish and strengthen your brethren.’” When you are converted! That would, of course, be at the Day of Pentecost.

Next we find Christ’s message to the disciples on that final evening of the Passover.

John 14:2, “‘In My Father’s house and family there are many positions and offices....’” There are many responsibilities and offices. (NKJV, “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”) Christ makes it plain. He didn’t tell the disciples that they would go to heaven.

Some want to quote, “In My Father’s house there are many mansions.” I can remember as a child growing up in the Baptist Church, the preacher would read, “In My Father’s house are many mansions.” Many times they do that at funerals. At that point they would close the Book and begin to talk about how the dear departed were in heaven.

As a child I remember my concept when somebody said “mansion,” the only thing I could think of was some of these antebellum-style homes. My concept, as a child, was that the streets of heaven must be lined with great big white houses with great big white columns. Many mansions—just filled with mansions.

The preachers want to stop there and give you the impression that you are going to go floating off up there; you check into that great hotel in the sky. You get your room, and you don’t check out. That is not what Christ said.

He said, v. 3, “‘And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am you may be also.’” Christ made it plain that we are not going up there and meeting Him. He is coming here to us. He didn’t say I am going away, and I will leave you a road map as to how to get there. He said, ‘I am going to come back.’

The term “My Father’s house” was a reference to “the temple,” which the Jews understood. Christ had said just a few days earlier in Matthew 21:13, “‘It’s written My Father’s house is to be a house of prayer and you’ve made it a den of thieves.’” The temple was symbolic of the Father’s house. The temple did not symbolize heaven. The Holy of Holies and the ark of the

covenant symbolized the throne of God. There were many compartments and apartments. There were many places in the temple that were assigned to various offices and functions of the priesthood. The particular office or dwelling that particular ones held was in accordance with the position that they held there in the government. These apartments or places were around on three sides of the temple. They were part of the temple. The concept given is that the New Jerusalem is going to come down from God out of heaven (Revelation 21:2). Christ is going to prepare a place, and He's going to bring it with Him. It's ultimately going to come down. He's going to come down and assign offices and responsibilities. There's an analogy here, and it's plain that He's going to come back to bring the reward.

John 14:16, “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that it may remain with you forever, even into the ages of eternity.”

Verse 26, “The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in My name, it will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things, whatever I have said to you.”

One of the things the Holy Spirit does is it opens our mind to understand spiritual things. One of the reasons we need God's Spirit is that it helps us to learn to grasp spiritual things on our own and with God's Spirit working with us. Certainly for all of us here, God's Spirit is with us, but until you come to a point of conversion, until you come to really truly repent and be baptized, there is a difference. The difference is you can make progress; you can grow; you can make a certain level of progress; and you can go to a certain point on your own. With God's Spirit *with you*, you can go to a certain point, but then it's like you come up against a brick wall. You've made progress, changed, done certain things and gone as far as you can go, but you can't seem to get beyond that point. That's the point beyond which you can't go without God's Spirit *in you!* The Spirit had been *with* the disciples but it hadn't yet come *into them*, which it would on the Day of Pentecost.

With young people growing up in the Church or new people coming in, perspective members, the spirit is working with them, but they'll only make progress to a certain point. Beyond that point they cannot go until they surrender, make that commitment and the Spirit comes into them. Then it is like somebody tore down the wall.

Progress is still a step at a time and a day at a time, but there's no longer a limitation beyond which you can't go. At that point, God's Spirit is the unlimiting factor.

Christ makes it plain there is no so-called “independent Christian.”

John 15:1-4, “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that is not producing fruit, He takes it away; and every one that is producing fruit, He cleanses and purges it, so that it may produce more fruit. You are already clean through the word, which I have spoken to you. Remain and live in Me, and I in you. Just as the branch is not able to produce fruit by itself, all alone, except it remain and live in the vine; in exactly the same way, neither can you produce fruit, except you remain and live in Me.”

Imagine cutting a branch off, tying it to a fence post or a telephone pole and expecting it to bear fruit. Of course not! You cut the branch off, and it is not receiving nourishment anymore from the trunk—it dries up and withers.

Verse 6, the only thing you can use it for is firewood. Christ made that plain. All the branches have to stay attached to the main trunk. We have to be unified. The source of our ability comes through Christ. It comes through being attached to the body. Christ also made it plain to the disciples.

Verse 16, “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you. Also, I have ordained and appointed you, that you should go out and produce fruit, and that your fruit should remain: so that whatever you may ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you.”

Why are you here? Why am I here? Well, God called us; God chose us. I am not here because I figured it out for myself, and you're not here because you did it yourself. God sought us; God called us. Christ said, ‘You haven't chosen Me; I have chosen you.’ We didn't take the initiative, God did. He took the initiative in our lives. If God had not taken the first step, we would still be in our sins.

Christ then went on talking about how we would have trials and tribulation. Why did He tell us we should take courage?

John 16:33, “I have spoken these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good courage; I have overcome and conquered the world!” ‘I have overcome! I have conquered!’ We can have courage in facing whatever problems, whatever trial, whatever difficulties in this world, realizing

that Christ has already won. The battle is won. The war is won, and all we have to do is hang on to the winning side. It's already determined.

I am not going through every detail here in John 14, 15 and 16. We went through that on Passover. I'll hit some of the high points. We note here they had been there in the upper room where they had the Passover service.

Jesus comes to Gethsemane to pray: Matthew 26:36, Mark 14:32 and Luke 22:39.

Then Christ and the disciples left and on the way out to the Garden of Gethsemane, they were discussing some of the things that are here in John 15 and 16. We have the account of what Jesus was telling them as they were walking along. By this time they came to Gethsemane.

Matthew 26:36, "Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane: and He said to the disciples, 'Sit here, while I go and pray nearby.'"

Jesus takes Peter, James and John with Him: Matthew 26:37-38, Mark 14:33-34 and Luke 22:40

Matthew 26:37, "Then He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee; and He began to be extremely sad and deeply depressed." The whole reality of what was happening began to converge on Him, and it just overwhelmed Him. He felt just absolutely overwhelmed at the thought.

Verse 38, "Then He said to them, 'My soul is extremely sad, even to death: wait here, and watch with Me.'" 'I just feel so depressed that life is a burden. I am just extremely overwhelmed with this sense of what is happening.' He said, "Wait here and watch with Me."

Jesus prays for three hours: Matthew 26:39-44, Mark 14:35-40 and Luke 22:41-46.

Matthew 26:39, "And after He had gone forward a little way, He prostrated Himself, face down, and prayed...." What did Jesus do when He reached that point when He began to be overwhelmed with this discouragement and this depression? He went to God with it! He went to God and made His request known.

Verse 39, "...saying, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.'" He came and had this request. He said, 'I don't want to go through with this, but help Me—not My will but Your will.' Jesus prayed to come to that point of absolute total surrender. There is a serenity that comes from surrender. When you really put it in God's hands, there is a peace of mind that you have. There is peace and Christ had that. He wrestled through it in prayer. He had total surrender. He

was asking God to help Him get rid of any vestige of holding on to His way. 'Let it be Your will.' And when you really turn loose and you know it is in God's hands, you can relax and have peace. We have the account in John 17, some of the prayer that He prayed. Then He began to get His mind more and more on others because He had peace in Himself.

The time of betrayal: Matthew 26:45-46 and Mark 14:41-42.

Matthew 26:46, "'Get up, let us go. Look! He who is betraying Me is approaching.'" Finally, He told His disciples, 'Come on, let's go.' He was ready.

That's the key. He understands what it's like to be depressed, to be discouraged and to be absolutely overwhelmed. As the reality of what He was facing, what He was going to have to go through and what it was going to be like started to come to mind, it was just overwhelming. But He turned loose. He knew that God knew what He was doing, and He prayed it through. We have to come to that point of surrender. Once you really turn loose, then you can have peace because you know that God is going to work it out.

Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss: Matthew 26:47-49, Mark 14:43-45, Luke 22:47-48 and John 18:1-9.

Matthew 26:47-49, "And while He was still speaking, suddenly Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and elders of the people. And he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, 'Whomever I kiss, He is the One: seize Him.' And immediately he came up to Jesus, and said, 'Rabbi!' And with an outward show of love, he kissed Him."

Now they had paid this sum of money. Judas would lead them to where He was privately. They were just a small group, away from the crowds. The other thing was that as they came in with a group like this, it was dark and they had these torches. These were men all about the same age and would have been similar in appearance. They weren't sure of being able to pick out Christ in a group of other young men about His age. These were men around age thirty. Jesus was age thirty-three, so I think it is safe to say the disciples were pretty much in the twenty-five to thirty-five-age bracket. They would have been men right around that age. Christ was standing there, and they weren't sure they would pick Him out in a crowd like that where it was dark and torches and everything. But Judas would have

known Him well; he went up and kissed Him. It's apparent that Jesus didn't have a halo over His head to where you could see Him because He glowed in the dark. No, He looked just like an ordinary Jew of His day. And they paid Judas a considerable sum of money to "tip them off" as to where He was and then to go and point Him out.

Peter cuts off ear of high priest's servant: Matthew 26:50-55, Mark 14:46-49, Luke 22:49-53 and John 18:10-12.

Matthew 26:50, "But Jesus asked him, 'Friend, for what purpose have you come?' Then they came to Jesus, and grabbed him with their hands, and arrested Him."

All was done to fulfill prophecy: Matthew 26:56 and Mark 14:50-52.

Matthew 26:56, "...Then all the disciples, deserting Him, ran away." The disciples left. Everybody split.

Jesus led to high priest's house: Matthew 26:57, Mark 14:53, Luke 22:54 and John 18:13-14.

Matthew 26:57, "But those who had arrested Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled."

John 18:13, "And they led him away to Annas first; because he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year."

Peter follows into the courtyard: Matthew 26:58, Mark 14:54, Luke 22:54-55 and John 18:15-18.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all make plain that a couple of disciples followed Him. Peter followed Him. Peter is mentioned in all of the accounts. John makes it plain that he was with Peter. The two of them followed Him.

John 18:15-16, "Now following Jesus were Simon Peter and the other disciple [John]: but that disciple was known to the high priest, and he [John] entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest. But Peter stood outside the door. Then the other disciple [John] who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in."

John was actually a witness to the trial because he entered into the room and stood there and watched. He was evidently known and had some connections. He showed up there, and whoever was at the door let him come in. He stood there and watched. Peter was outside waiting.

Verse 24, "Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas, the high priest." So all of this

commotion was going on, and then they brought Him in.

Chief priests illegally condemn Jesus: Matthew 26:59-65, Mark 14:55-63 and Luke 22:63-65.

All the accounts bring this in.

Matthew 26:59-60, "And the chief priests, and the elders, and the entire Sanhedrin, tried to find spurious evidence against Jesus, in order that they might put Him to death. But they did not find any: yes, even though many false witness had come forward, they did not find any." Now here we are in the wee hours of the morning. What kind of people do you find on the streets in the wee hours of the morning? They had false witnesses in there. If you notice the story, the false witnesses couldn't get their stories together.

Mark 14:56, "For many gave false testimony against Him, but their testimonies were not in agreement."

What had they done? They had gone out, dragged the streets and grabbed a few drunks in off the streets. They had gone out, grabbed some of these drunks that left the bar about one o'clock in the morning. Who else are you going to find on the streets in the wee hours? They got this crowd in there, and these guys couldn't even get their story straight. They were all willing to go in there and give false testimony. They were trying to maintain the outward appearance of legality, so they needed two witnesses. They got this bunch of drunks, and they couldn't even find two of them who could remember the same story. So they had confusion there for a while until finally two of them managed to land on the same story. They said, 'Okay, that's it!'

Matthew 26:61, "But at last two false witnesses came forward and said, 'This Man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it again in three days.'" You talk about a stacked deck in a courtroom. The judge starts parading witnesses through and finds two that agree. 'Those are the right ones. I know because they agree. It's clear.' All you have to do is go through the account, and you can see what a trumped up false thing this was. It was an outward sham. They were ready to crucify Him, to take Him to Pilate.

Sanhedrin condemns Jesus and sends Him to Pilate: Matthew 27:1-2, Mark 15:1, Luke 22:66-73:1 and John 18:28.

Matthew 27:2, "And after binding Him, they led Him away, and delivered Him over to Pontius Pilate, the governor."

At this point, we will stop here this evening. The next Bible study we will conclude with Jesus before Pilate, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension into heaven. The final events will be covered in the next Bible study.

Hopefully, as we have been going through this series on the harmony of the Gospels, we can gain a little more insight into what Jesus did, what He said and taught, and gain a deeper insight into the day-by-day things that transpired. We see the development through His ministry, as it was finally time for things to culminate. He came in full force there to Jerusalem realizing that things had built up and the foundation was laid. When the foundation is laid, the full force doesn't take long.

I think from our standpoint, we need to realize that we are right now in the position of finishing the foundational structure in terms of the work. When the time comes that we "hit it" with full force, it won't take long. But we are in that position right now of completing the foundation. With that we will be concluded this evening.

Bible Study # 38 Questions

SURVEY OF THE GOSPELS AND ACTS SERIES

Matthew 25:14—26:75; Mark 13:37—14:72; Luke 22:1-62; John 13:1—18:27

1. What spiritual lesson was Christ teaching in the parable of the talents?
2. Has Christ been sitting on His throne and ruling and judging everyone during these last 1900 plus years He has been in heaven?
3. How do we demonstrate our real attitude toward Christ?
4. Did any of Christ's disciples ever feel that He was extravagant and wasteful with money?
5. Why were the religious leaders willing to pay Judas Iscariot thirty pieces of silver?
6. Prove from the context that Jesus did not initiate some new and different day of keeping the Passover.
7. Why did Jesus wash the disciples' feet? Was Judas present for this?
8. Did Judas partake of the bread and the wine?
9. What is the real way to greatness?
10. What was the new commandment Jesus Christ gave?
11. Was Peter converted at this time?
12. What function would the Holy Spirit serve when it came?
13. Did Christ tell the disciples in John 14 that they would all go to heaven to be with Him?
14. Prove that there is no such thing as an "independent Christian" according to the teachings of Jesus Christ.
15. Had the disciples been the ones who had chosen Christ? How does this apply to us?
16. Even though we face trials and tribulation in this world, why did Christ tell us that we should take courage?
17. What was Christ's attitude toward the crucifixion as the hour approached? How did the disciples react?
18. Where was Jesus taken after His arrest? Did any of the disciples go with Him?
19. Demonstrate that Christ's trial was illegal.

Bible Study # 39
August 8, 1989
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Gospels and Acts Series—Matthew 27:1—28:20; Mark 15:1—16:20; Luke 22:66—24:53; John 18:28—21:25

Everything has been building to this point—to **the events that culminated in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ**. He came as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world (John 1:20). He was that final Passover Lamb that God did provide.

Last Bible study we went through the events of the final Passover supper that He observed with His disciples. We saw the events that culminated with His arrest and ended with Peter's denial. There is an important lesson that we are to gain from that. God ensured that Peter learned the lesson, and then he went on to serve God in powerful ways. When we rely on human strength, it will fail us and let us down at a crucial time. He felt that when the going got tough, he could handle things.

Jesus had gone aside that evening and prayed. He went a little further and prayed fervently. His disciples dozed off and fell asleep. Jesus recognized the crucial nature of the events He was going to be going through. He saw the enormity of what lay ahead, more than anything ever. The disciples did not recognize how powerless they were. If they had, they would have found it a little bit easier to concentrate. There was an illusion of the suffering. Peter went through a bitter experience and recognized his own weakness. At a crucial time his strength failed, and he learned a crucial lesson. He learned the lesson to never depend on his own strength. Strength was something that came from above.

John 18:28, "Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium [which is the judgment hall]: and it was early. Now they did not enter the Praetorium, so they might not be defiled: but that they might eat the Passover." The members of the Sanhedrin did not go into the Judgment Hall to talk to Pilate. They didn't go in the Judgment Hall so as to not be defiled by coming into contact with Pilate. Many of the Jews observed the Passover on a different day than Jesus and His disciples—who had observed it on the previous night. The members of the Sanhedrin and others had not observed it yet. We follow the practice of Jesus.

Notice the hypocrisy of their thinking. It would be a terrible thing if they would come into contact with the Italian governor. They would be defiled and couldn't eat the Passover. They built up this attitude in their minds. Like Jesus told them, 'they strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.' Defilement originates in the heart and mind.

Judas repents and hangs himself: Matthew 27:3-10 and Acts 1:15-19.

Matthew 27:3-4, "Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he regretted what he had done, and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' But they said, 'What does that matter to us? That is your problem.'"

'Big deal! What do we care? What you did was a sin, but paying you was not a sin.' They had paid the bribe and didn't feel guilty. Then they had a great discussion.

Verse 6, "And the chief priests took the pieces of silver, saying, 'It is not lawful to put these coins into the treasury, since it is the price of blood.'" 'We used this to cause a man to be betrayed and murdered. We can't put it back in the temple treasury.'

Verse 7, "After taking counsel, they bought the potter's field with those coins, for a burying ground for strangers." They bought a parcel of ground and used it for a cemetery.

Matthew 27:5, "Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple, and left, and went out and hung himself."

Acts 1:18, "Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and after falling headlong, he burst asunder in the middle, and all his bowels gushed out." He evidently hung himself in an out-of-the-way place; the body hung, fell down and burst. If you put the two accounts together, you have the full story. Matthew tells us how it started; Luke tells us how it ended.

Jesus condemned before Pilate: Matthew 27:11-14, Mark 15:2-5, Luke 23:2-4 and John 18:29-30.

Luke 23:4, "Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the multitude, 'I find no fault, nothing to condemn, in this man.'" Pilate found Him innocent. 'This Man hasn't done anything.'

Verse 5, "But they were indignantly insistent, saying, 'He stirs up the people, teaching throughout the entirety of Judea, beginning from Galilee even to here.'" This mob was agitated. 'He has stirred up the whole nation. He started in Galilee.'

Verse 6, “But Pilate, when he heard Galilee mentioned, asked whether the Man were a Galilean.” When Pilate heard this, he thought he was going to get “off the hook.”

Verse 7, “And after finding out that he was from Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also at Jerusalem at that same time.”

He said, ‘That should be Herod’s jurisdiction.’ Pilate was a politician, and they had been doing that for years. He wanted to “pass the buck” to Herod.

Verse 8, “When Herod saw Jesus, he was extremely pleased for he had been wishing for a long time to see Him, because he had been hearing so many things about Him; and he was hoping to see some miracle or sign performed by Him.” Herod heard about it and was really excited. He had heard about all these miracles and had never seen a miracle.

Verses 9-11, “And he questioned him with many words; but Jesus answered him nothing. And the chief priests and the scribes stood and vehemently accused Him, and Herod and his troops were arrogantly insulting and ridiculing Him, and after mocking Him, they put a gorgeous robe on Him, and sent Him back to Pilate.”

When Herod didn’t see any miracles, he let his troops abuse Him and sent him back to Pilate. Here was a man who had an obligation to enforce justice, but he didn’t want to “make waves.” If he could “pass the buck,” he would.

Pilate finds Jesus innocent: Luke 23:13-15 and John 18:31-37.

John 18:31, “Then Pilate said to them, ‘You take Him, and judge Him according to your own law.’ But the Jews answered him, ‘We are not permitted to put anyone to death.’” They didn’t want to do that. They wanted Him taken out and executed. They wanted a horrible death for this One whom they hated. Pilate spoke to Jesus in a little more detail.

Verses 33-36, “Then Pilate entered the Praetorium [the judgment hall] again, and called Jesus, and asked Him, ‘Are You the King of the Jews?’ Jesus answered him, ‘Are you asking this of your own self, or did others tell you this about Me?’ Pilate answered, ‘Am I a Jew? Your own people and the chief priests have delivered You up to me. What did You do?’ Jesus answered, ‘My Kingdom is not of this world. If My Kingdom were of this world, then My servants would fight, that I should not be delivered up to the Jews. But now My Kingdom is not from this world and society.’”

Christ and His disciples did not get involved in the politics of this world. He came as an emissary of a Kingdom to come; as His followers, we find ourselves in the same situation.

Pilate releases Barabbas and crucifies Jesus: Matthew 27:15-23, Mark 15:6-14, Luke 23:16-23 and John 18:39-40.

Matthew 27:18, “Because He knew that through jealousy and envy they had arrested Him.”

Mark 15:7, “And there was one called Barabbas, who was imprisoned with his confederates after making insurrection, he had committed murder.”

Luke 23:18, “But they cried out in unison, yelling, ‘Away with this Man, and release Barabbas to us!’”

John 18:40, “Then they all shouted again, saying, ‘Not this One, but Barabbas!’ Now Barabbas was a robber.” Barabbas was kind of terrorist leader of his day. Pilate knew that through jealousy and envy they had arrested Jesus Christ. He knew that was what it was. He desired to turn Him loose.

Matthew 27:24, “When Pilate saw that nothing could be done to change their minds, but instead a riot was starting, he took water, and washed his hands in front of the multitude, proclaiming, ‘I am innocent of the blood of this righteous Man. You must tend to it yourselves.’” He saw a riot was on the verge of starting. He was concerned about his own political future, not what was right and wrong. That is what is wrong with human government. They know what they should do and have some inclination to do it, but pressure is brought—and they back down. He said, ‘I am going to wash my hands of it.’ He thought he could wash the guilt away.

So Pilate set Barabbas free and sent Jesus to be crucified. They beat and scourged Jesus Christ. They brought Him out and were still demanding that He be crucified. Finally, Pilate “caved in” and they led Him away to be crucified.

Soldiers lead Jesus away to be crucified: Matthew 27:31-33, Mark 15:20-22, Luke 23:26-31 and John 19:16-17.

John 19:17, “And carrying His own cross, He went out to the place called The Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha.”

Matthew 27:31-33, “And they led Him away to crucify Him. And as they were coming out, they found a man, a Cyrenian, named Simon: and they compelled him to carry His cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means, Place of a Skull.”

He started out carrying His cross, but because of the brutal beating, He was unable to continue. Simon of Cyrene carried the cross the rest of

the way. Simon of Cyrene later came into the Church, and his children are mentioned in Paul's epistles. We are not told if he knew anything about Jesus Christ. This had quite an impact on him. Later his family is mentioned—his sons Alexander and Rufus are mentioned in Mark 15:21.

Title and accusation written on cross: Matthew 27:37, Mark 15:26, Luke 23:38 and John 19:19-22.

As we continue the account, we find there was a sign that was made. This is a good example of how the Bible interprets itself. Every writer gave a summary account. You give the information that impressed you.

Matthew 27:37, “And above His head they put up His written accusation, ‘This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.’”

Mark 15:26, “And the inscription of His accusation was written over Him, ‘The King of the Jews.’”

Luke 23:38, “Now there was also an inscription written over Him in Greek and Latin and Hebrew, ‘This is the King of the Jews.’” Luke tells us something Matthew and Mark didn't tell us. It was written in three languages. They summarized the title.

John 19:19-21, “And Pilate also wrote a title, and put it on the cross. It was written, ‘Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.’ Then many of the Jews read this title: because the place where Jesus was crucified was close to the city (now it was written in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin). Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, ‘Do not write, “The King of the Jews,” but rather, “He claimed, I am King of the Jews.”’” The Jews wanted to change the sign to that *He claimed* He was King of the Jews.

Verse 22, “Pilate answered, ‘What I have written, I have written.’” Enough is enough. This was a testimony written in languages that everybody present could read, a testimony any literate person in that area could read. Here was something that testified in each of those languages. Every account gives a little more detail that the other didn't give. That is how the Bible is written.

Two thieves crucified with Jesus: Matthew 27:38, Mark 15:27-28, Luke 23:32-33 and John 19:18.

Luke 23:33, “And when they came to the place called a Skull, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right side, and one on the left.”

Matthew 27:38, “At the same time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right hand, and another on the left hand.” Matthew tells us that He was placed in the midst of those.

Jesus is mocked and reviled; darkness: Matthew 27:39-45, Mark 15:29-33 and Luke 23:35-44.

Luke 23:35, “And the people stood gawking. And the rulers were also sneering and ridiculing Him with them, saying, ‘He saved others! Let Him save Himself, if this is the Christ, the chosen One of God!’”

Matthew 27:44, “And in the same way the robbers also, who were crucified together with Him, insulted and reproached Him.” He said, “robbers”—Plural.

Luke 23:39-40, “Now one of the criminals who had been crucified blasphemed Him, saying, ‘You are the Christ, save yourself and us!’ But the other one rebuked him, saying, ‘Don't you even fear God, seeing that you are suffering the same condemnation?’” Luke tells us that one was joining in, but the other was not.

Both said something at the beginning. But Luke says one continued to taunt; the other one rebuked the other. ‘Don't you even fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? You are going to be dead and face God in the judgment.’

Verse 41-42, ““And we truly are condemned justly; because we are receiving a due payment for what we did: but this Man did nothing wrong.’ And he said to Jesus, ‘Remember me, Lord, when You are coming in Your Kingdom.’” Note here the attitude of conversion. What does it take to be converted? —Basically to repent of our sins and to believe the Gospel. The thief demonstrated this attitude of repentance. He said that he was getting what he had coming. He offered no excuses. He made no attempt to minimize what he had done. ‘I am getting what I had coming. I have sinned.’ That is not the normal carnal approach. ‘I have broken the Law of God, and I am getting my just consequences.’ When you talk to anybody in prison, they always say they got a “bum rap”; he is on appeal, and everybody is against him. Talk to anyone in law enforcement.

What we have here is something different. He acknowledged himself as a sinner. Did he have faith? Did he believe the Gospel? Here he was hanging there, a man whose life was ebbing away. He said, ‘I know that You are going to come into Your Kingdom. I believe that You are the Messiah, the King, and that You are going to

establish that Kingdom. When You do, please remember me.' Here was an act of faith.

There isn't any evidence to the fact that Jesus was going to do anything except die. But he believed that this Man was who He said He was. He believed that and he said, "Remember me, Lord, when You come into Your Kingdom."

Verse 43, "And Jesus said to him, 'Today I am truly telling you, you shall be with Me in Paradise.'" The punctuation has caused some misunderstanding. 'Today you will be with Me in Paradise.' –That is not what it said. The question is did Jesus go to Paradise that day? Three days later He told Mary, 'Don't touch Me; I have not ascended to My Father' (John 20:17).

Ecclesiastes 9:5, "...the dead know nothing..."

The thief did not expect to go to Paradise that day, but when Christ came with His Kingdom. Perhaps he had heard the message that Christ preached. Here was Jesus who could see into the hearts of men, could see that this man had made a commitment, that he was prepared to stick with it. God looks on the heart.

How long does a person have to be converted? Some people have misunderstood. How many Sabbaths do you have to keep? It is not a matter of that, but what you are willing to do. Repentance is a willingness to turn from the works of man. Our willingness to do those things is an evidence of repentance and a desire to do what God said. But it is not our physically doing those things. It is an important principle that we learn from this account.

John 19:25-27, "And standing near the cross of Jesus was His mother, and the sister of His mother, and Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. Therefore seeing His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, Jesus said to His mother, 'Woman, now this is your son!' Then He told the disciple, 'See, this is your mother!' And from that very hour the disciple took her into his own home." One of the last things He did was to ask John to take care of His mother. Here was Jesus still thinking of others at the last part of His life. He asked John to look after her.

Jesus is forsaken, offered vinegar; spear thrust into His side; He dies; veil torn in two: Matthew 27:46-51, Mark 15:34-38, Luke 23:45-46 and John 19:28-30.

Matthew 27:46, "And about the ninth hour Jesus yelled out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' Which is, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me.'"

Matthew 27:49-50, "But the rest said, 'Let Him alone. Let us watch, and see if Elijah comes to save Him!' And another took a spear, and thrust it into His side, and out came water and blood. And then Jesus yelled out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His Spirit."

Luke 23:45-46, "And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was ripped down the middle. And crying out with a loud voice, Jesus said, 'Father, into your hands, I commit My Spirit,' and after saying these things, He died."

John 19:34, "Rather one of the soldiers had already pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water had gushed out!"

Matthew 27:51, "And suddenly the veil of the temple was ripped in two from the top to the bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks split and cracked." There was an earthquake. The veil was rent in two. Previously, direct access to God the Father was not available. When Jesus died, the veil was rent in two to demonstrate that there was no longer a barrier. He had done away with what separated us from God the Father. We have direct access because our sins have been paid for.

Matthew 27:52-53, "And the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints which had fallen asleep arose. And walked out of the tombs after His resurrection, and went into the Holy City, and appeared to many." There was a literal resurrection that occurred. The tombs opened. They did not come out of their graves until after Jesus resurrected them. They were resurrected to physical life.

What happened to the saints? The same thing that happened to Lazarus—eventually he died. These saints were resurrected to physical life. Evidently, they were people who were known in the community. The whole purpose was to witness to the resurrection. If someone appeared and said they were Abraham Lincoln, you wouldn't believe it. But if your next-door neighbor, whose funeral was last week, suddenly were resurrected, that would get your attention. These were people that when they were resurrected, it created a stir. They had probably heard the message. Some would be there for the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), receive the Holy Spirit and will be in the first resurrection.

John 19:31, "Then the Jews, in order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (because it was a preparation day, since that coming Sabbath was a great day, a holy day) [the First Day of Unleavened Bread] [NKJV, "a high day"], requested of Pilate that their legs

might be broken, and their bodies taken away.” They didn’t want the bodies to remain on the cross on the Sabbath. But it didn’t bother them to murder an innocent Man. They wanted to break their legs. When they were hanging and once the legs were broken, the pain was so excruciating; they couldn’t push themselves up to get a breath every so often. They would die in a few minutes. He had a very gruesome death. They did not break Jesus’ legs because He was already dead.

Verse 33, “But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.” They were not to break any bones of the Passover lamb. This was prophetic.

Many of the women watch to the end: Matthew 27:55-56, Mark 15:40-41 and Luke 23:48-49.

Matthew 27:55-56, “And there were many women standing at a distance, looking on, who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him. Among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.” Jesus died at three o’clock in the afternoon.

Body of Jesus laid in tomb: Matthew 27:57-61, Mark 15:42-47, Luke 23:50-55 and John 19:38-42.

Matthew 27:57-58, “And as evening approached, there came a man of Arimathaea, Joseph by name, who also himself was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered to him.”

Luke 23:50-51, “And then a man named Joseph from Arimathaea, a city of the Jews, being a counselor, and a good and righteous man, (He had not voted with the counsel, and did not approve of their actions,) who also himself was waiting for the Kingdom of God.” We are given a little more insight. Joseph had not voted with the Sanhedrin. He was a disciple, but he had concealed it.

John 19:39, “And also Nicodemus, who at the beginning had come to Jesus by night, came carrying a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about one hundred pounds.”

They were evidently the two members of the counsel who had not gone along with it. They had been afraid to take a public stand before this. They had done what they had done quietly. They were men of wealth and importance, afraid of what people would think; but when it came “down to the wire,” they took a stand and made plain where they stood. When they saw what

the leaders were doing, they couldn’t go along with it.

Mark 15:44-45, “And Pilate was amazed, and wondered if he were already dead. And when he called the centurion, he asked him if he had been dead very long. And after he knew it from the centurion, he granted permission to Joseph to take the body.”

Pilate asked, ‘Is He already dead?’ He sent a soldier to go and check; he came back and said, ‘Yes, He is dead.’ Pilate then wrote a release for the body to be released to Joseph and Nicodemus. This was at sunset.

Verse 46, “And he had bought a linen cloth: and after taking Him down, he wrapped Him in the linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of a rock; then he rolled a stone to cover the entrance of the tomb.” They took the body of Jesus and very quickly wound it with linen. They did what they could and buried it in a nearby tomb. They buried it very quickly prior to sunset. We are given that account.

Now let us notice the three days and three nights. Matthew 27:57, “And as evening approached, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, Joseph...a disciple of Jesus.”

Verses 59-60, “And Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb...” Let us see what happened.

After Holy Day women buy and prepare spices: Mark 16:1 and Luke 23:56.

Mark 16:1, “And after the Sabbath was past [the first holy day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread], Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought aromatics and spices, that they might come and anoint Him.” This tells us plainly it was after the Sabbath was past that they bought the spices to prepare Him.

Luke 23:56, “And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments [on the day following the holy day Sabbath], and on the [weekly] Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.” Look at what Luke tells us. They prepared the spices and then rested on the Sabbath. How could they buy the spices after the Sabbath and prepare them before the Sabbath. The key to the mystery is made plain.

John 19:31, “Then the Jews, in order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (because it was a preparation day, since that coming Sabbath was a great day, a holy day (the First Day of Unleavened Bread)...)” (NKJ, “Therefore, because it was the preparation day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on

the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a High Day)....”) It was the preparation day. The coming Sabbath was a high day, a holy day, the First Day of Unleavened Bread. That was an annual Sabbath. The preparation day on which Jesus was crucified was for an annual Sabbath, a high day. They prepared the spices and rested on the regular Sabbath.

So when you put it together, He was crucified on the preparation day of an annual Sabbath. After the holy day had past, they purchased the spices and then rested on the (weekly) Sabbath day. Then early Sunday morning as soon as dawn began to break, they made their way out there to embalm the body. But when they got there, the tomb was opened. If you go through all the accounts, it becomes very plain.

Women come to tomb early first day of week; Jesus already resurrected: Matthew 28:1-8, Mark 16:2-8, Luke 24:1-12 and John 20:1-10.

Matthew 28:1, “Now after the [two] Sabbaths [the first holy day during the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the weekly Sabbath], as it was getting light toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.”

Mark 16:9, “Now after Jesus had risen, early the first day of the week He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.” He was already gone from the tomb on the first day of the week. He appeared first to Mary Magdalene.

John 20:1-2, “But on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came very early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the entrance of the tomb. Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and the other disciple, whom Jesus loved [that was the way John referred to himself], and told them, ‘They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him!’” She went and got Simon Peter and John.

Verses 4-6, “And the two ran together: but the other disciple ran ahead, faster than Peter, and came to the tomb first. And stooping down and looking in, he saw the linen clothes lying there. However he did not enter. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen clothes lying there.” When they got there, John, being cautious, stopped; Peter, not being cautious, rushed right on in.

Let me point out something here in John 20. You have all heard of the shroud of Turin. It was a fraud and we knew it. The Turin was one garment.

Verse 7, “And the handkerchief, which had been upon His head, was not lying with the linen clothes, but was folded up and was lying in a place by itself.” He was wrapped in two different things. There were two separate garments used to wrap His head and His body. The people who forged the garment back in the Middle Ages should have made two separate pieces. The selling of relics was a very popular and lucrative business. They should have made two different pieces. Peter and the others came and looked and went away. Mary came back.

Verses 11-12, “But Mary stood outside the entrance of the tomb, weeping. And as she was weeping, she stooped down and looked into the tomb. And suddenly she saw two angels dressed in white. And they were sitting, one at the head, and one at the foot, where the body of Jesus had been laid.”

Verses 15-16, “Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?’ But thinking that He was the gardener, she said to Him, ‘Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away!’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ Turning around, she said to Him, ‘Rabboni!’ That is to say, ‘Teacher!’” When He said it that way, she turned.

Verse 17, “Jesus told her, ‘Do not even touch Me; because I have not yet ascended to My Father. But go to My brethren, and tell them, ‘I am ascending to My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.’”

Later on He did let the disciples touch Him (Matthew 28:9; John 20:27). But not until the wave sheaf, the first of the first fruits was offered in the temple.

Matthew 28:11-15, “And as they were leaving, some of the guards went into the city, and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. And the chief priests assembled with the elders; and after taking counsel, they gave the soldiers a large amount of money, instructing them ‘to say, ‘His disciples came at night, and stole Him away while we were sleeping.’ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will convince him, and you will have nothing to worry about.’ So they took the money, and did as they were instructed. And this report is widely circulated among the Jews to this day.”

The three days and three nights was a special witness to the priests. Remember when they asked for a sign? That sign was a special sign, in a unique way, to the religious leaders of the day. Remember when He was buried. They had gone

to Pilate saying that Jesus had been saying He was going to be resurrected and that the disciples were going to steal the body (Matthew 27:62-66). The soldiers were a witness to what happened, and the priests told them not to tell anybody. 'You tell everybody that you went to sleep, and if you get into trouble, we will get you out of it. But you need to spread this rumor.' If you pay somebody to tell a lie, there are two people who know it is a lie. And this was the situation here. It was a witness to them because they knew it was a lie.

The disciples had trouble handling the event of the resurrection.

Luke 24:10-11, "Now it was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary of James, and the rest of the women with them, who told the apostles these things. But their report appeared to them like idle talk, and they did not believe them." They didn't really believe it.

Luke 24:36-37, "And as they were telling these things, Jesus Himself stood among them, and told them, 'Peace be to you!' But they were terrified, and filled with fear, thinking that they were seeing a spirit." Their first response was that they didn't believe it. Then they were terrified, scared to death, and then they came and rejoiced (Luke 24:41).

Luke 24:12, "Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb; and as he leaned over to look in, he saw the linen clothes lying there alone; and he went away, wondering in himself at what had occurred." He wondered what happened.

John 20:7, "And the handkerchief, which had been upon His head, was not lying with the linen clothes, but was folded up and was lying in a place by itself."

A very minor point—Jesus took time to fold them up and put them away neatly. In the excitement of the moment, you would have wanted to just put them away. But it showed His character. Jesus was a neat person. He cleaned up after Himself. The ushers would have had an easy time to clean up if they came around where Jesus sat. Anywhere you went behind Him, you would find it very neat. He cleaned up after Himself and folded up His garment. If He thought it was important at a time like that, then we should do so, also.

Jesus appeared there and began talking to them, and they couldn't believe it.

Luke 24:31, "And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him. Then He disappeared before them." When they realized who He was and their eyes were opened, He disappeared.

John 20:19, "Then, it being evening on that same day, the first day of the week, when the doors had already been shut where the disciples were assembled, because they were afraid of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the middle of them, and said to them, 'Peace be to you!'" That scared them. Here they were in a locked room.

Matthew 28:10, "Then Jesus said unto them, 'Don't be afraid! Go tell My brethren that they must go into Galilee, and there they shall see Me.'"

Luke 24:37, "But they were terrified and filled with fear, thinking that they were seeing a spirit." They thought they were seeing an apparition and were scared to death.

Verse 38-39, "And He asked them, 'Why are you disturbed, and why do these imaginations spring up in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. You can see that I AM! Handle Me, and see for yourselves; because a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.'"

'It is Me! I am here. You can touch Me. I have flesh and bones.' It didn't say anything about blood. He showed them the wounds. They couldn't believe it. They had seen Him die and knew He was dead. It was like their whole world had been shattered. They couldn't fully accept what it was.

Verse 41, "But, while they were yet disbelieving for joy, and were wondering, He asked them, 'Do you have anything here to eat?'"

Verses 44-45, "Then He said to them, 'These are the very words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which have been written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me.' Then He opened their understanding and comprehension, that they might understand the Scriptures." He explained the scriptures to them.

John 20:24-25, "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not present with them when Jesus came. Then the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I can see in His own hands the scar's and holes of the nails, and put my own finger into the scars and holes of the nails, and put my own hand into his side, I will not believe, no, not ever!'"

Eight days later they were assembled again. Thomas had been saying he wouldn't believe it until he could touch Him. Ever "sounded off" and said something?

John 20:26-27, "But after eight days His disciples were again assembled inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, after the doors

had already been shut, and stood in the middle of them, and said, 'Peace be to you!' Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach here with your own finger, and look at My hands; and reach out with your own hand, and put it into My side: and do not be faithless and unbelieving, but believing and filled with faith!'" Jesus told Thomas to come and stick his hand here. Jesus knew what Thomas had said. Verses 28-29, "Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!' Then Jesus said to him, 'Because you have seen Me, Thomas, you have believed: blessed are those who have not seen, and have believed!'"

Verses 30-31, "Therefore, Jesus did many other signs also in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these have been written, that you may believe and have faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in and through His name."

Those details not given in the Gospels:

I Corinthians 15:4-7, "And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures: And that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain until this present day, but some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James; then of all the apostles." Paul mentions He was seen by the twelve, and there was over five hundred that saw Him at once.

The disciples left Jerusalem and went to Galilee.

John 21:1, "After these things Jesus manifested and revealed Himself to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. And He manifested and revealed Himself this way:" They were at "loose ends." He would appear and leave. They were having trouble putting things together.

Verse 3, "Then Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you, too.' They left, and immediately boarded the boat; and during that night they caught nothing." Peter was an impulsive sort.

Verse 9, "Therefore, when they came up on the shore, they saw a fire of coals burning, and fish lying on it, and bread."

Verse 12, "Jesus said to them, 'Come and dine.' But none of the disciples ventured to ask Him, 'Who are You?' knowing it was the Lord." They didn't quite know what to say.

Verses 14-17, "This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested and revealed to His disciples, after He had been resurrected from the dead. Therefore, when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonas, do you

love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I have deep personal affection for You.' He said to him, 'Feed My lambs!' He asked him again, a second time, 'Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I have deep personal affection for You.' He said to him, 'Shepherd My sheep.' He asked him the third time, 'Simon, son of Jonas, do you have deep personal affection for Me?' Peter was grieved and hurt because He said to him the third time, 'Do you have deep personal affection for Me?' and said to Him, 'Lord, You know and understand all things. You know that I have deep personal affection for You!' Jesus said to him, 'Feed My sheep!'"

This was in a spiritual sense. He went through this three times. It is connected to the fact that Peter had denied Him three times. He kept stressing, "Feed My sheep."

Verses 18-19, "'Truly, truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you dressed yourself, and walked wherever you desired. But when you become old, you shall hold out your hands, and someone else shall dress you, and take you where you do not desire.' But He said this, signifying by what manner of death he would glorify God. And after He had spoken this, He said, 'Follow Me!'" What manner of death—the time would come when he would be taken against his will and be executed.

Verses 20-21, "Then as Peter turned around, he saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following him; who also had reclined on His chest at the supper; and had asked, 'Lord, who is it that is betraying You?' As Peter saw him, he asked Jesus, 'Lord, what about this one?'"

When Peter saw John, he asked, 'What is going to happen to him? All of this is going to happen to me. What about John, he is not going to get off scot-free, is he?'

Verse 22, "Jesus said to him, 'If I desire that he remain alive until I come, what does it matter to you? Follow Me!'"

Jesus answered, 'If I want him to remain alive until I come, it is none of your business. You follow Me!' This is Jesus' answer to all of us! When we look around and see what our neighbor is doing, we want to make sure that if we "get it," everyone else does, too. 'You don't worry about him. That is between him and Me. You follow Me! What you need to do is you follow Me.' We have to follow Him. That is a statement to all of us. If you want to follow somebody, you have to keep your eyes on Him. If we keep our eyes on

Him, then we don't have to worry about anybody else.

Christ's commission to the disciples: Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-20, Luke 24:49-53 and Acts 1:8-11.

The great commission is given in Matthew 28. Matthew 28:18-20, "And Jesus came to them, and spoke to them, saying, 'All power and authority in heaven and earth has been delegated to Me. Go therefore, teaching and making disciples in all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things, whatever I have commanded you. And listen, I am with you always, every day, even until the completion of the age. Amen.'"

Mark 16:15-16, "And He commanded them, 'Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to all the creation! He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; and he who disbelieves shall be condemned.'"

Luke 24:49, "'And listen, I am sending the promise of My Father upon you: but you must remain in the city of Jerusalem, until you be clothed and imbued with power from on high.'" 'Wait here until you receive power from on high. You can't do it on your own.'

Acts 1:8-11, "'But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.' Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.'"

We have an overview with the events that culminated with the resurrection. We have the events of Christ's life and His ministry. We see the fact that He came truly as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. He laid down His life for us. He triumphed over death; through that power, we can triumph.

We are going to continue on through the book of Acts and on through the New Testament Church in the book of Acts in the next Bible study.

Bible Study # 39 Questions

SURVEY OF THE GOSPELS AND ACTS SERIES

Matthew 27:1—28:20; Mark 15:1—16:20; Luke 22:66—24:53; John 18:28—21:25

1. Did the members of the Sanhedrin go into the Judgment Hall to talk to Pilate? Why?
2. How did Judas die (cf. Acts 1:15-19)?
3. Did Pilate find Jesus Christ guilty of any crime?
4. Why did Herod want to see Jesus Christ?
5. What did Pilate realize about the reason the Jewish leadership wanted Christ executed?
6. What attempts did Pilate make to get out from the responsibility of executing a man whom he knew to be innocent?
7. Did Christ carry His own cross out to Golgotha? Explain.
8. Describe the sign Pilate had affixed to Christ's stake.
9. What was the attitude of the two robbers who were crucified with Jesus Christ? Did one of them go right to heaven?
10. What events happened at the moment of Christ's death?
11. There were two members of the Sanhedrin which voted against the condemnation of Christ. Who were they and what did they do after the crucifixion?
12. Demonstrate the passage of three days and nights in the events which occurred between Christ's burial and His resurrection.
13. Who did Christ first appear to after His resurrection?
14. Why was Christ's resurrection after three days and three nights a special witness to the chief priests?
15. What was the reaction of the disciples when Jesus Christ suddenly appeared in their midst?
16. How did the disciples react to the event of the resurrection?
17. What were Christ's final instructions to His disciples?
18. What was the final time they saw Jesus Christ?

Bible Study # 40
August 22, 1989
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Gospels and Acts Series—Acts 1—9

This evening we are continuing in our survey series. We finished up the Gospels last Bible study and we **are continuing into the book of Acts**. The book of Acts is a direct continuation of the Gospels. It was originally written as a continuation of Luke's Gospel. In fact, *Luke and Acts really could almost be viewed as two volumes of one work*.

In Luke 1:3, you might note here, "it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus." Luke addresses his book to an individual by the name of Theophilus. It was a style of writing that was common in the Greek world when addressing a patron. Luke was written to give a detailed story of the things that Jesus taught and did. He addresses it to Theophilus.

Note in the book of Acts 1:1-3, "The former account [treatise] have I made, O Theophilus of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."

Now the former account (treatise) is the book of Luke. Here you have, in effect, two volumes of the same work. Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke that told the story of Jesus and what He did. It gave the account of His life and ministry from the beginning and continuing until the crucifixion and the resurrection. Then in the Acts of the apostles (the book of the actions of the apostles of Jesus), the story continued. Luke picks up the story in Acts exactly where he left off in the book of Luke. He picks it up with the ascension into heaven and then comes forward with the story of what happened. So the two books go together to tell what Jesus did and said in His human ministry and then the continuation of His ministry.

Christ's ministry is still going on through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church that Jesus built is functioning to do His work. He came to

do the will of the Father. He left behind His disciples and went to the Father in heaven; He empowered them through the Holy Spirit to do the work that He had begun. So we have the continuation here in the book of Acts.

I think I mentioned before that the original canonization of the New Testament, basically twenty-two books by the Apostle Peter, was in about 67 A.D. There remained one final canonization, one final adding of Scripture which was by the Apostle John thirty years later. John added in his own five books. The twenty-two that Peter codified would have corresponded to the twenty-two that the Jews reckoned in the Old Testament. In that original reckoning, the Gospels would have been Matthew, Mark, Luke, and then Acts would have come next. Luke and Acts would have been together and read as two volumes of one work. One picked up the story where the other one left off. It's kind of like going through Samuel and Kings or something of that sort. There is a break and then you pick it right up.

John, about thirty years later, gave us the New Testament in the form that the Greeks have preserved it. He added in at that point his own five books: the Gospel of John, the epistles of I, II, III John and the book of Revelation. This was the final capstone of God's revelation to mankind that was to be preserved in Scripture. Of course, the only logical place for the Gospel of John is with the four Gospels. It was the last written. It did not follow exactly the story of the other three. The other three are much more similar than John. There was no point in John writing something that was going to simply rehash what the others had already told from several different standpoints. John focused on the information that needed attention.

By the end of the first century, it was apparent that there were things that needed to be focused on, details that needed attention that the others had not seen a need of at an earlier time when they had written. John's Gospel comes in at the end of the Gospels and it is "sandwiched" in between Luke and Acts. Sometimes we don't stop to think about it; we don't realize the extent to which there is a story flow that comes right on over into the book of Acts. Acts is a continuation of the Gospels. It is an integral link in the New Testament. Acts picks up the story where Luke leaves off in his Gospel account.

One of the main purposes of the book of Acts is to show the continuity of the ministry of Jesus Christ through the work of the ministry of the

early Church. The ministry of Jesus Christ did not end with His ascension into heaven. Christ did not go into retirement. There was a work to be done.

Luke, of course, begins Acts with the ascension of Christ from the Mount of Olives and the role of the twelve apostles there in Jerusalem. We will note that the narrative begins to narrow its focus. We find that Peter and John are the ones that are primarily focused on for the first twelve chapters. Others are mentioned somewhat incidentally. The rest of the twelve apostles pretty much drop from view and are just incidentally mentioned. *The attention of the first twelve chapters of Acts is primarily on what Peter and John were doing.* Beginning with Chapter 13 to the conclusion of the book, the focus switches from Peter and John to Paul. James, the brother of Jesus, was not one of the twelve, but he was certainly one that occupied that office and played a very major role presiding at the Jerusalem Church throughout his lifetime. He appears off and on throughout the book as a major figure. He is the one there in Jerusalem.

We note here the focus in Acts. Have you ever wondered why the book of Acts ceases to focus on the twelve apostles after Acts 12? After Acts 12, it concentrates primarily on the Apostle Paul. One of the reasons is that after Acts 12 the twelve apostles drop from view—they left the area of Judea. Christ had given them a specific commandment. Their primary commission was not to the Gentile nations. They were told by Jesus to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:6). That's where the twelve went.

Paul, on the other hand, had as the primary focus of his mission to preach in the Gentile world throughout the Mediterranean area. It was not God's purpose that the location of the lost sheep of the house of Israel should be made clear back at this time. It was a part of God's purpose to allow the identity of Israel to be lost from view. And because that was God's purpose, He did allow the identity of Israel to be lost from view. The attention was not focused on where they went and what they did because if it did, we would have the story of the travels to Britain and to areas of France. Perhaps some of them went in the area of Scythia and Northern India where certain of the tribes were and later migrated up into Northern Europe. Since where they went would be very clearly identified, we change focus. Certain ones drop from view. It was not God's point to preserve all of those details at that time and in that way.

There is another reason for focusing in on Paul's ministry. The latter part of the book of Acts gives us the details of Paul's ministry. It provides for us the background of Paul's epistles. Paul's epistles make up the backbone of much of the New Testament. Paul wrote fourteen books. They are the most detailed explanation of the teachings of the New Testament Church on various doctrinal subjects. Paul addresses any number of things. Yet we could not really understand what Paul had to say if we weren't provided some of the background for his epistles. To whom was he writing? What were the circumstances? What were the situations? Luke gives us a background from which we can begin to understand more clearly some of the things that Paul had to say.

Another thing we note, as we go through the book of Acts, particularly in the first few chapters, there is a heavy emphasis on the miracles that God wrought through and on behalf of the early New Testament Church. We have in Acts 2 the miracle of languages on Pentecost. In chapter 3 we have the healing of the lame man. In chapter 5, we have God's punishment of Ananias and Sapphira. We have the account even of people being healed by just Peter's shadow passing over them. We have an angelic deliverance of the apostles from prison.

These things all serve to illustrate the dramatic way in which God made known to all in Jerusalem that He had taken the Kingdom from the Pharisees and Sadducees and given it to a people bearing the fruits of it (Matthew 21:43).

In Matthew 21:43, Jesus had told the Pharisees that the Kingdom was going to be taken from them. He indicted them for the way in which they misused their authority. He told the people that the Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat (Matthew 23:2-3); 'all they bid you do and observe, but don't follow their example.' He began to indict them. But earlier, He had told the Pharisees that the Kingdom, the authority, the government of God, was going to be taken from them, and it was going to be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

Acts 2 makes that transition plain. God made it plain in a very dramatic way to all in Jerusalem who were interested in looking through whom He was working. God never leaves His people in the dark. If God makes a transition, God will make it plain. God will make it apparent through whom He is working. He doesn't leave His people in a quandary where you cannot tell and you don't know. This was the case here.

Go back and read Mr. Herbert Armstrong's autobiography of the period during which this era of the work, the Philadelphia era, came into existence. When you read the early period of his ministry in the 1930s, God made it very apparent to the Church at that time and to all who had the wit to see what was the live branch of the Church that was bearing fruit—through whom God was working—and what were the dead branches comprising the Sardis era.

It was very apparent because of the miracles and because of the works. Some of the most dramatic miracles and works that God accomplished in this era were done back in that period of the 1930s. It was back in time when there was a transition being made from one era to the next. It was made apparent to all with the wit to see what part of the tree was dead and what part had life and was bearing fruit. When God makes a transition that way, He makes it apparent. He never leaves His people in a quandary.

We have a dramatic focus on this kind of thing in the early part of the book of Acts. Then we will note, as we go through the book of Acts, that this dramatic upsurge of public miracles at the beginning begins to gradually fade somewhat as the Church became established. God had demonstrated where He was truly working.

We will note here, this evening, that there was a time when the apostles were put in jail, and the jailers hardly got back to town before God sent an angel and brought them right out (Acts 5:18-19). You had dramatic interventions in that way. By the time we get to the end of the book of Acts, Paul had been put in jail and stayed there for years. It was not that God began to run low on miracle-working power. It was a matter that God was working to accomplish His purpose—God's purpose in our lives.

At an earlier period in Paul's life or Peter's life or some of these others, God had a job for them to do. He wanted them out where they could travel, where they could speak, where they could do certain things of that nature. If a man sought to stop it by putting them in jail, God just simply sent an angel to solve that problem right away. Paul was still just as anxious to get out, but later on there came a period in Paul's life where he had reached another phase of his ministry. He wound up languishing in one place for a long time. He had a lot of time to sit and think. Some of the most important contributions that he wrote for the New Testament were composed at that time. You see, he was in a different phase of his ministry, not because he chose it, but because

God who had an overview knew what was most important for Paul to do at the time.

We have to understand that God may intervene in our lives in one way at one point in our life, and then in another point in our life, He may choose to deal in another way. What is important is that we are close to God and we can look to Him. As we look to Him and let God rule in our lives, there may be different things that are more important for us at different times in our life. We may not know what those are.

We will also note as we go through the book of Acts, in chapters 8 and 9 we are given our introduction to important figures in the early history of the Church. We are introduced to Saul, the persecutor, better known as Paul the apostle. We are also introduced to Simon the Sorcerer, known in history as Simon Magus. He was a Samaritan who played a very important role in Church history. We will note some of that as we go through.

We saw that Acts is a continuation of what Luke had written previously. We might note that here again.

Acts 1:1-3, "The former account I made [the Gospel of Luke], O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." Note here what Jesus preached.

In the beginning of Christ's ministry, He started out preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Mark 1:1, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

Verse 14, "Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God."

Acts 1:3, "...being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."

In the book of Acts, we find the conclusion of Christ's ministry—after His crucifixion, His resurrection, immediately prior to His ascension into heaven. What was He teaching the apostles during these forty days between His resurrection and His ascension? He was teaching them things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. Jesus started out preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and He ended up preaching the Gospel of the

Kingdom of God. So we note in the beginning of the book of Acts, at the beginning of the history of the New Testament Church, Jesus was preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

What do we find Paul preaching at the end of his ministry?

Acts 28:30-31, “Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.” The book of Acts ends up by saying Paul was preaching the Kingdom of God.

Jesus came proclaiming a message, the message of the Good News about God’s coming government. He preached that all through His human ministry. He continued to lay stress on it to the apostles after His crucifixion and resurrection, and we find it preached throughout the book of Acts. When we come to the end of the book of Acts, we find the last thing we have recorded is Paul was still preaching the Kingdom of God. It’s very apparent, when we look from a biblical standpoint, that the message that Jesus brought was not simply a message about the person of Christ. It is the message that Jesus Himself brought and preached. It’s the good news Jesus proclaimed which is the good news of the Kingdom of God. The apostles understood that because notice the last question they asked Him.

Acts 1:6, “Therefore when they came together and they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord will You at this time restore again the Kingdom of Israel?’” He had been talking about a literal kingdom, a literal government. He talked about it all through His ministry. He talked about it here after His resurrection. So they asked a logical question, ‘Well, Lord, is now the time? You’ve gone through all of this. You’ve been resurrected from the dead. Are You at this time going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?’ They kept expecting the establishment of the Kingdom.

Verse 7, “And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.’” It was not God’s purpose that they, at that time, should fully perceive those things in terms of more clearly understanding God’s time plan.

We find some of that later on into the New Testament period. We find Peter mentioning in II Peter 3:8, God’s seven thousand-year plan: comparing the days of the week with one

thousand-year time periods. Peter gives a little bit of insight.

John makes it plainer in Revelation 20:4-5 as he gives the capstone and makes it clear for the first time. John defines the length of time that the Kingdom of God is going to rule in the days of the Messiah. It will last for a thousand years. We talk about the Millennium so much that many times we don’t stop to realize that the only place the length of the Messiah’s reign is clearly defined is in the book of Revelation.

If you didn’t have the book of Revelation, you couldn’t prove that it’s a thousand years. You don’t find that in the book of Isaiah or in the book of Daniel. You find prophecies of the Messiah’s coming and the Kingdom of God, but there’s no place where it says that it will be a thousand years. It says so in Revelation. He will reign for a thousand years. Revelation is progressive. Some of these things were made clearer and clearer as time went on.

Christ had a job for them to do. It was not something that they needed to fully understand at the time. Christ didn’t tell them yes or no. He just said that the Father has reserved certain things for Himself (Acts 1:7). God has a time plan. That time plan is seasonal in nature. The times and the seasons the Father has put in His own power. God has a time plan that is seasonal. We picture it through the seasonal observance of God’s Festivals. God knows what He is doing. God is right on schedule.

Christ gave them instructions. They were gathered there and were in anticipation of the establishment of the Kingdom because Jesus had talked of it so much. He appeared to them and dealt with them from time to time over this period of forty days beginning with the Wave Sheaf Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread (when He first manifested Himself to them), and then for forty days—a number for trial and testing.

Acts 1:4, “And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father.” Jesus told them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father.

Verses 8-9, “‘But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’ Now when He has spoken these things, while they watched He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked

steadfastly toward heaven as He went up....” He told them, ‘At this time you have a job to do, but you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be witnesses unto Me.’ When He had spoken these things, He ascended to heaven. They watched Him as He ascended up from the Mount of Olives and out of their sight.

Jesus gave them a job to do, but He stressed to them, ‘Don’t go out and try to do it on your own. You need the promise that the Father has made. You need the fulfillment of the Father’s promise. You need to be endued with power from on high.’ They didn’t know exactly when they were going to get that power. He told them to go back to Jerusalem and wait.

We find out when they did.

Acts 2:1, “Now when the Day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.” They were there to observe God’s holy day.

Verse 2, “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.” That power came upon them suddenly.

This was ten days after Christ’s ascension. They didn’t know it would be ten days; they didn’t fully realize it. They may have wondered if that was going to be it, but Christ didn’t tell them to go back and wait ten days. He said to go and wait until it happens. That’s always a difficult thing for us to do. We don’t like to wait, particularly when it’s open ended. We like to know when. That was the last thing they asked Him, ‘When are You going to do all this stuff You have been talking about?’

That’s probably the question you and I would have asked. When? Isn’t that the question we ask now? When? When? When do you think? Christ made it plain what the concern needed to be. The concern was doing and accomplishing the job that God had given to be done. But that job could not be done and accomplished on the basis of human skill and human power. It’s not just human wherewithal. There was a need for the power of God to make possible the accomplishment of the job God had given to do.

That is a very important lesson for all of us to realize. No matter what talents, no matter what skills, no matter what things are available to us to accomplish God’s work, the most important tool is not human skill. The most important tool we have in accomplishing God’s work is not the printing press. It’s not the computer, the automobile, or the airplane. It’s not the radio; it’s

not television. *The most important factor in accomplishing God’s work is the Spirit of God!* That is the most crucial factor in the accomplishment of God’s work—not some physical device or tool. Those things are well and good and they certainly have their place. God has provided that those tools are available to us, but the crucial ingredient is the power of God’s Spirit.

Acts 1:9, they stood there and watched Him as He ascended. They stood there staring and “gawking,” as would be the case. Just imagine as He began to rise and finally got so high the clouds obscured Him.

Verses 10-11, they just stood there with their mouths open and their eyes looking toward heaven. Finally, a couple of angels appeared and said, ‘You men of Galilee, what are you looking up into the heavens for? What are you staring at? This same Jesus whom you’ve seen going up is going to come back, just like He said. He will come back in the same manner as He left.’

Verses 12-14, then they went to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. They came to an upper room, evidently an apartment or place they had used, where the apostles were residing. They were staying in Jerusalem. The group continued in one accord in prayer and supplication, seeking to understand and grasp the full impact of what was going on and what God wanted them to do. We find in v. 15 there were one hundred twenty disciples altogether. It says the number of names together were about one hundred twenty.

By the way, this is a digression, but I would call your attention to it. Let me show you a good example of how a verse can be taken out of context. What I am going to tell you is literally true. You remember the story of Galileo and the telescope? Galileo discovered and taught that the earth was not the center of the universe, but rather revolved around the sun. Feticus came up with the idea, but Galileo proved it with his telescope and promulgated that.

Well, this created a problem for Galileo. He got in trouble with the Pope who already had infallibility and had proclaimed that the earth was the center of things and everything revolved around it. So, there was a cardinal at the Pope’s behest who wrote a book as a counterblast to Galileo. Of course, Galileo was threatened with ex-communication and everything else. He was dragged up there and threatened with worse than that. He was threatened with dire physical harm if he didn’t “see the light.” It struck me as funny, as far as how a verse can be taken out of context.

The Vatican quoted this verse in this particular papal bull to prove that people shouldn't be looking in telescopes. They quoted a portion of Acts 1:11, "...Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven...?" "You men of Galilee why stand you gazing up into the heavens?" That was the only part of the verse that they quoted to prove that the Bible said you shouldn't be looking up into telescopes. You've heard people say you can prove anything from the Bible. You really can't prove "anything" from the Bible if you take the Bible for what it says. If you lift things out of context, take a word here and a word there and stick it all together, well, there is no telling what you would come up with. But that's not an honest use of the Bible.

We note here in the end of Acts 1, Peter who is the leader of the twelve—we notice that all through the Gospel accounts—stood up and addressed the twelfth apostle being chosen (vv. 15-20). Twelve, of course, is the number of organized beginnings. The nation of Israel began with twelve patriarchs, and the Church clearly needed to begin with twelve apostles, twelve witnesses. In addition to being apostles, they were the foundation of the New Testament Church (Ephesians 2:20). They were to be eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ and His ministry through His resurrection.

Verse 22, they concluded that whoever was chosen to take Judas' place should be one who had been in the group of disciples from the time of John's baptism on up. It needed to be someone who had association with Jesus throughout the entirety of His ministry. The twelve were not the only disciples. Disciple and apostle are not interchangeable. "Disciple" simply means "learner."

In Luke 10:1, you read one place in the Gospels where Jesus ordained seventy and sent them out two by two. But the twelve were set aside as apostles. There was a need for this twelfth one. Verse 23, they came up with two names that met the criteria. They did not know which of the two God had chosen, so they prayed.

Verses 24-26, "And they prayed and said, 'You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.' And they cast lots, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

You might note as you come through the rest of the book of Acts or in any other later portion of

scripture, you will never find another example of this term "choice by lot." You know what the difference was? It's what came next. What happened right after they had chosen the twelfth apostle by lot? The Day of Pentecost came! And what happened on the Day of Pentecost? The Holy Spirit was given. Prior to that time, the Holy Spirit had not been given. After the Holy Spirit as given, there was no longer the need for casting lots, or something like that, to determine God's will. It was something that had been utilized from time to time in the Old Testament period and was utilized prior to the giving of God's Spirit.

Now in Acts 2, we find the Day of Pentecost came. We find this miraculous gift was given. It was a gift of speaking in foreign languages. That is made very, very apparent.

Acts 2:4, "And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues [languages], as the Spirit gave them utterance." Now what was the purpose of that?

Verses 5-11, "Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, 'Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.'"

Here were people of all different nationalities. They were Jews—but just as the Jews today in the United States speak English, and the Jews down in Mexico speak Spanish, and the Jews in France speak French. The Jews normally are going to speak the language of the country where they reside. If they are Orthodox Jews and practice their religion, they may know a smattering of Hebrew, but very few Jews other than those living in Israel are really that fluent where they can carry on a comfortable conversation in Hebrew. This was the case here. The average Jew of the time who was a practicing Jew knew certain phrases in Hebrew, but even the Scriptures were not commonly read in Hebrew outside of Palestine because most

Jews were not that familiar with it. It was the language of liturgy. They used certain words and certain expressions in religious terms.

Like some of you who had a Catholic background, years ago when the Mass was said in Latin, you may have been familiar with certain Latin phrases and religious terms that were commonly used, but you couldn't carry on a conversation in Latin. If the Pope had given a speech in Latin, you wouldn't have gotten a whole lot out of it. You may not have gotten much out of what the priest said, and that wasn't a whole lot. In other words, while a person may recognize certain words or expressions, they aren't fluent in the language.

With all of these people in Jerusalem, the only way that they were going to clearly hear and understand what was said was in their own language. God performed a miracle. The miracle that God performed is quite a contrast to what the modern group that calls itself "Pentecostal" practices. To begin with, the first difference, the apostles were keeping one of God's holy days. How many Pentecostals do you know who keep God's holy days? They don't keep God's Festivals. The apostles were doing that. They were gathered together to keep one of God's Festivals.

The next thing we note in Acts 2:2, "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven...." This just came suddenly. It didn't say that Peter had been there working up the crowd for about an hour or two, playing all this music, getting all jazzed up and getting the crowd to answer him back—kind of working the crowd, building up and getting this excitement building.

Verse 3, "Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them."

I can remember years ago when old A.A. Allen (some of you may remember him) would get on the radio and ask, 'You want that baptism of fire?' Well, he didn't really want that baptism of fire if he had gotten it. When you understand what the baptism of fire was, it was not these tongues of fire. Being baptized is "plunged into." If you get that baptism of fire, you get immersed in fire, known as the lake of fire. So, I don't think he really wanted that baptism of fire. The "Pentecostals" don't have cloven tongues of fire that appear. They are not speaking in languages that all of these people of every nationality understand. No, that is not the case.

Jimmy Swaggart says that he has the gift of tongues. He's gone all over the world preaching.

When he goes to Japan, why doesn't he speak Japanese if he has the gift of tongues? And in Mexico or South America, why doesn't he speak in Spanish? Why doesn't he speak in a language that somebody understands if he has the gift of tongues? He goes all over, but he needs somebody there who speaks that language because he doesn't have the gift of speaking any language that anybody understands.

The apostles didn't get up and work themselves up until they were just mouthing a bunch of "gobbledygook" that nobody understood. They were preaching a message. The apostles weren't just reciting certain catch phrases over and over again, just kind of building up speed and repetition. The apostles were preaching a message that proclaimed God's message. We see many, many differences that occurred right here.

Peter gave the main sermon. He really indicted them for what they had been a party to, and we find the question that they asked.

Acts 2:37, "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'"

Verses 38-40, "Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.' And with many other words he testified and exhorted them...." He went on and explained a lot of things.

They believed the message Peter brought. Their response to their belief was, 'What shall we do? We believe you. We have heard the Gospel message and believe it—what shall we do?' Now Peter didn't tell them what some would have today: 'Well, you don't do anything. You just believe, brother; you don't do anything.' Peter didn't tell them that. Peter said, 'Repent. That's what you do! You turn around and go the other way. You've been going the devil's way; now turn around and go God's way. You need to change direction in your life.' That's what repentance is. It involves surrender to the will to God. Peter made it plain that there was something to do. What there is to do is a change of direction, a surrender of our will.

Then he told them, on the basis of their faith and repentance, they should be baptized as an outward sign, and they would receive the gift of God's Spirit. This was a promise that extended to

them and also to their children. The obvious implication is, of course, young children who were at home still being taught and trained by their parents. As a result of God's calling, these people have access to God; their children at home who were growing up and being taught by them also had access to God. They weren't cut off from God as the rest of the world was. They could have an understanding. Here was a promise that was available if they would reach out and take it. The promise extended to them and to their children. It also extended to any elsewhere that God would individually and specifically call.

We might note in Peter's sermon on Pentecost a couple of comments that would be quite at variance with what most modern-day Pentecostals would say. Peter was not preaching about going to heaven. In fact, he made it very plain that the saved don't go to heaven.

Acts 2:29, "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried and his tomb is with us to this day."

Verse 34, "For David did not ascend into the heavens..." David has not gone to heaven? Now we are looking at ten days after Christ ascended to heaven. Christ was already in heaven. Everybody that was going to go to heaven had gone (John 3:13). Peter made plain that David wasn't up there. David hadn't ascended up to heaven. 'David was dead and buried and his grave is right over there. That's where David is; he's in the grave.' Quite a contrast to what most people believe.

We note also in v. 41, "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." There were about three thousand individuals that day.

Verse 42, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." There was doctrine taught. There was a way of life being taught. There was more to it than "believe." The individuals that were being converted and being baptized were individuals that continued steadfastly, resolutely, in the apostles' doctrine and in their fellowship. There was a closeness that was there. It says, "...in the breaking of bread and in prayers." What is this "breaking of bread"? Some people think that means communion, 'Boy, just have communion everyday.' No, that's not true.

Notice in v. 46, "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart."

"Breaking bread" simply means "having a meal together." They didn't just go down to the store and buy Wonder Bread enriched twelve ways. The wonder is that you eat it and live to tell the tale when you find out all the stuff it has in it. And Holsum Bread, which isn't. The bread that they ate was bread that was literally broken. It was similar to Pita bread. This was a very common style of bread that was utilized. It kind of doubled as something to put the other food in.

Bread was a common part of the meal. In certain parts of this country—certain parts of the South—inviting somebody to break bread with you simply meant to have a meal. A lot of time, the kind of bread people ate was cornbread or something of that sort. Sometimes that was what they literally did—they broke bread. Going back to the time when that was the way bread was divided up, it was broken into pieces.

There is nothing here that refers to them having communion every day, but 'with gladness they broke bread from house to house and ate their food with gladness.' They were spending time with one another. They were eating at one another's homes day by day.

One of the things to realize is that a large portion of the Church that began on the Day of Pentecost was Jews from elsewhere in the Roman Empire. There were Jews who didn't live in Jerusalem. Remember there were people from all over the Empire to observe Pentecost, and this event occurred. Now, none of them wanted to go back home. There was excitement, exhilaration and the thrill of all of the things that was going on here. They didn't want to be separated from that, so they stayed. How did they stay? They had things in common. They shared. They moved in. Those who were from out of town only had enough money to maybe have been there for a short period of time for the festival. Once that was gone, and if they were going to stay, they would have to stay with somebody. So, they all pitched in. They shared. You see this type of thing.

Verse 47, "praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the Church daily those who were being saved." God calls. People don't just join on their own initiative. God adds those whom He is calling.

Acts 3:1, “Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer; the ninth hour.” The “hour of prayer” was an expression the Jews had that referred to the hours of the morning and evening sacrifice.

Verses 2-8, we have the healing of this lame man who had been there at the gate of the temple.

Verses 9-11, this created quite a stir because this individual had been there for an extended period of time. Thousands of people had seen him; when he was suddenly healed, it really created a stir. This also antagonized the religious leadership. Peter preached a very powerful sermon. He didn't pull any punches.

He told them in Acts 3:19-21, “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.”

The restitution of all things is when God's Kingdom is going to be established.

In Acts 4:1-7, we find that the priests were all upset because of the people who believed the word.

Acts 4:8-12, “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to the helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the “Stone, which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.” Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” He didn't pull any punches in speaking to them.

Verse 12 makes it plain that there is only one way to salvation and that's through Jesus Christ.

As we continue, we see the power that God's message had. At this point, time had passed. There were people who were liquidating property and donating it to the Church to provide for all of the new converts who had stayed in Jerusalem.

In Acts 5, we read of a certain couple, Ananias and Sapphira who sold a possession and kept back part of it. Then they came and brought it to the apostles. This is a very dramatic event. We see Ananias being struck down dead and then

Sapphira. Now notice here because some have had the idea the New Testament practiced communism and didn't believe in private property. Well, that's not true. The Bible certainly teaches private property. One of the commandments teaches, “Thou shall not steal.” This presupposes there is something to steal. If everything belongs to everybody, then how can you steal?

Acts 5:4, “While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.” Ananias and Sapphira didn't get in trouble because they didn't donate everything. They were in trouble because they lied to the Holy Spirit.

Notice what Peter told Ananias, “While it remained, was it not your own?” ‘It was your property. You could do with it as you wished. It was yours; after you sold it, it was in your own power—it was still your money. You have conceived this thing in your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit. You brought this part over here and said it was everything. You tried to aggrandize yourself as though you were sacrificing and giving everything; you weren't. It was your property; you didn't have to sell it at all. After you sold it, you could have given any part you wanted or you could have kept it all. It was your property. Nobody made you give any of it. The Church didn't say you had to sell your property. You “cooked up” a scheme really to lie to the Holy Spirit because that's whom you were lying to. You weren't simply lying to a man; you were lying to the Spirit of God.’

This account makes it plain that property belonged to the member. It was not some New Testament enforcement of communism or something of that sort. People had all kinds of ideas that they dreamed up.

Verse 15, “so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them.” Things had gotten to the point that even the shadow of Peter passing over them caused some people to be healed.

Verses 17-20, “Then the high priest rose up and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation [jealousy], and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, and brought them out, and said, ‘Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people

all the words of this life.” They threw them in jail.

Verse 21, “And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.” They said, ‘Okay, bring these guys in. We are going to have a trial.’ They sent the officers to the prison and they came back and said, ‘They’re gone. Where are they?’

Verse 25, they said, ‘Well, I think they are over there in the temple preaching. How did they get there?’ Things were moving with power. God made it very plain. Things continued right along.

Peter made it very plain that if we are confronted with a requirement of men to disobey God, what should we do?

Verse 29, “Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said: ‘We ought to obey God rather than man.’” When there is a conflict between our duty to God and our duty to man, God comes first.

These things continued. There was increasing antagonism that the Jewish religious leadership had—even to the point that they sought to beat up Peter and some of the apostles (v. 40).

Verse 41, “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” That was their attitude toward persecution. It was persecution for righteousness sake. There is nothing wonderful about being persecuted in and of itself; it’s only if we are persecuted for righteousness sake. Peter and the others were persecuted for righteousness sake.

Verse 42, “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.”

In Acts 6, as the Church grew very rapidly, there arose a problem. One of the things we should learn is that even in the Church there can sometimes be misunderstandings, cases of hurt feelings or whatever. Here was a problem that arose.

Even though the entire Church consisted of Jews, some were Jews of the Diaspora called Grecians or Hellenists. Others were Hebrews or Jews of Judea. The Jews of Judea looked down on the Jews of the Diaspora because of their contact with the Gentiles. The Jews of the Diaspora tended to look down on the Jews of Judea as being pretty limited and narrow in scope and not

really as educated and sophisticated. So there was a certain antagonism that was common in the Jewish world. There were certain prejudices that people had.

It’s not uncommon for people to have prejudices. You can go all over the world and can find groups of people who look down on somebody else and have some prejudice against some other group. You can go to any continent or nation and can find some of these groups of people having all kinds of problems. You and I couldn’t tell them apart. They’ve been having rioting in Bulgaria of ethnic Bulgars and ethnic Turks. Now you line them up—chances are that most of us couldn’t tell which one was which. But they can tell. There have been thousands of ethnic Turks fleeing across the border in Bulgaria over into Turkey. You can go around the world; there is certain antagonism between people. Satan always likes to play on this kind of thing and stir up people.

Here, even in the Church, there arose a problem because here were these two groups. Even though they were both Jews, there were certain cultural differences because of background. All of the leadership were Judeans. After a while some were kind of grumbling and saying, ‘I don’t think our widows are being paid enough attention to. I think some of those who are seeing after the widows are not paying enough attention to ours.’

Verse 2, the apostles finally got called in on this thing. They said, ‘We have more important things to do. We can’t stop doing the work of proclaiming the Gospel and get out there, count out exactly how much every widow is receiving and attend to waiting tables. If we spend all our time looking after all the physical details, we would never get around to doing what we have been commissioned to do.’ They recognized that while it was an important matter that needed to be tended to, it was not their primary job to get bogged down in the physical administration of things. They wouldn’t have the time to concentrate on the spiritual job. So they instituted an office in the Church—the office of Deacon.

Acts 6:3-6, “‘Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.’ And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip,

Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Pramenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.”

Men who had spiritual qualifications were appointed to a physical responsibility. They were men who could see after this matter and make sure that there was no inequity in how it was being carried out. They were ordained, set apart, for this office.

Verse 7, we find as a result of taking an action such as this, of becoming more highly organized and becoming more efficient, the number of the disciples multiplied. God blessed and multiplied what was going on as they properly handled their responsibilities.

Verses 8-10, we find that there was an individual, in fact one who had been ordained, a man by the name of Stephen who was a remarkable individual. The religious leaders were very antagonistic toward him because when they would bait him with questions, they simply could not withstand his answers. So they decided what they were going to do. They were going to arrest him and do something to get rid of him.

Verses 11-13, “Then they secretly induced men to say, ‘We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.’ And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council. They also set up false witnesses who said, ‘This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law.’” They hired false witnesses.

In Acts 7, we find Stephen on trial. We find the sermon he gave. As they had him there, he gave a very powerful message to the court that was standing there. Then, we find that they killed him.

Acts 7:59-60, “And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not charge them with this sin.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” They threw stones and rocks at him and killed him. Notice Stephen’s attitude that he expressed right in the end was ‘forgive them.’ He was a remarkable man.

Here was the first death that occurred. About two years had passed since the Day of Pentecost. Things were growing and multiplying. But everybody was bunched up in Jerusalem. Nobody wanted to leave. Stephen’s death launched a persecution.

Acts 8:1, “Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the Church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.”

Saul is introduced here. He was a young man at the time. He stood there and watched this. We find that as a result of this persecution, there was a scattering. The disciples were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except for the apostles. So there was now a scattering. Everybody was all bunched up together, and then this tragic event occurred. It undoubtedly had a tremendous impact. People must have had their faith shaken. How could this be? How could God allow this to happen? Just a matter of months earlier, the apostles were thrown in jail and God sent an angel and delivered them. He could have sent an angel and delivered Stephen.

What was the result of this persecution? The Church was scattered! Was that bad? –No, not in God’s overall plan. It caused the disciples to have to spread out, and now the message could spread. God is sometimes working out a plan that we don’t understand. We look at an event and we say, ‘Why would God let that happen?’ Well, God’s ways are not our ways. We don’t always know where God is going in terms of how He is going to accomplish His overall purpose.

Verse 5, “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.” Philip went down to Samaria and began to speak to people.

Verses 9-10, “But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, ‘This man is the great power of God.’” We are introduced to a man by the name of Simon. He used sorcery and bewitched the people of Samaria. He was the religious leader of the Samaritans.

Verse 11, “And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time.” He worked lying wonders. He was a sorcerer.

Verses 12-13, “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.” The

whole city seemed to believe Philip's teaching—what he was telling them about the Kingdom of God. They were baptized. Simon himself was rather impressed and thought he had better get baptized, too—and he did.

Verse 14, "Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them." There is government in the Church; they found out there was something going on in Samaria. It took a little time for word to travel. They sent Peter and John to see what was going on.

Verses 15-17, "who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He [It] had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit." Philip had baptized them, but he had not laid hands on them for the receiving of the Spirit.

Verses 18-19, "Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, 'Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.'" Simon noticed what was going on and he came to Peter and offered money.

Verses 20-23, "But Peter said to him, 'Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.'" Now I want you to notice that expression "part nor lot."

'You have neither part nor lot in this matter.' Hold your place here and turn back to Acts 1:25-26 where they had chosen Mathias, that he may take *part* of this ministry and apostleship. And they gave forth their *lot* and the *lot* fell upon Mathias, that he might take *part* of the apostleship. The *lot* fell upon Mathias. That expression, "part nor lot," has reference to an apostleship. Simon was trying to buy the office of apostle. Peter said, 'You have neither part nor lot in this matter. You have no part of an apostleship. You were not chosen by lot, you have no part in this apostleship.' He went on to emphasize that Simon was in the bond of iniquity, of lawlessness. He was in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. He was a slave of lawlessness. Peter saw through him.

Simon was the religious leader of the Samaritans there in Samaria.

What many don't realize—just as the Jews had a Diaspora and were spread throughout the Roman Empire, the Samaritans had also been scattered at an earlier time by Alexander the Great. There were sizable Samaritan communities in Alexandria, Egypt and Rome, Italy. It was the nucleus of Samaritans in these areas that gave heed to Simon.

We will note at a later time the role that Simon played in the beginning of a great false church that called itself "Christian." In reality, it traces back not to the leadership of Simon Peter, but to the leadership of Simon the Magician. He was the "*pator*," the Babylonian or Samaritan word for the "opener" of the old Babylonian Mystery religion that had come to Samaria. We are introduced to Simon in somewhat detail here in Acts 8 so that we might understand the background later on.

As we look through Acts 8, a little later, vv. 27-40, we have the conversion, the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch. I might comment on that. From the time of King Solomon, many of the upper class leaders in Ethiopia practiced the religion of the Old Testament. For literally hundreds and hundreds of years, the ruling families and the upper classes of Ethiopia practiced the religion of the Old Testament, to the point that it was not uncommon that they were circumcised. That's why an Ethiopian could come to the temple and go right in to the same court at the temple that any of the Jews could because they were circumcised. Right to this day, particularly among the leadership classes, the Ethiopians have continued to practice the religion of the Old Testament. It was not uncommon for them to travel to Jerusalem. It was obviously those who had the money and the wealth to do so.

Verse 27, this Ethiopian was a man of great authority. He was an Ethiopian that was there. In one sense he was the first Gentile baptized, and yet is not considered such because he was in that sense a convert to Judaism first. He was not converted to Christianity directly from a Gentile pagan religion. He had undoubtedly, as many of the upper class in Ethiopia, practiced the religion of the Old Testament. He had gone to Jerusalem and was traveling back.

Verse 28, he was sitting there in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah.

Verses 31-35, Philip preached the Gospel to him from the book of Isaiah.

You know, the Old Testament is a guide to salvation. Peter preached his sermon in Acts 2 out of the Old Testament. Philip preached to the Ethiopian eunuch out of the Old Testament. So, it is made very plain.

In Acts 9, we are introduced in more detail to the Apostle Paul or the one that became the Apostle Paul in his conversion.

Verse 3, Saul, the persecutor, was struck down on the road to Damascus. You are familiar with the account.

I would call your attention to a three-fold commission God had in mind for him.

Acts 9:15, “But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine, to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.’” Those were the three parts of the commission that God gave to Paul.

But God, even in working with Paul, continued to work through the government of His Church.

Verses 8-9, God struck Paul blind, and he was blind for a period of three days. God sent Ananias (no relationship to the Ananias of Acts 5 who had been struck dead) to anoint him.

Verses 17-18, “And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me, that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.”

Ananias anointed and laid hands on him; he was healed. He talked to him, counseled with him, and baptized him. God does things in an orderly fashion through the government that He has established in His Church, even when He is going to work with someone in a unique manner.

We will pick up the story next time here with Paul. We will focus in on that in more detail next time.

Bible Study # 40 Questions

SURVEY OF THE GOSPELS AND ACTS SERIES

Acts 1—9

1. For how many days did Jesus Christ remain on earth teaching His disciples after the resurrection?
2. What was Christ's final instruction to the disciples?
3. How many real disciples did Jesus have after He ended His earthly ministry?
4. Who took Judas' place?
5. What are some of the differences between what took place on the day of Pentecost (as recorded in Acts 2) and the modern "Pentecostal experiences"?
6. Prove from Peter's sermon on Pentecost that heaven is not the reward of the saved.
7. What does God require of us in order to receive the Holy Spirit?
8. Did people become converted on their own initiative?
9. Is there more than one way of salvation? Prove.
10. Did the Church insist that everyone dispose of all their possessions and donate everything?
11. What did God do when the apostles were put in prison?
12. What should we as God's people do when man's law conflicts with God's law?
13. Why was the office of deacon created?
14. Why were Jewish religious leaders so anxious to get rid of Stephen?
15. What was Stephen's attitude toward his murderers?
16. Who was Simon of Samaria and what did he attempt to purchase from Peter?
17. Prove from the first eight chapters of the book of Acts that the Old Testament is a guide to salvation.
18. What was Paul's (Saul) three-fold commission?
19. Did God work through human instruments and the government in His Church in Paul's conversion, even though Paul was being called for a special job? Give example.

Bible Study # 41
September 12, 1989
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Gospels and Acts Series—Acts 10—17

This evening we are continuing our survey in the book of Acts. We **are up to the middle section in the book of Acts—chapters 10-17**. One of the things that we will note, particularly this evening, is the issue of Gentiles. *One of the great issues of the early New Testament Church involved the acceptance of the Gentiles into the full fellowship of the Church.* Now let me preface that by saying that the issue was not simply a matter of accepting Gentiles. *It was a matter of accepting uncircumcised Gentiles.* That was the issue. The great issue had to do with circumcision.

It wasn't simply a matter of ethnic origin. If you want to note the contrast in Acts 8, we have the account of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. There wasn't any controversy concerning that. In Acts 10, when we come up with Cornelius (who was Italian by ethnic background), all of a sudden we have a major controversy that, to an extent, occupies the next five chapters. It really isn't settled until after Acts 15; even after Acts 15, it resurfaces from time to time. There was a reason for that. I think I mentioned this last time.

The Ethiopians, particularly the leading upper class in Ethiopia, the educated class, had from the time going back to King Solomon (almost a thousand years earlier) practiced the religion of the Old Testament. Many of them were circumcised. There were many Sabbath keepers among the ruling class in Ethiopia. It was the only example of a Gentile nation, over any period of time, where a significant portion of the population took it upon themselves to follow many of the principles of the Old Testament. It goes back to the account of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (I Kings 10). In fact, the last emperor of Ethiopia who died several years ago, Emperor Selassie, traced his genealogy in an unbroken line back that far. The Ethiopian royal line held the throne of Ethiopia for almost three thousand years. So there was continuity.

For someone who was circumcised, such as this Ethiopian who had come to Jerusalem, there wasn't any problem. He could enter into the inner courtyard of the temple. He could enter into the court of the Israelites. He was not confined to the outer court of the Gentiles. The issue had to do

with the physical sign of the covenant. The Jews were prepared to accept a Gentile into religious fellowship if he took upon himself the outward sign of the covenant with Abraham, which was circumcision.

Now the issue arose, beginning in Acts 10, concerning the spiritual necessity of a Gentile man taking upon himself that outward sign of the physical covenant that God had made with Abraham. Was it necessary? You see, the position of many of the religious Jews who were being converted was that if a Gentile wanted to come into the Church, fine, but first he had to become a Jew. Salvation is of the Jews. If you want to become a Christian, first you had to become a Jew; then you become a Christian. This was the controversy.

There was a lot that needed to be resolved in terms of what were the spiritual requirements for salvation. We might also understand the term "Gentile" because the term that is translated "Gentile" throughout the Old Testament, the Hebrew word "*goyim*," simply means "the nations." It was a general term that referred to everyone except the twelve tribes of Israel. Gentiles could be of any race or ethnic background. They could be white, black or yellow. They could be any number of ethnic backgrounds because it was an inclusive term that simply meant everyone except the descendants of Jacob.

Abraham had other children besides Isaac. But the promise line, the seed of promise, came through Isaac. So Abraham's other children would have been considered Gentiles. Ishmael, the Arabs and all of those that descended in that way were considered Gentiles. Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. But because the promise came through Jacob, Esau's descendants would have been considered Gentile. Jacob (his name was changed to Israel) had twelve sons. They became the ancestors of the twelve tribes. The descendants of the twelve tribes, the descendants of Jacob (or Israel) was, let's say, the dividing line. It was a general term. It referred to Israel, and then everyone else was "the nations" or "Gentiles."

The Jews had developed this separateness by the time the New Testament was written. The other tribes of Israel had been dispersed in captivity and disappeared from the scene several hundred years earlier. The Jews were the only ones who were still living there in the Middle East. They were the only ones who preserved and maintained their identity and association with the

Promised Land. So they tended to view themselves as separate and distinct people. God had laid great importance on the fact that Israel maintained their separate and distinct identity from the nations around.

The problem that had developed by the time of the first century was something that went beyond recognizing the need to avoid the corrupting influence of the world and the society around. This is a struggle that God's people all through the centuries have had. You can go back to the beginning of God establishing a people, which was Israel being called out of Egypt. The great battle all the way down has been the tendency of the people of God, collectively, to have that contaminating influence of the world around. It is a necessity that God's people maintain their separate identity because if we're going to please God, we have to conform to God and His ways—not to the world and its ways. The world takes its standards from the devil, in terms of value systems and priorities.

The real problem was the Jews had taken this concept and had developed it into a purely physical concept to where they really looked down on all of the other people as being in some way polluted and dirty. That's why it was such a novel concept.

Even to this day, there are *three requirements for a man who wishes to convert to Orthodox Judaism*. They have maintained these requirements for many centuries. The *first* one was ritual circumcision. *Secondly*, was what they called the "*mikvah*," which was the "ceremonial washing" or the "ritual bath." The *third* was the offering of a sacrifice (a sin offering) there in the temple. Today a convert to Orthodox Judaism goes through the circumcision and the "*mikvah*" and simply makes a pledge that, if the temple is rebuilt in his lifetime, he will offer the appropriate sacrifice.

The concept was that all "the nations" are born in sin; they are dirty and they have to be washed. They are unclean. However, when a Jewish baby is born, they are circumcised and a sacrifice is offered—but there is no "*mikvah*," no ritual bath. Their concept was that they are born clean and everybody else is born unclean. They are better than everyone else. That's why when John the Baptist came and said, "Repent and be baptized," that was a novel concept. The Jews were familiar with this practice of immersion. They were familiar with the Hebrew term "*mikvah*," the immersion, the washing away, but it was something they only applied to Gentile men.

Interestingly enough, at the time of the first century, they also applied it to Jewish women, but they didn't apply it to Jewish men. They considered themselves as having been born clean. That's why Christ told them, 'If the Son shall set you free, then you'll be free indeed.' And boy, they got indignant and said, 'We are Abraham's seed; we have never been in bondage to any man. What do you mean you'll set us free? We don't need to be set free; we're okay.' When John the Baptist came and preached the message, "Repent and be baptized," this was a radical departure. It had never occurred to them that they were unclean, also.

The thrust of John the Baptist's message in preparing the way for the Messiah was the fact that you are unclean. You need to be washed and cleansed. You need a Savior. You are born in sin.

As Paul stressed it in [Romans 3:23](#), "...all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." It is not just the Gentiles that have sinned, but all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Nobody has a spiritual "leg up" based on their ancestry. It's as simple as that.

The issue of baptism was a difficult concept for many of these first-century Jews to grasp. John the Baptist came preaching baptism and many were baptized. They were convicted at least of the fact that they were unclean and needed to repent and be forgiven. Jesus preached baptism and His disciples practiced it. That was never the issue. But the issue of circumcision was another thing. Many of the Jews could accept the fact that they needed to be baptized, that they needed to be washed from their sins. But they also said, 'Gentiles need to be circumcised if they are going to be as good as we are. They need to take upon themselves the outward sign of the covenant that God made to Abraham.' So God made it plain in dealing through Peter that circumcision was not a spiritual matter of salvation.

Now there is nothing that was ever said to discourage the continuing practice among the Jews to circumcise their children on the eighth day after birth. There was never anything to discourage the descendants of Abraham to continue the physical sign of that physical covenant. But it was not a spiritual matter of salvation. It didn't have bearing on salvation. That was not what was involved. God, dealing through Peter (who was the chief of the twelve), revealed that the Gentiles were not in some separate category in that way. And of course,

Peter had this vision that prepared him for this event. It was a major event. As we go through, we recognize the magnitude of it.

I would like to mention something that is sometimes overlooked. When you go through the book of Acts, you see what an issue circumcision was, particularly starting here in Acts 10, and for chapters it keeps coming up and coming up. Then Paul mentions it in his epistles. It was an issue for years, literally for several decades as long as the Church was centered in Jerusalem. From the time of the first Gentile converts and for a good twenty years, it was really an issue; it did not entirely cease to be an issue until the Church was no longer primarily centered there in Jerusalem and in Judea.

But consider—with the modification that was made in regards to circumcision, it was explained that this was not a spiritual requirement of salvation. Spiritually, circumcision was of the heart (Romans 2:25-29) and was not necessary to be performed in order for someone to be saved. If the issue of circumcision created this much controversy, how is it that people think that the Sabbath was changed? You never read a whisper of the controversy in the New Testament.

If circumcision was a big deal to the Jews, do you know what an even bigger deal was? The Sabbath! The two biggest things to the Jews in the first century were idolatry and Sabbath keeping. The prohibitions against idolatry and Sabbath keeping were major issues. That's why meat offered to idols kept coming up. It was a controversial issue. In fact, the Jews had made such an issue of the matter of idolatry that there were riots in Jerusalem when the Roman troops displayed the imperial insignias in a flag over the citadel. The Jews considered it an idolatrous emblem, and there were riots all over Jerusalem. In order to maintain peace in Jerusalem, the Roman troops didn't display the imperial insignias (the Roman eagle) on their flags. The Jews considered it idolatrous because of its connection with Roman gods.

They had such an issue over idolatry, and they took it to such a point—that's why you had all the issues about eating meat offered to idols. It's why you will to this day find certain wines that are labeled kosher wines. Ever noticed that? There are wines that are labeled kosher wines. Do you know why? It's not because any unclean food is used in making any wine. The issue of kosher wine goes back to this time. At the time of the vintage when the wine was made, it was the practice or the custom of the Gentiles in the

Greek and Roman world that the first cup would be poured out in an offering to the god of the vintage—to Bacchus or the various gods. The Jews saw it as everything out there being polluted. It had been offered to idols. Here, this cup had been poured out there in front of that idol. They wouldn't touch it. They would make their own. And to this day, that is where kosher wine comes in. It goes back to the idea that they didn't even want to take a chance that there may have been a cup of this poured out in front of an idol. They wanted nothing to do with idolatry. That's why you also find the subject of meat offered to idols that come up. It was something that had to be resolved in terms of the way it was dealt with.

You never find a mention or a breath of controversy about the Sabbath. Paul was never accused of teaching the Gentiles to break the Sabbath. Now, they got all upset; they accused him of bringing in an uncircumcised Gentile into the inner court of the temple (Acts 21:28), which he didn't do. But they provoked a riot that led to Paul's arrest over that issue. Nobody ever accused him of breaking the Sabbath or teaching against the Sabbath. How can anybody say that the early New Testament Church moved from the Sabbath to Sunday and think that there would never be a hint of a controversy over the subject in the New Testament. Boy, I tell you—the "ripple" about circumcision would have been minor compared to the controversy that would have been had they taught that it was permissible to desecrate the Sabbath and do something else. That is just a sub-point to bring in, which I think is good for us to realize.

In Acts 10:44-48, we are going to notice that when the first uncircumcised Gentiles were baptized (Cornelius, and those with him of his household) there was an unprecedented event that occurred in that context. It is the only example that we have given in Scripture of people who received the Holy Spirit prior to baptism. There was a reason for that miracle.

It was such a hurdle for Peter and those there with him to accept the fact that God was ready to accept the Gentiles on a spiritual basis without their having carried through the physical ritual of circumcision. It was such a major hurdle for them to get over in their mind, that God performed this miracle of giving the Holy Spirit before baptism. Peter looked around at the others and said, 'God's accepted them; how can we not!' And he went ahead and baptized them. It was again a specific example where this miracle of speaking

in other languages was worked at the time of their conversion. There's a reason why that miracle occurred. You don't read that's what normally happened when people were baptized and received the Holy Spirit. Why did God perform that miracle for Cornelius and his household?

It's very evident as to why God had performed that particular miracle for the apostles and for those who were there on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). They were speaking to a multi-lingual audience. Why the necessity of this miracle for Cornelius and his household? I think if we look at it, it is apparent that God performed the same miracle when the first Gentiles were converted as He did when the first Jews were converted. If He didn't, the Jews could have still said, 'Yeah, but yours still is not as good as ours. We are still "one up" on you.' God knew human nature and certainly knew the way that people would reason.

God knew the tendency of people to compare themselves among themselves. So the same miracle was performed to make it apparent that God had not in some way made a spiritual distinction. God does not make spiritual distinctions based on physical criteria. Now obviously, there are physical distinctions. We are male and female. That's pretty physical. But we are heirs together of the grace of life. There are not spiritual distinctions that are made on physical criteria. This was emphasized.

We will note some other things. In fact, we will note something a little later in the book of Acts that will show the extent of some of the multi-ethnic background of many of the early New Testament Church, even the leaders of the New Testament Church. A lot of people have read over and not realized that all of the early New Testament Church did not come from an exclusively ethnic Jewish background. We have already mentioned the Ethiopian eunuch who was a clear case in point. But let's continue. We will come to it.

In Acts 10, we noted the first uncircumcised Gentile convert. This was Cornelius, the Roman Centurion. He was an Italian and a leader of a group who were stationed in Judea (v. 1). There were a significant number of soldiers who were stationed in Judea as a part of Roman troop detachments, as well as others who came in contact with the Jews who were impressed with the teachings of Scripture.

The bankrupt pagan mythology that was extant in the first-century Greek and Roman world had

long since lost its hold in terms of really filling any kind of void for people who thought very much. Many of the Gentiles in some of these areas who were exposed to Jewish culture were impressed with the teaching of Scripture. They recognized standards and recognized answers that were something beyond anything that they had from their background. Many of these became proselytes or converts. They were called "proselytes of the gate." In other words, if they came to the temple, they never could go past the gate because they did not become circumcised and take upon themselves the full commitment of the covenant, which circumcision involved. But they attended the synagogue and would listen to the Scriptures read. They would practice many of the principles of the law. They recognized its moral value and worth. They saw that there was something here, but they stopped short of becoming circumcised and becoming, in the eyes of Greek and Roman society, a Jew. This was a major step to take and most did not do that.

Verse 2, Cornelius, we are told, was a devout man. He, evidently, had been exposed to the teaching of Scripture there in Judea. He had, undoubtedly, spent time attending synagogue and hearing the law read. He was impressed with many of these things. He had come to believe in the true God—the God of Israel. He recognized that the idols that the Greek and Roman world worshipped were nothing. There came a point in time when he was sincerely seeking God; God heard and honored his request.

In vv. 3-8, Cornelius was told where to go and find Peter.

In v. 9, it was around noon (we are told the sixth hour, which would have been noon counting from sunrise) when Peter went upon the housetop.

Of course, their housetops were a flat style and not what we think of as housetops with the Acadian style as here in south Louisiana. That would have been kind of a difficult place to navigate. You wouldn't want to climb up on that kind of roof to pray—you definitely would feel like praying if you were balanced precariously up there. That's not the kind of housetop Peter was on. In an area where there isn't a lot of rain, they utilize a flat rooftop. With a little bit of drainage, it wasn't a problem. There wasn't much rainfall. It was often an area that expanded the living area. You'd get up there in the cool of the evening or when the sun began to set. It was a little cooler up there; you would pick up a little bit more of a breeze.

Verse 10, Peter had gone up there. It was a private place and he was waiting for them to prepare lunch. He was hungry and went up there to pray. While he was up there praying, waiting for the meal to be prepared, he went into a trance, and had a vision.

Verses 11-12, in this vision he saw a sheet come down from heaven. On this sheet was every kind of creature you can imagine. Now this is proof that Peter did not come from south Louisiana because when he saw all those creeping things, he didn't jump up and have a crayfish boil.

Acts 10:13-16, "...'Not so, Lord. I have never eaten anything common or unclean.'" When he was told to rise, kill and eat, he said, 'No, I can't do that.' Now this vision was repeated three times.

Peter was really scratching his head. He couldn't figure out what it meant. A lot of people today jump to the conclusion that they know what it means. They think that they can eat anything that doesn't eat them first. Almost all of us (you did and I did) grew up eating all kind of things. I think about some of the things I used to eat, and it spoils my appetite to even think about them. I don't even want to describe it at mealtime. I'm sure you are the same way. But there was a time when we ate it and didn't think anything about it. But Peter didn't jump to that conclusion. He couldn't figure out what it meant.

Peter had spent three and one-half years with Jesus Christ, living with Him, spending day after day together. They camped out together; they ate meals together; and they spent hours together, day after day over a period of three and one-half years. There was nothing that Christ had ever said which in any way gave Peter the indication that he should be eating unclean foods. Peter had never eaten anything common or unclean. It's obvious that Jesus didn't either, because Peter was with Him, and they ate the same thing during the years of His ministry. Peter didn't jump to the conclusion that the laws against clean and unclean had been done away. That never occurred to him.

Verse 17 says afterwards that he doubted in himself—he wondered—what this vision he had seen could mean. He couldn't figure it out.

About this time word came to him.

Verses 18-19, somebody downstairs wanted to see him. It was a Gentile.

Verses 20-23, he was told to go home with them and not to worry or be disturbed about it. So he went down and found out what the situation was. They explained it to him, and Peter accompanied

them. Several of the other brethren went with them and came to Caesarea.

Verse 24, Cornelius waited for them. He had called together his relatives and his close friends.

Verse 25, when Peter came in, Cornelius met him, fell down at his feet and worshipped him. Now if Peter had been the Pope, he would have told him, 'Here, kiss right here on this big toe.' Peter didn't tell him that. It is pretty good evidence that Peter didn't view himself as the first Pope. He didn't have people bowing down and kissing his feet. When the man did that, he told him to stand up, 'don't be groveling down there on the ground trying to kiss my feet.'

Verse 26, '...stand up, for I am a man just like you are. I am a human being.'

Cornelius had come from Rome from a religious background where the religious leaders were venerated in that way. Well, that's not God's way. God's way is certainly a way of respect.

God tells us to respect those who are older, respect our elders, rise up before the hoary (gray) head (Leviticus 19:32). Certainly we are to respect our elders and use terms of respect that are appropriate. Just as we show respect to those who are elders, physically, it is certainly just as appropriate and just as proper to show respect to those who are our spiritual elders. To show proper respect for another human being or respect for an office or age is one thing, and something we should show to one another. But there's a difference between an appropriate respect and an attitude of veneration, worship, adoration and this type of thing.

That's why in God's Church we don't use some specific religious titles. We don't call ourselves "reverend" because we read in Psalm 111:9 (KJV), "... holy and reverend is His name." Since that's God's name, we never talked about Reverend Armstrong. We don't use those terms because they would be inappropriate. Holy and reverend is God's name. We refer to them respectfully in the same way we refer to older people or to any people we would hold in respect. We refer to our spiritual leaders with a courtesy title of respect that we use in this society, not with a religious title.

We see here this attitude. It is good to notice that a lot of the things associated with a certain religion, where the head of it calls himself the successor of St. Peter—he doesn't follow the example of Peter. If you are going to claim to be Peter's successor, then you need to be held to the same standard of doing what Peter did. Do you practice the things that Peter practices?

A little while later, it began to dawn on him what his vision had been.

Acts 10:28, "...'God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.'" Now Peter got the point of his vision. He realized what this was all about. He had been putting people, human beings made in the image of God, in the same category as an unclean animal. Peter was viewing them in kind of the same context, using the same terms, and he had come to realize and to see that was wrong. That was an attitude of prejudice. That was not reflective of God's perspective at all. Peter recognized that.

As we go through Acts 10, we note the rest of the story of Cornelius and his household receiving the Holy Spirit prior to baptism.

Verses 44-48, "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision, who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, 'Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit?' And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days."

This, of course, demonstrated that a man did not first have to be circumcised before he could be part of the Church. God made it clear. If there is something of this magnitude, God makes it clear. God does not make a change (that is a change from God) in some obscure way that leaves people confused, where you can't know which is which. When God made a specific change, in terms of circumcision, He made it plain to the New Testament Church. He did it in a very plain and a dramatic way that was a clear basis that anyone could look to. God's will was plain.

Acts 11:1-3, "Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, saying, 'You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!'" Peter came back to Jerusalem, and needless to say, there were people that were upset. 'You ate with uncircumcised men!' Boy, they were upset about that. There was a prejudice that was there. It had its origin, in terms of religion, that carried over in all of these ways. Obviously, it came down to viewing every non-Jew in an unclean category. The average Jew wouldn't think of going in and eating a meal at a Gentile's table. That was

unthinkable. So they were pretty upset when they heard Peter had done this.

Verses 4-14, Peter then explained the matter from the beginning. He went through and told them the story; he made it clear that it was from God.

Then he says in v. 15, "'And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning.'" It was not the way the Holy Spirit normally came every time. 'It was the way the Holy Spirit fell on us at the beginning.' We go back to that point. God wanted to make it plain that Gentiles didn't get a second-rate baptism or a second-rate conversion. Peter goes through and explains what happened.

Verse 16, in the light of what had happened, he began to understand some scriptures that he had not previously understood.

Verses 17-18, when all this was explained, those who were there glorified God and said God was also granting repentance to the Gentiles.

Verse 19, in the meantime, the Church had been scattered. There was a persecution that had arisen after the stoning of Stephen. Much of the Church had been scattered. For the first couple of years the Church had remained right there centered in Jerusalem. When Stephen was stoned in 33 A.D., persecution broke out. The result was it forced people to begin to leave, to spread out. There had been a reluctance to leave the center of action. The result was that, as people began to spread, the knowledge of the truth began to spread.

Verses 20-22, it had come to the attention of the apostles that there were a number there in Antioch.

Verse 19, there were some from the area of Judea who had gone there; they had been talking about the truth, about the Church, and the knowledge of the Messiah—but only to the Jews. They had been doing so, certainly, in the synagogues at Antioch.

Verse 22, when word came to Jerusalem, the decision was made at headquarters that since there was interest in Antioch, they needed to send a minister who would go to Antioch to take charge of the situation. Here we see a clear account of Church government. The people in Antioch didn't get together and send a pulpit committee out to find somebody to preach what they liked and invite him to come there. When something came to the attention of headquarters, the apostles in Jerusalem sent Barnabas. He was sent down there as the pastor.

Verse 25, when Barnabas came, he went on to Tarsus—which was not all that far away—to seek Saul.

You remember that Saul, or Paul, had been converted several years earlier. He had been struck down on the road to Damascus. He had come to repentance, been baptized and converted; he had gone to Jerusalem but had not been that well accepted. They had accepted him, but they really didn't want him hanging around there. Because there was a little bit of skepticism, he stayed there about two weeks, got acquainted with several of the apostles and left.

In Galatians 1:17-18, we find that he spent a period of about three years in Arabia, there in the desert, having been taught directly by Christ (vv. 11-12). He came back through Jerusalem and was there for a short time. But at that time there was not a place for him. He was told, 'The best thing for you to do is to go back to Tarsus where you came from and get a job. Don't call us; we'll call you!' So that's what he did.

He knew that God works through the leadership He has established and ordained. When Barnabas, whom Paul had met and talked with right after his conversion (and evidently kept tabs on him), was sent to Antioch to pastor the Church, he went to Tarsus and brought Paul back to Antioch with him (vv. 25-26). Paul was evidently ordained as an elder at that time because we will note later that Paul was an elder in the Church at Antioch, although he's listed in the tail end of the list of the ministers serving there in Antioch (Acts 13:1).

Barnabas went there to Tarsus and Paul entered the ministry full time. Saul (as he was known then) came back to Antioch to assist Barnabas. There's a period of a year that went by and the Church built up there in Antioch.

Verses 27-29, we find that there were prophets from Jerusalem that came down to Antioch with the message of a famine. There was a certain relief that was sent.

In Acts 12:1-2, we pick up the story of the first apostle to be martyred. Herod had James killed. This was James, the brother of John. When he saw that this was popular, he decided that he would finish off some of the others as well.

Verse 3, he arrested Peter and was going to execute him after the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Verses 5-11, the Church prayed and besought God's intervention. God intervened in a very dramatic way. He sent an angel and brought Peter out of jail.

Verses 12-16, when Peter came there to the house where all the people were praying, they were so shocked that they almost didn't believe their prayers had been answered. That's sometimes the case. We pray for a miracle, and then we are amazed when it occurs. We need to not only pray for it, we need to expect it! This created quite a stir.

Verse 25, Barnabas and Saul remained there in Antioch. They had come down to Jerusalem and had returned to Antioch.

Acts 13:1-3, "Now in the Church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away."

Now, who laid on the hands? Well, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene and Manaen. These were, evidently, prophets that had been sent down from Jerusalem. We are told they are prophets and teachers. Barnabas is listed first in the list because he was pastor of the Church. He had been sent down from Jerusalem as the Church pastor. These others who had evidently come down from Jerusalem were prophets from Jerusalem.

Verses 2-3, they were given revelation from God because what we have here is the ordination of Paul and Barnabas as apostles. This is what we have—an ordination. They fasted and prayed and laid hands on them; then they sent them away. They were sent out. That's what "apostle" means. They were sent forth. This is the ordination.

I think it is interesting to note—I mentioned the multi-ethnic background of the leadership of the early New Testament Church. 'Simeon that was called Niger'—"Niger" is the Greek word for "black." It specifically refers to Blacks from the area of West Africa. We have today the Niger River, the nation of Nigeria. It comes from the same term. The term "Ethiopian" was used as a general term to refer to Blacks from East Africa, just as the term "Niger" was used as a general term to refer to Blacks from West Africa.

The Roman Empire took in portions of Northern Africa. Cyrene was in North Africa in the area around where Tunisia is today. That was a part of the Roman Empire, but the Roman Empire did not include East or West Africa down in the area of Ethiopia. Ethiopia maintained its

independence, and so did certain kingdoms in West Africa. There was trade and commerce. There was a familiarity in the Greek and Roman world with people of both East and West African origin. There was trade and a certain amount of commerce there on the border of the Empire. It was not uncommon.

We are not introduced to anything of the background of this individual (this Simeon called Niger), except that it is clear from his surname what his origin was. He was a West African from the area that we would refer to as the area of the Niger River in West Africa. We are not given any details at what point he came into the Church or at what point he had been ordained in the ministry. We are not given background on that. We are simply introduced to him, as well as to Lucius of Cyrene of whom we are told nothing else. The only thing we know about Manaen was that he was of an aristocratic background. He had actually grown up with Herod. He had been a friend and companion of many of the upper class.

What we see is that the leadership of the New Testament Church had been called from a variety of backgrounds, ethnically and culturally. It wasn't any longer exclusively Palestinian Jews. In fact, Simeon and the other two were the ones by whom God actually ordained Paul and Barnabas as apostles. We get a little bit of insight into the beginning of the impact of the New Testament Church. These prophets had been sent from Jerusalem headquarters to Antioch. God had given them that commission.

At this point, after the ordination of Barnabas and Saul, we find that Barnabas and Saul left to begin the **first evangelistic journey**. They sailed from Antioch and went to Cypress. Then they went up to central Asia Minor and preached in the area that we know as Galatia. Then they came back over land down to Antioch. If you look at a map, you will see that Antioch is in the modern nation of Syria. They went from there across a small stretch of the Mediterranean to the island of Cypress, then up to ancient Asia Minor (the central portion of modern-day Turkey), the area of Galatia. They went there, traveled overland through Asia Minor (or modern-day Turkey) and then came back down the coast over land to come back to Antioch. This was the first evangelistic journey that they made. The account of it is given in Acts 13 and 14.

Beginning in Acts 13:9, there is one thing that we find plainly evident. We see that the name Paul begins to be used in place of Saul, which was the

Hebrew name. Paul was the Roman name that he had, and Saul was his Hebrew name. As he began traveling in the Gentile areas, he elected to go by his Roman name. We see that switch over at that time.

We find in Acts 13:5 Paul's address to the Jews in Cyprus and the sermon he gave. I will refer back to this a little later.

One thing I would like to call your attention to. I mentioned earlier, in terms of the Sabbath, the fact that there isn't any New Testament evidence at all of any controversy about a change of the Sabbath. If anybody were going to change it, certainly Paul would have done it when he preached to the Gentiles.

But we are told in Acts 13:42, "And when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath."

Paul could have told them, 'You don't need to wait until next Sabbath. We are going to have church service for you Gentiles ten o'clock Sunday morning. We are going to have Sunday services. You don't need to wait until the Sabbath. The Sabbath has been done away!' Why didn't he explain that? Because it wasn't true! These Gentiles (Greeks primarily) in the area of Asia Minor came up and said, 'We'd like for you to preach to us next Sabbath. We would like to get together and hear you.'

And we are told in v. 44, "And the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God." It is very clear that Paul was preaching to the Gentiles on the Sabbath, as well as the Jews. Some say, 'Yeah, Paul preached to the Jews on the Sabbath. He went to the synagogue because that's where the Jews were. He didn't go there because he believed it; he just went there because that's where the audience was.' Well, if that was the case, the Gentiles didn't normally keep the Sabbath; so why did he preach to them on the Sabbath? Why didn't he use that as an opportunity to introduce Sunday worship? It's very plain when we go through the scriptures that Paul did not institute Sunday worship among the Gentiles.

We see that the main persecution Paul faced was religious persecution from the Jewish religious leadership.

Verse 45, "But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul." They were really jealous.

Verse 50, “But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.” They stirred up a great controversy.

Acts 14:2, “But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren.” They began to spread all kinds of rumors and gossip. There were all sorts of problems that were stirred up.

We see the account in chapters 13 and 14 of the trip back that Paul made over land and the arrival back in Antioch. This was the first large-scale conversion of Gentiles where large congregations were raised up in some of these areas that, primarily, consisted of Gentiles with a very small Jewish contingent. The issue of uncircumcised Gentiles being accepted into full fellowship was still kind of “cooking” and there was a problem. There was a controversy that came up.

Acts 15:1, “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’” There were some that came down from Jerusalem and began to tell some of the brethren that it was fine to be baptized, but they still need to be circumcised. ‘I know you’ve been baptized and received the Holy Spirit, but if you are going to be saved, you still have to be circumcised.’

It stirred up a controversy and a dispute. When this doctrinal matter came up, it was not something that could be entirely addressed there locally. Paul and Barnabas decided to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders there about the question and have it resolved once and for all. There would be an official statement of Church position.

Verse 2, “Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders, about this question.” We see the recognition of the concept that God is not the author of confusion (I Corinthians 14:33). There is peace. We see that there was a discussion. As the leadership in Jerusalem came together, there was a lot of discussion. Peter finally rose up.

Verse 7, “And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up, and said to them: ‘Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.’”

Verses 7-11, Peter began to recount the situation from the beginning as to how God had originally opened the door to the Gentiles through him. He went through, recounted it and explained it; he brought it through, step by step, exactly what had happened.

Verse 12, “Then all the multitude kept silent, and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.” They explained all the things that God had done through them on this evangelistic journey. They added to and reinforced the things that Peter had said. Once these things had been stated, this kind of concluded the discussion.

Verses 13-15, “And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, ‘Men and brethren, listen to me: Simon [Peter] has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written....’” James got up and made the official pronouncement. He was the brother of Jesus Christ. He was an apostle. He was not one of the twelve, but he held the rank of apostle. He was the pastor there of the Jerusalem Church and presided over the conference. Since he was the one who was presiding, he then said, ‘All right, Simon [Peter] has explained how this whole matter started.’

Verses 15-17, he invoked scriptural principles from the Old Testament that backed that up.

Verse 19 (KJV), “‘Therefore my sentence is....’” The word “sentence” is the Greek word “*krino*.” It is a legal technical term in the Greek that refers to “a judgment” in the sense that a court would make a judgment. It is in the sense of a judge passing sentence or a judgment. It was an official legal decision. He was saying, ‘All right, everything has been discussed. We have heard it. Peter has explained what God revealed to him and what God did through him. Paul and Barnabas have told you what occurred. We have listened to all of this, and the scriptures certainly prophesied and anticipated of the event that we have experienced and gone through. Wherefore, my sentence, my official statement, my official legal decision, the binding decision of the Church is....’

Verse 19, “‘...that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God.’” This was concerning circumcision.

Verses 20-23, “‘But that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and

from blood. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.’ Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren. They wrote this letter by them....”

Verses 23-29, a letter was written, and it was dispatched stating the decision of the Church.

Let’s note something here. Some quote this statement in v. 20 and say, ‘You see, James didn’t say anything about the Gentiles keeping the Sabbath. Therefore, it is very obvious that the Gentiles don’t have to keep the Sabbath. All of that’s done away. They weren’t told to keep the Sabbath.’

Well, that’s right! They weren’t told to keep the Sabbath; neither were they told not to commit murder. If v. 20 does away with the fourth commandment to remember the Sabbath, it also does away with the sixth commandment not to murder because that’s not mentioned either. In fact, there’s nothing here that says the Gentiles shouldn’t steal or shouldn’t lie or covet or dishonor their parents. There are a lot of commandments that are not mentioned. Most people who want to do away with the Sabbath aren’t quite so anxious to do away with murder, particularly, if they are on the receiving end of the gun. They generally figure that’s a good commandment to have around.

Why isn’t the Sabbath mentioned? Well, the Sabbath isn’t mentioned because it wasn’t a question. James didn’t answer it because nobody asked the question. That simply had never come up. What had come up and was being discussed was circumcision. When they address the subject of circumcision and they say, ‘All right, circumcision applies in the spirit. It is a circumcision of the heart (Romans 2:28-29). The physical ceremonial requirement of circumcision is not necessary for salvation.’ Then that raises the question of what about some of these other things that are so uncommon and strange in the Greek and Roman world? Are they also ceremonial? What about meat offered to idols? Is there anything wrong with that? What about morality? Do the prohibitions of morality apply?

Most of us have trouble associating the concept of morality with some of these other matters. But what you have to realize is that the whole concept of chastity and morality was such an

uncommon thing in the Greek and Roman world that it was looked upon as a peculiarity of the Jews. Immorality (fornication) involved in idolatrous temple worship and this kind of thing was taken for granted. Immoral practices were so taken for granted in the Greek and Roman world of the first century, that it was a real culture shock to some of these who came out of this kind of background. They needed to recognize the importance that God placed on morality. The Jews placed great emphasis on it. What the Gentile converts had to realize was that this was not simply a peculiarity of the Jews. God placed great emphasis on it.

We are almost coming back to a situation like that in our society today. There is no sense of scandal being attached to immorality in a way that was common twenty-five or thirty years ago. It was common that immorality was a scandal. It is so taken for granted and accepted now, that many young people growing up in this society and surrounded by the attitudes of a society evidenced at school and through the media, etc., have trouble grasping, ‘What’s the big deal?’ Now, that’s a concept that some of us who grew up thirty or forty years ago and longer may have trouble grasping. How can you not understand what a big deal it is? We have to realize how much the culture in this nation has changed in the course of a generation—a drastic change that we could date to the 60s. You could pick various benchmarks, but I think the most recent radical change began in the 60s—particularly, by the mid-60s the toboggan slide had really begun to become evident.

These were issues in the Gentile world, and they had to be addressed. What James makes plain is that these other things you wondered about are not ceremonial. You should abstain from pollutions of idols, from immorality, from things strangled and from blood. This had to do with the methods of slaughter and the use of blood as a matter of diet. There were some questions about some of these things; James summarized it to make it plain.

Now, concerning the matter of blood—the Jehovah’s Witnesses take this and make a big issue of blood transfusions. Blood transfusions are not being discussed here. It is discussing dietary laws. It is not a verse that has any bearing on blood transfusion, one way or the other. Notice what James went on to say. Why did James not feel it necessary to do anything more than clarify these points that had been raised? He

answered the questions that had been asked, and he didn't feel the need to explain more. Why?

Verse 21, "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." It was apparent that James knew and accepted that the brethren were going to go and hear the Scriptures and the Law read every Sabbath. The Gentiles were going to the synagogue and were hearing the Law read every Sabbath. James said, 'I don't need to explain any further because you will hear it read in the synagogue. You will hear it on the Sabbath when you go listen to the Law being read.' It is very apparent that James didn't say, 'Hey, you Gentiles are going to the synagogue on the Sabbath and listening to the Law being read; don't you know the Sabbath is done away? The Law is done away, and you shouldn't be going. All it is going to do is get you confused.' He didn't tell them that did he? So again, it is important to note. The letter was written and sent forth.

Verses 40-41, "But Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches." Paul and Silas were going on their **second evangelistic journey**. This time they were going to leave and go over land up through Syria and across through Asia Minor.

Acts 16:1, "Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek." They came through the area of Galatia.

Verse 3, "Paul wanted to have him [Timothy] go with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek."

You notice this. The issue had been resolved. It was not a spiritual matter, but they did circumcise Timothy. There is a reason. Timothy's mother was a Jew and his father was a Greek. It was known in the area what Timothy's background was. Timothy, being of a Jewish background, would have been a stumbling block to the Jews. They would have viewed Timothy as a traitor to his own people. Paul recognized this. It wasn't that Timothy needed to be circumcised in order to be saved, but Paul recognized that it would be a stumbling block in Timothy's ministry if the Jews viewed him as one who was kind of a traitor to his people. They viewed it as rejecting the outward sign of the covenant, and it would brand him as one who identified with his

father's Greek heritage and rejected his mother's Jewish heritage—which would obviously be an issue of contention in the Church. The simplest thing was that he be circumcised; it would not be an issue.

So this was done. Paul and the group traveled across to the coast of Asia Minor and into what is Europe (modern-day Greece).

Verse 9, he saw the vision of the man in Macedonia. Macedonia is northern Greece. He crossed over from Asia Minor into Europe.

Verse 13, "And on the Sabbath day, we went out of the city to the river side, where prayer was customarily made: and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there." This is the first time the gospel went out in Europe.

Now, in my KJV Bible, there is a little "4" out by the word Sabbath. The marginal rendering is "Sabbath Days." This has a different ending in the Greek that is like a plural ending. It means it's not the common way of writing "Sabbath." It would more literally be "on the day of Sabbaths." It was a term used among the Jews to refer to Pentecost, the Feast of Weeks or the Day of the Sabbaths because you counted seven Sabbaths to arrive at it. We would date the first sermon Paul preached here in Europe as Pentecost of 50 A.D.

The interesting thing to note is the New Testament Church began on Pentecost of 31 A.D. Exactly nineteen years to the day later the gospel first went into Europe. Of course, God's whole calendar is based on a nineteen-year cycle. The calendar repeats itself every nineteen years. Exactly nineteen years after Pentecost, the gospel first went out into Europe.

Exactly nineteen years after that on Pentecost of 69 A.D. there was a voice in the temple. The Jews heard thunder, but the Christians heard a message, and the Church fled Jerusalem. In the aftermath, the Roman troops came in, surrounded the city and Jerusalem fell. It was destroyed in 70 A.D.

You can divide the organized proclamation of the gospel by the early New Testament Church into two nineteen-year periods. It is just a matter of historical reference in the Scriptures.

Verse 12, we see that Paul was preaching in the area of Macedonia. Let me call your attention again to what Paul was preaching and the way he was identified. After Paul had cast a demon out of a girl, her master brought them to the magistrate.

Verse 20, "And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, 'These men, being Jews,

exceedingly trouble our city; and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe.” Notice that Paul was being accused of teaching Jewish customs. That’s what they accused him of. If Paul had come in and had been preaching Sunday, Christmas, Easter and doing all this stuff, he wouldn’t have been creating a problem. They would have been familiar with all those things. Those were good old Roman holidays. He wouldn’t have been teaching customs unlawful for the Romans. They wouldn’t have identified him as being Jewish. Paul was looked upon as teaching Jewish customs.

He was accused of the same thing that the Church is accused of today. People think Paul is the one who did away with the law. It’s very plain. You never find Paul being accused of that. In fact, it’s interesting, a little later on, when Paul came to Ephesus. The people who were the angriest were the silversmiths (19:24-27) because they were in the idol-making business. They got all upset and said, ‘This guy is going to put us out of business.’ Now if Paul had been a good Catholic, they wouldn’t have been upset. They would have just switched over into making crucifixes and all kinds of little trinkets. Paul would have been good for the business. They would have been glad to see him there. It would have just added something extra to sell. But what Paul taught was going to put these guys out of business because all of a sudden, there was not going to be any demand for all of their little idols and shrines, all their little religious figurines that dotted the countryside. I think it is important to note some of these things as we go through.

Acts is not so much the teachings of the apostles. Though it tells us what they said, Acts does not primarily focus on the teachings—it focuses on the *actions*. It is important that we note what these actions were. We notice how much these actions contrast with the things that pass for Christianity in our modern society and country. People accuse us of not being a New Testament Church. People say, ‘You just have the Old Testament; you don’t really follow the New Testament!’ Well, yes we do! We follow the New Testament, as well as the Old Testament. In reality, they follow neither. They follow the customs and traditions of men. They follow the things that you don’t find here in the book of Acts.

Acts 16:21-24, we find Paul being thrown into jail because he was “teaching customs that are not lawful.”

Verses 25-26, they were praying. About midnight, God sent a big earthquake.

Verses 27-28, the jailer got so scared that he was going to commit suicide. He just knew all these prisoners were going to get away. Paul stopped him and said, ‘Don’t do that. We are all here.’ This jailer was so impressed that he brought these men out.

Verse 30, “And he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’” He was familiar with who they were and what they had been teaching.

Verse 31, “So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him, and to all who were in his house.” They went through and explained.

He was familiar with what Paul and Barnabas were doing. They had been thrown in jail for teaching the necessity of observing Jewish customs (as the Roman government looked upon it). He was familiar with all of these things. He was familiar with their message. He knew who they were and why they were in jail. When he saw the hand of God, he was so impressed that he asked, ‘What do I need to do to act on all of this?’ They told him, ‘You are going to have to believe, to really believe what Jesus said.’

Now, you can’t take this out of context and say that’s all you have to do is believe. They continued and spoke to him the word of the Lord. They went through and explained to him. He had already heard these other things.

Verse 33, we find that he was baptized. The next day they found out that Paul was a Roman citizen, so the magistrate said, ‘We are just going to kind of send these guys away and get them out of here.’

Verse 37, “But Paul said to them, ‘They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No, indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out.’” Paul said, ‘You’ve beaten us openly and illegally. You want us to leave? You come ask us nicely.’

Paul was not averse to utilizing the rights of Roman citizenship. He submitted to the government authorities. But there is a time, particularly in terms of the work of God, that it is important that we avail ourselves of the rights and privileges that the laws of the land give us. Paul availed himself of those rights and privileges. But recognize that’s not where our protection is going to come from. Our protection

comes from God, but those things can be properly utilized.

Acts 17:1-2, “...they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Then Paul, as his custom was went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures.”

Verses 10-11, “Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” They checked it out. They proved it out of the Bible.

That’s what is important! God wants us to prove out of the Bible the things that we hear so our faith and our confidence rest upon Him and upon His word. We are to really prove what we believe and why we believe it.

Paul went from there to Rome.

Verse 16, they took him there while he was waiting for the others to join him. They took him to Mars Hill, the Areopagus (v. 19).

Verse 21, “For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.” We are told they loved to discuss things, and they prided themselves on really being open-minded. They always wanted to hear something new. They were always coming up with something. We see that example. Paul took advantage of the opportunity. He went there to Mars Hill and had an opportunity to speak. He addressed them. I would call your attention to the way he handled it.

Verse 22, “Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, ‘Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious [KJV].’” The KJV gives kind of a negative impression. That is not really the sense of it. Paul didn’t start out in a negative way. Some of the modern translations bring it out a little more clearly. What he really said was, ‘I perceive that you are very religious.’ Paul didn’t start out insulting them.

He said in vv. 22-26 (paraphrase), ‘Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious people. I have noticed your devotions, the outward signs of your religion; one of the things I noticed was that you even have an altar dedicated TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. It is this Unknown God that I wish to tell you about this afternoon. He is the One you ignorantly worship, this

Unknown God, who is unknown to you. You don’t know Him. I want to explain Him to you today. He is the God that made the world and all things that are therein. He is the Creator.’

Paul goes through and begins to explain. He starts by introducing the Athenians to the God who is the Creator of the Greek people. He comes through, and then, finally, we have the conclusion of his summary.

Verse 31, “‘because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.’”

I would call your attention to something. In Acts 17, as Paul went through and addressed the issue, he didn’t mention the name of Jesus Christ. If you compared the sermon Paul gave in Acts 17 to the one he gave the Jews in Acts 13, it’s totally different. In Acts 13, he started out quoting the Bible. He’s quoting Scripture—bang, bang, bang—straight Bible all the way through.

Why the difference? You address people in a way that they are going to be receptive and understand what you are talking about. If you are addressing people who acknowledge the authority of Scripture, then you start with the Bible and quote the Bible to them. If you are addressing people who don’t even know what is the Bible, then you don’t start out by quoting the Bible. There is no point. They don’t even know what’s under discussion.

The way that Paul addressed the Athenians was much the same way as Mr. Herbert Armstrong began his initial addresses in some of the Gentile nations—in Japan and some of these places. In fact, he used Acts 17 as a guide. This was the way you addressed people. In that context, you then bring them to the point of recognizing that there is a Messiah and there is One who is coming to judge the world.

Bible Study # 41 Questions

SURVEY OF THE GOSPELS AND ACTS SERIES

Acts 10—17

1. Who was the first Gentile convert (uncircumcised) of the New Testament Church?
2. Did God want Peter to start eating unclean animals for food?
3. Show from Acts 10 that Peter did not conduct himself as the “first Pope.”
4. What was different about the way Cornelius and his household received the Holy Spirit? Why was it done that way?
5. Show from the account in Acts 11 that Church government was understood and practiced.
6. Who was the first of the apostles to be martyred?
7. How did God respond to the prayers of the Church when Peter was arrested?
8. How did Paul become an apostle?
9. Where did Paul go on his first evangelistic journey?
10. Prove that Paul did not institute Sunday worship among the Gentiles.
11. Who proved to be the main source of persecution that Paul faced during his ministry?
12. What was the reaction of Paul when a dispute arose over doctrine?
13. Since Acts 15:20 does not mention the Sabbath, does this mean that it was not necessary for the Gentiles to keep the Sabbath? Prove from the context.
14. When did the gospel first go into Europe? Who was the first European convert?
15. Prove from Acts 16 that Paul was not teaching that the law of God (particularly in regard to Sabbaths, Holy Days, clean and unclean meats, etc.) was done away with.
16. Did Paul believe in standing up for his legal rights?
17. What was unusual about the people of Berea?
18. How did the people of Athens like to spend their time?
19. Did Paul “preach Christ” to the Athenians? There is a vast difference between the sermon recorded in Acts 13 and the one Paul preached to the Athenians in Acts 17. Why?

Bible Study # 42
September 26, 1989
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Gospels and Acts Series—Acts 18—28

We will be finishing up our series on the survey of the Gospels and the book of Acts. There is an awful lot that we could have gone through on some of this as far as this sequence of studies. Hopefully, it has given you a little bit of an insight in terms of continuity and the flow of it. This evening we are continuing this series.

One of the main areas that we **will focus on this evening has to do with the imprisonment of the Apostle Paul.** I think this section is an excellent place to illustrate the point as to how God works in our lives in ways that we could not begin to foresee. We have the account of the way God worked in the circumstance of Paul's life—Paul's imprisonment or what resulted in his Roman imprisonment.

He was first imprisoned in Caesarea for a couple of years. He was in transit on a ship and was shipwrecked. He went through a lot of difficult circumstances and finally wound up in Rome. He was there for a couple of years. The whole circumstance was not at all an enjoyable sequence of activities. It was not a pleasant experience. Well, God allowed that! Don't you think the Apostle Paul must have wondered why?

You know, we have the advantage. We look at it and we read it. It only takes us a matter of a few minutes to read the last portion of the book of Acts, and we know the end of the story. He lived his life one day at a time, just like you and I live our lives and the sequence of our lives. Paul had found himself in difficult situations before. He had found himself in jail before. There was a time when he was thrown in jail. He and Silas prayed and sang hymns. About midnight, God sent a big earthquake and an angel, and they were delivered. That's pretty dramatic.

This time Paul was thrown in jail. Midnight came and there was no earthquake. In fact, the next day came and there wasn't any earthquake. It dragged on and on. The days turned into weeks; the weeks turned into months; the months dragged out; and a couple of years went by. It was a very difficult and trying experience. It dragged on and on for several years.

Now, undoubtedly, Paul must have wondered during this time why God was allowing this. 'I need to be out of this place. There are things that

I need to do, people I need to visit, places in which I need to preach, and areas where the Gospel needs to be spread. There are a lot of things that need to be done.' I am sure all those things went through his mind. They would go through mine, and I'm sure they would go through yours.

We look back on it from a little different perspective because while he was in jail, the only way that Paul could really impact the areas where he had worked was to write letters. Now, we are familiar with those letters. They comprise a goodly portion of our New Testament. Some of the most important things the Apostle Paul did, he did from a jail cell. He wrote letters that had a tremendous impact. They explained many things. He was in a circumstance that writing letters was all he was able to do—and he did it.

The point is God was working out a purpose. Paul may have looked at it at the time and wondered why he had been "put on hold." He couldn't get out and do anything. And yet we look back on it and realize that while he was in jail, he did what turned out to be one of the most permanent, enduring and important parts of the work that he had ever accomplished. He gave us a goodly portion of our New Testament.

The point that I would like to make in that regard is that when we are going through difficult circumstances, when we are going through trials and we can't see why, we have to accept the fact God may be working something out in our lives. God may have a plan and a purpose that supersedes anything that we can see or fathom at the time. Generally, we can never see the purpose until after it is all over. Very rarely we can understand the purpose of a trial when we are in the midst of it. Generally, we only see it in retrospect; sometimes it is even years in retrospect because it takes time to get it into perspective.

Paul's imprisonment in Rome allowed him to come into contact with the very top leadership of the Roman Empire. A lot of times that's not realized, but there's a lot of evidence of Paul's impact upon the very top echelon of the Roman Empire. Notice what Paul says in one of the books he wrote in prison.

Philippians 4:22, "All the saints greet you, especially those who are of Caesar's household." There were people converted in the very household of Caesar. That's getting pretty close to the top. There were converts in Caesar's household.

Philippians 1:12-13 (KJV), “But I want you to understand, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and to all the rest.” This we often read over. We notice here that he talks about throughout “all the palace.”

I would like to give you the RSV translation of it because it brings out an additional detail. “I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole Praetorian Guard.” “Praetorian” is the Greek word for “palace.” The RSV translates it, “the whole Praetorian Guard.” What was the Praetorian? Who was the Praetorian Guard? Why is that significant?

The term that is used here refers specifically to the Praetorian or Praetorian Guard. It was an elite group that was first established by Caesar Augustus as a detachment of troops to be his private bodyguard. They were an elite organization and under the later emperors came to have many special privileges. This Praetorian Guard became so powerful that it was able to raise and depose emperors at its will because after all, these were the elite troops. They were the ones who were right there in the capital city. They were the ones who were responsible for the security of the emperor. They had direct access to him in a way that no one else did. You’re at the mercy of no one more than you are at the mercy of your bodyguards. No matter what you think you have, you are no more secure than your bodyguards.

This special Praetorian Guard was ruled by the Praetorian Prefect, an individual who was second only to the emperor because he held the supreme military and judicial authority there in Rome. As the captain or Prefect of the Praetorian Guard, he was kind of a combination Joint Chief of Staff and Supreme Court. He was the commander of the Praetorian Guard, the supreme military commander of the Roman Empire. He commanded the home troops and had seniority on every other commander; he was considered the supreme military commander of the Roman Empire. He also had supreme judicial authority. He exercised the judicial authority in the name of the emperor. He had a certain amount of legislative power in control of finances and influence with the provinces. In fact, it was almost impossible to exercise an important influence in political affairs, except in concert with the Praetorian Prefect. It was a powerful

post. He was in a position of daily contact with the emperor. He had the personal command of the emperor’s bodyguard, the troops that maintained the palace and the troop right there in the capital. He was a very powerful individual.

Let’s notice Paul being brought to Rome. Acts 28:16, “Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.”

That’s how it’s rendered in the NKJV, but if you will check it up, you will find the literal rendering is, “the centurion delivered the prisoners to the Praetorian Prefect, but Paul was allowed to dwell by himself with the soldier that kept him.”

Paul was actually handed over to the Praetorian Prefect when he arrived in Rome. He arrived on an appeal, a judicial appeal to the emperor. There was direct knowledge of his circumstance. At the time Paul was delivered to Rome in 60 A.D., Emperor Nero was the ruler; he was the emperor. If you have read very much about Nero, you know what a perverted character he was, and he was a pretty good size, too. He was “nutty as a fruitcake.” If you’ve read very much about him, he did some crazy things.

There were two main rival factions there in Rome. There were two individuals who had great influence with Nero. One was his mistress who, of course, had her own brand of influence. She was a woman by the name of Popaea. The Praetorian Prefect was a man by the name of Burrus. He had risen to power in the Roman Empire. He had originally come from North Africa. He had risen to great power and influence there in Rome and Italy; he was the commander of the Praetorian Guard. He was a very close friend of the philosopher Seneca who was the great Roman philosopher at the time and had also been a teacher of Nero. Burrus and Seneca were close friends. As long as Burrus lived, they sought to combine their influence to keep Nero in check because they recognized his mental instability—the cruel and crazy tendencies that he had.

Popaea was attracted to Judaism. She was somewhat familiar with Judaism and was attracted to that. Burrus, on the other hand, was very much anti-Jewish. Now, this sets the stage for something.

Paul had been a political “hot potato” back in Judea. The Jewish religious leadership had brought charges against him. It was primarily because of an unwillingness to create a lot of

upset with the Jewish religious leadership in Judea that the Roman governors had held Paul as a prisoner, and then finally sent him to Rome. He was a “hot potato,” and they were trying to get him off their hands.

They realized that Burrus, who was anti-Jewish, would have an automatic incentive to be favorable to Paul and Paul’s appeal. He didn’t have much use for the Jews. Poppaea was the rival for the influence that he had because she had a lot of influence with Nero. She was really the only one who was in a position to influence Nero, apart from Burrus and Seneca. Burrus resented that. So for political reasons, he would have had incentive to take Paul’s side against the Jews. With this level of contact and with the attitude Burrus had, when Paul came, it evidently set the stage for allowing Paul the level of freedom and the level of contact all the way up to the palace.

Paul became well known in the Praetorian Guard and in the palace. He became very well known and had contact. Many of these people had connections with him. In fact, it may certainly have influenced even some of the later writings of Seneca. There is evidence of that. When you read some of the things that he wrote, because of the timing of it, you wonder to what extent he came under the Apostle Paul’s influence.

Paul was released from prison evidently in 61 A.D. Burrus died a few months later in 62 A.D., shortly after Paul’s release from prison. Now, with Poppaea in the ascendance, once Burrus was gone, she was able to influence Nero without Burrus’ counter-influence. It took time for the new Prefect to establish his authority. One of the things that happened was that Nero turned tolerant toward the Jews and began to persecute the Christians.

One of the things that seem to be characteristic of the demagogue type of politicians is that they always look for some group to be made the scapegoat. They like to blame all the problems on some minority—somebody that is significant enough in the minority to be noticed but is powerless enough that they are not going to be able to successfully defend themselves. You have to pick a group that is small enough that you can overwhelm them, but they are large enough that everybody notices them. You blame all the problems on them. You say, ‘They have caused all the problems. Let’s get them.’ This is an old tactic that has been used on various groups. In some cases, it was used on the Jews.

The Jews have been a target, but they have not been the only target. There were other groups and other targets. It depends on the society and the culture at the time as to what’s used, but it is an attitude of human nature. People don’t want to take responsibility for their own problems. They want to believe that somebody else is the source of all their problems. Boy, you gang up on them; you get them; and you’ll solve all your problems. Politicians are good at that. They try to make a scapegoat out of some segment of society.

Nero, the Roman Emperor had used the Jews that way at various times. It was also a handy way to get a little cash because when you expelled the Jews from Rome, you confiscated all their property—you got a little cash in your hands. You “sent them packing.” Then after a few years, they gradually drifted back.

In Acts 18:2, we read of Aquila and Priscilla who were Jews from Rome. We read that they had been expelled from Rome when Claudius kicked out the Jews. They had come to Corinth. Paul had met them and became acquainted with them. Why were they expelled? Claudius was a predecessor of Nero. He decided that they had problems, so they just blamed all the Jews and kicked them all out of Rome. They gave them a few days to leave with what they could carry on their backs. Then they confiscated their property, which of course went to the emperor. This was the situation. Later, the Jews were allowed to come back in. They needed them for business purposes. This was the kind of situation that was going on.

After the death of Burrus, Nero began to turn his persecution from the Jews to the Christians. Because Poppaea influenced him to not be so rough on the Jews, he looked for another group he could blame all the problems on. If you can’t blame it on the Jews, there should be somebody you can blame it on. Blame it on the Christians. This led to the situation that later resulted in the Roman martyrdom of Paul and Peter and several of the other apostles. Prior to that time, the latter 60s, the persecution the Church received was from the Jews. The Romans were observers. There may have been times when they didn’t step in simply because they didn’t want to risk stirring up political trouble. They just let the events take their course. They didn’t really care, one way or the other, unless they got “put on the spot” with it.

After the late 60s, after the death of Burrus, then they began to turn their attention toward using the Christians as the scapegoat. Official Roman

persecution began to come on some of the leadership of the Church. When the book of Acts ends, it ends with the conclusion of Paul's imprisonment in 61 A.D.; Paul left Rome. When he was let go from prison, he left Rome, went to Spain (which was where he had said he was going (Romans 15:24)) and then from Spain to Britain. There was a period of several years that went by. About three years afterwards, about 65 A.D., Paul returned into the Mediterranean area. It was shortly after that, about 67 A.D., that he was arrested and put to death. Luke ends his account in Acts with the release of Paul from prison. He didn't go further.

One of the things to note about the book of Acts is that it does not end with "Amen." "Amen" is the concluding statement, the word that gives the connotation of completion and finality that we find in the other New Testament books, with a few notable exceptions. We note it here with the book of Acts, in the book of James and in the book of III John. They are the only New Testament books that do not end with "Amen." There are reasons in each case.

When we go through the General Epistles, we will focus in on why that was the case in James and III John. We might just note that Acts was written as a book to catalog the acts or the actions of the apostles; it ends abruptly. It doesn't end with the death of Paul. It just summarizes the fact that he was released from prison in Rome two years after being brought to Rome. He dwelt in his own rented house two years.

Now, there's a reason why it ended there. God did not want the rest of the story recorded. You remember Paul's three-fold commission. He had been commissioned to take God's name before the Gentiles, before kings and before the children of Israel (Acts 9:15). That was the commission, and that was the order of the commission. The book of Acts records him taking the message before the Gentiles, and it brings us up to where he was going before kings. He went before governors and rulers, right on up to the Roman emperor. But it ends when he left Rome.

God did not have recorded the third part of his commission to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. God did not intend that it be clearly and unequivocally preserved in Scripture exactly where the lost sheep of the House of Israel were; otherwise, they wouldn't have been lost sheep. God allowed that knowledge to be pretty much lost from sight. It's been available and accessible, but God allowed it to be lost

from common sight. God didn't preserve that clearly.

I think it is interesting if we look at the commission God gave Paul: take God's message to Gentiles, to kings and to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. You could say that in Mr. Herbert Armstrong's case, it was the same commission, only in reverse order. He took God's message first to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, then to the Gentiles and then before kings. It's kind of an interesting reversal of the way that it went.

There is this ending in Acts. The acts of the other apostles are not noted here. Luke told a portion of the story that God wanted recorded for us. But the absence of the "Amen" gives us realization that there is more. It does not have that "ring" of finality. It was what God wanted preserved as Scripture for this time. Perhaps in the Millennium, Luke himself will write the rest of the story. Perhaps he will write the completion of the history of the Church, which is the action of the apostles.

Let's note briefly, let's summarize this portion of the book of Acts.

Acts 17 ended up with Paul having come to Athens and his address on Mars Hill.

Acts 18:1, "After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth." Corinth is a little further down in Greece. This is where he found Aquila who had lately come from Rome.

Verse 2, "And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them." Claudius had expelled the Jews from Rome.

One of the ways of dating the book of Acts is that the command to expel the Jews from Rome was issued by Emperor Claudius in 50 A.D. That is simply a matter of secular history and Roman records. It is one of the ways of cross-dating. The book of Acts can be dated internally. We will go into that in a later series. We will go through a "Life and Letters of the Apostle Paul Series." We will go into detail in terms of how we date the events here. Much of Acts can be dated internally, but there are also a few places where we can check with an external date—a date from secular history—where an event of secular importance is noted. It serves as a crosscheck on the date. This is one of those ways of cross-dating.

We see what Paul did when the Jews no longer allowed him access to the synagogue. We find that Paul simply rented a place nearby.

Acts 18:6-8, “But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, ‘Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.’ And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized.” He rented a location nearby. He went to a place that was nearby and preached to the Gentiles. This was Paul’s approach.

Verse 11, he stayed in Corinth for a period of a year and a half. He was anxious to return to Jerusalem.

Verse 21, “but took leave of them, saying, ‘I must by all means keep this coming Feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing.’ And he sailed from Ephesus.” He was anxious to go to Jerusalem.

This was the Feast of Tabernacles 52 A.D. Paul didn’t say he just wanted to go to Jerusalem because it had been a long time. He didn’t say he wanted to be there at Feast time to preach to some Jews. He said, ‘I must by all means keep this Feast!’ Now, if he was going to keep the Feast, he was going to observe the Feast.

The Protestants try to explain it away and say Paul wasn’t going to keep the Feast; he was going to be there to preach to some Jews because he knew there would be a bunch of Jews there. You can go through and read the account. That’s not what he did. He didn’t evangelize in Jerusalem at all. When he went back for the Feast, he didn’t go there to evangelize. He knew that he wasn’t a very popular person in Jerusalem, and he didn’t go there to evangelize. There isn’t any mention of him doing that at all. He went there to do what he said. He went to keep the Feast.

It’s incredible—if you were to ask most people, most theologians, they’d tell you, ‘Oh, the New Testament does away with the need to keep the Sabbath and the Holy Days.’ And they’re sure that if anybody did away with it, Paul did away with it. Some of them will say, ‘Well, maybe James kept them or Peter did, but Paul, he didn’t fool with all those Jewish things.’

You go through the book of Acts and find Acts 18:4, “And he reasoned in the synagogue

every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.”

Verse 21, “but took leave of them, saying, ‘I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem....’” You find example after example where Paul kept the Feast and kept the Sabbath. He preached not only to the Jews on the Sabbath, but he also preached to the Gentiles on the Sabbath.

He commanded the Church, the Gentile Church, in Corinth:

I Corinthians 5:8, “Therefore let us keep the Feast....” Paul made it very plain that he kept the Feast and the Church should keep the Feast.

We find that Paul left.

Acts 18:22, “And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up [to Jerusalem] and greeted the Church, he went down to Antioch.” To go “up” means to go to Jerusalem. That is the term that is used. When a Jew speaks of going to Jerusalem, he always speaks of going up to Jerusalem. It doesn’t matter where he is going from; if he goes to Jerusalem, he goes up to Jerusalem.

A part of that is derived from the symbolism of Isaiah where it talks about how, in the Millennium, all nations will say:

Isaiah 2:3, “Come, and let us go up to the house of the Lord.”

Verse 2, “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it.” The Jews always speak of it in that term and from that perspective. From wherever you are, you are always going up to Jerusalem and going down to anywhere else when you go from Jerusalem.

Acts 18:22 says he landed in Caesarea. Caesarea was the seaport. He went up, which means up to Jerusalem. He greeted the Church. He didn’t evangelize the Jews. He went to keep the Feast. He met with the congregation in Jerusalem. Then he left right after the Feast and went down to Antioch.

Antioch was his headquarters for the Gentile portion of the work. It was the center from which he worked. He spent some time there. Evidently, he wintered there. He spent a period of several months there, probably about six months, between the Feast and the Spring Festivals. Then he left to go over land. This began his **third evangelistic journey** going up through Asia Minor, Galatia and Phrygia.

Acts 19:1, “And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus....” Paul came to Ephesus, which is located in Asia Minor on the seacoast across from Greece. We find that he went into the synagogue.

Verses 8-9, “And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the Kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.”

When trouble came up and he no longer had access to the synagogue, he rented a school, a school of Tyrannus. Evidently, a fellow by the name of Tyrannus had a school there. So Paul utilized that and separated the disciples.

Verse 10, he stayed there for a period of two years and evangelized the whole area. The Roman province of Asia (what we would think of today as the Western portion of Turkey) was a portion of Asia Minor.

In Acts 19:1-7, we note here an example of some who had been baptized, but they had not received God’s Spirit. They had been baptized at an earlier time. This is an example of someone whose baptism was not valid. What makes a baptism not valid? Well, what makes it not valid is if you did not receive God’s Spirit when you were baptized. You weren’t truly converted. You really didn’t understand.

Verses 2-3, here were people who had been baptized by John the Baptist or some of his disciples, but they did not understand conversion. They didn’t understand about the Holy Spirit.

Verses 5-6, Paul baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus and laid hands on them; they received the Holy Spirit and spoke with tongues and prophesied.

This is the third and final mention in the book of Acts of the miraculous gift of foreign languages at the time of receiving of the Holy Spirit. This was not something that happened every time. It was something that happened only on special occasions, and this is the third occasion that is mentioned. God gave that original gift on the Day of Pentecost. That marked the beginning of the establishment of the New Testament Church. We’ve gone through and read that and saw reasons why that particular gift was chosen and given at that time. Later on, when the first Gentiles were converted, God worked the same miracle. God wanted it clearly shown that the

Jews would not consider that the Gentiles had gotten a second-rate baptism. So it was the same miracle. Here in this place, again God put His stamp of approval in a very clear way. Here was a decision that had to be made. Here were people who had been baptized earlier by John the Baptist or his disciples. After Paul counseled with them, he determined that their baptism was not valid and he re-baptized them. God put His clear stamp of approval in a very dramatic and miraculous way to clearly evidence that the decision had been a valid one. God made this clear distinction.

Paul remained there in Ephesus for an extended period of time. Various events took place. One thing we might note simply by way of example in Acts 19:11-12, “Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.”

As Paul was preaching there in Ephesus, people sent word to him of illnesses and of problems. Paul was certainly not able to go and personally anoint and pray for everyone who sent word of being ill. With transportation being what it was, it would be far more difficult than it is today. It is not always immediately possible and practical to go today, and far less so at that time. What did Paul do when he was unable to go and personally anoint and pray for someone? He anointed a cloth. “Handkerchief” or “aprons” just means “a piece of cloth.” He took a piece of cloth, anointed it, laid hands on it and sent it to the individual. God honored that.

Many, many years ago, back in the early 1930s, as Mr. Herbert Armstrong was preaching on the radio, there began to come in requests for him to pray and to anoint someone for illnesses. He was unable to go and personally do that everywhere. That would have been impossible. He looked here and saw the example of what Paul did when he was in that circumstance; he followed that example.

That, of course, is what we do today. If it is possible for us to do so, we go and personally anoint those who are sick. In some cases when that isn’t possible, we will anoint a cloth and send it. It is not the physical act that does the healing. God is our Healer. God has chosen to designate that. God utilizes the laying on of hands. Laying on of hands is listed in Hebrews 6:2 as one of the basic doctrines of the Church. The laying on of hands has to do with Church Government and the fact that God works through

human instruments. We find the laying on of hands utilized in cases of ordination, receiving of God's Spirit at baptism and in cases of someone seeking God's intervention in healing. It designates the fact that God is working through human instruments. God could do it some other way, but He has chosen to do it that way to make plain His working and the continuity of His working through human instruments. It shows the fact that we need to go through God's government in certain areas.

One of the things we run into in the book of Acts is the problem that came up with the silversmiths in Ephesus. I think it is interesting to note why the silversmiths were mad at Paul.

Acts 19:24-27, "For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: 'Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout most all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands.'"

'By this craft we have our wealth. Now this Paul has persuaded people to get rid of all these idols and our craft is in danger. He's going to put us out of business.'

This is a good place to go to prove that Paul was not a Catholic because if he had been a Catholic, the Ephesian silversmiths would not have been mad at him. He would have been good for business. They would have added a new line of crucifixes, Madonnas and all kinds of trinkets, saints and medallions. They would have had a whole new line of products. Paul wouldn't have been bad for business. They wouldn't have had any complaints about him. But they did. Why? Because Paul told the people to get rid of that junk! 'That is idolatry; get rid of those things. Throw them away. You don't want those things around.'

It makes a contrast. I think it is good for us to note the clear evidence of the departure of what calls itself "Christianity" and what calls itself "the Church" that Jesus built. It is important for us to note how far departed it is from the teachings and the practices of Jesus and the early apostles. Paul did not preach a message that was compatible with idolatry and the use of all kinds of shrines. You can't drive down the street without seeing all these little shrines out in front of the houses, and all the various things. That's

what they had in Ephesus. But the people that believed Paul got rid of those things, just as you did when you came into the Church. All of us, when we came into the knowledge of God's truth, had things we had to get rid of because we realized that was not God's way. There was so much of a problem in Ephesus that Paul finally had to leave. He left and went to Macedonia.

Acts 20:1, "After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to him, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia." We find Paul had gone from Macedonia and had crossed into Asia Minor.

Verse 7, "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight." Some had tried to take this out of context and say that Paul was having a Sunday morning service and they were having communion. On the first day of the week, Paul was over there to say mass and have communion early Sunday morning. Well, that's not what it is talking about at all.

Notice in v. 6 when it was, "But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days." Oh, they were keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread. Luke and the group with him had been in Philippi for the Days of Unleavened Bread. Paul was in Troas. Why was Paul breaking bread? "Breaking bread" just simply means "eating a meal." Why was he breaking bread and eating a meal with the disciples on the first day of the week?

Verse 7, "...Paul, ready to depart the next day..." Paul was getting ready to depart the next morning. He ate this meal and the speech lasted until midnight. Now, what is the evening or night portion of the first day of the week? It's not Sunday night. It's Saturday night! If Paul was gathered with them breaking bread on the first day of the week and their meeting lasted until midnight, when was this? This was Saturday night. This was at the close of the Sabbath. They had a going-away dinner for Paul. He was getting ready to leave; after the Sabbath they had a going-away party, so to speak, and Paul spoke. When he got "cranked up," he just kept going. It lasted until midnight.

Verse 9, there was a fellow sitting there by the name of Eutychus. He got sleepy, which occasionally occurs. The only problem with Eutychus was that they didn't have air conditioning and the windows were open. He was sitting up there in the balcony and was evidently

trying to get a little fresh air. He dozed off and the next thing you know, he fell out of the window, which is even worse than falling out of your chair. It's bad to go to sleep and fall out of your chair. But what was really bad, he was sitting up there by the open window and he fell out.

Now can you imagine how Eutychus is going to feel when he comes up in the resurrection and finds out the only time that he got his name in the New Testament was one time when he fell asleep in Church. Luke had to write it down and put his name in there so that everybody who has ever read the Bible, all the way down through the centuries, the only thing they know about Eutychus is that he went to sleep in Church and fell out of the window. If I were Eutychus, I think I would have a few words with Luke. I would want to ask Luke, 'Did you have to mention my name? Couldn't you just say "somebody"?'

Anyway, he went to sleep and he fell out. Verses 9-12, Paul went down and prayed for him. He raised him up and he was healed. They went in and ate some more. They broke bread and ate again because it was late. They talked a long while, even until the break of day. So this thing lasted all night. The moral of that story is if you're going to go to sleep, don't sit next to the window. Everybody else was either wide-awake after that time or they stayed away from the windows because we don't have a record of anybody else falling out.

Verse 13, Paul left early the next morning. What happened (if you look at a map) is that the others had left and sailed around the peninsula. Paul was able to walk straight across it. He stayed there on the Sabbath and Saturday night. Early Sunday morning when it was daybreak, he took off on a twenty-mile hike. That's what he was doing Sunday morning. He stayed there until daybreak. Sun-up Sunday morning, he took off on a long hike across this peninsula and met the ship on the other side. He had quite a day's work. I say twenty miles; it may be seventeen or eighteen, but that is a pretty good walk. I think that's usually about as much walking as most of us would care to do in a day—and then a little bit. There certainly isn't any Sunday morning church service going on here.

Paul sailed by Ephesus. He did not want to spend time there.

Verse 16, "For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost." Here he is

observing the Day of Pentecost. He was on his way to Jerusalem to observe the Day of Pentecost.

Verses 17-36, he had sent word and the elders of Ephesus met him at the Port when he came; he was able to speak to them.

Notice the emphasis that he gave and the message that he preached.

Verse 25, "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God...." Jesus came teaching the Kingdom of God. Paul taught the Kingdom of God. It was a message about the establishment of God's government. The God of heaven is going to set up a Kingdom. You find that emphasized throughout.

The last question the disciples asked Jesus was, Acts 1:6, "Lord, are You at this time going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?" Why did they ask that? He kept talking about a Kingdom and the establishment of a Kingdom. They understood what a kingdom was, and they just wanted to know *when*, which is the question most of us have. 'When, Lord, are You going to restore it? Right now? Five years from now? When?' Well, that's the question they had.

He told them to wait until they received the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4, 8) and then to go and do the work. That's what we are to do until the Kingdom comes. We are to be busy doing the work. That was Paul's message here to the Ephesians elders.

Verses 29-30, he warned them about the falling away and the things that were going to happen. There were already things coming in that were setting the stage for the apostasy—the falling away and the false church that would occur.

Acts 21:8, "On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea...."

Verse 15, "And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem."

Verses 17-18, "And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present." James was an apostle and the brother of Jesus. He was the apostle who presided over the Jerusalem Church. This was the headquarters Church in the New Testament period. This was the area from which everything centered. When Paul arrived at Jerusalem, he went to James.

Verse 19, all the other ministers were gathered there and they greeted them. He gave them a report of the things that God had been doing.

They were very thankful, and they updated him on the work that was going on there.

Verse 20, “And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, ‘You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law.’”

Now notice. Had Christians in the headquarters Church in Jerusalem been taught that Christ did away with God’s law? James was the brother of Jesus. Surely, if Jesus had done away with the law and nailed it to the cross, He would have let His brother know. James is saying we have a lot of people here, and they are all zealous for the law! James didn’t say, ‘We are trying to tell them that the law is done away.’ Paul didn’t say, ‘Why haven’t you told them it was nailed to the cross?’ People just read right over that and want to say, ‘Well, the law was done away.’ James didn’t think it was done away. He said they were all zealous for the law.

Verse 21, “but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.”

‘They have been misinformed about you.’ Things were wrongly stated. Word has gone out that Paul was teaching the Jews who lived in the Diaspora, the Jews who lived in the Gentile areas, that they shouldn’t circumcise their children. That was not what the Church taught at all. The Church did not teach against circumcising the children on the eighth day. That was not what the Church taught at all.

The decision of Acts 15 did not say that there should not be circumcision any more. They said that circumcision is not a matter of spiritual salvation, and when Gentiles who are uncircumcised are converted, they don’t have to go through the ritual of circumcision to be a part of the Church. It is not something that is necessary. It is not part of conversion. If you were uncircumcised when you came into the Church, there is no reason for you not to remain that way.

But in the case of Jews, circumcision was the physical sign of the covenant God made with Abraham. There is nothing the Church said in any way to discourage the continuation of that practice, most specifically, by those who were themselves the descendants of Abraham. There was nothing there to discourage that. And the Church has never discouraged it in that sense, as a physical matter. But it is not a part of salvation.

If someone is uncircumcised when they are converted, there is no need for them to make a change in that. It has no bearing on their salvation.

Verse 21, Paul’s statements had been misinterpreted. Paul had never said that, but some of the Jews had believed this rumor that Paul was telling Jews in the Diaspora to just ignore the instructions on circumcision of their children. So they came up with an idea.

Verses 23-24, “Therefore do what we tell you: we have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.” They said, ‘We want the Jews here to recognize that you are not anti or against or disparaging of the custom that we observe, even as a part of the temple ritual.’

There were some volunteers from individuals who had a vow. You have to understand that there were things that could be carried out when the temple stood that simply can’t be carried out today. You could not take upon yourself a Nazarite vow today because a part of that vow involves a temple ritual at the end of it. When the vow expires, you have to go to the temple and do certain things. Today there isn’t a temple to go to. If you can’t do exactly as God says, you leave it alone.

That is why the Jews don’t offer sacrifices today. It’s not because they consider that the need for them is done away, but because they recognize the instructions in Deuteronomy 12 that say you can’t do it just anywhere you think of doing it. You have to go to the place where God has set His name. You have to do it at the altar that is sanctified, and the Levites and the priests have to perform it. They recognize that if there isn’t a sanctified altar and a Levitical priesthood to carry out the ritual, it is something that they can’t do. It will occur, but they won’t do it until that is re-instituted.

There was nothing here that restricted those who had access to the temple from taking part in certain rituals, which were not wrong and which had their place. Since Paul was not against that, he was going to be involved in this. The intent was to have his presence there in the temple, bear the cost of these individuals ending their vow, and let it be seen that Paul was not the kind of individual that he had been represented to be. But that was not the way the story went.

Verses 27-28, “And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, ‘Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.’”

We see a mob. A riot starts—this kind of lynch-mob mentality. People get in a mob and they don’t think. Rumors go out and people believe the craziest things. Here they were. The rumor went out that Paul had brought some Gentiles into the inner part of the temple; he had brought some in who were uncircumcised and who would not have had access beyond the outer courts in the court of the Gentiles. The rumor went out that He brought them in and had defiled the temple.

They said, ‘This man has so little regard for the temple that he has brought a couple of uncircumcised Greeks in here, and they have defiled the temple. He has nothing but contempt for the temple.’ This was the rumor that began to run rampant. There was a riot that started.

Verse 33, the police force came and arrested Paul. They didn’t know what was going on.

Verses 37-38, “And as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, ‘May I speak to you?’ He replied, ‘Can you speak Greek? Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago raised an insurrection and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?’”

The captain of the guard makes it plain. He said, ‘Aren’t you that Egyptian fellow that had started a riot and led a bunch of robbers off into the desert?’ He was surprised when Paul spoke Greek to him. From all the commotion going on, he thought he was arresting the “Al Capone” of his day. He thought he must have the public enemy “number one.” It turns out that he said, ‘You are not that guy. I can see you and listen to you talk. You are not that fellow that did that.’ Paul said, ‘No, I’m not.’

Verse 39, “But Paul said, ‘I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people.’”

Verse 40, Paul began to speak there. He spoke in Hebrew to the crowd.

Acts 22:2, “And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent...” They quieted down when he began speaking in Hebrew—both out of respect for the Hebrew language as well as the fact that they generally had to “listen up” in order to hear

it better because Hebrew was not the everyday spoken language in Judea at that time. Aramaic, which is similar to Hebrew, was the common language. Of course, a lot of the Jews who were there from other areas for the holy day understood only a small amount of Hebrew or they were “rusty” with their Hebrew. When Paul began speaking in the “real thing,” they had to really “listen up” to try to understand what he was saying. They were doing so, and he went through and spoke to them.

Everything was fine until he began to talk about preaching to the Gentiles. When he mentioned going and speaking to the Gentiles (vv. 21-22), this really stirred them up. To them this was the unforgivable sin. They were ready to start a riot again. Such was their attitude.

Verse 24, the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks (KJV, “castle”). He decided that there had to be something to this. He didn’t know what was going on, but he took him in there and gave him a good working over—gave him the “third degree.” Then they would see what story he would tell.

Verses 25-26, they tied up Paul. Paul asked, ‘Is it lawful for you to do this to me, a Roman citizen, un-condemned? I haven’t had a trial. I haven’t been convicted of a crime. You’re going to take me in there and give me a beating. I’m a Roman citizen.’ Well, then the guard got scared and went and got the captain. ‘You had better watch it; this guy is a Roman citizen.’

Now, Roman citizens had rights. Most people in the Roman Empire were not citizens. Originally, the only ones who were Roman citizens were the inhabitants of Rome. Later, Roman citizenship was extended to all the people of Italy. Everyone else that they conquered was subject peoples; they weren’t citizens. They were subjects of the Roman Empire, but they weren’t citizens, which meant that they didn’t really have any rights. The only ones that had any rights were the citizens.

There were a number of rights. Rome practiced the rule of law, but the law only applied to the citizens—and there weren’t a whole lot of citizens. The automatic citizenship, there in Rome and Italy, was extended out to a few other localized areas. Individuals could obtain Roman citizenship granted on a one-by-one basis. Generally, the way you got it was you bought it. Kind of like the way you get things today. If you have enough money, you can probably buy just about anything. You could probably get a Russian citizenship or whatever citizenship you wanted if you had enough money.

It's amazing when you pay off the right people. The emperors were always willing to sell a few things, a few citizenships, and raise a little cash.

Citizenship was hereditary in the family. If your dad was a citizen, then you inherited that citizenship. Once a family received Roman citizenship, then from that time on, that family had that citizenship. Paul had inherited his citizenship. He was born a Roman citizen. Paul invoked the legal rights that he had and utilized them.

Let's quickly summarize here as we get to the situation where he went to trial before the Sanhedrin (Acts 22:30).

In Acts 23, Paul used wisdom. There is a time to use wisdom. Paul was on trial. When they brought him before the Jewish court, it didn't take him very long to realize that half of them were Pharisees and half of them were Sadducees. Now, the Pharisees believed in the resurrection. They accepted the doctrine of the resurrection, but the Sadducees didn't.

Verses 6-7, when Paul got in there, the first thing he said was, 'You know I was born a Pharisee; I am the son of a Pharisee. I am in here because I've been called into question of the hope of the resurrection of the dead.' Immediately, this began to set things "abuzz."

Verses 8-9, the Sadducees were upset because they didn't think there was any resurrection. They began arguing with the Pharisees who said, 'Yes, there is.' Then the Pharisees said, 'This fellow doesn't seem like such a bad fellow; we think you should turn him loose.'

Verse 10, the Sadducees were mad and began squabbling and fighting among themselves. Paul just used a little bit of psychology. He picked the point that they did not agree on and got them arguing among themselves. That got so much commotion going that they were about to get into a fight over him. The soldiers came in and took him back to jail. They said, 'This is getting out of hand.'

In Acts 24, they brought him before Felix the governor. Now the Jews had hired a real "hotshot" lawyer—a fellow by the name of Tertullus. He was one of those real "hotshot" types, a kind of the "Race-horse Haines" of the day or whatever the famous lawyer. He came in there. Notice the "syrupy" way he started off. When he was called, Tertullus began to accuse Paul to Felix.

Acts 24:2-7, "And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying, 'Seeing

that through you we enjoy great peace; and prosperity is being brought in this nation by your foresight, we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us. For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law. But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took him out of our hands.'"

Does that at all bear any resemblance to the truth? He comes in here "laying it on really thick." He was saying, 'This fellow, he's a troublemaker, a ringleader of this sect—this cult, this sect of the Nazarenes. [Boy that sounds bad.] He's just stirring up trouble everywhere. He was going to profane the temple, and all we were trying to do was bring him to court. We are peaceful, law-abiding people. We were arresting him for breaking the law, and we were going to take him to court. These soldiers, these policemen, just came in there swinging their Billy-clubs everywhere. They just knocked us all around and just took this guy. Boy, police brutality! They were just trampling all over us, just terrible, terrible! You need to speak to that chief of police that you have. I just can't believe it! Those police just came in there, and they were just so ugly!'

Listen to this guy just "laying it all on." People haven't changed; it's the same thing. You can just see this lawyer up here in court, going on about his poor client. 'The police came in, and it was terrible.' Well, anyway, the governor listened to all this.

Verse 9, the Jews were standing there, and they were agreeing—"listen to this guy." So Paul, afterward, just went down and gave the facts.

Verses 10-13, "Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: 'Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city. Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me.'"

'They didn't find me in the temple arguing with anybody or inciting people—neither in the

synagogues nor in the city. I haven't said anything to anybody. They can't prove any of these things that they are saying. They have no evidence. They can't document one thing that they say I did. I was not preaching in the temple. I was not doing anything.' Paul had been accused of profaning the temple.

We see the situation went on. Felix listened to Paul. He called Paul and liked to listen to what Paul had to say.

Verse 25, "Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, 'Go away for now, when I have convenient time I will call for you.'" When Felix heard about righteousness and temperance, this made him a little nervous. When he began to find out there was a judgment to come, this really scared him because he knew that he was falling pretty far short when it got to righteousness and temperance, and if there was a judgment to come, he really was in trouble. So, he didn't want to hear anymore. This is the way some people are. They hear the truth and want to turn off the television. It makes them uncomfortable.

Verse 26, "Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him."

Felix kept him in jail because what he really wanted was a little "payola." He wanted a little "under-the-table" money. He kept figuring that eventually Paul could "shake down" the Church and get some money for him. He would listen to him from time to time and kept waiting to get some money.

Verse 27, "But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left him there." Two years went by, and Paul didn't pay him off. So when he was getting ready to leave office, he decided he would just leave him there. He wouldn't stir up trouble with the Jews. Festus came in. Festus was the new governor. Well, they had to go through all the "rigmarole" again.

Acts 25:2-3, "Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him, asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem—while they lay in ambush along the road to kill him." Festus thought, 'Let's just send him back to Jerusalem and have a trial.'

Verse 10, "Then Paul said, 'I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well

know.'" Paul said, 'No way. I am not going back there.' He knew that they would try to kill him. There wasn't going to be any trial. Paul at this point appealed to Caesar.

Verse 11, "For if I am an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar.'" He appealed to the Supreme Court of the day. He appealed to Caesar. He was exercising his right as a Roman citizen to do so, and this solved the problem for Festus. He said, 'I will just send you to Rome then.'

Verse 12, "Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, 'You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!'"

Verse 13, King Agrippa was in town, and he wanted to hear this fellow Paul. Festus decided this would be an opportunity to get in good with Agrippa.

In Acts 26:1-29, Paul addressed Festus and Agrippa. Notice the situation. Paul has now had an opportunity to speak to the top echelons of government in his area. He spoke to the two Roman governors and the king over that area under the Roman Empire.

Acts 26:31-32, neither of them found anything wrong with him.

In Acts 27, they put him on a boat and were going to ship him off to Rome.

Verses 13-44; 28:1, on the trip from Caesarea to Rome, a storm resulted in a shipwreck on Malta where the group had to winter. Of course, Paul took advantage of the opportunity to preach.

In Acts 27:9-10, it was a time when the sailing was dangerous. In fact, Paul warned them that it was really too late in the season. But they figured, 'what did he know?' And they went anyway. It mentions in v. 9 that the Fast was already past—in other words, the Day of Atonement.

In Acts 28:1, they wrecked there at Malta.

Verses 11-14, when the winter was over—in the spring—they left. They landed at Syracuse, in Sicily and then came into the main part of Italy, south of Rome. When Paul came to Rome, he was delivered to the Praetorian Guard.

Verse 16, he was allowed to dwell by himself. He rented a home.

Acts 28:30, "Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him." He had a personal guard. He was evidently chained to the guard, but he was at least allowed to dwell in a house. He was

allowed free access for people to come and see him.

Notice the reputation of the Church. Notice what they knew about the Church.

Verse 21, “And they said to him, ‘We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you. But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect [speaking of the Church], we know that it is spoken against everywhere.’”

‘We don’t really know anything about it; we just know that people don’t like it.’ That sounds kind of like us, doesn’t it? They don’t know much about it, but they don’t like it. ‘This sect! This cult! This crazy bunch you got mixed up with.’

There’s nothing new under the sun. That’s what they said about Paul. That’s what they said about the Church in the New Testament. Why should we expect that they think more highly of us? Christ warned us to be careful.

Luke 6:26, “Woe to you when all men speak well of you.” Be careful if everybody likes you. I don’t mean your personality. People liked Christ’s personality, but they didn’t like His message. If the world agrees with you, you have trouble. If the world agrees with you, then you have to look and see what you are preaching and practicing. The world did not agree with Christ, and they are not going to agree with us. They may like certain things about us, but when it comes down to religion, they think that’s kind of crazy.

We notice what Paul was preaching right to the end.

Acts 28:31, “preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.”

We open the book of Acts with the disciples asking Jesus, Acts 1:6, “...Lord, will You at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?” –Because that’s what He preached about. When the book of Acts ends, Paul was preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. So throughout, we have the clear message and teaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. The world has lost sight of that Gospel and that message, but God’s Church has preached and taught that message through the centuries.

With that, we will conclude our survey of the book of Acts. We, of course, have only hit the high spots in the book of Acts, but you have had opportunity to read the story in detail. I have

tried to concentrate on matters of background that can perhaps make it a little more meaningful.

We will be starting fresh on a brand new series.

So with that, we will be completed.

Bible Study # 42 Questions

SURVEY OF THE GOSPELS AND ACTS SERIES

Acts 18—28

1. What did Paul do when the Jews would no longer allow him to preach in the synagogue?
2. How long did Paul remain in Corinth? Why?
3. Why was Paul anxious to return to Jerusalem?
4. Where did the Church in Ephesus begin to meet when Paul quit preaching every Sabbath in the synagogue of that city?
5. What did Paul do when he was unable to go and personally anoint someone?
6. Why were the silversmiths of Ephesus mad at Paul?
7. Does Acts 20:7 picture a Sunday morning worship service?
8. What had Paul preached among the Ephesians?
9. To whom did Paul report when he first returned to Jerusalem?
10. Had Christians in the headquarters Church in Jerusalem been taught that God's law was done away with by Christ?
11. According to Acts 22, at what point did the Jewish mob become incensed at Paul and refuse to listen to him any longer?
12. How did Paul use wisdom during his trial before the Sanhedrin as recorded in Acts 23?
13. What was Paul accused of before Governor Felix?
14. Was Felix an honest politician? Prove.
15. What did Paul do when Festus tried to send him back to Jerusalem to be tried by the Sanhedrin?
16. What was one positive result of Paul's lengthy imprisonment?
17. What event happened on the trip from Caesarea to Rome?
18. Was Paul cast into the common prison in Rome? What special privileges did he have?
19. What gospel do we find Paul proclaiming at the end of Acts?

Bible Study # 43
November 14, 1989
Mr. John Ogwyn

Introduction to the General Epistles

I want to **begin a new series. It will be a fairly short four-part series on the General Epistles.** I think it will serve to tie up material that we have covered. We went through the Gospels—the story of what Jesus Christ said and did—then we followed up with Acts, the actions of His original apostles. We have the emphasis on action—what was done by Jesus Christ and His disciples.

Now we come to what is next in the inspired order of the New Testament—the General Epistles. I'll explain to you, in just a few moments, as to why they would logically come next. We will focus a little bit on what these books contain because they have vital information.

When we finish this series, we are going back to the Old Testament and picking up some of the material we skipped over earlier. We covered the historical survey of the Old Testament in story flow, but there are many books that we did not touch upon. When we finish this series on the General Epistles, we will go back and pick up the Major Prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel—that I think will prove to be a very timely subject. Then we will go into the Minor Prophets. I think we will find that the timing of going into those books will prove to tie in very directly with the events that we will be going through in the course of the next year.

Let's focus this evening on the General Epistles—sometimes called the “catholic epistles.” That's right! You know why they are called the “catholic epistles”? The word “catholic” simply means “universal.” The term “catholic epistles” does not mean that they have any connection with the Catholic Church. We will notice a little later what the Catholic Church sought to do to some of these epistles. Some of the commentators use the term “universal” or “catholic” in the old sense of “universal” or “general.”

Many of the letters that Paul wrote were specific letters. He wrote a letter to the Church at Rome. He wrote a letter to the Church in Corinth, a letter to the Church in Thessalonica, a letter to the Church in Ephesus.

The General Epistles are letters that were written, not to a specific church or to a specific

individual like Titus or Timothy or Philemon, but to a wide general audience. They were not directed toward one specific congregation or one specific individual. That's why they are termed General Epistles.

In the order of the New Testament that the Greeks have preserved, we have, first, the Gospels and Acts. They were preserved in the order that we customarily find them. Next are the General Epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude. Paul's epistles come next in mostly the order that we now have. The only difference would be that Paul's letters to the seven Churches, Romans through Thessalonians, would follow in the order that we have them, but the book of Hebrews would be inserted in between II Thessalonians and I Timothy rather than coming after Philemon, as in our common English versions. *So, the inspired order is the Gospels, Acts, the General Epistles, Paul's epistles followed by the book of Revelation.* We are going to note that there were some reasons for this. As I said, this is the order that was preserved by the Greeks in their manuscripts.

The order that is used in our English Bibles is what is called the Western order. That is the order that was derived from the Catholic Vulgate—the Latin translation—that was the official version of the Catholic Church. They re-arranged the order of the books from that which the Greeks had preserved. When the translations were made from the Greek manuscripts, they rearranged the order of them to conform to that with which people were already familiar, which was the Catholic or Western order. The reason was that they didn't see what difference it made. They said, ‘it's all the same books; what difference does it make what order they are in? This is what people are familiar with, so this is what we will do.’ That's why all subsequent English translations have followed that order. To my knowledge, the only English translation that uses the original order is the Pannan translation of the New Testament. He didn't fully understand what the significance was, but he figured there must be one. So in doing his English translation, he followed the original Greek order.

We have the same thing with the Old Testament. The order that we have in our King James and all the English translations is a re-arranged order. It is not in the order that the Jews preserved the books. If you find a Jewish translation of the Old Testament, it will be in the inspired order, but any of the other English orders simply follow a

re-arrangement. The library in Alexandria, Egypt, didn't see any "rhyme or reason" to the order that the Jews had, so they re-arranged it—as librarians are want to do. They arranged it in the order that made sense to them—which missed the point—but they didn't understand the point. There are several reasons why God originally inspired that the general epistles come right after the book of Acts and why that was the first thing you would go into. One clear reason involves the subject matter of the books themselves. The subject matter contained in James, Peter, John and Jude is very basic.

Peter tells us about Paul's epistles.

II Peter 3:16, "as also in all his [Paul] epistles, speaking in them of these things hard to be understood, which those that are unlearned and unstable wrest and twist as they do also the other Scriptures." Peter recognized that Paul was a writer that you have to read very carefully. Paul was a deep thinker. He wrote very complex sentences. Any of you, if you were an English teacher, would have a great time trying to diagram one of Paul's sentences. Some of them take up almost two paragraphs. He wrote a lot of very complex thoughts. Because of his style of writing, you really have to carefully go through what Paul said. He was a very deep thinker; he expounded very many deep truths.

Paul is not for beginners in the sense that Peter said Paul wrote things that are hard to be understood. So that tells us you start with what's easy to be understood and progress to what's hard to be understood. If you start with what's hard to be understood, and you don't understand that, then you are all "balled up" by the time you come to something easy. Then the whole thing is a mess. It's kind of like starting with Algebra and then trying to work your way back to two plus two. That's not the approach to use. You start with the most basic and work up to what is more complex. Paul wrote things that were more complex. He wrote some very deep spiritual things.

When you go through the Gospels, you have what Jesus Himself said and did. When you go through the book of Acts, we find the continuation of the story of what the apostles said and did, but the emphasis is on action. When we come to James, Peter, John and Jude, there are basic things that are further developed. We will find what those things are in just a few moments. *The material is very basic and provides a proper prelude to the study of Paul's letters.*

The apostles who wrote the General Epistles are James the brother of Jesus, Peter who was the chief of the twelve apostles and John who was part of that inner circle of the twelve. He was the last of the original apostles left alive. Peter and John were basically responsible for the completion of the New Testament canon. James, of course, had died prior to the time the canon was completed. James died two or three years prior to the death of Peter. He was not involved in canonization of the New Testament. James the brother of John had died much earlier (Acts 12:2). He had been martyred much earlier.

In Galatians 2:9, Paul acknowledged James, Peter and John as being the pillars of the Church. Paul recognized and acknowledged them as such. James, as I said, was the brother of Jesus. He was the apostle who presided over the headquarters' Church in Jerusalem. Peter was the one that Jesus utilized as the chief of the twelve. John was a part of that inner circle of Peter, James and John. There are two James. You recognized that. James who wrote the book of James was not the James who was the brother of John (Acts 12:2). James who wrote the book of James was the son of Joseph and Mary; therefore, he was technically the half-brother of Jesus Christ. Jude was a younger brother of James and, therefore, also a half-brother of Jesus.

When we look at James, Peter, John and Jude, we are looking at the writings of apostles who were centered and had been focused there in Jerusalem. The apostles were, in the case of Peter and John, a part of the twelve; in the case of James and Jude, they were literal brothers of Jesus Himself.

Even though Jesus' brothers were not converted during His lifetime, you have to recognize the benefit they had. They had grown up with Him. They knew Jesus in a way that basically no one else did. They had grown up with Him and were with Him up until He was thirty years old when He left home to begin His ministry. They were at least in their mid-twenties by that time. They had been around Him; they had worked with Him; and they had associated with Him all their life. They knew how He thought. They understood a lot of things that they didn't fully grasp until they were converted. Once they were converted, they had that tremendous background of that intimate day-after-day exposure for years and years.

The exposure of the twelve apostles had been more limited to a three and one-half year period, but it was a very intense exposure. It was the time of Christ's ministry. It was a time when they

were more mature and more receptive—even though they weren't really converted and didn't really get the point of a lot of what Jesus said until after they were converted. Once these individuals were converted and really began to get the point, a lot of things came together.

The greatest importance of the books of the General Epistles is the basic knowledge and warnings that they provide the Christians. They give the knowledge about the real meaning of Christianity and the attempts that were being made to subvert and to corrupt it. There is a great deal of warning in these epistles concerning the apostasy, attempts to subvert the truth and to raise up what ultimately became the great false church.

It's interesting because there have probably not been any books of the New Testament that have been more objected to over the years than most of the General Epistles. In the early centuries, the church at Rome, Alexandria and Carthage rejected most or all of these books. The Catholic Church likes to claim the credit for having given us the Bible. That, of course, is not true. When you first come upon the early Catholic Church conference, the Bible, as we know it, was already in existence. The only thing they were arguing about was taking books out of an already existent canon. They were arguing about whether or not certain books should be included that were already included. We find something already extant, and we find individuals objecting to it.

The interesting thing is that when you look at the Churches that Paul raised up or the Churches that John administered in the latter years of his life, there was never any objection to the canon of the New Testament. When you look at the Churches in Asia Minor and in Judea, you don't find any record of any objection to these epistles or to any of the New Testament. There was never a question in the areas of Judea or the area of Asia Minor. There was never any objection from any of those Churches to the canon of the New Testament as we have it.

The only places objections came from were Rome, together with Alexandria, Egypt, which should tell you something. What did God ever do in Egypt, other than tell His people to come out of it? Rome is not where you look as the repository of truth. That is made plain and is one of the reasons they so greatly objected to the book of Revelation. You know, you don't even have to be really perceptive to read Revelation; by the time you get to Revelation 17, you come to this great city that reigns over the kings of the

earth that sit on seven hills. You don't have to scratch your head too long to figure out which one that is. There are not very many cities that will fit that definition—the great city of the ancient world that was very famous for being the city of seven hills. That, clearly, was the city that reigned over the kings of the earth. They didn't have to read too far. They could even figure out a few things and knew that it was directed at them—and they didn't like it.

The Churches in Syria and Jerusalem accepted these books from the earliest time. There was never a question in the Churches in Asia Minor. The real reason for the argument was a desire to discredit the instructions and the warnings that are contained in these books.

It's interesting that you can come all the way down to the Protestants and Martin Luther; Martin Luther didn't like these books, particularly the book of James. The Lutherans derive from Martin Luther. The German translation of the New Testament is based on Martin Luther's translation in the German language and is the equivalent of what the King James is in the English. It is kind of standard.

To this day in this German translation, there is a verse in Romans that is mistranslated because Martin Luther added a word in where it talks about being justified by faith. Martin Luther didn't think that was strong enough, so he added in "alone." So it reads, "justified by faith alone." Martin Luther referred to the book of James as "an epistle of straw." He didn't like the book of James because it talked about faith without works is dead. He called it "an epistle of straw."

Well, if you wait a few years, you will get to find out what James is going to call Martin Luther. We found what Martin Luther called James; wait a few years and you will get the rest of the story. We will hear what James calls Martin Luther, and I daresay James will have the last word. In the long run, his word is going to carry a whole lot more weight. The ways things are headed, you may not have to wait too, too, long to find out what James thinks on the subject.

Then we will see some of the scholars who want to argue about the Greek and the Hebrew. They can be arguing about it while the bombs are falling and the Germans are marching down the street. They can be arguing about how many people wrote Isaiah, that the Bible doesn't mean what it says and prophecy doesn't really tell about the future. We will just stick around for a few years and see who has what to say.

The objections to these books go back to certain areas. The objections to these books ultimately go back to the subject matter. These books were clearly written to encourage Christians during times of increasing stress and persecution, of increasing turmoil and dissensions within the visible Church. You have to get the picture. You have to realize a little of what was going on at the time.

The book of James and the books of Peter (certainly James and II Peter) were written within a five-year period prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. Both of the books of Peter were written within, let's say, a six- or seven-year period of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. John's books were written in the 90s, but James, Peter and Jude were written in the early to mid-60s A.D. II Peter was written perhaps around 67 A.D. What we are looking at is a time just a few years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

You have to understand what that meant. From the time that the Church had its beginnings on the Day of Pentecost 31 A.D. up to this time, things had been centered in Jerusalem. If there were questions, controversies or problems, they could come up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders there, and the matter could be resolved.

Look at the case in Acts 15. It was clear that this is where the apostles were and where things centered. If there were questions, you go to Jerusalem and you get them resolved. The Jerusalem Church was the nucleus. Paul admonished the Gentile Churches to be followers of the Churches of God in Judea. Everyone was directed to look to headquarters, to Jerusalem, to the Churches in Judea because that was where the Churches had been established for the longest period of time. This is where the people who were the most deeply grounded in the Law and scriptures were. This was the logical place.

Even for the Jews who were converted, a great deal of their life revolved around Jerusalem and around the temple because the temple was the focal point for Jerusalem. Even those who were converted still went to the temple and viewed it. Jerusalem was a visible symbol of where God had been working, of God's work and what God was accomplishing and doing. There were many things that focused in on it.

It was very difficult for them to perceive of how things could go on with Jerusalem "wiped off" the map and with the temple "wiped off" the map, which meant of course that the headquarters Church scattered. There was a remnant that went

to nearby Pella, but they ceased to have influence. You have to realize the extent to which this was going to shake up people and the extent to which this was going to be a problem. These events would seem so drastic that those who had understood some of what Jesus said in Matthew 24 must have thought for something like that to happen, it would mean that the end was here—Christ was going to come back.

After all, didn't Jesus say in Luke 21:20, "...when you see Jerusalem encompassed about with armies...." They were going to perceive that.

Now there were things that had to be pointed out. That's part of why the General Epistles were written. Paul wrote Thessalonians right around the same time.

II Thessalonians 2:1-3, "Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition."

He was warning them. He said, 'You are going to see things going on and are going to scratch your head and say, "How can this be?"' Here are people introducing heresies, people who were doing and saying things. In some cases, whole congregations were being subverted.

Paul warned those in the Greek-speaking world in II Thessalonians 2:3 to understand that at the time of the end, that day shall not come except there was a falling away first and the man of sin was revealed—the son of perdition.

II Peter 3:3-4, "knowing this: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.'"

Peter wrote and explained, 'Don't think when you see things happening, and it doesn't happen on your time schedule, that God is slack concerning His promises or that God is careless or that God is not paying attention to things. Don't think that.'

Verses 8-9, God is not slack concerning His promises. God has a time plan; in God's plan, one day is representative of a thousand years. You draw the conclusion from that—a day is representative of a thousand years in God's plan. In Revelation 20:4-6, John makes plain that

period is a thousand years. We know that there is a Sabbath that God reserves to Himself at the end. That's made plain in the Major Prophets. Isaiah and others describe that God reserves a period of time. The time of the Messiah, the time of the Messiah's reign, is likened unto a Sabbath (Isaiah 14:7). John tells us in Revelation that that Sabbath will be a thousand years of duration. Peter tells us in II Peter 3:8 that a day is illustrative of a thousand years in God's time schedule. God is not slack, but He is on a time schedule. You begin to perceive a seven thousand-year plan—six thousand years allotted to man and the seventh thousand-year period, the millennial Sabbath, reserved for God. You begin to understand some of that, but it really doesn't become clear until these things were written.

One of the purposes of these epistles was to encourage Christians during the times of increasing stress and persecution, of increasing turmoil and dissension within the visible Church. There were going to be problems, things they were going to see. I think we have to understand that sometimes God allows things to take place. You think, 'Why would God allow this?' Well, God over the years has chosen to allow many things. What we have to do is stay close to God, walk with God and realize God has a plan and a purpose that He is working out.

God allowed some of these things; these epistles were to encourage them and to build them up during those times. It was to give instruction on points of basic Christian doctrine and Christian living. There are some very fundamental issues addressed in the General Epistles. We will see what those were in just a few moments. The most fundamental basic issues of Christian life were addressed here. These are things people needed to know.

The General Epistles serve to warn the people about the heresies that were increasingly rampant and to exhort them to continue in the faith once delivered. **Jude** exhorted the people *to contend for the faith once delivered* (Jude 3). Here was Jude writing in the 60s A.D., thirty to thirty-five years downstream from the Day of Pentecost (not even a full generation away from it). He had to tell the Christians of his day to really contend for the faith once delivered.

Other things were coming in—a little change here, a little watering down there, a little something here, a little something there. Heresies were coming in; various ideas and philosophies of people were coming in. Jude said, 'You have to honestly contend for the faith once delivered.

Contending for the faith once delivered is what we want, not the corruption that man has introduced or the customs and traditions that man has introduced. We want the faith once delivered.'

Too many times people look at a lot of books that come out. In many cases, they start from today's social customs, attitudes and ideas, and then they try to read some of those things back into the Bible. Well, you can't do that. That is not the perspective. What we have to contend for is the faith once delivered—not trying to read the attitudes of a liberal, permissive western society back into things that God had written almost two thousand years ago.

Let's notice a little bit of these individual books. Let's get the theme of these books and understand why they are so basic.

What did **James** talk about?

James 1:3-6, "knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting..."

Verse 12, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."

Verse 22, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

James 2:1, "My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality."

Verse 17, "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." He talks about *faith and works* throughout the remainder of Chapter 2. As you go through, James continues to address this subject of faith. When you look at the book of James, he addresses the subject of faith. He explains what living faith is. He explains that faith without works is dead, that the trying of your faith works patience. James is the one that addresses the subject of healing.

James 5:14-15, "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven." Again, the emphasis is on faith.

Verse 17, "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, he prayed earnestly that it would not rain;

and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.” Elijah prayed the prayer of faith. Throughout the book of James we have an emphasis on faith. James explains what real faith is. *Real faith is living faith. It is faith that is mingled with actions.*

Now, this is the thing that Martin Luther objected to. It bothered him, and this is the thing that has bothered many about James’ writings. They consider James as too “Jewish” because he stressed the importance of what we do. Faith is not simply what you believe. Real faith carries over into action. I can say I believe something, but unless I act on it, I don’t really believe it very much. If you tell me this building is on fire, if I believe you, I will get up and get out. I can sit here all night, and say, ‘Oh, I believe you. I am sure you are right. I know you are telling the truth. I surely believe that.’ But if I don’t do anything, it is pretty evident that I don’t believe it too much. If I believe something, I am going to act on it.

That happens sometimes in a natural disaster. A hurricane is going to hit here, and you have people that aren’t going to believe it. They say, ‘Oh, I don’t think it’s going to be that kind of damage. I don’t think it will hit here. I’ve lived here for forty years. I don’t think I am going to leave.’ They don’t believe it. That’s the point! Because they don’t believe it’s going to happen to them, they don’t do anything. Others believe it and do something. They get up and leave. They do various things.

Faith! If we really believe something, we act on what we believe. The kind of faith that the Christian-professing world pays lip service to—the kind of faith they talk about—‘Oh, brother, do you believe?’ It is dead faith. If they really believed, they would act on what they claimed to believe. James tells us that faith without works is dead. If you believe something, you act on that belief. If you don’t act on it, you don’t believe it.

He tells us that our faith is tried so that we can build endurance. God does not just instantly answer or give us an instant response every time where faith is involved. If our faith were never tried, we would never learn to endure. Our faith is tried and tested when what we see and what God says contradicts. Then, which evidence do you believe? Do you believe what God says or do you believe what your eyes see? When the two are in contradiction, do you believe what the five senses discern or do you believe what God tells you? What do you believe?

Remember when Jesus was walking on the water and Peter said:

Matthew 14:28-31, “...‘Lord, if it is really You, tell me to come, and I’ll come, and walk on the water too.’” Christ said, ‘Come on,’ and Peter impulsively acted. He believed what Jesus said, and he stepped off the boat and started walking. Then all of a sudden, he started looking around and he said, ‘Wait a minute! I can’t do this. You can’t walk on water.’ And about that time, *glug, glug, glug*, down he went. Before we laugh too hard at Peter, we need to realize at least he took a few steps. He took a few more steps than any of us have taken, and few more than any of the other apostles took. He believed at least for a little while.

But what happened? What his five senses discerned and told him contradicted with what Jesus said. Jesus said, ‘Yes, you can—come on.’ While he believed and acted on it, he was fine. But as soon as he began to think, ‘Wait a minute, I can’t do this,’ when he began to notice and pay attention to what the five senses told him, faith “went out the window.” Faith and sight often contradict. The question comes: what do you believe? Do you believe what your five senses tell you or do you believe what God says? That is the issue of faith. James addresses faith. You can’t get much more basic than faith.

What does Paul tell us?

I Corinthians 13:13, “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” The things that are permanent abiding values are faith, hope and love. Those are the basic fundamental values that are necessary for the Christian life. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrew 11:6). Without faith you can’t please God because the very basis of our relationship has to be a relationship of trust. That’s what faith involves. It involves trust. James discusses the subject of faith. He goes through and expounds what real faith is. That is pretty fundamental.

Now guess what **Peter** talked about. **Hope!** We start out with faith and we get to hope. Guess what we are going to find **John** talks about? You guessed it. **Love!** John talks about love all through the books of I, II, III John.

I John 4:16 he talks about, “God is love.”

I John 5:3, “This is the love of God that we keep His Commandments.”

I John 4:20-21, “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this

commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.” You can’t love God and hate your brother. It talks about all kinds of things about love.

It’s kind of interesting. You start out with one book of James, two books of Peter, and then three books of John. It’s kind of building up, step by step—faith, hope and love—and the greatest of these is love. Step by step it builds up. These are fundamental Christian doctrines. These are fundamental abiding Christian values.

We have gone through what Jesus said and did in His life, and what the apostles continued to do in the book of Acts. Then, we come to the epistles. They are not so much a story of the actions, but they now begin to explain certain concepts and principles in more detail. We start out with a focus on the fundamental Christian principal: faith, hope, and love. Jude primarily warns about apostasy and the need to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered (Jude 3). Then you go into Paul’s epistles.

At that point, with the background of the General Epistles, you are prepared for the book of Romans and for some of the things that Paul says there. Peter has already warned us that there are things that Paul wrote that are a little difficult to be understood. When you understand that Paul builds on what the others have said, you don’t go off the “deep end” when Paul talks about not being justified by works. James didn’t say we’re justified by works; he said faith without work is dead. Your works don’t justify you. But if you don’t have any works, you clearly don’t have any faith. So while it is your faith that justifies you, if your faith doesn’t have any works, then your faith is dead. A dead faith won’t save anybody.

You have to approach it step by step to really get the point or else you wind up where the Protestants are. Some of the Protestants have gone off the “deep end” because they have laid aside James, Peter, John and Jude; they jump directly into some of the great complex parts of Paul. ‘Well, all you have to do is believe.’ They don’t understand what kind of faith is living faith. They don’t understand the difference between a living faith and a dead faith. That’s right; faith is all you need, but it has to be a living faith and not a dead faith. What you need is faith and love. That’s right! But if you read I John, you’d know that.

I John 5:3, “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” You’d know that love is the fulfilling of the law. You’d know what love is. We would understand these things.

What happens is the Protestant world skips over the General Epistles and jumps immediately into Paul’s epistles. Then they come up with a couple concepts: all you need is to believe and all you need is love. If you understand what is involved in belief and in faith, if you understand what’s involved in love, that’s right—that’s what you need. But those things involve a lot more than most of the Christian-professing world thinks they do.

Let’s notice here. James starts out with faith. Faith has to do with our relationship with God. It has to do with trust in God, with believing God, with holding onto the promises God makes. We build and develop our relationship with God as we go through certain things, certain trials and tests. It may be in regards to healing or jobs or family problems. It may be in regards to many different things. I think almost all of us look back at certain things in our lives. I can look in my life and can look at some things that I hope I never have to go through again. But I wouldn’t take anything for having gone through them, in the sense of what I learned and the fact that my faith was deepened as a result of it. What do you need over faith? Faith is fundamental. But hope comes in there. What does hope do?

I Peter 1:3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

Verse 13, “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Peter talks about trials and the basis of surviving trials. The means of surviving trials is the reality of the hope that is before us.

I Peter 3:15, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense [KJV, “an answer”] to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”

Peter emphasizes the importance of that hope being real to us, of the hope of the resurrection being real to us, and the hope of the reward that God has in store for us being real. It is because that hope is real and because that hope is fixed in our minds that we are able to go through what we encounter here and now.

Brethren, we need to understand. We look at the things that are happening on the world scene, and we get excited about it. Well, we should in some ways. But we also need to be sobered by it

because if we are where we think we are, we haven't seen anything yet. You haven't seen anything yet. Jesus said very plainly that before He returns, there is going to be a time of tribulation that is going to be greater than anytime that has ever been on the earth until then (Matthew 24:21). When you look back and see some of the things that have happened, you realize that's going to be pretty bad. When you look at what has happened, Christ said there is going to come something that is going to pall all of the other things into insignificance. It's going to be so much worse. It's going to be so much greater. It's going to be the culmination. We are going to go through these things.

I know God holds out promises of a place of protection, a place of safety, a place where at least the Philadelphia era of the Church is going to be kept and protected for a time, times, and half a time—for three and one-half years—the period of the tribulation. I understand that. But how do you think that's going to be divided out? Do you think God's going to have an announcement made, 'All right, everybody who wants to be a Laodicean and go through the tribulation, would you please form a line over here on this side of the stage. And everybody who wants to be a Philadelphian and would like to be protected from the tribulation, please get over here and form a line. We are on our way.' You think that's the way it is going to be? No!

One of the things we are told about the Laodiceans is that they don't see themselves as they are. They think they are the ones in great shape. Do you ever think about that? They think they are rich and increased with goods. They have need of nothing; they are in great shape. They don't perceive themselves as Christ perceives them.

You know, we are in for a time of trial and testing in the Church, as well as in the world. I think God allowed us to go through things. Don't think all the time of trial and testing for the Church ended in 1979. Not that we will go through exactly the same things, but if we think that all of the trials and tests on the Church were over ten years ago and that it's just kind of "riding a greased sled" from now on into the Kingdom, I think we grossly deceive ourselves.

That's not what I read in the prophecies of the Bible. That's not what I read in Matthew 24 when it talks about people becoming offended and even hating and betraying one another (v. 10). It talks about love growing cold (v. 12) and about various other things. In other words,

brethren, we are going to go through and live through some very real events. Some have emphasized it in the context of watching world news. We most definitely need to watch *ourselves*. You know, God is on schedule. Am I? That's what I need to look at. God's plan, what God is doing and what God is working out in the world is on schedule. What about me? We need to take heed of ourselves to make sure that my life, my growth and my development is on schedule. That's the thing that I need to take note of. That's the thing in your life that you need to take note of.

Peter emphasizes the reality of the hope. The means of surviving trials is seeing the reality of the hope.

He tells us in I Peter 1:3-6, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible [this is what our hope is] and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials."

We go through a lot of trials, a lot of difficulties. He didn't say that we don't get "down" with things sometimes. He says we rejoice in hope. Not that we don't get "down" and discouraged by some of the many problems we encounter here and now. What we rejoice about is the fact that there is something on the other side. There are a lot of people that have gone through a lot of trials and tests, a lot of things a lot worse than any of us have encountered.

While the celebration was going on in Germany for the ending of the Wall, there was a very solemn occasion that was being noted in Israel—an occasion known as "Kristallnacht" which means "the night of glass." That was the night, approximately fifty-six years ago, that the Germans came through and broke all the windows in the Jewish shops and Jewish homes. It was the beginning of the end for the Jews. They called it the German term which meant "the night of glass" or "the night of broken glass." Here were people who saw everything that they had worked for, everything that they had built, destroyed by a mob. Over the next few years, in many cases, their lives, their families, everything was wiped out. They went through those things and they died. For many of them, they didn't

really have any practical hope. They didn't know what lay ahead.

The world is filled with people who have gone through suffering, whether it's been diseases, whether it's been terrible family calamities or various problems. The world is filled with people who have problems. We go through trials but trials are not unique to the Church of God—whether it is financial trials, health trials, family trials or whatever. People all over the world have problems, trials and difficulties. What is unique is that we have a hope. We have an understanding of the reality of what lies on the other side of those trials and difficulties. That is what we are told to rejoice in—to rejoice in hope.

I Peter 2:1 we continue to be admonished, "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all guile, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking."

Verse 5, "you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

Verse 6, it describes the analogy of laying in Zion the chief cornerstone, and that is Jesus Christ.

Verses 7-8, "Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient. 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,' and 'A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.' They stumble, being disobedient to the word to which they also were appointed."

Verses 9-12, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation."

Verse 20, "For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God." If I get in trouble for something I did and I take it in a good attitude, big deal! I brought it on myself. If I am persecuted for righteousness' sake and I take it well, now that counts for something because then I am doing what Jesus did. He

never suffered for anything He did; He suffered for righteousness' sake. I can't say that the only suffering I have ever done is for righteousness' sake. Can you? Then it go through in terms of human and personal relationships, husbands and wives, people dealing with one another.

In I Peter 3:14-15 we are told, "But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense [KJV, "an answer"] to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."

You don't have to worry if you suffer for righteousness' sake. We can suffer for righteousness' sake and maintain a positive attitude. People are going to wonder, 'What's with you?' That's kind of the context in which people ask you what it is about you that is different. How can you go through this and handle it the way you do? We are told to be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks concerning a reason of the hope that is within us. It is the reality of that hope that enables us to endure.

It goes on and talks about trials and all of these things. The means of survival is the reality of that hope.

II Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness..." That hope is not something that is far removed. But we do look for a new heavens and a new earth.

Verse 13, "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." The reality of that hope is emphasized.

II Peter explains a great deal of important material. It even explains and gives us some insight into the beginnings of the false church. It gives us insight into understanding how we came to have the New Testament preserved as we do. We will focus on that a little later. There is an emphasis on hope.

Faith, hope and love. John talks about love throughout the books of John.

I John 2:10, "He who loves his brother abides in the light..."

Verse 15, we are not to love the world or at least the things of the world.

I John 3:1, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God..."

Verse 16, “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

Verse 18, “...let us not love in word, or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

I John 4:7-8, “...let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is begotten of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

Verses 10-11, “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

Verse 16, “And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.”

Verses 18-19, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.”

I John 5:2-3, “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”

You know, you’d almost think that John was talking about love! Faith, hope and love. John explains what real love is.

James explains what real faith is. Real faith is living faith. It is a faith that is coupled with action and results in action. In other words, we act on what we believe. That’s what having faith with our works means. We act on what we believe. If I really believe it, I am going to act on it.

Peter explains how to keep on acting on it when everything is going wrong around you. You are able to keep going because you have a hope that is living, a hope that is real and a hope that is on the other side of the trial. How did Christ go through and survive what He went through? – Because of the reality of the hope that was set before Him. Peter explains the living hope that we have is the means of our enduring the trials.

We start out with faith and we demonstrate our faith by acting on it. Our faith is tried and tested. Our means of going through and surviving trials and tests is the hope that is real to us.

Then we come to understand the most fundamental aspect of God’s character, which needs to be made a part of us. Love! We find that love and law go together. We find that love is the fulfilling of the law.

I John 5:3 explains, “...this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” We are to love God and love one another. God loved us. We see this emphasis, this explanation, of what is real love.

If you go through the Gospels, you find that Jesus kept the Sabbath. He entered into the synagogue on the Sabbath, as was His custom (Luke 4:16). You go through the book of Acts and find out that the apostles did the same thing. Then James tells you that you need to have works with your faith. Then Peter tells you that Paul wrote a few things that were sometimes misunderstood. John tells you that sin is the transgression of the law (I John 3:4), and the love of God is that we keep His commandments. Jude tells you to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered (Jude 3). You are not going to get to Romans that Paul wrote and think that Paul must have done away with the Sabbath and the Ten Commandments. We have a basis of understanding on some of the things Paul wrote because you understand these fundamental areas of faith, hope and love, which Paul said were the things which were going to abide (I Corinthians 13:13). How do you understand what faith, hope and love are? You go back to James, Peter and John. John tells us that.

II John 6, “This is love, that we walk after His Commandments. This is the commandment that you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.”

Then he talks about deceivers that have gone out into the world who are bringing this doctrine (vv. 9-11).

In III John 9-10, he talks about certain congregations being subverted.

We find that there was a church that was appearing on the scene that did not continue in the faith and actions of the apostles. Therefore, it should not surprise us to find that there were those who were trying to get rid of these epistles, and get them out of the canon. Who were they? Well, it’s a good bet that the ones that John and Jude were warning you of were the ones that you read of a few years later that were trying to get rid of those books. If people want to get rid of something, it is generally because it points them out.

Then you come to **Jude who warns about apostasy, the falling away and contending for the faith once delivered.**

Jude 3-4, “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you

to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Oh, so the problem was going to involve a misunderstanding of grace. Peter said Paul wrote some things a little difficult to be understood—or that can be misunderstood—if you don’t take them in the right way, which those that are unlearned and unstable twist (II Peter 3:16). In other words, they take it out of context. The way you misunderstand Paul is you don’t take him in context. He wrote long complicated sentences. You can extract something out of the middle of it, take it out of context, and totally miss the point. So, Peter warned that’s what some did, the same way they twisted other parts of the Scriptures.

Jude tells us that those who were trying to subvert and to mess things up were the ones who were turning grace into lawlessness. They were distorting what God’s grace is about. Now, God’s grace is wonderful. God’s grace is what makes possible our forgiveness and our opportunity to be a part of His Family. But God’s grace does not diminish from our responsibility of obeying Him. God’s grace is extended to us because our best efforts are not good enough. There is nothing we could ever do on our own to atone for what we have done in the past. God extends His grace and His mercy. If we believe that, we are going to act on that belief.

Jude goes through and really gives us warnings about some of these things. We have here material that is fundamental. We might look, just very briefly, at these books.

Jude was addressed to the twelve tribes of the dispersion. It was not just to the Jews but also to all of the Israelites. James was the presiding apostle at the headquarters Church in Jerusalem. He was the half-brother of Jesus Christ. This book was probably written around 60 A.D. James was a remarkable individual. He was known, even among the Jews, as James the Just or James the Righteous. He was martyred about 62 A.D. by being thrown over the side of the temple. He was pushed, shoved or thrown off of the high wall down on the rocks below.

Many of the Jews, interestingly enough, felt that the Roman invasion was retribution for their martyrdom of James. The Jews greatly respected him and, in a sense, knew that what they had

done was wrong. It is interesting in some of their own writings, some of the statements that are made concerning that.

James was an individual of quite renown. We will note some things when we get into the book of James. We will note the area of circulation and the areas of prominence that the book of James had throughout the Middle East, and even some of the areas of Britain and Parthia where Israelites were settled.

Peter was written to Israelites dispersed along the southern shore of the Black Sea. There is a lot of emphasis on hope in the midst of persecution. II Peter was written shortly before Peter’s death. It explains the origin and purpose of the New Testament canon.

John wrote about thirty years later. He wrote after all the others had written. He gives kind of a wrap-up and a summary. He zeroes in on two things. Interestingly enough, what did Christ warn?

Matthew 24:12, “And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.” It’s interesting. The thing that John focuses on is the fact that (1) lawlessness is multiplying and (2) love is growing cold. John focuses in on the relationship between love and law. He shows the antidote to what Christ had warned of because that’s what happened. That was what sapped the spiritual strength and stamina of the New Testament Church.

What did Christ tell the Ephesians Church? Revelation 2:1, 4, “To the angel of the church of Ephesus write...nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.” What sapped the spiritual strength and stamina? Well, there was a certain watering down. There was a disregard for law that began to grow; as a result, love began to diminish.

It doesn’t matter how much you emphasize love if disregard for the law and a casual approach to the law begins to grow. Love inevitably will dim because law and love go together. You cannot separate them. The reason is because a lawless attitude is a selfish, self-centered attitude. The law reflects our relationship with God and with other people. When you have a disregard for the law, you have an increase in selfishness and self-centeredness. Why do people want to break the law? Because they don’t want to be inconvenienced by doing what they are supposed to do. They want to do what they want to do. That is selfish. That is self-centered. When people have that kind of selfish, self-centered

approach, it is obviously going to diminish the love that they show toward others.

John zeroes in on these things. John wrote in the 90s A.D. What John wrote has specific connections with the heresies that were extant at the time.

Jude was written about the same time as II Peter. It shows the extent that the apostasy was in “full swing.” It has the warnings and the insight that helps us to understand what was actually taking place in the early New Testament Church.

Next Bible study we are going to cover the book of James. The following Bible study we will cover I and II Peter. Then the following study after that, we will cover I, II, III John and Jude. That may seem like a lot to lump together, but when you look at II John and III John, you realize they are little short chapters. They are just little short one-chapter books. Jude is just one chapter. I, II, III John and Jude, taken together, are very short amounts of material.

So I think it will give us a basis, a kind of an overview of this section of Scripture. This section is very basic in terms of understanding practical day-by-day Christian life. We can kind of take it from there.

When we conclude the General Epistles, we will save the remainder of the New Testament until later. We will come back and do a series on the “Life and Letters of Paul” at a later time. We will also save the book of Revelation until later. When we finish this, we will go back to the Old Testament. We will pick up the Major and Minor Prophets, and then we will see where we go from there.

Bible Study # 44
November 28, 1989
Mr. John Ogwyn

General Epistles Series—James

This evening we are in the book of James. We want **to get into and address this book of James**. We have already mentioned the theme that runs through each of these General Epistles—James, Peter, John and Jude—the theme of faith, hope and love. We went through and saw that in quite a bit of detail last time. Of course, Jude contains warnings against apostasy, against falling away and the exhortation to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered.

The book of James was written in the early 60s A.D. We would date it about 61 A.D. Of course, James wrote it. There are several James mentioned in the New Testament. The James who wrote the book of James was the brother, or more properly stated, the half-brother of Jesus Christ. Jesus had several brothers as well as sisters. His brothers James, Simon and Jude are all mentioned and are enumerated in the Gospels. He also had several sisters.

James had grown up with Jesus Christ. He was somewhat younger, perhaps two to four years younger than Jesus Christ. Even though he was not one of the twelve and was not one who followed Christ in His ministry, yet it seems clear that James was converted in the immediate aftermath of the resurrection. There certainly had been nothing of greater impact to have struck him than to have seen his brother, who was dead, stand before him alive.

We are told by Paul in I Corinthians 15:7 that He specifically appeared to James, as well as the others. Christ, in a very personal way appeared to James. He manifested Himself after the resurrection. We are not given the details of the account in the Gospels, but Paul alludes to it. There was that forty-day span between the time of His resurrection and the time of His ascension into heaven during which Jesus appeared many times (Acts 1:3). In the aftermath of this, James was converted and became a very leading apostle.

He was the presiding apostle at the Church in Jerusalem, serving as the pastor and overseer of the headquarters Church. He is the one who presided at the ministerial conference of Acts 15. He is the one that is enumerated, along with Peter and John, as one of the three pillars of the Church. He is catalogued by Paul in Galatians

2:9 as being one of the upright supports, one of the strong stays and supports of the New Testament Church. He is one of the key figures. He was looked up to and was highly respected.

The book of James was *a letter that went out and was addressed* not simply to the Jews or to those in Judea where James was, but *to all the tribes of Israel*.

James 1:1, “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.” This is to whom the book of James is addressed. It was an address to all of the tribes of Israel, not simply the tribe of Judah.

Realize that there was a certain awareness of where the tribes had scattered. The identity of the twelve tribes had not been entirely lost by this time. We find a concentration of remnants of the twelve tribes in the area to the east of the Euphrates, which was not at this point a part of the Roman Empire but of what was called the Parthian Empire. The Parthian Empire was the other great empire that lay east of the Euphrates. The Euphrates was pretty much the dividing line between Rome and Parthia. There were a number of Israelites who were in the area east of the Euphrates because after the captivity of the ten tribes (II Kings 17), they had settled in that area to the east and up on the southern shore of the Black Sea.

According to Ezekiel’s prophecy, a three hundred ninety-year period would transpire for northern Israel (Ezekiel 4:5). We date the three hundred ninety years from the time that northern Israel went into captivity in 721 B.C. If you bring it down three hundred ninety years, you come down to 331 B.C., which is the year that Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire. It was the year that saw the release of the Israelite captives who had been subject to the Medes and the Persians. Within the next couple of decades was the beginning of the so-called Celtic invasions into Europe, which came up across and around the Black Sea. It was the time of the coming of the Galls. Really, it was many of the Israelite tribes.

There’s a lot that we could go into on some of that, but the point is these people came up from the Black Sea, up the Danube River basin, up into the area of modern day France, and many crossing up into Britain. There had been an earlier migration to Britain at the time of the captivity of some who had escaped. There had been previous migrations in that area. There were concentrations of Israelites in Europe, as well as

the Parthian Empire who were remnants of the twelve tribes. We could go into many things, of pinning down specific tribes and where they were located at the time. And there were a number of migrations yet to occur. But do you realize that most of the original twelve apostles actually went to one or the other of the twelve tribes—and we could track them? Perhaps, we will at a later time.

So the book that James wrote was very widely circulated. It circulated as far as Britain. It circulated in the Parthian Empire. It circulated throughout the Middle East, in terms of Judea, and in the area of Asia Minor.

James is a very basic book. It deals with practical, basic principles of Christian living. We have seen that James has a **primary theme of faith**. It sets the stage for the progression of faith, hope and love that we see through the General Epistles. James deals with faith, but he deals with faith in a very practical way. He deals with faith in action. He addresses faith in our lives.

We are going to go through and note twelve component parts of the book of James. One of the things that James addresses is the importance of becoming a completely mature Christian.

James 3:2, “For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man...”

The word translated “perfect” is a word that means “fully mature” or “a completely developed person”—a completely mature Christian. It is the same word that is used when Paul addresses spiritual maturity in Hebrews 5.

Hebrews 5:12-14, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God [in other words, the most basic principles of God’s word]; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

Paul draws a point here in terms of spiritual maturity. He describes the difference between being spiritually mature and spiritually a baby. He says a little baby can’t sit down and eat a big rib eye steak. He can’t digest it; he can’t handle it. He needs milk! That’s all that a little baby’s stomach can digest.

Paul compares that to the most basic elemental principles of Christianity and then says that strong meat belongs to them that are of full age.

It’s for those who are mature. The word that is translated “of full age” is exactly the same word that is used back in James 3:2 and is rendered “perfect.” That’s what it means. It means someone who is “fully mature,” someone who is “completely developed.” It means someone who is a “fully-developed Christian.” James wants each of his readers to become a completely mature and fully developed Christian. With this idea in mind, we are going to note a little more as we go through that this is really faith in action. This is a mature, developed faith that produces fruits, works and actions in our lives.

Let’s notice, as we go through the book of James, the **twelve themes that reflect the various components of a mature Christian**. James 1:1 is the introduction.

(1) The first component in James 1:2-18 is **the attitude a mature, fully-developed Christian has toward trials and temptations**. It addresses the response of a fully mature Christian towards trials and temptations.

James 1:2, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into different trials.” You know, when you read that, that’s talking about something that’s a little more mature than what most of us have come to. Do you just get all excited and jump up and down and you’re so happy every time you have a trial? ‘Boy, I have a trial. It just really makes my whole day.’ What did James mean when he said, “count it all joy when you fall into different trials”? It’s not that the trial is fun. A trial isn’t fun for anybody. I don’t care how mature you are or how long you’ve been around or anything. It’s not the trial that’s enjoyable or pleasant.

In vv. 3-4, he says, “knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience. But let patience have her perfect work...” Again, you have the same word “perfect”—this complete, mature, fully developed work. Let patience be fully developed and matured in you that you might be perfect, that you might be complete, that you might be fully, entirely, whole, completely developed and matured, not lacking in anything.

Verses 5-6, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that gives to all men liberally...But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.” If you approach it that way, God doesn’t answer that.

Verse 7, “For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double minded man, unstable in all his ways.” God requires a commitment. To be double-

minded is to lack commitment; you're not really resolved in a specific course of action. You're pulled in two different ways. You're kind of "hedging your bets," as it were. It is a lack of total commitment. When God says to ask in faith nothing wavering, what needs to not waver is the depth of our commitment. If our commitment is wavering because we are double-minded, we're not really totally committed. Until we come to that level of commitment, God's not going to pay a lot of attention.

In vs. 12-18, he goes on and says, "Blessed is the man that endures temptations [endures trials], for when he is tried he shall receive a crown of life...Let no man say, when he is tempted, that I am tempted of God. God can't be tempted with evil; neither does He tempt any man...Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust is conceived, it brings forth sin and sin when it is finished brings forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good and perfect gift comes down from above, from the Father of lights...He has begotten us...that we should be a firstfruits of His creatures."

You see here that the subject of trials and temptations is addressed. The thing that is joyful about a trial is not the going through of the trial; it's not the trial itself. The joy is the result, the consequence. It is the spiritual character that is developed as a result. Our faith when it is tried works patience. We learn to wait on God. We need to develop that kind of relationship with God.

When we lack wisdom, we don't understand. We can ask God for wisdom, but we need to ask in faith, not wavering in our commitment, but single-minded in our approach. We need to go to God in faith, asking Him for the wisdom to understand and to have the perception of what is going on in our lives. God says that He will answer that prayer. The joy comes from the results, the spiritual character that results from the trial.

I don't think anybody enjoys having a problem. But we can probably all look back and see results of trials. I know I certainly can look at certain trials I have gone through in my life, and I hope that I never have to go through them again. But I wouldn't take anything for having gone through them. I wouldn't take anything for some of the results, the consequences and certain things that I learned as a result. Even though it was not at all pleasant in the process of going through it, there

was a certain relationship with God that was built.

James initially addresses the attitude towards trials and temptations of a completely developed, fully mature Christian.

(2) The second component in vv. 19-27 is **the reception of God's Word**. He addresses the way in which a fully mature Christian receives God's Word.

James 1:19-20, "...let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." He says be swift to hear and slow to speak. So many times we reverse that. Ever been quick to speak and slow to hear? I guess with all of us it has happened one time or another. It should tell us something that God gave us two ears and one mouth. He didn't reverse it. He could have given us a mouth on each side of our head and one ear in the middle. God didn't choose to do it that way. I don't know all the reasons why. Maybe part of it was He wanted us to spend twice as much time listening as talking because He said that we're to "be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath"—not quick to "fly off the handle," not quick to form an opinion, not quick to jump to conclusions because that doesn't lead to the righteousness of God

Then he says in vv. 21-22, "...lay aside all the filthiness and excess of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save our souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

Then he draws the analogy that if you listen and don't do, you are like somebody looking in the mirror and not acting on what they see (vv. 23-24).

Verses 25-26, "But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this one will be blessed in what he does. If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless." We are kidding ourselves because real religion involves action.

Verse 27, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their afflictions, to keep himself unspotted from the world."

We focus here on how a mature developed Christian receives the Word. He is quick to listen, not quite so quick to speak and receives with meekness the implanted (KJV, "engrafted") Word. He desires to look into that perfect law of liberty, to have God's Word actually put into him

and to become a part of him. There is receptivity to the Word. There is an approach we see in terms of trials and temptations. We learn to value and appreciate the character that is developed and to be receptive to the Word.

(3) The third component in James 2:1-3 is **our attitude toward others**. It involves impartiality in the spiritual area when it comes to regarding the worth and the value of someone else.

James 2:1, “My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy [vile] clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine [KJV, “gay”] clothes and say to him, ‘You sit here in a good place,’ and say to the poor man, ‘You stand there,’ or ‘sit here at my footstool.’”

In other words, don’t make spiritual distinctions based on physical criteria. Don’t use outward physical things or economic status to decide someone’s worth. Someone comes in to your assembly with gold rings and goodly apparel, and someone comes in and is poor and in worn, tattered clothes. If you have respect to him who wears the gay clothing, you are showing partiality.

Let me just pause for a second. I want to call your attention to something to illustrate a point. Notice how the English language has changed since 1611. Sometimes things are not a matter of a mistranslation, it is that the meaning of a word in English has simply changed.

He’s talking about someone having “gay clothing.” If you were talking today and said somebody had on gay clothing, the connotation would be a little different than what Paul was addressing here. Here’s a word that’s basically changed its meaning. In this case, it meant something that was bright or something that was festive. We have seen people in what we would today term “gay apparel.” You see them and you don’t have to do too much figuring to figure what they are. And certainly in some of our major cities, there are areas like that. There are an awful lot of them that are easy to pick out, out there on the street. It’s kind of hard to describe, but if you were to drive down the street you would know what I mean—I don’t think you would be in doubt.

That’s not the meaning of the word in James. A lot of words in the English language have simply changed their meaning over a period of years. Sometimes when you read something in the KJV

translation, you have to consider what the word meant at the time it was translated because sometimes it has taken on a different meaning over the years, and we don’t always get the same impact of it that people who read it a hundred or three hundred years ago received.

He says two people come in and one is dressed very nicely and indicates a very wealthy, prominent individual. Someone else comes in and by his appearance, gives the impression of abject poverty. Don’t make a distinction based on that. To the person who looks rich, influential and impressive, you say, ‘We have something special for you.’ You give him the best seat in the house and really go all-out to try to make him welcomed. Then someone comes in and appears to be poor, to have a very low economic and social status, and they are kind of relegated to the “back burner.” ‘Maybe we can find a spot for you.’ They are kind of ignored and shunted off to the side. James is addressing this matter of respect of persons in terms of power, status and economic circumstance.

Verse 9, “but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.” Because the law says you shall love your neighbor as yourself, that’s the royal law (v. 8). In other words, we are to treat every human being with proper respect. There is, in the context of relationships in the Church, the realization that all human beings are of special worth and value before God. God does not judge the worth and value of someone based on the size of that person’s bank account or the degrees that person has after his name. God does not look at economic criteria, race, education or physical components to determine spiritual worth and value—and neither should we.

Now there are obviously physical relationships that we have in this world. The scripture tells us that there’s neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, bond or free; we’re all one in Christ (Galatians 3:28). That is relative to our spiritual relationship (our relationship with God) and the basis of our proper relationship and valuing of one another as Christians. It’s the basis of loving our neighbor as ourselves.

Obviously, there are physical relationships in this physical life. We are still male and female on a physical level. There is that physical distinction, but it does not carry over in terms of our worth and our value to God. God does not look at someone as being of more worth or more value or as being spiritually superior because of race, sex or economic status. Those are not spiritual

criteria. James is bringing out that there were circumstances of that matter in the Church at this time, just as there are today.

Servitude was a very common thing in the Greek and Roman world. You have many circumstances of that even existing in the Church. In fact in several of Paul's Epistles, he addressed instructions to masters and instructions to servants because there were Christians in both categories. But there was a spiritual relationship that transcended all earthly physical components. In some cases today, some of us may work for others of us. There are various things that are there, but that is not something that determines the spiritual worth and value.

James brings out that the fully developed Christian properly esteems his neighbor as himself and does not make some distinction based on economic status. The same principle would apply to other criteria as well, whether it is race or whatever. Any of those things that would be the outward physical distinctions are not the basis of a spiritual judgment or spiritual valuing. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves and not get into this attitude that the world has of wanting to show special favor to someone who is in a position of power, kowtowing to someone who has power and status and taking advantage of someone who is defenseless. God says to deal with people fairly and equitably regardless of their status. This is addressed in the first thirteen verses. We need to recognize that all of us are judged by this perfect law of liberty.

I might just add one other thing in regard to the matter of dress. The matter of dress is not the basis of making distinctions. What is appropriate is that we, as individuals, show a respect for God. This is not advocating that people should show a lack of respect for God by just dressing in the worse thing they have when they come to Church. That's not what is being described at all. In fact, the clear implication is that the person who came in the vile raiment came in the best that he had. It just wasn't much. In some cases, if there is someone who is not able to buy what is appropriate to wear, we can have an attitude of love and concern toward our neighbor and share with them. Perhaps, we can give them some of what we have. We could have that attitude of sharing and helping rather than standing back and kind of looking down on them. They're doing the best they can do, but they are very limited in what they have. Part of that is the principle behind our "used clothing."

(4) The fourth component in James 2:14-26 is **our credentials of living faith**. It describes the kind of faith that will characterize a mature, fully developed Christian.

Verse 14, we see that it is the kind of faith that is living faith—faith that is coupled with action.

Verses 15-16 bring out that we see our brother or sister destitute, and we have an attitude of "depart in peace, be warmed and filled." 'Hope things get better for you.' But, you don't help them; you don't do anything. You don't avail yourself of the action you could do to help them in their circumstance. What does it profit? Faith that has not works is dead. If we really are concerned and our heart is really in the right place, then we are going to desire to do something.

Then James goes on, v. 18, to address the fact that we demonstrate our faith by our actions and, v. 20, that "faith without works is dead."

Verse 21, he showed Abraham was justified by works, but we are also told Abraham was justified by faith. That's right! It was his faith with his works.

Verse 22, "...and by works was faith made perfect?" –Made complete, made fully mature, fully developed. This is the same word here. His faith was completed. He completed his faith by acting on it.

Verse 23, "...Abraham believed God..." And because he believed God, he acted on what God said—the same with Rahab (v. 25). We find here the living faith that is a component of the completely mature, fully developed Christian.

(5) The fifth component in James 3:1-12 is **the use of the tongue**.

James 3:1, "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation." This word "masters" is a word that has changed its meaning over a period of time. It is used in the older English sense of "teacher," as in "schoolmaster." That's a term that you don't hear very much anymore. It used to be common years ago to talk about the schoolmaster. The term "master" in that sense is still commonly used that way in England, referring to teacher.

Actually many people don't realize there are three totally different words in the Greek language that are all translated by the one English word "master." One of them is a common word referring to a teacher. There is a second Greek word, "*kurios*," also translated "master" that was a title of respect. It literally referred to someone who was an owner or

possessor of property. It was a title of respect and most closely akin to our English word “Mister,” which is derived from “master.” It is a title of respect for a property owner and has come to be the universal title of respect in the English language. The Greeks had a word that was very similar to that and used in the same way that is translated “master” in the New Testament.

There is a third word that is translated “master” that’s only used one time in the New Testament. That’s in the verse in Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 23:8-10, when Jesus said, “don’t call any man ‘master.’” Remember when He said, “don’t call any man Father, and don’t call any man Master.” It’s a totally different word. It’s not the word that’s the title of respect, and it’s not the word that means teacher. It was a term that had the connotation of a spiritual guide. It was more of a religious title. It was used in the Greek world to refer to someone who guided them through the maze of the mystery religions. It had the connotation of someone who you gave over your spiritual guidance to; he was going to guide you through the mysteries.

That was a relationship that’s alien to the Scriptures. We may have those who teach us, but ultimately, in that sense, God, His Spirit and through His Word is our guide. While God may use human instruments to help teach and expound that Word, they are not the source of it.

James 3:1, when he says (KJV), “...be not many masters,” the word here is teacher. ‘Don’t all desire to be teachers’ is what he is saying. “Knowing that we shall receive the greater [the sterner, the more strict] judgment” (v. 1).

The point he is making is don’t think that it’s some “glory” job to be the one who is teaching. Understand something; with that responsibility comes a stricter, sterner judgment. God is going to scrutinize much more closely what those who are in the role of teachers say and do than anyone else because there is a responsibility. The teacher impacts those who are learning; therefore, he is more highly accountable. James warns of that. People should not be quick to want to volunteer to do the teaching.

Then he begins to address the subject of what we say.

Verse 2, “For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.” The fact is that all of us offend in one way or another.

Verses 3-5, “Indeed, we put bits in horses’ mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things....”

Verse 10, “Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.” Sometimes out of the same mouth proceeds blessings and cursing.

Verses 11-12, “Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring can yield both salt water and fresh.” Some things need to be one way or the other. We have the use of the tongue that is brought out—the way we utilize the tongue. The use of his tongue is shown to be a very important part of a mature, fully developed Christian.

(6) The sixth component in James 3:13-18 is **true wisdom**.

James 3:13-14, “Who is a wise and understanding man among you? [Is there someone who really has knowledge among you?] Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.” That is not something to be proud of.

Verse 15, “This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.” This is wisdom that does not come from God; it is earthly, sensual and devilish.

Verses 16-17, “For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing will be there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” These are the seven components of wisdom.

Verse 18, “Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” Righteousness and peace go together. We see godly wisdom, true wisdom, wisdom that results in appropriate actions. Wisdom is not based on striving for status and position, but is based on humility, on serving, on giving, on helping, on a willingness to humble the self and serving others. Wisdom that is pure and peaceable, gentle, easily entreated. In other words, it is full of mercy, of good fruits, with no partiality, “wrangling” and hypocrisy. We see this contrast here. We see the

wisdom that will characterize the mature, fully developed Christian.

(7) The seventh component in James 4:1-10 is **the amiability, humility and lack of worldliness.**

James 4:1-4, “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in you members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and receive not because you ask amiss that you may spend it on your own pleasure...Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

We have to make a choice. We have to choose between God and the world. We cannot desire to fit in with the world and fit in with God at the same time. Friendship with the world is enmity with God because God does not value and approve of the things that the world takes for granted. God does not value the things that the world values and approves.

It’s proper and appropriate that God’s people should be different. We shouldn’t be just like the world. If we look like the world, act like the world, be like the world and fit in with the world, then we’re not fitting in with God.

In v. 5, the scripture warns us that the Spirit that dwells in us yearns jealously or it lusts enviously. There is that nature in us that really kinds of desires and yearns after, in kind of an envious way, the glitter and the glamour that the world holds out. It looks enticing, and there is a nature in us that is constantly pulling us in that direction.

Verse 5, “Do you think the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?’” No. We are warned of that. That’s our nature and that’s the constant pull. That desire, that pull, has always been since Adam and Eve in the garden until now. Yet it is something, if yielded to, which alienates us from God.

So we are told that God gives more grace.

Verses 6-10, “But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will

lift you up.” We are told how to get close to God. We are told to renew that relationship with God. It addresses the concept of how we get along with one another, which ties right on into our relationship with the world, which leads right on into the attitude of humility, which is really our relationship with God. These are tied together. The way we get along with one another, the way we get along with the world and the way we get along with God are all tied together in this matter of relationship. The types of relationships that characterize the mature and fully developed Christian are described in the first ten verses of James 4.

(8) The eighth component in James 4:11-12 is **our consideration of our fellow man.**

James 4:11, “Do not speak evil one of another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?” The attitude of the completely mature, fully-developed Christian is his consideration of his fellow man which is described here. It’s not an attitude of speaking evil and sitting in a judging and condemning way.

(9) The ninth component in James 4:13-17 is **the attitude and the approach of business affairs.**

James 4:13, “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit.’” You have all these great plans.

Verse 14, “Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.” It doesn’t say you shouldn’t make any plans, but it says our plans need to be subject to God’s will.

Verse 15, we need to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that. My plans are to do this or that, if God is willing.’ We are not to just go charging off, thinking we will do this or that and making this money, etc. We must have a state of mind of recognizing that our plans are subject to God’s will.

Verse 16, we are not to rejoice in boasting like that. That kind of boasting is evil.

We are still dealing with the subject of business affairs and our attitude toward business.

James 5:1-7, “Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded,

and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the hire of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you. Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.”

It describes here the attitude that has caused some to mistreat others and to hold back the hire of their laborers. In other words, they are so greedy and anxious for gain that they take advantage of those who work for them.

Just yesterday there was an interesting thing in the news. There is a major component, really the starting component, of the whole American computer industry—the industry that makes the tools that fetches the chips that then are the basic components for all the electronic devices. Well, there is only one company in the United States that manufactures the tools that make the chips, and it’s up for sale. Guess who is buying it. The Japanese! They will have absolute control of the starting point because without the tools, you can’t make the chips, and without the chips, you can’t make anything else. The Japanese will be in control.

The interesting thing that is pointed out as to why an American company wouldn’t buy it—it kind of ties in with this—IBM, none of them, wanted it. They said the problem was the approach the American companies were taking was the desire for big profits very quickly. In this industry, the profits were stretched out over a much longer period of time. There were not going to be any big profits really quickly; you had to take a more long-term view. Nobody here in the United States wanted to do that.

This attitude of greed or people who are out to get everything they can get has led to a lot of the economic problems we are having. Very shortsighted economic decisions have been made in this country. God shows what’s going to happen.

Verse 4, people will take advantage of those who work for them and hold back what would be rightfully theirs. People who have this greedy attitude take advantage.

The scriptures are very clear and describe in a very picturesque way the aftermath of some nuclear confrontation. I think that is what is described here in v. 3, when it talks about the gold and the silver being corroded and how it will eat your flesh as it were fire. I don’t think that can describe anything else but the results or the aftermath of some nuclear confrontation where you have vast stores of precious metals that become radioactive. Gold does not rust in that sense of the word, but it is very receptive to radioactivity. The exposure becomes very highly radioactive, and it will eat your flesh like fire.

When you compare this with Isaiah 2:18-21 and with Revelation 6:14-16, you find the description of the day of the Lord. It describes the great, the mighty and the rich throwing their gold to the moles and the bats in the caves of the earth, trying to get rid of it.

If you put Isaiah 2, James 5 and Revelation 6 together, what you find is the description of what happens when this horde of precious metals that a bunch of greedy people have put together to try to buy their way out of trouble becomes radioactive. They are going to find out that they are in a big hurry to get rid of it. The point it is making here is the futility of putting your trust in selfish, greedy things but having an attitude of being fair and realizing that our plans are very subject to God’s disposal.

(10) The tenth component in James 5:7-12 is patience and endurance.

James 5:7-8, “Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.” Realize that we have to wait on God and that patience and endurance of waiting on God is a vital component of a mature, fully developed Christian.

(11) The eleventh component in James 5:13-18 is conduct in affliction.

James 5:13-18, “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced the fruit.”

The point is we see this description in terms of our conduct in affliction. We need an attitude of growing closer to God, praying and walking with God, drawing closer to God, learning to trust God, having our confidence directed in God, having an attitude of praying for one another, seeking to encourage one another and recognizing that the great men and women of the Bible of whom we read were human beings just like we are. They had the same weaknesses, the same problems. They had the same things that make them human, just as we do.

Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are. He was just as weak and fallible a human being as all of us. He was a human being. He wasn't some unique different sort of person that couldn't be touched with the feelings of human weakness and frailty. But he was close to God and God listened.

(12) The twelfth component in James 5:19-20 is the effort in behalf of an erring brother.

James 5:19, “Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.” That is the final component.

If you go through, there are twelve components that outline the book. The various components comprise what it means to be a completely mature, fully-developed Christian.

Let's notice briefly our study questions. I think most of them have been commented upon.

Why are we told to count it all joy when we have problems? This is brought out in James 1:3. Our character is purged and refined and strengthened by the trials through which we go through. Hebrew 12:11 brings that out as well, “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” It is not going through the problem that's enjoyable, but it is the aftermath, the consequence.

Does God tempt us? No. God may try us, but He never tempts us. “Tempt” carries with it the connotation of trying to “trip up” someone. God never tries to trip us up, never tries to get us to fall.

James 1:13 brings that out. God may “try” us, but He never tempts us in the sense of trying to trip us up. We are basically tempted to sin; our human nature takes care of most of that.

James 1:14 says we are drawn away of our own lust and enticed. That's where the temptation comes in.

James 1:27, “*Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*”

There are two components. One involves helping those who are not able to return the favor, those who are not in a position to make it worth your while. It is helping others from a disinterested standpoint.

It is another thing to help somebody who is in a position to help you back. Kind of like the scandal involving several senators who are in trouble now because they interceded on behalf of this fellow who owned this big savings and loan. They said, ‘We were just trying to help. We felt sorry for this guy. He is constituted, this poor American.’ Well, the fact that he kicked in a few million bucks for their campaign funds gave them a little incentive to have a little more interest in helping him then they would have had to help you or me were we in trouble. They just wouldn't have gone quite the length to help us. I don't see five of them lining up to go see somebody on my behalf or yours either.

The point is a lot of people are quick to try to help somebody when they think the guy can do a lot of good for them. God says pure religion is when you help somebody who's not in a position to “make it worth your while”—the widow, the fatherless or those who are really in the least position to defend themselves. You are to visit them, to pay attention to them, to give them help. That's one of the components of pure religion. Pure religion is service that is directed from a pure motive and is directed toward those who need it most and are least able to make it “worth your while.”

The other component is to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. That is a constant battle because if we're not careful, bits and pieces kind of rub off on us. The need is to keep ourselves unspotted and unpolluted from the world around us. Those are important components of pure religion.

What is the relationship of faith and works? Faith without works is dead. We show the depth and sincerity of what we believe by what we do. James 2:14-26 bring this out. Faith and works go

together; they don't contradict. We demonstrate our faith by our works. If we believe something, we are prepared to act on it. If we don't act on it, then we obviously don't believe it very much.

James 3:1, we have already commented on that (KJV), "...*be not many masters...*" The Greek word here is "*didaskaloi*." That's the word that's translated "master" here which means "teachers." The other word was a common title of respect. It meant "someone who owned property"; it is a totally different word, "*kurios*." And the third word—the one that Christ said was not to be used as a title—was a totally different word, "*kathegetes*."

The specific words aren't important. I mention them because you don't even have to know Greek to be able to tell those words in the Greek language are totally dissimilar words. They are words that are totally different from one another even though they are all rendered by the same English word "master." Sometimes the same Greek word is rendered by two or three English words; sometimes the same English word is used to render two or three different Greek words. It can sometimes be a little bit confusing of not realizing the distinctions.

Let's notice the seven components of Godly wisdom. This is James 3:17-18: (1) pure, (2) peaceable, (3) gentle, (4) easy to be entreated, (5) full of mercy and good fruits, (6) without partiality and (7) without hypocrisy.

James 4:3 tells us *why we sometimes don't receive what we ask*. It tells us it is because we ask amiss. We ask in the wrong way or not from a proper perspective. That's one reason why we sometimes don't receive the answer we desire; we ask amiss.

What James tells us concerning sin in James 4:17, "To him that knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin." God imputes sin based on what we know. We are judged on the basis of what we do with what we know, and the more we know, the more we are accountable for.

James 4:14 *compares life to a vapor*. It's just a little trail of water vapor. That's pretty insubstantial, isn't it? That's what comes out of your teakettle. James says that's what life is like. It's here and it's gone. It goes by. It's something you can't hold on to. Ever try to hold on to water vapor, get a good hold on it, and won't let it go? Doesn't work, does it? Life is that way. You can't just grab hold of it and say you are just not going to turn it loose.

The point that James makes is our life is in God's hands. God gave us our life, and none of us has

any guarantee of how long it is going to be. We need to live our lives with the realization that our life is in God's hands; that the plans we make are at God's disposal; and that we try to order our lives by recognizing God's role and how temporary we are.

The matter of oaths or of using an oath in James 5:12, "But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No' be 'No,' lest you fall into judgment." He says don't swear. That is why we don't swear, even in legal matters. We can simply "affirm" something rather than swearing an oath. The law recognizes that. James says don't do that because when you swear, then in a sense, what you're doing is you're making a distinction. He says, "Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.'" In other words, say what you mean and mean what you say!

You make this big distinction, 'Boy, this time I am really telling the truth. I'm swearing to all this stuff, and I'm really telling the truth this time.' Well, what's the implication of that? The implication is that you normally don't tell the truth. But you stick your hand up, put your other one on the Bible and you're really telling the truth this time. James said to just simply tell it. When you get any further than that, then you get into making distinctions as to whether you're telling the truth or not. As a Christian, we just should tell the truth—period. There shouldn't be any need for a Christian to have to take some kind of an oath because we're to be consistently telling the truth. If we say it, it is true.

God's instruction to the sick is a familiar verse, one many of us memorized years ago when we first came into the Church.

James 5:14-15, "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick..."

This is one of the basic instructions in term of anointing for illness and looking to God in terms of recognizing God as our Healer. One of the blessings and the benefits that God allows us as His people to partake of is the fact that we can have access to Him in the midst of our sicknesses and afflictions.

What kind of prayers gets answered? James 5:16, "...The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." There are several components to prayer. We are to really put our heart into it. We are to be obeying God.

That's the kind of prayer that God really takes note of.

Hopefully, this has given you a little bit more insight and a little bit of an overview of the book of James. There is so much that is packed into the book of James. It is one of the most basic books of the New Testament in terms of practical day-to-day Christian living. It tells us the way that we should live our lives and conduct ourselves on a day-in, day-out basis. There is a very practical, basic approach towards applying the teachings of Jesus Christ in our own life. It's one that I think we can all profit from going back to again and again.

Next Bible study we will go through the books of I and II Peter; then we will have one more Bible study on this series. We will get into I, II, III John and Jude. That may seem like a lot to string together, but when you look at the fact that II and III John and Jude are all very short one-chapter books, you're really not stringing that much together. I John is only five chapters. It's a fairly short section. Basically, we have two more Bible studies in this brief series on the General Epistles. Hopefully those will be of help in terms of focusing in on some basic areas here in the Scriptures.

With that, we will be concluded this evening.

Bible Study # 44 Questions

SURVEY OF THE GENERAL EPISTLES SERIES

James

1. Why are we told to “count it all joy” when we have problems?
2. Does God tempt us? Explain.
3. What is “pure religion”?
4. What is the relationship of faith and works?
5. Explain James 3:1.
6. What are the seven characteristics of Godly wisdom?
7. Why do we sometimes not receive from God what we ask?
8. To whom does James tell us that sin is imputed?
9. To what does James compare life?
10. Does it really matter very much whether or not you use oaths?
11. What is God’s instruction to those who are sick?
12. What kind of prayers really gets answers?

Bible Study # 45
December 12, 1989
Mr. John Ogwyn

General Epistles Series—I & II Peter

This evening we **will be in the books of I and II Peter**. The Apostle Peter wrote them and they are called by his name. I Peter was written in the early-to-mid 60s A.D. We would date it approximately 65 A.D. II Peter we would date two to three years later—perhaps the winter of 67-68 A.D. There was not a long period between them. II Peter was clearly written at the very end of Peter's life. It was written, evidently, after the martyrdom of Paul or at least right around that time. Peter was martyred within a matter of months after Paul. II Peter would have been written shortly prior to Peter's martyrdom. We'll notice some of that as we go through the books.

The book of **I Peter was written and addressed primarily to Israelite Christians scattered in the area that is up along the southern and western shore of the Black Sea—the area of what is now northern Turkey**. This is an area in which Paul never went.

You might just notice here in I Peter 1:1, "Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ to the pilgrims of the Dispersion [KJV, "strangers"—a term that was utilized to refer to Israelites] scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia."

If you have a map in the back of your Bible, let's notice a little bit of the sequence of these areas; let's notice where they are located. You will notice that they are coming across from east to west. It comes across from Pontus, to the areas of Galatia and Cappadocia, to Asia, then to Bithynia. We're moving across from east to west.

As far as Galatia is concerned, there were two portions of Galatia—northern and southern Galatia. It's pretty clear, when we put the whole picture together, that northern Galatia was addressed by Peter. Southern Galatia is the area where Paul went. We know that the portions where Paul went are Derbe, Iconium, and Lystra—those areas down on the southern portion of Galatia.

There was a difference in the peoples. The peoples scattered along the southern shore of the Black Sea were the remnants of some of the Israelite tribes that had been settled in those areas. In fact, the Gauls who crossed the Black Sea and invaded Europe gave their name to what

is know as modern-day France. Gaul and Galatia are both derived from the same word. The Gauls inhabited northern Galatia. It is from the southern coast of the Black Sea that the Gauls invaded Europe. The Gauls were ancestors of the French people, some of whom were actually settled in this area at that time.

Gaul, if you check it out, was derived from the Hebrew, "Galad," which was a form of Gilead. Gaul came to be applied to the descendants of Reuben because the land that Reuben anciently settled in was on the east side of the Jordan River in what is now modern-day Jordan. The east side of the Jordan River was the land of Gilead. That tribe was, in some cases, simply referred to as Gilead from the geographic location-place name. That's where Reuben settled at the time when Joshua brought the Israelites across to their inheritance (Joshua 13:8). This term "Galad" or "Golwa" is derived from "Gilead." It is the term from which Galatia was derived. They gave their name to that area of the southern portion of the Black Sea, and it was the name they took on up into Europe. That is just kind of an aside, but it's where the name came from.

Galatia came to be applied as a general place-name to central Asia Minor. At the time of the New Testament apostles, the southern portion of what had come to be designated by the Romans as Galatia was basically Greek Gentiles. But the northern portion close to the Black Sea was Israelites.

We would note, when Peter begins to address these locations of Pontus, Cappadocia, Galatia, Asia and Bithynia, he is addressing—as you would come from east to west, going from Pontus to Cappadocia to Galatia, to Bithynia, to Asia—what would be a mail route. You can track that out, and it would make like a little bit of a circle around that area. That would be the logical sequence if you were coming from the east to the west.

I bring that up because Peter says in I Peter that he is writing from the city of Babylon. He says I Peter 5:13, "the Church that is at Babylon salutes you." The city of Babylon, which Peter referred to, was a city that was built nearby but not exactly upon the location of ancient Babylon. It was the capital of the Parthian Empire in the east. There was still a very significant Israelite settlement in that area. There was a Jewish community in Babylon itself. Babylon is where Peter clearly spent a goodly portion of the latter years of his ministry. His headquarters was based from Babylon.

The Parthian Empire was what lay east of the Roman Empire. It was east of the River Euphrates, which meant it would include, let's say, portions of modern-day Iraq and virtually all of modern-day Iran. It stretched on into portions of what we would term today as Pakistan or India—kind of stretching up the border area of Pakistan and India, but it primarily consisted of Iran and portions of Iraq today. It was a sizable empire to the east.

I bring it up because there isn't any evidence that Peter was in Rome. Peter was not the first pope, and he was not in Rome. There isn't any evidence that he was there, and there is plenty of evidence to show that he wasn't there. One of the most clear-cut evidence that Peter wasn't in Rome is that when Paul wrote the book of Romans, he saluted people by name. He is greeting them by name in the end of the book (Romans 16). Greetings to "so-and-so," to this one, and that one—he goes through and addresses them by name. He says "hello" to more people in the book of Romans than in any other book that he wrote, and he never so much as mentioned Peter.

Now, if Peter was the pope in Rome and Paul writes a letter to the Roman church and says "hello" to everybody except Peter, it would be quite an insult. Also, Paul wrote the book of Romans and told the Romans, "I am anxious to come to you in order that you might be established" (Romans 1:11). Again, that would have been a terrible insult if Peter had been there since the mid-40s A.D. (according to the Catholic tradition, since about 44 or 45 A.D.) in the position of pope or bishop of Rome. That would have been a terrible insult. But obviously Peter was not there.

In fact, the Catholic Church is confronted with a dilemma because when Peter wrote I Peter 5:13, it is obvious he was writing from Babylon. You know what they say? Look it up in the Catholic Encyclopedia or Catholic Commentaries. They say that by Babylon, Peter really meant Rome. They say he was utilizing that name as symbolic of Rome. Why doesn't Babylon symbolize Rome—especially when you read of it in the book of Revelation? If Babylon symbolizes Rome when you read of it in Revelations, then why doesn't it symbolize it in the book of I Peter? If it does, it's got some pretty rough stuff to say about it. They're kind of on the "horns of a dilemma."

The book of Revelation is written in symbolism. Symbolic terms are used. But I Peter isn't written

in symbolic terms. When it mentions Babylon, he means Babylon. He is talking about a geographic place-name, not using terms in a symbolic way. There isn't any evidence that Babylon was used to refer to Rome until John wrote the book of Revelation, and it was utilized in a prophetic sense. The only thing the Catholic Church has come up with to try to put Peter in Rome is the fact that he said he wrote from Babylon and that Babylon was a reference to Rome in this particular case.

If he had been writing from Rome, his letter would have been traveling from the west to the east, and logically it would have been addressed to Asia, Bithynia, Pontus, Cappadocia, Galatia—or something of that sort. The letter would have traveled in a different way. When you look at the way the letter traveled, it is clear the letter came from the east to the west. It first went to Pontus, then down to Cappadocia, across to Galatia, up into Asia and up to Bithynia. It made the logical mail route coming from east to west. I think we can dismiss the idea that Peter was writing from Rome.

The only reason to identify Babylon that Peter wrote from with Rome is in order to preserve the Catholic tradition that Peter was in Rome as the first pope. We will go into that in a later Bible study on the history of the first-century Church (the lost century), and who the first pope really was. Some of these things can be interesting and intriguing. We don't have time to get into all of the details this evening.

It's clear from Matthew 10:5-6 that we would expect Peter to be writing primarily to an Israelite audience because that was the commission that Jesus gave to the twelve apostles. In Matthew 10:5-6, Jesus told the twelve not to go into the way of the Gentiles, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Now, Paul was sent as the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Galatians 2:7-8). God's work was organized.

God has always been the author of organization. He didn't have the various apostles tripping over one another, each going into the other's area and territory. I don't go over into other areas to do visiting and counseling or another minister coming over here to visit and counsel—just kind of "hodge-podge" around. There is organization. Galatians 2 makes it plain that Paul was assigned as the apostle to the Gentiles, just as Peter and the twelve were to the ten tribes of the house of Israel. We have that as a background for I Peter.

II Peter was written basically to the same audience. It was written a little later, right at the end of Peter's life. It was written at a time when, as we are going to see, the mystery of iniquity was at work and making inroads into the Church. Some of these Samaritans were utilizing many spurious gospels and epistles in order to trigger their deception. There were a lot of books that were, supposedly, written by some of the apostles. There were books that purported to be gospels accounts or epistles from some of the apostles.

II Peter is written as a warning to the Church and also to demonstrate the need of a clear canon of New Testament Scripture that Peter was responsible for introducing at the end of his life. It was written just prior to his arrest and execution. We will note some of that. Let's just briefly survey the books. We will note certain material as we go through it.

He addresses in I Peter 1:1, "...the pilgrims [KJV, "strangers"]..." in this area of what we would term northern Turkey.

He addresses those who are the elect.

Verse 2, "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace be multiplied." Elect simply means "chosen"; to elect is to choose. The elect are those whom God has chosen to be a part of the firstfruits. We are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. God has determined ahead of time that we would have the *opportunity* of being part of the firstfruits. We're elect! What makes us elect? What sets the elect apart? We are set apart through sanctification of the Spirit. We're set apart and made holy by the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit. We are set apart through God's Spirit; the Spirit of God dwelling in us makes us holy. We are set apart to exemplify God's way through obedience and through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

We are reminded in v. 3, "...according to His mercy has begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus, from the dead." We have a hope that is living, a hope that is alive—not a hope that is dead. Our hope is based on eternal life. Our hope is based upon the fact that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. He didn't stay in that tomb; He came out. That living hope is defined.

Verse 4, "To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away reserved in heaven for you." Does that mean you go to

heaven? Some read that verse and think, 'When we all get to heaven....' It doesn't say anything about going to heaven. We have an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled. In other words, it doesn't deteriorate. It doesn't rust, rot or decay. It is kept in a very safe place; it's kept in heaven. It is reserved in heaven. If it's in heaven and we are here, how are we going to get it? If the reward is in heaven and we are on earth, there are only one or two things that can happen. Either we have to go to heaven to get it or it has to come down here to us. So which is it?

Notice what Jesus says in the end of the book of Revelation 22:12, "'Behold I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work.'" The last thing Jesus said in the book of Revelation was "Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me." So Christ is going to bring the reward with Him when He comes. We are not going to heaven to get it. The reward is being *reserved* in heaven until Christ comes. And when He comes, He is going to bring the reward with Him to give us in accordance with what we have done. It's very clear when we look at I Peter 1:4 and put it together with Revelation 22:12 that Christ will bring that reward with Him when He comes.

II Peter 1 describes this reward and the hope of which we are to have our hearts and minds set upon.

In v. 6, he tells us that even though, right now, we may be undergoing various trials and tests, we are to rejoice.

II Peter 1:7, "that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perish...." Gold deteriorates and will wear away a molecule at a time. Maybe you've had a piece of gold jewelry or ring for many years; you will notice that gradually it begins to wear away. It will smooth down and will gradually wear away. Gold will perish. The reward that God has for us will not wear away and perish. The character that we are to build is not something that will wear away and perish.

He compares the trial of our faith to being like gold. For gold to have value and to be used, it has to be refined. Precious metal has to be refined because normally there are impurities that are mixed in with it that have to be purged out and gotten rid of. To separate the pure metal from the impurities present in the ore, the ancient metal workers or silversmiths had an interesting approach in refining precious metal. Using silver for an example, the method that they had of being able to determine when the silver was pure

and purified to the point that they wanted it, they would melt the silver, the impurities (the dross) would come to the top, and they would skim it. Their method for determining when they had it right was that the silversmith would look into the molten metal, and when it had gotten to the point that he could see his own reflection without distortion, he considered that all the impurities were removed. It was considered finished and completely refined. Today, that's not the way they do it. We have a little more sophisticated technology.

There's a lot of analogy to be drawn by the way that it was anciently done. The trials, tests and difficulties that we go through are compared to fire. It is through fiery trials that our character is purged. The dross and the impurities are purged away. And, interestingly enough, what is God doing? Isn't He, in effect, looking into us, looking into our character until He can see His own reflection without distortion? Isn't that the kind of character that we are to be developing? We are to be developing the mind of Christ and the character and nature of God. Just as the ancient silversmith, the worker with precious metals, looked into the molten substance to see if their reflection was there without distortion, so in effect, that is part of what we are going through as God is seeking to refine our character to reflect Him.

We find the tests, trials and difficulties that we go through mentioned here.

Verses 13-16, "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance [we are not to go back and be the way we were when we didn't know any better]; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'"

God says we are not to fashion and shape ourselves according to the former lusts—to the cravings, desires and pulls of human nature. We're not to be like the world. We are to be holy in all aspects of our conduct and in every area of our life because God is holy and He wants us to reflect His values. He wants us to reflect His nature.

Verses 17-21, "And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear [or reverence, as it actually means]; knowing that

you were not redeemed with corruptible things [our lives have not been purchased with money]... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."

We are reminded in v. 24, "...All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass...." In other words, everything that appears so real and permanent to us is here today and gone tomorrow. It is just that passing and transitory.

Then we are told, going on from that, in I Peter 2:1, "Therefore laying aside all the malice, all the guile, all the hypocrisy, the envying, the evil speaking." Lay aside the evil motives, the resentment, the play-acting, the envy, the gossip and the backbiting. Lay aside all of these things.

Verse 2, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." The analogy God draws, in terms of the way we are to crave and desire God's Word, is in the same way that a little baby earnestly desires its mother's milk. Now, if there is ever an example of fervent desire, it's a little baby wanting to nurse. Any parent can remember. You can just see that little baby just bobbing its head just so anxious to get to it. It's like he has to have it, and he has to have it right now. It is the exact description of this fervent desire. I have to have it, and I've just got to have it right now. It's kind of funny to watch them sometime, as to how excited they can get at mealtime when they are ready to nurse.

God points that out and He says look how a little baby earnestly desires his mother's milk because he needs that in order for him to grow. He says you need to take a lesson from that little baby. You need to have the same attitude when it comes to My Word. You need to be just as eager and excited about My Word, about the milk of the Word, as a newborn baby is after his own mother's milk. That's quite an analogy because you think about that little baby and the way he is. We realize that God wants us to recapture some of that zeal, that eagerness, that anticipation for learning more of His way because that's our spiritual nourishment.

Then he tells us in v. 4, “Coming to Him as to a living stone....” He draws an analogy here that describes us.

Verse 5, “You also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” We’re compared to living stones. There is a spiritual temple being built. Think a little bit. Do you remember the most unusual aspect of the construction of Solomon’s temple? If you had come there, it would have been the most unusual construction site you would have ever seen.

We are told back in I Kings 6:7 that there was not the sound of a hammer or of an axe at the temple site. Have you ever been to a construction site, and you didn’t have all this clang, clang, bang, bang? All of the stones were cut at the quarry and they exactly fit. Everything was brought to the site exactly pre-cut. Three thousand years ago that must have been pretty primitive, but their measurements weren’t too primitive because they cut those stones to where they fit exactly. They didn’t need to get the sledgehammer out to it.

Have you ever wondered why God did that? What was the big deal? Was God primarily concerned about the sound of hammers at the temple site? The construction of the temple, just as the construction of the tabernacle and the furniture for it, was symbolic. God instructed Moses to do it exactly the way He showed him in the Mount. Why? Because it symbolized something! When the time came for Solomon to build the temple, God instructed him how to do it. God inspired him exactly how it was to be done because it was symbolic of certain things.

We are compared to living stones. God is building up a spiritual edifice, a spiritual temple that is going to completely come together at the time of the resurrection. The construction site, so to speak—when the spiritual temple comes together at the resurrection—is not when God’s going to get out the axe and hammer and start working on us. We’re going to fit exactly because right now we are at the quarrying stage. That’s why we get the knots on our head. He’s banging away right now. There’s a lot of banging and noise right now in our lives. The hammers, the axes and the saw, everything is at work right now trimming us to specification. When the time comes, we’re going to fit. We’re coming as living stones. Solomon’s temple was built with physical stones—just plain old Jerusalem sandstones—but

God’s spiritual temple is being built, not with physical sandstone, but with living stones.

Verses 6-7, Jesus Christ Himself is compared to the chief cornerstone. In other words, the cornerstone is the one that is first laid and everything else derives from there in terms of its measurement. Everything has to fit around the cornerstone. That’s the one that is the basis by which everything else is measured out. What it amounts to is that we all have to fit around Jesus Christ. We have to be cut and shaped where we will fit with Him. That’s quite an analogy describing how Christ is the chief cornerstone.

Verse 8, “and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.” He has become a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to some.

Verse 9, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

Verse 11, “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts....” We are not part of this society. We are strangers and pilgrims.

Verses 13-14, “Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers....” We are to respect the laws of society, but we are not to be a part of it. We are not part and parcel of this society. We’re strangers and pilgrims. In other words, we are passing through. Because this is not our society, we are not part and parcel of this world’s military and political establishment. We are to submit ourselves to ordinances of man. We are to recognize and respect the laws of the land, but we are to realize that we are not a part of this society. There is that distinction. We are to try to set an example that people will notice in the way we live.

Verse 17, “Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.” We are to show proper love, respect and honor. We are to show proper esteem for others.

Verse 18, servants are enjoined to be subject to their masters, not simply to the ones that are good. There were, undoubtedly, those who were kind and considerate people. Just as today, some may work for a boss that is considerate and tries to be fair and equitable. There were servants then who had masters who sought to be just, masters who were equitable and reasonable men who tried to conduct themselves in an appropriate

way. Peter says here to be subject to the harsh, not simply to the ones that do what they ought to do because there are plenty of those that are the other way.

Verses 19-20, “For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.” When you get in trouble for something you did wrong and you take it in a decent attitude, God says, ‘Big deal! What does that count? You had it coming. You’re getting what you deserve. You are just simply receiving what you earned.’ If you haven’t done anything wrong and you take it in a proper attitude, this is commendable before God.

Verse 21, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.” What were His steps?

Verse 22, He didn’t do any sin.

Verse 23, “who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten....” Christ suffered. Sometimes, if we are going to live godly, we will have to suffer wrongfully. Will a Christian ever suffer wrongfully? Sure, sometimes. Christ did; Christ suffered wrongfully. He never suffered for what He did because He didn’t do anything wrong and He suffered for it. He left us an example that we should follow.

We realize that as a Christian there may be times when we are persecuted for righteousness’ sake. God takes special note when someone is receiving something that they did not incur. The character that is established and the attitude that is exemplified by one who suffers wrongfully is something God takes note of.

Christ set the perfect example.

Verse 24, “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.” We see that Christ paid the ultimate sacrifice. He gave His life for us. It is through His death that we have access to God. That access makes possible both our forgiveness of sin and our healing. That’s one of the benefits that we have as God’s people.

It’s one of the benefits that we have by having access to God. Christ certainly made that possible. The healing that He made possible certainly includes the whole gamut, whether you’re talking in spiritual or emotional terms and

certainly in physical terms because that is one of the blessings and benefits that God has made available to His people. Christ gave Himself for us. He suffered in our stead, dying in our stead. Through Him we have access to God, and through Him we have access to the benefits that God extends—the benefits of God’s mercy, His forgiveness and of God’s healing.

He talks about servants in 2:18. Then he talks about Christians in general—those who suffer wrongfully.

Then he says in I Peter 3:1-2, “Likewise [in the same way], you wives be subject to your own husbands, that if any obey not the word, they may without the word, be won by the conduct of the wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear [KJV, “respect”].” He addresses here the example that wives are to set.

Verse 3, “Do not let your beauty be that outward adorning of arranging the hair, of wearing gold, or of putting on fine apparel, but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves....”

The word “adorned” is the word “*cosmos*” in the Greek. Interestingly enough, it is the same word that our modern English word “cosmetic” derives from. “*Cosmos*” in the Greek can be rendered several different ways, but in this context, it refers to “adorning.” The point that he is making is that it becomes a matter of priority. The world’s priority is on what goes on the outside. This is what life is all about to people in the world.

God says to His people (and specifically here addressing women), your life should not revolve around the outside but around the inside. The adornment that needs to be primarily focused upon is the inner person. The attitude, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, is priceless in God’s sight. This is the ornament that the holy women of old utilized. It was an attitude that shined out. It is the inner person that manifests itself.

Obviously, this is not saying that you should never comb your hair and walk around in a sack all the time. I think we understand there are plenty of scriptures that show we should be properly neat and clean and groom ourselves appropriately. There’s nothing wrong with dressing nicely and tastefully and appropriate grooming. God is not saying you should never

take a bath, never comb your hair and put on an old feed sack. That's not what He is saying at all.

He's talking about a set of priorities. He's talking about what your life revolves around. Let's face it. In the world, in so many cases, the emphasis is on the external. All the things that can be put on the outside are considered what beauty is all about. What God thinks is beautiful is not something that derives from what you put on the outside. It derives from what you are on the inside. It's a matter of perspective and a matter of priority. This is an emphasis.

Verse 5, this is an example of the attitude of the holy women of old who trusted God and who were in subjection to their own husband. They had an attitude of respect.

Verse 6, "as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror." That is kind of an obscure statement; it means as long as you do well and do not let anxieties unnerve you. It requires faith. God's government is based on faith. To step out and to show the proper respect for God's government in the home requires faith that God will do His part and make it work.

Our daughters grow up to aspire to being counted by God as a daughter of Sarah. That is a very complimentary term. God looks upon Sarah as one of the most outstanding women of the Bible. She was a remarkable person. You read what Sarah went through and you read that Sarah had trials.

Abraham may have been the father of the faithful, but he was not perfect. You go back and read the story, and you find out that he wasn't perfect in some of the things that he did. And Sarah wasn't perfect either. But there was an example, there was an attitude, there was something that God saw that He greatly valued in those two individuals. They were called out as a unique and special team. Peter hearkens and utilizes this; I think there is a lot to be gained from focusing on the details of this instruction.

Then he begins to go into instructions for the husbands.

Verse 7, "Likewise you husbands, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel..." This term "weaker" could just as easily be rendered "fragile." The word literally means "more fragile." The point is a husband is told to be understanding of his wife, to give honor and respect to his wife. There is a proper chivalry, a proper attitude of manners. Give honor unto the

wife as the one who is the more fragile, the more sensitive, perhaps the more easily hurt or crushed. There is generally a greater sensitivity that women have. They tend to be more sensitive emotionally, a little more sensitive in their feelings. She is a little more fragile in that way. The husbands are told to realize that your wife tends to be more sensitive; show special honor and respect towards her.

There are many concepts of matters of chivalrous conduct that we should seek to practice in our own lives and certainly with our own wives. We want to teach our young boys to be polite, to treat the young ladies like ladies, to open and hold the door, to let the ladies go first and to show this kind of attitude of respect. It's proper and an appropriate kind of thing. Our society is so geared the other way that it takes a lot of instruction because that's not the message that they often get from society around.

Verse 8, "Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another..."

Verse 9, "not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling..." Have this attitude of being kind and giving a blessing.

Verse 7, He tells Christian husbands to deal with their wives in this way that your prayers be not hindered. Certainly, if we don't fulfill our responsibilities in the way that we handle our life and our families, it can certainly impact our prayer life and our relationship with God.

Verses 14-15, "But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. 'And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.' But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense [KJV, "an answer"] to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."

The context is suffering for righteousness' sake. When you're happy, even though you're suffering wrongfully, people can't figure that out. In that context, we're told to be ready to give an answer. If you really act like a Christian and live like a Christian, sooner or later somebody is going to ask you, 'What's with you? What's the source of this attitude, this peace that you have?' We're told, 'If it is the will of God to suffer, it is a whole lot better to suffer for well-doing than for evildoing.'

This is the example that Christ had.

Verses 18-21, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison,

who formerly were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscious toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” It’s compared to baptism.

What is this talking about? There are those who go off to great things. The Catholic Church teaches when Jesus was crucified, He went to hell and preached down there to all the souls in hell. Of course, He couldn’t have been there for three days and three nights because they only had Him dead for a day and a half. If He was doing that, He surely pulled a dirty trick on the people on the cross because He told the thief that, ‘Today you are going to be with Me’ (Luke 23:43). If that was the case and He went to hell, the thief surely got a surprise and wound up in the other place. You can’t have it both ways, as they sometimes tend to do.

Let’s notice the context. Jesus Christ died in the flesh. As a physical human being, He died. Through the power of the Spirit, He was made alive. It is through the power of that same Spirit, by that same spiritual power, that He went to the spirits in prison—not to men in prison, not unto souls in prison—but to spirits in prison. God makes His angels spirits (Psalm 104:4), and here were spirits who were in prison. Here were spirits in restraint (“*tartaroo*” in the Greek). This is the only place where “*tartaroo*” is used; it refers to the place where these spirits (or angels) are under restraint. These spirits are fallen angels or demon spirits. Here was a time when Jesus exhorted certain demon spirits who were in prison or under restraint. God has placed certain restraints upon them. They were cast down to earth (Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28). They had been, at various times, very disobedient.

The specific occasion that is addressed is the time when the patience of God waited in the days of Noah. So the time when Jesus did this was not when He was dead. It was the time when Noah was building the ark. It was many, many centuries earlier at the time when the ark was being built. In effect, things had been stirred up to the point that God was going to have to intervene and wipe out humanity from the face of the earth. He was wiping out life on the planet, and He was going to start over.

Evidently, at some point during the preparation of the ark prior to the flood, Jesus Christ

addressed the demon spirits and exhorted and warned them. Their final fate and punishment has not yet been assigned to each of them because we are told in I Corinthians 6 that we will judge the angels. We will have a part in judging them and giving a final sentence. Christ evidently exhorted them that they had better consider the consequences of what they were doing. He exhorted them that He was going to step in and put a stop to what they were doing. The magnitude of what they were doing was simply making it worse and harder on them. There is an exhortation, warning, and admonition to them at that time that their final judgment and sentencing had not yet been passed. They were simply getting themselves in deeper and deeper by the magnitude of some of what they were doing. He brings this in at this point.

I Peter 4:1, “Therefore, since Christ, suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.” Part of the purpose of going through trials and tests is that it enables us to grow. It helps us to overcome, to put sin behind us. It helps us to really get our priorities straight. It helps us to see things in proper perspective.

Verse 4, the world may think it strange that we don’t do the things that we used to do. They should notice a difference.

Verse 5, we are all going to give an account to Him who is ready to judge the quick (living) and the dead. The term “quick” simply means “those who are alive.” It doesn’t mean if you’re slow you won’t be judged. “Quick” means “those who are living”; it simply means that everybody is going to get judged. If you’re dead, you will be raised up and will be judged. If you’re still alive, then you’ll be judged, too. You’re either dead or alive. There’s not much way you can be in between—so that takes care of everybody.

Verse 6, “For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.” There are those who take that scripture and think they should preach to the dead. There are some who believe in being baptized for all their dead relatives. They think they can get people into heaven if they get baptized for them. Does this mean you should go down to the graveyard and preach to the dead? That wouldn’t do much good.

Ecclesiastes 9:5 says, “the dead know not anything.” So, it’s not going to do any good to preach to them.

What does this mean, “the gospel preached to the dead”? Notice what it says. “For this reason the gospel was [past tense] preached also to them that are dead [present tense].” The verb tense makes it plain the gospel was preached (past tense) to those who are dead (present tense). Christ is going to come back, and He’s going to judge everybody—both those who are still living and those who have already died. So the fact that some have already died doesn’t mean the gospel was preached to them in vain. The gospel was preached, past tense, to those who are now dead. Christ is going to judge us all, whether we have already died or whether we are still alive. Obviously, the gospel was preached to those who are now dead—but when they were alive. It was preached, past tense, back when they were living. They are now dead, but that’s okay because Christ is going to return. They will be made alive, and judgment will be there.

Verse 8, we are admonished to have fervent love among ourselves. Love covers a multitude of sin.

Verses 12-13, “...don’t think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” When we are partakers of Christ’s suffering, we can rejoice because when His glory is revealed, we will be partakers of that, too. We should not be shocked or surprised when trials and tests come.

Verse 17, “For the time has come [right now] for judgment to begin at the house of God....” Judgment for us, for God’s people, for God’s Church, is right now. This is our time of judgment.

I Peter 5:1-4, Peter ends up by admonishing the ministry to feed the flock that is among them, to set an example and to realize that Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd, will appear and demand an accounting.

Verses 5-6, “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.” We are to humble ourselves under His hand and He will exalt us.

Verses 7-8, “casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant....”

Verse 13, Peter closes by mentioning that he is writing from Babylon; this was his headquarters at this time.

In II Peter, Peter addresses the same basic group. II Peter 1:4, “by which has been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that

through these you may be partakers of the divine nature....”

Then he goes through and enumerates seven characteristics: virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. These are to be added to faith.

Verse 9, he tells us that if we lack these things, we’re blind.

Verse 10, he goes on to tell us that if we do these things, we shall never fail.

Peter tells us the basis in vv. 4-11, “by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

He gives us a sure-fire means to guarantee that we will never “fall by the wayside.” He tells us how to go about being productive and growing spiritually. There is a tremendous amount that is packed into these verses. These verses are certainly a way of ensuring that we will grow in grace and in knowledge (II Peter 3:18). We will not “fall by the wayside” if we are putting these things into practice.

Verse 12, “Therefore I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth.” He said, ‘I want to continually remind you of these things. I know you’ve heard it, but I want to always remind you.’

Verses 13-14, “Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent [as long as I am still living], to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent....” In other words, ‘I am going to die.’ Peter said, ‘As long as I am alive and here in the flesh, I think it’s important that I stir you up and remind you of these things. I realize that I’m not going to be around a whole lot longer.’

Verse 15, 'I will endeavor that you may be able, after my decease [after I am dead], to have these things always in remembrance.' Clearly this is a reference to a permanent canon of Scripture that Peter was responsible for bringing about. This would ensure that the things he had reminded and exhorted the brethren might be remembered after he was dead and gone.

In v. 16, you notice there is a change from first person singular to first person plural. In vv. 12, 13, 14 and 15, he said "I"—first person singular. He says, "I will not be negligent...I think it's fitting...I will soon die...I will endeavor...."

In vv. 16-19, notice the switch, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. We also have the prophetic word made more sure [KJV, "a more sure word of prophecy"]...."

Sometimes this can get read over, but it's important to note because it points out something very specific. Who is the "we"? Clearly it is those who were with Jesus in the holy mountain who heard the voice from God that said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Who was that? You go back to Matthew 17, and it is clearly defined.

Matthew 17:1-2, "Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, brought them into a high mountain...and was transfigured there before them...."

Verse 5, "...a bright cloud overshadowed them...there was a voice, 'This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear you Him.'" Who heard that? Peter, James and John were the ones with Jesus in the holy mount.

James the brother of John had been martyred. He was the first of the apostles martyred. We have reference to it in Acts 12, which is dated about 44 A.D. James the brother of John was killed with a sword (Acts 12:2). James the brother of John was the first one of the twelve that was martyred.

James was long dead, and that meant that Peter and John were the only two still living. There had only been three originally; one was dead, so that meant Peter and John were the only individuals living who had been with Jesus in the mountain.

They had seen Him transfigured and heard the voice from heaven that announced, "This is My beloved Son." Therefore, the ones who had the sure word of prophecy were Peter and John.

II Peter 1:19, "We also have the prophetic word made more sure...."

Verse 16, 'We have not come off and followed cunningly devised fables. We saw; we were there. We [Peter and John] have the sure word of prophecy.' They were the ones that God utilized to give us the New Testament. They were set aside through this unique experience. They were imparted with what Peter terms here as the sure word of prophecy. They were the ones that God utilized to designate what would be New Testament Scripture.

Peter singles this out, as he tells them, 'I am going to die. I've been reminding you of these things, and I want to make sure that after I'm gone, you will continue to be reminded. We [John and I], have the sure word of prophecy. So you take heed to what we say as opposed to what others may say.'

Peter then begins to warn them.

II Peter 2:1, "But there were also false prophets among the peoples, even as there will be false teachers among you, who secretly bring in destructive heresies...."

This was specific reference to the problems that came into the first-century Church. It describes what resulted in bringing together and what became the great false church.

We have already commented on II Peter 1:15 that Peter was putting together this canon of Scripture so that after he was dead, there would be a permanent record that would be available to continually remind them.

Then in chapter 2, Peter begins to point out these false prophets. He brings out the fact that God will deal with everyone in His time. God knows those that are His.

Verse 4, He dealt with the angels who sinned. Verse 5, He dealt with the world at the time of Noah.

Verse 6, He dealt with Sodom and Gomorrah. Verse 7, He delivered Lot and then dealt with them. God knows who's who.

Verse 15, God describes those who followed the way of Baalam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. Baalam was willing to preach anything for a price.

Verse 18, it describes individuals speaking great swelling words of vanity, who seek to entice those that have come into the group and to lure them back.

We are told in vv. 20-21 that it is better never to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and turned away from it. You're better to have never had your opportunity than to have had it and "blown" it. That's what he is saying, which evidently was the case in some of these.

II Peter 3:1-2, "Beloved, I now write to you, this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior."

Peter is here equating the New Testament with the Old Testament in terms of authority. He said, 'I want you to remember the Bible and what it says in the Bible. I want you to remember what was spoken before by the holy prophets [the Old Testament] and the commandments of us, the apostles of the Lord.' Peter is equating the Commandments that the apostles gave with the writings of the prophets of the Old Testament.

He is explaining this because at the time Peter is writing (up until that point), when you said "Bible" or when you talked about "Scripture" you were talking about what we think of as the Old Testament. That had been the Bible—the Scriptures—for many, many years. That had been the Bible, and these other things had been letters. There had been a letter from Paul or a letter from Peter, a letter from this one or that one. This is a clear designation of which books were official, and he is putting them on the same par with the prophets of old. He is saying that the writings of the apostles and the writings of the prophets of old are to be mutually adhered to.

Then he says in vv. 3-4, "knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lust, and saying, 'where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers have gone asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.'" There will come those in the last days who follow their own lusts and desires and who say where is the promise of His coming? Things just go on the way they always have.

II Peter 3:5-7 he then says, 'they are willingly ignorant of the fact that God has intervened in the past. They ignore the evidence of the flood. They ignore that God has stepped into history and judged the world in times past, and He will do so again.'

Verses 8-9, "But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord

is not slack concerning His promise...." God has not forgotten what He said. He has a time plan; a day is representative of a thousand years. God is going to do what He says He is going to do.

Verse 13, "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." We are looking for something that is to come.

Verse 15, then he ends up by reminding them of what Paul had written. All the things Paul wrote had been gathered together. He reminds them that Paul wrote some things that are difficult to be understood. They can be taken out of context and misunderstood.

Verse 16, "as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable twist [KJV, "wrest"] to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures." They take it out of context. That's what it means to wrest; it means "to pry loose." If you wrest something loose, that means you are prying it loose. The way people misunderstand Paul is by taking what he said out of context, prying it loose from the overall context in which it's written. They take it out and say Paul did away with the law—which he didn't.

But he wrote some things that are not easily understood unless you really carefully examine the context in which he says them. Peter addresses that and equates what Paul wrote with all the other scriptures.

Why did he write II Peter? He summarizes his purpose of writing.

II Peter 3:1-2, "Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle...[Those of you in Spokesman Club, this is called SPS—Specific Purpose Statement]...(in both [both letters I wrote] of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder) [of trying to remind you of something], that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior."

In other words, he wanted to stir them up to study the Bible—the Old Testament, which they already had and the New Testament, which God was using Peter to compile. He wanted to stir them up, to continue to go back over the Bible, to pay heed to it, to be reminded of what God was doing and of God's plan and purpose.

I hope that from this survey, this overview, we can perhaps have a little more insight into some

of the things that God revealed through Peter. There is a lot that is packed in here.

I am passing out questions on I, II, III John and Jude. That sounds like a lot of books when you “rattle them off,” but when you look at the number of pages involved, it is very short. Since II, III John and Jude each consist of one short chapter, I don’t think that will be too lengthy a set of Scriptures to study between now and next time. We will focus in on these very important books. You can’t always equate length with importance. A lot can be packed into a short space.

When we conclude the epistles of John and Jude, we will have completed this short series on the General Epistles, and we will be prepared to launch another Bible study series. I think, at this time, we will get into the Major Prophets. There is so much going on and happening in the world that I think that it would do us well to go back and take note of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. We will find that today’s and tomorrow’s headlines are already in the Bible.

With that we will conclude.

Bible Study # 45 Questions

SURVEY OF THE GENERAL EPISTLES SERIES

I and II Peter

(Give scripture references.)

1. What is the modern name of the area to which I Peter was written?
2. How are the “elect” set apart from others?
3. Prove from one or two other scriptures that I Peter 1:4 does not refer to our going to heaven.
4. What analogy does Peter use to describe Christians?
5. What is a Christian’s relationship with society?
6. Will God ever allow a Christian to suffer wrongfully?
7. What part of Christ’s sacrifice is connected with our healing?
8. In the Bible, Abraham is called the Father of the Faithful. Whom does Peter tell us that Sara is the mother of?
9. For what cause does Peter tell Christian husbands that their prayers might be hindered?
10. What, according to the context, prompts the question about “the hope that lies within you”?
11. Explain I Peter 3:19. Did Christ preach to souls in hell?
12. Explain I Peter 4:6.
13. When will God’s Church be judged?
14. Where was Peter’s headquarters at this stage of his life?
15. What does Peter tell us to do to insure that we will never fall away from the Church?
16. Who is the “we” that Peter refers to in II Peter 1:19?
17. Explain the significance of II Peter 1:15.
18. How does Peter define his purpose in II Peter?

Bible Study # 46
December 20, 1989
Mr. John Ogwyn

General Epistles Series—I, II, III John and Jude

This evening we want to finish up this short series that we have had on the General Epistles. We are going to do so by **focusing in on the epistles of John (I, II, III John) and also the book of Jude—a short one-chapter book.**

All three of John's books were written near the close of the first century A.D. John was the last of the apostles to die. He outlived the others of the twelve by close to thirty years. He lived into the late 90s A.D.—close to about 100 A.D. John clearly, at that time, would have been close to a hundred years of age; he lived to a very advanced age.

He was in exile for a period of time in the 90s A.D. on the isle of Patmos. Patmos is a small island off the coast of Asia Minor (what is today modern-day Turkey). He was placed in exile by Emperor Domitian. This exile ended about 96 A.D. John had been in Ephesus prior to his exile. In the latter years, he was in Ephesus for several years. He was exiled from Ephesus to the island of Patmos, yet he did have mail contact. It was from the island of Patmos that he wrote most of the writings for which he is noted.

The book of Revelation, in particular, was written at that time. He wrote to the Churches in Asia Minor. This is the area around Ephesus—the very area to which the book of Revelation was addressed. It was addressed to the seven Churches of Asia Minor.

John was released from exile in 96 A.D. After his return from exile on the island of Patmos, evidently he returned to Ephesus where he was said to have died in 98 A.D. John was writing toward the close of the early apostolic era of the Church. He was addressing problems that needed to be addressed. The books that he wrote put, in a sense, the final touches of the New Testament.

We focused last time on how Peter was responsible for collecting together the books that comprise most of our New Testament. We focused on how Peter had borne testimony of the fact that he and John had been given that sure word of prophecy (II Peter 2). Peter was responsible for collecting probably twenty-two books of the New Testament, which would be all of the New Testament books except John's five books. Twenty-two books, and in that sense, would have corresponded exactly with the Jewish

reckoning of the number of books in the Hebrew Bible. What Peter did (even though it was what God wanted at that time) was not the final capstone. There was information that yet needed to be written. At the time Peter died, in the late 60s (just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.), events had not yet come to the point where some of these final things needed to be written.

John wrote and was able to address things from a perspective of thirty years down the road from the time of the rest of the New Testament. Many of the problems that were in the beginning stages at the time that Peter addressed it—or James or Paul addressed it—had continued on and developed further for a period of about thirty years. The heresies that had begun to creep in ultimately gave rise to the false church—the false church that calls itself “Christian” yet does not practice the religion of Jesus Christ.

Paul said in II Thessalonians 2:7, when he was writing in the 50s A.D., ‘the mystery of iniquity does already work.’ The mystery religion of lawlessness was already at work even in the 50s A.D. Paul spoke in the book of Galatians of some coming and bringing another gospel (Galatians 1:6-7).

In the book of Acts written by Luke under Paul's auspices, we were introduced to an individual by the name of Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8) or Simon the Magician known in history as Simon Magus.

Acts 8:9, Simon Magus was the religious leader of the Samaritans. He was an individual who professed Christianity and yet never truly repented.

Verses 18-20, Peter rebuked him very strongly when Simon sought to purchase with money the office of an apostleship in the New Testament Church. Peter rebuked him very strongly. It is clear that while Simon was baptized and professed belief in Christ, he never repented.

That is stated very clearly because Peter told him in v. 20, “...your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!” ‘Your money is going to go where you are and you are both going to burn up. Your money perishes with you because you have thought this.’ We are introduced to something just kind of on the surface level.

In v. 10, we are told that this man was the great religious leader of the Samaritans and that all of them paid attention to him. We are introduced to that fact in other books.

In II Peter 2:1, for instance, we are told that ‘false prophets were creeping in.’ There were things that were being taught by some who were seeking to water down the gospel message and to undermine the importance of keeping the commandments and obeying God. There was a different message that was coming in and being introduced.

Now, when John was writing thirty years later down the line, many of these heresies had developed to the point that, in some cases, certain whole Churches were, literally, being taken over by the heretics and true Christians put out (III John: 9-10). Many of the so-called Gnostic heresies (“Gnostic” means “we know”) dated back to Simon the Magician and gave rise to a lot of teachings of the professing Christian Church. Perhaps we can go into that at a later Bible study.

In the books of John, we have, in a sense, a final admonition to a Church that had lost a lot of its first love. The Church at Ephesus typified the first stage of the Church of God. The Church at Ephesus typified the whole beginning stage or era of the Church. That Church was rebuked because they lost their first love. The Church to which John is writing had lost its first love, and as a result, it did not have the power of God to really resist the insidious encroachments of the heretics.

The books that John wrote, particularly I, II, III John, serve not only as a warning to the Church of that day, but it also provides for us a record of what actually transpired. It gives us the beginning of the events that developed. Many historical writers say that with the conclusion of the New Testament, a curtain rang down on Church history. We aren’t really able to penetrate that curtain for almost the best part of a century. Towards the end of the second century when the curtain begins to rise, the church that calls itself “Christian” is in so many ways totally different from the Church of which we read in the book of Acts.

This has puzzled many of the historians. We see Easter being substituted for Passover. We see a controversy having erupted and Easter having replaced Passover. We see Sunday worship having replaced the Sabbath, and we see the introduction of the mass and things of that sort taking the place of the Passover service. We see the introduction of many things that are radically different from the Church of which we read in the book of Acts.

The books of I, II, III John serve not only as a warning to the Church of that day, but they also serve to record for us what actually transpired that eventually resulted in what developed into the Roman Catholic Church. What we see starting here ultimately developed into the Catholic religion of the fourth century, which came to dominate the visible Church.

There were many different heretical movements that entered into the Church through the first century. One of these emerged, and by the time of the fourth century, with the political muscle of the Emperor Constantine, the brand of religion that had come to dominate in Rome was made the official religion. Everybody was expected to conform to that religion or they had to flee outside the bounds of the Roman Empire to avoid persecution.

Constantine saw the need, as he viewed it, to put the empire together with religion. He could see that nobody believed the old Roman religion any more. There was a need to have the unifying force of religion. He could see the vitality of the Christian religion. But there were different approaches and different variations to that, and he took the side of the bishop of Rome. He called a church council at Nicea and enforced on everyone that particular brand.

The books of John show us the beginnings of the heresies that gave rise to these events. It is a warning to us by way of example. The authority of John’s epistles and their authenticity are easily attested to from the earliest times in the area to which they were addressed—the Churches of Asia Minor. In the area of the Churches of Asia Minor, the books of I, II, III John and Revelation were never questioned; there’s never any question recorded in terms of the authenticity of these books.

Even Catholic historians preserved the writings of Polycarp, for instance, who was a disciple of the Apostle John and wrote in the 140s A.D. Polycarp was involved in a dispute with the bishop of Rome over the issue of Passover and the importance of observing the Holy Days. There are records that are preserved that date back to that time.

In those areas, there was never any question that John wrote these books and of their authority. The only places where we find the authority and the authenticity of these books questioned at early times was in Rome and perhaps in Alexandria, Egypt, and some of the areas that took their cue from Rome. The reason they were questioned was because there was an attempt to

undermine them. It was an unsuccessful attempt. It was an attempt to undermine them because of the indictment that they contained. Because they were uncomfortable with the message, they sought to attack the messenger and to try to cast doubt on the credibility.

Jude wrote the book of Jude. Jude was the brother of James who wrote the book of James, which makes him also the half-brother of Jesus Christ. It was written about the same time that Peter wrote II Peter. **Jude is a book that primarily warns about the advancing heresies of the day.** It was evidently addressed to the same areas that James had addressed his Epistles. It was written to pretty much the same audience that James had written to. It was written a little later than James who had written in the latter 60s A.D. It was written after James' martyrdom, in a sense, as kind of a warning to those areas. Jude was written earlier than the Epistles of John, but there is a sequence that we have already gone through on James, Peter, John and Jude as to why that was the logical sequence. Even though John's works were written later, they were inserted between the writings of Peter and Jude because of the subject matter and the flow that it gave.

We pick it up in **I John**. We will notice some things as we go through the book of I John. One thing that ought to be readily apparent is that there are *two basic themes* that John stresses all through I John. One theme has to do with the importance of love, real and true love, toward God and toward neighbor. John stresses the subject of love and he also stresses the subject of keeping the Commandments. He stresses *law and love*. He stresses commandment keeping and love over and over and over. If you go through the book of John, you'll see he talks about this type of thing.

In I John 1, he starts out by discussing the subject of fellowship. Brethren, the basis of our fellowship in the Church is explained right here in I John 1:3. Sometimes we hear the term "disfellowship." That's a term that's used in the Bible. It refers to someone who is put out or excluded from the fellowship of the Church. Many times that term has been used, and we have not understood where it originates. Why do we use that term? It's the term the Bible uses. But why does the Bible use that term? Notice what we're told about fellowship and we'll understand if we make the connection.

I John 1:3, "that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have

fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." That is the basis of our fellowship, our communion and our close intimate family relationship. John is saying, 'The things that I know, I am going to tell you because I want us to have a close relationship with one another. I want us to have fellowship and a close communion. I want us to have a close intimate family relationship with one another.'

He goes on to say that close relationship, that fellowship that we have, is not simply with one another—that fellowship is with God the Father and with Jesus Christ.

Then he continues in v. 5, "This is the message which we have heard of Him and declare unto you. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all."

There are many places in the Bible where it talks about God's word being a lamp unto our feet, a light to our path (Psalm 119:105).

I John 1:5-7 talks about the analogy of light and darkness and that God is the source of light. Matthew 17:2 talks about how, in His glorified state, Jesus' face shone as the sun in its glory. It is that sense of light chasing out darkness.

Whoever came into this room first this evening flipped a light switch. Here was a room that was dark, and all of a sudden, light came on and filled the room; now everybody can see. If the light suddenly went off, we would have trouble seeing where we are. That's the analogy that is used to refer to this whole world. God is the source of light. His truth is light. It comes out from Him. There is no darkness, no spiritual darkness, in God. God is perfect. He is complete. His Word is truth (John 17:17).

I John 1:6, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth." The point is you can't run with the devil and walk with God.

Amos 3:3, "Can two walk together lest they be agreed?" If we have fellowship with God, that means we are where God is. We're walking with God, which means we agree with God. You can't have fellowship with God if you don't agree with Him.

That's why the devil doesn't have fellowship with God. Because the devil didn't agree, he was cast out of heaven. It talks about the angels that kept not their first estate.

Jude 6, "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their habitation...." They were cast down to the earth (Isaiah 14).

Jude 13, "...wondering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever."

If you have fellowship with somebody, the basis of fellowship is because you have something in common; you are where they are.

In I John 1:6-7, John says that if we say that we're in fellowship with God, but our lives reflect darkness, then we're lying. We're not in fellowship with God unless we're dwelling in the light. God is in the light of His way, His truth. You can't be in close contact and fellowship with God, walking with God, have that relationship with God and be living like the world—living in spiritual darkness.

I John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another..." The basis of our fellowship with one another is, first and foremost, our fellowship with God and with Christ. We have fellowship with them when we're where they are—which is in the light. If we are outside the circle of light, if we're over here in the darkness, then we don't have fellowship with them. If we don't have fellowship with them, we don't have a basis for fellowship with one another. The basis of fellowship for the people of God is that we're in fellowship with God and with Christ.

When our actions take us outside of fellowship with God and Christ, it excludes us from any longer having a basis to fellowship with one another. That's what the term "disfellowship" means. It simply means "somebody who is removed from the fellowship." They are no longer in fellowship because they are no longer living like God's people live.

Look around. Most of you here wouldn't even know one another if it weren't for the truth of God. That's what brought most of us together. We represent a wide variety of backgrounds: different ages, different ethnic backgrounds, different educational backgrounds, different interests, different social backgrounds and different economic circumstances. Most of us would be total strangers to one another.

The thing that gives us what we have in common is the truth of God. If we weren't all in the Church, we wouldn't all be sitting here. We wouldn't know one another. We might not even like one another. We probably wouldn't have gotten to know one another well enough to know whether we liked one another or not. The basis of what brings us together is our relationship with God. We can't lay aside the relationship with God and expect to maintain the relationship and the rapport we have with one another. The reason

we can be in agreement with one another is because we agree with God; when we cease agreeing with God, we no longer agree with the people of God.

Heresies were creeping in. There were various problems that were coming in. John is addressing the subject. John is laying a foundation and explaining what is the basis for true Christian fellowship. The basis is not some mistaken idea of love and that you tolerate all kinds of sins and heresies, where you kind of put up with everything. The very basis of Christian fellowship is, first and foremost, fellowship with God. That's the basis of our fellowship with one another. Mistaken ideas come in and sometimes people don't understand.

One person explained it, and I thought he put it very aptly. Years ago, back in the mid-70s when certain ones were seeking to water down various things and bring in all kinds of things, they kept talking about being open-minded. One minister finally pointed out that there was a vast difference between being open-minded and empty-headed. Some failed to see the difference.

This was a problem in the New Testament period. They failed to really see the difference. They confused love with toleration of sin and heresies. They allowed certain of these problems to grow and to fester; it was not dealt with in accordance with God's government and God's way. Because it was not dealt with in the way that it would have been dealt with at an earlier time, some of the problems grew to the point of what we see happened. John is explaining things and is setting the stage.

Then he continues and talks about forgiveness of sin. He talks about the fact that if we say we don't have sin, we are kidding ourselves (v. 8). We all have sinned and made mistakes. When we seek to excuse and justify ourselves, we're just kidding ourselves.

Verse 8, "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." When we justify and excuse ourselves, then we're not getting anywhere. That's not the way to get out from under guilt. The human way to get out from under guilt is to want to blame somebody else. People have an excuse.

Ever notice when things go wrong and some governmental investigative body starts calling all these people in. Everybody has an excuse; it's always somebody else's fault. The ideal thing is that somebody has died, then they can all blame it on him—he's not around to defend himself.

The guy that's dead can be the ideal scapegoat because you can't ask him any questions. This is human nature. People have been "passing the buck" ever since God asked Adam 'Why did you do it?' Adam "passed the buck" to Mrs. Adam. The whole human race took a lesson from that and has been doing it ever since. God wasn't impressed then and He's not any more impressed now. That's not the solution. How do you get out from under guilt? –The solution?

Verse 9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Not by making excuses and justifications and blaming others, but by confessing our sins, by facing the truth and admitting it. The way to get out from under guilt is to be forgiven, to have God clean us up. There's a way out from under guilt. We don't have to live under guilt. God holds out mercy, but mercy is contingent upon judgment. If we won't bring ourselves under judgment, God will have to.

I John 2:1, "My little children these things I wrote to you, that you may not sin..." John is telling us the importance of not sinning. John is stressing this because some of the heresies that were coming in were based on the idea that you don't have to keep the law—it's not necessary to really obey. They claimed that's what grace is all about and that the law is done away. Peter warned that certain ones were taking what Paul wrote and were twisting it out of context. Peter had warned them about that almost thirty years earlier. The process had continued and had grown so that some were taking things Paul had written about—how we are justified by faith—out of context and using that as though the law was done away.

I John 2:1-2, "...And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." John says, 'I am telling you not to sin, but if you do, we have an Advocate with the Father. Jesus Christ is the propitiation [payment] for our sins.'

Verses 3-6, "Now by this we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word; truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."

John is stressing over and over that we have to obey; we have to do what God says.

Verse 7, he says, 'I am not telling you something new. I'm telling you something that you've had from the beginning.'

Then he begins to stress the importance of loving one another.

Verses 9-10, "He who says he is in the light [if we say that we're obeying God], and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him." If we really love our brother, we're abiding in the light, and we're not going to be an occasion for stumbling. The word in the Greek is "scandal of stumbling." There is no scandal of stumbling in him; that is an important aspect. If we are really doing what we should do, our conduct is not going to be a scandal. We're not going to be involved in scandalous conduct—carousing around and escapades that cause a source of stumbling to others. We are going to be careful where we go and what we do.

He says in v. 12, "I write these things to you little children..." John is in his 90s when he is writing this. That's his perspective as he looked at the people in the Church.

In v. 13, he talks to fathers and to young men of the importance of obeying God and of overcoming the wicked one.

Verse 15, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." He addresses the subject of not loving the world. Don't be in love with this world. Don't be in love with this world's values, its ways or its set of priorities. He brings out that the world's set of values and God's set of values are totally different and distinct. You can't really love God and love the world at the same time.

He summarizes the value system of this world. Verse 16, "For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world." What it feels like, what it looks like and to what extent is it going to impress other people—this is the value system the world revolves around. That is something that is passing away, and if you focus on that, you are going to pass away with it.

Verse 17, "And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."

Verse 18, he brings up the subject of antichrist. There are many antichrists. Antichrists are those

who are against Christ or whose message is against Christ.

Verse 19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us..." Here are those who had been in fellowship with the Church who had gone out. They had left the fellowship of the congregations and were bringing in many of these heresies. They had separated themselves.

Verse 20, "But you have an unction [KJV, "anointing"] from the Holy One, and you know all things." What did he mean by that?

Verse 27, "And the anointing which you have received of Him abides in you and you need not that any man should teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things..." The term "anointing" is talking about "the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit or the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit." "Unction from the Holy One" or "anointing from the Holy One" simply means "the receiving of God's Holy Spirit." "...the anointing which you have received from Him..."

When the ministry anoints you with oil, such as when we pray for someone's healing, the oil is a symbol. Olive oil is used in the Bible as symbolic of God's Holy Spirit. The physical anointing with oil is simply an outward symbol of the reality, which is the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit.

The audience to whom John was writing had an outpouring of God's Holy Spirit. God had given them His Spirit. They knew and understood these things.

In v. 27, he says this outpouring of the Spirit, "...which you have received of Him abides in you and you need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing [or outpouring of the Spirit] teaches you all things, and is true..." What did he mean when he said, 'you don't need anybody to teach you?' What was John doing when he wrote this letter? Wasn't he instructing them?

The point is that the basis of the teachings of many of these heretics was a development of the mystery religion. The idea was: 'You couldn't understand the Bible; you don't need to study the Bible. We'll tell you what it means. You can't understand. You have to be initiated in the mysteries. It's all written in allegories, and it doesn't mean what it says.' That was the way they sought to do away with it. They claimed it didn't mean literally what it says; it was an allegory, an illustration. They claimed these physical stories were simply to illustrate a

spiritual truth. They spiritualized away all of the literal accounts of everything that happened.

John is saying you don't need somebody else to come along and interpret. You have God's Holy Spirit and you can understand. The Bible isn't written in some way that a converted mind doesn't understand. That doesn't mean that there is not a need for a ministry or for teaching. But we don't tell you in the Church that you don't need to study the Bible—you can just take my word for what it means. Some of you may come out of a church where you were basically told that. We don't tell you that. Yes, you can understand it if you are yielded to God.

Psalm 111:10, "...A good understanding have all those that do His commandments..." If you are really acting on what God is teaching you, if you really act, obey and do what God says, you will grow in understanding. God's Spirit will lead you into a deeper understanding. John is stressing to them the opposite of what many of these heretics were telling them. That was what he is stressing right here.

I John 3:1, "Behold what manner of love that the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God..."

Verse 2, "...it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." That's what we are going to be like in the resurrection. We are going to be like God. We are going to be like Jesus Christ. If you want to know what you are going to be like in the resurrection, study and see what God is like. We are His children, and it's not demonstrable yet. We don't see what we are going to be like in the resurrection, but we are going to be like Him.

Verse 4 is a very familiar scripture (KJV), "Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law." That's what sin is! People will tell you the law is done away. Well, if the law is done away, so is sin.

John, again, is stressing in v. 5, "...He was manifested [talking about Christ], to take away our sin, and in Him is no sin."

Verse 6, "Whosoever abides in Him, does not sin..." If we are abiding in Christ, if we are letting Christ live His life in us, we are following Him and are not sinning because Christ didn't sin. To the extent that we are really walking with God, we are not going to sin either. When we sin, it's because we're not walking with God; we're not abiding with Christ.

Verse 7, “Little children, let no man deceive you, He that practices righteousness is righteous....” Why did John have to say something so self-evident? There were those who were saying that wasn’t necessarily so—you don’t really have to do anything. The Gnostics had really sought to kind of spiritualize away the statements in the Bible. Their teaching was that the Bible was written in some kind of unintelligible allegory that only those initiated into the mysteries could understand. Once you get people away from the Bible, then you can introduce all kinds of human tradition and custom and just go on from there. John makes it plain, “if you do righteousness, you are righteous.”

Verse 8, “He that commits sin is of the devil, for the devil sins from the beginning....” It’s a matter that Christ is righteous; if we are going to be righteous, we have to live like Him. The devil sins; if we are going to sin, we’re living like the devil. It’s our choice. It’s our choice between right and wrong, good and bad, God and the devil.

Verse 9, when the times comes that we’re ultimately born of God, we won’t sin at all because we are born of God.

Verse 10, “In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: whosoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he that loves not his brother.” We demonstrate who our Father is by the way we act.

John stresses again in v. 11, “For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.”

I John 3:9 makes plain that when we are born of God, we can’t sin.

Verses 7-8 bring out that we still sin from time to time right now. So we are obviously not born of God yet. We are not yet born; we are begotten. God’s Spirit is in us.

Verse 2 says it does not yet appear what we shall be. We’re His sons. We’re begotten sons and we will be born. When He returns, we are going to be like Him. We are going to be changed, transformed—born again. We are going to be born a second time, not born of a literal human mother but born of the Spirit.

John 3:6, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Right now we are flesh, but we shall be spirit.

John stresses the subject of love and the fact that we can’t be born into God’s Kingdom if we have enmity toward a brother.

Verses 14-16, “...He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” We are to give, to help, to sacrifice. We are to give of ourselves and of our time. We are to give of our life. What is your life? Your life is composed of time. If we perceive and really grasp God’s love, we’re going to demonstrate that in our dealings. An evidence of not having God’s love is if we have this world’s goods, we see a brother in need and refuse to do what we could to help. You can’t say that’s really a manifestation of the love of God. If we are in a position to help someone and we just turn our back—if we don’t have a caring and compassionate attitude—that’s not God’s way.

Verse 18, “My little children let’s not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” Certainly there is a matter of wisdom. Sometimes there may be factors where we need to get some counsel in terms of the best way to help someone. Sometimes a person is bringing a problem or problems on themselves and the best help is to let them learn a lesson. But we are to have an attitude of wanting to give, wanting to help, wanting to share—not to just stand by and have this attitude of selfishness. Not having this attitude of, ‘I am going to take care of me, and I don’t care what happens to you.’ We live in a world that is very much that way, a very self-centered world. People are going to take care of “number one” and not have a concern for helping others. We are instructed to love one another in deed and in truth.

John tells us in I John 3: 22, “...whatsoever we ask we receive of Him because we keep His commandments and do those things which are pleasing in His sight.”

We are going to look at two keys to answered prayers. One of the keys to answered prayers is obedience. Whatever we ask we receive because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing to Him. We are obeying God.

The second key is given in I John 5:14, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us.” **John mentions two keys to answered prayer:** (1) *obedience to God* and (2) *ask in accordance with God’s will.*

I John 4:1, “...believe not every spirit, but test [try] the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”

Again, he warns that not everybody is what they say they are. Because of all the problems that were extant, he was warning them to not think that everybody is what they say they are. He told them to try the spirits. He tells us how to do that.

Isaiah 8:20, “To the law and to the testimony! If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” If they speak not according to the law and the testimony, it’s because there’s no truth in them. He tells them to try the spirits. There are many false prophets.

I John 4:2, “By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God.” What did he mean by that?

Matthew 24:5, “Many are going to come in My name, saying, ‘I am Christ,’ and will deceive many.”

In Matthew 15:9, Christ talked about people worshipping Him in vain, teaching the doctrines of men.

In Matthew 7:21, He talked about those who would say, ‘Lord, Lord.’ But Jesus said, ‘not everyone who says unto Me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter into the Kingdom, but he that does the will of My Father.’

So, what did John mean when he said, “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God”? Part of the understanding comes from the most literal translation of v. 2; the tense of the verb “is come” in the Greek is the present progressive. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is coming (present progressive) is an evidence of God. That is the fact that the Spirit of God—the teaching of God’s Spirit, the confession, the admission, the acknowledgment that Jesus Christ comes into our flesh (into our life) to live His life in us—is coming in the present tense.

John 16:7, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him [It] to you.” Jesus described how He would send the Comforter and that it was expedient for us that He should go away. Jesus Christ comes into us.

In Philippians 2:5, the Apostle Paul tells us, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” Christ is coming to live His life in Christians through the Holy Spirit.

I John 4:12, “No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides [present progressive] in us, and His love has been perfected in us.”

Paul says in Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” What I am doing, I am not simply doing on my own. It is Christ living in me because He is alive; He has been resurrected; He is at the right hand of the Father; and He is dwelling in me through the power of the Spirit of God to live His life in me. I have surrendered myself to Him to where He is my Lord and my Master. I am getting out of the way and letting Him live in me. John brings out that this is the test.

Satan always mixes a little truth in with his heresy. He has a variety of heresies, and each one will have maybe a little glimmer of truth. But one thing Satan is never going to stress is the fact that you have to let Christ live His life in you. That is what Satan does not want. The evidence of the true Spirit of God is the acknowledgment and the teaching that we have to yield ourselves for Christ to come into our flesh, to dwell in us and to live His life in us.

I John 4:4, “...He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”

Verse 6, “We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.” He is showing that there were those who were going to listen to what he had to say, and there were those who wouldn’t.

Verse 7, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God...”

Verse 8, “...God is love...”

Verses 10-11, “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

Verse 13, “By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.”

Verse 19, “We love Him because He first loved us.” That’s why we love God. We learn to love. God loved us first. He took the first step. Because God loves us, we learn to respond to that love. That’s the way a little child learns to love. A little child responds to his parents’ love. Little children who grow up in a house where there is no love grow up very stunted emotionally. They need to have that love demonstrated to them in order to learn to love and to respond to that love. We learn to love God because God first loved us.

Verse 18, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear....” If we really grasp the depth of God’s love and God’s mercy, there is a confidence that we have.

Verse 20, we can’t love God and hate our brother. The love of God and the love of the brethren go hand in hand. If we love God, we need to love our brother also.

As we continue in I John 5:2-3, “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome [KJV, “grievous”].” This is how the love of God is defined. The commandments tell us how to love God and how to love our brother. The first four commandments tell us how to love God; the last six commandments tell us how to love our brother. The love of God is not just a feeling or emotion. It’s not just this feeling in your heart somewhere. It is a way of living and an attitude.

I John 5:1, “Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ [the Messiah] [Now if you really believe that, you are going to act on it.] is born [the better rendering is “begotten”] of God, and everyone that loves Him who begat, loves him also who is begotten of Him.” The sense here is “begotten,” not “born.” If we really believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Anointed of God, the coming Lord of lords and King of kings, then we are begotten children of God; we love God; and we love God’s children. You have to take what John said in its own context.

Verse 5 talks about overcoming the world.

Let’s notice something.

Verse 6, “This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness because the Spirit is truth.”

In vv. 7-8, you will find in the NKJ Bible and in many other translations a footnote for, “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth....”

The footnote says, “NU, M omit the rest of v. 7 and through ‘*on earth*’ of v. 8, a passage found in only four or five very late manuscripts in Greek.”

Verses 7-8, “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.”

All of v. 7 and the words “and there are three that bear witness on earth” of v. 8 are words that don’t exist in any of the original Greek manuscripts. It’s not something that existed in any of the early Greek manuscripts. It first existed in the Latin version of the Bible (the Vulgate) when it was inserted in the Middle Ages. Any commentary will point that out.

The reason it’s in the KJ translation of the Bible is because the KJ translation was made from the Greek manuscript published by Erasmus of Rotterdam who flourished just prior to the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. He flourished right around the beginning period of the Protestant Reformation in the late 1400s. He published a Greek New Testament text. The first text that he published got him in “hot water” because the text that he produced did not have this verse in it, though this verse appeared in the Latin Vulgate, which was the only place that it appeared. It wasn’t in any of the Greek. This really drew the wrath of the church there in Europe when Erasmus published his text and he didn’t have this “proved” text to the trinity. Because there is no “proved text” to the trinity, this one had been inserted. It created quite a stir. In fact, Erasmus was threatened with his life. When they explained it to him that way, he kind of “saw the light.” So when he republished his text, he put in there what they told him to put when it came to this verse—which did not come out of any of the Greek manuscripts but simply came out of the Latin.

It is not something we have a monopoly on. If you check it out in any good commentary or scholarly Bible dictionary, they all admit that there isn’t any evidence that this was ever part of the original text. It was inserted into a Latin manuscript. It was translated from the Greek text published by Erasmus. The only problem with it was the fact that when the pressure got put on Erasmus, he decided discretion was the better part of valor; rather than have his head chopped off, he stuck in this fictitious verse that he was pressured to put in.

Verse 6 should read, “...And it is the spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.”

Verse 8, which would probably be v. 7, would read, “...and there are three that bear witness, the Spirit, the water and the blood [God’s Spirit, the water (baptism), and the blood (of Jesus Christ)]; these all agree in one.”

Verse 9, “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater, for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.”

Verses 11-12, “And this is the testimony: that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life.”

Verses 16-17, “If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.” He describes the unpardonable sin and the fact that we can pray for a sin not leading to death.

Verse 19 (KJV), “We know that we are of God, and the whole world is under the rule of the wicked one.” (NKJV), “...the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.”

Verses 20-21, “And we know the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.” Already idolatrous objects of worship were beginning to come in. John concludes here.

Then we have the very short little book of **II John** addressed to the elect lady and her children (v. 1). There’s been a lot of speculation as to whom John meant by this.

In **II John** 4 after his greeting, he says, “I rejoice greatly that I found of your children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.”

Verses 6-7, “This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it. For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming [or, “is coming”] in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”

There are many who say that Christ does not come to live His life in you. They say He did it all for you, and He is not coming (present progressive) to live His life in us. That it is not we who live, but Christ living in us. They say you don’t have to yield yourselves to Christ living in you. There are many deceivers that say that.

John continues in vv. 9-10, “Whosoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your

house, nor greet him [KJV, “neither bid him Godspeed”].” John is warning them that there were false brethren. There were those who were sowing discord. There were those who were bringing in heresies. John said don’t have this distorted concept of love, to think that you just tolerate heresy and lawless actions. If somebody comes bringing you another doctrine, don’t invite him in, don’t wish him well, don’t help him out. If you do, you’re part of it.

Verse 12, “Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink....” He had some names to name and some specifics to say. God did not have some of those things written down in detail because, frankly, some of the very ones whose names John was going to name were the ones, in some cases, who wound up actually helping to preserve the Book. So God did not choose to have some of those things spelled out in that way. But John just mentions that there were specifics that he was going to explain in more detail when he would see them face-to-face.

III John 2, “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.” God desires good things for us. He desires that we may prosper and be in health physically in the same way that we might prosper and be in health spiritually. God’s first concern is for our spiritual well being, but He is concerned for our physical well being as well. God does desire good things for us.

Verse 4, “...I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”

As we continue, notice what John says—notice the state that the Church was getting into.

Verses 9-10, “I wrote unto the church but Diotrephes who loves to have the preeminence among them receives us not. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds, which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.”

When John wrote I John, he said, **I John** 2:19, “they have gone out from us, and they weren’t of us.” By the time he wrote III John, perhaps a couple of years later, the situation had progressed to the point that in some cases the heretics were literally taking over congregations and putting true Christians out. This was the situation that was becoming extant in the Roman world at the close of the first century A.D.

There were many heretical groups that acknowledged the name of Christ but did not

practice the doctrine of Christ. There were a variety of different heresies that were extant. The truth was being undermined. John was bearing witness of the truth. He was, in a sense, laying emphasis on the things that needed to be emphasized in that context. That's why additional books needed to be written to the New Testament.

He says in v. 11, "Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who practices good is of God, but he who practices evil has not seen God." He says don't follow that which is evil.

Verses 13-14, "I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face..."

Then there is a somewhat unique situation. There is no "Amen." There are only three books in the New Testament that do not conclude with "Amen": the book of Acts, the book of James and the book of III John. "Amen" signifies completion and finality. The book of Acts does not have an "Amen" because there is not that note of finality. It is the acts or the actions of the apostles, but there is much that was not recorded. The rest of the story wasn't recorded.

There were reasons for that. There was information God did not choose to have preserved in the Scriptures for us. And yet He made it plain that, in a sense, you look elsewhere for the information because there is no "Amen" at the end of the book. The book of Acts ends and we don't have the actions of the rest of the twelve. We don't know where the twelve went after they disappeared from Judea. We don't know where they went. We are not told in the book of Acts where they went. We are told where Paul went, up until the end of his first Roman imprisonment.

When you look at the commission to the twelve, Jesus told them they were not sent to the Gentiles but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5-6). Acts 9:15, Paul was told that his commission was to bear the name of Christ before the Gentiles, before kings and before the house of Israel. Those three were his commission and in that order. The book of Acts tells you the story of Paul going before the Gentiles and before kings. But the third part of Paul's commission to the lost sheep of the House of Israel is not recorded because God allowed the identity of Israel and where the twelve tribes went to be lost from view.

The story of the actions of the twelve and the story of Paul's final portion of his ministry is not

recorded because it would have made plain where the tribes of Israel were at that time. The book of James is addressed to the twelve tribes scattered abroad. Normally, there would have been names and place-names given at the end of the book, saluting certain individuals. That information is left out because, again, it would have made plain where the twelve tribes had been scattered.

In III John, there were things and details that if John had written them, it would have clearly named names of actually some of the earliest Church fathers. It would have named some of the ones who were responsible for what has developed into the professing Christian Church. There was information that God simply did not allow. Some of the specifics God did not want recorded in that way; so it ends not entirely complete.

Let's notice, briefly, the book of **Jude**. Again, Jude is a short one-chapter book. Jude was written approximately the same time as II Peter or a little while earlier than that.

Verse 1, Jude was the brother of James.

Jude 3, "Beloved, while I was very diligence to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." Here was Jude in the 60s A.D. telling the Church to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered because heresies had crept in. That's something that God wants us to be conscious of.

Verse 4, "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."

The situation at the time Jude wrote was that it was necessary to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered because there were heresies that were creeping in. There were certain men who had crept in who were turning the grace of God into lawlessness. Jude tells us that certain ones have crept in.

Paul said in II Thessalonians 2:7 that the mystery of iniquity was already at work in the 50s. Jude tells us in the 60s that certain men had crept in unawares and had sought to turn the grace of God into lawlessness—to do away with the law. John says in I John 2:19 that 'they had gone out from us because they were not of us.' By the time he wrote III John, he said they were taking over and were putting true Christians out of the Church. So this was a progression of the story of

the incursion of heresies into the visible Church. Jude then reminds the Church of God's judgment and that God will deal with these things—He will deal with these individuals.

Verse 9, he talks about Moses showing proper respect.

Verse 11, "Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit and perished in the rebellion of Korah." The "way of Cain" was the way of "get" for self. The "error of Balaam for reward" was for profit. Balaam was willing to preach anything for a price. The "gainsaying of Korah"—Korah sought to usurp the priesthood for himself. We see this attitude of "get." We see the attitude that Balaam sought to introduce. Balaam introduced the attitude of compromise that would bring about the destruction of God's people. Korah sought to usurp the authority and the government that God had.

Verse 12, "These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear..." Here they were pretending to be part of the Church. They were taking part in the feasting and things of this sort. They were feeding themselves without fear.

Verses 12-13, "...they are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever."

Jude begins to illustrate the power behind the throne. This is descriptive of demon spirits who are really the power behind the throne. Jude then shows that Christ is going to come, and He is going to deal with these things, with these individuals.

Verse 16, "These are murmurers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts..."

Verses 18-19, "how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit." (RSV), "These be they who set up divisions, sensual, having not the Spirit."

We are told to look to Jesus Christ, to recognize that and to have our focus on what God is doing. Hopefully from some of this we begin to get a little bit of a focus as to the events that were going on in the latter part of the New Testament period. We see the events that were shaping up and the things that were developing that ultimately gave rise to a Church that, in the midst of history, disappears. And when the curtain is

pulled back, what we see on the scene is not what we read of in the Gospels and Acts. We see a church using the name of Christ but not following His teachings. How did that occur? A lot of the understanding of that is given in I, II, III John and the book of Jude.

John lays great emphasis on the importance of love—love to God and love of the brethren. John lays emphasis on the fact that we are to love, but that you cannot separate love from obedience. Real love involves keeping the commandments. That is the basis of our relationship with God and our relationship with the brethren.

Jude warns of heresies. He warns of the necessity of earnestly contending for the faith once delivered. One thing that we ought to note is the tendency of human nature to run down. Throughout the Scriptures, from the beginning and all the way down, is the story of God's people. The tendency of human nature is toward compromise, toward watering down, toward letting down the barriers. It is toward blending in and being absorbed with the world around.

When you go through the story of Israel in the Old Testament, when you go through the story of the judges, the kings and all through the Old Testament, over and over again that was the problem. The tendency of human nature, the tendency of the people of God has always inevitably been to wear down. They get stirred up and are zealous for a short time, but then that begins to wear down. The tendency is to begin to compromise here and there, to begin to blend in, to begin to lose that distinction and that separate identity and to blend in with the world. That's kind of a summation, but when you go through the Old Testament and you find that cycle repeated over and over again.

It happened even in the context of the New Testament Church. When you read the seven stages through which the Church would pass, outlined in Revelation 2 and 3, we see that up and down, that up and down. That is the tendency.

And, brethren, we have to recognize that tendency in our own lives. It's not simply that it was the tendency of the ancient Israelites in the time of the judges or kings. It's not simply that was the tendency then, and we think how could those people in the early New Testament Church do things like that? How could they begin to drift away from the truth? They had heard it from the apostles. They had seen some of these things. They had gone through these things. How could that happen? It's not simply a matter of dead

history. We look at it and we say, 'We don't see how those people could be so carnal.' Is that what we think of when we read the book of Numbers? Do we think, 'If I had been back there, I wouldn't have done anything like that. It would have been Moses and me. We would have been standing up there—three of us going into the Promised Land—Joshua, Caleb and me.' We just automatically think that. We assume we would have done it, and all the others wouldn't have.

We have to realize that this is here as a testimony and a witness to us. This is my tendency and this is yours. It is the tendency of human nature. The tendency of the people of God is to start out all fired up, begin to let down and eventually begin to water down, compromise and blend in. That goes along until something happens that kind of stirs things up and "lights the fire" again. The only trouble is that the last go-around, those who can be stirred up by nothing else are going to get stirred by the tribulation.

It's important that we read some of these things and realize that this is not simply a matter of history. It's not something that only God's people in the early New Testament period had to be warned of. They are not the only ones who had to be encouraged, stirred up, made conscious of loving and obeying God and loving the brethren. They were not the only ones warned of being separate from the world and contending for the faith once delivered. They are not the only ones warned of being zealous, maintaining that identity and that distinction as a peculiar people. It is something that *applies to us*.

We have to watch because the same things that came on them are there to come on us. The same tendencies of human nature have been repeated over and over. Hopefully, we study the Bible; we study these accounts, not simply from a standpoint of those long dead, but to realize that it also applies to each of us. If we're not careful, we will fall into the same trap because so many have had to contend with it. Those are the tendencies for all of us. But with God's help, we don't have to go that route. We can learn. We can apply and maintain through God's help that faithfulness to God and His way that God wants to characterize all of us as His people.

With that we will conclude the General Epistles this evening. When we start up Bible study again, we will begin a series on the Major Prophets. I think we will see that Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel have an awful lot to say about today's world news. They have a lot to say about the headlines of today and tomorrow and the weeks

and months immediately ahead of us. That will be a timely subject, and I think we will get into that next time.

Bible Study # 46 Questions

SURVEY OF THE GENERAL EPISTLES SERIES

I, II, III John and Jude

(Give scripture references.)

1. What are the two main things that John stresses in I John?
2. What is the Bible proof that a person “knows the Lord”?
3. Explain I John 2:20, 27.
4. What will we be like in the resurrection?
5. What is sin?
6. Give a proof from I John 3 that we are not yet “born again.”
7. Can a person be born into God’s kingdom if he has any enmity toward a brother?
8. How are we instructed to love each other?
9. What two keys to answered prayer does John give us?
10. Explain I John 4:2.
11. Why do we love God?
12. How is the love of God defined?
13. What spurious scripture was inserted into the text of I John?
14. How does John characterize the state of the Church at the time he was writing his letters?
15. How should we respond to those who seek to bring false doctrine to us?
16. What does God desire about our physical well-being?
17. What is the significance of the lack of “Amen” at the end of III John?
18. What was going on inside the Church of God when Jude wrote his letter?
19. Explain Jude 11.

Bible Study # 47
January 23, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Introduction

This evening we are going to get into the Major Prophets. We want **to examine a little bit about who the major prophets were. We want to look at their place in the Scriptures, the roles that these individuals played, and the role that these books play in the Bible—and that they should play for us.** We are going to look specifically at **Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.** We are going to look at a little bit of background in each of these three books and perhaps gain some insight that can help us to understand a little more of what is involved. Then we will begin, step by step, through the book of Isaiah, then Jeremiah and Ezekiel. I have study questions that I will pass out at the end of the Bible study that will carry us through the first fourteen chapters of the book of Isaiah, which is what we will cover next time. As you can see, we will go through this in some detail.

To begin with, let's understand a little bit as to who were the prophets. The prophets served as God's spokesmen to His covenant people. God made a covenant with the ancient Israelites at Mount Sinai, which was based upon the covenant that He had made with their forefather Abraham several centuries earlier. God began to deal with the covenant people by sending His spokesmen, His messengers.

The sense of the word "prophet" was "one who proclaimed or announced." We think of prophecy as something being predicted—as simply concerned about the future. This is one aspect of prophecy. That is generally what we think of when we use the term, but the word for prophecy or prophet is used in a broader sense in the Bible. Some aspects that are referred to are certainly predictive and deal with future events. There are other aspects that deal simply with God's announcement, God's proclamation, and God's message to His people. The prophet was the one who announced or proclaimed. God's prophet announced or proclaimed God's message.

Samuel is reckoned as the first of the prophets. The term "prophet" began to be applied first to Samuel. This term came into vogue, into use, at the time of Samuel.

In I Samuel 9:9, we are told that, "(Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he spoke thus: 'Come, let us go to the seer'; for he

who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer.)" The term "prophet" is a broader term than "seer." "Seer" was restricted to "one whom God gave insight to see the future or to see what others did not see." The term "prophet" included the one to whom God gave that insight but it reflected, let's say, a larger role. The prophet came on the scene at a time when the priesthood began to deteriorate in terms of its faithfulness in fulfilling their function. Had they been faithful, the role of seer, spokesman or messenger from God was a role that would have been played by the high priest and those assisting him.

At this point, God began dealing with Samuel who was not of the high priestly line. Samuel was of the Levitical line but not of the high priestly line. He was not in line to become high priest, but God used him as a spokesman. The high priest of the family of Eli continued to hold that position. Because of the example they had set, God ceased to work through that hereditary line in the way that He had previously. While they functioned in an official and ceremonial capacity, God now began to raise up spokesmen and messengers, beginning with Samuel. With Samuel God began a prophetic succession. The term "prophet" came into vogue at the time of Samuel.

Samuel evidently established schools or colleges (using our modern term) for the training of the prophets.

This is mentioned in I Samuel 19:18, "So David fled and escaped, and went to Samuel at Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. He and Samuel went and stayed in Naioth." "Naioth" means "schoolhouse" in Hebrew.

Verse 19, the word got back to Saul that David was there.

Verse 20, it describes a company of the prophets prophesying. Now the term "prophesying" is a term that can include a variety of things. It can in context (depending on the way it's used) describe everything from an inspired message to a song service that is particularly inspiring or inspirational. It can describe inspired preaching, the spirit of song service or a delivery of a message that has to do with future events. It can, depending on context, mean all of those things.

Verse 20, "Then Saul sent messengers to take David. And when they saw the group of prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as leader over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied." In the context here, we have those who were of Samuel's school of the prophets there at what we

call the schoolhouse. What it describes is this group who were having what we would term a “song fest” or something of that sort. They were going through, perhaps, what is included in the book of Psalms today. Samuel gathered about him a company of what were called “a company of the prophets” or “sons of the prophets.” It simply meant those who were students at his prophetic school.

These schools are mentioned at the time of Elijah and Elisha, about one hundred twenty years after Samuel’s death (II Kings 2). It describes Elijah having been responsible for three schools of the prophets: one at Gilgal (v. 1), one at Bethel (v. 3) and one at Jericho (v. 5).

In vv. 3 and 5, it describes the students as “sons of the prophets.” The term “sons of the prophets” is a term that simply refers to the students at the school that Elijah ran.

Evidently, Samuel was responsible for beginning the schools. It was the “Ambassador College” of the day. The schools were a means of teaching, a means of instruction. There was not, as in the priesthood, a direct hereditary father-son succession. Rather, the prophet filled the position or role because God called him and used him in that way, as a messenger or as a spokesman. There was generally a certain amount of training that was involved. All of those who were trained did not go on to be used in some significant fashion. The roles varied.

There are **two basic categories of prophets**: Those who were oral prophets and those who wrote down their prophetic message. The **oral prophets** had messages that pertained primarily to their own time, their own people, in their own day. **Elijah and Elisha were primarily oral prophets.** There isn’t a book of Elijah nor is there a book of Elisha.

We read of Nathan, the prophet in the time of King David. We read of various ones that are mentioned in passing in the Old Testament of whom there is very little record of what they said. We have an example more of what Elijah did than we do of what he said. Clearly the bulk of the message that those individuals were given by God pertained to their own day, their own people, and it pertained to that time. That’s why it was not recorded and preserved for us because the portions that pertained to us were recorded.

Primarily, the example that those individuals lived and set was the portion of their work that had the greatest relevance for us today. That’s why that’s what we have. We have far more of the story of what Elijah did than we have the

story of what he said because the primary thrust and impact of his message was for people at that time. While what he did and the way he did it had a primary impact on the people at that day, it also set a pattern. His ministry set a pattern that would characterize the ministry that prepared the way for Jesus Christ. John the Baptist did that prior to the first coming of Jesus Christ.

There is an Elijah work to prepare the way for the second coming of Jesus Christ. Elijah’s work and ministry set a pattern that would be noted, let’s say, in preparing the way for the Messiah. The message Elijah delivered was not what we think of as a prophetic message in the sense that the books of Daniel, Revelation, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Malachi, or whatever have as far as relevance to us today. The oral prophets were messengers of God, but the primary thrust of their message was a relevance to the audience to whom it was delivered.

Now, on the other hand, we have the **written prophets**. The books of the **Major and Minor Prophets** in our Bible are clearly written prophets. The thrust of their message was not primarily for their time. They delivered messages that were relevant for their time, but God gave them a revelation that had more significant for us today than it had for the people of twenty-five hundred years ago. Their message was written down, and not only was it written down, it was preserved. There is an enduring significance not simply to the messenger or to the work that the messenger did, but there is an enduring significance to the message itself—the message that was delivered. As I have mentioned, the term “prophet” in the original use of the term was viewed not so much as a foreteller of events, but as “a bearer of God’s message.”

We use the terms “Major” and “Minor” Prophets. It is important that we understand the difference. The terms “Major” and “Minor” as applied to the prophets was not an attempt to catalog their worth or their value. It does not catalog the importance of the message, as saying that Isaiah’s message was more important than Malachi’s or Jeremiah’s was more important than Hosea or Haggai. That’s not what the terms mean. It is simply a reference to length. There is a vast difference between Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel in terms of the length, as compared with the twelve minor prophets of Hosea through Malachi. So the terms “Major” and “Minor” have been used relative to the size of the book.

Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel are the ones who are recognized or have been considered as the

Major Prophets. Their books are arranged for us in the order that these three men began their prophetic ministry. That's the reason why we have it that way. Why isn't it Ezekiel, Isaiah and Jeremiah or some other arrangement? Well, generally there is either the subject matter that is the basis of arrangement or it is simply arranged chronologically.

Isaiah began to prophesy at an earlier time. The beginning of Isaiah's ministry was prior to the time that northern Israel went into captivity, which was in the late 700s B.C.—what would be termed the late eighth century. His ministry was a very lengthy ministry. He lived up until a ripe old age. He prophesied many years.

Jeremiah's ministry, in the same way, was a lengthy ministry. It began much later than Isaiah. Jeremiah began his ministry a couple of decades prior to the time that Judah began to go into captivity. In other words, he began his ministry a good one hundred years or more later than Isaiah did.

Ezekiel's ministry overlapped with Jeremiah's but it began perhaps thirty to thirty-five years later than Jeremiah's began. Jeremiah's was a rather lengthy ministry. Ezekiel's was a fairly short ministry. We will go through and we will note, in a few moments, the similarities and the differences between each of these books.

Isaiah is where we start. Isaiah began his writings in the last year of King Uzziah or in 732 B.C.

This is dated by Isaiah 6:1, "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Eternal sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple." Isaiah described his calling. This is descriptive of the beginning of his ministry, of his calling.

Verse 5, he sees this vision of God; he is awestruck and overcome by a sense of his own unworthiness. Obviously, any time we really see and grasp the glory and the grandeur of God, we should correspondingly be struck with a sense of our own inadequacies.

That's what's meant by the term Jesus said in Matthew 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." The "poor in spirit" are those who recognize their own lack of spiritual self-sufficiency. They recognize how much they need what God has to offer. They are not as the Pharisee was when he and the Publican went out to pray. You remember the story Jesus told.

Luke 18:10-13, the Pharisee lifted up his eyes and said, 'Lord, I thank you that I'm not as other men are. I am this wonderful person. I'm glad

you noticed me because I really deserve it.' This was the sense of it. His perspective on life was a total contrast to the Publican who recognized his own unworthiness.

When we get it in proper perspective, we recognize that none of us is worthy of God's mercy. God extends His mercy and His love, but it's not because He looked down and was so impressed with us that He thought 'I have to do something special for that fellow. I've never seen anybody that great. I'm really impressed with him (or her).'

Isaiah clearly did not have that perspective on life. He was impressed when God revealed Himself in this vision.

Isaiah said in Isaiah 6:5, "...'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips...'” 'I am not holy enough to see. I do not deserve this. I'm not worthy of a revelation like this.'

In the vision described in Isaiah 6:6-7, an angel took a coal off the altar of incense, came and touched it to Isaiah's lips, and he was symbolically purified.

Verse 8, God said, 'I need somebody to do a job', and Isaiah said, 'Here I am! Send me.' It was recognition of what God could do through him. We have the description in Isaiah 6 of what was clearly the beginning of Isaiah's ministry. It dates it to the last year of King Uzziah.

The first five chapters of Isaiah set the stage for the message of Isaiah. The book of Isaiah was not a diary that Isaiah kept. He didn't just start writing this on the first day, and the second day he wrote—and the book just kind of goes through in the order of his life. That's not the case. There is more of a message content. The first five chapters kind of set the stage and introduce the book in terms of subject matter. Chapter 6 then picks up the story at the beginning by showing us how Isaiah began his ministry. Then the theme continues on.

We are told in Isaiah 1:1, "The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." We are told in chapter 6:1 that this began in the last year of Uzziah—which was 732 B.C. This is about ten years before the Assyrian invasion of northern Israel. Isaiah's message was a message that utilized the events that were happening in his time, the things that Judah and Israel went through in his day, but the primary thrust of the book of Isaiah is for the last days. We are told in

Isaiah 2:2, “Now it shall come to pass in the last days....” The emphasis, you see, is a message for the last days—“in the last days” or “in that day.” Isaiah 1:1 is a message concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now at one time when the whole nation was united, Jerusalem was the capital city, not only of Judah, but the capital of the whole nation. When all the twelve tribes were united as one nation, Jerusalem was the combined capital. Jerusalem is used symbolically to describe the entirety of Israel. It refers symbolically to all of Israel. The book of Isaiah is very clear—there are specific references to the house of Israel, as well as of the men of Judah.

For instance in Isaiah 5:7, “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant....” It is clear that there is a distinction between the house of Israel and the house of Judah. The term “Jerusalem” is used symbolically. Many of the things that were going on in Judah were used symbolically to refer to all of Israel. But at the time Isaiah began to write, there were two totally separate nations of Israel and Judah.

Israel went into captivity beginning about ten years after Isaiah began his ministry, but the deportation of the Israelites took place over the next couple of decades or so. They didn’t have the cattle cars and the railroad trains available to them to herd the people and ship them out, but they were pretty efficient. It took a little longer, and they had to rely on the methods they had available. So the depopulation of Northern Israel actually took place for a little over two decades. Isaiah’s ministry went through this period of time.

We don’t have any information in the book of Isaiah about the end of Isaiah’s life, but according to Jewish tradition, he was sawn asunder by order of the wicked King Manasseh during the first year of his reign. Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, was the most wicked king that Judah ever had. There is a reference in Hebrew 11:37 to the men and women of faith. It mentions the tribulations endured by some, describes the fate of certain ones and mentions “sawn asunder.” There is no place in the Old Testament where it specifically describes that martyrdom. However, there is a Jewish tradition that says that was the fate of Isaiah during the first year of Manasseh’s reign.

Isaiah’s ministry began in 732 B.C. (the last year of Uzziah) and continued down to the end of the lifetime of King Hezekiah, which would bring it down to 686 B.C. We’re looking at a forty-five

to fifty-year period of his prophetic ministry. It was a lengthy ministry. He started out as a relatively young man, and he was clearly in advanced years at the end of his ministry.

We’re not told a lot about Isaiah’s background. In Isaiah 1:1, we are told that he was the son of Amoz. According to the Soncino commentary (a Jewish commentary on the Old Testament), Amoz was the brother of Judah’s King Amaziah. This would mean that Isaiah was a cousin of the royal line of the kings, and this connection would explain the ease with which Isaiah had continual access to the kings of Judah.

Let’s look at the authorship of the book of Isaiah. If you want to look in any of the commentaries, particularly any of the more modern commentaries, you will find that the question of the authorship of Isaiah has been greatly disputed by all of the modern critics. Most modern critics claim that only the first thirty-nine chapters of Isaiah were written by Isaiah; the rest were written by one whom they called “Deutro-Isaiah,” which means “the second Isaiah.” There are some who even postulate a “Trito-Isaiah”; they think there were “three who wrote Isaiah.”

There is a very important reason why the critics divide the book of Isaiah and why some say part of it was written by Isaiah and part of it was written quite a bit later by another man who claimed to be Isaiah. There’s a real problem that they have with the latter part of the book of Isaiah, and that is because of how specific certain prophecies were. The real problem that the critics have is with the idea that there is a God who steps into history and literally inspires His servants—a God who reveals the future because He determines and He governs in the affairs of men (Daniel 4:32). So, any time you get into something that is clearly prophetic, the critics always want to say that it really wasn’t prophetic, that it was written after the fact.

One of the problems they run into is a message recorded in Isaiah 44 and 45.

Isaiah 44:23-28, “Sing, O heavens, for the Lord has done it! Shout you lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the Lord had redeemed Jacob and glorified Himself in Israel. Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, and He who formed you from the womb: I am the Lord, who makes all things, who stretches out the heavens all alone, who spreads abroad the earth by Myself; who frustrates the signs of the babblers, and drives diviners mad; who turns

wise men backward, and makes their knowledge foolishness; who confirms the word of His servant, and performs the counsel of His messengers; who says to Jerusalem, 'You shall be inhabited,' to the cities of Judah, 'You shall be built,' and I will raise up her waste places; who says to the deep, 'Be dry! And I will dry up your rivers;' Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure,' even saying to Jerusalem, 'You shall be built,' and to the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'"

Isaiah 45:1-5, "'Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut; 'I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places. That you may know that I, the Lord, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me.'"

God is naming, by name, Cyrus who God was going to raise up to do a job to free the Jews from Babylonian captivity and to allow them to return and rebuild Jerusalem. At the time the book of Isaiah was written, the Jews hadn't even gone into captivity, much less Cyrus coming along. Isaiah died one hundred fifty years before Cyrus ever conquered Babylon. Cyrus wasn't even "a gleam in his father's eye" when Isaiah wrote Isaiah 44 and 45.

This really bothers the critics. They say, clearly Isaiah 44 and 45 weren't written by Isaiah because that would mean that this man was known by name years before he was ever born, and that's impossible! Why is it impossible? It said right in the context that God said, 'Look, I'm God; I call things that are not as though they were' (45:5).

Let's look at the problem of somebody else having written part of the book of Isaiah. According to their teaching, this last part of the book of Isaiah could not have been written until after the Jews returned from exile in Babylon because the fulfillment of some of these things described what happened after the Persians had conquered Babylon. Now, what's the problem

with that? What is the likelihood of being able to add in something like that? When you're looking at something that was considered a part of Scripture, you're looking at what was considered the basic law of the land.

What do you think would be the likelihood of getting in and forging something on the end of the Bill of Rights and being able to fool everybody to think there are not ten amendments, but thirteen, to the Bill of Rights—amendments kind of written there in the margin, saying this is a part of it. That's ludicrous! There are too many copies and it's too well known. If you tried to tack on the bottom and claim that this was part of the original, that's silly! You'd never pull off a fraud like that because it's too well known.

Here you are looking at something that there was no way a fraud like that could be pulled off. Here was a book that had been accepted and established as a part of Scripture for many, many years. How can you come along and tack something on the end of it and claim it's been there all along? How can you pull off a fraud like that?

The only reason for objecting to it is the fact that the critics object to God. They object to the fact that there is a God in heaven who declares the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). As a result, they reject all prophecy. They reject anything that smacks of God's intervention in the affairs of man. They say, 'Well, there are certain differences in style or differences of language of some chapters at the end of Isaiah, as opposed to the beginning.'

Isaiah's ministry spanned forty-five years. The message that he gave was the same. But, obviously, in a period of forty-five years, from a young man to an old man, depending on what he's writing about, certain styles changed. Just the fact of the passing of years, there may be certain stylistic changes.

You can look at things that Mr. Herbert Armstrong wrote. If you have a copy of something he wrote in the 40s and compare it with something he wrote in the 80s, while the message and the thrust is the same, you may notice certain differences in terms of style of presentation. You may notice that there were periods, let's say earlier on, when some of his style of writing had emphasis of punctuation, capitalization or things like that which reflected a lot more of his early advertising training. And as the years progressed, some things that he wrote in later life did not reflect that exact same style of writing. There were certain changes that took

place. The message was the same, but you can have differences just over a period of time.

When you look at something you wrote years ago and then look at something you would write today, there are differences. I can look back at things that I wrote twenty years ago, and I don't think I would write it exactly the same today. I'm not saying that I wouldn't come to the same conclusion. A paper I wrote in college, I don't think I would express it exactly the same way today. I like to think I would express it a little better, but that may be an open question.

The point is that as the years go by, it is natural and normal that there are going to be certain stylistic variations. That doesn't disprove the same person wrote it. We are looking at a forty- to fifty-year time period. By the book's own claim, we would normally expect that there's going to be certain variations in terms of style over that long a period of time—plus the fact that the style of writing is going to vary somewhat with the subject matter that is being addressed. That's normal and natural also.

Isaiah 46:10 makes plain that this portion of Isaiah is intended as a prophecy, “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand and I will do all My pleasure.’”

Verses 9-10, “Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning...” How do you think you can write something like this and tack it on to the end of a book that people have been familiar with. Then you say, ‘This is prophetic here. Look at how amazing this prophecy is,’ when it is talking about an event that happened fifteen years ago. How do you plot out something like that if it doesn't make sense?

In fact, it's interesting because you see, Isaiah is probably one of the books of the Old Testament that the critics dispute the most in terms of its authorship. Yet Isaiah is referred to probably more than any other one prophet in the New Testament. Isaiah is quoted by name twenty-one times in the New Testament. Isaiah is quoted ten times from the first portion of Isaiah and eleven times from the last portion. So it is well divided.

There are four specific instances where Jesus Christ Himself quotes the prophecy and says Isaiah wrote it. Now, if anybody ought to know, Jesus ought to know, and He thought Isaiah wrote it. And if Jesus thought Isaiah wrote it,

Paul thought Isaiah wrote it, Peter thought he did and John and James thought he wrote it, I kind of figure that they may have known a little more about who wrote it than some character that thinks he is the world's greatest expert here in the last few years. Isaiah is referred to by name twenty-one times, and his prophecies are referred to eighty-five times in the New Testament. Isaiah is the most heavily quoted Old Testament prophet in the New Testament.

It's interesting that God bore extra witness of the one the critics want to dispute the most. It's like God just kind of “rubbed their face in it” by saying, ‘You are going to have to dispute not only Isaiah, but you are going to have to dispute everything that came afterwards.’

Isaiah's name means “God is salvation” and that seems to be the main theme of the book. The book of Isaiah has a lot of prophecies dealing with the Messiah. Many of the most striking prophecies of Tomorrow's World are there in the book of Isaiah. The book of Isaiah contains the most graphic prophecies of the coming of Jesus Christ, the promise of the Messiah, the prophecy that Christ would be born of a virgin, the prophecy that He would give His life as a ransom and of His scourging. All of these things are prophesied in the book of Isaiah, as well as the prophecies of Tomorrow's World, the prophecies that He would come as King of kings and Lord of lords. The book of Isaiah is filled with a lot of prophecies that really focus our attention on the fact that God is the only salvation; that's really the meaning of the name Isaiah, “God is salvation.” That's what Isaiah's message focuses on. Over and over it focuses on showing us why we need God's salvation and what we need God to save us from.

Part of the book of Isaiah is an indictment, but the other part of it is the good news that lies ahead. You have the indictment, the consequences of the indictment and the long-term results of salvation that God brings about. This is the thrust of Isaiah.

Jeremiah began his ministry, as I mentioned, a couple of decades prior to the time that Judah began to go into captivity. Jeremiah began his ministry one hundred years or more later than Isaiah did.

Jeremiah 1:1-2, he began his ministry during the thirteenth year of King Josiah, which would date it to 625 B.C., and about sixty years after the death of Isaiah. Jeremiah began his prophetic ministry when he was quite young; tradition says he was seventeen. Notice Jeremiah's response

when God told him he was being ordained a prophet.

Jeremiah 1:5-6, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; and I ordained you a prophet unto the nations. Then said I: “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.””

I would like to note a couple of things about Jeremiah and why God used someone this young. Jeremiah began his ministry during the thirteenth year of King Josiah. Josiah, during his thirteenth year, would have only been twenty-one years old himself.

In II Chronicles 34:1-3, we are told Josiah began to really seek God when he was sixteen. His thirteenth year would have been when he was twenty-one years old. This is when he really began to institute his reforms. Even though Jeremiah was quite young, he would have been close to the same age or perhaps four years younger than Josiah.

Jeremiah 1:1, Jeremiah’s father was Hilkiah, the high priest who was responsible for serving as the guardian of the young King Josiah during his growing up years. Hilkiah was responsible for a lot of the teaching and training that Josiah had. Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah the priest, would have sort of grown up with Josiah. Here was a young king, and God then began to work through Jeremiah when he was quite a young man. Jewish tradition says he was age seventeen, and that would certainly be in line with the statement of v. 6.

I want to point out that so many times the concept that we have of prophets is an elderly man with a long gray beard leaning on a staff. I think all of us, at some time, have that concept. I think a lot of times our young people kind of have the idea that God’s prophets were all elderly men with long gray beards, kind of leaning on their staff because that was the only way they could get around. There were some of God’s prophets that continued to function well on up into their later years, and certainly some of God’s prophets reached a very elderly age. But the point is that some of God’s prophets were very young, some of them were middle age and some of them were elderly. Even some of God’s prophets who may have functioned well on into their latter years began to be servants of God when they were very young.

In other words, you don’t have to be old to be a servant of God, and you don’t have to be young. You can be a servant of God at any age. You can be a servant of God as a teenager, a young adult,

middle-aged adult or as an elderly person. And I think it’s important for us to understand that, in a sense, there are role models and servants of God in every stage of life. Whatever stage of life we find ourselves, some of God’s servants were also at that point. The idea young people by default have to be out being little hellions and “sowing their wild oats” is not always the case. There is an alternative. That’s not what Jeremiah was doing when he was that age. That’s not what Josiah was doing at that age.

It’s interesting that Josiah was one of the most remarkable kings in all the history of Judah. The reforms he carried out were some of the most thorough going. He exemplified all of the zeal and the idealism of youth. God has worked through young people, just as He has worked through older people. Jeremiah started out as a very young prophet, and instead of a long gray beard, he may not have even had a beard at all. He continued his ministry for a number of years, and in the latter period of the book, in the latter period of his prophecy, he was a very elderly man. He had served God for many, many years. He had served God very faithfully over an extended period of time.

Josiah came to the throne at a very crucial time in the history of Judah. The wicked King Manasseh had ruled for a long period of time. Things had really gotten in a mess. It was at the point that God was ready to remove Judah. The only thing that stood between Judah and captivity was a zealous young king by the name of Josiah. God was so impressed by the zeal of Josiah that He made the promise that He would protect Judah as long as Josiah lived. When Josiah died, “the show was just about over.” God ceased protecting Judah. He allowed the nation to reap the consequences of what it had sown. But it shows, in a sense, what difference one person can make. In the case of Josiah, God looked at his attitude. He looked at his zeal. God looked at what Josiah did, and He took note of it. God honored Josiah’s obedience and zeal and spared the nation during his lifetime.

The reforms of Josiah are recorded in great detail in II Chronicles 34 and 35. We won’t go into them at this time, but Josiah had been greatly influenced by the priest Hilkiah who was the father of Jeremiah. Hilkiah presided over the priestly part of the reforms launched by King Josiah; Josiah, in turn, was spurred on by Jeremiah. These two young men grew into early adulthood, undoubtedly having known each other and spending time together as boys when

Jeremiah's father was the guardian of the young king. In many ways, the boys would have spent time together, kind of growing up together. This was an example of two young people who were a very positive influence on one another and who brought out the best in one another. They made a remarkable combination.

Jeremiah's name means "the Eternal establishes" or "the Eternal founds." This is very directly tied in with the commission that God gave to Jeremiah. The commission that is recorded in Jeremiah 1:10, "'See, I have set you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, to pull down and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant.'" We are going to see, when we get to the book of Jeremiah, the remarkable aspect of Jeremiah's prophecy. Because, you see, a very remarkable event occurred during Jeremiah's lifetime.

The beginning of his lifetime was marked by the reign of King Josiah—a righteous king—the last righteous king of Judah. The man for whom, in a sense, God spared the nation for a period of time. But in the aftermath of Josiah's death (within a matter of a few years), the Babylonians invaded and Jerusalem was taken in 604 B.C. Over the next seventeen or eighteen years, the Babylonians dominated until finally Nebuchadnezzar came, completely destroyed Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in 587 B.C. He burned the temple to the ground and took all the rest of the Jews that were left. He had taken a small group to Babylon in 604 B.C. He had come back, and this time he burned the city and burned the temple. First he looted it of the things of value; then he burned the temple and the city and finally took everybody to Babylon. He killed the last king, Zedekiah.

Now, if you remember, God had made a promise to David.

In I Kings 2:4, He said, 'There will never want a man to sit upon your throne.'

I Kings 9:5, "'then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, "You shall not fail to have a man on the throne of Israel."'"

Here, during the lifetime of Jeremiah, outwardly, visibly, as it would appear, that throne ceased. God preserved it when the ten tribes rebelled against the house of Solomon (I Kings 12). God established and continued that throne in Jerusalem reigning over Judah. But here was Judah gone into captivity, and here was the last king killed. Did God's promise fail? No, because when we look at the book of Jeremiah and when

we look at his contemporary Ezekiel, we will see the role that Jeremiah played in transferring the throne of David from Jerusalem to the location that it was set. If you want to be specific, it was actually transferred from Jerusalem to Tara, Ireland.

You've heard of Tara, the famous plantation in the movie "Gone with the Wind." Well, it takes its name from the ancient capital of Ireland. That was the location of the ancient high kings of Ireland, at Tara. Then it was later transferred from Tara, Ireland to Scone, Scotland. That's where the term "stone of scone" comes from because it was later transferred from Scone, Scotland down to London, England. It was overturned three times: once, to Ireland; the second time, to Scotland; and the third time, to England. We will notice some of that when we go through the book of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 1:10, Jeremiah was set over nations and over kingdoms. He was set to root out, to pull down, to destroy and throw down. But he was also set to build and to plant. We are going to see what Jeremiah rooted out, pulled down, destroyed and threw down, and what he built and what he planted. It is a remarkable story.

Jeremiah 1:1, Jeremiah was born in the priestly city of Anathoth, which is a short distance from Jerusalem. He was born near the end of the reign of the wicked King Manasseh.

The period of Manasseh's reign was a period void of an active prophet, though evidently, there were some like Jeremiah's father Hilkiah who continued to maintain the truth privately. The temple, of course, was closed during most of those years, and there wasn't an active prophetic ministry. Manasseh, evidently, put Isaiah to death at the beginning of Jeremiah's reign, and there wasn't an active, prophetic ministry that was done openly.

But the truth was maintained privately, and Jeremiah was the next significant prophet raised up. Jeremiah took an active part in helping King Josiah launch his reform movement. Throughout the book of Jeremiah, Jeremiah warns against the rampant sins of the people: adultery, idolatry, violence and oppression.

Now, with the death of Josiah, Jeremiah composed the book of Lamentations. It was a lament for King Josiah—the last righteous king of Judah—but it was also a lament for the nation because the prophecy had been made that God would protect the nation of Judah as long as Josiah lived. The obvious implication of that is, when Josiah dies, you had better watch out. And

that's what happened. It was a lament, not simply for the death of this righteous king, but for the captivity that was going to come upon this sinful nation.

The calamities that came upon ancient Judah in Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. (prophesied in the book of Lamentations) were, in a sense, duplicated again centuries later in 70 A.D. when the Romans came in, destroyed Jerusalem and destroyed the second temple. Both of those destructions of Jerusalem and the temple were simply a type of the Great Tribulation, which is to come. Jesus said in Matthew 24:21 that is going to be a time of trouble such as has not been since the world began. Clearly, Jesus makes it plain in Matthew 24 that the events that happened to Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A.D. were a type of the end-time events that were going to happen to His people.

Lamentations becomes a very prophetic book of the great tribulation—of the destruction and end-time captivity. We are not going to go through Lamentations at this time, but we will pick it up a little later in the proper sequence. We need to understand that Jeremiah wrote it, and he wrote it in the context of King Josiah's death.

Jeremiah's message of captivity and destruction for his nation brought him into great reproach from the kings that came after Josiah. It brought him great reproach from the royal court and from the citizens of Judah because people don't like to hear the truth when the truth is unpleasant; Jeremiah told it the way it was.

Jeremiah was an older contemporary of Ezekiel and Daniel. He corresponded with Daniel. There's direct reference to that in Daniel 9.

Daniel 9:1-2, "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus of the seed of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans. In the first year of his reign, I Daniel, understood by books [the margin rendering it "understood by letters"], the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord, given to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." Daniel came to understand, as a result of correspondence, what this seventy-year prophecy Jeremiah had made was all about. Evidently, the question had been, 'What was the full significance of it, and when did it begin?'

Jeremiah 25:11-12 was a prophecy that Jeremiah made of a seventy-year captivity on Judah.

Ezekiel flourished at a little later time. Ezekiel, we are going to see, went captive with the second invasion of Nebuchadnezzar in 596 B.C.

Jeremiah continued to prophesy in Jerusalem through this period of time.

Let's notice Jeremiah 29:1, "Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the remainder of the elders who were carried away captive—to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon." See, Jeremiah wrote a letter to the ones that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive. This group would have included Daniel and Ezekiel.

Jeremiah 29:10, "For thus says the Eternal: after seventy years are complete at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place." This was the seventy-year prophecy that Jeremiah made. Jeremiah greatly influenced Ezekiel and Daniel. Ezekiel and Daniel were in Babylon. Jeremiah was in Jerusalem. He was older than they were. They both went captive as very young men. Daniel was certainly even younger than Ezekiel. Jeremiah wrote to the group in Babylon and instructed them in certain things concerning this prophecy. Daniel makes reference that he sought for a number of years to clearly understand exactly what was meant. Since Nebuchadnezzar had invaded several times, what time did we start? Which invasion begins the countdown of the seventy years? What was the full sense of it?

Northern Israel had gone into captivity long before Jeremiah wrote. Jeremiah focuses in using the backdrop of Judah and Jerusalem in his day, over one hundred years after the northern tribes had gone into captivity. Jeremiah uses that as a backdrop to illustrate that the events that transpired at that time served as a parallel to events that were going to occur in the end time. There are many things in Jeremiah that clearly focus in on the end time, on the final punishment and captivity and then the subsequent renewal of God's people in this end time. The things that ancient Judah went through at the time Jeremiah wrote were a parallel to events that our people are going through in the end time. In effect, what you have is the same sins, which lead to the same consequences and the same punishment. But you will ultimately see the conclusion and the answer that Jeremiah records.

I mentioned that Jeremiah was an older contemporary of Ezekiel and Daniel. After the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., Jeremiah took the king's daughter from Jerusalem, through Egypt and ultimately to Ireland. That's where he

finished his prophetic ministry. We will go into some of that when we go through the book of Jeremiah.

A great deal of Isaiah's prophetic ministry centered on the time of King Hezekiah. He was a contemporary of at least one righteous king. Isaiah and Hezekiah were a very important combination in the history of ancient Judah. Jeremiah and Josiah were another important combination in the history of Judah and played a major role.

Let's notice briefly about Ezekiel. Ezekiel, as Jeremiah, was of the priestly family. Ezekiel's name means "God will strengthen." He was taken captive in the second invasion of Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., and he spent the remainder of his life among the Jewish captives near Babylon. Jeremiah and Isaiah both wrote in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Ezekiel wrote in the captivity; Ezekiel wrote at a time after the captivity had become a reality. The final destruction of Jerusalem had not occurred at the time that Ezekiel began his ministry. Ezekiel's ministry continued for a period of a little over twenty years. The complete destruction of Jerusalem did not occur until several years after Ezekiel's ministry began. Ezekiel's ministry was totally limited to the time he was in captivity in the area of Babylon.

As mentioned, he went into the captivity in the second invasion in 596 B.C. He spent the remainder of his life in that area. His years of prophecy were from 591 B.C. until 569 B.C. We are not told what happened to Ezekiel. The book just simply ends. Jewish tradition says his fellow captives murdered him.

From Jeremiah 29:1, we would conclude that Ezekiel was at least partially instructed and influenced by Jeremiah.

We are told in Jeremiah 29:1-2, "Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the remainder of the elders who were carried away captive—to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon. (This happened after Jeconiah the king, the queen mother, the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem.)" This was the second captivity of 596 B.C.

We are told Ezekiel was a priest. We will notice here in the beginning of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 1:3, "The word of the Eternal came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi

in the land of the Chaldeans by the River Chebar, and the hand of the Eternal was upon him there." So Ezekiel was a priest. He was in captivity near Babylon. Now, Ezekiel had a very clear-cut mission. He was assigned to be a watchman to the house of Israel.

Ezekiel 2:3, "And he said unto me: 'Son of man, I send you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me...'"

Ezekiel 3:4, "And he said to me: 'Son of man, go to the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them.'"

Verse 17, "'Son of man, I have made you a watchman unto the house of Israel...'"

There's one thing about that. The house of Israel had been in captivity for well over a hundred years when Ezekiel wrote. They had been in captivity for almost one hundred forty years when Ezekiel wrote. Now, why would you write a message warning of captivity to people who had been taken captive one hundred twenty or one hundred thirty years earlier? Clearly, the message was not for them.

You see, Ezekiel never delivered his message to the house of Israel. Ezekiel wrote his message down. Ezekiel's message is for the house of Israel today! Some of you who remember back, remember the radio broadcast over the years. You remember Mr. Herbert Armstrong going through the book of Ezekiel and emphasizing the message of the watchman. The message of Ezekiel was clearly a message for today because Ezekiel never left the area of Babylon. He was there with a bunch of Jewish captives hundreds of miles from where Israel had been taken captive.

Ezekiel 1:3, the tribes of Israel had been settled, not down by Babylon in southern Mesopotamia by the River Chebar, but they had been settled where? II Kings 17:6 says they were settled by the Assyrians in the cities of the Medes. They were settled up by the River Gozan, which is up in the area between the Black and the Caspian Sea—a little south of where all the fighting is going on right now in the Soviet Union. Azerbaijan is kind of between the Black and the Caspian Sea. It is north of where the Israelites were settled. The Israelites were a little south of that mountain range but in kind of that vicinity up north of the Tigris-Euphrates area in the cities of the Medes.

The Medes eventually migrated from there, up through the heartland of the Soviet Union, and are in the area that we would call the Ukraine today. The Israelites, centered there around the

Black Sea, later crossed the Black Sea and went up through the heartland of Europe. This was the invasion of the Gauls—the coming of various tribes into northern Europe.

Ezekiel never went to that area. At the time Ezekiel wrote this, he was in the boundaries of a totally different empire. What do you think the likelihood of Ezekiel coming up and saying, ‘Listen, I just got a message from God. You guys are going to have to turn me loose because I cannot be a slave here in Babylon anymore. God just told me that I have this message, and I need to take a hike about two hundred miles from here. There are these people who need to hear what I have. Turn me loose because God’s given me a job.’ –“Fat chance” getting loose on that. What’s the likelihood? Do you think they said to Ezekiel, ‘Oh, you can’t be a slave here in Babylon if God told you to go up there. Well, we will surely turn you loose.’

No, Ezekiel wrote his message! That’s why Ezekiel wrote it down. It is a message that applied for our time, our day and on out ahead of us. There are some very remarkable things in the book of Ezekiel, but the real impact, the real message of the book of Ezekiel, is for the House of Israel today. The warnings of the future captivity had no immediate relevance to a people already in captivity; that, of course, is what we see.

There’s an awful lot in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. As I mentioned, we are going to get into the book of Isaiah first. The questions will be dealing with the first fourteen chapters of the book of Isaiah. That is what we will want to read and study by the next Bible study, as we begin to get into this.

Bible Study # 48
February 13, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Isaiah 1—14

This evening we are getting into the book of Isaiah. We **are going to cover the first fourteen chapters**. Isaiah's name means "the Eternal is Salvation," and that name ties in very closely with the subject matter of Isaiah's writing.

Isaiah makes very plain that God will permit no uncleanness in His covenant people. God will punish them for their iniquities. However, God will also restore and bless Israel following their national repentance. The book of Isaiah deals with this.

It is one of the most Messianic books of the Old Testament. It is a book that focuses in on the prophecies of the Messiah—the prophecies of Jesus Christ. The most detailed prophecies of Jesus Christ—both in His first coming and what will be His second coming—are contained in the book of Isaiah. We will notice them as we go through.

There's a continual contrast that is drawn in the book of Isaiah. On the one hand is God's punishment for various evils, and on the other hand is the ultimate restoration and glory that will come when the Messiah appears. There is this contrast that is being drawn, developed and explained as we proceed through the book of Isaiah.

The backdrop of events in Judah at the time, the place and circumstance in which Isaiah was writing provides a backdrop for the prophecies and the details that he goes into. Isaiah lived in Judah and wrote in Judah. Some of his ministry overlapped the closing days of the Kingdom of Israel (the northern kingdom) who ultimately went into Assyrian captivity. The sins of the nation had been continually worsening, and God was going to use Assyria to chastise the people.

Assyria conquered Northern Israel and took them captive during Isaiah's ministry. Most of Judah's territory was occupied at a later time. The Assyrian armies came in and conquered Northern Israel around 721 B.C. There was a period of deportation of the Northern Israelites that continued over a period of about the next twenty years.

There was an invasion of Judah that took place in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah (II Kings 18:13), which was 701 B.C. This invasion threatened to take Judah into Assyrian captivity at the time.

Hezekiah went to God, and God miraculously delivered them by wiping out the Assyrian army encamped around Jerusalem (II Kings 19:35). God put a stop to that.

Isaiah brings out the ultimate fall of his own nation. The backdrop of crisis in his day and time served to set the stage for the prophecies that relate to our day. Isaiah laid continual stress on the fact that beyond the destruction the people could see lay ahead, ultimately lay the salvation of God—the only hope of Israel. Throughout the book of Isaiah, there is this thrust, this emphasis on the fact that God's salvation is the only hope of Israel.

In order to set the stage for the fact that this is the only hope, Isaiah emphasizes and describes at various points the sins of the nation and the punishment that will come upon the nation. But he then shows the fact that's not the end of the story. There is a salvation that lies on beyond. One of the reasons he goes into some of the things that he does and to the extent that he does is to demonstrate the fact that Israel needs something beyond itself to save itself.

Let's look at a brief outline. Chapter 1 is sort of an abrupt introduction to the book of Isaiah. In Isaiah 1, the nation of Israel is indicted for its sins. It is indicted as a sinful nation, which must receive God's wrath.

Isaiah 2 through 5 begins with a picture of Christ's millennial rule. Then there follows a detailed indictment of Israel's sins as a society and a prophecy of captivity and destruction. God starts out with an introductory indictment in chapter 1.

In chapter 2, He focuses in on the way the story will end up, with a brief description of the millennial reign of the Messiah. Then He proceeds into a very detailed indictment of the sins of the nation and the captivity and destruction that will come.

In chapter 6, we go back and pick up the story of Isaiah's calling. The first five chapters are really introductory material that sets the stage for what the prophecies of the book are all about. In chapter 6 we go back and pick up the story of how God called and began to work through Isaiah.

In chapters 7 and 8, there is a prophecy that God would help Judah against a combine of Israel and Syria (7:1-9). That event is used as a backdrop of prophecy of the Messiah (vv. 10-16). Then there is a prophecy of the ultimate canonization of the Bible in the New Testament by the disciples of

Jesus (8:16, 20). We will notice those prophecies as we go through.

In chapters 9, 10, 11 and 12, Christ's coming is prophesied. It tells us of God's use of Assyria to punish Israel (10:5-11). Then we have His redemption of Israel, His punishment of Assyria (v. 12) and the establishment of the government of God (11:10). These events are detailed in sequence.

In chapter 13, we have a prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, which is really a type of the ultimate, future destruction of Rome. It is paralleled in Revelation 18.

Chapter 14 is where we will end up this evening. In the beginning of chapter 14, we have the description of the house of Israel restored to prosperity during the Millennium. We culminate that chapter with a section that describes the origin of Satan the devil.

Let's notice here, as we begin to go through. Isaiah 1:1, "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." We have a time span here of about sixty years (a lengthy time span) of Isaiah's ministry. It began quite a way back. We have the prophecies that he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is used to typify the entire nation—to typify Israel as well as Judah because Jerusalem was the only city that was a combined capital of Israel and Judah. The prophecy deals not only with Judah but it deals with the whole nation, all the tribes of Israel. Jerusalem is used symbolically to represent all of the tribes of Israel because Jerusalem was the focal point, the center place. This was the city from which David and Solomon reigned as king over all the tribes. So Jerusalem is used in a symbolic way.

We use terms like that even in our modern terminology. Today, on the radio, there was the statement made about the arms talks and Moscow's response to Washington's proposal. Moscow is the capital city of the USSR, and the name is used to symbolically refer to the whole nation or government of the nation. The city of Washington symbolizes the government of the United States. We use some of the same terminology; so when you see Jerusalem referred to in this way it is used in a symbolic fashion to refer to the whole nation—to the combined twelve tribes.

Isaiah saw this over a period of time. God begins with His indictment. God makes comparisons here.

Verses 2-3, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the Lord has spoken: 'I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me; The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; But Israel does not know, My people do not consider.'"

God says, 'My people don't seem to have as much sense as a dumb animal.' Have you ever fooled with animals? A cow knows where the feed and stall is. A cow is not too smart. God says, 'I feed and take care of them, and they don't have as much sense as an ox or a donkey because at least these animals know who feeds them, where to go and respond to their master and their owner. My people don't seem to be able to figure that out.'

We pride ourselves on being very educated, very far-advanced people. God says that He doesn't think we really rank all that smart. We haven't figured out something that dumb animals have figured out. God says He has nourished Israel like children. He draws the analogy of providing for children. He gives the analogy that even an animal recognizes its owner and Israel doesn't.

The consequence is given as He continues. Verses 4-6, "Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away backward. Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is not soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment."

There's consequence. God says that the nation is sick from head to toe. A sickness is internal. There are prophecies later on in Hosea where it talks about Ephraim seeing his sickness and Judah seeing his wound (Hosea 5:13). When we get into that a little later, we will notice specifically that a sickness refers to an internal condition; a wound is something that is externally imposed.

Our nation, Israel, is described as a nation sick from head to toe. And remember, while the term "Israel" refers in a general way to all of the tribes of Israel, it refers primarily to Ephraim and Manasseh. Jacob crossed his hands and laid hands on Ephraim and Manasseh, and he said, Genesis 48:16, "...Let my name be named on them..." His name, Israel, was named on those boys and their descendants in a very special way.

Prophetically, the term “Israel” generally refers to Ephraim and Manasseh in a specific way and in a general way to all of the tribes.

God’s indictment here is of a nation sick from head to toe. God describes an internal moral deterioration and decay. That is the condition that God describes, and there is a consequence that is going to come from that condition. First, God diagnoses the problem: ‘You’re sick from head to toe, and the sickness is not healing up. It is breaking out in putrefying wounds and sores’ (1:6). He says there is going to come a consequence—the prognosis. First you have the diagnosis; then you have the prognosis.

Verses 7-10, “Your country is desolate. Your cities are burned with fire; strangers devour your land in your presence; and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. So the daughter of Zion is left as a boot [cottage, shelter] in a vineyard, as a hut in a garden of cucumbers as a besieged city. Unless the Lord of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah. Hear the word of the Lord you rulers of Sodom; give ear to the law of our God you people of Gomorrah.”

Simply put, there is going to come a desolation on Israel as a nation as a punishment. The destruction will not be total because God will preserve a remnant. A remnant will survive, but there is going to come a devastation of this nation. This is described here. This massive destruction is ultimately going to occur. If it weren’t for God’s stepping in, there would not be anything left (Matthew 24:21-22).

God compares our nation to Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18 and 19). Why do you think He would do a thing like that? We have come so far, that in many of the major cities of this nation, they celebrate with parades what they call “gay-pride” week. I suspect they must have had one of those in Sodom and Gomorrah. They were pretty proud of things. There’s not even a sense of shame. It’s like, ‘We do these things, and not only do we do them, we are proud of it.’ It’s absolutely incredible. If you have a talk show and they’re interviewing somebody, chances are they don’t go very far before this character may wind up talking about some celebrity and his homosexuality. That’s how far we’ve come. Things like that are just openly talked about and discussed as though it’s no big deal.

Verse 10, God even compares the nation to rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah.

Verse 11, “‘To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?’ says the Lord. ‘I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs or goats.’” He says, ‘What are you going through the motions of religion for? I’m sick and tired of your going through the outward form of religion.’ And we call ourselves a religious nation. Let’s notice.

Verse 14, “‘Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they are trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them.’” This verse is often taken out of context and misapplied by certain Protestants who say, ‘See, God hates the Sabbath and the Holy Days; you shouldn’t keep them.’ “*Your* New Moons and *your* appointed feast My soul hates....” He didn’t say, ‘My appointed feasts, My Sabbaths, My day’—He said ‘*yours*.’

There’s a difference between the ones that God says belong to Him and the ones that He says belong to the people. Whose are they? Whose days does God hate? Does He hate His own? That wouldn’t make sense. Does God say, ‘I am going to give you these days, but I surely hate them’? What sense would that make? The problem wasn’t with God; the problem was with the people.

There were two problems. In some cases, they substituted in their own festivals. Northern Israel did that right after they rebelled against Solomon. Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, changed the Feast from the seventh month to the eighth month (I Kings 12:31-33). They introduced their own festivals. In some cases, it was a substitute for God’s; in other cases, while they held on to the outward form of the day that God had set, they didn’t celebrate it the way He said. It was a matter that they had come to the point, as it’s described here, of going through the motions of religion, but there was no substance of the heart.

For that matter, we can come to Sabbath services every week and warm a seat. We can go through all the various motions. We can do everything the Pharisees did, and God is not impressed with that—not any more than Christ was impressed with the Pharisees. The point is we are what we are on the inside. Our religion is something that needs to be lived and not something that is simply put on.

God says, speaking of this in v. 15, “‘When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. [‘I’m not going to even look when

you make your prayers. I'm not going to listen. Why? Because'] Your hands are full of blood.”

Verse 16, “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil.” ‘You’re going to have to clean up. You are going to have to cease to do evil.’

Verse 17, “Learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.” God says you are going to have to repent. It’s not a matter of going through the forms of religion. It’s not a matter of when you get into trouble saying, ‘Oh, God, please deliver me.’ If you’re really sincere, then you’re going to have to change your actions. You are going to have to start doing what’s right. You’re going to have to have an attitude of give, help, love and concern; not an attitude of greed, materialism, selfishness, pride, vanity and violence. God says, ‘There has to come a change if you want Me to listen.’

Coming on down, He describes and indicts the leadership of the nation.

Verse 23, “Your princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; everyone loves bribes, and follows after rewards. They do not defend the fatherless, nor does the cause of the widow come before them.” It talks about ‘...the princes are rebellious and companions of thieves; they all love gifts...’ That sounds like the front page of the paper. It’s almost a badge of status.

If a state official in Louisiana hasn’t been brought before the Grand Jury to be investigated about something, it’s like he almost doesn’t have any status. Everybody who’s anybody gets called before the Grand Jury. Some of them get indicted, and occasionally they beat the rap. On a federal matter, they may even be sent to jail. Right now, there are about four U.S. senators that are being investigated. They were tied into some big Savings and Loan bailout that involved about a billion dollars of government money. It just so happened that the guy who owned the Savings and Loan was the major contributor to each of their campaigns. Some are Republicans; some are Democrats—doesn’t make any difference. You can buy one vote as well as the other. He wasn’t a respecter of persons.

“Your princes are...companions of thieves.” This is the crowd they keep company with. “...And they follow after reward. They do not defend the fatherless, nor does the cause of the widow come before them.” They are not judging the cause of the fatherless and looking after the widow. They are not concerned about those who can’t take

care of themselves. They can vote themselves a massive pay increase and turn around and be ready to cut the Social Security benefits taking care of the elderly. There ultimately comes a day of reckoning. God is not impressed. He just doesn’t think that some of the priorities are exactly where they should be.

God then begins to talk about what is going to happen.

Verse 28, God says that there is going to be a destruction of the transgressors. After this kind of preliminary indictment where Isaiah sets the stage, he now goes into prophecies of what is going to come. It is not just going to stay this way. It’s not simply going to end with destruction because what’s going to happen in the last days?

Isaiah 2:2, “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills. And all nations shall flow into it.” The government of God is going to be established. All the different nations and different groups and tribes of people are going to begin to flow up to it. What are they going to say?

Verses 3-4, “Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths,’ for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

God is going to set up His government here on this earth. Jerusalem is going to be the future capital. It’s going to be worldwide in scope. It will be established in the top of the mountains. All nations shall flow into it. It will be headquartered in Jerusalem. Different groups of people are ultimately going to come up.

Later on in the book of Isaiah, we’re actually given a little bit of the sequence of the order in which some people are going to start coming up. We are going to see the way the government of God is actually established. We won’t get into it this time, but next time we will. It is interesting because it even names specific peoples who will be among the first to send ambassadors up to Jerusalem and say, ‘Will you please come down here and teach us? We want some of these things.’

Verse 4, “He shall judge between the nations, and shall rebuke many people...” Some people need to be instructed; others need to be exhorted and admonished. There are a few that are going to have to be rebuked and corrected. It is a matter that depends on the attitude. Some are going to

be willing. They just don't know; God instructs. There are others that are going to be pretty self-willed and are going to think they have a better way. God's not going to put it to a vote. One vote, all right! And the vote will be God's. The ballot will be unanimous. Man has proven and is going to have opportunity to prove he can't govern himself. If people are ignorant of the right way and you put it all together, then you have "collective ignorance"—and what good is that?

Isaiah 2:4, "...They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." God is going to rebuke among many nations until they beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. God is going to put a stop to the war-making ability. He sets the stage showing what is ultimately going to happen.

Verse 6, "For You have forsaken Your people, the house of Jacob, because they are filled with eastern ways..." or "full of divination from the east." This is one of the first things that God indicts the nation as He begins to get very specific. He sets the stage in chapter 2 as to what's ultimately going to happen. God is going to set up His government, and this is the way it is going to work out.

But what is happening right now? Why is God forsaking His people? God's people (the nations of modern day Israel) aren't looking to God or the Bible. They are looking to some crackpot "new movement" or they are looking to some Eastern mysticism. They are looking to all kinds of ideas and crackpot philosophies—the so-called great wisdom of the East that God is not impressed with. Frankly, using a little common sense, look at the nations of India, China, etc., nations that have produced so-called great wisdom—the great philosophies of the East. What have those things ever done for the East? You find there some of the most poverty-stricken, superstitious, backward, ignorant areas on the face of the earth. What has it done for them? We want to import it over here and say maybe we should get a little of that. It's insane! Yet this is what God says in v. 6, and this is what we find.

Verse 7, "Their land is also full of silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures..."

Verse 8, "The land is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands..." God indicts the nation for seeking answers elsewhere than from the God of Israel and His word. The nation is indicted for materialism and for idolatry. These

are the things that are going to happen and are happening—the materialism, the idolatry, the looking elsewhere for answers, looking away from the God of Israel. God says there is going to come a consequence.

Verse 11, "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."

Verse 19, "They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and the caves of the earth, from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily." I'll tell you what. When the earthquakes begin to hit and it culminates in the earthquake that occurs at Christ's return—which is going to be an earthquake of such mammoth proportion that it is actually going to reshape the topography of the earth—nobody is going to be strutting around as to how great they are. Let the forces of nature shake the ground right under you, and about that time, nobody is really impressed with himself. It has this humbling effect. God is going to get everybody's attention, and they are all going to be humble because it is kind of hard to be anything else when the ground is shaking. The most solid thing you know is shaking like a dishrag. God has a way of solving that.

He goes into details of the condition and state of our own society.

In Isaiah 3, He gives an indictment on society; there is a lack of wise, competent leadership in the nation. He describes a period of juvenile rebellion and women's lib, a society dominated largely by haughty women. He talks about the leadership, the mighty men, the judge, the prophet and the prudent. These all passed away; they are gone. God says you are not going to have the great, wise, competent leadership that has been available at certain times of crises in the past.

Isaiah 3:4, "I will give children to be their princes and babes shall rule over them..." They are children and babes by comparison.

Verse 5, "The people shall be oppressed, every one by another and every one by his neighbor..." We are talking about internal strife and civil strife. We are talking about people seeking to oppress one another to gain selfish, greedy advantage. We are talking about a society divided against itself.

Verse 5, "...The child will be insolent toward the elder, and the base toward the honorable." Here is a breakdown in the structure of society, a breakdown in respect.

I think one of the most fundamental things that we see has occurred in our society since the 1960s has been the breakdown of respect. Anybody who has been involved in the public school system over a period of let's say a twenty-five-year period of teaching to look back on, will point out and zero in on the absolute breakdown of respect as one of the major changes that has taken place in our society since the mid-60s. And when respect breaks down, the entire foundational units of society begin to crumble. When you lose respect in society—whether it is those who are younger respecting those who are older, whether it is for the structure of society, the respect and way others look up to those who are in a leadership capacity or the respectful interaction of people in society—when that respect begins to break down, the entire foundational units of society begin to crumble. This is zeroed in on.

Verse 6, “When a man takes hold of his brother in the house of his father, saying, ‘You have clothing; you be our ruler...’” This part is not here yet. Right now everybody and his brother are trying to be President. But believe me, before the end of this age, there's going to come a time when they almost can't find anybody who wants to be President because they are going to say (v. 7), ‘Look, this thing is about to collapse, and I don't want to be responsible for it.’ A time will come when the “rats” are going to be trying to desert the ship, trying to blame somebody else.

Verse 9, “The look of their countenance witnesses against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom; they do not hide it...”

Driving here this afternoon, I was listening to a talk show interview, and they were interviewing this guy. It started out how he had gone from being an athlete to being a dancer; before they got very far, he was talking about his lover, when he “came out” and all this kind of garbage. I wanted to pull over to the side of the road and throw up. “...They declare their sin as Sodom; they hide it not...” There's no shame, no embarrassment. Drive down and look at the movie marquee. We advertise it.

Later part of v. 9, “...Woe unto their soul! For they have brought evil upon themselves.”

Verse 12, “As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths.”

God continues.

Verses 16-18, “Moreover the Lord says: ‘Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and

walk with outstretched necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go. Making a jingling with their feet. Therefore the Lord will strike with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will uncover their secret parts.’ In that day the Lord will take away the finery: The jingling anklets, the scarves, and the crescents.” He describes all of these various ornaments and things.

He talks about the time of captivity.

Verse 24, “And so it shall be: Instead of a sweet smell there will be a stench; Instead of a sash, a rope; Instead of well-set hair, baldness; Instead of a rich robe, a girding of sackcloth; and branding instead of beauty.” This is talking about the destruction. When it talks about hair falling out, in some cases, perhaps, it is the results of radiation sickness, the destruction that is ultimately going to hit.

God describes a society whose priorities are upside down. The structure of society has been displaced. God designed proper roles for men, women and children, not roles of superiority and inferiority. God didn't create inferior people. God created human beings in His own image, but He created male and female. God structured a proper and appropriate role for each. One role is just as important as the other. Try eliminating one bunch and see how long the human race stays around.

God established that society have a certain structure. The family is the foundational unit of the structure of society. But we have here a society that is based on materialism. We have a society where the structure is turned upside down. We have a society where the hallmark is pride, haughtiness and what goes on the outside, not what comes out from the inside. There is a replacement, a substitution of the “daughters of Jezebel” in place of the “daughters of Sarah.” It is a totally different set of priorities and values. What was looked up to, what was idealized, what was viewed as proper and appropriate, what was the ideal to aspire to, has been thrown aside and replaced with something new. God is not impressed.

We come on down and it talks about the destruction and the consequences of some of these things.

Isaiah 4:4-5, “When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem...then the Lord will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night....” God

will bless the nation when He restores them and when the lesson has been learned.

What has happened to the nation?

Isaiah 5:1, “Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard.”

He describes God’s vineyard (Israel) is protected, hedged about, walled off and protected from other nations.

Then in v. 5, God says that because the nation has not appreciated and valued what God has given, He is going to take away the hedge. He is going to allow the protection to be taken away.

I think we have not fully realized the extent to which our nation, the nations of modern Israel (Ephraim and Manasseh), have been hedged off and protected. We are the only nations that have not been invaded by foreign troops. The United States, Britain, Canada and Australia haven’t had foreign troops set foot on their soil. Can you name other nations that haven’t? Try to come up with one.

Look at Latin America and the other nations of Europe. Why could Hitler not go beyond the English Channel? Why couldn’t he get across? Why couldn’t he get beyond? Why couldn’t the Kaiser get beyond? Napoleon? Why hasn’t anyone ever been able to get beyond since the last migration of Israelites in 1066 under William the Conqueror? Since that time, foreign troops have never been able to set foot on British soil. Why? Why haven’t there been any invasions by foreign troops?

The only destructive war we ever had in this country was the war between our states where the states of the North and South fought against one another. That was a war so destructive that there were more American lives lost in that war than in every other war that we’ve ever fought added together. But those weren’t outside forces. Those were forces right here within the nation of Manasseh. We haven’t fully appreciated and valued what it means to not have foreign troops on our soil and not have our land devastated.

Russia can’t say that. Moscow was burned and destroyed. There was a tremendous loss of life, literally running up into many, many millions, tens of millions during World War II. I don’t think we recognize the devastation that Russia went through in the time of World War II. There were great quantities of the area that was occupied. They had gone through an invasion during the time of Napoleon. There wasn’t destruction on quite as massive a scale, but there was an invasion. Nations like China, Japan and India have been invaded. God says, ‘I have put a

hedge, a wall, but I am going to tear that wall down. I am going to open you up and let them come in.’

Then He begins an indictment as to why He is going to do that.

Verse 8, “Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, till there is no place where they may dwell alone in the midst of the land!” We haven’t properly used the things we have, even the way we’ve built our cities. God says selfishness and greed have been the motivating factors.

God says there is going to come a famine.

Verse 10, “For ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield one ephah.” Ten acres are going to yield about three-quarters of a bushel. That’s not very much. You’re not going to stay in the farming business very long.

Verses 11-12, “Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may follow intoxicating drink; who continue until night, till wine inflames them! The harp and the strings, the tambourine and flute, and wine are in their feasts; but they do not regard the work of the Lord....” They are partying. They are out abusing alcohol and various other drugs—wanting to party. That’s what they want to spend their life doing. They are not concerned about the work of God. They are not concerned about doing what God says. It’s pretty descriptive.

Verse 13, “Therefore my people have gone into captivity....” They are going to go into captivity.

Verse 20, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil....” There is an upside-down set of values.

Verses 21-22, “Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe to men mighty at drinking wine, Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink.” Last of the big boozers! Their pride is how much they can manage to “put down” before somebody has to carry them out. There is this upside-down set of values that produced the epidemic of chemical abuse in this country. This is catastrophic!

Then there are very descriptive terms that describe the legal profession.

Verse 23, “Who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away justice from the righteous man!” They are not out trying to find justice. It’s an adversarial system with each side trying to win.

Back two or three years ago, I heard an interview with one of the most prominent criminal defense attorneys in this nation. He was being asked about his clients. He just made the point that he

has seldom, if ever, defended a really innocent man. 'I am not after justice; I am out to try to get my client off. My job is to win the case for my client. That's what I'm being paid for. I don't have any apology for that. The District Attorney is out trying to win the case for the state. He's not trying to get justice. He's trying to win the case for the state, and I'm trying to win the case for my client.'

That was an analysis. God says woe unto them who justify the wicked for reward. They are not concerned about what's right, just and equitable. They are out to do what they can do and to get what they can get.

Verse 24, God says they are going to be devoured like fire devours stubble. Ever burned off a field? You know how that fire goes. God says, 'When I light the match, it is going to go like fire through a stubble field. It's going to go, "...Because they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, and despise the word of the Holy One of Israel."

We have a very descriptive area, describing an overview of the nation. It describes the greed, corruption and materialism. It describes the breakdown of respect, the very foundational force that holds society together. The structure of respect should begin in the home and reflect throughout all of society. It describes the emphasis on the external—the materialism and the things that God says are not of value in the long-term—and the rejection of the true values, rejection of the things that really proceed from God.

God set the stage having briefly introduced in chapter 2 the fact that, in the last days, the ultimate conclusion is the God of heaven is going to set up a kingdom.

In Isaiah 6, we come to the calling that Isaiah received.

Verses 1-5, in the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah sees this vision, and in vision, he sees God sitting upon a throne. He is overwhelmed with this. He goes through symbolically the things that occur. He doesn't feel worthy.

Verse 6, in his vision, God symbolically cleanses him.

And then in v. 8, God says, 'I have a job to do.' Isaiah's response is, "Here am I, send me." God then says that He will.

Isaiah 6:11-13, Isaiah asked the question, "Then I said, 'Lord, how long?' And He answered: 'Until the cities are laid waste and without a man, the land is utterly desolate, the Lord had removed men far away and the forsaken places are many

in the midst of the land. But yet a tenth will be in it, and will return....'" There is going to come a captivity from which only a tenth of our nation will return. God is going to save out a tithe. We're looking at ninety percent destruction that will occur. That is destruction on a scale that we cannot imagine or comprehend. We don't realize what is taking shape, what is occurring right now and the things that are beginning to shape up in Europe.

In Isaiah 10:5, God talks about that, "Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger and the staff of whose hand is My indignation." This nation is blindly negotiating away. We are talking about Germany reuniting, and will they stay in NATO or not. We are ultimately going to find out that with a reunited Germany, NATO is going to be the least of their concerns. Whether or not they stay in is going to be the least of our concern because we are going to find that the Assyrian is going to be the rod of God's anger. God is going to use the Assyrian nation (the modern-day Germans) to chastise and correct our nation. That is going to occur.

We have to look at things that God indicts our nation for and the things that He hates. We have to look at these things as we go through. What we need to do is to ask God to change our set of values from the inside out. We want to learn to hate the things God hates; we want to learn to love and value the things that God values. In our lives as men, women, children, families, employees, employers and human beings, we want to learn to value and appreciate what God values and appreciates. We want to recognize the contrast in the values that are so common in our society.

We live in this society and are influenced by it. Our children are even more influenced by it. We must really dedicate ourselves to try to fill our minds with a godly set of values and to instruct our children as to why the set of values that they see at school, on television, entertainment and in all of the things around are not the values to hang on to because there are consequences that are going to come. These things are destroying an entire nation.

In Isaiah 7, God then begins to describe the alliance of Syria and Ephraim and the conflict that was taking place with ancient Judah at the time Isaiah was writing this—and the fact that was not going to be a successful combine. The Assyrians were going to take them into captivity (vv. 17-20). There were events that were going to

happen that really, in a sense, foreshadow events that would happen way on down the line.

Notice the sign of salvation that God would give. Isaiah 7:14, “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” “Immanuel” means “God with us.” This is a prophecy of Jesus Christ. It is quoted in the New Testament (Matthew 1:23). This is set into the context of the prophecy as the nation is looking at what is sure destruction. They are looking at what they can see, and the warning is don’t base what is going to happen on what you can see.

At the time Isaiah wrote this, Judah saw Northern Israel (headed up by the tribe of Ephraim) was making an alliance with the nation of Syria. They were going to invade the Jews. It looked like destruction was on the horizon. This combine was going to come in and really “put it” to them. But before any of that really happened, the Assyrians came in and conquered the whole thing. The picture can radically change. Events can happen very quickly. So Isaiah’s message was, ‘Look, don’t depend on what you see. God is the source of salvation.’

In Isaiah 8:7-8, He continues talking about Assyria, how He is going to bring the king of Assyria into the nation and how it will pass through Judah. It describes the destructive conquest; after describing the invasions and the things that occur, then it begins to focus in on salvation.

Isaiah 8:13, “The Lord of hosts, Him you shall hallow; Let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread.” Don’t be worried. Don’t be impressed with what all these other nations and people are going to do. Focus on God!

Verse 14, “He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rack of offense to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” He is speaking of the Messiah who was to be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. People took offense.

Verse 15, “And many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken, be snared and taken.”

Verse 16, “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples....”

Verse 20, “To the law and to the testimony....” That is a description of the Bible. You remember in the book of Revelation 12:17, when it describes the saints of the Most High who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ? That expression is

used two or three places. That is a description of the Church. “To the law and to the testimony” is simply another way of saying the Old and the New Testament. The law is reference to what we term “the Old Testament”; the testimony of Jesus Christ is what we refer to as “the New Testament.”

Verse 20, “...If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” We ultimately look to the Bible, to the law and to the testimony, to the law of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ. Genesis to Revelation—we look to the whole book.

Who’s going to be responsible for putting it together?

Verse 16, “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples.” This canon of Scripture would be completed among the disciples of the Messiah, the One who would be the stone of stumbling. Who gave us our New Testament? The disciples of Jesus! The disciples of Jesus Christ are the ones who sealed it up and finished it. It wasn’t the Catholic Church in the Nicene Council or something two or three hundred years later. The only thing they ever tried to do was take it apart. It was already in existence when you read of the first Church Council discussing it. The only thing they discussed was trying to get rid of some of the books that were in it. The testimony was bound up and sealed up among the disciples. We have gone into that before, focusing in on Peter and John specifically.

Verse 17, “And I will wait upon the Lord....”

Verse 19, “And when they shall say to you, ‘Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,’ [seeking out astrology, fortune-tellers, séances and things of that sort] should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?”

Verse 20, “To the law and to the testimony [that’s where you look—to the Bible]! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” If someone claims to represent God, the real test is whether he is teaching what the Bible teaches. “To the law and to the testimony.” Is he teaching the entire Bible? Isaiah 9 is prophecy of the Messiah, a prophecy that He would come from beyond Jordan and Galilee of the Gentile nations (v. 1).

Isaiah 9:2, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.” The reference here is a prophecy of Christ.

Verse 6, “For unto us a Child is born. Unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder....” Jesus Christ was born to be a King.

Verse 7, “Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it....” Jesus Christ is going to sit upon the throne of David when He returns. This is describing a prophecy of where salvation will come from. It will come from the Messiah who we know to be Jesus Christ.

God continues showing that the nation does not recognize its need for salvation.

They say in v. 10, “The bricks have fallen down, but we will rebuild with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will replace them with cedars.” We will work it all out. We will fix it some way or another.

Verses 14-16, “Therefore the Lord will cut off head and tail from Israel, palm branch and bulrush in one day. The elder and honorable, he is the head; the prophet who teaches lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err, and those who are led by them are destroyed.” God indicts the leadership for causing the people to err. He says those who are in the responsible positions, those in the leadership positions, are causing error. They are not leading the nation in the right way.

Isaiah 10:1-7, “Woe to those who decree unrighteous decrees...To rob the needy of justice, and to take what is right from the poor of My people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless. What will you do in the day of punishment...Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger, and the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Yet he does not mean so, nor does his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off not a few nations.”

Right now, as they are planning German reunification, that’s not what they mean in terms of the destruction. ‘He means not so, neither does his heart think so.’ At this point, they don’t really think that they are going to do it again, but it’s in their nature. When they go to war, they go to it with brutal efficiency, and they are going to do it. God says they don’t realize what they are up to; right now at this point, that’s not necessarily what they are actively planning. But the circumstances are going to come about and Satan

is going to stir them up; they are going to come—and God is going to allow them to do so. God is going to remove the hedge, the fence, and He’s going to allow the Assyrians to be the rod of His anger, to chastise and correct this nation in a way we have never experienced. He indicts us as a hypocritical nation. Then God is going to deal with the Assyrians after that.

Verse 12, “Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Lord has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, that He will say, ‘I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks.’”

God is going to use the Assyrians (the Germans) to punish us, and then He’s going to “take care” of them. He’s going to turn around and use the Russians and Chinese to punish them. There’s going to be a succession. We’re going to see the succession as we go through the Major Prophets. And we will ultimately see the battle that will actually be fought several years into the Millennium. There are events that are going to occur.

Isaiah 10:20, “And it shall come to pass in that day that the remnant of Israel, and such as have escaped of the house of Jacob, will never again depend on him who defeated them, but will depend on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.” They are going to come back from captivity. They are going to learn a lesson.

In Isaiah 11:1, we are told, “There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.” This is speaking of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who was born of the seed of David. David was the son of Jesse.

Verses 2-5, “The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. His delight is in the fear of the Lord, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears. But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist.”

He is going to judge in righteousness; He’s going to judge with equity. There’s going to have to be correction and things straightened out. But notice the extent of change, which is going to take place.

Verses 6-7, “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young

goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.”

Verse 9, “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” When the knowledge of God is pervasive, God is literally even going to change the nature of the animals. God uses wild animals as a description of the way many of the kingdoms of this world act.

When God describes the great world-ruling Gentile kingdoms in the book of Daniel and later in Revelation, He describes them under the guise of wild animals. He describes them as animals that are out for prey, out to devour and to destroy—under the analogy of lions, leopards, bears and this type. God says this is the nature human beings have; they act like a bunch of wild animals. That very nature, even in the animals, is going to be changed to symbolize, to demonstrate, that there is a different way of life. There’s going to come peace, rest and tranquility. There’s not going to be the danger and the harm.

Verse 10, ““And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people [in other words, stand like a “flag” that everybody can seek to]; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious.”” It really is!

Verse 11, “It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left, from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and the islands of the sea.” The remnant of Israel is scattered in Assyria, North Africa and various areas.

Verse 12, “He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”

Verse 13, “Also the envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim.” There is going to be peace that is going to occur because the nations of Israel will have learned a lesson when God begins to bring them back from the captivity. At the end of the captivity, at the beginning of the Millennium, they are going to come back in a humble, submissive and teachable attitude.

Verse 15, “The Lord will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt...”

Verse 16, “There will be a highway for the remnant of His people who will be left from Assyria, as it was for Israel in the day that he came up from the land of Egypt.” God is going to begin to bring His people back from that captivity at the beginning of the Millennium. He’s going to gather them back by way of a highway God’s going to have constructed right through part of what’s now sea. There’s going to be a highway to bring them down directly so that they can come back.

Isaiah 12 is a very short chapter that ties in with this. ‘Praise to God!’ It describes the time of the Millennium.

Isaiah 12:3, “Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” A time of salvation will be opened up. God indicts the nation of Israel, shows their sins, shows what He disapproves of, shows the calamitous events that are going to occur and then He shows the salvation that God holds out—the only source of salvation.

Now He begins to focus in on some of the nations God uses as a tool against Israel and what is going to happen to them.

Isaiah 13:1, “The burden against Babylon...”

Verse 6, ““Wail, for the day of the Lord is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.”” This is the day of the Lord that is going to come. The day of the Lord comes after the tribulation.

Verse 10, it talks about the heavenly signs.

Verses 11-12, ““I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a mortal more rare than the fine gold, a man more than the golden wedge of Ophir.”” God will give a sense of priorities. When all this is over, people won’t place value on material things. People place a lot more value on material things than they do on other human beings. God says, ‘When I get through, they are going to learn what’s important.’

Verse 13, “Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts and in the day of His fierce anger.” This describes the day of the Lord.

Speaking of Babylon in v. 17, ““Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, who will not regard silver; and as for gold, they will not delight in it.”” The Medes are the nation that’s

settled in the area of what is now the modern-day Ukraine. That is part of Russia, the Soviet Union. What you have and what we are going to see is the pendulum swings that take place.

Right now there is coming into a greater European orbit what is Eastern Europe, Central Europe and Western Europe. There is coming a European orbit that is certainly going to include many of the nations of what we've considered behind the Iron Curtain nations—nations of Central Europe that we've tended to think of as the Eastern Bloc. We are even seeing some of the nations that are constituent parts of the Soviet Union in that European orbit. I think that much of Russia and some of the other nations are going to, at least for a time, be allied with the Beast Power. Some of the nations of Central Europe will actually be part of it. I don't think there's any indication that Russia will not ever be one of the ten kings. But I think, clearly at the beginning, there is a very great likelihood that they are going to be allied with it. It may be part of that nuclear arsenal that winds up being used against us. Where is Germany going to get their nuclear arsenal? It's evidently going to be in the context of a European defense force. Where's it going to come from? The scripture shows that as events go on, there is going to come disillusionment and a lack of trust between Germany and Russia that is going to involve a "double-cross."

If you remember, World War II started out with Hitler and Stalin being allies. Stalin was Hitler's ally. That's the way he picked up Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, a good chunk of Poland, parts of Romania and parts of "this" and "that." That's where he got it all at the beginning of the War. He stole it at the beginning of World War II when he and Hitler were allies. They made a deal and split it up between themselves.

And then Hitler stabbed him in the back. Hitler didn't trust Stalin. So when he thought he was in a position to do it, he launched an attack on Stalin. He caught him by surprise; then Stalin launched his counter-attack on Hitler. Hitler bogged down as the Russian front won by "General Winter"—the most formidable "soldier" the Russians have. When it drops to forty degrees below zero, things don't work very well. The mechanized equipment the Germans brought in froze up, literally.

It's an interesting story if you read it. It was the last successful use of horse cavalry in modern warfare. Do you realize that took place in World War II? The weather dropped to forty, fifty, sixty

degrees below zero, and all the mechanized equipment froze up. The Russians brought in Mongol horsemen from Siberia. The Germans were on foot and about to freeze. All their tanks and lubricating oils froze up. The Russians brought in by train these Mongol horsemen and thousands and thousands of Siberian ponies from Siberia. Those things you couldn't freeze them out if you tried. They lived for thousands of years in Siberia. They brought in all these Mongol horsemen. They hitched those horses up to Russian stuff, pulled it around and "rode circles" around the Germans. The Germans couldn't even get their guns to fire. The things froze up. That's what defeated Hitler on the Russian front. It's amazing when technology breaks down—you go back to old faithful. There are things that survive.

Anyway, what did you have? You had the pendulum swing. You're going to have the same thing. Basically what is going to happen, the first woe is Europe coming against Russia. The Germans and the Russians have never trusted one another. They have worked together at various times in history, but there's a lack of trust. The first woe is Europe attacking Russia. They are going to try to get a pre-emptive attack. They are not going to be successful.

The second woe is the Medes (Communist bloc of nations) are going to come. There is going to be a backlash. Communism right now is being phased out, but don't think that all the hard liners and that entire bunch will disappear. They may fade from power. But what's going to happen when this newfound prosperity and what promises to be success in linking up with the West turns to dust? When this turns into dust, you are going to have a pendulum swing, and you are going to have an alliance of Russia and China coming back.

It describes the Medes in v. 17, "Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, who will not regard silver; and as for gold, they will not delight in it." There's going to be a revival, a takeover, of the old hard-liner communists. They are going to rise up and unite the whole Asiatic area of China and India, and it will be dominated by Russia. This will occur well on into the tribulation. These are the events of the Day of the Lord. These are the events in the last year before Christ returns. That pendulum swing will swing back, and they will come in and devastate Europe. They will devastate Babylon. The destruction that you read of in Revelation 18—

the destruction and nuclear devastation of modern Rome—that's who's going to do it.

Verses 19-20, ““And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It will never be inhabited....”” Now that occurred to ancient Babylon, and it's going to occur to modern Babylon.

Revelation 18 makes plain it's going to occur to modern Babylon because Revelation 18 was written way after it had happened to ancient Babylon. That was already old stuff when Revelation 18 was written. Isaiah prophesied it and it happened to ancient Babylon. But it's going to happen to modern Babylon. Revelation 18 makes that plain.

Isaiah 14:1-2, “For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will still choose Israel, and settle them in their own land. The strangers will be joined with them, and they will cling to the house of Jacob. Then people will take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them for servants and maids in the land of the Lord; they will take them captive whose captives they were, and rule over their oppressors.”

When Christ comes back and all of this occurs, those who were the keepers of the concentration camps and whatever are going to come bringing the captives out, kind of “dusting them off” and taking them back gently. They are going to try to do what they can to get out of trouble. The “shoe is going to be on the other foot.” The way God is going to get the point across to those who were part of the Beast power is by making them servants. They are going to be brought back, and they are going to be made servants. Everybody needs to learn to serve.

Here's a group of people brought back to Israel in the position of servants. Very possibly, it may be a generation or may even be the time of the first Jubilee that the people of the Beast power are brought back to Israel in the position of servants. So, they'll have the opportunity of learning to serve. That's a good place for those who were the haughty, the mighty, those who dominated, to learn how to serve and to perform lowly functions as servants.

We all have to learn to serve. There is nothing wrong with being a servant. Jesus came as a servant. He was willing to wash the feet of the disciples. We need to have that attitude of service. Leadership from God's standpoint is service. There are those whose opinion of themselves and their status are such that they are

going to need to be in the role of servants in the beginning of the Millennium.

Obviously, the law of God will be such that certainly by the time of the Jubilee, they will go out and be given back their own land. They will have a chance after they have had a generation or two to really learn the lesson and have it impressed. Then they will be to a point where they can be trusted to go back to their land and be instructed by those of the government of God.

Verse 3, “It shall come to pass in the day the Lord gives you rest from your sorrow, and from your fear and the hard bondage in which you were made to serve.” God is going to give rest from sorrow, fear and from hard bondage.

Verse 4, “that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon....”

Verse 7, “The whole earth is at rest and quiet; they break forth into singing.” That's descriptive of the time of the Messiah, of Tomorrow's World, a time of a millennial Sabbath.

Verses 12-15, we have a description of the one who is really the power behind the throne, the ultimate king of Babylon—Lucifer. His desire was to ascend into heaven and to exalt his throne above the stars of God. He wanted to be like the Most High. Lucifer became Satan and is ultimately the source of all of the problems because this satanic attitude is the source of all the problems.

We end up here in chapter 14 with Lucifer desiring to take God's place and the events that are going to occur.

There's an awful lot packed into the book of Isaiah. There is an awful lot that deals with the things that are going on here and now. It gives God's view of our society. It gives His perspective. It gives the events that are going to occur immediately ahead and then on beyond that into the World Tomorrow. There is an awful lot that we have yet to uncover as we continue through the Major Prophets.

This is where we will conclude this evening. Next time we are going to cover chapters 15 through 35. I will hope to see you here the next time for that.

Bible Study # 48 Questions

SURVEY OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS SERIES

Isaiah 1—14

1. To what does Isaiah compare the relationship of God and Israel in the beginning of his prophecy? In what way does Israel show less perception than dumb animals?
2. What is the resultant condition of the nation?
3. What will be the result? Will the destruction be total?
4. Does Isaiah 1:14 mean that God is doing away with the holy days?
5. For what specific sins does God indict the nation's leadership?
6. Where will God's future capital be? Will the government be worldwide in scope?
7. For what specific sins does God indict the nation? How will God bring about a true perspective on what's important and what's not for rebellious Israelites?
8. How does God characterize the condition of society in the final days of the nation?
9. How does God characterize much of our legal system in Isaiah 5?
10. What was Isaiah's reaction when God announced that He had a job that needed doing?
11. What percentage of Israel will return from captivity?
12. What great sign of a Deliverer did Isaiah say that God would give His people?
13. What does God reveal as the sign of one of His true prophets?
14. Upon which throne will Christ sit when He returns?
15. In Isaiah 9, what does God say the nation's leaders cause?
16. How does God characterize the Assyrians in Isaiah 10?
17. What will the animals be like after the Messiah returns?
18. How will all of the people return from Germany (Assyria) to Jerusalem?
19. What will happen to Babylon?
20. What will both the people and whole earth experience after God chooses Israel and puts them in their own land?
21. What was the intention of Lucifer when he rebelled?

Bible Study # 49
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Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Isaiah 15—35

We are looking at the second section of Isaiah. This particular section of Isaiah, that we **are looking at this evening, deals primarily with prophecies against some specific Gentile nations, as well as some directly against Israel.** This section **concludes with accounts of God's intervention in human affairs and also a description of the time when God's government holds sway during the Millennium.** We will also **notice prophecies relating to the Church in the place of safety.** I think there are a couple of prophecies that many of you may not have been familiar with before that I think you will find of interest. It gives us at least a little bit of insight.

Isaiah 15 opens up with a prophecy against Moab. The Moabites are a people who inhabit much of modern-day Iraq and some of modern-day Jordan. The Moabites and the Ammonites are basically in the area of Jordan and Iraq. The Ammonites are centered in Jordan. The capital city of Jordan takes its name from that ancient tribal name. It's spelled the same way and pronounced "Ammon" today. Basically, this is where those peoples were anciently, and the modern nation is still pretty much in the same geographic boundaries that exist today. In many cases, you have several different ethnic groups that are lumped together inside the same modern nation-state. It's not exact. Iraq, for instance, consists of several different groups such as the ancient Moabites, as well as a certain amount of Arab stock from Arabia that moved in there at an earlier time, as well as other ethnic groups such as the Kurds and others like that.

The description here describes some of the waste in which Moab is laid.

Isaiah 15:1, "...Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste and destroyed, Because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste and destroyed." Moab is laid waste.

Certainly in this context, we are told that the Euphrates River will ultimately be the demarcation line between East and West, and that the kings of the East will assemble their army east of the Euphrates. The Euphrates will be dried up, and they will cross it and will invade. The Euphrates goes through a goodly portion of Iraq. It kind of divides the nation of

Iraq, which would give us the indication that Iraq is ultimately going to be devastated and at least partially occupied if that's the case. Chapter 15 kind of fits in with some of the other prophecies. Isaiah 16 is an interesting section.

Isaiah 16:1, "Send the lamb to the ruler of the land, from Sela to the wilderness, to the mount of the daughter of Zion." The word "Sela" in the margin says "Petra." "Sela" is the Hebrew name, while "Petra" is the Greek name of the same geographic location. It is known today by its Greek name "Petra." "Petra" and "Sela" mean the same thing. They both have the meaning of a great rock. The modern place-name of this location, Petra, is known by its Greek name, but it is referred to here in the Hebrew text by the Hebrew name. Many of the commentaries recognize the location to which is being referred as the area that we would term modern-day Petra.

Here is a description that mentions "the ruler of the land from Sela [the area of Petra] to the wilderness, to the mount of the daughter of Zion." It is describing the area that would include Petra. Now the modern-day ruler of that area is King Hussein of Jordan. That is currently in his territory. "Send a present," as it were, "to the ruler of this area from Petra to the wilderness."

Verses 2-5, "For it shall be a wandering bird thrown out of the nest; so shall be the daughters of Moab at the fords of the Arnon. 'Take counsel, execute judgment, make your shadow like the night in the middle of the day; hide the outcasts, do not betray him who escapes. Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler. For the extortioner is at an end, devastation ceases, the oppressors are consumed of the land. In mercy the throne will be established; and One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness.'"

By the time we get down to v. 5, it is pretty obvious from the context, time wise, it brings us down to the return of Christ because it brings us down to a time when the extortioner will be at an end, when the spoiler will cease, when oppressors will be consumed out of the land, when finally, in mercy, the throne will be established and a King will reign in righteousness there in the tabernacle of David. That is something that is yet to happen and will occur at the return of Christ.

We're looking at prophecy that centers around the area of Petra. It has to do with Moabites,

many of whom have been dislodged from location. At least a portion of Iraq has been invaded, at least up to the Euphrates River. There are many dispossessed, homeless people. They're coming into an area that is inhabited by many of their kinsman.

Actually Moab and Jordan were of the same family. Until Iraq overthrew the monarchy back around 1960 or something like that, the monarch of Iraq was the uncle of King Hussein of Jordan. They were very closely related; it is the same family that ruled both kingdoms. So they are related peoples, related kingdoms in related areas. They border. So if you become dislocated, the logical place you flee is into Jordan there in the area of Petra, which is a fairly empty area.

In v. 2, the statement describes the Moabites as a "wandering bird."

In v. 1, there is a statement made basically to "the ruler of the land" because he is the one who is addressed.

Verses 3-4, "...Make my shadow like the night in the middle of the day; hide the outcasts, do not betray him who escapes. Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab..." Moab is not God's outcasts. God addresses Moab and He says, "Let My outcasts dwell with you Moab." This is one of the indications that we have looked at to make us wonder in terms of the location of the place of protection—the place of safety for God's people during the tribulation—as perhaps being the area of Petra. You have probably heard that speculation. Well, this is one of several verses in the Bible that seems to indicate Petra as being a place where at least some of those who are called "God's outcasts" will dwell and be protected until the time of the return of Christ. So this is kind of the setting and context here.

Isaiah 17:1, "The burden against Damascus..." This chapter discusses Damascus. We have addressed the burden of Damascus or modern-day Syria. Damascus is the ancient and the modern capital of Syria. It's one of those unique situations. Damascus, to my knowledge, is the oldest continuously inhabited city. It has continually been the capital of that area since way back in Biblical times. It is a rather unique situation when you consider all the fighting and the wars that have gone on with so many invading troops, off and on. Most cities have been destroyed a long time ago, and others have been built to take their place. Damascus is still there. But Damascus is not going to remain because it will ultimately be taken away from being a city and become a ruinous heap (v. 1).

The timing of that is brought out.

Verses 7-8, "In that day a man will look to his Maker, and his eyes will have respect for the Holy One of Israel. He will not look to the altars, the work of his hands; He will not have respect what his fingers have made..." That's looking on into the future. The setting of this prophecy is at the time of Christ, the time when Damascus will ultimately be destroyed.

In Isaiah 18, we are addressing an interesting prophecy in terms of what it describes. What it describes are the very first people who are going to voluntarily send emissaries up to Jerusalem and say, 'Come and teach us your ways.'

Isaiah 18:1-2, "Woe to the land shadowed with buzzing wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, which sends ambassadors by sea, even in vessels of reed on the waters, saying, 'Go, swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth of skin [KJV, "scattered and peeled"; margin reference, "outspread and polished"]..." The Jewish translation renders it "a people who are very tall and who are oiled"—a reference to a style of presenting themselves.

The KJV is very awkward, but it is descriptive of the area south of Ethiopia—the area beyond the rivers of Ethiopia where the headwaters come down. We are looking at the area that centers on southern Ethiopia, Uganda and down into the area of Kenya—that area in East Africa is what is described. One particular tribe of the people who inhabit that area, the Watusi, is noted for their height. They are a people who are very tall and slim as compared to the peoples in other areas of Africa. That particular group of people is the dominant people there in East Africa. It's a descriptive term of a rather unique situation as we are going to notice here in chapter 18.

Let me summarize it. That is one of the areas that is the most devastated today. Look at the news of the Ethiopia, Uganda areas where large amounts of people have been dying of starvation and various diseases. It is one of the most tragic circumstances on the face of the earth today when you look at the destruction that has been wrought by the civil wars and the various things. What is described here? This describes the very first people who are going to voluntarily send emissaries up to Jerusalem and say, 'Come and teach us of your ways.'

Verse 7, "In that time a present will be brought to the Lord of hosts from a people tall and smooth of skin [People who are tall and oiled as their traditional style of native presentation. They are noted for that.], And from a people terrible from

their beginning onward, a nation powerful and treading down, whose land the rivers divide—To the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, to Mount Zion.” What it describes here is at the time of Christ’s return. There is nobody who’s going to be more ready to respond than these people down below the rivers of Ethiopia, who have perhaps suffered more in the latter portion of the twentieth century than any other area of the earth. When you read a little bit of what is going on and what has been going on there, it is a very terrible circumstance.

You read in Isaiah 2 of how many nations are going to say, “Come let us go up to the house of the Lord, and He will teach us of His ways.” Those who are evidently singled out here as being the first to respond are those in the area in East Africa, an area that has been trodden down, an area that has really suffered quite a bit of tragedy and trauma, particularly in recent years. It’s kind of an interesting inset as it describes their response. By that time, they will have had enough of what man’s system produces, and it won’t take a whole lot of convincing that they want what Jesus Christ has brought there to Jerusalem.

Isaiah 19:1, “The burden against Egypt...” We address the subject of Egypt. We find what is ultimately going to come about in Egypt.

Verse 2, “I will set Egyptians against Egyptians; everyone will fight against his brother, and everyone against his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom.” Egypt is ultimately going to be confronted with a great deal of internal unrest and civil strife. There’s a great deal of that below the surface in Egypt right now, and this is what is ultimately going to occur.

Verse 4, “‘And the Egyptians I will give into the hand of a cruel master, and a fierce king will rule over them,’ says the Lord, the Lord of hosts.” This is, evidently, the Beast power. Other prophecies in Daniel show that they will come in and occupy Egypt.

In v. 5, we find the drought that is going to afflict Egypt.

Verse 17, “And the land of Judah shall be a terror to Egypt; everyone who makes mention of it will be afraid in himself...” That certainly has already come about. Remember the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War? You realize that the land of Judah has become a terror to the land of Egypt, to the point that it says “everyone who makes mention of it will be afraid in himself.” It scares them to even say the word. It singles out that it is the land of Judah because the nation that

calls itself Israel in the Middle East is really, in Biblical terminology, the land of Judah.

It describes what is ultimately going to occur in v. 21, “Then the Lord will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day, and will make sacrifice and offerings...” God is going to have to smite Egypt. God is not going to have to smite Uganda, Ethiopia and Kenya when He comes back.

Verse 22, He is going to have to smite Egypt. But after He smites it, He will heal it, and they will return to the Lord. Other prophecies in Zechariah show that it’s going to take a while to get the point. They are not going to want to come up to the Feast and do certain things at the beginning (Zechariah 14:18-19). God will have to punish them, but He will do so for the purpose of bringing them to repentance. And when they repent, He will heal them.

There will ultimately be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria.

Verses 23-24, “In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians. In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land.”

Here we find described that in Tomorrow’s World when the lessons have been learned, Egypt and Assyria (modern-day Germany) will rank up near Israel as the great nations there in the midst of the land. They will serve as a blessing and as a conduit of God’s truth.

Of course, ancient Egypt gave their pagan religion to much of the rest of the world—not only to the rest of Africa, but also to other areas of the world. Greece borrowed their religion from the Egyptians, and the Romans borrowed it from the Greeks. So much of paganism goes back to the ancient Egyptians. They were responsible for that, both in Africa as well as in Europe. They have been a source of a great deal of problems in the past. The Germans (Assyrians) have been a source of problems and destruction, but when those people finally are converted, they will be a source of things that are positive. They will be blessings in the midst of the land. It even describes a great highway that is going to be built that is going to connect Egypt with Germany, going through the land of Israel. It will be something at that time that will serve as a source of blessings to all nations.

Isaiah 20 is more of a historical prophecy inset. It describes an ancient Assyrian captivity of the

Egyptians and Ethiopians, based on what had occurred a little earlier in Ashdod.

Isaiah 21 addresses the areas of Elam and Media. This refers to the Slavic world; the Slavic peoples are basically descended from Elam. Media is a related people. This would refer, particularly, to the Ukraine. This would be an area that would be descriptive of much of Eastern and Central Europe.

Isaiah 21:2, “A distressing vision is declared to me; the treacherous dealer deals treacherously, and the plunderer plunders, Go up, O Elam! Besiege, O Media! All its sighing I have made to cease.”

Verse 9, “And look, here comes a chariot of men with a pair of horsemen! And he answered and said, ‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen! And all the carved images of her gods he has broken to the ground.’”

This section describes these areas, the alliance that is put together (of East and West in Europe); there’s going to be a lot of treachery involved in that. The peoples involved are ultimately going to betray one another, just as Napoleon and the Czar betrayed one another. Napoleon betrayed the Czar way back in the early 1800s, and that ultimately led to Napoleon’s defeat. Hitler didn’t learn anything from history and did exactly the same thing with Stalin. And there are ultimately going to be more treacherous dealings in the future. It is going to lead to the destruction of Babylon (modern Rome).

Verse 11, “The burden of Dumah [Dumah is an Arab tribe that lives in the area of Petra. That’s their modern-day location.]. He calls to me out of Seir [“Seir” is the ancient name for the area of which Petra was the capital.], ‘Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?’” Here’s another indication of a group of people in the area of Petra. The modern-day native inhabitation right around that area is addressing one whom they regard as the watchman. If you go back to the book of Ezekiel, you will find that’s a term used to describe God’s work in the end time. They address one who they regard as the watchman. They see what’s going on, and they inquire of him how much time is left.

Verse 12, “The watchman said, ‘The morning comes, and also the night. If you will inquire, inquire; Return! Come back!’” The watchman simply tells them that they had better turn to God and then come again.

Verse 13 concludes with the burden directed toward Arabia (Saudi Arabia, the modern Arabian Peninsula).

Verses 16-17, Kedar is addressed. Kedar is the main tribe of Saudi Arabia. It describes their destruction and being diminished (KJV, “overwhelmed”).

Isaiah 22:1, “The burden against the Valley of Vision....”

Then it refers to the time of the Day of the Lord.

Verse 5, “For it is a day of trouble and treading down and perplexity by the Lord of hosts in the Valley of Vision....” It describes some of the events that are going to come about.

Isaiah 23:1, “The burden against Tyre....”

Ancient Tyre, addressed here, is symbolic of the state of Babylon the Great (modern Rome). In fact, some of the statements from Isaiah 23 are actually quoted and paraphrased back in Revelation 18 when it describes the fall of Babylon the Great. It describes the destruction of how it’s going to be overthrown.

Tyre was the great coastal trading city of the ancient world. It is used to typify the great trading combine that will ultimately arise. Actually, many of the descendants of the ancient people of Tyre have settled in portions of the southern part of Italy. Tyre, as the great trading capital of the ancient world, in that sense, is symbolic of Babylon the Great, which will not only be the religious, military and political capital, but it will also be a great trading economic combine.

It describes how God will bring about its destruction.

Isaiah 24:1, “Behold, the Lord will make the earth empty and make it waste, distorts its surface and scatter abroad its inhabitants.”

Verse 3, “The land shall be utterly emptied and utterly plundered....”

Verse 5, “The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.” You can go back to Exodus 31 and see where the Sabbath is described as an everlasting covenant.

As a result of that, v. 6, “Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left.”

I will point this out because this is a verse that is quoted by the Seventh Day Adventist. If any of you are familiar with the writings of Ellen G. White and the Seventh Day Adventist Church, their teaching is that the earth will be desolate during the Millennium. The Seventh Day Adventists, those who followed Ellen G. White, were split-off from the Church of God back in

the 1850s-1860s. There were those who had been associated with the Church who accepted her as a prophetess and followed her visions; that gave rise to the Seventh Day Adventist Church, which dates from about 1860. Her teaching is that the saints will spend the Millennium in heaven taking part in the investigative judgment—pouring over the books—kind of like one great one thousand-year soap opera. And you get to find out everything your neighbors were doing that you always suspected but never knew. Who in the world wants to spend a thousand years watching a sordid soap opera with every detail of every thing? This is what they anticipate doing. Their statement is that Satan is chained by circumstances because there is nobody on earth to deceive. That’s their explanation.

In her writing, The Great Controversy, to prove her point that the earth is desolate during the Millennium, she quotes (or misquotes) Isaiah 24:6. The way she quotes it in the book is, “Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned [period].” If you read her book, you would not know that there were four words left out. She didn’t quote the last part of the verse. She put a period where the Bible has a comma and left out the words, “...and few men left.” Yes, there is going to be great destruction and great devastation, and all kinds of things are going to happen. But there are going to still be a few people who live through it. Verse 10, “The city of confusion is broken down, every house is shut up...”

Verse 12, “In the city desolation is left, and the gate is stricken with destruction.”

Verses 19-20, “The earth is violently broken, the earth is split open, the earth is shaken exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard....”

Verse 21, “It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord will punish on high the host of exalted ones....” It describes the destruction that is going to come about, but there are going to be people who survive the events of the Day of the Lord. There will be a few men left.

In Isaiah 25:6-7, once the earth has come to this point and the world has come to this devastation, God steps in and says, “And in this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all people a feast of choice pieces [KJV, “fat things”], a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of well-refined wines on the lees. And He will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over

all nations.” In other words, the veil that covers the eyes of people so they cannot see and understand is going to be removed. God is going to make a feast of fat things to all people. There is going to be a time of abundance and a time of blessing. To make that possible, the veiled understanding that has kept people from being able to really see and understand is going to be removed.

Verses 8-9, “He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuked of His people He will take away from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken. And it will be said in that day: ‘Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us....’” Certainly God is going to pour out His blessings once the world has come to its senses.

Isaiah 26 continues with this theme. It’s basically a song of praise to God.

Isaiah 27:1, “In that day the Lord with His severe sword, great and strong, will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan that twisted serpent....” This is descriptive of Satan the devil. It’s the terminology back in Revelation 12:9 referring to Satan, that great dragon.

Verse 6, “Those who come He shall cause to take root in Jacob; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.” Once the remnant is re-gathered and brought back, they are going to begin to have families. They are going to blossom and bud. They are going to begin to multiply, and they will ultimately fill the face of the earth with fruit. Israel, at that time, will really be the blessing to all nations that God had intended for them to be. They will be a blessing as they begin to spread out once again evidencing God’s way.

Verse 13, “So it shall be in that day that the great trumpet will be blown; they will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, and they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.” This refers to the return of Jesus Christ and the effect that it will have on the Israelites ready to perish in the concentration camps of the future. It will be that final fulfillment of the great day of Trumpets.

Isaiah 28 begins an indictment on Israel of the things that lead to their captivity.

Isaiah 28:1, “Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim [It might be pointed out that one of the highest concentrations of alcohol abuse in the western world is in the area of Britain.], Whose glorious beauty is a fading

flower....” That has been the case. The glory of the British Empire has faded like a flower.

Verse 5, “...To the remnant of His people....” Only a remnant is left.

In v. 3, it describes this crown of pride that is there, and they are going to be brought down. God will bring them to repentance.

We have a little insight in terms of how the Bible is written.

Verses 9-11, ““Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breast? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.’ For with stammering lips and another tongue he will speak to this people.”

Verse 13, “But the word of the Lord was to them, ‘precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little,’ that they might go and fall backward, and be broken....” The Bible is written where you have to get a little here and a little there, and you have to build on it. One line upon another, here a little, there a little, but you build it taking precept upon precept, line upon line—build it in a step-by-step way. Those who will be taught have to mature.

Verse 9, ““Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breast?” They have to take it a step at a time. The Bible is written so that those who are not being called are simply deceived. Even though they can read the Book, they don’t understand it.

Verse 16, “Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily.’” This refers to Jesus Christ.

In Isaiah 29, we continue with prophecies about Israel.

Isaiah 29:1, ““Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt!” “Ariel” is a poetic term used to refer to Israel which means “lion of God.” That is the Hebrew translation of Ariel.

Verse 13, “Therefore the Lord said: ‘Inasmuch as these people draw near to Me with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me....’”

Verse 14, God says He is going to work a marvelous work among them. The nation is ultimately going to hear, but God describes a nation that pays lip service—and that’s all. They

are not sincerely seeking God. They pay lip service to God and to religion, but their heart, their priorities are elsewhere.

Verse 15, “Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the Lord, and their works are in the dark; they say, ‘Who sees us?’ and, ‘Who knows us?’” Can you imagine anybody being so dumb as to think that what he is doing is secret and nobody knows? Yeah, we can all have imagined that. The point is that God says “woe” to somebody who thinks he is “putting it over” by doing it secretly in the dark and nobody will ever know. God knows! Whom are we serving? God knows!

The fact that no human being saw us doesn’t prove anything. If I do something in a dark closet, God can see in the dark as well as He can see in the daylight. I haven’t hidden anything from God, and God’s the One who ultimately judges. I better live my life in sincerity and truth before God, recognizing that God sees and hears. God will ultimately deal with the nation and with those who take this approach. It describes some of that through the rest of chapter 29.

Isaiah 30:1-2, ““Woe to the rebellious children,’ says the Lord, ‘who take counsel, but not of Me, and who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin. Who walk to go down to Egypt, and have not asked My advice, to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the showdown of Egypt!’” Israel is not seeking God but is seeking Egypt and other nations.

Verse 7, “For the Egyptians shall help in vain and to no purpose. Therefore I have called her Rahab-Hem Shebeth [Rahab sits idle].” (KJV, “...therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still.”) They won’t accomplish anything, and our nation won’t accomplish anything by trying to work something out with them. Perhaps they will be looking to them trying to work out something over the issue of oil or the Suez. We need to look to God.

Verse 8, “Now go, write it before them on a tablet, and note it on a scroll, that it may be for a time to come [margin, “the latter day”], forever and ever.”

Verses 9-10, “That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children who will not hear the law of the Lord. Who say to the seers, ‘Do not see,’ and to the prophets, ‘do not prophesy to us right things; speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits.’”

‘We want you to tell us something nice.’ People don’t want to be told their sins by religious

leaders. They don't even want to be told the problem by the analysts and political leaders. They want to believe that everything is going to get better and better, and if somebody comes along and starts telling the seriousness of what's going to happen, people don't like that.

Because the politicians are aware of that, none of them want to talk about the seriousness of some of the things that are happening or are going to happen because that's a good way to lose an election. You have to make people think that they can have a free lunch, take a free ride, put it all on their Visa and MasterCard and the bill will never come due.

That's what we are doing as a nation. We have over a hundred billion dollars a year deficit as a nation (1990). You can't live beyond your means indefinitely. You try it. I don't recommend that you do. Perhaps some of you have. Sooner or later, somebody shows up at the door and they are there to collect. That's life and it happens to nations as well as individuals. But the nation doesn't want to hear that. We don't want to be told. We don't want to pay higher taxes, but we don't want to get any of our government services cut either. We want everything! Everybody's for cutting the government, but they never want to cut anything that applies to them. Cut defense!

Boeing has a big plant in Lake Charles, Louisiana. What do you want to do—cut the Boeing contracts? We have people here that are involved in that, and a lot of people in Lake Charles are involved directly or indirectly. You want to cut defense? Fine. That means you're going to cut out a lot of Boeing's contracts, and that means they are going to shut plants and lay off people. Not only lay off people, but what about all the related service industry? You'd shut down bases, etc.

The point is nobody wants whatever he's getting money from to close down. We don't want anything cut off, but we also don't want to pay. You can't do it that way. You can't live life on a MasterCard or Visa forever and think that the bills will never come.

We say to our seers, to our prophets (both the secular and the religious sort), 'Tell us nice things; don't tell us bad news.' We don't want to hear bad things. 'Tell us what nice people we are and how everything is going to get better and better. Paint a rosy picture. Give us some confidence. Make us feel good about ourselves.' People want that in the secular realm and in the religious realm. Hopefully, we will never get to

the point in our lives that we don't like being told bad news.

If we really find ourselves getting upset when corrective sermons come, then maybe we should go back and read Isaiah 30:10 and say, 'No, that's not the category I want to be in.' When we don't want to be told any bad news, then we are really cutting off our opportunities to grow. Correction hurts! I don't enjoy being corrected, in that sense. It's not pleasant at the time, but we can appreciate it afterwards because that's the way we learn and grow.

God tells us in Hebrew 12:11, "no chastening for the present is pleasant, but afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness." I didn't enjoy it when my dad put his belt on my rear end. I look back on it, and I am very thankful that I had a father who loved me enough that he put that belt on me when I needed it. He held a tight rein on things, and I appreciate and value that.

It describes the nation and their attitude. They don't want correction; therefore, they don't want the plain word of God. This problem is ultimately going to be solved because when the Millennium comes and God's government is set up, and after all these things are over with, they will be taught.

Verses 20-21, "And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore. But your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it.' Whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left."

That is going to be a very interesting thing at the beginning of the Millennium as people get used to that. No longer will they just be able to ignore it and not want to hear the truth. The teachers won't be far off in a corner anymore; you'll see them! Suddenly, a spirit being will materialize behind somebody, and they will hear, 'Wait a minute. This is the way; walk you in it.' Talk about getting someone's attention! That will kind of put a damper on things.

But it will give us a level of supervision that sometimes, as parents of small children, we wish we could have when we're trying to keep them totally in our sight. The minute they get out of sight, they are into something. You're trying to make sure they don't get hurt, and you find yourself having to say, 'No, stop.' Probably one of the very first words kids learn is "no" because that's the one they hear the most often. So many

things that little children think of could be harmful or dangerous.

We're going to have to deal with people and keep things pretty strict. Strictness does not mean a lack of love or a lack of mercy. But if you're going to get things back on the track, things have to be strict. When things start getting loose and lax, things start wandering off the track, and pretty soon you have a mess—not because they started out to have a mess, but because things wander astray. If a shepherd doesn't keep his flock together and where they are supposed to be, if he gets lax and careless, pretty soon they all wander off. Some may get lost in the woods and wolves (or whatever it may be) get them.

God is strict because He does love us and doesn't want us to get hurt. He is certainly going to have to be strict at the beginning of the Millennium to get things back on track because people are going to have so much to unlearn. It is going to take them a while to get the point that God's way really is the best way.

It describes the things that are going to take place.

Isaiah 31:1, "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the Lord!" Their trust is not in God. Their trust is in human deliverance. That is an important matter of faith. God wants us to look to Him as our Deliverer. One of the sins of the nation is looking elsewhere, looking to physical resources to deliver us.

It describes the events that are going to occur in v. 4, "...So the Lord of hosts will come down to fight for Mount Zion and for its hill."

Verse 7, "For in that day every man shall throw away his idols of silver and his idols of gold—sin, which your own hands have made for yourselves." It describes the events when Jesus Christ returns and how they are going to throw away their idols. When the Day of the Lord comes, things are going to "melt down" in a hurry, but the result of that is that it will bring about the event of chapter 32.

Verse 8, "Then shall the Assyrians fall by a sword not of man..."

Isaiah 32:1, "Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice." In v. 2, as a result of that and that society, "A man will be as a hiding place from the wind [A man will be a welcome sight. You see a stranger today, and you don't know how to react and

respond.], and a cover from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." It will be like water in a dry place, like a shadow on a hot day. It's going to be a welcome sight because there will be a basis of trust and confidence.

Verse 15, "Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is counted as a forest."

Verses 17-18, "The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." Peace is the result of righteousness. That's why there is not peace on earth today, and there will not be peace because first a king must reign in righteousness. The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance.

The world has all kinds of peace marches, peace crusades, peace groups, etc. Peace is an effect! It is the effect, the result and the consequence of righteousness. You are never going to have peace until you first have righteousness. Righteousness must precede peace. Peace is simply a logical result. When people are living in righteousness, they have peace. When we are conducting our lives righteously, we have peace with one another. The lack of peace comes in as a result of a lack of righteousness on somebody's part.

The world has to learn righteousness before it's going to have peace. The world wants peace, but they want to have their own variety of peace. The devil, in effect, has sold people on the idea that there's more than one way to have peace. The devil has sold the idea that you can come up with some other way and you can work it out your way. The great peace conferences that men have put together have always set the stage for the next war.

The Spirit is going to be poured out from on high.

Verse 15, "Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high..." Peace is going to come through Jesus Christ. Human nature will be transformed. Christ will establish the rule of righteousness, and together with that, the Spirit of God will be poured out. That sets the stage for a transformation of human beings.

Isaiah 33:1, "Woe to you who plunder, though you have not been plundered; and you who deal treacherously, though they have not dealt treacherously with you!" This is referring to the

Beast power. They are going to receive consequences for their actions.

Notice a couple of interesting verses.

Verses 5-6, “The Lord is exalted, for He dwells on high; He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness. Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times. And the strength of salvation; the fear of the Lord is His treasure.”

We live in a very unstable world. Everything is in transition, and that has served to destabilize the lives of many, many people. “Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of your times.” There is a source of stability that we can have in our lives as the world is “topsy-turvy” around us. We don’t have to feel like everything is changing around us because if we have wisdom and knowledge, there is a source of stability.

Psalm 111:10, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do His commandments.”

Proverbs 9:10, “The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” It is the starting point.

We have a source of wisdom and knowledge that can provide stability in our lives—a stability that the world does not have because the world doesn’t know where to look for any absolutes. The world doesn’t have absolutes. Everything is “topsy-turvy” and changing. A lot of people feel their whole lives are destabilized because it seems like everything is in a state of flux and changing. All the rules have changed.

The reality is none of the rules have changed if you are going to go back to God’s rules. God is consistent.

Hebrews 13:8, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” All we have to do is get back to God’s rules. The wisdom and knowledge that comes from God is an eternal wisdom and knowledge and a source of stability. What’s right today was right yesterday and will be right a year, ten years, a hundred years and a thousand years from now. What was wrong five, ten, fifty, one hundred and a thousand years ago, is just as wrong today. If it’s wrong, it’s wrong; if it’s right, it’s right. We have the source of stability that the world doesn’t have.

That lack of stability is one of the things that contribute to so many problems, even the psychological and emotional problems that so many are beset with. They look around and see everything changing, and they feel like they have to change to be “up” with the times—or maybe I should say to be “down” with the times. The times are on a toboggan slide. There is no

agreement on things that even a generation or two ago there was agreement on. You watch old reruns on television made back in the early 60s, and you can see the differences in what was taken for granted as normal. There was, at least, a certain agreement in society about what constitutes normal. Society has lost much of that agreement now. I’m not setting up any period as an ideal time because, no, it wasn’t. But there was, at least, more of a Biblically-based value system that tended to be taken for granted. That has been lost, and there is a lack of stability because of that.

What it describes is in the context of the end-times.

Isaiah 33:7-8, “Surely their valiant ones shall cry outside, the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly. The highways lie waste....” It describes the time of the end that is going to bring about all of the destruction and all of the things that’s going to catch people by surprise. But, we have a source of stability during those trying times.

Let me call your attention to something in vv. 14-16, “The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: ‘Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?’ He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, he who despises the gain of oppressions, who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil: He shall dwell on high [or dwell on the heights]; His place of defense will be the fortress of rocks [KJV, “munitions of rocks”]....”

That’s a very awkward translation. The marginal rendering is “the stronghold of Sela or Petra”—“Sela” is the Hebrew term.

Verses 16-19, “He shall dwell on high; His place of defense will be the fortress of rocks; bread will be given him, his water will be sure. Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; they will see the land that is very far off. Your heart will meditate on terror [you will meditate on what is going on]: ‘Where is the scribe? Where is he that weighs? Where is he who counts the towers?’ You will not see a fierce people, a people of obscure speech, beyond perception....” You won’t see these events. You won’t be there at that time.

Verse 20, you will be able to look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities, of our festival seasons; your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet habitation. It describes a time when the sinners of Zion are afraid. Who is going to dwell with the devouring

fire? Who is going to be able to survive all these burnings? Who is going to be protected during the time of this catastrophe?

Verse 15 says, “He who walks righteously and speak uprightly...” –The one who does what’s right. How are they going to be protected? They will dwell in the heights. Their place of defense will be the stronghold of Sela; bread and water will be provided for them—and they will ultimately see the King (Jesus Christ) in His beauty. Again, this is one of those verses that seem to indicate the possibility that Petra may very well be the place of protection for God’s Church in the end time.

Notice what Jerusalem is going to be like in Tomorrow’s World.

Verse 20, “Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts; your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that will not be taken down...” It is truly going to be the city of peace. That’s what the word “Jerusalem” means, and that’s what it will be in Tomorrow’s World. It will be the city of peace.

Isaiah 34 describes the Day of the Lord.

Isaiah 34:2, “For the indignation of the Lord is against all nations, and His fury upon their armies...”

Verse 8, “For it is the day of the Lord’s vengeance, and the year of recompense for the cause of Zion.” Very likely, the Day of the Lord will be that final year of the three and one-half-year period. The tribulation begins three and one-half years before the return of Christ. But the last year of that is going to be God’s wrath—the day of the Eternal’s vengeance. It comes down and describes that.

Then it describes what is ultimately going to be the consequence afterward. There is going to be rejuvenation to the whole world.

Isaiah 35:1, “The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.” The geographic transformation that will take place will make Tomorrow’s World a wonderful, habitable place for all humanity. We see the description of the great transformation that is going to take place. It will be a time of tremendous healings.

Verse 5, “Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.”

A time when the desert will bloom and, vv. 6-7, dry land will produce water. God will divide their inheritance to the nations, but another aspect of that is that everybody’s inheritance is going to be a nice place to be. In

today’s world, nations covet what other nations have and try to take it away from them. That won’t be the case. Christ won’t allow that. But He’s also going to make sure that everybody’s heritage, everybody’s habitation, is going to be a beautiful, productive place.

Scripture describes a highway that is going to be built, and they are going to call it the “Way of Holiness.” I like this description.

Verse 8, “A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray.” I like this description. Road directions are going to be simple in Tomorrow’s World. You’re not going to get turned around and lost. If you’ve ever been in one of our big cities and gotten turned around on some of these expressways, sometimes it’s like a bowl of spaghetti. You go to Houston and it’s all headed every which way. You don’t have to be a fool to be lost on something like that.

The highway that God is going to build in the Millennium is going to have a name. It is going to be called the “Way of Holiness.” It’s going to be a highway. It will be for the wayfaring man, and even if he’s not really smart, he’s still not going to get lost on it because it’s going to be simple. That’s descriptive of God’s way of life. The Bible is simple. It’s not all easy. Everything God says is not easy to do, but it is simple and clear-cut. Anytime somebody starts making it so complicated you can’t understand it, you better sit back and have a big “question mark” because God talks about the simplicity of Christ (II Corinthians 11:3). God’s way is simple. It’s clear-cut. There’s a difference between “easy” and “simple.” A program can be simple but not necessarily easy to put into practice. God’s way is simple and clear-cut, and this highway is, in a sense, going to be a reflection of that. Many times God uses physical things to symbolize something, and this is evidently going to be the case here.

This brings us down to a concluding point. The next Bible study we will cover chapters 36-49.

Bible Study # 49 Questions

SURVEY OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS SERIES

Isaiah 15—35

1. What is another name for Sela referred to in Isaiah 16:1?
2. To what does this prophecy refer?
3. What will happen to Damascus?
4. What internal conditions will Egypt encounter in the near future?
5. What will evidently be the three great nations of the World Tomorrow?
6. According to Isaiah 21, which nation will be responsible for the fall of Babylon?
7. Does Isaiah 24 prophesy the total annihilation of life on earth?
8. In the aftermath of all of this destruction, what will God then begin to do?
9. According to Isaiah 27, what will Israel do during the Millennium?
10. What event is referred to in Isaiah 27:13?
11. According to Isaiah 28, how is the Bible written and how must it be understood?
12. According to Isaiah 29, are our people in this nation sincerely seeking God?
13. What does our nation want from its religious leaders?
14. What will the leadership be like in Tomorrow's World?
15. How will real peace come to the earth?
16. What will bring about the transformation of human nature described in Isaiah 32:2?
17. How would the expression "the munitions of rock" in Isaiah 33:16 be better translated and to what does this probably refer?
18. What will Jerusalem be like in Tomorrow's World?
19. How is the Day of the Lord characterized in Isaiah 34?
20. What geographical transformation will take place after the Millennium begins?

Bible Study # 50
March 27, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Isaiah 36—49

This particular portion **provides a historical inset into the main theme of the book. It gives us events in the life of Hezekiah and the invasion of Judah. It gives Hezekiah's subsequent illness and healing.** Throughout the book we **have an emphasis on the promises of God.** This historical inset, as it were, serves an appropriate place for faith-building realities of God's promises. It gives us some insights into what God does and the way He does it.

In chapter 40, a new section of the book opens up. The critics call it "Deutro Isaiah"—a second Isaiah. Critics have a problem with chapters 40-66. There is a prophecy concerning Cyrus, a king of the Medes and Persians. He was prophesied to come on the scene. They could not accept this, and the alternative is to say that it was written after the fact. One of the problems that the critics have is acknowledging the fact that there is a God who rules in the kingdom of men (Daniel 4:17) and declares the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). Those prophecies are introduced with the statement, "Here is the proof that the God of heaven is far above all idols because He declares the end from the beginning." Prophecy is a proof that God exists. It singles out that this could not have been written on the human level. A person obviously changes certain methods of style and expressing oneself. We don't express ourselves always in the same way. The subject matter varies and the time of his life that it was written varies. Why should it be surprising that there are certain variations in that way?

Chapters 36 and 37 deal with the Assyrian invasion of Judah, Hezekiah's reaction to that invasion and God's deliverance.

Chapter 38 deals with his illness and his subsequent healing.

In chapter 39, we see what ultimately proved to be a mistake in terms of Hezekiah's dealing with the Babylonian ambassador.

Chapter 40 deals with a commission that God gives to this world—to His end-time work—to speak comfortably to Jerusalem and to prepare the way before Jesus Christ.

Chapter 41 focuses in on the fact that prophecy is a proof of God. God's greatness is contrasted with the puniness of man.

Chapter 42 continues to focus in on the coming of the Messiah. Prophecy is again pointed out as a proof of God and that Christ is coming to magnify the law. This is all brought out in chapter 42.

Chapter 43 deals with the re-gathering and the redemption of Israel.

Chapters 44 and 45 show how God will ultimately pour out His Spirit upon Israel. It also has a prophecy of Cyrus, and the greatness of our Creator is praised.

Chapter 46 again points out prophecy as a proof of God.

Chapter 47 deals with actually what is Rome or the Catholic Church, as you will notice here.

We see in chapter 48 a prophecy that points out that modern Israel uses the name of God, but is not really practicing what they preach. They will ultimately be punished and then redeemed. Chapter 49 shows that God will not abandon Israel. They will be re-gathered from the entire earth from their captivity. They'll prosper and increase under the government of God.

We come to the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, which we would date as 701 B.C. Isaiah 36:1, "Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, and Sennacherib, king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them." The Assyrians had previously invaded and conquered northern Israel. The process of deportation had been ongoing. The Assyrians returned now in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah and invaded Judah. They very quickly overran the nation of Judah and came to the point of laying siege to Jerusalem. They very quickly overran the whole land. They wanted to intimidate the Jews into surrendering the nation and Jerusalem without a fight. So they began to tell them, 'Look, you'd better surrender.' We see the representative of the king of Assyria trying to intimidate them.

Verse 4, "Then the Rabshakeh said to them, 'Say now to Hezekiah, "Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: 'What confidence is this in which you trust?'"'"

Verses 6-7, 'What are you going to depend on to defend yourself from me? Why there is nothing you can depend on! You depend on the Egyptians; they are not going to do it. You depend on your God and He is not going to do it. Didn't Hezekiah just get through tearing down all these altars?' Of course, what the Assyrians didn't understand was God didn't want all those altars. God wanted to be worshipped in spirit and

in truth (John 4:23; Joshua 24:14) there in Jerusalem.

Verse 10, “Have I now come up without the Lord against this land to destroy it? The Lord said to me, ‘Go up against this land, and destroy it.’” He said, ‘God wants us to come here and destroy this land. Why we’re here doing God’s will.’

About this time a couple of Hezekiah’s servants came out.

Verse 11, “Then Eliakin, Shebna and Joab said to the Rabshakeh, ‘Please speak to your servants in the Aramaic language....’” They asked the Assyrians, Rabshakeh, ‘Why don’t you speak to us in Aramaic rather than Hebrew?’ Aramaic was the common language of diplomacy throughout the Middle East at that time.

What it amounted to was the representative of the Assyrian king was down below the city wall, everybody was gathered up there, and they were “all ears.” He was trying to sap their confidence and undermine their faith; therefore, he was speaking in Hebrew because he wanted all the people to understand him. He wanted those who were up there to hear and understand so they could go and spread the rumor. He was hoping this would undermine any credibility King Hezekiah had, and they would surrender without a fight. Hezekiah’s servant asked, ‘Why don’t you speak to us in Aramaic?’ He didn’t want to do that; he wanted to intimidate them.

Verses 16-17, “Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: “Make an agreement with me by a present and come out to me; and every one of you eat from his own vine and every one from his own fig tree, and every one of you drink the waters of his own cistern; until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards.”

‘Why, we Germans have your best interest at heart. We are going to give you the Millennium, German style. We’re concerned about you Jews. We have some nice cattle cars out here that we’re going to load you up into, and we’re going to take you to this nice place. We have this nice place in mind for you. Just surrender and come out; you can sit under your own vine and under your own fig tree.’

Now that expression is only used a couple of other times in the Bible. It’s used once to refer to the time of King Solomon (I Kings 4:25), and the other time it’s used is in Micah to refer to the Millennium (Micah 4:4). Solomon’s reign was a type of the Millennium.

It is a descriptive phrase to describe what it’s going to be like in the Millennium. It’s going to be a time of peace and prosperity. So, in effect, they showed up and said, ‘We will offer you the Millennium our style.’ Kind of sounds like the one thousand-year Reich. It’s kind of funny how some of the tactics and inspiration that Satan has given to those who have done his bidding have not changed. He usually tries to present some sort of a counterfeit of what God promises. ‘We will take you to a nice place.’ Sure they will!

Verses 18-20, ‘Your god can’t deliver you.’

In Isaiah 37, word came to Hezekiah and he went to the house of God.

Verses 1-4, he was very concerned and had been deeply praying to God about this whole matter.

Verses 9-13, Hezekiah received a letter that laid out all kinds of accusations and demanded unconditional surrender.

Isaiah 37:14-17, “And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord. Then Hezekiah prayed to the Lord, saying: ‘O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Incline Your ear, O Lord, and hear; open Your eyes, O Lord, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, who has sent to reproach the living God.’”

In effect, when Hezekiah got the letter, he went into the temple, laid it before God and said, ‘Look, You can read this. You see what they are saying. They are comparing You to the gods of the nations. Now truly they have triumphed over all these nations, and those nations’ gods couldn’t deliver them because they are really no gods. You are the Creator God.’ He really besought God and earnestly talked to God. God sent word to Hezekiah by Isaiah that said, ‘I will take care of this; I will intervene in your behalf. I will defend this city.’

Verses 35-36, “For I will defend this city, to save it for My own sake and for My servant David’s sake.’ Then the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead.” The dead corpses didn’t get up and discover they were dead. It was the people who were alive who got up the next morning and saw the one hundred eighty-five thousand soldiers (the army of the Assyrians) who had died the night before.

Verse 37, “So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, and returned home, and remained at Nineveh.” KJV, “When Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went and returned and dwelt at Nineveh.” You can just imagine. He got up the next morning, started calling for his servant, and nobody came. You can visualize in your mind how mad he must have gotten that nobody was there to bring him whatever it was that he wanted. He walked out of the door and what he saw was dead soldiers lying around—everywhere he looked he saw dead soldiers. I would suspect that he departed and went away and returned—all three of them—about as quickly as he could get on a horse and get out of there. He was “high-tailing” it.

Verse 38, when he got to Nineveh, he went in to worship in the house of his god. His sons came in and assassinated him. He had been saying some derogatory things about the God of heaven earlier, and he found out very quickly who was able to deliver whom. He was challenging the armies of the Living God.

We see Hezekiah’s response. When he was confronted with a problem of this magnitude, Hezekiah went to God. He recognized that the source of our solutions, the source of our health, is God. He went to God in faith and in confidence.

Isaiah 38:1, “In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.”’” Isaiah came in and told him, ‘You had better get things in order because you’re about to die.’ Josephus tells us that this was the last three days of this Assyrian siege of Jerusalem. Interestingly enough (we know this from history and from Josephus), the night the Assyrian army died was the night of the Passover. The death angel passed through the camp, and guess who wasn’t under the blood of the lamb? The Assyrians! It was the same as the Egyptians many centuries earlier. It was in the context of the Passover that God intervened and wiped out the Assyrian army. And it is also in that same context that God healed Hezekiah.

Have you ever seen that “when it rains, it pours”? Everything that can go wrong happens at the same time. Hezekiah must have felt like that. Realize that we read it and think, ‘Boy, wasn’t that great! Hezekiah had faith!’ And we go right on. But you realize this thing had been building for months and months. The Assyrians had been sending ultimatums. They had been invading

other nations. They had invaded Northern Israel much earlier, and God had spared Judah.

Hezekiah had been serving God. Remember the story of his great Passover—the most tremendous observance of the Passover since the days of Solomon (II Chronicles 30:1-26). Since that had happened twelve to thirteen years earlier, all this had been going along for a period of years. Now the Assyrians invaded and began to pour through the land. As a few weeks went by, they overran more and more of Judah. They went down and smashed the Egyptians. Then they came back up and brought both armies together to come against Jerusalem.

Don’t you think all through these months, and now particularly in the last few weeks, Hezekiah has really been praying and crying out to God for deliverance. The Assyrians kept overrunning more and more until they finally overran the whole land. They had Jerusalem surrounded. They put siege around it. Then they began waging this psychological warfare to wear down and discourage the people. Then to top it all off, right at a moment like that, Hezekiah gets sick—really sick. He “takes” to his bed. God’s servant, Isaiah, finally comes in and says, ‘I have bad news. You’re going to die, so you had better just get your affairs in order. You’re going to die of this.’

Hezekiah must have been feeling pretty low about that time. He began to really cry out to God. He went to God with it. He besought God for His intervention in terms of healing. God intervened, healed Hezekiah and that evening wiped out the Assyrian army—that evening of the Passover. That was a tremendous intervention that God performed.

We need to recognize as we go through some of these things, Hezekiah lived through his trial the same way you and I live through ours—one day at a time. When it’s over and we look back on it, we know how it turned out and it seems simple enough as time distances us from it. But when you’re in the midst of it and you haven’t read the end of the story yet, you don’t know exactly what will happen. You only know by faith.

Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” It is fundamental to our relationship with God.

Hebrew 11:6, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him...” Hezekiah stands out as an example of faith—an example of one who looked to God and trusted God, and God performed a

tremendous miracle. God added fifteen years to the life of Hezekiah.

Isaiah 38:5-6, “Go and say to Hezekiah, “Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: ‘I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; and I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city.’”” All of a sudden at one time, the whole thing began to break. But can you imagine how Hezekiah must have felt. He must have felt like the whole world was caving in on him at the same time. Here were the Assyrians about to lay waste to the city, and he was about to die. And where was God? God does not always step in at the moment that we think that He should do so. God chooses His time.

God worked a tremendous miracle here, and there were actually fifteen Psalms added to Scripture, Psalms 120—134. These are termed the Psalms of Degrees or the Psalms of Ascents, as each one is entitled. Psalms 120—134, there are fifteen of them.

Isaiah 38:20, Hezekiah said that he would establish songs that would be sung to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord. This would refer to sacred music, music that we would refer to as Psalms. The fifteen psalms of degrees are considered to be added by Hezekiah at this time.

In Isaiah 39, we find even people of faith and those close to God sometimes make mistakes. There is a time to speak and a time to keep silent (Ecclesiastes 3:7). We can sometimes say things we would be better off not saying.

The king of Babylon sent an ambassador to Hezekiah in the aftermath of Hezekiah’s illness. The Babylonians were glad to see what had happened to the Assyrians because the Assyrians were threatening them. Hezekiah wanted to impress this visiting representative, so he showed him through the temple treasury and the palace treasury. He really kind of “laid it on thick,” which in the long run was not a very smart idea because the Babylonians took note of what wealth the Jews had—which they hadn’t realized before. In a later generation (when Nebuchadnezzar ruled), they remembered it and decided that Jerusalem was worth attacking after all.

Verses 5-7, God warned him of that and told him that it would eventually happen that way. We should not seek to go around and to impress other people. It will ultimately lead to problems.

This ends this inset. This inset is, in a sense, to bolster our faith, to encourage us and to point us to the reality of God’s fulfillment of His promises.

A new section opens up. We begin to get back into prophecy.

Isaiah 40:1-3, “Comfort, yes, comfort My people!” says your God. ‘Speak comfort in Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.’ The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’”

We find part of the mission of this work defined here in v. 3. It refers to John the Baptist who prepared the way for Christ’s first coming. That statement is quoted in reference to John the Baptist (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3). It would also be in reference to the work that God has done through this work—through the Philadelphia era of His Church—to prepare the way for the second coming of Christ.

Mark 1:3, “‘A voice crying in the wilderness, prepare you the way, make ready.’” What is it that should be said as we go out with the gospel message? Let’s notice an interesting statement that we over the years have taken to perhaps refer to Radio Jerusalem.

Isaiah 40:9-10, “O Zion, you who bring good tidings, get up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, you who bring good tidings, lift up your voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid; say to the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God!’ Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; Behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.” Here is the proclamation of the good news of the Kingdom of God.

Verse 9, “...you who bring good tidings [the gospel]...lift up your voice with strength...” Broadcast it to the cities of Judah with strength. This gives the impression—and we have sometimes taken that as a possible indication—that there would be, before the end, a broadcast going forth from Jerusalem announcing the gospel to the cities of Judah.

It’s interesting. You know, God has a time scale and a time schedule. I remember very clearly, and many of you will remember back in 1967, I received a co-worker letter in the end of May where Mr. Herbert Armstrong was telling of the exciting news that he had just signed a contract with Radio Jerusalem. In fact, it was the largest contract in radio history with King Hussein of

Jordan. At that time, the old city of Jerusalem was under Arab/Jordanian rule. We were to begin a broadcast on Radio Jerusalem, and it was to begin on Pentecost of 1967. He was actually going to fly to Jerusalem and make that first broadcast live. I remember where I was when the Six Day War broke out and I heard the news.

Mr. Armstrong was on his way from Ambassador College in Bricket Wood, England, to the airport. He was in transit in a car on his way to the airport, ready to board a plane and touch down in a couple of hours in Jerusalem. Then he was to go in and make that live broadcast. So it was within a matter of just a few hours, from the time that the broadcast was to go out, that all of a sudden, just like that, a war broke out, which lasted six days. Interestingly enough, it ended prior to sunset on Friday evening. It was an incredible event that totally changed the complexion of the Middle East. That portion of Jerusalem was no longer under Arab rule. All of a sudden, the Jews had taken the West Bank, the Golan Heights and the Sinai. You name it and they took it.

We all thought that we were on the verge of Isaiah 40:9 being fulfilled. Now that has been a few years ago—twenty-three years ago. It was not yet God's time to accomplish this prophecy in 1967; we thought it was. The doors had opened, everything had fallen into place, and we thought this prophecy was on the verge of being fulfilled. It came within about five hours of being fulfilled. But it wasn't God's time. God is the One who opens doors and no man can close them when he opens them. But He is also the One who closes doors and when He closes them, no man can open them (Revelation 3:7-8). I think the time is ultimately going to come when this verse is going to be fulfilled.

From everything that I can see here in vv. 9-10, it gives a clear indication that the gospel will be proclaimed from Jerusalem prior to the return of Christ because it says, "Behold your God shall come" or "is coming." That is a statement that is made prior to the return of Christ. He will come. It doesn't say He has come and He's already here. It says He is going to rule. His work is before Him and His reward is with Him. This proclamation that is going to have to be made to the cities of Judah has not really gone out. It has not really reached them as a warning and a witness yet. God will do so in His time.

As we come down, we focus on the magnitude and the greatness of God in v. 15, "Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted

as the small dust on the balance...." All the nations are as a drop of a bucket compared to God. They are like "nothing" before Him.

There is an interesting statement. At the time of Isaiah, the various pagans believed that the earth was flat, that it rested on the back of a great turtle. You have to ask yourself, 'On what did the great turtle rest?' They evidently never got that far. The Greeks, Romans, Assyrians and the Egyptians and Babylonians all had these crazy ideas.

But Isaiah writing under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit wrote in v. 22, "It is He [referring to God] who sits above the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are like grasshoppers...." God sits upon the circle of the earth! The word that is translated "circle" is a word that literally means "a sphere" in the Hebrew language. God sits upon the circle of the earth or "*chuwg*" in the Hebrew. This is a term that refers literally to "a sphere." He understood under the inspiration of God that the earth was round. The contemporary pagans didn't understand that.

Verse 25, "'To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?' says the Holy One." To whom will we compare God?

Isaiah 41:4, "'...I, the Lord, am the first; and with the last I am He.'"

Verses 21-23, "'Present your case,' says the Lord. 'Bring forth your strong reasons,' says the King of Jacob. 'Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; Let them show the former things, what they were, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare to us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods; yes, do good or do evil that we may be dismayed....'" What is brought out here is that fulfilled prophecy is a proof of God. It is brought out in Isaiah 41 as a means of telling the true and all-powerful ruling Creator God from the idols of men's invention. It is the great contrast.

Here, the critics want to come along and say, 'Well, Isaiah didn't write this part of the book. This was just added in later.' The whole context (the way that it is brought out) is, 'Look, I am telling you things that are going to come to pass afterwards.' Prophecy is a proof.

How do you stick in something like that afterwards and have it accepted? How do you make an issue out of the fact that you're going to tell things that are going to come to pass and that's a proof that you speak for God, when you're telling about things that happened fifty or one hundred years ago. That doesn't give you any credibility.

How does something like that ever get accepted as Scripture? It makes no sense! The critics don't think it through. They simply don't want to acknowledge that there is a God who rules in the affairs of men. If they acknowledge that, then they may have to acknowledge the fact that He may have something to say about the way they live, and that maybe they had better clean up their dirty little lives. They don't want to do that. So the simplest thing to do is say, 'We just discount this.'

Then, in Isaiah 42:1-7, a prophecy of Jesus Christ, "'Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands shall wait for His law.' Thus says God the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it: 'I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house.'"

As we see here, this is a clear reference to Jesus Christ. A portion of this is quoted in Matthew 12:17-21 and the remainder is quoted in Luke 2:32. It is an interesting reference to God's Servant, to Jesus Christ the Messiah who came in the role of a servant. He did not come trying to lead some kind of great demonstration or reform movement. He was not out trying to overthrow anything. He did not come to change things at that time. "A bruised [KJV, "braided"] reed He will not break." He did not come to fix things then, but He is going to come with judgment. And when He does come, He will not fail nor be discouraged until He sets judgment in the earth. He is coming as a light to the nations (v. 6). He is coming to open the eyes of the blind and to bring out of darkness those who are imprisoned in it. These prophecies and statements are referred to in the New Testament as a reference to the Messiah.

As we come down, there is another reference to what the Messiah will do.

Verse 21, "The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the law and make it honorable." He will magnify the law and make it honorable! That was what Jesus Christ came to do. He fulfilled that on the Sermon on the Mount as well as other places. Christ did not come to minimize the law or do away with the law. He came to magnify the law.

Matthew 5:17, "'Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill.'" He came to fill it up. He came to make it complete and full. He came to magnify. That was actually prophesied right here in Isaiah 42:21.

In Isaiah 43, we have a clear reference to the fact that the Lord of the Old Testament is the One who actually became Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Let's pick it up in v. 10 so that there is no misunderstanding on that.

Isaiah 43:10-13, "'You are My witnesses,' says the Lord, 'and My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed. I, even I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior. I have declared and saved, I have proclaimed, and there was no foreign god among you; Therefore you are My witnesses,' says the Lord, 'that I am God. Indeed before the day was, I am He; and there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it [who shall hinder it or turn it back]?'"

When it says in v. 10, "...Before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me," the word "God" is "Elohim." The "im" ending is a plural ending in Hebrew. Any word in English when we make it plural, we add an "s." "Elohim" is the term that is used for God referring to the God Family.

Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God [Elohim] created the heavens and the earth." The word "God" is "Elohim."

Later in v. 26, "...Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness..." This clearly shows the use of the plural pronoun. God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." We understand that this was a conversation between the One that we know as the Father and the One that we know as the Son, Jesus Christ.

When He says in v. 10, "...Before Me there was no God formed," there was no Elohim formed; there was no other God Family formed and neither would there be after Him. We are not coming as some other Elohim. We will be a part of that Family. We will be born into that Family because Elohim is the Family name that, at this

point, includes the One who we know as the Father and the One we call Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

In John 1, Jesus Christ is called the Word.

John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word...the Word was God...” There was that unity from the beginning. The God Family consisted of the Father and the Word. We can ultimately be born (born again) into that Family as a son of God. So there is no contradiction to what it says here in v. 10.

Then the One who is here speaking to Isaiah, inspiring these things, says, v. 11, “I, even I, am the Eternal, and besides Me there is no savior.”

Acts 4:12, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” This clearly shows that the One who is referred to in Acts 4:12—the One we know as Jesus Christ—is clearly the Eternal, the Lord of the Old Testament and the One who is identified as the Savior. Christ came to reveal the Father. The Father was not the One who had dealt with the Old Testament patriarchs; it was the Word, the One we know as Christ. He came to reveal the Father because they did not know the Father (Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22).

Isaiah 44:1-4, “Yet hear now, O Jacob My servant, and Israel whom I have chosen. Thus says the Lord who made you and formed you from the womb, who will help you: ‘Fear not, O Jacob My servant; and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on him who is thirsty and floods on the dry ground. I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring. They will spring up among the grass like willows by the watercourses.’” Here we are shown that God is going to pour out His Spirit upon Israel, and it is going to cause Israel to flourish like willow trees on a riverbank.

Verse 3, “I am going to pour out My Spirit upon your descendants.” That is ultimately going to occur in completion in Tomorrow’s World.

Verse 6, “Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God’.” There is no Elohim. There is no other God Family. God is used here, in that sense, as the Family name. It refers to the Father and Christ.

In vv. 9-11, He talks about the idols and they are ridiculed. He describes how they make this idol.

Verse 12, “The blacksmith with the tongs works one in the coals, fashions it with hammers, and works it with the strength of his arms. Even so,

he is hungry, and his strength fails; He drinks no water and is faint.” He is a human being.

Verses 13-14, “The craftsman stretches out his rule, he marks one out with chalk; he fashions it with a plane, he marks it out with the compass, and makes it like the figure of a man...He hews down cedars for himself, and takes the cypress and the oak; he secures it for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a pine, and the rain nourishes it.”

Verses 15-17, he cuts down a tree and some of it he uses for firewood to warm himself or as wood for a cook stove to bake bread. Then part of it he takes and makes a god out of it. How silly that is. A guy cuts down a tree. He takes parts of it and builds a fire. And he takes a part out, carves it out, makes a god out of it and starts bowing down and worshipping it. God says what sense is that? The tree was growing. The rain made the tree grow. You’ve used some of it for productive purposes. Then you carved up some of it, started worshipping it and started thinking that’s your god. That’s pretty silly.

We can drive around, even in our area of the country, and see all these little shrines that sit out there in people’s yards. In effect, that’s their god, even though they may not want to express it that way. That’s the way they treat it. They venerate it. They think that’s somehow going to deliver them. They can take the plaster of Paris and make a figurine or this or that for their bookshelf. They make a religious artifact out of it. They stand it up, put all kinds of devotional things around it, kneel down and pray and do the rosary. It’s the same thing. Human nature hasn’t changed a whole lot. People still do the same things.

God begins to address Cyrus in v. 28, “Who [referring to God] says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure,’ even saying to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be built,’ and to the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid.’”

Isaiah 45:1-4, “Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut: ‘I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places that you may know that I, the Lord, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant’s sake, and Israel My elect, I

have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me”.”

It is a very interesting story when you go through the story of Cyrus and see all the things that Satan tried to do to prevent this prophecy from being fulfilled. God prophesied what Cyrus would do one hundred fifty years prior to the time he would do it. What was Cyrus going to do? Cyrus was the one who put together and united the empire of the Medes and Persians. He went in and besieged and conquered Babylon. That was the night of the handwriting on the wall (Daniel 5:5-6). And he, in turn, issued the decree that allowed the Jews to return from Babylon and to go back and rebuild Jerusalem (II Chronicles 36:22-23).

If you go back into history, you will see that the Persians ruled over the Medes. The Persians looked down on the Medes and ruled over them. This king of the Persians (Cyrus' grandfather) had a dream. In his dream (as it was interpreted), he would have a grandson who would overthrow him and would take his place. He was determined that was not going to happen. When the time came for his daughter to get married, he decided that he would not marry her to anyone who would potentially be a rival to him; he would marry her to a Mede. He would not marry her to a Persian, but to a Mede who was subject people. So he married her to a son of a Median chief.

He didn't give a whole lot more thought to it. A little later he had the dream again and began to get worried. He found out his daughter was pregnant. He made arrangements for her to come to his palace to have the baby. He decided what he would do; he would take the baby when it was born and would have it killed. He called his servant who he trusted and said, 'Look, when the baby is born, I want you to take it out and kill it.'

The servant took the baby, and when he went out of the palace, he couldn't bring himself to kill the baby. So he "passed the buck" to somebody else. He gave it to a shepherd who kept some of the royal sheep and told him to take the baby, to go and expose it out on the mountain and let the animals kill it. He got himself off the hook where he didn't have to do the "dirty work" with his own hands.

It just so happened that the shepherd's wife had a child exactly at that same time, and the child was stillborn. So the shepherd got the idea that rather than kill this baby, he and his wife would raise it as their own. They would take their stillborn baby and put it in the basket out on the

mountain; the king would never know the difference. They would have this little child to rear—and they did.

Things went on until the child grew to a pretty good size. Eventually, the child found out the story. He went on to rally all the Medes and he led in a Median army. The story of the Persian king's dream had gotten around, and when Cyrus showed up with an army of the Medes, the Persians were so overwhelmed and so intimidated—because they felt like this prophecy was certainly going to happen—they all surrendered without a fight. They all went over to his side because they figured they were doomed. He had escaped death until now; and sure enough, his grandfather was out of a job. Now Cyrus was the king of the Medes and the Persians. He became king out of what had sought to be his death.

It's interesting because this story comes from the Greek historian Herodotus about 500 B.C. who wrote a story out of secular history. A pagan Greek historian recorded the story. Even the pagans recognized and even, in effect, testified to the authenticity of the story of Cyrus. Herodotus was a Greek historian who wrote the story of the Persian wars and the history of that empire.

When Cyrus united the Medes and the Persians, he headed for Babylon. Remember the story from the book of Daniel? Daniel 5, they showed up, and Babylon thought that it was impregnable. The Babylonians were feasting and having a big "blowout," a real orgy there in the palace. They were laughing because they said it was impossible for anybody to get in there.

In the meantime, Cyrus had dug a channel and diverted the flow of the Euphrates River so that the water level dropped and dropped. Within a few hours the water level had dropped down so low that he marched his soldiers through the riverbed and up under the fortification. The city was thought to be impregnable, but the Euphrates flowed through the midst of it. They had this big iron grating that came down into the water so you could not even sail a boat under the wall. But Cyrus' engineers dug a channel canal to divert the Euphrates. When they broke the dike, the river began to divert and the water level began to drop. Pretty soon it was below this iron grating that stuck down beneath the wall. The river got so shallow that soldiers just waded through the mud and muck and came right in under the wall. Before daylight dawned, the Persian army was inside and Babylon had fallen without a shot. So from being impossible to fall, Babylon fell into

his lap. The gates were actually opened. He didn't have to break through the gates. God said the gates were going to be opened.

Isaiah 45:1, "...to open before him the double doors..." That's what happened. Cyrus rode through on his horse.

Verse 18, "For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited: 'I am the Lord, and there is no other.'" The word translated "in vain" is the exact same word that is used in the book of Genesis where it describes the creation.

Genesis 1:1-2, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void..." The word translated "without form" in Genesis 1:2 is the word "*tohu*." Genesis 1 tells us that God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was without form and void. The earth was "*tobu*" and "*bohu*."

Here in Isaiah 45:18, it says God created the earth and He established it. He did not create it "*tobu*." Genesis 1:2 tells us the earth became that way. Isaiah 45:18 says God didn't make it that way. So something happened between the time God made it and the time we pick up the story in Genesis 1:2. What happened in between was the rebellion of Lucifer that resulted in the destruction, the chaos and confusion that came to take place on the earth. This is just an aside that is good to note.

God says He declares the end from the beginning.

Isaiah 46:9-10, "Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.'" God says, 'I am God. I can tell you in the beginning what the end is going to be.'

There are people who are all amazed at some of the events that are going on in Europe. Those of us in this room are not amazed at those things. Some of you have been reading the literature and listening to the broadcast for decades. You heard Mr. Herbert Armstrong say those things decades ago. Why could he do that? Was it just a lucky guess? No! He read the Bible. He believed what the Bible said, "God declares the end from the beginning." God knew the way the twentieth century was going to end up, way back centuries and centuries ago. God is able to declare the end from the very beginning, and He's able to bring it

about. This bothers the critics because that means that there really is a God and He has something to say about the way we should live.

Verse 11, "...Indeed I have spoken it; I will bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it." God shows there is none like Him because He alone is able to declare the end from the beginning.

Prophecy, in general, and the prophecies of Christ and His coming, in particular, are proofs of God. God is going to bring these things to pass.

Isaiah 47 is a reference to Babylon. It is not referring to the Babylon of old, but to the daughter of Babylon (v. 1)—in other words, the modern-day descendant, which would be modern-day Rome.

Isaiah 47:8, "Therefore hear this now, you who are given to pleasures, who dwell securely, who say in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, nor shall I know the loss of children'." "

Remember in Revelation 17:5, where we're told of the great whore, "... the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." She had children. She had harlot daughters who came out of her. She was not going to know the loss of children. She didn't think she would, but God describes some of the destruction that is going to come upon that entity.

Isaiah 48 discusses the subject of prophecy.

Isaiah 48:2-3, "For they call themselves after the holy city, and lean on the God of Israel; The Lord of hosts is His name: 'I have declared the former things from the beginning; they went forth from My mouth, and I caused them to hear it. Suddenly it did them, and they came to pass.'" "

Verse 5, "Even from the beginning I have declared it to you; before it came to pass I proclaimed it to you, lest you should say, 'My idol has done them, and my carved image and my molded image have commanded them.'" Again it is clearly showing as it was written that this was prophetic. It was understood to be prophetic. In terms of prophecy, it clearly pointed out the proof of God.

Isaiah 49:8, "Thus says the Lord: 'In an acceptable time I have heard You, and in the day of salvation I have helped You; I will preserve You and give You as a covenant to the people, to restore the earth, to cause them to inherit the desolate heritage.'" Here is a statement referring to the fact "... in the day of salvation..." "The" is not a definite article used in the Hebrew. This is showing the fact that there is not simply one and

only one (“the day”) but there is “a day.” There will ultimately come “a day.” There is simply not one day (“the day”), but “a day” of salvation. There is a day that pertains to us, and there is a day that pertains to the world that is yet to be experienced.

Isaiah 49 (the latter part) shows that the time for the salvation of Israel is a day of salvation. Today is a day for the Church (I Peter 4:17), but there is another day. There is a day that is coming, a day of national salvation for Israel that is yet to come. This is not that day right now.

Verse 15, “Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb...?” He says that He is going to bring back His people.

He describes when Israel is re-gathered.

Verses 19-20, “For the waste and desolate places, and the land of your destruction, will even now be too small for the inhabitants; and those who swallowed you up will be far away. The children you will have, after you have lost the others, will say again in your ears, “the place is too small for me; give me a place where I may dwell”.”

After the Millennium sets in and as the remnant of Israel is re-gathered to the Middle East, God describes how the population of Israel will begin to increase and to multiply within a relatively short period of time. That little narrow area in the Middle East will begin to be outgrown. Here’s a remnant that is scattered, comes back from captivity and is re-gathered. It looks like they’ve been destroyed and devastated; yet within a matter of a few decades, the population is increasing and is growing to the point that the descendants begin to say, ‘This place is too small. We really need to expand; we need a place to go.’ They are going to spread back. Israel is going to begin to re-colonize the areas that God had given them. They will spread back to the United States, Canada and Australia—to the areas of Israel. That is going to occur in the beginning of the Millennium.

Well, we have focused in on this section of Isaiah. I think you will find the remaining portion (chapters 50-66) to be especially meaningful for the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread season. There are a number of prophecies that refer clearly to Jesus Christ as the Messiah. There are a number of very meaningful statements. Really, in many ways, the most powerful portion of this book is chapter 53. It particularly deals with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It deals with a number of things that I

think will be helpful to us to focus on at this time. This is a good section to read and study during the Passover season. On the next Bible study, we will conclude the book of Isaiah.

Bible Study # 50 Questions

SURVEY OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS SERIES

Isaiah 36—49

1. What major event happened in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah?
2. What were the Jews promised if they would forsake Hezekiah?
3. What was Hezekiah's response to the Assyrian threat?
4. How did God respond?
5. How did Hezekiah respond when he learned of his terminal illness?
6. What did God do?
7. What serious mistake did Hezekiah make in dealing with the Babylonian ambassador?
8. How is the mission of this work defined in Isaiah 40?
9. What part of this prophecy gives the indication that we will probably be broadcasting on Radio Jerusalem before the end?
10. Prove from Isaiah 40 that the earth is not flat as the ancient pagans believed.
11. What is brought out in Isaiah 41 to prove that God is real and that the idol gods are nothing?
12. What does Isaiah 42:1-7 refer to and where are these verses quoted in the New Testament?
13. What is Christ prophesied to do concerning the law? Where in the New Testament do we find that prophecy fulfilled?
14. Prove from Isaiah 43 that the "LORD" of the Old Testament is the One who became Jesus Christ in the New.
15. According to Isaiah 44, how is God going to cause Israel to begin to flourish like willow trees on a river bank?
16. What pagan king was prophesied of by name many years before his birth? What was this king prophesied to do?
17. Prove from Isaiah 45 that God did not create the earth in the chaotic state described in Genesis 1:2.
18. How does God demonstrate that there is none like Him (Isaiah 46)?
19. What does Isaiah 47:8 refer to?
20. According to Isaiah 49, is there only one day of salvation?
21. What will the re-gathered Israelites do when they become too populous for the nation of Israel in the Middle East?

Bible Study # 51
April 24, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Isaiah 50—66

We are dealing with a wrap-up of the book of Isaiah—chapters 50-66, the concluding chapters of the book of Isaiah. This particular section **deals with prophecies that almost entirely look forward to the time of the Messiah.** There are a lot of details given concerning Christ's first coming and His crucifixion in Isaiah 53, as well as 50 and 52. This section gives some of the most detailed prophecies of His scourging and subsequent execution. The events and reasons surrounding these actions are given in the material we are covering this evening. The Jews did not understand these things. They did not understand at the time that these events occurred and they really have no real idea of the meaning of this section of Scripture to this day.

Acts 8:27-39 is a good illustration of the lack of understanding that the Jews had as to the meaning of this section of Scripture. We have the story of the Ethiopian eunuch. He was an individual of great ability and obviously he was one of the major leaders in the nation of Ethiopia. He was right under the Queen in charge of the treasury. He was a highly educated man, and like many of the upper class and educated class of Ethiopians of his day, he practiced the religion of Judaism.

A number of the upper-class Ethiopians had practiced the religion of Judaism from the time going back to the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon (I Kings 10). The leadership of the Ethiopian people practiced many aspects of the religion of Judaism. In fact, Ethiopia and their connection with Scripture and with the level of understanding that was maintained there is probably a major factor in why Ethiopia is the only place in Africa that was never colonized. It has maintained its independence from the time of antiquity. Until the death of King Helai Selassie, the royal line of Ethiopia traced itself from generation to generation for three thousand years of unbroken succession.

This leader from Ethiopia had been to Jerusalem. Being able to travel to Jerusalem was evidence of wealth and education. It was a long trip. He had come there to worship and he was returning. He was in his chariot, which was being driven by a servant that he had. He was sitting there reading the book of Isaiah. He was reading this

section of Scripture from Isaiah 53 and he did not understand what it meant. His lack of understanding was not due to his lack of education. It was simply due to the fact that the Jewish community did not understand this section of Scripture. This man, who had been up to the temple to worship in observance of one of the Festivals, was not able to understand it because nobody had ever been able to explain it to him before. The Jewish religious leadership, the priests, none of them understood it. This is brought out. This Ethiopian man in Acts 8 was reading Isaiah the prophet and he was reading from Isaiah 53:7-8.

He asked Philip who was the prophet speaking of? Who was this individual that was being described in this prophecy? Philip began to explain to him about Jesus Christ. This eunuch did not know that. The Ethiopians did not know and understand because it was not known and understood in the circles of Jewish religion then—nor do the Jews understand to this day.

We are going to notice some very specific prophecies of Jesus Christ and what He was going to do. In this section, we also have some fairly specific and detailed prophecies of the Millennium. It goes into how Israel will be restored and the way that it will be brought about. In this section, God also focuses on the requirements of individual religion. God continually flashes back, as it were, on the requirements of individual religion if it is to be acceptable in God's sight.

God brings out in Isaiah 50:2, "...Is My hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Indeed with My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness; their fish stink because there is no water, and die of thirst." God describes what He is capable of doing. He says the problems and punishments that Israel has are not because of God's lack of ability to deliver them.

Verses 5-7, "The Lord God has opened My ear; and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away. I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help Me; Therefore I will not be disgraced; therefore I have set My face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed." This is a prophecy of Jesus Christ. This is a prophecy of His smiting and His scourging.

In Isaiah 51:1, we are told, "...Look to the rock from which you were hewn and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug." In other words,

look back to our origin; look back from where we came.

Verse 2, “Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you....”

Verse 3, “For the Lord will comfort Zion, He will comfort the waste places....” God is going to bring comfort. He is going to bring relief to His people, nationally and spiritually. He is going to comfort Zion. He is going to comfort the nation of Israel. Continuing, “...He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord....” The land of Israel will be healed. It will be restored.

Verses 4-5, “Listen to Me, My people; and give ear to Me, O My nation: for law will proceed from Me, and I will make My justice rest as a light of the peoples. My righteousness is near, My salvation has gone forth....” God is going to make waste places blossom and through His righteous law, He will make the whole land rejoice. In that way, he will provide comfort to His people, to Zion. We go through God’s comforting of Zion and some of the events that will transpire.

Isaiah 52 describes the work of God.

Isaiah 52:7-8, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, your God reigns! Your watchmen shall lift up their voices, with their voices they shall sing together; for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord brings back Zion.”

Here we see a description of God’s work. The Church is described as bringing the Gospel. It very thoroughly describes the Gospel message—the good tidings that publishes peace, publishes salvation and announces the establishment of God’s government. How descriptive can you get to the New Testament message—the Good News of the Kingdom of God—which Jesus Christ came proclaiming? It describes the work of those going forth as a messenger. Maybe you never thought of yourself as having beautiful feet, but v. 7 shows that, at least by analogy. It describes it in that way because feet are what the messenger walks on. It is descriptive of going forth with a job to do, doing that job and announcing that message.

There is a very strong admonition that God gives to those in His work.

Verse 11, “Depart! Depart! Go out from there, touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her, be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Lord.” If we’re going to do the work of God, if

we’re going to be God’s people, we must be clean. We must not be tainted and polluted by the uncleanness of this world and society. We live in a society that God describes as unclean. We’re told that if we are going to carry on the work of God, we are to be clean.

In ancient Israel, the priests of God had laws that regulated the ritual cleanness. There were laws that regulated things. If the priests came in contact with something that made them ceremonially unclean, they could not serve in the temple. Basically, the things they came in contact with were things that would physically pollute them. If they touched a dead body or an unclean animal, they were unclean. What it meant to be ritually unclean was that they had to go and take a bath, wash their clothes and wait for the end of the day before they could come back in. This was to impress upon them the importance of cleanness. And if you are unclean, what you touch becomes unclean also.

This lesson was impressed in the ceremonies the priests went through. The priests and the Levites were the ones who, literally, bore the vessels of the Eternal. They bore the vessels there in the temple and the temple worship. There were strict regulations given about the importance of their being clean. These lessons were written really to teach the principle of cleanness and the importance of being clean—if we’re going to fulfill God’s work in a way that is pleasing to Him.

We, today, are spiritually bearing the vessels of the Eternal. We are doing the work of God. That’s what that meant—doing God’s work. We are doing God’s work. If ritual uncleanness made them unacceptable in God’s sight to carry that out, how much more would moral and spiritual uncleanness make us unfit in God’s sight to carry out God’s work. If we’re going to carry out the work of God, we have to be clean. We have to uphold God’s standards. This is a part of the message that Christ had.

Let’s notice some information concerning Christ’s scourging. There are several prophecies concerning Christ’s scourging.

Verse 13, “Behold, My Servant....” It describes Him as God’s Servant.

Verse 14, “Just as many were astonished at you, so His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.” It describes His visage as being marred. It describes Him in the aftermath of that beating. He was virtually unrecognizable.

I remember someone, a number of years ago in Corpus Christi, Texas, who had been through an automobile accident—a man who later went on to become a local elder. If you've ever seen someone who's been through an automobile accident, you know what I mean. God certainly can and does intervene and that was a very remarkable case. It made a very vivid impression in my mind.

It describes here Jesus Christ being marred more than any man. Many were astonished at Him. His visage was marred more than any man. After the beating He was unrecognizable. Even those who knew Him would not have been able to recognize Him. When He was resurrected, Mary Magdalene stood there and thought He must be the gardener (John 20:14-15). She did not recognize who He was until He spoke to her. At that point, He manifested Himself in the way He had been as a result of that beating rather than in the form that would have been totally recognizable to her.

Isaiah 53:3-5, “He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows; yet we esteem Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”

This shows what Jesus Christ went through. The word translated “grief” is a word that is in almost every case in the Old Testament (other than here and one or two other places), a word that is normally translated “pain” or “disease.” What we see here is that Jesus Christ died for our sins. He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. Through His sacrifice we have access to God; through that access to God, we have access to all of the benefits God offers and extends to His people. Access to God is made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It culminated in His death.

Verse 6, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” That is made plain. He died for us, for the sins of the world.

Verse 8, “He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of My people He was stricken.” He died for us.

Verses 9-10, “And they made His grave with the wicked—But with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You made His soul [His life] an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days....” He was resurrected.

Verse 12, “...because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” He died for the sins of the people. He was executed with criminals, buried with the rich and raised from the dead. These aspects of His sacrifice are all made evident here. We have the description of His scourging, how He was brutally beaten with stripes. His countenance was totally disfigured.

Verse 7, He didn't answer His accusers. We are told how He was like a sheep brought to the slaughter. As a sheep before His shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. He went through all of these things to suffer in our stead.

Isaiah 54 describes God's relationship with Israel and Israel's redemption.

Isaiah 54:5, “For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth.” It describes God's redemption.

Isaiah 55:6-8, “Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. ‘For My thought are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the Lord.”

We are to seek God while He is accessible. We have the opportunity right now to seek Him. He is near and He is available. We are told to not procrastinate and put it off. There are events coming, the tribulation and the Day of the Lord. There are things that are going to transpire. We are told to seek God and to draw near to Him. We are told the way to do that. We are told to change both our actions and the way we think. It's not enough simply to change what you do. It is not enough for the wicked to forsake his ways, but rather, we must forsake our thoughts. The reason is because our thoughts are not God's thoughts nor, for that matter, are our ways His ways.

Our ways are a reflection of our thoughts. Our actions reflect our thinking and if we are going to

make fundamental change in our life, we have to change—not merely the outward action, we have to change the inward thought. We have to change the way we think. Otherwise, what we have is mere external conformity. We are people that just go along. You can comply with what the Church says in doing this or doing that (or not doing this or that), but if you don't change the way you think, you won't understand why you're doing it other than, well, the Church says you shouldn't do this or that. People go along and they make external conformity, but they never make internal change. And if the pressure to conform is taken off, they go back to being the way they were because they never learned to think any differently. I think that's fundamental. It is something we have to understand. God is not concerned merely about what we do. More fundamentally than what we do, He is concerned about what we are and what we think on the inside.

The Pharisees conformed to all kinds of things outwardly. Now God is concerned about what we do in the sense that you can't be right on the inside and wrong on the outside. I think we understand that. You can't be keeping the spirit of the law on the inside and outwardly be murdering, raping, pillaging, stealing, committing adultery, taking God's name in vain, breaking the Sabbath and all these things. I think we all understand that. You can outwardly be keeping the various points of the law and conforming to what we are told, but inwardly be something else.

Many people conform to what the law requires. They even conform to what man's law requires out of fear of the trouble they would get into. But if they thought they could get by with it, they would do it. That's not the kind of attitude that God wants to perpetuate forever. That's why He said to not only change your action but to change your thoughts because 'your thoughts aren't My thoughts.'

What are our thoughts? Human nature kind of follows the line of vanity, jealousy, lust and greed. That's what makes up a large part of human nature and human reaction. The thoughts of vanity, jealousy, lust and greed come naturally to the natural man. That's what people tend to be motivated by. Advertisers know that; that's why they appeal to vanity, jealousy, lust and greed. These things sell. That's not the way God thinks and He wants us to exchange our way of thinking to His way of thinking.

In v. 11, God explains that His word will not return to Him void. What God says will be accomplished.

In Isaiah 56, God addresses the importance of keeping the Sabbath—the importance of *all* keeping the Sabbath regardless of background or whatever circumstance. The Sabbath is not simply for the Jew.

Isaiah 56:2-3, “Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.’ Do not let the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord speak, saying, ‘The Lord has utterly separated me from His people....’” God says blessed is the man that does this, not simply the Jew, but the man, the person, the human being. The “son of the foreigner” (KJV, “stranger”) would apply to someone who is not a native-born Israelite. It would be someone who is not born physically of the seed of Abraham; it would be a Gentile.

God says, ‘Regardless of your ethnic heritage, regardless of anything, when you obey Me, when you embrace My ways and you serve Me, you are acceptable in My sight.’ You are not somehow separated off into some separate spiritual category. Physical factors are not the basis of spiritual categories. Spiritual categories, basically, come down to those who obey and those who don't. And nobody has a “leg-up” because of ethnic origin, wealth, education, position, social status or anything else whatever it may be. Those may be physical factors in physical society, but God looks on the heart to judge human beings. God looks to the one who is humble and trembles at His word (Isaiah 66:2).

Here, in Isaiah 56:2-4, it specifically mentions the Sabbath as an outward sign and how God counts as His own those who obey Him and take this outward sign of the Sabbath, regardless of other physical factors.

We are told that through obedience anyone—Gentiles, eunuchs—can become part of God's covenant people and share in His blessings. The Ethiopian eunuch mentioned in Acts 8 is an example of one who, in that sense, fits both categories that are mentioned here—the son of the stranger and the eunuch. The Ethiopian eunuch was a man singled out to be mentioned in a positive light. We will, undoubtedly, have the opportunity to meet him in Tomorrow's World as a part of the firstfruits of God's plan. There have been many, but he is singled out as a literal fulfillment. We've read his account earlier and it

describes one who obeys God and is therefore counted as one of God's people.

Then there is the statement that Christ quoted in the New Testament.

Verse 7, "...For My house shall be called a house of prayer for *all nations*." This is quoted in Matthew 21:13.

God characterizes the leadership of the nation as being, in effect, blind, asleep on the job and consumed by greed.

Verses 10-11, "His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yes, they are greedy dogs which never have enough...."

This is a rather apt description. If you've ever seen a bunch of dogs trying to eat, you will realize that they can be the personification of greed. They all "muscle" in there and try to suck it up like a vacuum cleaner. God uses these vivid descriptions to describe human beings. He describes watchmen who are blind. They are like dogs that have lost their ability to bark. They've gone to sleep. And yet they are greedy dogs. God says the watchmen of Israel are that way.

Then a point to consider: why God allows some of the righteous to die before their time.

Isaiah 57:1, "The righteous perishes, and no man takes it to heart; merciful men are taken away, while no one considers that the righteous is taken away from evil." He is taken away from the evil to come. So, in some cases, God allows that.

Who is going to dwell with God?

Verse 15, "For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'"

In Isaiah 66:2, God describes those who are going to be a part of His Family as those who are humble, contrite and who really tremble at His word—those who really take God seriously. God is not impressed with people who are impressed with themselves. It is a matter of recognizing our dependence upon God and humbly seeking Him. That is the way to have access to God and to dwell with God.

God give His ministry and His work a commission.

Isaiah 58:1, "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."

In other words, we have not been commissioned to play a lullaby and put the world to sleep, but

rather, we have to play revelry to wake them up. That's what God wants His work to do. That's what God holds His work responsible for; it's what He holds His ministry responsible for.

It will ultimately be part of the basis of what He is going to use to judge us upon. We all are judged for our areas of responsibility. You are judged for your areas of responsibility; I am judged for my areas of responsibility. If I just kind of play a lullaby, speak smooth things and prophesy deceits, if I just kind of go along and put you all spiritually to sleep, then I am ultimately going to have to give an account to God for that because His calling is that He wants the ministry and His work to, figuratively speaking, play revelry—to play "wake up" on the bugle. God wants the ministry and His work to sound the trumpet, to sound the alarm, to say, 'Hey, it's time to wake up and to go forth.' There is that responsibility.

God describes a people who are going through the outward motions of religion but are not accompanied by the inward change, the inward things.

Verse 3-5, He describes the kind of fasting that God takes note of. It describes a people who fast, but their fasting is in the wrong way and for the wrong reasons. God describes the kind of fasting that He is after.

Verse 4, "Indeed you fast for strife and debate...." We don't fast to get our own way.

Verses 6-7, "Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the cords of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?"

In other words, we are to fast in order to get our lives straightened out. We fast to make changes. Fasting is for the purpose of drawing close to God and seeing ourselves. Fasting is for getting the spiritual strength to cut the things that bind us to wickedness, that bind us to sins. We are to cut the ties to sin. We are to be cut free from that and to get the help to make the changes that we need to make.

Verses 9-10, God does not want us simply pointing the finger at others and speaking wickedness (KJV, "vanity"), but rather, of having an attitude of giving, serving and helping.

Let's notice what God says about the Sabbath.

Verses 13-14, "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My

holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

We are to turn away our foot from trampling God’s Sabbath. It means we are not to be doing our own pleasure or pursuing our own interest and our own endeavors. Some translations render it “business”—not doing your own business on the Sabbath. But that can be misunderstood. Some have read it that way and have misunderstood it to mean your regular job. They say, ‘Well, if I’m not doing my regular job, it doesn’t matter what else I do.’ That’s not what it means. It says, ‘from doing my own pleasure.’ That doesn’t mean that if you enjoy it, it is sin.

God says that we should call the Sabbath a delight. It should be a delight and we should delight ourselves by a proper focus. It’s not a day to pursue our own interests and endeavors. It is not a day to pursue secular recreation and entertainment. It is not a day to go to the ball game or to lay up watching television—the Saturday cartoons or whatever is on. I assume that’s what is still on; at least it was twenty-five years ago. The point is that whatever is being pursued, it should be in conformity with making the Sabbath a delight, a holy day of the Lord and honorable—showing honor and respect to God.

That doesn’t mean you sit in the corner or closet and don’t eat all day. There is nothing wrong with eating a meal and having a meal of fellowship with brethren or something of that sort. We should enjoy the fellowship and the company of one another as God’s children fellowshiping together. But it’s not a time for secular pursuits, secular entertainment and recreation. Even things that are not necessarily wrong, of and by themselves, but they’re not things you would do on God’s time, and the Sabbath is God’s time.

If you work for someone, on the boss’s time, there are certain things you don’t do (at least you’re not supposed to do), not because those things are always wrong, but because they’re not things you would do on his time. Well the Sabbath is God’s time and He gives us certain things as to the way that He wants us to deal with it.

In Isaiah 59, God brings out the biggest factor as to why sometimes God does not seem to answer.

It brings out that, when the answer is held back, the problem is never God’s inability to respond.

Isaiah 59:1-2, “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.” Our iniquities can separate us from God. If God doesn’t answer, the problem is not that God is unable to respond. There may be factors that interfere with our closeness to God and our access to God.

In v. 4, it describes the iniquities of the nation and how none calls for justice.

Verse 7, “Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood...”

Verse 8, “The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their ways.” It describes the tragedies that beset much of our nation.

Isaiah 60 describes the restoration of Israel under God’s government in the Millennium. It describes many of the gentile nations who were part of the Beast power that took Israel captive and how they are going to come and to begin the Millennium as servants of the restored nation of Israel. They are going to have certain lessons to learn.

Isaiah 60:10, ““The sons of foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you; for in My wrath I struck you, but in My favor I have had mercy on you.””

Verse 12, ““For the nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish, and those nations shall be utterly ruined.”” They’re going to have an attitude of service. There will be a willingness to serve and learning to serve. Many of these nations are going to have that lesson brought to them. They are going to be taught that.

Verse 5, ““Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart shall swell with joy; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you.”” God mentions the wealth that is going to be restored to Israel.

There is an interesting statement. He talks about the abundance of the sea to be turned to you. Do you realize that even a few years ago, Dow Chemical manufactured over five hundred items from seawater? How can the abundance of the sea be converted? One cubic mile of seawater stores over one hundred seventy-five billion tons of dissolved chemicals that are worth upwards of thirty to fifty billion dollars. Just one cubic mile of sea water—maybe around thirty billion

dollars—a substantial amount. Several hundred million of that would be gold alone in just one cubic mile of seawater. “...the abundance of the sea will be converted to you and the wealth of the Gentiles will come unto you.” There’s a lot involved there.

Isaiah 61:1, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives....”

This is what Jesus read in Luke 4:16-20 as prophetic of His mission to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

Verse 4, “And they shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities....” That’s going to happen in the beginning of the Millennium. The cities will be rebuilt.

Verses 5-6, many of those who have taken Israel captive are going to learn to serve in the beginning of the Millennium by coming back in that way as servants.

Israel will finally set an example.

Isaiah 62:2, “The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory....”

It describes what God is going to do.

Isaiah 63:4 describes the day of vengeance of God, the day of the Lord. It describes some of the events dealing with that.

There is a plea for Christ to return and for God to establish His government.

Isaiah 64:1-2, “Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence—as fire burns brushwood, as fire causes water to boil—to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your presence!”

Notice what God has to say about our human righteousness.

Verse 6, “But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf....” On our own, we can’t become what Christ would have us be. It’s not our own humanly devised righteousness. It’s not what we can do, of and by ourselves. It’s what God can do in us and through us.

In v. 8, we are told that God is the Potter and we are the clay, the work of His hands. We are to be shaped and molded by Him. We are not to take on conformity to the image of this world and this society, but we are to be molded, shaped and refashioned by God to reflect Him.

Isaiah 65 describes God dealing with our nation and with our people.

Isaiah 65:2-5, “I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, according to their own thoughts; A people who provoke Me to anger continually to My face....” A people who do everything I told them not to do. Continuing, “...who sacrifice in gardens, and burn incense on altars of brick; who sit among the graves, and spend the night in the tombs; who eat swine’s flesh, and the broth of abominable things is in their vessels; who say, ‘Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am holier than you!’ These are smoke in My nostrils, a fire that burns all the day.”

After they do all these things, they say, ‘Don’t come near me; I am holier than thou.’ That’s not an attitude that God is pleased with. God says, ‘I am not going to put up with that.’ This kind of attitude is offensive to God. God takes note of people who provoke Him to anger by pursuing all the things they shouldn’t and then culminating with an attitude of looking down on their neighbor, an attitude of condemnation.

Verse 20, “No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed.” What does that have reference to? The indication is that we are looking at a time at the conclusion of the Millennium. The time setting of Isaiah 65 is at the end of the Millennium.

Verse 17, it is a time setting when God is going to create a new heavens and a new earth. The time described here is at the conclusion of the Millennium, the conclusion of the White Throne Judgment period and right on the threshold of eternity.

In v. 20, we arrived at a point in human history when there will be no infants, no children. There won’t be anyone who has not fulfilled his days. It describes here a one hundred-year period. It describes the child living to a hundred, but the one who is still a sinner, at a hundred, he will be accursed. It is from this verse that we have come to derive the understanding that we know there will be children born during the Millennium. We also know that at the end of the Millennium, at the time of the White Throne Judgment, there’s a time when all people will be resurrected and will be given an opportunity for salvation.

There has to come a point at which no new children are born because, otherwise, how can everything physical pass away and everything that is spiritual remain? There will come a time

when there will be no more children born. And all of those who have been born will have an opportunity to grow to adulthood. When will that be? That is after the Millennium and during the White Throne Judgment period. How long will it last? The indication of Isaiah 65:20 is that the White Throne Judgment period will last a hundred years, and we have described here what it's going to be like.

Verse 25, "...They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,' says the Lord." It will be a time of peace.

We conclude here with chapter 66. We see that God is not impressed with the mere form of religion.

Isaiah 66:1-2, "Thus says the Lord: 'Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool, where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist,' says the Lord..." I have made everything. Continuing, "...But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word."

Then, in vv. 3-4, He describes those who go through the outward form of religion, sacrifices and things of that sort. The sacrifices, the outward forms of religion by the disobedient, are an abomination to God. God looks to basic attitude and motivation. God is not impressed with outward form unless it is accompanied by inward substance. For someone to hypocritically go through the outward motions of religion and yet not to be as they should be is offensive in God's sight.

Verse 3, "...Just as they have chosen their own ways..."

Verse 23, "And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another; and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me', says the Lord." The focus is on the Sabbath. This is showing clearly that the Sabbath will be kept during the Millennium.

Verse 24, "And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh." This is not speaking of the immortal worm. The description is of those who will be outside and will be cast into the lake of fire, cast into the Valley of Gehenna. Some seize on this and say it is talking about hell, and there are worms there that never die. That's not the focus of it.

Outside of Jerusalem there was a valley called the Valley of Hinnon (or Gehenna). It is the term that Jesus used in the New Testament to refer to the place of punishment for the wicked (Mark 9:43-46). It was an area where trash, refuse, bodies of dead animals and even of certain terrible criminals were thrown. They were thrown down there, and there was a fire that was always kept burning because things were added to it. It wasn't quenched; it wasn't put out. It continued to burn and the worm didn't die. This worm refers to maggots. It just simply refers to the fact that there were always dead carcasses there for them to eat on. Maggots turn into flies and then they fly away. They lay eggs and those eggs become more maggots. There is a continual diet there to feed these maggots. That's what it is describing. It's not a description of the immortality of worms.

You will ultimately either be a part of God's Kingdom and share life with Him, or simply be destroyed with those who rebel and pursue wickedness. That is the reference here.

At this point, we have pretty well concluded the book of Isaiah. There is a lot packed into Isaiah. I think we will see when we get into Jeremiah that there is certainly a lot packed into Jeremiah. These things written down in the Prophets are descriptive of attitudes and circumstances of our time today. There's a tremendous amount of insight into God's mind, nature and character, as well as insight into events through which we will live in the years ahead of us. We will cover Jeremiah in three sections and Ezekiel in three sections.

Bible Study # 51 Questions

SURVEY OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS SERIES

Isaiah 50—66

1. How is God going to yet comfort Zion?
2. How is the work of this Church described in Isaiah 52?
3. What very strong admonition does God have toward us whom He has called to do His Work?
4. What are told about Christ's scourging (Isaiah 50, 52, 53)?
5. What are we told concerning Christ's death in Isaiah 53? Where are these prophecies fulfilled in the New Testament?
6. How are we told to go about seeking God?
7. What does God say concerning Gentiles and eunuchs keeping the Sabbath?
8. How does God characterize many of our national leaders in Isaiah 56?
9. Why does God allow some righteous to die before their time?
10. Who according to Isaiah 57 will dwell with God?
11. What commission is God's ministry given in Isaiah 58?
12. What kind of fasting does God notice and what does He ignore?
13. Is it permissible to use the Sabbath as a day partially for entertainment or recreation?
14. According to Isaiah 59, why does God not seem to answer?
15. What will be Israel's relationship with the Gentiles at the start of the Millennium? Where will Israel receive its wealth?
16. To what does God liken our human righteousness?
17. How have our people continually provoked God to anger?
18. To what period does the prophecy in Isaiah 65 probably refer?
19. Show from Isaiah 66 that God is not impressed with the mere form of religion.
20. Prove when will be the day of worship in the Millennium.
21. Explain Isaiah 66:24.

Bible Study # 52
May 8, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Jeremiah 1—15

This evening we are getting into the book of Jeremiah. We **are getting into the account of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry.** Jeremiah's ministry covered a period of about forty years. He began his ministry during the reign of King Josiah. He continued during the reign of King Josiah and all the way down until the final invasion of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. From Judah, Jeremiah went into Egypt with the Jews who fled into Egypt. From Egypt, he proceeded by way of Spain all the way into Ireland. Some of that is gone into in the booklet, What's Ahead for America and Britain?

A major part of Jeremiah's commission involved the transferring of the throne of David from ruling over the house of Judah to ruling over the house of Israel. There would be a continuation of his throne and dynasty. A lot of that culminates in the book of Jeremiah. It was during the time of Jeremiah's ministry that there was what appeared to be an apparent end to that promise because the Babylonians came in and conquered Judah.

They took the Jews into captivity. They conquered Jerusalem and burned the temple. They sacked Jerusalem and killed the sons of King Zedekiah. They put out the eyes of Zedekiah and transported him in chains to Babylon. He came to a very gruesome and horrible end. In fact, the very last sight that he saw was the murder of his sons. The Babylonians murdered his sons before his eyes and then they blinded him. His sons being murdered was the last sight that he saw. Then they led him in chains to Babylon—a very horrible end.

Was that the conclusion of the story of David's dynasty? No, it wasn't. Zedekiah's sons were killed, but other Scriptures show that his daughters were not. Jeremiah was responsible for safeguarding the daughters. There was one, in particular, who traveled with Jeremiah to Ireland that had a major part in the transferring of the throne of David from ruling over Judah to ruling over Israel.

One of the interesting things that we come upon in the story of Jeremiah is the relationship that Jeremiah had with King Josiah. It kind of sets the stage for the story. King Josiah was the king when Jeremiah first began to prophesy. There is something rather unusual about this. Generally

when we picture a prophet, the picture that comes to our mind is of an elderly man with a long white beard and kind of leaning on his staff. Some of God's prophets were elderly. But Jeremiah was, from all indications, about seventeen years old when he started as a prophet. You don't generally think of a teenage prophet. Jeremiah was seventeen and Josiah, who was the king, had just turned twenty. They were a couple of young men just barely out of their teens. In fact, in a lot of ways Jeremiah and Josiah kind of grew up together.

Remember the story of Josiah? He was proclaimed king when he was eight years of age (II Kings 22:1). He did not actually have authority and power as king. He was under the oversight of the high priest, Hilkiah (II Kings 22:4, 8). When we read Jeremiah 1:1, we find that Hilkiah the priest was none other than Jeremiah's father. Josiah was about three years older than young Jeremiah.

The father of Jeremiah, Hilkiah the priest, was the guardian of the young king. Hilkiah was responsible not only for the training and teaching of his own children but serving as guardian of the king while he was a minor. Hilkiah was what would be termed the Chairman of the Counsel of Regency—in other words, the group that oversaw the affairs of state until the king became of age.

In II Chronicles 34:3, we're told that when Josiah became sixteen, he began to really, very seriously seek to learn more of God's way. He took a very serious interest in God's truth as a teenager. When he became twenty years of age, he assumed the full authority of kingship. He launched the most vigorous reform movement in the history of the nation.

It is interesting to note that a twenty-year-old king and a teenage prophet spurred the most vigorous, intense and complete reform movement in the history of the nation. I think that is a picture that is not often grasped or realized. God can and has worked, through the years, with young people, as well as middle-aged people and old people. It is certainly possible for young men to respond to God. It is possible for young people to respond to God working in their lives.

It's important to realize that it was a time when all of the zeal, drive and intensity of youth was channeled in a very positive way. Even though Jeremiah was quite young, he was dealing with a king who was only about three years older than he was. That relationship continued on through the years of Josiah's active kingship.

There was about a fifteen-year period of Josiah's life that remained. Josiah died fairly young. He was cut off in his prime.

II Chronicles 35:25 and the book of Lamentations was written by Jeremiah to lament the death of Josiah. Josiah was not only his friend but also his king. Lamentations served as a lament for what was going to happen to the nation.

God was impressed by the zeal Josiah evidenced. God had said the nation was going to be punished, but God also promised that He would not do it during the lifetime of King Josiah. God had promised that as long as Josiah lived, He would protect the nation; but when Josiah died, it was all over with—and that is basically what happened.

Lamentations was a lament at the death of King Josiah and for the events that would transpire to the nation of Judah and of Jerusalem in the aftermath of his death. And in that sense, it was prophetic of the events of the Great Tribulation ahead of us. Later, when we go through the book of Lamentations, we will notice the extent that it is a prophecy of the Great Tribulation. The events and captivity that befell ancient Judah prefigured the events of the Great Tribulation, which will be the same thing but in a much grander scale.

This evening we'll **cover the beginning of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry.** His ministry stretched over a period of over forty years. It began when he was quite young and continued on up into his latter years. Actually, it continued past forty years, but it is at that point that we lose sight of it because the story drops in the book of Jeremiah after Jeremiah's departure to Egypt. We don't have the continuation of the story of his ministry in Egypt in the areas of Tarsus and Spain and then on up to Ireland, but we do have accounts of it in secular history.

The first fifteen chapters of the book of Jeremiah, which we will cover this evening, **focus primarily on God's indictment of the sins of Israel—the forsaking of Him as the true God.** God lists the indictment. He starts out by setting the stage. One of the themes that runs through so many of the prophets is first a formal indictment of their sins. This formal indictment of their sins sets the stage for the punishment that is to come. The punishment, in turn, sets the stage for the repentance that will result. The repentance, in turn, sets the stage for God's deliverance and then God's ultimate blessing, which is what God wanted to give all along.

But for God to continue a blessing in the midst of disobedience is to be detrimental to the overall long-term welfare of the person. If God continues to just indefinitely bless us in the midst of disobedience, it serves to harden us in the way of disobedience. God wants us to be a part of His Family. God desires to give the nation His blessing, but the nation has to come to an attitude of obedience. They had to come to repentance, and God was going to deal with them to bring them to that repentance.

God starts out by indicting them. He showed why He was going to have to deal with them severely—why He was going to have to punish them. Then He explained what the punishment was, what the result of the punishment would be in terms of repentance, and then what the final deliverance would be.

The indictment against Israel focuses in on their forsaking of the true God. They forsook the true God. They went after false religion in place of the true God; added to that are the sins of violence, sexual immorality and a total lack of seeking for real truth and justice. There's also a condemnation of Israel learning the way of the heathen. We'll notice in Jeremiah 10 a reference to the Christmas tree. God shows the punishment and the captivity that He is going to bring on the nation. In these chapters, He also alludes to Israel's final repentance, deliverance and restoration.

We will pick it up in Jeremiah 1:1, "The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin." As I mentioned earlier, Jeremiah's father was Hilkiah the priest. Anathoth was a small village on the outskirts of Jerusalem. It was one of the priestly locations; it was one of the cities of the priests. Actually, it was more of a village.

In v. 2, we are told that the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah in the days of Josiah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. Josiah became king when he was eight years old; that would be when Josiah was twenty-one years of age.

God told Jeremiah in v. 5, "'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; and I ordained you a prophet to the nations.'" God said, 'I had you picked out for a job before you were ever born.'

Some of these Scriptures are quoted in the New Testament by the Apostle Paul (Galatians 1:15; Romans 11:5) to explain what he termed "the election of grace." "Election" is simply another way of saying "selection." The point is that you and I were selected. God chose us in accordance

with God's plan and purpose. It was an act of God's grace, of God's mercy. We were not chosen because of some particular thing about ourselves. We didn't earn or deserve it. It was not because God was so impressed with us that He said, 'Boy, I certainly need him. I can't make it without him.' God does the choosing and God chooses on the basis that He chooses. God has the right to make decisions. He has the right to decide.

God chose to deal with Jeremiah and He chose to deal with Jeremiah before Jeremiah was ever born. He had done nothing good or bad, one way or the other, to deserve this calling. God had made up His mind about the job that He had for Jeremiah before he was ever born. God began to deal with him and said, 'I have you in mind; I have set you aside as a prophet to the nations.' Jeremiah's response was that he couldn't do that. Verse 6, "Then said I, 'Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.'" He said, 'I'm just a kid; how can I go out and go to the nations? How can I do those things? I'm just a kid.'

Verse 7, God said, 'Don't say that because I'm the One who's sending you. You're going to go wherever I send you; whatever I tell you, that's what you're going to say. I'm with you and I'll take care of you and inspire you. I will give you the words you need to speak.'

Then Jeremiah's commission was laid out. He had a specific commission.

Verse 5, he was ordained a prophet unto the nations. He had a specific commission to go to nations (plural), not simply to ancient Judah.

Verse 10, "'See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.'"

He was to root out and pull down, destroy and throw down. And he was to build and to plant. This is a poetic illusion to what he was to do. He would preside over, as a prophet, the pulling down of the temple, the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, the rooting out of the nation and the pulling down or the overthrow of the throne. But his commission was not to stop there. His commission was also to build and to plant. He was to preside over the transfer of the throne to the house of Israel because God had made a promise to David that He would establish his dynasty and his throne forever. He would not deal with David's family as He had dealt with Saul's. The family of Saul was absolutely removed from the kingship.

God told David in II Samuel 7:13-16, 'If your sons [your descendants] sin, I will punish them, but I will not remove them. I will not take My mercy away from them; I will not remove them.' God continued His explanation to Jeremiah of the job that He had for him.

Jeremiah 2:2, "'Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem...'"

What did God say to Israel?

Verse 3, "'Israel was holiness to the Lord, the firstfruits of His increase, all that devour him will offend; disaster will come upon them,' says the Lord." God has never intended to confine His dealings to Israel or to never move beyond Israel in His dealings. Rather, God started with Israel. Israel was the firstfruits. The fact that Israel was designated as firstfruits presupposes there was an increase that was to come—an increase that would include all of mankind. Israel was simply God's starting point.

If you remember, the law of the offerings and the firstfruits was holy to God. God told Israel that when they began to harvest their crop, the firstfruits (the first part) was holy to Him. They gathered in the whole crop, but the firstfruits was holy to God. In the same way, God has begun His harvest of mankind. He chose Israel to be His firstfruits. That's where He started. Israel was chosen as the firstfruits and was to be holy to God.

Exodus 19:5-6, God offered them a covenant and an opportunity to be a holy nation. They were to be holy in the same sense that they would be set apart by having God's law. If they followed God's law, God would dwell in their midst. God would be the source of their holiness. God promised them protection and deliverance.

Jeremiah 2:3, "'...All that devour him will offend; disaster will come upon them,' says the Lord." God said He would bless, defend and protect them. But we're going to see that there was a problem. He said, 'Look what I did for you. This is My message. This is the calling I gave you. This is what I chose you to have a part in. This is what I've done.'

Verse 7, "'I brought you into a bountiful country, to eat its fruit and its goodness. But when you entered, you defiled My land and made My heritage an abomination.'" This is what God has to say about the land that He's granted our forebearers. He brought them into a bountiful country. But the land has been defiled. God's heritage has been made an abomination. We have defiled it. We have polluted it physically, morally and spiritually. We've made God's

heritage an abomination. We look at some of the things that have been done, the things man has done with what God has given us.

Then God goes into an indictment of the religious leadership.

Verse 8, “‘The priests did not say, ‘Where is the Lord?’ And those who handle the law did not know Me; the rulers [pastors] also transgressed against Me; the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.’” He said, ‘The people that should have been teaching you, those to whom you looked for religious guidance, have deserted Me.’

Verse 9, “‘Therefore I will yet bring charges against you,’ says the Lord, ‘and against your children’s children I will bring charges.’” He said, ‘I am going to continue to deal with you and to get the point across.’

Verse 11, “‘Has a nation changed its gods, which are not gods? But My people have changed their Glory for what does not profit.’” Look around and see if you can find an example of a nation that has changed their gods, which are yet no gods. God says to look at the pagan nations; they have been faithful to their paganism.

Isn’t it incredible? You go over to some of these pagan countries and they’re still worshipping the same idols they worshipped centuries and centuries ago. God says, ‘The pagans have been faithful to paganism, and yet My people haven’t been faithful to the truth.’ Isn’t that an incredible thing!

This is the tendency. We see it throughout the Scriptures. The tendency of the people of God who have the truth is to not appreciate it. They take it for granted and gradually let it be watered down. This has always been the tendency of human nature. It’s easy to take it for granted. This is what ancient Israel did. We read that and say, ‘How could those people be so carnal and do that?’ Yet we have to recognize the tendency that can come up, even with God’s people and with God’s Church. God’s Church can gradually take God’s truth for granted and not really be excited about it, to value and appreciate it and then to gradually kind of water it down—to let it water down until it becomes blended more and more with worldliness. After a while, it finally comes to a point where God’s people have lost their identity.

This is the story repeated over and over in the Old Testament, and it is the warnings we have in the New Testament. It is the tendency of human nature. We have those examples, and it should be a warning for us. That’s going to be the tendency

of human nature. We’re going to have to swim against the tide to do anything else.

Verse 13, “‘For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.’” Talk about a bad trade! Here, on the one hand, you have an artesian well and you don’t appreciate that. You want to make a cistern. A cistern is not an ideal source to depend on for water. This is a broken cistern, which means whatever you are going to put in is going to dribble out, and you won’t have anything at all. If someone were willing to trade an artesian well as his water source for a broken cistern, you would think that’s pretty dumb.

It’s a very descriptive picture. When you get the picture, you see that’s what God says our people have done spiritually. Here is God, the source of living waters. The Holy Spirit is compared to living waters. That’s like an artesian well. The water comes bubbling up. There’s a source of flowing water there that anybody can have—a source of pure water, bubbling up from down deep inside the earth. God compares that to His Holy Spirit that is a source of life. It flows out. He contrasts it with a trade for a broken cistern. He says, ‘My people, Israel, have made a trade and they have really made a bad deal.’ We certainly want to make sure that we don’t make that trade. God indicts them for not only rejecting the truth but for choosing error.

Verse 19, “‘Your own wickedness will correct you, and your backslidings will reprove you....’” A lot of the punishments that are going to come upon us are cause and effect; there are consequences to our actions that will come upon us. A lot of things that are going to happen to this nation are the results of the things we have sown. We reap what we sow.

In Jeremiah 3, He begins to draw another analogy to His relationship with Israel. Now we get into the relationship of a marriage relationship. In Exodus 19, God entered into a covenant with Israel. That covenant was a marriage covenant. God established with ancient Israel a marriage relationship.

In Jeremiah 3:1, He describes Israel having played the harlot with many lovers, and yet God says that He is still offering them an opportunity to return. Here was Israel who had been so unfaithful to God, figuratively, having played the harlot. Israel lived as a prostitute with all sorts of other lovers—with other nations. God says Judah didn’t learn anything from what Israel did.

Jeremiah 3:8, “Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also.”

Verse 14, “Return, O backsliding children,’ says the Lord; ‘for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.’” God is putting away faithless Israel and removing His protection from her. Even so, God pictured Himself in the role of the husband. He was the Protector and Provider. Israel was to be faithful and be a faithful helper. Israel was to further the plan and purpose that God had. Israel was to be supportive, a helper, one who is fitting and suitable. Instead of being faithful, Israel was faithless. But God says that He was still going to give them an opportunity to repent, to change, to learn, to turn around and go the other way. He tells them to repent, to “return, O backsliding children.” He says, ‘Eventually when you do, I am going to bring you back out of captivity.’

Verses 15-18, “And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land...At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem; they shall walk no more after the stubbornness of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers.” —“The land of the north.”

If you go north of Palestine, you’re going up into Europe. Judah and Israel are going to be re-gathered together. Now that has not happened yet. Judah is the only part of the twelve tribes that ever returned to the Promised Land. When Israel went into captivity, they never came back. They never returned. We will notice that at a later time Judah returned. But this is a time yet future, a time when Judah and Israel would return together. That’s after the return of Christ. At that time they will have right and proper leadership and be re-gathered from the land of the north. It is brought out that God is our source of help.

Jeremiah 4:1, “If you will return, O Israel,’ says the Lord, ‘Return to Me; and if you will put away your abominations out of My sight, then you shall not be moved.’” There is a need for change.

There is a need to repent, to put away sin, and to put away the abominations out of God’s sight. We can’t continue in sin and expect God will approve.

God talks about circumcision of the heart in v. 4, “Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts, you men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem...” Clean up our lives. This is prophetic of the Holy Spirit and is an allusion to the understanding that came about in the New Testament, of the circumcision that had a spiritual implication. It talks about God’s word going forth and the results.

Verse 15, “For a voice declares from Dan and proclaims affliction from Mount Ephraim.” That had to be a future prophecy because Ephraim, Dan and all the others had long since gone into captivity well over a hundred years before Jeremiah ever prophesied. It was looking all the way down to our day to God’s work going forth from the British Isles and throughout Europe—going forth from that area. It was something that was not fulfilled until this point in time.

It talks about what is going to happen in v. 20, “Destruction upon destruction is cried, for the whole land is plundered...”

Verse 22, “For My people are foolish, they have not known Me. They are silly children, and they have no understanding. They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.”

God talks about the destruction that is going to come, and yet He says in vv. 27-30, “For thus says the Lord: ‘The whole land shall be desolate; yet I will not make a full end. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black, because I have spoken, I have purposed and will not relent, nor will I turn back from it. The whole city shall flee from the noise of the horsemen and bowmen. They shall go into thickets and climb up on the rocks. Every city shall be forsaken, and not a man shall dwell in it. And when you are plundered, what will you do? Though you clothe yourself with crimson, though you adorn yourself with ornaments of gold, though you enlarge your eyes with paint, in vain you will make yourself fair; your lovers will despise you; they will seek your life.’”

God describes Israel under the guise of a harlot. She arrays and adorns herself in the traditional manner of the harlots, the harlots of antiquity. You can go through certain districts of many cities; you drive down the street and you can see some that are pretty much “decked out.” Jeremiah 4:30 comes to mind. They have the “look.” They don’t have to hold up a sign saying

what their profession is. All you have to do is look at the way they're "decked out"—how they're dressed, all painted up and "bleached out." You know exactly what they're peddling.

God describes Israel in that connotation, 'You're looking at your lovers (other nations). You think that somehow you are going to be able to appeal to them.' He describes Israel under the guise of an unfaithful wife; when confronted with calamity, she thinks somehow she can be pulled out of the calamity by trying the old trick of enticing the lovers. He uses descriptive, poetic language that was descriptive of the women of ill repute. God describes that even when Israel was confronted with her calamities, instead of turning to Him, she started trying to "finagle" around as to how she could entice allies to come to her rescue. God says it's not going to do any good. You have to learn the lesson.

Jeremiah 5:1, "'Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem; see now and know; and seek in her open places if you can find a man, if there is anyone who executes judgment, who seeks the truth, and I will pardon her.'" Look and see if there's any truth in judgment. God says you are not going to see much of that.

Verses 7-8, "'How shall I pardon you for this? Your children have forsaken Me and sworn by those that are not gods. When I had fed them to the full, then they committed adultery and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were like well-fed lusty stallions; every one neighed after his neighbor's wife.'"

God describes the immorality. God says, 'When I blessed you, when you were prosperous and you had everything, instead of appreciating and valuing it, you lined up like troops for the harlots' houses for every kind of immorality.' It describes the allusion of everyone neighing after his neighbor's wife—absolute rampant immorality. Immorality absolutely undercuts and is destructive to a society because morality is the guardian of the family. Morality guards and protects the family. It gives sanctity and "specialness" to the family. When morality breaks down, the family falls apart; when the family falls apart, the community and nation fall apart.

The family is our basis of connecting to the past and to the future. When you think in terms of family, you think of those who've come before you and whose contribution you appreciate and value. But you also think in terms of the future. You have children and grandchildren, and in terms of what you're doing, you're thinking not

just for yourself, but it's for them. There's a sense of connection with the past and with the future. When people think in terms of family, they build the future. When people think only in terms of "here and now" and self, there is no concept of the future. When all they're after is self-gratification, they don't care what the consequences are tomorrow. The attitude is 'I don't care what happens, I'll be dead by then.'

It's kind of like the famous quote that is attributed to King Louis XV of France. His son Louis XVI was the king when the French Revolution came about. Louis XV was pretty much of a waster. He squandered things and he knew that he was not properly governing the nation. He made the statement on more than one occasion, "After me, the flood!"

Some say, 'I don't think it will happen in my lifetime, but when I'm gone, it's all going to come tumbling down. But I don't care because I'm not going to be here.' No sense of concern or loyalty. What kind of world am I leaving to my children and grandchildren? 'I won't be here and if I'm not here, who cares!' That's a pretty selfish, self-centered approach. The world is filled with that, and the more there is a disintegration of the family and family loyalty, the more people don't care what kind of world they are leaving. 'Hey, I'm not going to be here; what do I care?' Even economically we are running up this astronomical debt. The ones who are running it up think the bill won't come due until after we're dead—let the children and grandchildren worry about it.

We don't care if we build up something that won't last. All it needs to do is last through our lifetime. That's all we care about. This is a selfish, self-centered approach. That means you're setting up a society to collapse—a society where immorality is rampant, a society that is selfish, self-centered and greedy. It's only thought is for "here and now." Right now! The problem with "only right now" is that, eventually, tomorrow and the day after are going to come. A society that will endure and last is a society that is in preparation, a society that is building something that will last. The whole concept of craftsmanship is building something that will last. We talk about the extent to which we have become a "throw-away" society. So many things that are built, within a few years they are falling apart. They are not even built to be fixed—just throw it away and get another one.

A lot of this attitude gets back to the whole concept of morality—a selfish, self-centered

society. A society that has lost its moral bearings is a society that cannot long endure. God describes that.

Jeremiah 5:11, “For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously with Me,” says the Lord.”

Verse 15, “Behold, I will bring a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel,” says the Lord. ‘It is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language you do not know, nor can you understand what they say.’”

Notice here that this is a prophecy to the house of Israel, not a prophecy to the house of Judah. Jeremiah had prophecies for Judah (referring to his own day and his own time), but the house of Israel had gone into captivity over a hundred years before Jeremiah ever wrote this. So these prophecies look way beyond his day. These prophecies come on down to our day, at the end time. He talks about that and the events that are going to come in. He says, ‘I’m going to bring this nation upon you.’

Verse 16, “Their quiver is like an open tomb; they are all mighty men.” It’s interesting that the word “German” literally means “man of war.” “Ashur” who is the ancient ancestor means “strong.” So when He says they are mighty men of war, it is really a play on words of the name of the nation that was going to be used as the instrument of punishment.

Verses 17-19, “And they shall eat up your harvest and your bread, which your sons and daughters should eat. They shall eat up your flocks and your herds; They shall eat up your vines and your fig trees; they shall destroy your fortified cities, in which you trust, with the sword.’ ‘Nevertheless in those days,’ says the Lord, ‘I will not make a complete end of you. And it will be when you say, “Why does the Lord our God do all these things to us?” then you shall answer them, ‘Just as you have forsaken Me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve aliens in a land that is not yours.’”

God says, ‘You haven’t wanted to serve Me; I’m going to let you find out what service is.’ Those who don’t want to voluntarily submit to God are going to have a chance to submit at the end of the point of a bayonet to the German Gestapo of the future. Then they will find out it really wasn’t so bad to serve God. How glad we would be for the chance to serve God instead of serving the Beast power of the future.

It’s going to give new meaning to the verses in Matthew 11:28, 30 when Christ said, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy

laden...For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” You think it’s hard to serve God? Stick around for a few years and try serving the Germans. You’ll find out we never had it so good.

The events that are going to happen in the Great Tribulation are going to far overshadow the events of World War II and the Holocaust; there will be no comparison. The magnitude of the events of the Tribulation will so overwhelm and overshadow those events that there will be no comparison. The events of World War II won’t even be mentioned because the events of the future are going to be so much worse and on such a greater scale. That’s hard to imagine.

Jesus said in Matthew 24:21, “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.” It’s going to surpass everything and anything that has ever happened, which means it is going to surpass the Holocaust, the atrocities that Stalin wrought in Russia, that Hitler wrought, and that all the dictators have wrought. These things are going to be paled by the magnitude of what is going to occur.

Jeremiah 5:23, ““But this people has a defiant and rebellious heart; they have revolted and departed.””

Verse 25, ““Your iniquities have turned these things away, and your sins have withheld good things from you.””

Verse 31, ““The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and My people love to have it so....”” People don’t want to hear the truth; they like it that way. That’s the incredible thing. People don’t like it if you start telling them the truth. They resent that. They want to be told that everything’s great and everything’s fine. They’re not anxious to have the leaders tell them the truth.

Let’s see a little more of what God has to say about the religious leaders.

Jeremiah 6:13-15, ““Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely. They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, saying, “Peace, peace!” when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time I punish them, they shall be cast down,” says the Lord.”

God says that from the least of them to the greatest, they're given to covetousness. God says that is really the motivating factor. A lot of people in the world have begun to recognize that. Turn on the Sunday morning "comedy hour" if you want to call it that way. They spend more time begging for money than anything else. Then we had all these scandals that hit. God says, 'Look, the whole bunch is given to covetousness. That's what they're after. They're in it for what they can get.' He says, 'They are all dealing falsely. They've healed the hurt of My people slightly.' Did God say that none of them have ever done anything that's any good? No, He didn't say that. They may have helped a little bit here and there, slightly. But they haven't really solved the problem. They say, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." They weren't ashamed of what they had done. They hadn't really turned from the abominations that are done in God's sight.

God says in v. 17, "Also, I set watchmen over you, saying, 'Listen to the sound of the trumpet!' But they said, 'We will not listen'." God sets a watchman. This work was raised up when God raised up Mr. Herbert Armstrong and threw him into this work. We are now a part and a continuation of this end-time work of God.

God raised up His work (the Philadelphia era of His Church) to be a watchman, to proclaim a message, even though the nation is not really going to listen and to hearken.

Jeremiah 7:2-9, "Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, 'Hear the word of the Lord, all you of Judah who enter in at these gates to worship the Lord!' Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Do not trust in these lying words, saying, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.' For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt, then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever. Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know'."'

You do all these things and then you say, v. 10, "and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations'?"'

People were trusting in lying words, saying, v. 4, "...the temple of the Lord..." In other words, God's house is here. We are God's people and God won't let anything happen to us. A lot of people think, 'The United States is the bastion of democracy, the best hope of mankind. God wouldn't let anything happen to us. After all, we're the best He has.' Well, let's not kid ourselves! Here's their approach: the law is done away and we're delivered to do all these abominations (v. 10). They say that it's okay because the law is done away. God says, 'That is not the case.'

Verses 17-18, "Do you not see what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven..." This describes the origin of hot cross buns and why they come out at Easter time. "Easter" is the English spelling and pronunciation of the ancient Babylonian god Astarte, the queen of heaven.

The Catholic Church has simply taken the old Babylonian goddess Astarte or Easter (as they call her now) and they continue to worship the queen of heaven. Those of you who come out of a Catholic background realize who the queen of heaven is, don't you? They talk about the queen of heaven; they call her Mary. Mary was the mother of Jesus. She was certainly given the greatest honor that any human woman could ever be given. She was chosen by God to literally give birth to God in the flesh—to give birth to Jesus Christ—and to be entrusted to bring Him up, to train Him and to teach Him. There is no place in the Bible where Mary is called the queen of heaven.

The one called the queen of heaven here was the old Babylonian goddess. That's why, today, what's called the Roman Catholic Church is nothing but a continuation of "Mystery Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth" (Revelation 17:5). That's what it is, just a continuation of the same old Babylonian Mystery Religion. The same old customs are right on down to our day. Everything they do goes right back to ancient Babylon. You can read about it. In just a page or two (Jeremiah 10), we come to the Christmas tree. All these things go way back.

Jeremiah 7:22-24, “For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices, but this is what I commanded them, saying “Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.” Yet they did not obey or incline their ear....”

The sacrifices were not a part of the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant was not based on the sacrifices. When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He did not originally speak to them concerning sacrifices. That’s not what the Old Covenant was about. The sacrifices were added after they broke the Old Covenant. They were added because of disobedience. They were added as a schoolmaster. The Sabbath wasn’t added. The holy days weren’t added. The laws of God were not added; that was part of the Old Covenant to begin with. The sacrifices were added. God didn’t originally speak of the sacrifices when He brought them out of Egypt.

Galatians 3:24, “Therefore the law was our tutor....” KJV, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster....” God added the sacrifices as a schoolmaster.

God talks about the things the nation did.

Jeremiah 7:25-26, “Since the days that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them. Yet they did not obey Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck....” God said, ‘Yet you haven’t listened.’

Jeremiah 8:5, “Why then has this people slid back, Jerusalem, in a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast to deceit, they refuse to return.”

Verse 9, “The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken. Behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord; so what wisdom do they have?” When you reject God’s word, what kind of wisdom are you going to find?

Verses 10-11, “...Because from the least even to the greatest everyone is given to covetousness; from the prophet even to the priest everyone deals falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly....” Slightly, that’s all it amounts to.

In Jeremiah 9 is the prophecy of the catastrophes and calamities that are going to happen.

Jeremiah 9:11, “I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins and a den of jackals [KJV, “dragons”]....” The word actually means “coyotes” and things of that sort. “Dragons” is a bad translation. In other

words, it is going to be deserted. There will be wild animals. Continuing, “...I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.”

Verses 12-14, “...Why does the land perish and burn up like a wilderness, so that no one can pass through? And the Lord said, ‘Because they have forsaken My law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice, nor walked according to it, but they have walked according to the imagination of their own heart and after the Baals, which their fathers taught them.’” They have done these things and as a result, there will be war and captivity.

Verse 16, “I will scatter them also among the Gentiles, whom neither they nor their fathers have known. And I will send a sword after them until I have consumed them.” This shows that the nation was going to go into captivity for its sins.

Verses 23-24, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the Lord.”

God says don’t glory in the physical things. Don’t glory in what you know or how strong you are or what you have. Don’t place your confidence in the physical. Those things will let you down. Money can be wiped out overnight. You can have a stock market crash; rapid inflation occurs. You can have all kinds of things happen. That’s not something that is foolproof. Physical strength can fail. Wisdom is limited. Whatever you know, it’s human knowledge and it is limited. Don’t take pride in the physical, but rather, the thing to have confidence in is that you know the true God.

Verse 26, “Egypt, Judah, Edom, the people of Ammon, Moab, and all who are in the farthest corners, who dwell in the wilderness. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.”

This shows that God is concerned about circumcision of the heart. Circumcision of the heart is a cutting away of the old attitudes and thoughts, the cutting away of the old attitudes of mind. He describes the Gentile nations as being uncircumcised and all the house of Israel as uncircumcised in the heart. Circumcision of the heart is the most important circumcision of all.

In Jeremiah 10:1-8 is the description of the Christmas tree—a pagan custom that God’s people are not to follow.

Jeremiah 10:1, “Hear the word which the Lord speaks to you, O house of Israel.” This is not addressing Judah because this sin is not the sin of Judah; it is the sin of the house of Israel—our people, our nation.

Verse 2, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Do not learn the way of the Gentiles [KJV, “heathens”]....” Don’t learn heathen pagan customs.

Verses 3-4, “‘For the customs of the people are futile [vain]... [Then He describes one of them.] ...For one cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers so that it will not topple.’” They go and cut a tree. They bring it back and make it stand up straight. They decorate it and make it all glittery and pretty. Kind of sounds familiar, doesn’t it? God says that’s the custom of the heathens. Don’t learn the way of the heathen.

Every year right around Christmas time, an article will come out in one of the local newspapers about the origin of Christmas. They will readily tell you that Christmas trees go back to pagan customs and pagan traditions and ideas. They will readily admit, ‘We got this custom from the ancient Babylonians or that custom from the Egyptians or the Assyrians, and aren’t all these nice pagan customs okay?’ People sometimes make the excuse, ‘That’s not why we do it.’ God says, ‘Don’t learn the way of the heathen.’

You can look at any number of worldly customs mentioned in the Bible in a negative way, and people say, ‘Yeah, but that’s not why we do it today.’ No, the reason we do it today is because we’re trying to be just like everybody else. Why do people decorate their house for Christmas? It’s not because they are trying to worship the sun god. It’s because they’re trying to be like their neighbors. They are trying to blend in. Would you like to be the one to explain to Christ when He asks why you did do so and so? ‘Well, everybody else was doing it. I didn’t want to stand out.’ Wouldn’t you feel really good about giving that explanation? Don’t you think He would be really impressed with that? Somehow, I just don’t think it will “wash” too well. People miss the point. If we just learn the way of God, we have all we can handle. Why go out and start learning the way of the heathen, trying to mix it in and creating our own way of doing things?

Jeremiah 10:23 is a very important verse, “Oh Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.”

That is just another way of saying, Proverbs 3:5-6, “... lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and He shall direct your paths.”

It’s not just inherently a part of us to know just what we should do. The way of man is not in himself; it’s not in man that walks to direct his steps. We don’t know by ourself. That’s why God tells us; God reveals to us. We are like God’s little children and God teaches and tells us.

Can you imagine just turning a little baby loose and not giving him any guidance? The way that they should go is not just inherent in them. They’ll do all kinds of things because they don’t know better. Some things they do can be so dangerous and destructive. We’re just grown up little babies. Spiritually we are still just kind of crawling along. The way of mankind is not in himself. Apart from God revealing it to us, we don’t know by ourselves. God reveals it to us not because He’s trying to give us a hard time, but because He loves us and doesn’t want us to hurt ourselves. Why did you set rules and restrictions for your little babies and your little children? Was it because you didn’t want them to have fun? Of course not! It’s because you didn’t want them to hurt themselves, to do something dangerous and wind up inflicting permanent damage upon themselves.

Jeremiah 11:2-5, “‘Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and say to them, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel; ‘Cursed is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, “Obey My voice, and do according to all that I command you; so shall you be My people, and I will be your God,” that I may establish the oath which I have sworn to your fathers....”’”

Verses 7-8, “‘“For I earnestly exhorted your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, until this day, rising early and exhorting, saying, “Obey My voice.” Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but everyone walked in the imagination of his evil heart; therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do....”’” God says, ‘I have warned them. I have told them.’

Verse 10, “They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers who refused to hear My words, and they have gone after other gods to serve them; the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My covenant which I made with their fathers.” God describes the covenant. God’s covenant message to our people, over and over again, has been a simple direct message: “Obey My voice!” Verse 7 brings that out.

Verse 8 shows that Israel proceeded to go its own way and will therefore receive, as a result, all of the curses mentioned in the book of the covenant. Go back and read Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. Read the curses of the book of the covenant. God made a covenant and He said, ‘Obey My voice; just obey My voice.’ And the nation has not done that. It has refused the admonition that has been given and repeated over and over. There are going to be consequences to come about. They have gone in the imagination of their evil heart, in the stubbornness of their own heart. They’ve just done their own thing. They do the things they want to do. God describes that.

Let’s notice a couple of places to illustrate that the house of Israel and the house of Judah are distinct and separate. I would suggest you read the booklet, What’s Ahead for America and Britain? Understanding where our nations are identified in the Bible is the basis of understanding much of prophecy. If you don’t understand who is being talked about when it says “Israel,” then you can’t understand Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos and all the others.

Jeremiah 11:10 is one place that shows a clear distinction between Israel and Judah, “...the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My Covenant which I made with their fathers.” That’s one place that shows a clear distinction between Israel and Judah. It shows that they are distinct.

Jeremiah 13:11, ““For as the sash clings to the waist of a man, so I have caused the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah to cling to Me,” says the Lord, “that they may become My people, for renown, for praise, and for glory; but they would not hear.”” God describes the events that were going to come.

He shows in Jeremiah 11:10 and Jeremiah 13:11 that the House of Israel and the House of Judah are distinct and separate. Jeremiah was writing over one hundred fifty years after Israel had ceased to be a nation. Northern Israel had gone into captivity. Jeremiah still regarded them as a distinct, separate people. Israel is not the same

thing as the Jews. The term “Jew” only refers to “the descendants of Judah.” It refers to the House of Judah; “Jew” is an English slang term for “Judah.”

In Jeremiah 12, the events of the captivity are cited.

Jeremiah 12:4, “How long will the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither? The beasts and birds are consumed, for the wickedness of those who dwell there, because they said, ‘He will not see our final end.’” It talks about all the things that have happened and the events that have occurred.

Verse 7, “I have forsaken My house, I have left My heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of My soul into the hand of her enemies.” God allowed the punishment to come.

Verses 15-16, “Then it shall be, after I have plucked them out, that I will return and have compassion on them and bring them back, everyone to his heritage and everyone to his land. And it shall be, if they will diligently learn the ways of My people, to swear by My name, “As the Lord lives,” as they taught My people to swear by Baal, then they shall be established in the midst of My people.” God will deal with them and He will bring them back.

Jeremiah 13 describes what He is going to do and how He’s going to call them to repentance. He talks about Judah being carried into captivity.

Jeremiah 13:19, “The cities of the South shall be shut up, and no one shall open them; Judah shall be carried away captive, all of it; it shall be wholly carried away captive.”

Jeremiah 14 talks about the drought that was coming.

Jeremiah 14:2, “Judah mourns and the gates thereof languish.”

Verse 4, there was a lack of rain.

Verse 14, “...The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart.”

He says that they will perish along with the others.

Verse 15, “Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who prophesy in My name, whom I did not send, and who say, “Sword and famine shall not be in this land”—“By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed!””

In Jeremiah 15, we see a description showing three categories of the calamities and events that are going to occur.

Jeremiah 15:2, “...Thus says the Lord: “Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity”.” He describes all the calamities and events that are going to occur and the reason that these things were going to happen to Judah.

Verse 4, “I will hand them over to trouble, to all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, for what he did in Jerusalem.” God says Judah went into captivity because of the sins of wicked King Manasseh. The nation never recovered from that. Things go so far off the track for so long, they never got back.

God tells us that when they get into trouble, they say, “I’m sorry,” but they don’t mean it.

Verse 6, “...I am weary of relenting!” What He is talking about is the old “broken record” of people. When they get in trouble, they say, “I’m sorry” and do not really mean it. He’s not talking about a genuine turning away from our own ways. He’s talking about the same old thing, over and over and over again. That gets old. The events are described.

Jeremiah describes his regard for God’s word in a very descriptive poetic term.

Verse 16, “Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.” Jeremiah describes God’s word. It was delightful food. The word of God should be like our spiritual food. Part of the way we are spiritually nourished is taking in God’s word. Jeremiah says, ‘Your words were found and I did eat them.’

Jesus said, Matthew 4:4, “...Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” That needs to be our attitude toward God’s word. Jeremiah describes in the latter part of the chapter the attitude that God is pleased with, the attitude of desiring God’s word and, Jeremiah 15:17, an attitude of not sitting in the assembly of the mockers. Having the right attitude toward God and God’s word—not taking it for granted, not mocking, but really appreciating and valuing what God says. Our attitude needs to be one of really appreciating God’s truth and calling and our valuing what God says.

We are clearly living in very momentous times. You do not, at all, want to take for granted the tremendous things that God has opened our

minds to see and understand. We want to value and appreciate them.

With that, we will conclude the Bible Study.

Bible Study # 52 Questions

SURVEY OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS SERIES

Jeremiah 1—15

1. What was Jeremiah's excuse as to why he couldn't do what God called him to do?
2. What was Jeremiah's commission?
3. According to Jeremiah 2, did God intend to confine His dealings with the nations to Israel?
4. What does God say concerning the land He granted our forebearers?
5. According to Jeremiah 2, what are the two main evils that our peoples have committed?
6. According to Jeremiah 3, what was the relationship of God to Israel? What happened?
7. According to Jeremiah 5, why is God unwilling to pardon our people? What will happen to them as a result?
8. Are our people anxious to have leaders tell them the truth?
9. What does God have to say about the nation's religious leaders?
10. Why did the people of ancient Judah think none of these terrible calamities would come upon them (Jeremiah 7)?
11. Were the sacrifices a part of God's original covenant with Israel?
12. What punishment will God send on our people (Jeremiah 9)?
13. What kind of circumcision is God most concerned about?
14. Where does God describe the Christmas tree?
15. Is it possible for people, on their own, to figure out the way to properly handle their affairs?
16. According to Jeremiah 11, what has been God's constant message to Israel? What was Israel's answer and what will result?
17. Jeremiah was writing over one hundred fifty years after Israel ceased to be a nation and went into captivity. Show that he still regarded Israel and Judah as separate.
18. Why was God going to send Judah in captivity anciently?
19. How did Jeremiah regard God's word?

Bible Study # 53
May 22, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Jeremiah 16—34

We are continuing our survey through the book of Jeremiah. We **are dealing with the middle section of the book of Jeremiah**—chapters 16—34. This section **deals with various prophecies of Judah’s impending captivity**. He uses it as a type of events that will come upon the whole house of Israel at the end time. In the context of material we will look at this evening, **another thing that comes out is the persecution that Jeremiah faced as God’s spokesman**. This is important to realize because down through the centuries, God’s message has not been a popular message. Many times God’s servants have suffered great adversity and difficulties for delivering that message. We will see that here in the book of Jeremiah and we will see some of the things Jeremiah went through.

I think it is important for us to realize that there are probably a lot of things that we’re going to have to face and go through between now and the end of this age. We don’t know every detail of what it’s going to be, but the Bible certainly gives indications and certainly shows by example the fact that God’s message has never been popular. It wasn’t popular at the time of Jeremiah. It certainly wasn’t popular at the time of Jesus Christ, and it’s not going to be popular in our time and in our day.

The Scriptures talk about events, a Great Tribulation, and various things. As I have mentioned before, we are in a time of a relative lull; a calm before the storm. We see events—things flash upon the world scene and then they fade. But what we have to realize is that the time is going to come when these events are going to flash on the world scene and they won’t fade. It will be time for things to begin to culminate and come together.

As you watch what’s going on in the Middle East right now, you realize what a volatile situation it is. I’m not saying that this situation is not going to settle down, but it demonstrates the depth of emotions and the lack of real solutions that is there. As we see in the book of Daniel, when the timing is ultimately right, the events in the Middle East will come to a head, but only when things in Europe have developed to the point that Europe is ready to respond—as the book of Daniel and other prophecies show that they will.

We are not at that point now, but we’re certainly moving far closer to it than we were a year ago. Consider what has transpired just since the last Feast of Tabernacles and all of the events that have happened in Eastern Europe since last Pentecost. We’ve gotten so adjusted to some of these things, I think we don’t realize how shocking it would have been had we announced it even last Pentecost. These things really began to come together at the fall Festival season.

Things are moving along, and we are in a period of relative calm. A period of relative calm can be used in one of two ways. It makes an ideal time to go to sleep. There is not a whole lot to disturb your rest, so people can use it to either “go to sleep at the switch” or they can use it for time of preparation, recognizing that it is going to come to an end and they need to be prepared. Because when things happen, they will happen quickly enough, that if you’re not prepared, there won’t be time to prepare. That’s part of the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:2-12)—the five wise and the five foolish. The five wise were prepared. The five foolish weren’t. It ultimately comes down to that.

Mr. Herbert Armstrong drew the analogy many, many years ago, not as a matter of a dogmatic statement, but his own personal feeling was that the parable of the ten virgins—the five wise and the five foolish—would ultimately see fulfillment in the Laodicean and the Philadelphian eras. He felt the Church would, at that time, divide down the middle—five wise and five foolish. That was his personal opinion on that. I heard him say that over twenty years ago. When I heard him say it, to me at the time, it seemed very far-fetched. I couldn’t imagine that. But as the years have gone by, I have appreciated his wisdom and insight more and have realized that as a possibility. I am not saying dogmatically that is exactly what it is going to be, but that is certainly a possibility. I know that it is one possibility that Mr. Armstrong leaned towards.

The point that I am making is as we go through Jeremiah, and as we focus on the events of Jeremiah, it is important that we realize that we’re not simply looking at dead history. We’re not simply looking at old remote events. There are events, in some cases, directly prophetic of our own time, and in other cases, we are looking at events that are typical of the kind of things that happen to God’s servants and God’s work. We’re looking at events that parallel things through which we may very well go through—things through which many of God’s servants down

through the centuries have gone through. We have lived in a time of relative tranquility and peace. Individuals may have faced persecution perhaps on the job or in a family context because of their beliefs. But in terms of organized systematic governmental persecution, we have not faced anything very intense and very long term for quite awhile.

Another thing we will notice in this section is specific information of Jeremiah regarding the king and what was to happen to the house of David. The promise had been made that the dynasty of David would continue. Jeremiah, in his ministry, was actually there at a time when the temple was destroyed and when all the things that seemed to be a part of the fulfillment of God's covenant and God's promise were swept from the scene. The temple was destroyed, the king's sons were executed, and the king was blinded and taken prisoner. The independence of the nation ended, the city of Jerusalem burned, and the Jews were taken into captivity. You had a destruction take place. Did that mean that God's promises were of no avail? Absolutely not! Those promises were to continue, and Jeremiah played a vital role in the fulfillment of some of those promises.

We also have an interesting section that deals with Judah's partial observance of the Sabbatical year and the events that transpired afterwards. Basically, what it amounted to was that the Babylonians put a siege around Jerusalem and the Jews were scared. They figured they had "had it." Ever see how, when people really get scared, they are ready to "cut a deal" with God? Maybe you've done that. The Jews knew that they weren't doing what God said to do. One of the outstanding things they weren't doing was that they had not been observing the Sabbatical year.

The Sabbatical year is a law that applies to a nation. It is a national economic law. It has to do with a release of private debt in the seventh year. It had to do with servants being given liberty at the end of that time and various things. It had to do with the land being able to lay rest, with servants being given their freedom and with private debt being forgiven. It was a law that God instituted to keep the nation economically on an "even keel."

Right now our nation is so burdened down with debt that it's just a matter of time. God made for periodic adjustments because wealth will become mal-distributed, and there can come such inequities that things eventually collapse. The

Sabbatical made provision for a fresh start. Those who worked harder were rewarded for it. But the Sabbatical made provision for a fresh start, an opportunity for private debt to be forgiven. You could not build up massive debt because private debt was going to come to an end every seventh year. You simply didn't build up a gigantic private debt. The economy would not be based on something like that.

The Jews (those who were in position of power) were looking at opportunities to make money. They didn't want to release debt. They didn't want to release slaves. Since they didn't want to do these things, they hadn't. When the Babylonians surrounded the city and they thought they were all going to be killed, they got scared and started trying to "cut a deal" with God. Oh, they were repentant and sorry; they would do all of this stuff. Jeremiah laid it out to them. He told them what they needed to start doing, so they did. They made an announcement. They released all the debt and turned loose the slaves. They did everything. They started observing the Sabbatical year.

Just a short time after they did that, the Egyptians launched an army that headed up to the area of northern Mesopotamia, toward Carchemish. The Egyptian army was going to launch an attack on the Babylonians. The Babylonians, who had Jerusalem surrounded, pulled the siege. They lifted the siege and the armies left. They went to fight against the Egyptians.

You know what the Jews did? They sat back and said, 'Boy, that's a relief. We didn't have to depend on God to rescue us after all. The Egyptians came to our aid. We knew those Egyptians would help us out. Let's forget about this Sabbatical year stuff. Bring the slaves back. We're going to exact a debt. We're going to do all the stuff. We're not going to wind up losing this money. We don't have to worry about that; the Egyptians have bailed us out.'

Immediately they went back to doing what they had been doing before. The Babylonians promptly smashed the Egyptian army and came back to Jerusalem. If you make a deal with God, you better fulfill your part of it. God can deliver us in various ways. Humanly, people want to trust what they can see. The Israelites wanted to put their trust in Egypt. They felt like if they could just get the Egyptians on their side, the problems would be solved. What they needed to realize was that the only way problems can be solved is to get God on your side. It's not a matter of talking God into seeing it our way; it's

a matter of coming to see it His way and making sure we get going in that direction.

There's a lesson of faith here. Again, we see the tendency of human nature—it wants to walk by sight. It does not want to walk by faith. We want to trust what we can see, touch, taste and feel—what we can sense with the five physical senses. And, in reality, the only thing that can be depended on is something that can't be discerned by the five physical senses. It is the power of God.

We find in this section, Jeremiah 17:9-10, the Biblical definition of human nature.

In Jeremiah 17:19-27, we see God's rebuke of people for failure to properly keep the Sabbath.

In chapter 18, we focus in on a lesson of God being the Potter and we being the clay. We look in on false shepherds.

In Jeremiah 31:31-34, we see a prophecy of the New Covenant and the Holy Spirit.

In Jeremiah 16, Jeremiah was told how bad things were going to get. In fact, he was told not to marry and raise a family at that time because of the terrible captivity and the things that were going to occur. Notice the attitude of the people as God's servants told them of these things.

Jeremiah 16:10, ““And it shall be, when you show this people all these words, and they say to you, ‘Why has the Lord pronounced all this great disaster against us? Or what is our iniquity? Or what is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?’”” They said, ‘Why we are good people! God wouldn't do those things to us. What's so bad about us?’ That's what people still think. ‘We're better than old “so-and-so.” We're better than somebody else. We are not the best, but we're sure not the worst. God wouldn't do those things to us.’

God makes it very plain.

Verses 11-12, ““then you shall say to them, ‘Because your fathers have forsaken Me,’ says the Lord; ‘they have walked after other gods and have served them and worshiped them, and have forsaken Me and not kept My law. And you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, each one walks according to the imagination of his own evil heart, so that no one listens to Me.’””

Each one of you just doing your own thing; you're walking after the imagination of your evil heart.

If that was descriptive of ancient Judah, is it descriptive of us today? Have we not, as a nation, forsaken God? Have we not refused to keep God's law? We can say that our ancestors did that, and we've done worse than they did because

we have turned away from the portions of right and wrong that they clung to. We are getting to the point where we want to legalize sin and outlaw righteousness—a very upside-down perverted approach.

Verse 13, ““Therefore I will cast you out of this land...””

Up until now, the great event that has defined the history of God's people and the history of Israel was the Exodus. That was kind of the great point from which everything else flowed.

Verses 14-15, ““Therefore behold the days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘that it shall no more be said, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ but, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from the lands where He had driven them.’ For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers.’”

God talks about the events of the future when Israel goes into captivity and they will finally be delivered again. It will be an event that will greatly overshadow, in terms of size and magnitude, the events of the Egyptian captivity and the Exodus from Egypt.

There is going to be a future Exodus of bringing the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He will drive them. He will bring them back. This is a prophecy that goes beyond Judah.

Verse 15 makes plain that it is a prophecy to the children of Israel. Realize that Jeremiah was writing one hundred twenty years after the ten tribes of Israel had already gone into captivity. The ten tribes were gone; they were history. Jeremiah is talking about events yet future. He is talking about events concerning the children of Israel, the house of Israel. The events that occurred to Judah were, in many ways, a type of end-time events to the house of Israel. These things are made plain. He describes what is going to happen. He describes that captivity is ultimately going to come. Eventually, God will deliver and He will bring them back. It will be an event of such magnitude that it will absolutely overshadow everything that has ever gone before.

Verse 19, ““...The Gentiles shall come to You from the ends of the earth and say, ‘Surely our fathers have inherited lies, worthlessness and unprofitable things.’” As He deals with the nations, they will come up to be converted. They will want to learn God's way.

Notice what God says about putting our faith in human help.

Jeremiah 17:5, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord.’” “Cursed be the man who trusts in man”—putting your faith and confidence in human beings and what they can do and losing sight of God and the reality of His power. If you get your focus on the human element, you’re under a curse. What’s the curse? The curse is that you are dependent on a weak, frail, human being, just like you are. You are trusting in a human being who is just as limited as you are. We cut ourselves off from access to the great power of the Eternal God and we put confidence in human beings.

He goes on and compares that.

Verses 7-8, “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters....” You have a continual source of help.

Then we have some things about human nature defined for us.

Verses 9-10, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.” We are told that the primary ingredient of human nature is self-deceit. We kid ourselves. One of the hardest things for any of us to do, as human beings, is to be totally, brutally, frankly honest with and about ourselves and about our motives.

Have you ever noticed that if you want to do something, you can find a lot of good excuses as to why you should buy this, you should do that, or go here, etc. You can come up with a lot of good reasons that justify it. If you don’t want to do something, you can come up with a lot of pretty good-sounding excuses as to why you shouldn’t or you can’t. ‘I don’t think I can’—all these things that come to mind. We can come up with all these good things as to why we don’t think we can. There is a difference between a reason and an excuse.

“The heart is deceitful above all things.” It’s hard for us to really come to grips with our motives. We can kid ourselves. We can deceive ourselves. That is a crucial part of human nature. We can “lock in” and we can never work on a problem we don’t see. We have to see it in order to work on it. We have to honestly face something in order to deal with it. This is a very crucial part of human nature. “Who can know it?” “The heart is deceitful above all things.” First and foremost we

kid ourselves. We make up excuses and justifications. It’s hard for us to really come to grips with the real reason we do things.

God says He searches the heart. He tries the mind. If we really want to see as God sees, God will show us, but you have to want to see. It’s a matter of examining why we do what we do. Why do we do or refrain from doing certain things? It takes time to get down to the heart and core of our real motivations. That’s a part of what Christianity and internalizing the law of God is all about. Christianity is much more than merely external observance. Christianity is about internalizing a new way of thinking. Obviously, if we internalize a new way of thinking, it’s going to be reflected in what we do on the outside. If we’re externally disobedient, then it’s a pretty good indication we’re not internally doing what we should do either.

However, the reverse is not true. A person can outwardly conform to everything and yet inwardly, be simply like the Pharisees. We’re told that our heart is the seat of our emotions and of our thinking. The heart is deceitful above all things. We need God’s help to really properly perceive and not kid ourselves.

God begins to rebuke the nation concerning some of the sins. He refers to Sabbath breaking.

Verses 21-23, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; nor carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, nor do any work, but hallow the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers. But they did not obey nor incline their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear nor receive instruction.’”

He talks about the consequences of not hallowing the Sabbath.

Verse 27, “But if you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.” The specific reference to bearing a burden was burdens of merchandise, particularly from agricultural districts. People were simply bringing in merchandise into Jerusalem. They were bringing forth things from the house with which to barter and trade for produce.

The Jews went to great lengths, after the captivity, to define as to what was a burden. They got into great debates among the rabbis trying to define how much is a burden. By the time of

Christ, they had so “nit-picked” the thing apart that they had come out with the rabbitical ruling that anything exceeding the weight of three figs constituted bearing a burden on the Sabbath. That is a carnal-minded approach.

Let’s understand why it’s a carnally-minded approach. The carnal mind wants a line drawn so they can get as close to it as possible. The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God. It really does not want to be as close to God as it can be. It wants to be as close to the world as it can be, and it wants an exact line. It wants to get up just as close as it can and kind of lean over the cliff but not lean over so far as to fall.

The rabbis said, ‘Since the attitude of the people is that they are going to go as far as we’ll let them, then what we need to do is to draw the line way back over here. That way, nobody gets really close to the cliff.’ Nobody went too far because they drew the line so far that no one could get close. What the rabbis said was that they were going to build a hedge around the law. Their reasoning was, ‘Look, we went into captivity because we violated the law, particularly idolatry and Sabbath breaking. What we need to do is build a hedge around the law so that people can’t even get close to breaking the law. We’ll stick on all these “do’s” and “don’ts.” You will have to go far beyond the limits we set in order to break the law. It will keep everybody “in line.”’ That’s a carnal-minded approach because it’s dealing from the premise that people are going to go as far as they can go, as far as you’ll let them get by with.

I think we need to understand that God is not going to have anybody in His Kingdom with that approach. The approach that God wants is to get as close to Him as we can. Our whole direction needs to be that we want to get as close to God as we can get. Not as close to the world as we can get by with, but as close to God as we can get. It’s a different approach. When you have that approach, you don’t have to build a hedge around the law because you’re not trying to get up to the edge to lean over. You’re not trying to “cut the corners” and take the liberties. You’re trying to apply the principle.

We’re not only to observe the law but also to understand and to apply in our hearts and minds the principles behind the law. That’s why the Pharisees got into this contention with Christ. Remember where He had healed the man who was paralyzed and He told him to rise, take his bed and walk—and the guy did. And the Pharisees got all “bent out of shape.” The fellow

wasn’t picking up his Sealy Posturepedic; that wasn’t what he was carrying. What he had was like a sleeping bag. It probably wasn’t even that much. It was just a little mat. He rolled it up and put it on his shoulder. Christ didn’t have the guy staggering down the street carrying a king-size bed and headboard on his back. That was not the point. He was healed. What was he going to do? Was he going to go off and leave it and not have the mat to lie down on anymore? It was silly. There was nothing in God’s law that forbade the fellow to roll up the mat or blanket, stick it on his shoulder and go on. The Pharisees took the approach of trying to build a hedge around the law of humanly imposed “do’s” and “don’ts.”

We have to understand that the tendency of human nature is to veer from one ditch to the other. We need to realize that we need to obey the law, but we need to go beyond simply obeying the letter of the law. We don’t need to go beyond in the sense of inventing a whole lot of humanly-imposed ideas. We need to understand the principle and we need to apply the principle. We need to realize that when God talks about some of these things, there is a principle involved. There is a particular way that God wants His people to be, and we want to fit in with that. We want to be made conformable to the image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29), not conformable to the image of the society around us (Romans 12:2).

It goes on and further develops that in chapter 18.

Jeremiah 18:1-6, we have the story where Jeremiah was told to rise and to go down to the potter’s house.

I want to mention something. A number of years ago, there was an art show that was going on. It sounded interesting and we decided to go down and take a look and see what they had. The thing that I particularly remember about it was the potter that they had there. He had some beautiful vases and art objects that he had made. He was working at a potter’s wheel. It was very interesting to watch him. I had never seen a real potter working before. As I watched him, Jeremiah 18 was running through my mind.

When a group of us gathered around, he started fresh. He picked out a lump (or brick) of clay. The first thing he did with this brick of clay that he picked out was to lay it down on this table and start beating on the thing with his fist. It was hard and it wasn’t very pliable. He pounded on it for a little bit. After he had beat on it for a little while, he had this little bowl of water and he sprinkled a

little water on it. After he had beat on it for a little bit with his fist, it began to kind of lose that rigid brick-like shape. He sprinkled a little water on it and pounded on it a little more. He tore it in two and then put the two together. He'd reach back, put a little water on it and work with it. Gradually, instead of being hard and very difficult, it became more and more pliable. He was working it back and forth. When he had it really loosened up and really malleable, he plunked a big lump on the potter's wheel and began working with the treadle to make this potter's wheel turn. It was just incredible. Within a matter of minutes, this beautiful vase took shape. Before, it had just been a lump of clay; now it was a beautiful vase. The potter's wheel kept turning it around. He got out some instruments, put some fine touches on it and got it just right. Then he ran a string under it to separate the bottom of it from the potter's wheel. He got it loose and set it aside. He said he would let it dry for a little bit and then he would oven bake it to harden it. Then it would be painted and baked again. He described the rest of the process. What happens when God first selects us? What happens when God calls us and begins to work with us? He's the Potter; we're the clay. He selects us. He calls us out. He chooses us from the midst of all these other lumps of clay. But then He has to bring us to the point that we can be worked with. Some of us are a little harder lump of clay than others. What does He do? Well, He has to pound on it for a little while. He has to bring us to the point that we can be molded and shaped because you can't shape a lump of clay until it is malleable and can be worked with.

You have to be pliable. Therefore, the first thing you have to do is get some of the stiffness out of it. What does God do? He pounds on us a little bit. A few trials come along. It gets our attention and takes a little of the stiffness out. What does He do? He begins to add some of His Spirit. That's what the water is. Water is even used in the Bible as a symbol of God's Spirit. God begins to add in some of His Spirit, and that Spirit makes us more and more pliable. He keeps working with us and working with us, adding in a little more Spirit. He keeps working with us until finally we're responsive to Him. Then at the point that we really become responsive, He can make us what He wants us to be. Then that character is hardened.

There is an analogy that is drawn; the trials and tests we go through are like being put through the

fire (I Peter 1:7) and hardened. Because once you've fired a piece of pottery, nothing else can ever be made out of it. It can be destroyed and made into dust, but you could never take it, reshape it and make something else. It has lost that elasticity, that ability to be shaped. God ultimately gets us just like He wants us. In effect, He fires our character to where it hardens and to where we are set. There may be a few little decorative touches that He puts on, but, basically, it becomes set. It's an interesting analogy.

God goes through that with Jeremiah. It's a good analogy to think about and to realize that God says, 'I am the Potter and you are the clay. Jeremiah, you want to find out how I work with you and what I'm doing. Go down to the potter's house; look and see what he does.'

Is prophecy conditional?

Jeremiah 18:8, "'if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.'" If a nation against whom God has pronounced punishment turns from their evil, He will turn from what He was purposing to do. The example of that is Nineveh, in the book of Jonah, repenting of their sins. Prophecy is conditional if a prophecy of punishment is given. Upon a lack of repentance, God describes the things that He is going to do—how there would be a captivity that would come and, v. 17, the nation would be scattered. These events were going to occur.

In Jeremiah 19, he talks about some of those things.

Verse 8, he talks about the city being made desolate.

Verse 9, he describes that the nation will have such an extent of famine that there was, literally, cannibalism that occurred. That literally occurred during the first siege of Jerusalem. Josephus records that there were some instances of it in the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans. Undoubtedly, it is going to be paralleled again in the events that mark the beginning of the tribulation, the famine and the things that are going to occur. There are going to be some very, very serious things.

Then there is the response to God's message being delivered. They weren't happy. They didn't like it and the government officials didn't like it.

Jeremiah 20:1-2, "Now Pashhur the son of Immer, the priest who was also chief governor in the house of the Lord, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things. Then Pashhur struck

Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the Lord.” Here he was ready to throw Jeremiah in jail. He was going to punish him. He said, ‘You shouldn’t say things like this.’ People become very antagonist when the truth is told. Jeremiah made it plain to Pashhur what was going to happen to him.

Jeremiah 21:1-2, “The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur...‘Please inquire of the Lord for us, for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon makes war against us....’” He said, ‘The king of Babylon is making war against us, and we want to know if God will intervene for us.’ Here’s the irony of it. They were ready to throw him in jail. They were mad at him. Yet when they got scared and their “back got against the wall,” they came to him and asked him to inquire of the Lord for them. They knew where God was working.

There are some interesting examples that are mentioned in Mr. Herbert Armstrong’s autobiography of some similar type events in the early years of the work. There are certain ones that he mentioned. There was a particular church that really had no use for him. They were of a Pentecostal variety, and they figured that they were spiritual and he wasn’t. They had all kinds of things to say about him until the time when the pastor’s wife fell over “under the spirit” and they couldn’t revive and bring her back. Immediately, they set out to look for him. When “push came to shove,” they knew whose prayers were answered. It’s the irony sometimes, and this attitude is reflected right here in Jeremiah 21. Jeremiah came and explained what was going to occur. He told them exactly what was going to happen and how.

Verse 10, “‘For I have set My face against this city for adversity and not for good....’”

He goes on to explain why all these calamities were going to come.

Jeremiah 22:9, “‘...“Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and worshiped other gods and served them.”’” They hadn’t obeyed God. They hadn’t served God.

Verse 21, “‘I spoke to you in your prosperity, but you said, “I will not hear.” This has been your manner from your youth, that you did not obey My voice.’” Again they had this attitude and this lack of obedience to God.

Jeremiah 23:1-6, “‘Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture,’ says the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My

people: ‘You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,’ says the Lord. ‘But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking,’ says the Lord. ‘Behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘That I will raise up David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.’”

The term “pastor” is a term that means “shepherd.” This certainly can apply both in the national sense as well as in the religious sense. It certainly would apply to false ministers and false religious leaders. It simply refers to those who are to be the shepherds of God’s flock. Instead of properly tending the flock, they have been fleecing the flock. God says, ‘I am going to deal with that. I am going to hold them accountable, and things are ultimately going to change.’

It shows the righteous Branch that God will raise up. The One who is characterized as David’s Righteous Branch will be ruling over all—in other words, Jesus Christ. Ruling under Him will be various righteous shepherds—that’s us. It describes the consequences of what has occurred, the things that set the stage for the prophecies.

Then it describes the future Exodus.

Verse 8, “‘...“As the Lord lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them.” And they shall dwell in their own land.’”

Here we have a prophecy that clearly comes down to the end time.

Verses 10-11, “‘For the land is full of adulterers; for because of a curse the land mourns...For both the prophet and the priest are profane....’”

Verse 14, “‘Also I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem: they commit adultery and walk in lies; they also strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns back from his wickedness. All of them are like Sodom to Me, and her inhabitants like Gomorrah.’” We have a description of how God characterizes the nation and the result of what He is going to do as a consequence of that.

Jeremiah 24 has the parable of the figs. We have two baskets of figs: one is characterized as very good fig and the other is characterized as very bad figs. The good figs symbolized those who had already been taken captive to Babylon, over whom God would watch and would ultimately bring back to the land. This happened a generation later under Zerrubabel. The bad figs symbolized those left behind and those who had gone to Egypt.

Verses 9-10, they would suffer many punishments which were yet to come.

In Jeremiah 25, Jeremiah continues his prophecies and the things that were going to occur. He explains they were going into captivity and why they were going into captivity.

Jeremiah 25:5-7, ““They said, “Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the Lord has given to you and your fathers forever and ever. Do not go after other gods to serve them and worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands; and I will not harm you. Yet you have not listened to Me,” says the Lord, “that you might provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt.”””

Verses 11-12, ““And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,” says the Lord; “and I will make it a perpetual desolation.”””

God describes the events that were going to occur and the seventy years that were prophesied. It wasn't totally clear, even at that time, as to what exactly the seventy years was about. In fact, it's interesting. Daniel who was a younger contemporary of Jeremiah had been studying this.

Daniel 9:2, “in the first year of his reign [speaking of Darius] I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord, given through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.” Daniel had been studying this. He had been trying to understand it. He was in Babylon. He had been taken captive from Jerusalem. He didn't understand exactly what the seventy years meant—when did it start and when did you stop it? How did this seventy years run? He had been studying the book of Jeremiah.

Daniel 1:2, the books of the Bible had been taken to Babylon along with the artifacts that had been taken from the temple. Daniel had access to them. He had been studying it trying to understand. Finally he did. He understood it shortly before it happened. The details generally become plain as we get closer to the time of fulfillment. The seventy years, basically, would extend from about 604 B.C., which was Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion, down to 534 B.C., which is when the Jews actually returned. Cyrus issued the decree in 535 B.C., but it took several months to get back. It was actually 534 B.C. before they returned. So it was seventy years from the time of the first invasion and captivity until the return of the captives from Babylon.

The people got upset in what Jeremiah had to say.

Jeremiah 26:11, “And the priests and the prophets spoke to the princes and all the people, saying, ‘This man deserves to die! For he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your ears.’”

‘Boy, we need to get rid of this guy.’ Great persecution began to come. I think we can understand that and even some of the parallels right on down to our day.

In Jeremiah 27:1-7, we have indication of how God was going to give Babylon dominance.

In vv. 12-18, we have Jeremiah's advice to the king and the information that he brought out.

By the time you get to chapter 29, Jeremiah had some advice for the captives of Babylon. He wrote a letter.

Jeremiah 29:1, “Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the remainder of the elders who were carried away captive—to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon.” This would include Ezekiel who was one of the priests who had been carried captive. And it would include Daniel. This was the letter that was written and it described the seventy years. Undoubtedly, this was the letter that Daniel was referring to in the book of Daniel when he was trying to understand, trying to grasp the significance of it.

Verses 4-7, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and dwell in them, plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take

wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace.”

They were told that they were to settle down there, build houses, get married and raise their families. They were told they would not be coming back, to not put off those events and to pursue them day in and day out. The time would come when they would be delivered, but they should be pursuing their normal activities in the meanwhile. That was the appropriate way.

In some ways, we could parallel that today. What should we be doing? We need to go about pursuing our normal activities and being productive individuals. Yet we need to be spiritually prepared and ready, realizing that this society, the Babylon in which we live, is not going to last.

It continues and describes some of the persecution that came in.

Jeremiah 30:2, “Thus speaks the Lord God of Israel, saying: “Write in a book for yourself all the words that I have spoken to you.”” Jeremiah was told to write in a book the words that God had spoken, and this is the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was told to write down and describe all these things.

Then we’re told of Jacob’s trouble.

Verse 7, “Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.” Now this is clearly referring to the Great Tribulation Jesus talked about.

Matthew 24:21, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no nor ever again shall be.”

In Jeremiah 30:7, we are told, ““...that day is great, none is like it...”” You can’t have two times that are worst than any other time. Clearly, both describe the worst time; therefore, it’s the same time. One of the things that characterize the Tribulation is that it is the time of Jacob’s trouble. He also brings out what will occur after God brings them back from captivity, after He saves them out of that Tribulation.

Verse 9, ““But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.”” King David is going to be resurrected and is going to be king. They are

going to serve Jesus Christ and they are going to serve King David. God will bring them back.

Verse 10, ““...Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid.””

There is no way you can take the description here and apply it to the return of the Jews to Judea in our time because they certainly are not dwelling at rest and with no one making them afraid. That area is filled with terrorists, and there are all kinds of things going on. That is not the fulfillment of this event right here. This is yet future, after the return of Jesus Christ.

Verse 18 describes the great Exodus of the future.

Verse 24, “...In the latter days you will consider it.” It brings out that this prophecy is set in the latter days.

Jeremiah 31 describes the return of Israel.

Verses 7-8, Israel is being re-gathered and the remnant will be saved and brought up from the north country. They are going to be taken, not to Egypt, which is south, but they are going to be taken to the north country. The clear reference is the area up in Europe, the area where the Beast power is centered, which is north of Jerusalem. They are going to be re-gathered and brought back.

Jeremiah 31:10, “Hear the word of the Lord O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, “He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.”” It describes that gathering together.

It describes a time of rejoicing after the re-gathering.

Verse 13, ““Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old, together; for I will turn their mourning to joy, will comfort them, and make them rejoice rather than sorrow.””

One thing as just a kind of aside—it’s interesting that when you read of music in the Bible, it is a unifying factor, a culturally unifying factor. The idea of different music for different generations is a concept alien to the Bible. Music in our age and society, in the twentieth century (particularly the latter portion), has become a divisive factor in society. It has become divisive to generations.

Different music is appropriate for different occasions. There is formal music that is appropriate for occasions of public worship, to set an atmosphere of worship and reverence. There was the Levitical choir and orchestra. But there is also music that is appropriate for other occasions, music that is more informal. Here it

describes a time of rejoicing. Music in this case was appropriate for a kind of impromptu street dance—a time of festivity and rejoicing. We find that this is the role that it traditionally played.

We have to understand the extent to which our modern problems are something unusual. That's not always been. When you go back years ago, some of you remember that normally when there was a dance in the community, everybody was there, young and old people. They all enjoyed and took part in the occasion.

This is what is described here. We are looking at what God intends music to be; music is a culturally unifying factor. Music can express emotions and feeling in a way that virtually nothing else can. God has designed that and designed the laws that actually regulate music in terms of why music affects us as it does because music does have an effect. Certain music can stir you up or slow you down. It can raise or lower your blood pressure and heart rate. They have proven that in clinical studies. You can play a stirring march or soft lullaby, and it has a different effect. There is different music for different occasions.

There is a reference to Rachel.

Verse 15, "...A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children, because they are no more." This scripture is quoted in Matthew 2:17-18. The reason Bethlehem is considered the city of Rachel is because Rachel died in Bethlehem giving birth to Benjamin. She died and was buried there. Bethlehem was in the territory of Benjamin. In that sense, it was considered Rachel's city. She was identified with it because she died there and was buried there. The Benjamites (Rachel's descendants) dwelt there.

In Matthew 2:18, Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem. Herod knew that the Messiah had been born, at least the One who was reported to be King of the Jews. Because Herod didn't want any competition, he sent the soldiers in to kill all the babies there in Bethlehem. This verse was quoted. It was a poetic reference to the devastation that took place. It describes, figuratively speaking, Rachel weeping for her children. It is a poetic reference to the destruction and devastation that occurred, and it specifically referred to Rachel because of Bethlehem being identified with her. Herod very directly fulfilled it at the slaughter of the infants. Figuratively, it could even refer forward to the time and events of the tribulation when

many of Rachel's end-time descendants will be slaughtered.

We have a description of the New Covenant.

Jeremiah 31:31-33, "'Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them...But this is the covenant that I will make...I will put My laws in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.'"

This will ultimately be fulfilled after the return of Christ. It will be a time when that covenant is being written in the hearts of everyone, and there won't be anybody left to be taught. The new covenant will ultimately be completed when all have been converted or have rejected it and been destroyed. God is making the new covenant. It is made with us right now, and the rest of the world will have the opportunity to enter into the new covenant at a future date.

The basis of the new covenant is not that the law is being done away; it is that the law is being written in our hearts and in our minds. In other words, we are trying to learn to think like God. We are not trying to edge as close to worldliness as we can. We are trying to think like God. We are not trying to see what we can get away with. It's having the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5). God will put His laws into their hearts and into their minds—convert them. That's what "conversion" means. It means "a change, a transformation." It is more than just external conformity; it is an internal transformation. This is very, very crucial and important.

Jeremiah 32:2-3 goes back and describes Jeremiah's imprisonment.

Verses 3-5, people were upset at what he was saying, the things he was doing and the message he was proclaiming.

I call your attention to more references to the fact that there was a difference between Judah and Israel.

Jeremiah 32:30, "'because the children of Israel and the children of Judah have done only evil before Me from their youth...'"

Verse 32, "'because of all the evil of the children of Israel and the children of Judah...'"

We have this clear reference to the fact that there is a distinction between them.

Jeremiah 33:7, "'And I will cause the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel to return, and

will rebuild those places as at the first.”” This has not yet been fulfilled. Judah came back; Israel has not. That is yet future. It is another reference that clearly shows that Israel’s identity would be preserved down to the end; otherwise, how could they be brought back?

Verses 17-18, ““For thus says the Lord: “David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; nor shall the priests, the Levites, lack a man to offer burnt offerings before Me, to kindle grain offerings, and to sacrifice continually.””

Verses 20-21, ““Thus says the Lord: “If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levites, the priests, My ministers.””

God describes this covenant. This message was spoken shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem, and with it, the cessation of the functioning of the Levitical priesthood and of the reign of the house of David from Jerusalem.

This scripture shows that in spite of appearances, vv. 25-26, God intended to keep His covenant. He would preserve the house of David and the house of Levi. Other scriptures show that while David’s dynasty would continue an uninterrupted reign over the house of Israel, it would not be restored to Jerusalem until Christ comes. The Levites would also be restored to a functioning priesthood at that time.

Notice what he said about David.

Verse 17, ““...“David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel.”” Now the family of David had not ruled over the house of Israel for more than three hundred years. By the time Jeremiah was writing this, the house of David and the family of David had not ruled over the house of Israel for over three hundred years. They had been ruling over the house of Judah. But this says they are going to rule over the House of Israel. We will notice that there are clear references in Jeremiah and Ezekiel to Jeremiah’s role in transferring the throne of David from Judah to Israel. We will notice some of that next Bible study. We will notice the commission that Jeremiah was given and how it ended up.

Jeremiah 34 recounts the occasion that I mentioned at the beginning of the Bible study. It recounts the siege of the city of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. It recounts Judah’s temporary

repentance and observance of the Sabbatical year, then the Egyptians coming and the Jews thinking they were “off the hook.” They went back to their old ways. Then God said, ‘Just look out. You’re going to get the old punishment.’

You can tie that in with the statement in Galatians 6:7 where God said, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”

You don’t “put one over” on God. It just doesn’t work that way. Human nature finds it difficult to realize that God sees and knows and that there isn’t any way that we would ever “put something over” on God. This is a clear lesson and parallel, here in Jeremiah 34, of the attitude of wanting to get out of trouble. But they didn’t have an attitude of really wanting to change. Sometimes that happens. We have to examine our own life and make sure we don’t do something just trying to get out of trouble and not really motivated by a desire and a heart that wants to change. We want God’s law in our hearts and in our minds. That’s the new covenant, being converted, being changed and transformed by a renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2).

As we go to God for that and for that help, God will work with us. He will add in His Spirit. He may have to work us like the potter does the clay. He may have to pound on us for a little bit to get us softened up where we can be worked with. Some of us take a little more pounding than others. God is going to do it because He is preparing to shape and form us and make us a vessel fit for the Master’s use. We are being shaped and transformed.

A lot is packed here in the book of Jeremiah. We will conclude the book of Jeremiah next Bible study.

Bible Study # 53 Questions

SURVEY OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS SERIES

Jeremiah 16—34

1. According to Jeremiah 16, what will be the attitude of people when God's servants tell them of all of the calamities that are to come?
2. Will something eventually overshadow the exodus from Egypt?
3. What does God have to say about trusting in human help?
4. In Jeremiah 17, how does God define human nature?
5. According to Jeremiah 18, is prophecy conditional? Explain.
6. What verse shows the extremes of famine that is to come?
7. What was the government reaction to Jeremiah's prophesies?
8. According to Jeremiah 22, why did God bring all these evils upon Jerusalem?
9. How does God characterize modern-day pastors?
10. Who will rule over Israel and Judah in Tomorrow's World?
11. What was meant by the parable of the figs in Jeremiah 24?
12. How long did Jeremiah say that Judah would serve the king of Babylon?
13. What was the reaction to Jeremiah's strong warnings as shown in Jeremiah 26?
14. What advice did Jeremiah give to the Babylonian captives in Jeremiah 29?
15. How is the Great Tribulation characterized in Jeremiah 30?
16. From where will the exodus of the future take place?
17. Where is Herod's slaughter of the children at the time of Christ's birth alluded to?
18. How does Jeremiah describe the new covenant that God will make with Israel?
19. What does Jeremiah 33:17-26 refer to?
20. What event is being referred to in Jeremiah 34:8? Did Judah follow through with this observance in the proper way?

Bible Study # 54
June 26, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Jeremiah 35—52

We are ready to finish up the book of Jeremiah. The first eleven chapters that we are going to cover this evening, **Jeremiah 35-45, provide a historical inset to the theme of the prophecy.** What we have, primarily, in these chapters is a historical account of the events of Jeremiah's ministry. We have the account of his warning to the governmental leaders in his day, the story of his subsequent arrest and, finally, the story of the Babylonian invasion of Judah and subsequent captivity of Jerusalem and Judah. We have the account of those Jews who were left behind and their electing to move to Egypt in spite of Jeremiah's warnings to the contrary. We have the consequences of that.

These chapters deal primarily with contemporary events and yet they also provide lessons for us today. There is a lot of insight, a lot of things that we can gain and learn from parallels with the work that God did through Jeremiah, the work that God is doing in our day and on out ahead of us. Also, these historical inset chapters provide kind of a summary or setting to help us to understand the context in which Jeremiah was writing.

One of the things about prophecy is that much of it is dual. To a great extent, what the prophet was writing or delivering had certain meaning and application for his contemporaries, for those people there at that time and that day. However, the prophecies that were written down generally had implications way beyond that day and down to the end time. That's one of the reasons that certain prophecies are written and recorded and preserved for us, while other prophecies are not. Men such as Elijah, Elisha, Nathan, Gad and many others are mentioned in the Bible as prophets. Yet the prophetic messages that they delivered evidently had primary implications to their day and their society because those messages were not written down and preserved for us.

But when we come to something like the book of Jeremiah, it clearly was preserved for us today. The implications of the book are things of which we need to take heed. Even the events that were contemporary accounts of Jeremiah's life, or things that he was going through, provide a background setting and stage and help us to

understand the circumstances of what happened. Many times when you understand the way it happened the first time (when you understand the circumstances and background of it), it helps you to have a clearer picture of the way some of these things may have implications for us today.

Jeremiah 46-51 provides an insight into God's punishment on the surrounding nations. You have the Egyptians, the Philistines, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, Damascus, Kedar, the Elamites and the Babylonians. These are all focused on and they all have their fates outlined. God will not only punish Judah.

Acts 10:34 KJV, "God is no respecter of persons." God will ultimately punish all nations for their sins. We have this brought in. We can understand some things as we note the modern identity of some of these nations that come down to us today.

Let's note in Jeremiah 35 an example and illustration that is given. We read of an interesting account of a group of people known as the Rechabites who are addressed here. The Rechabites were, in one sense, related to the Israelites in that they were descendants of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law. Jethro himself was a Midianite. The Midianites were descendants of Abraham through his son Midian who he had with Keturah (Genesis 25) after Sarah's death. The Midianites were a kindred people. They were also descendants of Abraham. The Rechabites were descended specifically from Jethro, Moses' father-in-law.

God calls the Rechabites to Jeremiah's attention. What we are told about them is that they had kept and observed from generation to generation precepts that were laid down by their human ancestor Jonadab, the son of Rechab. Jonadab had established a rule for his family. That rule was that his family was not to consume alcohol and they would not settle in towns and in fixed dwellings. They would live as nomads and they would forbear the use of alcoholic beverages.

Now, interestingly enough, you find the descendants of those people in the Middle East still doing the same thing. They are still nomads and they still don't drink alcohol. One thing you have got to hand it to them for is that they have a knack for consistency. They are not a people who are given to a lot of radical innovation. They are rather consistent from one generation to the next.

The Rechabites had come inside the wall of Jerusalem. The Babylonians were laying siege and set up camp inside the walls of Jerusalem.

God told Jeremiah he wanted him to do something. 'I want you to invite the leader of the Rechabites and some of the chief men. I want you to invite them into the temple and set a meal and wine before them. Invite them to sit down and have a nice meal.' Jeremiah did this. When it came to the occasion, the leader of the Rechabites told him he couldn't do this because it was not their custom to drink wine.

Verses 6-8, he said, 'We have not done this [by this time about three centuries] going back to the time of our father Jonadab, the son of Rechab. He established the rule for our family and we have all adhered to it ever since.'

Verses 13-16, God told Jeremiah, 'I want you to notice what has occurred. Notice how these Rechabites have observed the commandment of their ancestor. What about Israel observing My commandments? These people have such honor and veneration for their human ancestor. He laid down a humanly-devised rule, and his children and his descendants for generations down all observe the rule. He established a rule for the family and it was observed out of honor and veneration for him. It was observed for generations to come. I gave rules to My people, My children Israel, and they didn't last "until the water got hot." They didn't honor Me at all. These people honor their human ancestor, and Israel did not honor Me.'

Interestingly, God made a promise to the Rechabites. God was impressed at the dedication that those people had.

Jeremiah 35:18-19, "And Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts and done according to all that he commanded you,' therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me forever.'"

In other words, 'I am going to preserve this little tribe; I am going to preserve it as a witness. I am going to preserve them because I am impressed that a group of people who have had such an attitude of respect and such a tenacity, that I point them out as an example to Israel. I am going to make a promise to you that this tribe will never cease. It is not going to die out. It is not going to be wiped out by all the invading armies.'

They were never a great nation. They were never a mighty people. Many of the mighty peoples of the past have come and gone. Here is a group

what is still today a small Bedouin tribe, probably about the same size they always were. Here is just one more little Bedouin tribe out there in the desert regions in the Middle East.

It's an interesting commentary. God pointed it out as an example to Jeremiah for the fact that all they had was a human instruction and commandment; yet they were faithful to it. They acted on what they knew and held on to it. They had a respect there. God said to Israel, 'You had so much more. You didn't simply have a humanly-devised set of rules.'

Actually, it is interesting if you go back to the context in which Jonadab lived. It was a time when there was a lot of social strife. A lot of things were going on in Israel and Judah. In effect, what Jonadab did was to say, 'We are getting out of this. We see the vice and the luxury. We see the problems. We see the materialism, the idolatry, all of these things. We're going to leave city life behind us. We're going from the things that I view as a corrupting influence. We're going to go out of here, mind our own business, leave everybody alone and live our lives.'

Now God has not called us as His people to go off and hide in a cave and wait for the end. But we have the commandments of God. Israel had the commandments of God. Judah had the commandments of God Himself. They weren't as faithful to what God said as these people had been to what their own simple human ancestor had said.

Jeremiah 36 is kind of an interesting story.

Verses 1-2, this is the account during the fourth year of King Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah. Jeremiah was told to take a scroll and to write all the things that he had been told to say from the day that God had first spoken to him. Really, what he was doing was writing the book of Jeremiah.

Verse 10, he was writing the book and Baruch, who was his assistant, actually wrote the words down. He copied the words and went in and read those words in the temple. This created quite a stir when he went through and read all the prophecies and all the things Jeremiah had said. Some of the princes were a little bit upset. They had Baruch come in and read the book to some of them.

Jeremiah 36:15, "...So Baruch read it in their hearing."

Verses 16-17, they were a little bit taken aback and said, 'We really better take this to the king

because there were some very strong things that were said.' So they had Baruch come in.

Notice, I think this is kind of funny. People who are in charge or think they are in charge of some level of functioning like to give the idea that they have some important questions to ask and that they are really making a determination. I think it is kind of humorous. Since they did not want to appear overly impressed, they said they needed to ask something.

Verse 17, "And they asked Baruch, saying, 'Tell us now, how did you write all these words—at his instructions [with his mouth]?'” What do you say after you have just gotten through having the first two-thirds of Jeremiah read to you and you're told all the things that are going to happen to you? Well they said, 'Tell us now, are you the one who wrote this? How did you exactly write all these words at his mouth?'

Verse 18, "So Baruch answered them, 'He proclaimed with his mouth all these words to me, and I wrote them with ink in the book.'”

Baruch said, 'It wasn't really hard. He pronounced all these words with his mouth. That was the first step; he just kind of said the words [pronounced it with his mouth]. I took some ink and I wrote it in this book. Is it really difficult to figure out how I managed to write this thing down?' I think there was maybe just a tinge of sarcasm that Baruch had when he answered that and kind of described it in graphic detail. What it gets back to is a stupid question deserves a stupid answer. They asked a silly, self-evident question, and he just gave it back to them.

I think you will notice that Jesus dealt with people in that way. For people who asked sincere questions, Jesus always had time to explain in clear terms. He never put them down for asking. But some of these self-important individuals whose attitudes were wrong, when they asked the question, they were trying to be argumentative anyway. They were pompous and trying to appear important. He had no problem at really "pricking their balloon." There were times when He answered in a sarcastic manner because they asked the question that way. He never answered people who were sincere in that way; they simply wanted to know. There were times when people simply needed to be answered that way—applying [Proverb 26:5](#), "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes [KJV, "conceit"]."

Jeremiah 36:19, they told Baruch, 'You and Jeremiah had better lay low. We are going to

take this book in and we're going to read it to the king.' They read it to the king.

Verse 22, "Now the king was sitting in the winter house in the ninth month [this would be December], with a fire burning on the hearth before him." There was a fire there in the hearth. He was sitting there in front of the fireplace and they were reading this to him. They'd read a little ways—this was a scroll—and they would unroll it.

Verse 23, "And it happened, when Jehudi had read three or four columns, that the king cut it with the scribe's knife and cast it into the fire...." He took his knife, cut it and pitched it into the fire. He didn't pay any attention to this stuff. He wasn't impressed.

Word came to Jeremiah.

Verses 27-28, "Now after the king had burned the scroll with the words which Baruch had written at the instruction of Jeremiah, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying: 'Take yet another scroll, and write on it all the former words that were in the first scroll which Jehoiakim the king of Judah has burned.'”

'Take another roll and write on it everything you said the first time; then we have a few things to add.' One thing is evident; God ensures the preservation of His word in spite of human efforts to destroy it.

People ask, 'How can you be sure that we really have the Bible? How can you be sure that some of it didn't get lost in the shuffle?' Well, how can you be sure there is a God? If you can prove there is a God (and that is something that clearly can be done), God is certainly capable of preserving His word. He did right here in Jeremiah 36.

The king said he'd show them; he'd burn up the scroll. God said, 'Big deal! I'll just have it written down again. You won't destroy it at all.' Plus they added in a few details—a few little points about what was going to happen to the king, which were none too good.

Verses 30-31 record the punishment that happened to Jehoiakim. It records how he died. He was not even to be given a decent burial and his descendants would not sit on the throne.

Verse 32, "Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, who wrote on it at the instruction of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire. And besides, there were added to them many similar words." They added in the rest of the story.

In Jeremiah 37, we pick up the story a few years later. We have a story of Jehoiakim being replaced. Nebuchadnezzar came in and put Jehoiakim “out of business.” He went out of the “king” business really quickly. They got rid of Jehoiakim and his brother Zedekiah was placed on the throne instead. Jehoiakim was dealt with here.

Nebuchadnezzar had three invasions of Jerusalem. He came in 604 B.C. He came back in 596 B.C. Finally he returned in 587 B.C. and wiped out the place. He burned the temple and ended the Jewish independence. Nebuchadnezzar came in; his first step was to collect tribute money and to set up a vassal king. When he kept having trouble from the Jews, he finally came back and decided to put a stop to it.

Jeremiah delivered a message. He was willing to speak God’s word and tell it like it was. When you tell it like it is, that is not popular. God’s servants have never won popularity contests. They are never going to win some great popularity contest in their own societies. When you deliver an unpleasant and unpopular message, people don’t like what’s said. There were a lot of people who liked Jesus Christ personally. He was a very likeable individual, but they didn’t like what He said. They didn’t like what Jeremiah said, to the point that when Jeremiah called it like it was, they got mad and threw him in prison.

Jeremiah 37:15-16, “Therefore the princes were angry with Jeremiah, and they struck him and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe, for they had made that the prison. When Jeremiah entered the dungeon and the cells, and Jeremiah had remained there many days.” They kept him in a dungeon and he stayed there for quite a while.

Verse 17, Zedekiah the king called him out privately and asked him if he had heard any word from the Lord. ‘Got any news?’ Zedekiah was not a very courageous sort. He was kind of an opinion-poll politician; they have to read the opinion polls to find out what they are for and against. Their position on the issue changes somewhat from day to day. They’re rather intimidated by others around them. Zedekiah seems to have been this sort of fellow.

Can you imagine what some kind of an old dug-earth cellar that they had him in down there? Then they put him in the court of the prison. They moved him upstairs.

Verse 21, “Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah to the court of

the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread from the bakers’ street, until all the bread in the city was gone. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.”

There was a famine. They gave him a little bit of bread every day and moved him out of the dungeon. They really had him in just a terrible situation where he was, and he was anxious to get out of it. He was accused of all sorts of things.

Verse 13-14, they accused him of being in league with the enemy saying, ‘You are falling away to the Chaldeans.’ Again, he was falsely accused.

People suspect our motives. This is something that happened historically to Jeremiah. We, brethren, should not be surprised or shocked to realize the time is coming when we’re going to be vilified, accused and have our motives suspected. We’re going to have things said about us in terms of why we’re doing what we’re doing. People tend to want to accuse and be suspicious of motives.

For years people said of Mr. Herbert Armstrong that he’s in it for the money. Now they never could explain why he was in it for so many years when there wasn’t any money. Nevertheless, that was what they said. Some of you were associated with the work and go back to a time when there wasn’t any money to be in it for. People look for a reason to accuse.

They accused Jeremiah and said, ‘You’re in league with the enemy. You’re on the payroll from King Nebuchadnezzar. You’re just trying to subvert the nation.’ In reality, Jeremiah wanted to save the nation. He told them the only way to salvation was repentance. If they didn’t repent, they were all going to be wiped out. People didn’t like to hear it. It’s kind of interesting the way Jeremiah was treated by his own people (the Jews) and by his own government. They threw him into prison.

In Jeremiah 38, the siege continues. They threw Jeremiah back into the dungeon, a different dungeon.

Jeremiah 38:6, “So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the king’s son, which was in the court of the prison, and they let Jeremiah down with ropes. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire. So Jeremiah sank in the mire.” It was like throwing somebody into the swamp. Actually, when you check it out, it was an area where there was refuse. It was kind of the worst sort of fate. Actually, what they put him in had originally been dug as a cistern to store

water. But there wasn't any water there. There was mud and all kinds of gunk.

Verses 10-13, finally the king did have Jeremiah taken out before he died. You keep going through this. The king really didn't have the courage to listen to Jeremiah and act on what he had to say.

Jeremiah 39 is the story of the final invasion in 587 B.C.

Jeremiah 39:2, "In the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, the city was penetrated." The enemy came in and burned the walls.

Verses 6-7, "Then the king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes in Riblah; the king of Babylon also killed all the nobles of Judah. Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with bronze fetters to carry him off to Babylon." This was a very horrible punishment. They burned the city. They did all of these things, but, interestingly enough, Jeremiah was freed.

Verses 11-12, "Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, saying, 'Take him and look after him, and do him no harm; but do to him just as he says to you.'" You talk about "carte blanche!"

King Nebuchadnezzar told the commanding general, 'Look, this Jeremiah, you get him out of the prison and you treat him well. And you let him do whatever he wants. He's got "carte blanche.'" This was significant because what really occurred, in effect, Jeremiah was given a passport.

Jeremiah 40:4-5, "'And now look, I free you this day from the chains that were on your hand. If it seems good to you to come with me to Babylon, come, and I will look after you. But if it seems wrong for you to come with me to Babylon, remain here. See, all the land is before you; wherever it seems good and convenient for you to go, go there.'...So the captain of the guard gave him rations and a gift and let him go."

What in effect happened: Jeremiah, if you remember, had a commission. This commission was given at the beginning of the book of Jeremiah.

It was detailed in Jeremiah 1:10, "...to root out, to pull down, to destroy, to throw down..." But he was also "to build and to plant." Jeremiah's commission involved both tearing down and building up. He was responsible to prophesy about the tearing down of Jerusalem, the rooting out of the people from that area, the overthrow of

the throne and the transfer of it. But he was also responsible to build and to plant.

The final part of his ministry involved building and planting, which he had not done up until then. Actually, building and planting involved removing the throne of David from Jerusalem to the British Isles. If you check it out, the actual location to which it was transferred was to Tara, Ireland.

This was the seat of the old high kings of Ireland. Ireland was divided up into several component parts (each of which had a king), and there was a high king who dwelt in Tara. The throne was transferred there. Then quite a few centuries later, it was transferred from Tara, Ireland, to Scone, Scotland. That was at the time of Kenneth McElvyn, King of Scotland, about 800 A.D.

Then several centuries later, it was transferred a third time from Scone, Scotland, down to London, England, at the time of King Edward. That's why there is a stone called the "Stone of Scones." The Queen of England was crowned on it. It's called King Edward's chair. It was built for the coronation of King Edward. The stone was transferred from Scotland and is the symbol of the house of David. The rulers of the house of David have been crowned on it going all the way back to antiquity.

I made comment on it when we went through the book of Chronicles. There are several different places where it describes the fact that during the king's coronation, he stood upon the pillar or stood upon this stone. This was the custom that is identified.

The king's sons were killed before him (Jeremiah 39:6), but we read of the king's daughters in Jeremiah 41:10. We also read of them a little later in Jeremiah 43:6-7. We read that they were taken down into Egypt. Jeremiah went down to Egypt and from Egypt he took at least one of the daughters of the king and maybe more. They traveled with him. They went from Egypt, crossed the Mediterranean and went to the southern tip of Spain. From there, they sailed up to Ireland.

Jeremiah, here in chapters 39 and 40, was given a "carte blanche." He was given a passport from the king of Babylon, along with expense money, to enable him to carry out the job. He was now under the personal protection of the king of Babylon. He was basically free to travel wherever he wanted to go by order of the king of Babylon. If you "messed" with Jeremiah, you weren't "messing" with Jeremiah—you were "messing" with the king of Babylon.

He gave specific instructions. It now enabled Jeremiah to carry out the job God had given him. God opened that door for Jeremiah to be able to travel and to carry out the job he had been given to do. It points out to us how God can work through circumstances—sometimes in the most improbable circumstances—to make it possible for His servants to accomplish the job He has set before them.

We don't know what parallels that we may find. In effect, Nebuchadnezzar was the leader of the Beast power of his day. He was the original Beast, if you want to look at it that way. What is the answer to the booklet, Who is the Beast? Well, if you had lived in the days of Jeremiah, you could have answered it very succinctly. It was King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel told him that. Remember?

Daniel 2:37-38, ““You, O King...are that head of gold.”” ‘You're the one.’ Everything since then has been the succession because the Beast system is symbolized both by the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in Daniel 2, as well as the creatures that Daniel saw in Daniel 7. They reflect a succession of empires that date from the time of ancient Babylon, all the way down to our day and to the time immediately ahead of us.

The point we can realize is that God can work through circumstances, sometimes in the most improbable of ways. We don't want to limit God by determining ahead of time how God has to do things. God can work things out. People have wondered sometimes how are we going to get here or there? How is this going to happen? How in the world could the Church ever get to a place of safety? God doesn't tell us the details because it's not the physical details that He wants us to focus on.

Luke 21:36, Christ told His disciples to pray, to stay close to God, to be watchful and to be vigilant so that they might be accounted worthy to escape the events of the Great Tribulation.

Revelation 12:14 talks about the woman (the Church) being taken into the wilderness into her place (a specific location) where she is nourished there for a time, times, and a half time (the duration of the Tribulation), and protected from the face of the serpent. We're not given the specifics in terms of how it is going to happen. We're not given all the details. There may be certain indications here and there, but you have to be careful of being overly dogmatic on some of those indications. Nevertheless, they are there.

The real point is that God has a variety of ways He can work out the details and He hasn't seen fit to reveal all of that. We see some examples and realize that God could do it in a lot of ways. God can sometimes give us favor in the most improbable of people. God gave Jeremiah great favor with King Nebuchadnezzar. Later, God gave Daniel great favor with King Nebuchadnezzar. God sometimes has ways of working things out we don't expect. We want to look to God and not limit God by our own humanly-devised things. Jeremiah was now free to go and do the job God set him to do.

In Jeremiah 42:1-6, the Jews wanted Jeremiah to pray for them. They said, ‘We will do what God says; we just want you to tell us.’ Jeremiah told them under God's inspiration.

Jeremiah 42:19-21, ““The Lord has said concerning you, O remnant of Judah, “Do not go to Egypt!” Know certainly that I have admonished you this day. For you were hypocrites in your hearts when you sent me to the Lord your God, saying, “Pray for us to the Lord our God, and according to all that the Lord your God says, so declare to us and we will do it.” And I have this day declared it to you, but you have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God, or anything which He has sent you by me.””

‘Don't go to Egypt.’ He said, ‘I know you're going to do it because you never listen. But that's what you're supposed to do—don't go to Egypt.’ In Jeremiah 43:1-2, when they heard a message they didn't want to hear, they got mad and said, ‘You're not telling us the truth.’

Verses 4-7, they said, ‘We're going to do it. We're going to show them.’ Here's the attitude. People want to know. You tell them and then they don't want to know. They are not going to do it. They don't believe it. They don't accept it. They are self-willed. This is pointed out. And, again, as God's servants today, we can't expect a whole lot better response or a whole lot better reaction.

They didn't believe Jeremiah and said, ‘We'll go down and the Egyptians will take care of us.’ Jeremiah said, ‘Guess again! Guess where Nebuchadnezzar's going next? Egypt is next on his list’ (vv. 10-11). People found it difficult to believe. Egypt had been a dominant, independent nation for centuries and centuries and centuries. It was the oldest nation. They couldn't believe that anything could happen to Egypt. Surely not! Egypt had been a major power since antiquity. Well, it did happen.

We call attention here to Jeremiah 43:6. Specifically, "...the king's daughters..." This shows that all of the royal family was not wiped out; the king's daughters were spared. That's the way the line of David was continued.

Jeremiah 44 shows how God dealt with the Jews that went down to Egypt and why He did it.

Jeremiah 44:12-13, ""And I will take the remnant of Judah who have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed and fall in the land of Egypt. They shall be consumed by the sword and by famine. They shall die, from the least to the greatest, by the sword and by famine; and they shall be an oath and an astonishment and a curse and a reproach! For I will punish those who dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence.""

'I am going to punish them because they wouldn't listen. They went down there and they wouldn't listen. They just "tuned it out." If they couldn't hear what they wanted to hear, they would ignore it. God said, 'I am going to take care of that.'

This is a reference and certainly a parallel to what happens. Our people today have that same obstinate approach. They are going to do it their way and don't see why their ways won't work. The only way that works in the long run is God's way.

Beginning in Jeremiah 46, we notice over the next few chapters that we have specific statements about various foreign nations. We start out dealing with the Egyptians. This is against Egypt.

Jeremiah 46:2, "Against Egypt..." Certainly it has an application to that time and day. It was a reference to what God was going to do to Egypt through the Babylonians.

But as we come down to v. 10, we will see that the prophecy and the significance of what was told to the Egyptians went beyond that time. It comes down to our day and on beyond.

Verse 10, ""For this is the day of the Lord God of hosts, a day of vengeance, that He may avenge Himself on His adversaries. The sword shall devour; it shall be satiated and made drunk with their blood; for the Lord God of hosts has a sacrifice in the north country by the River Euphrates."" It talks about the day of the Lord of hosts.

Verse 27, ""But do not fear, O My servant Jacob, and do not be dismayed, O Israel! For behold, I will save you from afar, and your offspring from

the land of their captivity; Jacob shall return, have rest and be at ease; no one shall make him afraid.""

That did not occur in that time and in that day; it is sometime yet future. It describes a successful invasion and destruction. It describes that there were implications of that invasion of Egypt on beyond our time. Read in the book of Daniel where the Beast power comes into the Middle East.

Daniel 11:42, "...and the land of Egypt will not escape." They are going to invade Egypt. In a sense, there are implications that modern Babylon is going to invade modern Egypt, just like ancient Babylon invaded ancient Egypt.

In Jeremiah 47, we focus on the Philistines. The term "Palestine" is simply an alternate spelling. It is an English form of the Greek form "Philistine." It is kind of derived from that with a little different ending. That's why you will never hear a Jew use the term "Palestine." The Arabs refer to it as "Palestine." If you've heard Yassar Arafat interviewed, he will talk about Palestine. "Palestine" means "the land of the Philistines." "Israel," of course, means "Israel."

That's what the whole dispute is. To whom does it belong? Well, some of the descendants of the Philistines are right there and have always been there. That's why the Gaza strip is such a problem. If you go back and find out where the ancient city of the Philistines was, it was Gaza. If you look on a map of the area there, you will find those little villages. They probably haven't changed much—the same bunch of people and the same place. They are still mad; they are still fussing—same old thing.

Some of the descendants of the Philistines left from there. In fact, some of the Berbers of North Africa are descended from them. The Berbers are there in North Africa, particularly in the area of Libya. I haven't done any research on it to see Khadafy's ancestry, but it wouldn't surprise me that he is of Berber extraction. That is one of the dominant people in Northern Libya, which would make him a Philistine by ancestry. He certainly is by temperament and inclination. What you have, in a lot of cases, is the same people getting along just the same as they always did. There's no new thing under the sun.

Then God talks about the consequences of things that were going to happen anciently to Gaza. The Egyptians were coming in and they took over Gaza. They ruled Gaza until the Israelites took it away from them back in the time of the Six-Day

War. The Philistines (the Palestinians) have been living there all along.

In Jeremiah 48 and 49, Moab and Ammon are addressed: Moab in Jeremiah 48 and Ammon in Jeremiah 49. The Moabites and the Ammonites are pretty much located in the area of Jordan and a portion of Iraq. The modern capital of Jordan, Amman, takes its name from Ammon in the Bible; it's the same people. The Ammonites and Moabites are kindred peoples. Some of these tribes you find concentrated primarily in the area of Jordan and a portion of Iraq. The Moabites concentrated perhaps more in the area of Iraq and perhaps some of them in Jordan. The Ammonites more directly centered in Jordan. We find them addressed and some of the things we see prophesied. They will suffer destruction. Jeremiah 48:47 and Jeremiah 49:6 show this.

Jeremiah 48:47, “‘Yet I will bring back the captives of Moab in the latter days,’ says the Lord.”

Jeremiah 49:6, “‘But afterward I will bring back the captives of the people of Ammon,’ says the Lord.” They are going to face the Babylonian invasion that is going to come in.

Jeremiah 48:25-26, “‘The horn [leader] of Moab is cut off...for he magnified himself against the Lord....’” It talks about the pride of Moab.

One of the ancient locations of Moab was the area of the modern Petra. Petra is a Greek name. The Jews call it Sela. The Greeks call it Petra. It basically has the same meaning in Hebrew or Greek. It is located in Jordan and it is known by the name that the Greek geographers gave it in the time of Alexander the Great. It was the ancient location of many of the Moabites.

There is an interesting allusion to it in Jeremiah 48:40, “‘For thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, one shall fly like an eagle, and spread his wings over Moab.’” Some have taken that as an allusion to the place where God would protect His people in the end time.

Compare it with Revelation 12:14 and how the woman will be taken into her place in the wilderness on the wings of a great eagle. Also compare that with other Scriptures.

Isaiah 16:1, “‘Send the lamb to the ruler of the land, from Sela [margin, “Petra”] to the wilderness, to the mount of the daughter of Zion.’” Sela was the Old Testament name. Petra is the modern name. There is a reference in Isaiah 16:1-2 to someone who is the ruler in that area, and it talks about the daughters of Moab.

Verse 4, “‘Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab; be a shelter to them from the face of the

spoiler....’” Some of these things are taken together.

Jeremiah 48:28, “‘You who dwell in Moab, leave the cities [talking about after Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion] and dwell in the rock [or dwell in Sela], and be like the dove which makes her nest in the sides of the cave’s mouth.’” “‘You who dwell in Moab’”—Speaking of the Moabites.

This is what the Moabites did anciently when the Babylonians invaded. Those Moabites who escaped fled from the cities of Moab and went there into the area of Petra. They did do that, so there has been an allusion from this. “...dwell in the rocks [in Sela or Petra], and be like the dove....” It describes the making of a nest.

Isaiah 16:4, “‘Let My outcasts dwell with you Moab, be a cover to them from the face of the spoiler.’” If you put this together with Jeremiah, several of these verses have been taken as an allusion to the place where God would protect His people in the end time. Certainly, it cannot conclusively prove that is the location. There are a couple of others in the book of Isaiah that even appear a little bit stronger than that. When you take them all together they may give an indication, but they certainly are not total conclusive proof.

Nevertheless, it is the basis of why we have felt for many years that the spot that seemed most likely indicated by the Bible as the place where God would protect His people in the end time is the area there of Petra. That, together with a number of other scriptures in Isaiah, has been where the idea came about or why we speculated along that line for many, many years.

In Jeremiah 49:1, we come to the Ammonites.

Jeremiah 49:7, “‘Against Edom....’” We pick up the Edomites. There are several groups that are descendants of the Edomites. We have felt that many of the modern-day Turks trace their ancestry back to at least some of the tribes of Edom. The Amalekites were also the descendants of Edom. Many of them intermarried with the Philistines in the Middle East as well as in North Africa. Many of the Palestinians trace back to the Philistines and the Amalekites who are descendants of the Edomites. It describes the destruction that is going to come upon them. We also find that alluded to in the book of Obadiah.

Jeremiah 49:11, 17-18 show that the Edomites will simply be totally destroyed. The women and children will be left alive, but the male population will be destroyed.

In v. 23, Damascus is addressed. Damascus is the ancient capital of Syria and also the modern capital of Syria.

Verse 28 picks up the story of Kedar. Kedar would be primarily identified with Saudi Arabia. A lot of people don't realize that Ishmael also had twelve sons; Jacob's not the only one who had twelve sons. There are twelve tribes of Arabs, just as there are twelve tribes of Israelites. The primary tribe of the Arabs in Arabia is the tribe of Kedar. They are the ones who are the dominant tribe there in Saudi Arabia. We would take the reference in v. 28 to perhaps be referring to the European invasion of Saudi Arabia as they pour into the Middle East.

The Elamites are addressed in v. 34. They were anciently neighbors of the Babylonians. To a great extent, the Slavic people in Eastern Europe are descendants of Elam. Many of the Slavic peoples trace back to the Elamites.

In v. 36, it describes the Elamites anciently being scattered; this is what happened. They were scattered and basically went into Europe as a captive people, captive to the Assyrians (Germans). They have kind of always lived there, sandwiched in and dominated by either the Germans on the west or the Russians on the east. It's been the story of Middle Europe in the area of Poland and down through Czechoslovakia and some of that area. It is kind of a tragic story because their whole history has been one of being sandwiched between two strong and aggressive peoples.

Jeremiah 50 has prophecies of Babylon and God dealing with Babylon. We find that Babylon is going to be utterly destroyed.

Verses 9-15 describe Babylon being destroyed and not inhabited.

Jeremiah 50:39, “Therefore the wild desert beasts shall dwell there with the jackals, and the ostriches shall dwell in it. It shall be inhabited no more forever, nor shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation.” Ancient Babylon was overthrown. The city of Nimrod was overthrown.

Now, interestingly enough, some of the statements here in Jeremiah 50 are paraphrased back in Revelation 18 when it describes Babylon the Great being overthrown by the Medes and the Persians. There is the allusion that modern Babylon (Babylon the Great and coming down to modern Rome) will be overthrown by an attack by the modern descendants of the Medes and the Persians. This will ultimately be fulfilled with a Russian counterattack (a pendulum swing) that is

going to occur. There is going to be a Russian falling out with the Beast power and destruction.

When you read Revelation 18, you read of something in terms of destruction that went beyond the implication of anything available in the time that John wrote it because it was really a nuclear destruction. It describes the ships and the sea standing afar off for fear of her torment. They saw the smoke of her burning coming up and they stayed afar off for fear of her torment (Revelation 18:9-10). A very apt description of what you would see in a nuclear attack. What do you see? You see a mushroom-shaped cloud and you stay far off for fear of her torment, the fallout that comes as a result—a very apt description.

Jeremiah 50 describes what is going to occur to Babylon.

Verse 15, “...her foundations have fallen, her walls are thrown down; for it is the vengeance of the Lord. Take vengeance on her. As she has done, so do to her.”

Verse 23, “...How Babylon has become a desolation among the nations...”

Verse 31, “...For your day has come, the time that I will punish you.”

Verse 38, “...For it is the land of carved images, and they are insane with their idols.”

How is God going to deal with Babylon?

Verses 9-15 show that Babylon will be utterly destroyed and will no more be inhabited.

Verse 23, “...becomes a desolation...”

Verses 35-39 show that.

God is going to use the Medes and the Persians to inflict this (vv. 31-42).

Verse 41, “...a people shall come from the north, and a great nation and many kings shall be raised from the ends of the earth.”

Verse 42, “...they are cruel...”

Jeremiah 51:11, “...The Lord has raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes. For His plan is against Babylon to destroy it...” It describes the destruction.

Verses 27, “Set up a banner in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations! Prepare the nations against her, call the kingdoms together against her: Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz...” This is describing certain geographical areas between the Black and the Caspian Seas, Soviet Central Asia, some of that area where there is a lot of trouble and strife going on right now—the area of Soviet Armenia. “... the area of Ararat, Minni and Ashchenaz...”

It describes these people being allied with the king of the Medes who is going to come and make Babylon a desolation (vv. 28-29). The

kings of the Medes would trace back to modern Ukrainians; some of the modern peoples of the Soviet Union and European Russia go back to the ancient Medes. They all go back to the ancient Medes. The Medes did it anciently and they are going to do it again.

I think what we are clearly seeing is a transition that is taking place in Europe. There is a vacuum being created by the falling apart of a strong, unified, cohesive, dominant Soviet Union. We are seeing a fracturing taking place. I think that it is very likely that portions of the Soviet Union will come into the orbit of the Beast power, at least for a period of time. It's not clear to what extent some portions of it will be formally part of the Beast power and to what extent some will simply be allied with it. But the Beast could never rise or have risen had the Soviet Union stayed the dominant power that it was.

What we are seeing is a fracturing. We are seeing disillusionment with Communism. What's going to occur yet future is disillusionment with the resurging Catholic Europe that is going to take place. We are going to see a pendulum swing, a reaction that is going to take place at least in some of the nations that were constituents of the Soviet Union. Whether they come back together again in exactly the same configuration, we don't know. But there will be an alliance of many of those nations that are going to turn on that end-time Beast power and are going to attack it. The modern descendants of the Medes are going to literally sack modern Babylon (Rome) and leave it absolutely totally desolate, as Revelation 18 describes in detail.

Clearly, Revelation 18 is describing our time today because the ancient city of Babylon that Jeremiah is discussing here was destroyed. John was not talking about the ancient Babylon. He was talking about a modern end-time event.

Jeremiah describes the Beast power in Revelation 17:2, “with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”

It's a paraphrase of Jeremiah 51:7, “Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore the nations are deranged.”

Revelation 18:2-4, “And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a habitation of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication,

the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.’ And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.’”

That great city, Babylon the Great, is the name that is written in Revelation 17:5, “And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”

Revelation 17:2, “with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”

Now compare that with Jeremiah 51:7-9, “Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore the nations are deranged. Babylon has suddenly fallen and been destroyed. Wail for her! Take balm for her pain; perhaps she may be healed. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed. Forsake her, and let us go everyone to his own country; for her judgment reaches to heaven and is lifted up to the skies.” What John wrote in Revelation 17 is a paraphrase of Jeremiah 51:7.

Let's go on a little further.

Revelation 18:2-4, “And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a habitation of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.’ And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.’”

Verse 10, “standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’” John paraphrased some of the statements that Jeremiah made in Jeremiah 51:6-8.

Jeremiah 51:11, “Make the arrows bright! Gather the shields! The Lord has raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes. For His plan is against Babylon to destroy it, because it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance for His temple.”

It was to be the king of the Medes who was to come and to destroy Babylon. The quotation in Revelation shows that the main application is to the end time and the end-time Babylon because Revelation 18 clearly has the context of the end time. But there is a reference and an allusion in Revelation 18 back to Jeremiah 50 and 51.

In fact, we would also note in Isaiah 21:9, “And look, here comes a chariot of men with a pair of horsemen! And he answered and said, ‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen! And all the carved images of her gods He has broken to the ground.’” “Babylon is fallen, is fallen.”

Revelation 18:2, “And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a habitation of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!’”

Notice any similarities? You think John ever read the book of Isaiah or Jeremiah? You find that one prophet picks up and goes into greater detail where the other one left off.

Isaiah and Jeremiah looked forward to the literal destruction of the literal city of Babylon, but what they said went beyond their time and day and had implications for the future. John, in the book of Revelation, saw an event on out beyond. He saw events of modern Babylon, the daughter of Babylon, as it is sometimes called in prophecy (Isaiah 47:1; Jeremiah 50:42; Jeremiah 51:33)—Modern Babylon, Babylon the Great.

John picks up and quotes or paraphrases a quotation from Isaiah and Jeremiah and gives more details. So you have to go back to Isaiah and Jeremiah to understand part of it. When does this destruction come? When does this fire come on Babylon? Her plagues as we are told in Revelation 18:8 are going to come in one day. Death, mourning and famine mean she is going to be utterly burned with fire (v. 18). It describes this fiery destruction of Babylon.

Verses 9-10, it is going to have smoke that ascends so high that ships way out at sea see it from a distance and stay far off for fear of her torment.

In reading it today, we can see it in the context of modern technology; we realize that’s what happens if you drop a nuclear bomb on a place. The ships that are at a far distance see that mushroom-shaped cloud on the horizon and they keep their distance. Who is going to do that? Who is going to drop it? When we fit in the book of Isaiah, we see that the allusion is clearly the Medes or the end-time descendants of the Medes.

Another indication in Jeremiah 50:18-20, “Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria. But I will bring back Israel to his habitation, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan; his soul shall be satisfied on Mount Ephraim and Gilead. In those days and in that time,’ says the Lord, ‘The iniquity of Israel shall be sought, but there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, but they shall not be found; for I will pardon those whom I preserve.’”

This is the end time. This is future. This is the time when Israel and Judah are going to be pardoned, the time when they are both going to be brought back. Israel is going to come back to their habitation. It ranks the destruction of Babylon with the redemption of Israel.

In v. 20, it mentions both Israel and Judah. It will be a time when they are going to be pardoned and their sins are going to be forgiven. Israel and Judah are going to be re-gathered. Clearly, this shows Babylon’s punishment in the light of God’s deliverance of Israel at Christ’s second coming.

We see that while there was a literal fulfillment, it also looked beyond their day to our day and beyond. It is important for us to realize these things are sure. They are going to happen, and God provides word of it here through His prophets.

Jeremiah 52 concludes the book of Jeremiah. This is just kind of an historical inset. It shows the total destruction that the Babylonians wreaked upon Judah, Jerusalem and the temple.

Jeremiah 52:10-11, “Then the king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. And he killed all the princes of Judah in Riblah. He also put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in bronze fetters, took him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.” They killed the sons of King Zedekiah, slew the princes, blinded Zedekiah and took him as a slave to Babylon.

Verses 12-13, “Now in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month (which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), Nebuchadnezzar, the captain of the guard, who served the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. He burned the house of the Lord and the king’s house, all the houses of Jerusalem....”

They burned the city, destroyed the temple and the palace and, v. 14, they broke down the walls.

Verse 15, “Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive....”

They totally destroyed that area. We get a little bit of insight into the destruction that the Babylonians wreaked upon ancient Jerusalem. Interestingly enough, the Romans, the successors of ancient Babylon, did the same thing to Jerusalem and Judah in 70 A.D. And, ironically, they did it on the same day. They did it on the anniversary of the destruction—the tenth day of the fifth month, the ninth and tenth of Ab. Ab is the fifth month of the Hebrew calendar, which corresponds to our July/August (latter part of July, first part of August). The Jews, in commemoration of the Babylonian destruction, made the ninth day of Ab a day of national fasting and mourning—kind of like the Fourth of July in reverse. It was a day of mourning for the destruction of their nation, loss of independence and the destruction of the temple. They read the book of Lamentations and fasted on that day.

When the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D., they did it on the same day. The Orthodox Jews to this day continue to observe it as a day of mourning. It now commemorates the destruction of both temples.

Next time, we will get into the book of Ezekiel. We are now two-thirds through. We have just the book of Ezekiel left. There is an awful lot that is packed into these Major Prophets and these things that God has inspired to be recorded. Ultimately, the Bible has been preserved for us. It has been preserved for our admonition that we might study it and learn from it. Some things may have direct reference in terms of prophecy. Other things we may learn simply by example and illustration—seeing examples of what has happened to God’s people and God’s servants in the past and realizing that God’s people today, undoubtedly, will face parallel things between now and the end of the age. There will be many things that we will face and go through.

Bible Study # 54 Questions

SURVEY OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS SERIES

Jeremiah 35—52

1. What was important about the example of the Rechabites?
2. Cite an example to show how God ensures that His Word will be preserved in spite of human efforts to destroy it.
3. How did God deal with Jehoiakim and why?
4. What happened to Jeremiah for proclaiming God's message? What was he accused of?
5. Contrast the way the Babylonian invaders treated Zedekiah with how they treated Jeremiah.
6. What is the significance of Jeremiah 40:4-5?
7. What great promises did the Jews make in Jeremiah 42? What did they do when they were told something they didn't want to hear?
8. Were all of King Zedekiah's children killed? Prove.
9. How was God going to deal with the Jews that went down to Egypt after the Babylonian invasion? Why?
10. Show from Jeremiah 46 that Nebuchadnezzar's invasion and subsequent wasting of Egypt was merely a type of a yet future event.
11. What is prophesied for Moab and Ammon? What will God do concerning them at the very end?
12. How is God going to deal with the Edomites (Turks)?
13. How is Kedar (Saudi Arabia) described and what will happen to them?
14. How is God going to deal with Babylon?
15. Who is God going to use to inflict this punishment on Babylon and how are they described?
16. Where in the New Testament are some of the verses in Jeremiah 50 and 51 quoted? To whom are they applied in that context?
17. Demonstrate that the prophesies against Babylon have mainly a future fulfillment.
18. According to Jeremiah 52, how did the Babylonians deal with Judah and Jerusalem at the time of their final invasion?

Bible Study # 55
August 14, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Ezekiel 1—16

We are getting into the book of Ezekiel this evening, and I think it's appropriate to start out with an illustration. The term "watchman" is a term that we don't frequently use anymore. Years ago there was what was termed a "night watchman." Everybody else was in bed sleeping; this one person was supposed to see if anything happened—fire breaks out or some vandalism occurs.

Going back further than that, at the time Ezekiel was written, generally towns were almost like a little fort. There was a wall around these towns. The fields that the people farmed were outside the wall. When there was danger, people came into the town inside the wall. The gates were closed and they were in a fortified situation where they were protected.

There was an important responsibility in these areas, and this was the job of the watchman. Normally, on any city wall, there was a high tower at a strategic point along the wall and in that tower was an individual whose job was to watch. In the type of terrain that you have in many areas in the Middle East, you could look out quite a distance and you could observe something out of the ordinary.

Particularly, you would see a dust cloud. A lone horseman or one individual walking wouldn't make much dust (a horse would make a little more than an individual walking), but a whole gang of horses and chariots would really kick up a lot of dust. You could see that quite a way on the horizon. It took them time to get there. The very fastest traveling was on horseback or in a chariot pulled by a horse, so you had a little time.

The watchman would observe, and if it appeared that danger was approaching, his responsibility was to sound a blast of alarm. They sounded a blast. Generally, the Shofar (a ram's horn) was customarily used because it made a high shrill sound that could be heard for a long distance. It wasn't long ago that bells were often used to signal the time—a dinner bell, etc. This ram's horn carried a sound more like what we would think of as a brass trumpet today. It was a very important job because the survival of the community could depend on the watchman doing

his job. In many cases, there would be marauding bands of robbers out to get what they could.

As we go through the book of Ezekiel, we find that he was told that he was to be a watchman for the house of Israel. He was the one responsible for standing on the pinnacle observing, taking note of what was happening and sounding the blast of alarm warning the nation of impending danger. But there was one problem with that.

As we go through it, we find that the book of Ezekiel was written about 596 B.C. There were three Babylonian invasions and all three were led by King Nebuchadnezzar. The first one took place in 604 B.C. Right after he became king, he launched the first Babylonian invasion there in the Middle East. He came all the way down through Judea and down toward Egypt. At that time he did not destroy those nations or deport the population. He took a few back, but what he basically did was ensure that a king friendly to him was on the throne and that they would start paying him tribute. He was satisfied with that.

Things "rocked along" for about eight years. Because things weren't working the way he had anticipated, he came back in 596 B.C. and changed kings (II Chronicles 36). Nebuchadnezzar took the king (Jehoiachin or Coniah) as a prisoner of war and hauled him back to Babylon. He also took a number of leading citizens and increased the taxes.

Another nine years later, about 587 B.C., the Jews again rebelled against him; this time he came in ready to do serious damage. He burned the temple, burned Jerusalem, destroyed the area and deported the population.

There were three invasions that took place over a period of time. Ezekiel is writing in the context of the second invasion, about 596 B.C. The point that I would like to make and as we are going to notice in going through the book of Ezekiel is that Ezekiel addresses the house of Israel. He says that he was given a message as a watchman to the house of Israel. Do you see what the problem is with that? The house of Israel went into captivity—not to the Babylonians but to the Assyrians about 721 B.C.—over one hundred twenty-five years before Ezekiel wrote. The northern ten tribes, the house of Israel, had long since been in captivity.

One hundred twenty-five years is a long time. One hundred twenty-five years ago takes us back to 1865 A.D., the year that saw the end of the War Between the States. That's been a long time ago. Anybody remember that? No, there is nobody alive that remembers that. One hundred

twenty-five years is a long time. When you start talking about the War Between the States, it seems like ancient history to many people; particularly to young people, it's so long ago.

That's how long had transpired between the time Ezekiel was writing his message and the time earlier when the house of Israel had gone into captivity. So there was a problem. Ezekiel was writing a warning about impending captivity, but the people he's warning have been in captivity for one hundred twenty-five years. If that's who he was really warning, then you have to say he was a little bit late. And, in this case, I don't know if "better late than never" would have applied. If you are already in captivity, it's a little bit late for somebody to warn you that if you don't "straighten out," boy, are you going to be in trouble. One problem was the time element.

We will see that there is a distinction between the house of Israel and the house of Judah. That distinction is made plain in the book of Ezekiel. Solomon died two hundred years before Northern Israel went into captivity. When King Solomon died, what happened? His son came to the throne. But that didn't last until the "water got hot" because the first thing the son was going to do was keep taxes high. Things haven't changed; "read my lips, no new taxes."

They were fighting about it centuries ago in ancient Israel. Solomon had taxes high. Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, came along promising a new deal. Elect him king and he would lower taxes. So he swept into office. The northern ten tribes said, 'You are going to be our king. That's what we like; we don't like high taxes.' Rehoboam kept the southern tribe, the area around Jerusalem.

At that point, you had what was called the kingdom of Israel or the house of Israel in the north and the kingdom of Judah or the house of Judah in the south (I Kings 12). Two hundred years came down since that time. The Assyrians invade and take the house of Israel into captivity and settle them in an area between the Black and the Caspian Sea, in the area of the River Gozan and the city of the Medes (II Kings 17:5-6). Israel is in that particular vicinity, an area that was quite a bit to the north of Babylon.

At a little later time, the Assyrians began to pass from the scene; after they did, the Babylonians came onto the scene. They rise to prominence, invade Judah and take the Jews into captivity. Where do they settle them? They settle them down around Babylon. Here is the northern house of Israel living up in an area that is not

even part of the Babylonian Empire. They are in an area that is independently ruled by the Medes, up in the area between the Black and the Caspian Sea.

And here is Ezekiel coming along as a watchman for the house of Israel and warning the house of Israel. First, he is late because they were taken into captivity one hundred twenty-five years ago; second, how is he going to get there? He is a slave in Babylon. He was taken prisoner of war to Babylon.

Was he going to come up to the soldiers and say, 'I think I need to leave; I have this important message and it's for these people who live a long way away. So, I'll see you later. God told me to leave.' Would they say, 'We'll open up the gates of Babylon and let you right out'? That "wouldn't fly" now and "wouldn't fly" then. Ezekiel was stuck there. He didn't have any way of getting out. How is he going to do it?

The point of the fact is that Ezekiel's message was not for his day. It is warning of captivity for Northern Israel, after Northern Israel was already captive. So it can only apply to a time yet future when Northern Israel would again be established as a nation. It is a prophecy as to what was going to happen.

Ezekiel differentiates between the house of Israel and Judah. The split had occurred three hundred twenty-five years prior to the time of Ezekiel's writings. Northern Israel had its capital at Samaria. They had already gone into captivity and were settled in the city of the Medes, the northern-most part of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, the area slightly south and between the Black and Caspian Sea. The House of Judah was taken captive between 604 B.C. and 587 B.C. by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar. They were transported to the area of Babylon and settled in the southern Tigris-Euphrates Valley. The area where Israel had been settled over one hundred twenty years earlier was not ruled by Babylon. Ezekiel could not possibly have delivered his message to the people intended in his day. His message was warning of future captivity and destruction. This would have been meaningless to a people already in captivity.

The real impact of the message of the watchman for Israel is our time today. Mr. Herbert Armstrong began to understand that back during World War II and he began recognizing the responsibility of proclaiming Ezekiel's message. If it had meaning and impact for our peoples at that time—during World War II and the time right after—how much more does it have

meaning for our people in the years immediately ahead. We live at a very crucial and critical time in the history of mankind, and I think we all realize that. Somebody would have to be blind, indeed, to look at the world around and say they don't see anything that relates to Bible prophesy going on—those things must be for a hundred years from now. Dream on! You can turn on the evening news, pick up a news magazine or newspaper and read things that a few years ago, the only place you ever saw it was in the Church magazines and telecast. Those of you who have been around for a few years know that. You remember that.

The first 16 chapters of the book of Ezekiel, which we **are going to focus on this evening, focus on the commission of the watchman.** There are specific warnings of calamity to Israel. There is a cataloging of Israel's sins. There are even a couple of inset chapters that give us a little insight into God's throne.

We will pick up the story in Ezekiel 1. God gets Ezekiel's attention. Ezekiel was here "minding his own business," so to speak.

Verse 1, he was among the captives by the River Chebar and, all of a sudden, he saw a vision of God. Ezekiel sees a vision that opens up. It was an incredible thing. Have you ever thought about how God goes places? Sometimes people have the idea that God just sits there.

When we were in Washington with the youth group, one of the places we went was the Lincoln Memorial. It's a very impressive place. There's this giant carved white marble chair, much larger than life. In this large throne-like white marble chair sits Abraham Lincoln, also carved out of white marble. This is sitting up on a high platform at the back of the memorial. It really dominates the inside. It is very impressive. I couldn't help but think as I saw that immovable, impassive white marble visage much larger than life, sitting there on that great throne-like chair, that's the way a lot of people conceive God.

Some people conceive God as just sitting there not changing expression, not moving and never getting up out of His throne. They think He just sits on His throne. It's like He is glued to His chair. God has a throne in heaven and He sits on that throne. But God doesn't just sit there immovable twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, throughout all eternity, never getting up out of His throne. The fact that the scripture says He sits on the throne doesn't mean that He never does anything else.

I think it's kind of interesting in Ezekiel 1 because here's a picture of God—the One who actually dealt with Israel, the One who we know as Jesus Christ—actually traveling through the universe in this conveyance, a rather impressive, striking sort of thing. When Ezekiel saw it, it appeared to be like this great circle of crystal. There was fire and flames shooting out. There were great brilliant lightening flashes. There were these unusual creatures under it. It describes wheels within a wheel—which is something like a gyroscope—and it can travel in any given direction. This wheel within a wheel enables it to turn in any way.

These creatures that were under it would strike us as very strange looking; yet they were there. They had four faces; therefore, whichever direction they went was straightforward. Think of the advantages if you had four faces. Any direction you went was straightforward. That's the way these creatures were. When Ezekiel looked up, he thought there was a whirlwind. It looked like a tornado or something. As it came closer, he saw it was like fire unfolding itself. As it came closer, he saw this great brilliant device that had come there, very, very quickly. He describes it moving like lightening.

Ezekiel 1:14, "And the living creatures ran back and forth, in appearance like a flash of lightning." They had slowed down to the speed of light, which was slow by comparison to the speed they usually moved because if you just moved at the speed of light, you would spend a long time going across the universe.

Our closest star, Alpha Centauri, is somewhere around a couple of light years away. That means if you are traveling at the speed of light (186,000 miles per second), it would still take you two years to get there. That's a long way. There's nothing man knows that can travel at the speed of light—except light.

Here it describes these creatures that are attached to the transportation of the throne. When they ran and returned, it was like a flash of lightening. It was just instantly there. And that was in slow-motion. Because when they really wanted to go fast, they went beyond that to where they could transverse the universe virtually at the speed of thought. Some of the science fiction talks about another dimension. Well, there is another dimension; it is the spirit dimension. That is the dimension of eternity. That is the dimension that God inhabits. There are some incredible things. We are just given a little bit of it.

I think it is important for our young people to realize that God's Kingdom is not going to be dull. Sometimes the concept of being in God's Kingdom is, 'Life sure is going to be dull because what does God do? He just sits on this throne.' Well, God does a lot of things, and I'll tell you one thing that God doesn't do. God doesn't look down on human beings and say, 'I wish I were a person; they have all the fun. They get to do all this exciting stuff and all I get to do is sit up here on My throne.' God never looked down envious of us and wished He could come down and have fun.

It's important to realize that there is nothing that we give up for being part of God's Family. It's like you better have all your excitement and fun now because the end is coming. You'd better pack it all in because once the kingdom gets here, that's the end of anything exciting. Well, if you like to ride fast, hold on to your hat because you have never ridden anything like this. You think it is a thrill? Well, it is!

I remember riding on horseback rapidly or coming down a hill on a bicycle. I remember the thrill of the first time you experience that sense of speed. Well, you have never moved with speed like God can move with speed. When we are a part of His Family, we will have access to all kinds of things.

God gave Ezekiel a little bit of a vision of the greatness and the power and splendor of God; he recorded it for us. I think it is important for us to realize that because sometimes we can have this kind of concept that comes out of religious art, which comes out of certain ideas that have been built up, which really doesn't come out of the Bible. There's no Being in the Universe who lives a more exciting, more scintillating and more enjoyable, wonderful existence than God does. And He offers to share it with us.

It's not a matter of having to give up excitement, fun and thrills. Who designed you to where you could enjoy things? Who made it possible for you to even experience emotions? Anything you can experience right now is only enough to whet your appetite, and it is only a tiny shadow of what God can experience on the spirit realm. I think that's important for us to realize and for our young people to realize.

Ezekiel sees this vision, this throne.

In Ezekiel 2, Ezekiel is given a commission. What is he told?

Ezekiel 2:1-5, "And He said to me, 'Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you.' Then the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me, and

set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me. And He said to me: 'Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day. For they are impudent and stubborn children. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, "Thus says the Lord God." As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse—for they are a rebellious house—yet they will know that a prophet has been among them.'"

Based on v. 5, I would conclude that there remains yet a very powerful conclusion to this work to be accomplished. When all these things come crashing down, they are going to know that there has been a prophet among them. I don't think that would entirely be the case were everything to end up now.

There are, in certain sections in the United States, many who know some things about the Church and a little bit of what we've taught. But in terms of having really shaken this nation—particularly Britain, as well as Australia, New Zealand, Canada (the portions of modern-day Joseph), as well as the other areas of the house of Israel in northwestern Europe—I don't think we have really shaken them in the way that God has yet for us to do. So there remains a work to be done. At the right time, God will open the doors and will enable us to go through those doors if we are close to Him, walking with Him and if we're not "asleep at the switch." That may be in some cases.

Ezekiel's commission is described.

Ezekiel 3:4, "And He said to me: 'Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them.'"

Verse 17, "'Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me.'" He was told to go and do this.

Verses 18-19, "'When I say to the wicked, "You shall surely die," and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet if you warn the wicked and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity but you have delivered your soul.'"

Basically, you give the warning. You do your part, but you don't control the response. But if you don't warn them, their blood will be required at your hands.

Verse 20, “Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand.”

The job of the watchman carries with it a great responsibility. God’s servants will be held accountable for the consequences if they don’t convey God’s message. Satan would like nothing better than to have us get caught up in our own problems, to get caught up in petty squabbling and various things that divert our attention and our resources from the work that God has set before us to do. Satan would like to divert our attention and to subvert our efforts. I think we have to keep that in mind. It’s a matter of keeping priorities in mind.

Notice how clearly Ezekiel distinguishes Judah and Israel as two separate people. He told him he was to portray a siege.

Ezekiel 4:1-5, “You also, son of man, take a clay tablet and lay it before you, and portray on it a city, Jerusalem. Lay siege against it, build siege wall against it, and heap up a mound against it; set camp against it also, and place battering rams against it all around. Moreover take for yourself an iron plate and set it as an iron wall between you and the city. Set your face against it, and it shall be besiege, and you shall lay siege against it. This will be a sign to the house of Israel. Lie also on your left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it. According to the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their iniquity. For I have laid on you the number of years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days; so you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.” This had to do with portraying the punishment that was going to come upon the house of Israel.

Verse 6, “And when you have completed them, lie again on your right side; then you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days. I have laid on you a day for each year.” He was to bear the iniquity of Israel three hundred ninety days, and for the house of Judah he was to bear it forty days. This shows a very clear-cut distinction between the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

By the way, the three hundred ninety years, if we figure from the fall of the house of Israel (the Assyrians captivity and invasion) in 721 B.C. and come down three hundred ninety years (v. 6,

a day for a year), it would bring us to 331 B.C. Now, 331 B.C. was a significant date because that is the year when Alexander the Great conquered the Media-Persian Empire.

Remember, the house of Israel had been settled by the Assyrians up in the city of the Medes. We are told that in II Kings 17:6. The empire of the Medes had been a subject people to the Assyrians. In 612 B.C., they gained their independence from Assyria. They conquered Nineveh. Nineveh was actually overthrown by a confederation of peoples and collapsed. The Medes gained their independence.

The Babylonians rose as a great empire. The Medes remained a little independent entity up in the north. Things “kicked along” for almost a hundred years until the Medes and the Persians united, overthrew the Babylonians, and ruled as an empire. The Northern Israelites had remained captives. They had remained in a servant status for three hundred ninety years—from the time the Assyrians brought them up and settled them in the city of the Medes, all through the time of the Median Empire until Alexander the Great conquered the Medes in 331 B.C. When Alexander the Great overthrew the Medes, then the servants of the Medes (the Israelites) were freed and were free to migrate. That marks the beginning of the great Celtic invasion of Europe—coming across the Black Sea and up into Europe. This is a rather remarkable thing, and the dates exactly correlate. It dates back to this time. This was the three hundred ninety years.

As we come down, notice we are given some information about what is going to happen. Ezekiel was told to take some hair and divide it in three portions.

Ezekiel 5:1-3, “And you, son of man, take a sharp sword, take it as a barber’s razor, and pass it over your head and your beard; then take balances to weigh and divide the hair. You shall burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are finished; then you shall take one-third and strike around it with the sword, and one-third you shall scatter in the wind: I will draw out a sword after them. You shall also take a small number of them and bind them in the edge of your garment.”

Then he was told that this is what is going to happen to the house of Israel.

Verse 12, ““One-third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst; and one-third shall fall by the sword all around you; and I will scatter another third to all

the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them.”” That is what Ezekiel warned was going to happen to the house of Israel when they were taken captive.

That’s a warning that applies to our time yet future. We understand the great invasion, the things that are going to take place, the fact that there is literally going to be famine and disease epidemics that are going to sweep this nation. The gods that our modern nations trust in to deliver them from such things are going to fail. They are going to find that the gods in which they have placed their trust as a nation are going to fail in their time of crisis. The American people trust in a multitude of gods. They trust in the gods of war, military might, economic power, the gods of technology, and of medical science—of all the various modern-day gods at whose altars people virtually worship in our modern nation. They stand in awe and think that surely, whatever problem, they have some humanly-devised solution that can solve it or there is some humanly-devised protection that can shield them. Well, we are going to find that is not the case.

The only ones who are going to be spared—a handful—are the remnant that is bound up in the skirt. They’re in a place of protection. This shows the calamity and events that are going to occur and the magnitude on which it will occur.

As we come down, we see what is going to happen to our cities.

Ezekiel 6:6, “In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste....” There is going to be bombing and destruction. There are going to be tremendous cataclysmic events that are going to occur. It is something just beyond the mind of most modern Americans to even imagine or conceive of. We think those are the things that happen to other people in other nations. We see the stories of what happened to other people in other countries, and it’s difficult for the average American to conceive that such things could happen here because they never have. But why haven’t they? –Because as the book of Lamentations brings out, God has set a hedge about our people (Lamentations 2:6; KJV, margin). But He’s going to remove the hedge. Is it going to be an all-out battle? Are we really going to be able to mobilize and put on a great show?

There’s an interesting verse in Ezekiel 7:14, ““They have blown the trumpet and made everyone ready, but no one goes to battle for My wrath is on all their multitude.”” He says they have blown the trumpet to make ready, but

nobody goes out to battle. The indication is we’re not even going to be in shape to retaliate. Why? I don’t know. It doesn’t say exactly. Maybe the people we have manning the nuclear arsenal are all “stoned” out of their minds when the word comes. That’s not too farfetched. It doesn’t say exactly. The indication is a very demoralized circumstance will have occurred and tremendous internal strife and tumult.

Amos 3:9 talks about the tumults in the midst of her, referring to our people. In other words, there will be civil strife and unrest.

When you let serious economic crisis come, then the consequence of that is that people in the cities get hit the hardest of all because they are the least able to independently survive. Generally, the people who are at the bottom of the economic rung are going to be the hardest hit. That’s always the way it is. You’re going to have a lot of really severe problems. There’s going to be civil strife and great unrest because when people start getting laid off, when there begins to be a great deal of economic calamity in a nation that has known plenty, it’s hard for us to conceive there not being plenty.

There are some few of you here who remember the depression. As hard as it was on people then (people were better equipped to survive it then they are now), it’s going to have a lot more calamitous results when it happens again. People are accustomed to having it so easy.

Some think the solution is to stock up on gold, guns, food and to defend themselves. They will have their own place of protection. There are various survivalist groups that have some of these concepts. They, at least, have a little bit of insight into some of the problems that are going to occur, and they think that’s the solution.

Notice what God says about those who take that way out, those who decide that what they are going to do is stock up on gold, guns, hoard their food, maybe get them a cave somewhere and defend what they have.

Verse 15, ““...whoever is in the field will die by the sword; and whoever is in the city, famine and pestilence will devour him.”” So kind of take your choice here.

Verses 16-18, ““Those who survive will escape and be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, each for his iniquity. Every hand will be feeble, and every knee will be as weak as water. They will also be girded with sackcloth; horror will cover them; shame will be on every face, baldness on all their heads.”” It talks about being weak. The

indication would be of a nuclear destruction. It talks about their hair falling out. These are symptoms of nuclear fallout.

Verse 19, ““They shall throw their silver into the streets, and their gold will be like refuse; their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord...””

One thing about gold—it becomes very highly radioactive when exposed to radiation. One of the first things you would want to get rid of is your gold. It’s kind of an interesting thing. In the book of James, it talks about how the gold will burn them. It’s very descriptive if you read a little bit about nuclear fallout and radiation. It’s very descriptive of what happens with nuclear fallout and radiation.

James 5:3, “Your gold and your silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasures in the last days.” It talks about the effects of becoming radioactive, and it will just eat your flesh like it was fire. It is so very, very descriptive.

Some of the things that are described here, you know, people must have read that for centuries and scratched their heads and wondered how in the world could something like that happen? What could that mean?

You read about Babylon the Great in Revelation 18:17, ““for in one hour so great a city comes to nothing.”” People must have read that for centuries and scratched their heads. People must have figured that must be just kind of a poetic expression because you can’t destroy an entire city in an hour. It’s impossible! It was up until 1945. Then a great city was destroyed in an hour. All of a sudden, we realize that Revelation 18 is not just a poetic exaggeration, not just poetic license; it was a very literal description of what happens when a nuclear bomb is dropped. You see the smoke of the torment—that famous mushroom-shaped cloud—ascending up miles out to sea.

Verses 9-10, everybody keeps his distance for fear of her torment; the torment of radiation sickness, a slow death. It is very, very descriptive.

We see some of what is said.

Ezekiel 7:19, ““They will throw their silver into the streets, and their gold will be like refuse; their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord; they will not satisfy their souls, nor fill their stomachs, because it became their stumbling block of iniquity.”” Human beings put their trust in these

things to deliver them. In the day of the final calamity, they are going to find that it is not going to be of any avail. If that is what we trust in to survive the Day of the Lord, we are going to be disillusioned. We certainly should be wise stewards of our resources and should use wisdom in terms of riding out the ups and downs of our day-to-day economic fluctuations. Yes, but in terms of counting on something like this for deliverance and as a protector when the calamity comes, forget it!

Verse 23, ““Make a chain, for the land is filled with crimes of blood, and the city is full of violence.”” “Make a chain.” It is link joined to link; one thing is linked to another—cause and effect. This is so descriptive of our cities in this country today.

God says, as a result of it, there are going to be consequences that are going to come.

Verse 24, ““Therefore I will bring the worst of the Gentiles, and they will possess their houses; I will cause the pomp of the strong to cease, and their holy places shall be defiled.””

Ezekiel 8 gives an interesting description. God says, ‘I am going to show you some of the abominations of the house of Israel.’

Ezekiel 8:6, “Furthermore He said to me, ‘Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel commits here, to make Me go far away from My sanctuary? Now turn again, you will see greater abominations.’” He said, ‘You see this? It looks bad, but you are going to see greater abominations than this.’

Verses 13-14, “And He said to me, ‘Turn again, and you will see greater abominations that they are doing.’ So He brought me to the door of the north gate of the Lord’s house; and to my dismay, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz.”

Verses 15-16, “...‘Turn again, you will see greater abominations than these.’ So He brought me into the inner court of the Lord’s house; and there at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, and they were worshiping the sun toward the east.”

Now, when is the sun in the east? When it is rising, right? So what he saw was a sunrise service. The only time you would worship the sun toward the east is when it is rising. If you would like to do a little research on “weeping for Tammuz,” you will find that this is the origin of

Lent. It was a period of penance in the spring (going back to the ancient Babylonians) that culminated in a sunrise service—and it still is!

If you dig hard enough, you will find somebody who will come up with the idea of Mardi Gras back there, too—to kind of “kick it off.” If you’re going to do penance for forty days, you want to make sure you have something to do penance for. No need doing penance for nothing. God looks at these things and He doesn’t like it.

People say today, ‘But we don’t do it for that reason. We are not weeping for Tammuz. We’re not actually worshiping the sun. We’re worshiping God. We just go out there and have this service at sunrise, but we’re not doing it for that reason.’ It’s the same thing people will tell you about putting up a Christmas tree; they’re not worshiping the sun god. They put up a tree because everybody else puts up a tree. It’s pretty and decorated with the lights—anything wrong with lights? Does God hate trees?

People use human reasoning and say, ‘I don’t see what difference it makes. We are not doing it to worship Tammuz or to worship the sun god. It’s just kind of a cute little custom and everybody is doing it. We don’t want to stick out like “sore thumbs” and we don’t want our kids to be deprived.’

Well, I would like mine to be deprived—deprived of the Great Tribulation, deprived of the wrath of the Day of the Lord. There are a lot of things I would like to be deprived of and I hope my family is deprived of. I think there are things you would like to be deprived of. People say they don’t see what difference it makes. That’s the whole point; they don’t see what difference it makes! It doesn’t make a difference to other people. Maybe they are doing it for that reason. No, generally the reason they are doing it is because everybody else does. Show me any place in the Bible that says that just because everybody else does it, it is a good reason and that’s what God wants His people to do.

I do find where God says in Deuteronomy 12:30-32, “‘Take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, “How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.” You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way, for every abomination to the Lord, which He hates, they have done to their gods, for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to

observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.”

God says not to look around and see how all these pagans serve their gods and think that’s kind of a cute little custom. We should not do that.

John 4:23, God wants to be worshiped in spirit and in truth. What is truth?

John 17:17, “‘...Your word is truth.’” God wants to be worshiped in accordance as He reveals. He doesn’t want us adding to it or taking away from it and kind of adapting it. He doesn’t want us looking around and adapting all these cute customs.

‘We won’t call it by the old pagan name; we will just change the name.’ So the ancient Romans celebrating the Saturnalia started celebrating Christmas. They did the same thing at the same time, but they just called it by a different name. That makes it okay? Right?

You can read Deuteronomy 12 and Ezekiel 8 as well as I can. God directs how He wishes to be worshiped. We are responsible as individuals for what we do, and I think we have to understand that. You can do all kinds of things; maybe nobody else is going to know it and maybe nobody in the Church finds out. Big deal! We all ultimately give an account to God for what we do and what we know.

James 4:17, “‘Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.’” We all have to keep that in mind. Ezekiel has these warnings here, and we are admonished to take heed.

Ezekiel 8:17, “‘Then He said to me, ‘Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah to commit the abominations, which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence; then they have returned to provoke Me to anger. Indeed they put the branch to their nose.’” The more literal translation is “‘they have put the branch to My nose.’”

There are several who are called “emendations of the Sopherim.” The Sopherims were the scribes. They made several little emendments to the text. They didn’t erase the text. They just made a little note up above it in terms of the way it was to be read. There were several places that they thought the language was kind of strong or offensive or they knew that what was described was almost blasphemous and they didn’t want to say it that way. So they emended it to kind of soften the sound of it. When it said, “‘they put the branch to My nose,’” they thought that was a very harsh statement and changed it around.

When you actually look up that phrase, it is a reference to a very ancient pagan symbolism, an ancient phallus symbol. The Hebrew “*zmowrah*” is the term for “branch.” It refers to the phallus symbol, the obelisk. Actually, it is the origin of the steeple. That’s why you find it on the top. It goes back to the ancient “*zmowrah*.” God views it as offensive. People don’t see what difference it makes. It is irrelevant whether it makes a difference to people. The question we all should ask ourselves is, ‘Does it make a difference to God?’ That’s really the issue—does God care one way or the other? That is Who we have to be primarily concerned about pleasing.

I remember many years ago, back in the early to mid-70s, back around 1973 or 1974, things had gotten to such a point that there was an individual, who was even in the ministry at that time (he has long since been out of the ministry and out of the Church), who absolutely shocked me. I was at a district ministerial meeting and I was absolutely shocked by what I heard. Several of us were standing around, and he mentioned very casually that he had put up Christmas decorations that year. My mouth must have dropped open. I couldn’t believe what I was hearing.

His excuse was he was not doing it really to celebrate Christmas. He just didn’t want to be offensive to all of his worldly neighbors. They all go in for this and put it up. He just didn’t want to stand out as being different. They may have been offended because he didn’t have decorations up. My question was, ‘Aren’t you concerned about being offensive to God? If I were you, I would be a whole lot more concerned about offending God than I would the guy next door.’ Well, no, evidently he wasn’t. I guess he figured God would understand.

God understands—that’s the whole point! God understands when we are not doing what we should do. God offers mercy and grace, but He offers it upon repentance. God offers to save us from our sins, not in our sins. God is very merciful and compassionate when we repent. God doesn’t have a casual “anything-goes” and “I-don’t-care-what-you-do” attitude. He doesn’t say, ‘Whosoever will, may come. Just do anything you want to do and it is fine with Me. No big deal.’ I go through the scriptures and I find God made an awfully big deal out of a lot of things.

Ezekiel 9:4, “and the Lord said to him, ‘Go through the midst of Jerusalem and put a mark on

the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.’”

Verses 5-6, then He told His angels standing by, “To the others He said in my hearing, ‘Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary.’”

This is not the mark of the beast; rather, this is the sign of God. God sent Ezekiel and He said, ‘I want you to go through and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations of Israel. Set a mark on those who are really bothered and grieved and moved by all the trash and the filth that they see around. But do not set a mark on those who are comfortable and complacent with it, who want to be part and parcel of it and dabble their toe in the cesspool. Set a mark on those who are bothered by it, take offense at it, are grieved by it, hate to see it and are yearning, “Thy Kingdome come.”’ God says, ‘I want you to note all of those because those are the ones I’m going to protect. When I do that, then it’s all going to break loose.’

You might read the parallel back in Revelation 7:2-3 and Revelation 14:1 about the sealing of the servants of our God in their foreheads. That is what is pictured here. After the sealing, then the plagues of the Day of the Lord come sweeping across. He says, ‘Start at My sanctuary, at My house; start with My people.’

It is important that we be among those who sigh and cry for the abominations of Israel. It’s important that the things that we see happening in society bother us—not in the sense that we should just sit around and be horribly depressed all the time. We should not have a casual, careless, indifferent attitude to what we see because God doesn’t have a careless, casual attitude to what He sees.

God sees the consequences. Little things lead into big things. It leads to grief, suffering and harm for people—human beings made in God’s image who are suffering unbelievably the consequence of sin. It is important that we be bothered by that in the right way.

We are told in Ephesians 1:13-14 that we are sealed. God’s Holy Spirit has sealed us unto the day of redemption. That is symbolic—there on our foreheads, the sealing of God’s servants.

In Ezekiel 10, we again find this portable throne that God utilizes. It’s very descriptive. We don’t have time to go into all of this, but it must have been quite a remarkable thing. Ezekiel had to

describe it in the language of which he was familiar. How would you describe an airplane, an automobile, a train or something of that sort if you had never seen anything like that before? You would use the language that is known to you. You would try and describe it using terms and comparisons that you are familiar with.

That's like our forefathers when the car first came out. They called it the horseless carriage. Mr. Herbert Armstrong told about when he was a little boy that his father was standing at the window and said, 'Everybody come quick and see a horseless carriage.' This was quite an event. They had heard of them, but none of them had ever seen one. They came running to the window and looked out, and there was a wagon pulled by a couple of mules. His father had a big laugh and said, 'See, that's a horseless carriage.' It was not being pulled by horses but by mules. That was back in maybe 1896. People utilized phrases like "horseless carriages" because how do you describe them? There wasn't a name for it. Eventually, a name was invented.

Ezekiel saw this throne. He saw this conveyance. He couldn't use the language of modern technology to describe it. It would be beyond our ability to describe. To try to describe it, he used the language and the phrases that it looked most like to him.

Ezekiel 11 describes why God will give His Spirit to Israel.

Verse 17, he talks about bringing them back after the nation has been punished and the consequences—gathering the remnant and bringing them back. That is yet future after Christ returns.

Ezekiel 11:19-20, "'Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.'" God says, 'I am going to change them.' He is going to give His spirit for the purpose of conversion, of changing us, of transforming us, and enabling us to walk in His statutes and His ordinances. A transformation by the Spirit of God makes us the people of God.

We see the way that Israel is characterized in Ezekiel 12.

Ezekiel 12:1-2, "Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying: 'Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, which has eyes to see but does not see, and ears to hear but does not hear, for they are a rebellious house.'"

In v. 6, He says, "...for I have made you a sign to the house of Israel."

Verse 9, "Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, 'What are you doing?'" It goes down and describes the nation as a rebellious nation.

As we continue, there is an interesting description.

Ezekiel 13:2, "'Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, 'Hear the word of the Lord!'"

Let's understand a little bit about this word "prophet." The Hebrew word for prophet, "*nabiy*," is a word that means "those who announce or who proclaim." The prophet of God is one who announces or proclaims God's message. In some cases, it might be a revelation of future events. We think of the word "prophet" as being one who foretells the future. But the word "prophet" has a much broader meaning than that. A prophet is simply one who announces a message, one who conveys, proclaims or announces. A prophet of God is one who proclaims or announces God's message.

A false prophet is anyone who proclaims or announces a false message. In some cases, the message was a foretelling of future events. But that's not the only thing that God can convey. Here we see false prophets describing the false prophets of society.

I think sometimes we have tended to very narrowly view this and to think of some of the preachers on the radio and television of some of the worldly churches. We have identified it with them and said that these are the false prophets. Well, yes they are, but they are not the only false prophets. And, frankly, they are not the false prophets that are primarily listened to in this nation. The various ones on radio and television are not really the ones that most people in this country pay a whole lot of attention to. Only a tiny fraction of the people in this country really give a lot of credence and really pay a lot of attention to what the radio and television "false prophets" say.

The term "prophet" in the Hebrew—those who announce or proclaim a message—would certainly in our modern society refer in a general sense to the whole realm of the media. It is something that really did not exist in that way in ancient Israel, but it exists as a very powerful force in our society today. They (the media) are the opinion molders. They are the ones who announce or proclaim a message that shapes

the thinking and the opinions of people. This includes both the secular false prophets as well as the religious false prophets. It includes everything from the major television, radio, newspaper and news magazines—the whole realm of the opinion molders. It includes those who announce and proclaim, those that people look to for explanation and understanding of what is transpiring in the world around.

God says of them in v. 6 (KJV), “They have seen vanity and lying divination....” NJKV, “They have envisioned futility and false divination....”

Verse 10, “Because, indeed, because they have seduced My people, saying, “Peace!” when there is no peace—and one builds a boundary wall, and they plaster it with untempered mortar—” He says, ‘They’ve built up this edifice, and others have come along, whitewashed it and made it look good.’

But, v. 11, the whole thing won’t stand up because it is going to fall when a wind and storm comes. When the events that are going to transpire come, it is going to show what a shaky edifice has been built by those who claim to be “in the know,” those who are the “experts” and those who are the opinion molders and opinion shapers. It’s going to become very apparent when this occurs.

Verse 14, “So I will break down the wall you have plastered with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation will be uncovered; it will fall, and you shall be consumed in the midst of it....” It is going to be apparent on what a faulty foundation the whole society has been built.

Frankly, the biggest things that are the foundation of our modern society are the concepts of science (I Timothy 6:20 KJV, “falsely so called”), evolution and all the things that are the spin-off of that. If there’s anything or any concept that underlies the thinking of modern “educated” people, it is the concept of evolution. The concept of evolution is the idea that there really isn’t a God who intervenes in human affairs. And if there is any kind of God at all, it is some kind of remote vague “first cause.” They claim there really isn’t any God at all and this “first cause” really doesn’t have any relevance to us. It certainly doesn’t tell us how to live our lives and certainly does not intervene in the world or have controlling influence in the affairs of the world around us. The foundation of this society is based on the fact that there isn’t a God

who steps into history. They believe everything just continues along, just as it always has been.

Verse 17, it describes the daughters of My people. Some of the symbolism that’s used here is not entirely clear, but the concept is all of these various “do-gooder” causes and various movements that are out there.

Supposedly, all these various “do-gooder” causes go out and as it says in Jeremiah 6:14, it “heals the hurt of My people slightly.”

Ezekiel 13:19, “And will you profane Me among My people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, killing people who should not die, and keeping people alive who should not live, by your lying to My people who listen to lies?”

In so many cases, the consequence of some of these “do-gooders” is that all the sympathy is dished out for the criminal and the people who are out causing all the problems—“...keeping people alive that should not live...” And as a consequence, those who are innocent and are going around minding their own business die a needless death. The professional “do-gooders” and sympathizers always seem to have their sympathy with the perpetrators of the problems and very little sympathy left over for the victims. They are out trying to do all these things. There are soup kitchens and all these things, and it’s not the solution to the problem. “...by your lying to My people who listen to lies.”

Verse 20 (KJV), it describes all their various good works and the pillars that they sew and the things that they do.

Verse 22, “Because with lies you have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and you have strengthened the hands of the wicked, so that he does not turn from his wicked way to save his life.” You’ve been there to bail him out, to help him out and keep him from suffering the consequences of his actions. Really, what you’ve done is kept him from coming to repentance because you’ve been there to try to soften the blow. What he needed was not somebody to soften the blow. You’ve wound up making the righteous sad because the result has been a society that is filled with violence and all sorts of things. It’s a sad commentary as we see it.

Ezekiel 14:4, “Therefore speak to them, and say to them, “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Everyone of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity....’”” He sets up the idols in his heart. That’s ultimately where idolatry is. It

is what we set up in our hearts. It's what we look to, what we stand in awe of, what we're really deeply impressed with.

What does it mean to "worship"? Sometimes you need to look up synonyms because we think we know what it means to "worship." It talks about the world worshipping the beast. What does that mean? It means they are very deeply impressed with and they stand in awe of. That's what it means: to have that worshipful attitude, to just be most impressed with, to really stand in awe of.

In our society, if you'd ask most people, 'Do you worship idols?' They would say, 'No.' Take a poll in this country; go up to people on the street and ask, 'Do you worship idols?' You'd go through and say, 'Ezekiel must have been wrong; nobody worships idols. Everybody says they don't worship idols.'

We're familiar with the statues and things that we think of with the Catholic Church. If you were to go to them and ask if they worshipped those things, they'd say, 'No, of course not.' They don't worship idols. Nobody claims to worship idols. But God says somebody is worshipping idols. You can't read it and all the things God has to say about idolatry and not come to the conclusion that somebody, somewhere, is worshipping an idol. In fact, it kind of sounds like a bunch of people is worshipping idols. They set up idols in their heart.

Idols can be set up. They can be some literal figure that you see, bow down to and burn incense to. God very clearly says not to do that. But some people, who wouldn't dream of setting up this image and bowing down to it, have an idol in their heart. If we're not careful, that's the kind of idols we can set up. We'd be so careful not to bow down to some great big fat leering golden Buddha and burn incense to it. I don't think any of us would ever dream of doing such a thing. But we can set up an idol in our heart if we're not careful by really standing in awe of and being impressed with something other than God in a way that should be reserved for God.

God says, v. 13, "...I will cut off its supply of bread, and send famine on it...."

Verse 14, even though Noah and Daniel and Job were there, they wouldn't save anybody but themselves. Things are going to get so bad, and God says that nobody is going to be able to save anybody else. God says He's not going to make a deal like He did with Abraham (Genesis 18:32)—'if there are ten righteous men in the city, I will spare the whole city.' God singles out these three individuals as three of the most

righteous men who ever lived: Noah, Daniel and Job. These individuals are certainly singled out as men of outstanding righteousness. God says if they were there, He would save them. But He wouldn't save the city even for their sake.

Verse 13, "...I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it."

Verse 15, "If I cause wild beasts [KJV, "noisome beasts"] to pass through the land, and they empty it, and make it so desolate that no man may pass through because of the beasts." Animal plagues, noisome beasts that pass through the land, rabid animals—whatever it may be. You've heard some of these things about killer bees. So far nothing has really come of it. People can sit back and say, 'Well, you know something like that could never happen.' Well, God says it will. I don't know exactly how it's going to happen, but I believe it's going to happen.

Some of these things we've talked about, and Mr. Herbert Armstrong talked about them many, many years ago. We may have speculated about "time" in certain areas, as anticipating certain of these events happening. We may have "jumped the gun" on some of that in our eagerness. We may have introduced speculation about "time." God has reserved the times and the seasons to Himself (Acts 1:7). We tried to read God's mind, as we do sometimes. That's human nature. The disciples tried to do that, too. None of that diminishes from the accuracy of what is going to happen. We should never kid ourselves. We need to make a distinction between what's speculative and what's not.

There's nothing speculative about the fact that God is going to call noisome beasts to pass through the land to spoil it and make it desolate. That's what it says. That is not speculation. If I said, 'Well, He's going to do it in "x" amount of years,' now that would be speculation. The fact that He is going to do it is not speculation. That's a clear statement of fact.

Verse 17, "Or if I bring a sword on that land, and say, "Sword, go through the land," and I cut off man and beast from it."

Verse 19, "Or if I send a pestilence into that land..."

Verse 22, "Yet behold, there shall be left in it a remnant [just a handful], who will be brought out..." We see that there are going to be a lot of these things that are going to come about.

Ezekiel 16 is an analogy of Israel. Israel is pictured as a castoff infant and reared by God.

After her maturity, she marries God. Then in the aftermath of the marriage, Israel is pictured as entering into idolatry. God draws this analogy, which is brought out. He describes Israel in this poetic symbolism and, in a sense, shows the absolute horror of what Israel did in turning their back on God who rescued and nurtured them, who brought them up and married them, as it were in a symbolic sense.

There are many principles that we can deduce from this. There are many things that we can learn. We see the symbolism that God describes. He describes what Israel did. We understand the primary implications of it. I think that even in cases like this, it is one of the ways of learning how to be governed by the Bible and to let God reveal His will.

We know from the New Testament certain general principles, for instance, of proper modesty and not gaudy attire. Ezekiel 16 gives a picture symbolically of God arraying Israel. It is sometimes helpful to look at it, realizing that it's symbolic; but we realize that if God utilized it, then it is not inappropriate. He describes beautifully crafted shoes, beautiful garments with linen and with silk. He describes jewelry. He describes these things.

Ezekiel 16:9, "...I anointed you with oil [in the sense of perfumed oil]." We can see that Israel is arrayed as a bride or arrayed as a queen. There are appropriate occasions where it's not wrong to wear something that is appropriate for the occasion. Here it shows the utilization of jewelry, the utilization of beautiful clothes or even perfume. The things God utilized, the specific things that He mentions—basically perfumed oil, shoes, clothing and jewelry—show that it is not wrong for a Christian woman to utilize jewelry, for instance. Some religions totally prohibit the use of any jewelry. And yet we read from Ezekiel 16 and understand that it is not wrong.

Obviously, there are principles in the New Testament that show that we should be modest in our apparel. We are not to be gaudy and we are not to go to an extreme; jewelry is used tastefully and obviously for certain occasions, such as a wedding. Here, the sense is not only of a wedding but the coronation of a queen with a crown. Obviously, there would be things that would be appropriate that are not wrong in and of themselves as long as they are used properly, tastefully and not in a wrong manner. Some things God utilizes; other things He doesn't. You can draw contrasts between God arraying Israel

as His queen and Israel arraying herself as a harlot later on in other passages. But we can deduce here that it is not wrong that certain things are utilized. They are not intrinsically wrong in and of themselves—as certain ones have sometime thought—as long as it's done properly, appropriately, in proper taste and at the proper occasion.

It goes through and describes the contrast of Israel being called by God and God providing all of these wonderful things, offering Israel the opportunity as His wife, as His queen. And yet what did she do? She went and involved herself with all of the nations around. God compares that to harlotry. That's the way God views the unfaithfulness, spiritually, as a betrayal. He draws the analogy as a husband betrayed by his wife. In that sense, God pictured Himself as the husband. There is a sense of betrayal that is described.

This pretty well takes care of the first sixteen chapters in the book of Ezekiel. There's an awful lot packed into the book of Ezekiel and an awful lot packed into the Major Prophets. There is a tremendous amount that is there. There are things that we would do well to take notice of and pay attention to because they're things that very directly impact us and the world in which we're living—events that are transpiring oh so rapidly and quickly.

Bible Study # 55 Questions

SURVEY OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS SERIES

Ezekiel 1—16

1. Where was Ezekiel and what was his status when he began his prophetic career?
2. What did he see in his first vision?
3. In chapter 2, what was Ezekiel commissioned to do? What was the purpose?
4. In Ezekiel 3, how is Ezekiel's commission described?
5. What responsibility do God's messengers have for conveying God's message to the people?
6. In what way does Ezekiel 4 show that Israel and Judah are two distinct peoples?
7. According to Ezekiel 5, what will happen to our people?
8. According to Ezekiel 6, what will happen to our cities?
9. When invasion comes, will America be able to mobilize and fight back?
10. What does God indicate about those who are stocking up survival shelters and are investing in gold and silver as a hedge against the coming monetary crash?
11. What modern-day customs are the house of Israel pictured as observing in Ezekiel 8?
12. What is the significance of the mark mentioned in Ezekiel 9:4?
13. How does God travel from place to place?
14. According to Ezekiel 11, why will God give His Spirit to Israel?
15. How is Israel characterized in Ezekiel 12?
16. What does God have to say of the opinion molders (false prophets) of our society? What about the women "do-gooders"?
17. Who does God characterize as three of history's most righteous men? Would their presence in our nation today save us?
18. What four basic plagues are going to come on our nation?
19. What analogy does God use to characterize Israel—her relationship to Him and her sins—in Ezekiel 16?
20. What principle concerning dress and grooming is shown here?

Bible Study # 56
August 28, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Ezekiel 17—32

This evening we **are covering the mid-section of Ezekiel—chapters 17—32**. There are crucial parts in this section **that focus in on the prophecies of the continuity of David's dynasty in spite of the Babylonian captivity of the Jews**. This is something to note because God had made a promise to David at the time David desired to build the temple. He told David, 'You're not going to build a house for Me.' There were reasons for that. God said, 'Instead, what I will do, I will build a house for you. I am going to establish your dynasty.' God said, 'I'm going to establish that forever' (I Chronicles 17:4-14).

God made that promise to David and the dynasty had continued along for, let's say, in the neighborhood of over four hundred years. Now, we come to a time of the Babylonian captivity where Jerusalem is going to be destroyed. To all apparent visible signs, the dynasty of David is going to cease to rule. Was God's promise proved to be of no effect? God made a promise to David and even specifically told him, 'If your descendants, who sit upon your throne, sin, I will chasten him, but I won't turn away from him as I did from Saul. I will chasten him, but I will not reject him as I did the family of Saul' (II Samuel 7:14-15). God had made a covenant, a promise, to King David.

The people of God who were alive at that time had understood that promise. At least, they understood there was a promise and they had, as many times is the case, read things in. God made a promise that He was going to preserve the throne of David and, undoubtedly, they had assumed it would be done in Jerusalem over Judah. Therefore, that meant the uninterrupted continuation of the line there in Jerusalem in Judah. That's not what God said. But we can all have a tendency to read things in and to assume things that aren't necessarily there.

This is a lesson for prophecy (and prophecy even for today) to realize there are times we may have assumed things that are not always necessarily what the text says. Many of the Jews had assumed that the promise to David meant the unbroken continuation there in Jerusalem over Judah. That's not what God had in mind. In fact, the dynasty was continued and does continue, but

the throne of David today is located in London. The throne was overturned, overturned, overturned (Ezekiel 21:27, KJV). It was overturned from Jerusalem to Tara, Ireland; from Tara, Ireland, to Scone, Scotland; and from Scone, Scotland, to London, England.

Ezekiel 21:27, ""I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more [overturned], until He comes whose right it is; and I will give it to Him."" –In other words, Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

This evening we will notice a couple of things relating to that and relating to some of the prophecies of David's dynasty. We **will notice some of the specific indictments of the sins of modern Israel and the ultimate punishment**. We find some of these things outlined here in Ezekiel.

Also, **the origin of Satan is addressed in Ezekiel 28**. This is a section of Scripture Mr. Herbert Armstrong used to go back to many times. Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28—we've heard him talk about Lucifer and tie it in with Genesis 1, the two trees. He kept doing that because he felt like people didn't really get the point. I think, sometimes, some who thought they got the point didn't; that has been shown. In Ezekiel 22, there is interesting information that we will bring into focus a little more clearly as we come to it.

Ezekiel 17 is a parable to the house of Israel. Now, understand something. This is a parable to the house of Israel. Remember, as we went through the last Bible study, the house of Israel had already gone into captivity over one hundred twenty-five years before Ezekiel ever wrote this. Ezekiel was with the captives of Judah in the southern Mesopotamian area, which wouldn't be a good place to be in the modern-day Iraq.

He was kind of like some of the captives that are over there now. Saddam Hussein kind of saw himself as a modern-day Nebuchadnezzar. They had already started a construction project. He wanted to rebuild the palace of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon with the hanging gardens. They hadn't gotten around to rebuilding the palace, but they had put up a sign saying, "The palace of Nebuchadnezzar, rebuilt in the era of Saddam Hussein." He really was kind of equating himself with being the great conqueror. He was "riding high in the saddle."

Ezekiel was dealing with his ancient counterpart and he was a hostage of centuries ago. He wasn't any freer to leave Babylon than our hostages are to leave modern-day Iraq. Ezekiel couldn't travel all the way up to the area where the Israelites

were captive, which would be located on the border of modern-day Iran and the Soviet Union. The Israelites weren't in the area where Ezekiel was. They had already been taken captive one hundred twenty-five years earlier. It's kind of late to come in and give them a warning.

One hundred, twenty-five years ago—that's 1865. It's kind of like somebody standing up today and prophesying that if the South doesn't repent, it is going to lose the War Between the States. You'd say that it's a little late to address that issue.

This is exactly the time period we're talking about. To come along and tell the house of Israel, 'If you don't repent, you are going to go into captivity,' would be like getting on television today and telling Louisiana, 'If you don't repent, the Union troops are going to come in and you're going to lose the War Between the States.' What does that have to do with anything? That's over with.

The reason I emphasize that is to prove that Ezekiel's message was not for his day. It's not that God forgot to send Israel a warning—then He sent one. Then somebody said, 'That was all over with one hundred twenty-five years ago!' And God said, 'How time flies; I forgot!' God didn't forget. The message Ezekiel was given has implications down through time.

We already saw that Ezekiel makes a clear distinction between the house of Israel and Judah. A very good place to prove that is in Ezekiel 4:5, 'he is to bear the iniquity of the house of Israel for three hundred ninety days.'

In Ezekiel 4:6, 'he is to bear the iniquity of the house of Judah for forty days.'

The book of Ezekiel makes a clear-cut distinction between the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

Ezekiel 17 is a parable for the house of Israel, not the house of Judah.

In his parable, vv. 1-4, he sees a great eagle that came to a big cedar in Lebanon. He cropped off one of the young twigs, carried it into a land of traffic, and set it in a city of merchants.

Verses 5-7, he took also of the seed of the land and planted it in a fruitful field, planted it by great waters and it grew into a willow tree. And it grew. Then another eagle with great wings came. What is all this talking about?

In vv. 12-13, it talks about how the king of Babylon is going to take Jerusalem and the kings and the princes, lead them to Babylon and take captive of the king's offspring.

Then we come to something else. He is talking about Babylon captivity, but notice as we come down.

Verses 22-24, "Thus says the Lord God: 'I will take also one of the highest branches of the high cedar and I set it out. I will crop off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and will plant it on a high and prominent mountain. On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it; and it will bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a majestic cedar. Under it will dwell birds of every sort; in the shadow of its branches they will dwell. And all the trees of the field shall know that I, the Lord, have brought down the high tree and exalted the low tree, dried up the green tree and made the dry tree flourish....'"

He was told to take of the highest branch of the high cedar. The high cedar represented Israel. The highest branch would represent the king. He was to go to the family of the king (that's the highest branch of the tree) and from it he was to chop off one of the young twigs. In other words, this would be one of the children of the king, "a tender one." This would be a daughter as opposed to a son.

So one of the king's daughters was to be taken and planted upon a high and prominent mountain. A mountain is used in Bible prophecy to symbolize a nation. We are told in Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 how the Lord's house will be established in the top of the mountain and the hills will flow up to it. It talks about the seven mountains in Revelation 17:9. The seven mountains are seven kings. Mountain is used as symbolic of a great nation. Hill symbolizes a small nation. Here was a great nation that one of the king's daughters was to be taken.

Verses 22-23, she was to be planted elsewhere, in a high mountain, a great nation. It was to take root and it was to be fruitful. In other words, she would marry and have children, descendants; "...it will bring forth boughs and bear fruit...."

So you've taken this young tender twig; you've rooted it elsewhere. Another great tree grows up from there that will ultimately become a great empire that will have worldwide implications.

It is going to be a great tree, v. 23, "...and be a majestic cedar. Under it will dwell birds of every sort; in the shadow of its branches they will dwell."

This was symbolic of all the nations that would dwell under it. In other words, you are going to crop off a little tender twig, go root it, take it to another mountain and it's going to become a

great tree. It is going to produce and be fruitful; everything is going to come and dwell there.

Zedekiah was the last king of Judah. He was the last occupant of the throne of David there in Jerusalem. One of his daughters was married to the son of the high king of Ireland. The present day British royal family traces back to that dynasty, the dynasty that was actually transferred by Jeremiah the prophet. We went through that when we covered the book of Jeremiah. You can read some of the background in the booklet, What's Ahead for America and Britain? It goes into some of that.

That dynasty ultimately ruled over an empire that came to have worldwide implications. "The sun never set on the British Empire" was the saying because literally there are far-flung British dominions around the world. Even though the British Empire is greatly dissipated and disappeared, it is still that throne—the throne of David—that is the common bond that links people. There's still people all over the world that are linked by allegiance to that common throne, whether in Canada, Australia, New Zealand or even certain areas of the Caribbean, certain Pacific islands, as well as Britain itself. A Canadian coin, stamp or dollar bill has the Queen of England's picture on it. She is not only the Queen of England; she is the Queen of Canada. That is a part of the birthright blessings—the throne of David—that God established. There is reference to it right here.

In Ezekiel 18, there are a couple of very clear-cut scriptures that show that there isn't an immortal soul.

Ezekiel 18:4, 20 both state, "...the soul who sins shall die." Here are very clear-cut scriptures that show that "soul" does not equate with "immortality."

The context of Ezekiel 18 is that God does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked (v. 32). God wants people to repent. We will ultimately have to bear the consequences of what we have done. If we repent, God will spare us; if we don't, we will die. The soul that sins, it shall die.

Verse 21, "But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die."

Here we have a definition of repentance. Repentance is defined as turning around and going the other way. To receive God's forgiveness and mercy, we have to repent; we have to turn from our sins. That means we have been going one direction, the way of sin. We

have made a "U-turn" in the middle of the road. We turned around and started going the other way. We have turned from our sins and have begun to obey God.

Now, our obedience does not earn forgiveness, but it is the outward demonstration of our repentance. The sacrifice of Christ paid the penalty for our sins. There isn't any amount of law-keeping that is going to earn us forgiveness. But if we're not keeping the law, it is pretty evident that we're not trying to turn away from sin and we're not repentant. Because if I'm repentant, that means I don't want to be like the world. I don't want to be like the devil. I want to be like God. I desire to be like God. I'm trying to turn away from the old and embrace the new.

Verse 23, God has no pleasure that the wicked should die. What God desires is that the wicked will repent, that he will turn from his ways and live. This is important and it reflects the mind of God. God desires and delights to see not the punishment of the wicked but the repentance of the wicked.

Verse 31, "Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?" This is prophecy of conversion, a new heart. God does not delight in seeing our punishment; He wants us to repent.

We also see in this section that our good past actions or of our parents are not going to get us out of trouble.

Verse 24, "But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die."

That's why Jesus said in Matthew 24:13, "...he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved."

We have to keep on keeping on. You can't go along and do what's right for a while and then decide to quit, do wrong and turn away from God. Do you think God will say, 'He did keep the Sabbath for several years before he quit. He kept it for ten years; then he left the Church and broke it for five. So, we forget about these five because he kept it twice as long as he didn't.' That's not the way it works. If we turn away from obedience to God, then we've gotten off the track.

Jesus said, "He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved." We have to hang on. We can't just say, 'Way back when I used to do "such and such" or my parents used to do "such and such."' We each have to be responsible for what we do.

Ezekiel 20 is an important concept; it makes an interesting point. It talks about God's choosing of Israel.

Ezekiel 20:5, "...Thus says the Lord God: 'On the day when I chose Israel and lifted My hand in an oath to the descendants of the house of Jacob, and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, I lifted My hand in an oath to them, saying, "I am the Lord your God."'" He told them, 'I am your God.'

Verses 7-8, "'Then I said to them, "Each of you, throw away the abominations which are before his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt" I am the Lord your God. But they rebelled against Me and would not obey Me. They did not all cast away the abominations which were before their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt....'"

God said, v. 10, I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I brought them into the wilderness.

Verses 11-13, "'And I gave them My statutes, showed them My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them. Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me that they might know that I am the Eternal who sanctifies them. Yet the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them; and they greatly defiled My Sabbaths....'"

God shows and what we find here is that Israel did not willingly forsake Egypt. They did not willingly turn its back on and forsake Egypt. God took the people out of Egypt, but taking Egypt out of the people was a different matter.

We have to understand, v. 8, they did not cast away the abominations that were before their eyes. They did not forsake the idols of Egypt. They did not forsake them in their mind. This is the important part of conversion. It is something fundamental. We have to understand; it's not enough to outwardly forsake the idols of Egypt. We have to forsake them in our mind because if we don't forsake them in our mind, when we are provided with the right set of opportunities, we will turn back to them because we never turned loose of them in our mind to begin with.

The Egyptians worshiped the golden calf, the Aphis bull. Israel did not physically take a

golden calf with them out of Egypt. Israel did not take one with them, but when Moses was gone six weeks, they made one like they remembered (Exodus 32). They took it with them in their minds, and when they were given the opportunity to do what they wanted to do, that was what they wanted to do. They longingly remembered what they had ceased to do. When they got the opportunity, they went back to it.

If you had the opportunity, to what would you go back? Do you really chafe under not being able to set up a Christmas tree? If you had the chance, boy, you would like to do that. What are you longingly looking back for? Easter eggs? That's the big thing—"Surely wish we could have Easter sunrise service in the Church." What do we want to go back to? Do we want to be involved in this world's politics—trying to get old honest Joe elected because he could solve all the problems in the country and the state. He says he will. They all say they will. They've been saying that since anyone ran for office.

Jeroboam, the son of Nebet, ran for king of Israel (I Kings 12). No new taxes! That was his pledge; he was going to reduce the old taxes. That's not any great new thing. That's what got Rehoboam kicked out of office and Jeroboam put in. What did Jeroboam do? Pretty soon he had changed the Feast and done all kinds of things (I Kings 12:32). From that time on, God tells us all the kings of Israel walked in the ways of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. He wasn't a good king, but people thought he was going to be "just the man." He was the guy they wanted. He was the people's choice.

We look at it; most of us are not going to go out, physically sit down and carve a great golden calf and start bowing down to it. We think we wouldn't do a thing like that. God uses Egypt as a type of this world. We have to understand there is a principle here. Israel left Egypt reluctantly. They kept rebelling every time they got the opportunity. They kept going back because they didn't leave it in their mind.

When we're in God's Kingdom, is God going to be worried that over in our corner of the universe we're building golden calves? God is off somewhere and as soon as we think nobody is looking over in our solar system (our galaxy or whatever it is), we're manufacturing golden calves for everybody to worship. We're instituting Christmas, Halloween and Easter; we're having people put up Christmas trees and hide Easter eggs over in our corner of the universe. God's not going to have to be worried

that we're going to be trying to bring Egypt in and create little Egypt over there. God not only wants to bring us out of Egypt, He wants to get Egypt out of us. That's what conversion is all about.

Ezekiel 36:26, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you...." God says, 'I'll clean you up on the inside.' If we are cleaned up on the inside, the outside will take care of itself.

The problem with the Israelites was they got cleaned up on the outside several different times, but they never got cleaned up on the inside. As soon as they got the opportunity, the inside manifested itself on the outside. God wants more than a veneer of righteousness. He wants a heart and mind that is yielded and surrendered to Him. He wants us to walk in His ways. He wants a new heart. Israel did not willingly forsake Egypt.

Hopefully, we have willingly forsaken Egypt. Sooner or later God will give us all a chance to turn back because He wants to see if we will. He wants to see what's in our heart. That's what He said in Deuteronomy 8. That's why He led them forty years in the wilderness. He wanted to humble them and to prove what was in their heart.

Sooner or later, God will give you the opportunity to turn back to Egypt. Proverbially or symbolically, Moses will be gone for forty days. You'll have the opportunity to turn back to Egypt. Will you? God wants to know what's in our hearts. If we're really converted and yielded to God, we don't want Egypt. We saw what it was and we don't want it. We want God's Kingdom. We may not do everything perfectly, but we're striving for it. We want it and our mistakes are not mistakes of intent. Our mistakes are with the weaknesses we're struggling against and the pressures around. But we're striving and our eyes are set on the Kingdom. We want it and we want to be like God. This is fundamental to what conversion is all about.

Ezekiel 20:12, the Sabbath was given as a sign. It's made plain that God's Sabbaths are signs. They identify God. They identify that we serve the Creator God because the Sabbath harks back to the time of creation.

In vv. 21-25, it's made plain that Israel did not willingly obey God. They rebelled against Him. Every time they got the opportunity, they rebelled. I've made the point before.

After the Ten Commandments were given, Moses went up into the mountain for forty days. He wasn't up there forty days because it took God that long to write the Ten Commandments

with His finger. That wasn't the problem. God could have zapped the Ten Commandments and had Moses back down in forty minutes instead of forty days. In fact, He could have saved Moses the trouble and sent an angel to bring down the Ten Commandments to them. If Moses had never left, they would have never built the golden calf because Moses wouldn't have let them, would he? Look what he did to the golden calf when he got back and found it.

God wasn't going to let them stay in the golden-calf business because they were His Church. He was going to work with them. He had a job that spanned hundreds of years—many, many centuries and millennia. God had a purpose He was working out and He was going to use Israel. He wasn't going to just let them go into the golden-calf business and forget all about it.

He brought Moses back. But He also let Moses stay gone long enough for the people to have the opportunity to do what was in their heart if they thought Moses was dead and gone and away from there. God wanted to find out what they would do. Oh, for the good old days in Egypt. Somebody comes up with an idea and here they go.

There is a very important spiritual principle we have to think about because God is working with us and God looks on the heart. He is seeking to work with us in our hearts and minds. If our hearts and minds are really yielded to Him, other things will fall into place. We will do the other things because we are motivated from the heart, as opposed to doing the other things because somebody's standing there ready to zap us if we don't. We find that they didn't willingly obey.

Ezekiel 20:24-25, "because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, profaned My Sabbaths, and their eyes were fixed on their father's idols. Therefore I also gave them up to statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they could not live." Some misunderstand and say, 'See, God's law is bad. God says He gave them statutes that weren't good.'

Some Protestants like to point to this and say, 'The Sabbath is bad; God even says He gave them bad laws. That's why Christ had to come and do away with it. That's why Christ came and nailed the law to the cross because the law was bad. It says so right here, doesn't it? God gave them statutes that weren't good and judgments whereby they couldn't live. Boy, this really proves the Sabbath was done away!' No, that's

not what it proves at all. Let's read it in context. That's always the key.

Verses 24-25, "because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, profaned My Sabbaths, and their eyes were fixed on their father's idols. Therefore I also gave them up to statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they could not live."

Hold your place there, and let's go back to Psalm 81:11-14. This is one you might cross-reference in your Bible. I have it written in the margin in my Bible.

Psalm 81:11-14, "But My people would not heed My voice, and Israel would have none of Me. So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, to walk in their own counsels. Oh, that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways! I would soon subdue their enemies, and turn My hand against their adversaries."

'If they had really yielded to Me, I would have taken care of their problems.'

But notice what He says in v. 12 (KJV), "so I gave them up to their own heart's lust, and they walked in their own counsel."

Ezekiel 20:25, "...I gave them statutes that weren't good..."

Psalm 81:12, "...I gave them up to their own heart's lusts..." 'I let them pursue things that seemed good to them.'

Acts 7:38-39, "This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles [the living law] to give to us, whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt."

Interesting! This is the New Testament analysis! This is the application that I've just been making in Ezekiel, of treating the principles of the Exodus as a spiritual analogy. That's not some idea that I came up with. That's what Peter and Steven and the others said. They did the same thing. They used it as a spiritual example. It was a literal historical account, but it was also a spiritual type.

Verses 39-43, "whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, saying to Aaron, "Make us gods to go before us; as for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned and gave them up to worship the hosts of heaven, as it is written in the book of

the Prophets: "Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? Yes, you took up the tabernacle of Moloch..."

The point of Ezekiel 20:24-25 is that when Israel did not value and appreciate God's righteous laws, He gave them over to do things that weren't good. The statutes that weren't good were not statutes that originated with God; they originated with the lusts and desires of the people—and God gave them up to do it. In other words, He allowed them to do it and to get the consequences of it.

God is going to deal with them and He is going to say, Ezekiel 20:30, "Therefore say to the house of Israel, "Thus says the Lord God: 'Are you defiling yourselves in the manner of your fathers, and committing harlotry according to their abominations?'" Do you do all these things?

Verse 31, "...So shall I be inquired of you, O house of Israel? As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I will not be inquired of by you."

We might point out that when it talks about, vv. 30-31, "...defiling yourselves in the manner of your fathers...For when you offer gifts and make your sons pass through the fire...", they sacrificed children to the idols. We think that is horrible and yet we see in our nation a generation that has literally been sacrificed on the altar of materialism. Do you think that is less grievous in God's sight? A generation has been sacrificed (been thrown away), been passed through the fires of a decadent, materialistic, selfish, convenience-oriented society of parents who don't want to be bothered. Parents want to go out and pursue their own selfish interests and ambitions and are not centered there in terms of home and family.

We see the consequences. We see the devastation that has taken place. Now, we are into the generation who are the children of the generation sacrificed. We are seeing the spiraling, colossal problems that are just devastating our nation. It goes back to a set of values. We live in a very materialistic, self-centered, convenience-oriented society. People don't want to sacrifice. They don't want to give up anything and focus in on their responsibilities. There are some very strong parallels.

Verses 31-32, "As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I will not be inquired of by you. What you have in your mind shall never be, when you say, "We will be like the Gentiles, like the families in other countries, serving wood and stone."

In other words, we want to be just like everybody else. We are willing to be like all the other nations. This is what Israel of old wanted to do. The attraction of the world around has always been the battle that God's people have had to face. If you go back to the book of Judges, you will find that's why God didn't immediately get rid of all the Canaanites out of the land. He wanted something there, in effect, for the people to have to make a choice.

Christ hasn't taken us out of the world and stuck us off somewhere in a little cave where we are totally isolated and insulated from the influences of the world. We have to daily reject the world and choose God. We're surrounded by this influence and this pull. It's a battle. That's the way we build character. How do you build your muscles? You build muscles by exercise and by pushing them against resistance. That's the way we build our spiritual character. We're resisting the world. God could have isolated us. He could have told His people to do what the Amish do, to create their own little society. Christ didn't tell His disciples to do that. He just simply didn't. That wasn't what God had in mind.

He talks about how they will go into captivity. Verse 38, "I will purge the rebels from among you..."

Verse 43, "And there you shall remember your ways and all your doings with which you were defiled; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight because of all the evils that you have committed." They will come to repentance.

Ezekiel 21:2, "Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem, preach against the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel."

Verses 26-27, "Thus says the Lord God: 'Remove the turban [KJV, "diadem"], and take off the crown; nothing shall remain the same. Exalt the lowly, and abase the exalted. Overthrow, overthrow, I will make it overthrown! [KJV, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it..."] It shall be no longer, until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him.'" The crown was taken off.

There were two lines that came from Judah—Zarah and Pharez. Judah had twin boys. One started to come out first and the scarlet thread was put around his wrist. But he withdrew his arm and the brother was born first. A breach was created because here was one who started to come out first, but he was not entirely born. He had the scarlet thread to identify him as first-born, but then he wasn't the first-born. The other one, Pharez, came out. Pharez was the one that

actually was totally born first. He was the one who came down through the birthright of the scepter promise. In other words, the birthright of the scepter promise is in the family of Judah, not of Israel. Judah had the scepter promise, the promise of the line of kings.

You might want to be aware of the scripture, one that is good to have written down.

I Chronicles 5:2, "yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph's—" Judah had the scepter, the chief ruler; the line of kings came through Judah. But the birthright (material and national promise; wealth, prosperity, power) was Joseph's. That is clearly defined in I Chronicles 5:2. It is a good verse to clearly show that.

The line of Pharez had continued down through King David and through the lines of David. The Zarah line—the descendants of Zarah, the royal family in Ireland—traced their descent back through the Trojan kings.

Now the crown was being taken off the Pharez branch. It was going to exalt the branch that is low (the Zarah branch), the one that had the scarlet thread. The one that was high (Pharez) is being put down; the one that was low is being raised up. But really it is reuniting because the daughter of the Pharez branch was marrying the son of the Zarah branch. This is reuniting it.

Ezekiel 21:26, "...Remove the turban [diadem], take the crown..." We are going to transfer it from one branch of the tribe of Judah to the other branch of the tribe of Judah.

Verse 27 (KJV), "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it [Jerusalem to Tara, Tara to Scone, Scone to London] and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it to Him."—In other words, Jesus Christ.

In Ezekiel 22, we find the sins of the people characterized. It talks about violence, oppression of the defenseless, Sabbath breaking, sex sins, greed and extortion—all these various things.

Verses 2-3, the city sheds blood. It talks about the bloody city and all of the violence.

Ezekiel 22:7, "...they have oppressed the stranger; in you they have mistreated the fatherless and the widow." Taking advantage of those who are not able to fend for themselves or who are at a disadvantage because of some minority status. Taking advantage of the fatherless and the widow is a very serious matter.

Verse 8, "You have despised My holy things and profaned My Sabbaths."

Verse 9, "...in your midst they commit lewdness." It goes on to all sorts of things.

Verses 10-13, it even talks about adultery, incest and various problems of this sort. It talks about violence and murder for hire. It talks about greed and things of this sort.

Verses 14-15, God says, 'You think I'm going to put up with this? I am going to scatter you among the nations and you will be dispersed.' The house of Israel is going to be dealt with.

Verses 25-28, "'The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured people; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst. Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, nor have they made known the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood, to destroy people and to get dishonest gain. Her prophets plastered them with untempered mortar, seeing false visions, and divining lies for them....'"

God indicts the three leadership elements of society. He indicts **the prophets, the priests and the princes**. Now let's identify them in modern parlance.

We've often talked about false prophets. Many times we have limited our concept of false prophets to identifying them with some of the television evangelists and radio preachers. We need to understand that while they are false prophets, they are only a tiny percentage and their impact on society is minimal overall.

The word "**prophet**" in the Hebrew language is "**nabiy**" and it means "one who announces or proclaims a message." It is a word that in our modern terminology **would best reflect the entire scope of the media**. They're the ones who have impact and are a very powerful segment of society. They're the ones accused of daubing with untempered mortar; in other words, doing a whitewash job on what the other two have done. They have not really shown things clearly for what they are. They have not proclaimed the proper message. They kind of stick together and they have their approach. They have their line, so to speak, that they convey and people place credence in. So God indicts the media, those who announce and proclaim to society. This would certainly include the religious media but also the secular false prophets—the whole gamut of media.

Next are the **priests** who **are the leaders of organized religion**. They're indicted for the fact that they haven't done their job. They should have been teaching the people the difference between right and wrong, and they haven't done it. They have tried to water down and do away with the law. They say the law is done away. They've hidden their eyes from God's Sabbath. They have so watered down and profaned that they haven't even taught the people the difference in terms of absolute right and wrong. We have major Christian churches in this nation arguing over whether or not they should ordain homosexuals. That's incredible! Here they are claiming to be God's representatives, and they're not spending their time indicting some of these things as a sin (for which God is going to send the nation into captivity). They're talking about whether or not they want to ordain them and perform marriages between them. Incredible! Absolutely incredible!

Verse 26, "'Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy... [They haven't taught people the difference between right and wrong.]...they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths....'" God indicts the media, those who announce and proclaim to the nation, those to whom the nation looks. He indicts the religious leadership, the leaders of organized religion who have molded and set the stage in that way.

Then God indicts the **princes**. The princes were those who controlled power and wealth in ancient times, and they are the ones who control the power and the wealth today. These **would be the leaders of government and finance, the people who control the money and the governmental power**.

If you're going to look at it, what we have are the segments of society, the opinion molders: the media, the religious leadership and those who control the government (those who have the power) in terms of government and wealth. He indicts each of these—the leadership, the princes, those who control the power and money—for being greedy and doing anything they can just to get dishonest gain. They misuse their power and their wealth. They are like wolves ravaging the prey. They are out for what they can get. We see some very strong indictments on three segments of society into which God divides the leadership. Their contributions are brought out.

In Ezekiel 23, God uses the illustration of whoredom to characterize the sins of Israel.

In v. 19, He describes the nation multiplying her harlotry.

Verse 38, He describes the nation profaning the Sabbath. He defines them in the analogy of harlotry and, v. 40, of arraying themselves in that way.

The point is that physical action typified what Israel did spiritually. Instead of being a faithful wife seeking to please her husband (which is what should have been Israel's relationship to God), Israel began to go out and to seek out illicit relationships with other neighboring kings and other nations. Israel began to involve itself in illicit relationships as opposed to being faithful to the covenant she made with God, which is typified as a marriage covenant. She entered into these various arrangements. Israel is pictured as a harlot. God describes the things that characterize and people identified with a physical harlot. They looked down on that. That was not good. God said, 'You've done the same thing spiritually. You haven't been faithful to Me.' We have a view of how God views it and how it looks to God.

Ezekiel 24 deals with the bloody city (vv. 6, 9), which is characteristic of Jerusalem (v. 2) and ultimately of the nation (v. 21).

Ezekiel 25 is a prophecy against the Ammonites. Verses 4, 10, they are going to be delivered to the men of the East for a possession. It is going to be interesting to see exactly what is going to happen. Ammon and Moab are in the area of Iraq and Jordan. They are ultimately going to be delivered to the men of the East for a possession. Amman is the capital of Jordan. It is going to be interesting. We read of armies that are going to mass on the River Euphrates (Revelations 16:12-14), which is right there in modern-day Iraq. At the time of the Day of the Lord, they are going to finally be able to cross that river and they are going to come in. They are going to overflow into, at least, sections of Jordan and Iraq.

Ezekiel 26 deals with prophecies against Tyre. In Ezekiel 27, the analogy that is drawn is of a great end-time commercial combine headquartered in Europe. If you read Ezekiel 27 and then go back and read Revelation 18, notice a little bit about what it talks about.

Ezekiel 27:29-35, "All who handle the oar, the mariners, all the pilots of the sea will come down from their ships and stand on the shore [land]...they shall cry bitterly and cast dust on their heads; they will roll about in ashes...In their wailing for you, they will take up a lamentation, and lament for you...When your wares went out

by sea, you satisfied many people; you enriched the kings of the earth with your many luxury goods and your merchandise. But when you are broken by the seas in the depths of the waters, your merchandise and the entire company will fall in your midst. All the inhabitants of the isles will be astonished at you...."

Revelation 18:2, "And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen....'"

Verse 11, "And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore."

Then, vv. 12-13 talk about all these various merchandise, all these various traders and all these things that came in.

Verse 15, "The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing." The merchants would see these things.

Verse 17, "For in one hour such great riches came to nothing...." Finally, it comes to naught and the city is cast down.

Verse 19, "...For in one hour she is made desolate." If you read Ezekiel 27 and Revelation 18, you will see the parallel.

Tyre was a great commercial city, a great commercial capital located on the Mediterranean coast. It was destroyed by Alexander the Great a number of decades before Ezekiel wrote. The merchants of Tyre covered the whole Mediterranean. In fact, the city of Carthage in North Africa was settled by the people of Tyre. It was a colony of Tyre. Later, Carthage rose to such power as to challenge Rome. Rome and Carthage vied for the control of the Mediterranean world. Rome finally vanquished Carthage.

These were called the Punic Wars (if you remember your ancient history) because the land of Phut (Ezekiel 27:10) in North Africa takes it's name and goes back to the same root word from which "Phoenician" comes. These were the people of Carthage. They were a division of the Canaanites who were originally in Tyre and were later centered at Carthage, a great commercial capital.

The Romans devastated Carthage. When they finally defeated it, they forced the inhabitants either into slavery or pushed them down further into Africa. They plowed salt in the ground in Carthage to prevent it from ever being rebuilt there on the North African coast.

Tyre was a great commercial center. The Phoenicians were famous for all of this, and here

was a great center, a great world market. It was a type of that final Babylon the Great. Much of the analogy in Revelation 18 is derived from Ezekiel 27. If you read the two, you get the same rhythm of scripture. It is clear that there is a relationship there.

In Ezekiel 28, we come to the prince of Tyre. This is talking about the ruler.

Ezekiel 28:12-15, “‘Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre... [The prince of Tyre was the human ruler. Who is the king? He is the one who is over the prince. What are we told of the king?]...you were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God, every precious stone was your covering...you were the anointed cherub who covers; I have established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.’”

Certainly, this is not talking about the human ruler of Tyre. This is talking about the one that we know as Satan the devil. He is called Lucifer in Isaiah 14. Here was an anointed cherub, one who had been in Eden, one in whom iniquity was found and was cast out of God’s government. He is the one who was the real ruler of Tyre (and Babylon, and Egypt), the real ruler and god of this world.

What led to his downfall?

Verse 17, “‘Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor....’” Vanity! Pride led to his downfall. He was lifted up with pride and iniquity was found in him. It started out with pride, a self-centered attitude of pride and vanity that focused on the self and went on from there.

In Ezekiel 29, we find a prophecy against Egypt; an amazing prophecy.

Ezekiel 29:15, “‘It shall be the lowliest of kingdoms; it shall never again exalt itself above the nations, for I will diminish them so that they will not rule over the nations anymore.’” Egypt was going to be abased and we find this is what happened.

Here was Egypt, a nation that had been a major power on the world scene for centuries and millennia. Ezekiel was writing in the sixth century B.C. Here we find, in the latter part of the sixth century B.C. (circa 591-569 B.C.), Ezekiel writing a prophecy that Egypt would cease to be a major power. Now consider, by this time, Egypt had been a major empire on the world scene for almost three thousand years. Egypt

had been the dominant nation of the pre-flood world and the post-flood world. After the debacle at Babel (Genesis 11), Egypt again began to rise. Egypt had been a major power in the post-flood world all the way down until the time Nebuchadnezzar comes on the scene. Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt and destroyed its power.

Since that time, Egypt never again was ruled by a native prince (Ezekiel 30:13). That’s been twenty-five hundred years. The Babylonians ruled it, then the Persians and then the Greeks. Cleopatra, the ruler of Egypt was Greek. She was a part of the dynasty that was descended from Alexander the Great’s general, Ptolemy. The Greeks ruled Egypt down to Cleopatra.

Then the Romans took over and ruled it as a Roman province, down through the time of the Romans. Then later the Eastern Roman Empire (the Byzantine Empire) ruled all the way down to the seventh century A.D. when finally the Arabs, having been converted to Islam, poured out of the Arabian Peninsula (what is now Saudi Arabia), overran Egypt, and it became part of an Arab Empire ruled from Damascus and later Bagdad.

The Turks conquered it and ruled it as a part of a Turkish Empire up until the late 1800s. The British finally set up Egypt, prior to World War I, as independent. But they were under the rule of the line of kings that weren’t Egyptian. They were Albanian in origin. They ruled up until Nassar overthrew King Farouk in 1953.

Talk about prophecy being a proof of the Bible! Was it a lucky guess? How would Ezekiel make a guess of a nation that had been a dominant player on the world scene for as long as history has been around and say it’s going to be conquered and will never again be a significant force on the world scene? This is one of the prophecies that is a proof of the Bible.

Ezekiel 30:13, “‘...‘I will also destroy the idols, and cause the images to cease out of Noph [Ancient Memphis]; there shall no longer be princes from the land of Egypt....’” Egypt had always been famous for their idols.

It’s interesting. When the Arabs came in from Saudi Arabia, one of the first things they did was get rid of the graven images. The Arab world (the Islamic religion) does not allow any sort of graven images. In fact, artwork is pretty much limited to geometric designs. They really discourage the use of any kind of statuary things of that sort. How unlikely was it that Egypt was going to cease to be a place where they made

images? There wasn't any longer going to be a prince of Egypt in the land of Egypt, no longer a prince of native Egyptian stock. And it would be a base kingdom.

Verse 23, "I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them throughout the countries." Most of the inhabitants of modern-day Egypt are not descendants of the ancient Egyptians. Most people in Egypt are Arab.

Just as a point of Middle Eastern history, the Arabs burst on the Middle Eastern scene and began to dominate the Middle East around 650 A.D. The Arabian Peninsula is the native area of the Arabs. They overran the rest of the Middle East, Egypt, North Africa, all the way across into Spain. They overran areas and migrated far and wide in the spread of Islam. They spread their influence far afield. The Arabs originated in the Arabian Peninsula. They are the descendants of Ishmael.

There were other people in some of these countries before the Arabs came. The people in Egypt today who are of native Egyptian stock are a very small minority. They are called "Copts." The bulk of the ancient Egyptian stock was scattered. Interestingly enough, we find a group of people scattered throughout much of the world who call themselves Egyptians. We use the modern slang "gypsy," which is simply derived from "Egyptian." A slang spelling is what it goes back to.

Actually, if you trace it back, many of them were deported and taken into the area of India. It was from there that they spread out. They were known as gypsies. You basically could trace the gypsy migration back to an area of India, and this is where many of the Egyptians were settled when Nebuchadnezzar depopulated Egypt. He settled them on the eastern bounds of his empire, which stretched to the borders of India. That was where he settled many of this group of people.

It is just kind of an interesting "aside." They were scattered and some remained. Those who remain are Copts. Interestingly enough, the Copts are not Moslem. They are members of what is called the Coptic Church, which is a branch of the Catholic Church in Egypt.

The ultimate invasion of Egypt is brought out in Ezekiel 32:11, "...the sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon you." Babylon will ultimately invade Egypt. There are many interesting things in that regard.

I'd like to read a little bit of a column. I think it was Patrick Buchanan's column. I don't know how many of you saw it, but it kind of ties in

with what's going on in the Middle East. It ties in with some of this prophecy. I want to conclude here.

It says, "Even the President's critics concede that in winning King Faud's approval for United States forces in marshalling a global embargo and knitting together an Arab-American expeditionary force, George Bush's first diplomat has been superb. We've had all the pleasure of seeing America's best and greatest close an iron ring around Iraq. We find the President's rhetoric has reached war pitch. Before an assembly of pentagon generals and admirals, Saddam Hussein has been called a liar, and we are told that should he achieve his goal of becoming a master of the Gulf, our job, our way of life, our own freedom is threatened...Bush, this past Wednesday, directly compared Iraq to the Third Reich. A half-century ago our nation and the world paid dearly for appeasing an aggressor who should and could have been stopped. We are not going to make that same mistake. By using the Hitler analogy, Bush is virtually ruling out any negotiated settlement, for the modern-man Hitler is evil incarnate. Any leader who cuts a deal with him is guilty of another Munich, a fatal political charge. Is the Hitler analogy valid? Recall, that Hitler, after annexing Austria and establishing a protectorate over Czechoslovakia, overran Poland, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Holland, France, Yugoslavia, Greece, the Baltic States, and drove a thousand miles into the Soviet Union in two years. And Saddam, so far he's managed to land-grab a tiny defenseless kingdom, not half the size of Denmark. Is Saddam a warlord of Hitlerian dimension or is he a Middle East thief, a Baghdad-bandit who stole Kuwait's oil to sell it to us and get his bankrupt country out of debt?"

It goes on. "If Hitler is on the loose, where are the British, French, Spanish, Italian, German and Japanese troops to stand alongside the Eighty-Second Airborne to stop him? Why is everyone balking at upgrading the United Nation embargo into a blockade? The great men are talking about vacations; Congress hasn't been called back to deal with the crisis that Bush says threatens not only our jobs but our way of life. The implications are clear. Here's the point. If it comes to a shooting war, the United States is going to find itself, again, virtually without allies, except for a few British. And when we begin dropping bombs on Arab towns and Arab troops, how long will our Arab allies stand beside us? It is now almost impossible for Bush to accept a

Kuwait that is either a possession or vassal of Iraq. All this talk about 'standing up to Hitler' would be hurled back in his face at the next Democratic convention. If this embargo does not force Saddam to disgorge Kuwait, Bush will confront an alternative. Climb back publicly from the limb on which he has climbed so far out or take his country to war. But how is such a war to end? Who will keep them out after destroying Iraq's military regime and driving its army out of Kuwait? If the army is United States troops, will not those troops become targets of the same terrorists who picked off our Marines in Lebanon? Before Saddam goes down, he will take others with him. A United States attack could ignite an Arab civil war that could do for the throngs of the Middle East what Europe's World War I did for the throngs of Europe. Years ago an author called Britain's attack on the Suez 'The Lion's Last Roar.' Is this 'The Eagle's Last Scream'?"

It's kind of interesting because the situation in the Middle East is very volatile. We know the way the story is going to end. What we don't understand entirely is how is it going to get from here to there? It is going to culminate with a King of the South, with the Arabs getting their act together for the first time in probably seven hundred years in terms of uniting behind one individual who is going to push at a King of the North—a revived United States of Europe—the Beast power. The King of the North is going to retaliate by a blitzkrieg attack into the Middle East. The United States will have already "gone down the drain" prior to that time.

How are we going to see what is going to result in an American humiliation and Arab nationalism being stirred up to the fact that the Arabs are finally ready to unite, however briefly, behind one individual and are going to push at Europe. How is this going to trigger an attack on the United States and Britain, the modern state of Israel in the Middle East, and all of these things? Well, some of the details remain to be filled in. The Bible draws the picture as it stands at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. We look on a world scene and we see things today. We see the pictures converging, but there are many things to happen between now and then. We don't see exactly how all of it is going to converge. We might speculate and guess. Patrick Buchanan has some speculations, which may play a factor. We will have to wait and see.

The next Bible study will end up our series on the book of Ezekiel. I hope that it will have been

helpful in getting a little more insight into some of the prophecies that relate to our time and the time that's ahead of us.

Bible Study # 56 Questions

SURVEY OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS SERIES

Ezekiel 17—32

1. What is the meaning of Ezekiel's parable to the house of Israel in chapter 17?
2. What is God referring to in Ezekiel 17:22-24?
3. Prove from Ezekiel 18 that the soul is not immortal.
4. Does God take pleasure in the death of the wicked?
5. Can we use past good actions of either ourselves or our parents to escape from God's punishment?
6. Did Israel willingly forsake Egypt and its ways?
7. What did God give to Israel as a sign?
8. Did Israel willingly obey God's laws? Explain Ezekiel 20:25 in this regard.
9. Explain Ezekiel 21:26.
10. What sins of the people does God characterize in Ezekiel 22?
11. What are the three segments into which God divides the leadership of the nation and what have been their contributions to what has happened?
12. What analogy does God use to characterize the sins of Israel?
13. What punishment does God decree upon Ammon in Ezekiel 25?
14. What is described in Ezekiel 27?
15. Who is being described in Ezekiel 28:12-17?
16. What led to Lucifer's downfall?
17. Egypt had been one of the dominant nations on the world scene for 2000 years when Ezekiel wrote—what did he say its future status would be?
18. Explain Ezekiel 30:13.
19. Did the original native Egyptian stock stay primarily in the land of Egypt after Ezekiel's time? What happened to them and where are they today?
20. According to Ezekiel 32, who will ultimately invade Egypt?

Bible Study # 57
September 11, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Ezekiel 33—48

This evening we **are concluding the book of Ezekiel. We are covering chapters 33—48.** This set of chapters contains two very key prophetic chapters (chapters 37 and 38) that we want to comment on. These are chapters that are almost totally misunderstood; frankly, if you look at the various commentaries and things, they are basically understood by any one.

Ezekiel 37 is a vision of the valley of dry bones. Virtually none of the commentators understand because it is only when you put it together with Romans 11 and Revelation 20 that we can understand the time setting. Ezekiel 37 describes the event, but it doesn't explain *when*. You have to go elsewhere in the Scriptures to understand when it happens. In fact, *when* is not really made plain until you come to the New Testament. It then makes it plain that Ezekiel 37 can only be referring to the period that we call the Great White Throne Judgment period.

Ezekiel 38 and 39 are also misapplied by virtually all of the commentators. This event happens after the Millennium has started, not prior to the beginning of the Millennium. In times past, many of the Fundamentalist preachers who like to comment on prophecy have tried to use Ezekiel 38 and 39 to preach about a war between the United States and Russia. They could identify that the Soviet Union is made reference to and constitutes portions of this prophecy. And that is true.

We are going to see that nations that make up so much of the Soviet Union, China and that area are certainly referred to in Ezekiel 38 and 39. Many of these commentators have made a big deal of the fact that there was going to be a big war between Russia and the United States. You don't hear them emphasizing that quite so much now because of the change in what is going on in the world. One of the reasons we never taught that was because we correctly understood the time element.

In Ezekiel 38, we're going to notice four key verses that make plain the time element. When you understand the time element, then you understand what this prophecy is talking about. When we simply take it at face value, the time setting is very clear.

Ezekiel 40—48 is a section seldom commented on. It presents a problem particularly to many of

the commentators and various ones because there is a clear teaching in Ezekiel 40—48 that there is going to be a functioning Levitical priesthood, a temple and sacrifices during the Millennium. That may seem startling to some, but we are going to see that as we go through.

While some of the details of this section may not be completely understood at this time, it is clear that God is going to deal with the physical nation of Israel at the beginning of the Millennium to orient them physically to the law and to the covenant. The sacrifices will, evidently, serve as a schoolmaster for them (KJV, Galatians 3:24), as it was supposed to do for their forefathers.

It's kind of interesting. Even Jews "scratch their heads" when it comes to Ezekiel 40—48 because of some of the details that are mentioned. The Jewish Commentary dates the vision of Ezekiel 40—48 as the Day of Atonement, which began a Jubilee year. Whether that is true or not, the Bible doesn't say, but it certainly would be a very appropriate time for such a vision. The Jews solve their problems with this particular section by saying that only the prophet Elijah (who will usher the ultimate redemption) will elucidate these chapters. That is their comment on it. What they don't understand, they say the prophet Elijah will explain.

The reason they say the prophet Elijah is because of what it says in the end of the book of Malachi. Malachi 4:5-6, "Behold, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

The Jews anticipate the fact that there will be one who comes fulfilling the role of the prophet Elijah and preparing the way for the Messiah. The issues that they don't understand, they say they will wait until Elijah comes and he will explain it. And then they pass on to something else.

There's quite a bit of what they don't know and have failed to recognize. They failed to recognize Elijah when he came and they failed to recognize the Messiah they herald. They have failed to recognize the second Elijah; the work of God that was raised up through Mr. Herbert Armstrong. They have failed to recognize that and they won't really grasp it until the time when the Messiah finally does come the second time.

We read in Zechariah 12:10, "...then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a

firstborn.” They will repent. Then it will dawn on them what they did and Who this is who has come to save them from destruction. Then, at that point, things will be resolved.

Let’s pick it up this evening in Ezekiel 33. Ezekiel sets the stage, explaining the responsibility of the watchman. I’ve commented before on the symbolism of the watchman. The watchman is the one who was appointed to watch and to see what was going on. He was to stand up on the wall, to look and observe and sound the warning. Ezekiel was told throughout the book that he was being established as a watchman for the house of Israel.

We’ve already gone through the fact that Ezekiel did not fulfill that role in his day because Ezekiel did not personally go to all these various locations. Ezekiel did not do those things, and there is no way he could have. The job of taking Ezekiel’s message to those for whom it was intended was reserved for our time and our day.

He talks about the role of the watchman.

Ezekiel 33:7, “So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel...” I went into quite a bit of that last time and the fact that Ezekiel did not go to the house of Israel in person. But his message has been preserved, and God raised up a work to go to the house of Israel. This was a commission that Mr. Herbert Armstrong very much understood. That’s why God revealed to him very, very early in the beginning of his conversion where the house of Israel was.

This was knowledge that the Sardis Church did not have and did not understand. Even though the leader of the Sardis Church—the Church that we identify as the Sardis era or stage in the progression of God’s Church described in Revelation 3:1-6—acknowledged in a letter to Mr. Herbert Armstrong (a letter that is reproduced in his autobiography) that this information (the identity of Israel) was true. But the leader refused to preach it for fear that everybody wouldn’t go along with it or accept it.

The point is that you can’t take a message to the house of Israel if you don’t know where the house of Israel is. God made plain the identity of the house of Israel. That was one of the things that He revealed to Mr. Herbert Armstrong very early in the very beginning of his conversion. This message began to be taken and proclaimed.

Verses 8-9, God says in terms of the message to the watchman, “When I say to the wicked, “O wicked man, you shall surely die!” and you do

not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.”

I think it is important for us to realize as individuals and as a Church that we have a responsibility for which God will hold us accountable. There are things that are going to happen to this nation. It is important that we put our hearts into the accomplishment and the fulfillment of the work that God has set before us because we are ultimately responsible for warning. We are not responsible for results because we can’t control someone else’s results. This is important just in terms of the principle of recognizing responsibility.

Some people find themselves perpetually frustrated because they can’t get others to respond in the way they want them to. This can be in their families or in various circumstances of human relations. God makes it plain that we are responsible for doing our part, but we are not responsible for how someone else responds to what we have done. We can’t control that. The watchman is responsible for delivering the message, but he is not responsible for the response.

What was Ezekiel commissioned to do?

Verse 7, Ezekiel was commissioned as a watchman to the house of Israel. He was not sent to the house of Judah but Israel. Historically, Ezekiel never delivered the message to the people for whom it was intended. This was something that began to be done by Mr. Herbert Armstrong in our day, back in the 1930s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s and on up into the 80s. It is the work of God that continues right on down until now. The job of taking the message of God to the world is a job for us today because Ezekiel never delivered that message. That message was preserved. It was preserved for a warning for our time, the end time.

People are going to have a certain attitude towards this work.

It is described in v. 30, “As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, “Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord.””

I am convinced that there are some things that have yet to happen in terms of the impact of this work. God is going to open the appropriate doors at the appropriate time. What we have to be

doing is to make sure that we are doing our part. God is going to accomplish these things. Even if He has to raise up stones to do it, He would (Luke 3:8), but He has given us the opportunity to be His instruments. If we fail to do our part, we're not going to prevent God from accomplishing what He purposed (Isaiah 46:10-11).

We will simply have failed to heed the warning in Revelation 3:11, "...let no man take your crown." God has called us to do His work. He gives us the opportunity to have a part of it, and if we don't do it, He will get it done. But woe be to us, if we don't carry out the responsibility we have.

He speaks of a time when we are going to be the talk of the land. I think there is going to come a time, prior to the on-set of the tribulation, when the message is going to really go forth in greater power, and it's going to be the talk of the land.

Ezekiel 33:31-32, "So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them."

This has partially been fulfilled. There were a lot of people who listened to Mr. Herbert Armstrong and said they liked to hear that old man; they listened to him for thirty years. They never did anything he said, but they liked to hear him. They liked to read what he wrote. It's like somebody singing a pleasant song and has a nice voice. They say, 'That's a nice program,' but they don't act on it. They don't do anything with it.

The time is going to come when we are going to be even more talked about. It talks about the fact that everything is going to be "abuzz." We're going to be a subject of a lot of conversation. But, for the most part, people are not really going to be doing anything. They'll be excited about it in certain ways. It will have their interest and attention but not in a way that they are going to act on it.

Verse 33, "And when this comes to pass—and it will come—then they will know that a prophet has been among them."

That is very much the case. The time is going to come when the whole world is going to recognize that Mr. Herbert Armstrong really was God's true servant. The basic content of the booklets that he wrote, Who is the Beast? and

The United States and Britain in Prophecy, were written in the 1930s. Actually, he began writing on the subject even in the 1920s. Some of those things were first published in the 1930s. I have seen a copy of a 1935 article that he wrote. The magazine had in it the chart on "Who is the Beast?" It was the exact same chart that's in our booklet today.

The layout that is used in our booklet today was hand drawn on a mimeograph stencil. I went through and I checked and compared it; there is only one difference. You know what it is? It's where it says the sixth head. If you will look in our modern booklet, Garibaldi's reunification of Italy culminating in Mussolini is dated from 1871 to 1945 with the collapse of Mussolini. In the 1935 magazine, it had all of that except it didn't have the date 1945. That was ten years in the future. It had "1871-19__" because we didn't know the year when the sixth head was going to end. That is the only difference. Ten years later he could fill in the year. That is the only change that's been made in the chart.

The point is that the core information of The United States and Britain in Prophecy was published back in the 1930s in some of the very first magazines that came out. It was information that is the heart and core of a lot of what Ezekiel has to say.

Ezekiel 33:33, "And when this comes to pass—and surely it will come—then they will know that a prophet has been among them." They are not entirely acknowledging that yet. Though, interestingly enough, as we begin the Feast of Tabernacles after sunset on October 3, that will not only see the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles, it's also going to see the beginning of the new unified Germany. They are uniting October 3. Interesting! It was a year ago at the Feast that the wall began to come down. Remember that? How much has happened in the year!

Remember a year ago they were interviewing all the experts and they were saying, 'This doesn't mean that Germany will reunify. This does not mean that at all. And if it does, it is far off—maybe somewhere after the year 2,000 if possible—maybe ten, twelve, fifteen, twenty years is the possibility. Most of the experts don't think it will happen at all.' A year later and it's done. Now who were the experts?

I can show you whole magazines of articles Mr. Herbert Armstrong wrote that go way back. Some of you have copies of them. Who were the experts? Well, time is going to come when they

are to know that God's message has been proclaimed.

In Ezekiel 34, we have an indictment to the leadership of the land.

Verses 1-10, it shows that those responsible for overseeing the people of Israel have been motivated by personal greed and have not properly carried out their responsibility. It says, "the shepherds of Israel." We think of that sometimes in the sense of "pastor" because the word for "shepherd" and "pastor" are the same word. But the "shepherds of Israel" can also refer in the national sense as well. Certainly, here "the shepherds of Israel" would refer to the leaders of Israel.

In v. 31, Israel is described as the sheep of God's pasture, "You are My flock, the flock of My pasture...." God says, 'This is My flock, My sheep.'

The shepherds are those who are supposed to attend the sheep. God indicts the leadership of the land.

Verse 2, "... 'Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock?'" They have not given help to those who needed it.

Verse 4, "...but with force and cruelty you have ruled them."

Verses 5-6, "So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them."

Verse 8, "...because there was no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock."

Verses 10-12, God is going to deal with the shepherds. He is going to seek out His sheep.

Verse 13, "And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country."

Verses 23-24, "I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken."

If you go through the chapter and check the context, it is clear that the main emphasis is national Israel. God's people, nationally—Israel. His sheep, nationally, are scattered among the

nations. God is going to re-gather His sheep. This time He says, 'You know, the shepherds they have had have not been faithful shepherds. But I know one I can depend on to properly shepherd My sheep because he was a good shepherd.' It's interesting the way God prepared David to be king over all of Israel in Tomorrow's World. What training did God give David before He made him king? He made him a shepherd! That's important to understand because that tells us the concept God has as far as how He wants His government administered.

David learned how to administer God's government by being a shepherd. It taught him many things. The sheep need to be protected. There was a time for action, decisiveness, for boldness. They needed to be nurtured, guided and dealt with. You don't deal with sheep in a harsh cruel way. You don't go around just knocking sheep around. There may be lions and bears that need to be knocked around. David wasn't averse to doing that (I Samuel 17:34-36). You have to deal with sheep in one way and goats another. There's a difference.

God likens His people to sheep because sheep will follow. Goats don't have the same proclivity; goats tend to want to go their own way. They have to be dealt with a little differently. God compares His people to sheep because they are seeking to follow the Shepherd. If we're not seeking to follow the Shepherd, then there's a question raised as to whether we're God's sheep. Christ said, 'My sheep hear My voice' (John 10:3-4).

Ezekiel 34 indicts the shepherds of Israel, those who were responsible for tending God's flock. He says, 'You haven't done a good job. You haven't been faithful in tending My flock. You've been greedy and selfish and out to take care of yourself. You've allowed My sheep to be scattered. I am going to re-gather them and I'm going to set a shepherd over them who will take care of them.' King David, resurrected, is going to be king over all of Israel in Tomorrow's World.

Verses 23-24 clearly show who the national leader of Israel is going to be in Tomorrow's World.

Ezekiel 35:2, "Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir and prophesy against it."

Verse 15, Mount Seir is a symbol of the Edomites.

Verse 3, "I will make you most desolate." Mount Seir is going to be made desolate. We find there are reasons for that as it talks about the things that are going to happen.

This describes both events of past history and, I think, events that we are going to see in the time ahead of us.

In Ezekiel 36, we focus in on events in the land of Israel when God re-gathers Israel.

Ezekiel 36:19, “So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds.”

Verse 24, “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land.” This is after the return of the Messiah.

Verses 25-28, “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people and I will be your God.”

This is a section that has been frequently misunderstood because most of those who claim to preach the word of God do not understand the identity of modern Israel. When they read of “Israel,” they think simply of the nation of the Jews in the Middle East—the nation that calls itself “Israel” today. Many of them focused in on this and said, ‘This prophecy has been fulfilled. God has gathered Israel out of the nations.’

Verse 24, “...gather you out of all countries and bring you into your own land.” They claim that the founding of the modern state of Israel was the fulfillment of that. That’s not true. That was not the re-gathering of the house of Israel. That was the re-gathering of the house of Judah. The re-gathering of the house of Judah is prophesied elsewhere. It’s prophesied in Zechariah 8, among other places.

The proof that Ezekiel 36 is not talking about Judah is the fact that in vv. 26-28, it tells that when God brings Israel out of the nations and brings them back, He is going to convert them. ‘I am going to put a new heart in you and a new spirit. I am going to put My Spirit in you. I will convert you.’ Now the modern nation of the Jews is certainly not a converted nation. They don’t claim to be. Less than half of them are even observant Jews; the other half isn’t even that much. We have a description here of conversion. To take these scriptures in Ezekiel 36 and try to apply it to the modern state of

Israel is to take it out of its context. That’s not true.

They will pick out certain verses like vv. 33-34, “...ruins will be rebuilt. The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate...” They say that’s what they are doing over in Israel now. They are going in and irrigating some of the desert area. They may be doing that, but this isn’t the prophecy of that. This is talking about something else.

Verse 36, “Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the Lord, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I, the Lord, have spoken it, I will do it.”

Verse 38, “Like a flock offered as holy sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem on its feast days, so shall the ruined cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they shall know that I am the Lord.” This is prophecy of yet future events.

Ezekiel 37:1, “The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones.” Here were these dry bones.

Verses 4-7, “Again He said to me. ‘Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: ‘Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.’” So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone.”

You’ve heard the song, “the leg bone connected to the hip bone.” Well, bone came together, bone to his bone—all the bones. Ezekiel sees this in a vision. He looks down and at first all he sees is like a giant graveyard. He sees all these bones lying out there, and it’s not people. It’s like you would unearth a giant graveyard. He makes a prophecy. All of a sudden these bones are rattling and shaking; all these bones are coming together bone to his bone—everyone connecting up.

Then He says in v. 8, “Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them.” All of a sudden, where had been a graveyard, now it looked like a valley of corpses. There’s no breath. Everything’s dead.

Verses 9-10, “Then He said to me, ‘Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the

breath, “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.’” So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.”

A great multitude, a gigantic number of people stood up alive.

Verses 11-12, “Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, “Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off.” Therefore prophesy and say to them. “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.’””

Here is a resurrection, but it is a physical resurrection to flesh and blood life. Here are people who are resurrected to physical life. They are brought up out of their graves and brought back to the land of Israel.

After this occurs, v. 13, ““Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves.”” Here is a group of people who were not converted prior to the time of their death. These are not those who were Christ’s at His coming (I Corinthians 15:23). They are going to know that God is God after He’s opened their graves and brought them up. Here are people who are not going to learn the truth until after the resurrection.

Verse 14, ““I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it,” says the Lord.””

It’s going to be the time when Judah and Israel will be joined together.

Verses 16-17, ““As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: “For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.” Then take another stick and write on it, “For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions.” Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand.””

It’s going to be a time when Judah and Israel will be joined back together. There are those who want to say the ten tribes don’t exist anymore, that they are among the Jews. Well, according to Ezekiel 37:16-17, Judah and Israel aren’t going to be reunited until after the resurrection. That’s not going to occur until afterwards. Now, if the resurrection has already occurred, then I think it would have made a little bit of a “splash” with all the bones of the whole house of Israel coming

together and this gigantic multitude standing up in a great graveyard somewhere. I think that would have been hard to have happened without somebody hearing it. So, I don’t think that’s happened yet.

Verses 16-17 make plain when it’s going to happen.

Verse 24 makes plain that it’s the time when David is going to be king over them.

Verse 24, ““David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them.””

Ezekiel makes plain that God will resurrect those who have not had their chance for salvation to a physical life and give them a chance for salvation. The time setting is the White Throne Judgment after the Millennium.

It says in vv. 12-13, ““...I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel...Then you shall know that I am the Lord...””

Hold your place there in Ezekiel, and let’s notice Romans 11:1-2, “I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew...”

Verses 25-26 (the last part of the verse), “...hardening (KJV, “blindness”) in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved...” There’s a future day of salvation. There is a time when all Israel will be saved. Right now they are blinded. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew.

Ezekiel 37:11, “... “Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!””

‘Our hope is over with. We don’t have any hope.’ Here it describes a people for whom it, seemingly, is all over with. They are dead. They are in the grave. Their hope is lost. God says, ‘No, I am going to open your graves and bring you out of the graves. Then I am going to bring you to the land of Israel. Then I am going to let you know the truth.’

Romans 11:2, “God hasn’t cast away His people that He foreknew.”

Verse 26, “All Israel will be saved.” When you put Romans 11 together with Ezekiel 37, the event of which he is speaking is plain. And when you put that together with Revelation 20, you get the time setting.

Revelation 20:6, “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the

second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” Those who are in the first resurrection are blessed and holy. They are going to rule and reign with Christ for a thousand years.

Verse 5, “But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished....” Those who were Christ’s at His coming are blessed and holy. They are going to be in the first resurrection. They are going to rule and reign with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead doesn’t live until after the thousand years are over. What about the rest of the dead?

Revelation 20:12, “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life....”

In v. 13, we find that whether these people were buried in the sea or whether they were buried in graves, wherever they were, they came up. Nobody is buried somewhere that God can’t find them. They may be in an unmarked grave.

I think we have a few here who were on our Washington trip. While we were there, we went to Arlington Cemetery. There was row, after row, after row—thousands of graves. And one of the graves that we saw was the tomb of the “Unknown Soldier.” There is an inscription that says, “Here lies the Unknown Soldier, known but to God.” —A nameless young man who died somewhere sometime during the course of World War II or World War I or the various wars in which the nation has been involved. A young man who was unable to be identified is buried there. That’s right, but God does know.

There are millions and billions of graves that have long since been lost on the face of this earth that are known but to God. God does know and God does remember. “All the dead, small and great.” —Those whose graves have been marked and preserved, for those whom monuments have been erected and their graves have been known for hundreds and maybe thousands of years, and for those whose remains have been lost and whose memory is long since gone. All of them, small and great, are dead.

Revelation 20:12, “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God [All of them are going to stand before God.] and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.” This is the time spoken of in Ezekiel 37.

We could go to Matthew 12:41 where Christ talked about the men of Nineveh rising in the judgment with this generation. There is going to come a time when all the dead, small and great, are going to be judged.

Acts 10:34, “...‘God shows no partiality.’” KJV, “God is not a respecter of persons.” Because God tells us He is no respecter of persons, if He is going to give all Israel a chance to be saved, then He is also going to give all mankind a chance to be saved.

Christ made that plain in Matthew 12:41 when He talked about the men of Nineveh standing in the judgment with this generation. Matthew 10:15, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah and Matthew 12:42, the Queen of the South is going to rise up in the judgment with this generation—all the dead small and great. You have to put these things together with Ezekiel 37 to understand the time setting. If we just take it literally for what it says, it makes the time setting that we have very plain.

Ezekiel 38:1-2, “Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, set your face against Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him.’”

It has been recognized by many commentators that Magog was the ancestor of the Mongol peoples, the Asiatic groupings of people. Recently, a lot of attention has been paid to the fact that the Soviet Union is comprised of many groupings of people. There are actually three branches of Russians: The Great Russians, the Little Russians and the White Russians. There is White Russia or Belorussia, as it is sometimes called. The Ukrainians will sometimes use the term “Little Russia.” Then there are those who are called Great Russia, which is Russia proper. There are actually two branches of the Great Russians: the Moscow branch and the Talalsk branch, which are designated here by Meshech and Tubal. So, what we have is a reference to a group of people that include many of the Russians and Mongol peoples.

Verses 3-5, “‘and say, “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. Persia, Ethiopia, Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet.’””

They are allied with them. The KJV and NKJV render it Persia, Ethiopia and Libya. Ethiopia

and Libya are both interpretations. The names in Hebrew are simply Cush and Put. Cush frequently refers to Ethiopia. The Ethiopians are descended from Cush. But there are two branches of Cushites: an Eastern branch and a Western branch. The context clearly shows that it refers to the Eastern branch of the Cushites and Putites.

The Eastern Cushites are in the area of Northern India. That is why you find the Hindu Kush Mountain range there. There is quite a bit of traffic between India and Egypt of ancient date. The religion of India, the sacred cow and all of this, derived from the religion of Egypt. The worship of the golden calf and all this sort of thing derived from Egypt. Even the so-called Gypsy people migrated to India from Egypt. The term "Gypsy" comes from "Egyptian." That went back in antiquity. There were Eastern and Western Cushites. The Western Cushites are in the area of Ethiopia. The Eastern Cushites are in the area of Northern India.

Again, there is an Eastern and Western branch of Put. Most of Central and South Africa trace descent back to Put. Also, the people of Southern India trace descent back to Put. The ruling class in Southern India was called "rajput," which literally meant "the ruler over Put."

Persia certainly could refer to the area of Iran as some of the Persian people.

Verse 6, "Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north...." Togarmah would refer to some of the area up in Siberia. Gomer basically refers to the area of Indo-China, perhaps some of the area of Tibet and down into Korea. That area would include Gomer. What we have is clearly a conglomeration of people, basically an Asiatic alliance—a grouping that would be China, India, Indo-China and much of Russia.

We're not the only ones who can figure out where most of these identifications are. Much of this is historical, and many of the commentators have understood some of this, as to whom some of these peoples are that we are talking about. They looked at that and said, 'Russia and China and all that area—sounds like the communists are going to take over the whole East and are going to come and invade Israel [which they, of course, identify with the modern Jewish state].' Then later on it talks about fire being sent on Magog, so they say, 'There is going to be a great nuclear war and Russia is going to get defeated.' They have tried to identify this with Armageddon and various things.

This is a great Eastern conglomerate of peoples that would include China, India and much of what is now the Soviet Union. But notice the time setting.

Verses 8-12, "After many days you will be visited. In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely. You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you.' Thus says the Lord God: 'On that day it shall come to pass that thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan: You will say, "I will go up against a land of unwallled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwells safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and have neither bars nor gates"— to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places that are again inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land.'"

This is a time when God's people will dwell safely. The land of Israel is called the land of unwallled villages. They are dwelling without walls, having neither bars nor gates.

I am going to tell you something; that's not at all descriptive of modern-day state of Israel. They are certainly not a land of unwallled villages, and if there is anybody who is prepared for war, they are. They're stocked up on all the modern weapons and armaments. They are anything but an unwallled village.

The time setting is very clear. It's talking about the time after the beginning of the Millennium—a time after Israel has been re-gathered from the nations and has begun to prosper. It is a time when Israel is dwelling safely and at peace in their unwallled villages. There isn't any outward evidence of armaments of protection. There are not even locks on the doors.

Can you imagine not even having to put locks on the doors? No keys! The job of locksmith is going to be phased out in the early part of the Millennium. It's not a job that can be phased out today. What if no one ever broke the eighth commandment and nobody would steal. If you lived in a society where there wasn't any stealing, what would you need locks for? You could leave something anywhere you wanted to, and nobody would take it because it didn't belong to him—unless he thought you lost it and was going to bring it back to you. It is

descriptive of a society that is a total contrast to our society.

Some of you grew up, as I did, in some of the rural areas in a time when we were virtually a land of unwallled villages. I remember as a kid growing up that the lock on our front door didn't work. I don't know when my parents finally got it repaired, but I never remember it working all the time I was growing up. If somebody wanted to walk in, I guess they could have—the lock never worked. We never worried about it, never gave any thought to it. We weren't unique in that. For a lot of you, the most secure lock you had was the little hook and eye on the screen door. That was more to keep the cat and dog out.

It was a situation that was a total contrast to our society today. It is a time when Israel is re-gathered and the land is prospering and blooming. What we are looking at is a period after the beginning of the Millennium because when Christ comes back, the government of God is not just instantly spread over the whole earth. The first thing He is going to do is re-gather Israel. You have to start somewhere.

Some of the prophecies we went through back in Isaiah show that, at the very beginning, certain areas (for instance down in East Africa) are going to send up emissaries and are going to want God's government extended to them. It will. But in some of these other areas, it's going to take a little while.

Now, here's a case where some who have gone through the devastation of the events that accompany the return of Christ, two or three years into the Millennium, are going to hear about the prosperity that is beginning to take place. They are going to decide they are going to come down and take it. They will say, 'Those people are defenseless and we are just going to come down there and get it.' The pendulum swing of human nature!

It's interesting what we have now, particularly in the Soviet Union. There was the attempt toward atheistic communism that has proven to be "the god that failed." There is now the beginning of a swing back and there may very well be some sort of an alliance with Europe. I think it's going to be interesting to view the role of the pope.

Are you aware that for the last several years, Pope John Paul talks weekly with both President Bush and President Gorbachev? He has weekly conversations with them. He talks with Mr. Gorbachev in the Russian language and with President Bush in English because he is multi-lingual. There isn't any need for translators. It's

a one-on-one conversation; it's private phone conversations.

A year ago when all the upheaval was going on in Europe, he was on the phone for hours every day with Gorbachev discussing the situation. There was an article in U.S. News & World Report that went into a little bit of the background on that. The pope played a very important role in calming the situation in Lithuania. When Gorbachev was having all the upheaval, you noticed how everything settled down in Lithuania? Remember back when it looked like Russia was almost at the point of civil war. Things kind of settled down, and you didn't hear anything about Lithuania. You know who settled it down? The pope did. You see, Lithuanians are Catholic. All he had to do was put in a call to the Catholic archbishop of Lithuania and tell him what was going to be done in Lithuania. All of a sudden, things settled down in Lithuania. There's a lot that goes on behind the scenes. It was an interesting little article in U.S. News several weeks ago.

The point is that, now, there is a swing, and I think it's going to be interesting to see the things that are going to happen in the Soviet Union. But you will see there is going to be another pendulum swing because as they come into an orbit more aligned with Western Europe, once again they are going to realize they've "been had."

Read the book of Revelation and find the ten kings who give their power to the beast. When they realize they've "been had," it says they are going to hate the whore and are going to turn on her and make her desolate. You read it in Revelation 17:16. The pendulum swings back and here are people who are embittered about the swing back. This mentality is going to lead to this invasion.

The point is finally going to get across. They are going to come face to face with the true God. The time setting is shown if you just read Ezekiel 38 and take it literally for what it says.

Ezekiel 39:2 (KJV), "and I will turn you back, and leave but the sixth part of you, and will cause you to come up from the north parts, and will bring you upon the mountains of Israel." It shows that only a sixth part of this army is going to survive the invasion. This small portion will be left to go back and bring the facts back to the "bunch" at home.

The population at the beginning of the Millennium will have been drastically reduced, but that is going to serve its purpose because most of humanity is going to be dealt with after a

thousand years of preparation. The population of these various nations at the beginning of the Millennium is going to be very small, just a handful. But that's really the best way to deal with it. It's best to start with a small nucleus to begin to build; then you have a thousand years to build it the right way and get prepared to handle the greatest population explosion in man's history. You have time to prepare.

You start with a small group. You can educate them and you can build. The families expand. The earth and its resources have time to rest, to rejuvenate, and then it comes together. There are lessons that have to be learned and God allows those lessons to be learned. God has a plan and an overview. He is working toward a conclusion and there is logic and simplicity to God's plan.

Verse 12, "For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them, in order to cleanse the land." It's going to be a mammoth job. The physical people of Israel are going to be left there trying to clean it up. It's going to take a long time to clean up everything. While they are out tending to all of this, they are going to be reminded of what happens if you rebel against God. It's not a really smart thing, and this will help to impress it on them.

The consequence of this, vv. 21-24, "I will set My glory among the nations; all the nations shall see My judgment which I have laid on them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day forward. The Gentiles shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity; because they were unfaithful to Me, therefore I hid My face from them. I gave them into the hand of their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I have dealt with them, and hidden My face from them."

Verses 28-29, "then they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their own land, and left none of them captive any longer. And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel," says the Lord God."

Israel is going to learn this and the nations around are going to learn this. What lesson will the surviving Gentiles learn from all this? They are going to learn that the God of Israel is the true God and that Israel went into captivity because of transgressing God's laws.

Ezekiel 40—48 describe the topography of Israel after Christ returns. The time setting of the city and the temple is described.

Ezekiel 43:5-9, "The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the temple. Then I heard Him speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me. And He said to me, 'Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. No more shall the house of Israel defile My holy name, they nor their kings, by their harlotry or with the carcasses of their kings on their high places. When they set their threshold by My threshold, and their doorpost by My doorpost, with a wall between them and Me, they defiled My Holy name by the abominations which they committed; therefore I have consumed them in My anger. Now let them put their harlotry and the carcasses of their kings far away from Me, and I will dwell in their midst forever.'"

It is a time when His throne will be there and 'I will dwell in the midst of the house of Israel forever.' It is a time when they will no more defile God's holy name. What we are looking at is a future time, a time that will only occur after the coming of the Messiah. We see the time setting for these chapters. It is a prophecy.

Let's notice that one of the problems that the commentators have is that the description of the temple in Ezekiel 40—48 differs from Solomon's temple. It is not an exact description of Solomon's temple. It's clear that Solomon's temple was not exactly like the one described here. And the temple of Zerubbabel / Herod were not exactly like this. Some of the commentators really "scratch their heads" and try to figure out which temple Ezekiel was describing. The point is that he wasn't describing any of the above. He was describing the temple that is going to be built after the return of Christ. The reason they don't have one like that is because Christ hasn't returned yet and it hasn't been built. We have to look at it in terms of the time setting.

Now there are similarities. Some of the commentators want to go back and say there are discrepancies in what Ezekiel says, in what we read back in Kings or Chronicles in terms of Solomon's temple. They are not discrepancies. Ezekiel is not describing Solomon's temple. He is describing the temple that the Messiah is going to build after His return. It's a time when, Ezekiel 43:7, the Messiah will dwell in the midst of Israel forever and His throne will be there. Ezekiel is writing at a time when Solomon's temple was at the verge of being destroyed. Ezekiel knew what Solomon's temple looked

like. He wasn't trying to describe that. He was talking about something future.

Let's notice that there will be sacrifices offered and a functioning Levitical priesthood during this time.

Ezekiel 40:38-39, "There was a chamber and its entrance by the gateposts of the gateway, where they washed the burnt offering. In the vestibule of the gateway were two tables on this side and two tables on that side, on which to slay the burnt offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering."

Verses 45-46, "Then he said to me, 'This chamber which faces south is for the priests who have charge of the temple. The chamber which faces north is for the priests who have charge of the altar; these are the sons of Zadok, from the sons of Levi, who come near the Lord to minister to Him.'" These verses clearly show that there will be a functioning Levitical priesthood offering sacrifices during the Millennium. One way to understand it is that there will be ceremonies of state. Israel will be both a nation and a Church.

Today God's Church is not a civil nation. We are not a nation in the sense of a civil government. We are citizens of the Kingdom of heaven, but we are residents of many different nation states. We live under the jurisdiction of various human governments. But when the Kingdom of God is established on earth, there will need to be certain protocol, certain ceremonies of state, to orient the whole world toward Jerusalem, toward the functioning of the government. There will be certain protocol, certain pomp and circumstance, certain things that are identified with an identifiable government—the Kingdom of God. There will be certain things to orient the whole world toward the world capital at Jerusalem and the things that go on there.

The role of the Levitical priesthood and what they are going to do is certainly not to atone for sin. Jesus Christ has offered one sacrifice for sin forever. But there are certain ceremonies of state that will be performed that will serve to emphasize certain lessons and certain principles.

Today, various nations have certain ceremonies and certain protocol that is observed. If you go to London, you want to see the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace. There's certain ceremonies of state that take place that create a sense of reverence and awe and respect for the nation and for the things that the nation symbolizes. There are certain outward

manifestations and ceremonies that take place that keep people oriented in that way.

This will also be in the time when the Kingdom of God will be holding sway because the Kingdom of God will be ruling over physical human beings who need to be oriented toward the one government. People will need to be oriented toward the one-world capital in Jerusalem and toward God's government. There will be a functioning priesthood that is established. There will be a functioning capital there in Jerusalem. A temple will be built that will have in it the throne on which Jesus Christ will sit (the throne of David) from which He will rule the world. There will be various things that take place. It describes certain of the things that will be carried out by physical human beings. We find emphasis of that.

Ezekiel 40, 41 and 42 describe the temple itself. There is a reference in various places in the book of Ezekiel to the prince of Israel. When you go through Ezekiel, it talks about the portion that pertains to the prince. It's very clear that this is a human leader who will function under spirit beings.

Ezekiel 44:1-3, "Then He brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces toward the east, but it was shut. And the Lord said to me, 'This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the Lord God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut. As for the prince [KJV, "It is for the prince"], because he is the prince, he may sit in it to eat bread before the Lord; he shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gateway, and go out the same way.'" It goes on and talks about the things that are going to take place.

There are more descriptions here. It describes the land around about and how some of it is going to be allocated.

Ezekiel 45:4, "It shall be a holy portion of the land, belonging to the priests, the ministers of the sanctuary, who come near to minister to the Lord; it shall be a place for their houses and a holy place for the sanctuary."

Verse 7, "The prince shall have a portion on one side and the other of the holy district..."

In vv. 16-17, it talks about the prince of Israel and what the prince will do in terms of providing certain things for burnt offerings. Various things are going to be done in that way. You can go through the details of it.

Ezekiel 47 and 48 describe some of the layout of the land. When you go through and read of the portion for the prince and the prince's sons, it's clear that we are talking about a human leader

(let's say a human heir to the throne of David), just as the human physical descendants of Levi will be occupying a position of responsibility there. The continuation of David's physical lineage will be carrying out on a human level certain responsibilities and ceremonies of state and certain things that are allocated out. There is a restoration in the time of the Millennium of things that will enable the world to function. The world will be looking to God's government as a literal functioning government.

There are several things that we might want to note as we conclude. This is important to note.

Ezekiel 41:23-24, "The temple and the sanctuary had two doors. The doors had two panels apiece, two folding panels: two panels for one door and two panels for the other door." What it describes is doors, not the veil that had always been blocking the entrance from the Holy Place into the Holy of Holies.

Remember the veil that was torn at the death of Christ (Matthew 27:51). The tabernacle and later the temple had a veil that cut off access to the Holy of Holies. In the Millennium, the temple will not have a veil. There's going to be a set of folding doors that are going to slide back and forth, indicating ready and easy access into the presence of God. The future temple won't have the heavy veil blocking entrance to the Holy of Holies and symbolically blocking direct access to God. Rather, there will be doors that open to give easy access. That's why a different symbol is used.

Notice something very mundane; God spells out every detail. A lot of these were regulations that the ancient priesthood operated under.

Ezekiel 44:20 (KJV), "'Neither shall they shave their heads, nor allow their locks to grow long; they shall only poll their heads.'" They weren't to shave their heads like the priests of Egypt. They weren't to allow their hair to grow long, as some of the surrounding nations practiced. They were to poll their heads.

Now, if you look up that word, you find that they were to get what we would think of as simply a normal masculine haircut. The term "poll" refers to the shape of the head. There's a breed of cattle known as polled Herefords. The reason they are called that is because they don't have horns. You talk about a poll tax. The term "poll" means head and, in that sense, when you refer to cattle being polled, it means that there is nothing coming out from the head. That is simply the shape of the head and nothing coming out.

When it was used here in the context of the priests, it meant that the priests wore their

hair short enough that it was considered polled. In other words, it was clipped. The concept was that a man's hair was short enough that the shape of the head was evident. A woman's hair, as it describes in I Corinthians 11, is given for a covering. There is a more flowing, feminine, softer look to it and certainly room for a variety of styles. But the point is that it's long enough to cover something, and a man's hair is not normally long enough to cover—it's a cropped haircut. According to the Talmud, the Jews understood this to mean that the priests were required to get a haircut every thirty days. This was the specific regulation that the priests operated under. That was the way they understood that.

We live in a time where we see the artwork that shows biblical characters and they have long flowing hair coming down to their shoulders. A lot of us grew up kind of conceiving this is the way that Christ, all the apostles and people—a long time ago—had long flowing hair. No, it says right here that's not the way God's priesthood was. He didn't want them to look like the Egyptians and have kind of a "Yul Brynner" look; the Egyptian priesthood shaved their heads. Some of the priests of the surrounding nations wore their hair very long. God's priesthood just looked normal. All explanations aside, the bottom line was God said He wanted His priests to look normal.

The duty of the priests is made plain.

Ezekiel 44:23-24, "'And they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. In controversy they shall stand as judges, and judge it according to My judgments. They shall keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed meetings, and they shall hallow My Sabbaths.'"

The job of God's priesthood, ancient and modern, spiritual and physical, is to teach His people the difference between clean and unclean, holy and profane, what is appropriate. They are to teach the people how to make distinctions between what God approves and what He disapproves. There are various ways you could state it, but it is important if we are going to be kings and priests in Tomorrow's World. We are going to be priests in a spiritual sense. Even in the book of Leviticus, many of the things that were given anciently to the physical priesthood had to do with learning to make proper distinction between what is clean (what is appropriate and holy) and what is not.

Ezekiel 47 describes the river of living water. Christ used that symbolically to refer to the Holy Spirit (John 7:38-39).

Verses 1-12 make plain there is going to be a literal river of living water issuing from the throne of Christ. That is going to symbolize the Holy Spirit flowing out from Him to all the nations. You remember when Christ returns to the Mount of Olives, the mountain splits in two (Zechariah 14:4, 8) and a great ripped valley runs east/west and from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean.

Ezekiel 47:1, “Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east....” He saw this water that came out.

Verses 2-4, they go out and he sees this. He measures them and he saw it was a river.

Verse 5, “Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed.”

The waters rose and, vv. 6-8, there were trees on the bank. The fruit is going to be there for the healing of the nations. It describes all of this and it describes the river as it comes out.

Remember in Revelation 16:3, the waters over all the earth—the seas and the rivers—are going to be turned to blood and all the fish are going to die. Notice what happens when Christ comes back and this river begins to spring out.

Verses 8-9, “...‘This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed. And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes.’”

What is going to happen? You know, people read in Revelation, “all the water turned to blood and the fish die,” and they say how can life continue? Well, the way it is going to continue is a river is going to spring forth. When Christ returns and the Mount of Olives splits in two, this great ripped valley occurs. There’s going to come up a gurgling spring that is going to spread out. As this water flows, anything it touches is going to be healed and the fish are going to live. This doesn’t prove that fish have immortal souls either.

Go back to Genesis 1:20 and find, “...‘Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures [souls].’” The word “creature” for fish means “soul.” It says here that the fish are going

to live. It doesn’t mean that the fish have an immortal soul. It just means that there is going to be a healing, a restoration of life on the planet. Many times God does something outwardly, physically, that people can see. Particularly when He’s dealing with a nation, with a world, He does something outward, physical that they can see to teach a spiritual lesson. Just as life emanates out from the throne of God in a physical way, it is symbolic of a spiritual healing and a spiritual relief that will take place.

There are a lot of things in the book of Ezekiel. It’s a very intriguing book, a very powerful book. It’s a book that has an awful lot for us today. Hopefully, with this series, you have a little bit more of an overview of some of these prophecies.

Next Bible study, we will begin a brand new series; this will be a series on the life and letters of the Apostle Paul.

Bible Study # 57 Questions

SURVEY OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS SERIES

Ezekiel 33—48

1. What responsibility does the “watchman” have?
2. What was Ezekiel commissioned to do in Ezekiel 33? When was this job to be carried out and by whom?
3. What will be the attitude of people toward this work?
4. When will the nation recognize Mr. Herbert Armstrong as God’s true servant?
5. What does God say of the leaders of our nation?
6. Who will be our national leader in the future?
7. What will God ultimately do to Mount Seir (modern Turkey)?
8. What will God do to Israel when He re-gathers them in the future?
9. What did Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37 actually mean? What is the time setting of this prophecy?
10. What is the time setting of the prophecy of Ezekiel 38?
11. What portion of Gog’s army will survive their Middle East invasion? How long will it take to dispose of the dead?
12. What lesson will the surviving Gentiles have learned from all of this?
13. What is the time setting of the city and temple described by Ezekiel in chapters 40—48?
14. Show from Ezekiel 40 that there will be sacrifices offered and a functioning Levitical priesthood during the Millennium.
15. Explain the significance of Ezekiel 41:23-24. How did this differ from the entrance into the Holy of Holies that was in Solomon’s temple (and later in Herod’s)?
16. According to Ezekiel 44, what type of haircuts were the priests commanded to have?
17. According to Ezekiel 44, what was the duty of the priests?
18. Will there be a literal “river of living waters” in the future? Explain.

Bible Study # 58
September 5, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Life and Letters of Paul Series—Background on the Apostle Paul

We're going to get into something a little different in Bible study. Last time we completed our survey of the Major Prophets. I've given some consideration as to what would be a good place to go. At this point, we're going to take up a new series of Bible study, one entitled "The Life and Letters of the Apostle Paul." **We are going to focus in on both the life of the Apostle Paul as well as going through the letters that he wrote.**

I will comment a little later on the way in which we will proceed through Paul's letters or his Epistles. "Epistles" is just simply an older word that means "letters." You won't have to be like the lady in the joke I heard one time; the lady thought the epistles were the wives of the apostles. I won't belabor you with the entire joke, but that basically was the punch line of it.

This evening, to kind of set the stage, we **are going to focus in on introductory material. We will focus on the background of the life of the Apostle Paul and the letters he wrote.** It is important to understand the background of the Apostle Paul and these letters in order to understand the message that's contained in each of them. We are going to proceed through these letters in the order in which Paul wrote them. We will go through them in the context of the book of Acts in order to try to get them in their proper perspective and their relationship with one another.

Before we get into the letters Paul wrote, let's talk a little bit about the Apostle Paul. In order to understand and appreciate what he wrote, we have to understand some things about him. There are many things that we're told. Primarily, our biographical information on the Apostle Paul comes from the book of Acts, as well as certain information that he mentioned in some of his epistles. Particularly in the book of Galatians, he mentioned a little bit about his background.

One of the things that Paul mentions is that he came from Tarsus. Tarsus was the capital of the Roman province of Cilicia. If you have maps in your Bible, you might notice that this is in the area of what is modern-day Turkey. It is what was anciently called the Asia Minor peninsula. It has as its southern coast, the Mediterranean Sea and its northern coast, the Black Sea. Cilicia was

a province that was in the southeastern section of modern-day Turkey or ancient Asia Minor.

The city of Tarsus was the capital of this province. It was a thriving and prosperous city. It was a commercial center. It was, virtually, at the crossroads of three continents—Africa, Asia and Europe. They all converged there in that Middle Eastern area. That's one of the reasons the Middle East has always played such an important role. Civilization—whether it was African civilization centered in Egypt to the south, Greece to the west or the area of Mesopotamia to the east—converged there in the Middle East. Egypt was the gateway to Africa, just as the area of Mesopotamia was the gateway to Asia, and Greece served as the gateway to Europe. They all converged there in the Middle East.

You had a convergence of civilizations, commercial trade and travel. There were all sorts of things going on. There were great caravan and sea routes that came through, caravan routes to the East and sea routes coming up from Egypt. There was commerce that traveled up the Nile coming from the Port of Alexandria there in Egypt and commercial travel across the Black Sea. A lot of things converged in this area. It was a commercial area.

Tarsus was located, as far as agriculture is concerned, in a fertile plain. It had a dense population and was very wealthy. It was also the focal point of Greek culture and one of the greatest centers of education in the ancient world. The university in Tarsus ranked third in the ancient world, right after the universities of Athens and Alexandria. Those were the most noted centers of learning in the ancient world—let's say, of the first century, anyway.

The Apostle Paul grew up in a thriving, teeming, commercial, metropolitan area. It was an area noted for Greek culture. There were many Greeks in the area; Greek was the predominant population. The Greek language was very common. It was the language of commerce all through that area. It was an area where a wide variety of people from further east in Asia, Africa and Europe would converge in the great market squares where the various things were being sold and traded.

As Paul grew up as a young boy, this was the background that he had. In fact, he was very much involved in that because we learned that his father was a prosperous tentmaker. As a prosperous tentmaker, one of the main sources of his trade would be dealing with many of these caravans and traders, providing them with

tents. We learned he was a tentmaker; we know he was prosperous. I will show you a couple things later that will show how we know he was prosperous.

The family was Jewish. They were not the Hellenized Jews of the Diaspora. "Diaspora" is the term that is used to refer to the Jews who were dispersed away from the land of Judea. Those who were dispersed throughout the rest of the world tended to center in certain areas. Many of the Jews, in what was called the "Diaspora," tended to absorb a lot of Greek culture and Greek ideas. They were not that different from many of the Jews in modern-day America and Europe in that they tended to absorb the culture and the attitudes of the people around them and only cling in a very superficial way to Jewish religion.

The Apostle Paul's family was not that way. His father was a Pharisee, a member of the strictest sect of the Jews. Even though he lived in the Diaspora and had commercial dealings with the Gentile populace and the people who came and went, yet he was a very strict practicing Jew. As a tentmaker, the Gentile populace would have been his clientele. The main ones he would have sold his wares to would have been the caravans that traveled through, the traders.

Paul grew up in this environment. He grew up as a young boy being there around his father's shop, learning his father's craft. He grew up meeting and seeing these people of various nationalities and ethnic backgrounds come in there and haggle over the price of tents and put in orders for things that they wanted to buy.

There was a big university there in Tarsus. The teacher of the Roman Emperor Augustus, the great stoic philosopher, Athenodoras, was a native of Tarsus.

Tarsus had the status of a Roman free city. Many of its citizens possessed Roman citizenship. There was a sizable Jewish community there. Paul's father was a Pharisee and he was also a Roman citizen. We find that Paul inherited his Roman citizenship. Remember, in one encounter in the book of Acts, Paul brought up that he was a Roman citizen.

One of the Roman officers there was impressed and said, Acts 22:28, "... 'With a large sum I obtained this citizenship.' And Paul said, 'But I was born a citizen.'"

The only way you were born a Roman citizen was if your father was one. We take citizenship for granted. If you are born in the United States, you are an American citizen. You can also acquire citizenship. Anciently, Roman

citizenship was confined to natives of Rome. That's why it is called Roman.

The little city-state of Rome gradually conquered some of the other communities in the central Italian peninsula, gradually subdued the whole of the Italian peninsula and eventually they extended out. At first, they didn't allow any of these people to be Roman citizens. The only ones who possessed the rights and prerogatives of Roman citizens were people whose ancestry was in itself Roman. Gradually, they extended that out and Roman citizenship included everyone in the Italian peninsula. As the Roman Empire spread, they limited Roman citizenship to people whose origin was in the Italian peninsula (those who were born there) and to those who would go out to administer the empire in various areas.

A Roman citizen had a lot of protection. He had rights as a Roman citizen. He had the protection of Roman law. Much of our concept in terms of our American concept of Republican government and the written constitution go back to concepts of Roman law. Roman citizens had many rights.

As an area was conquered, not everybody became a Roman citizen. They were subject people of the Roman Empire, but they were not citizens. However, from time to time, individuals because of certain particular things on their part would be granted the status of Roman citizenship. When somebody was granted that status, then it was hereditary in their family from then on. They could pass it down.

Being a Roman citizen was a very coveted possession. It was not something that everyone could obtain. Generally, you had to do something of great merit for the Roman Empire. You had to help out in some way. You had to do something that they felt like they rewarded you. As time went on, it got to where (as a lot of things) it could be purchased with a price. If you were willing to pay enough or pay off the right officials, they would manage to find some way that you could be given citizenship. We find that human nature hasn't changed a whole lot and politicians haven't changed a whole lot. Some of these things went on then and have continued down.

Paul's father was a Roman citizen. How he became one, we are not told; but Paul was born as a Roman citizen. His father was prosperous. We can tell that by the fact that he was a Roman citizen. Being a Roman citizen was not common among the Jews. The other factor is that when Paul was a young man (a teenager) he was sent to Jerusalem to study at the school of Gamaliel.

Gamaliel was the foremost Jewish Rabbi of the day. In the Jewish community, to be able to be sent to study at the school of Gamaliel was the equivalent of going to Oxford and becoming a Rhodes scholar. It was like getting a law degree from Harvard University in the United States. To study at Jerusalem, the center of Jewish learning, and to study at the school of a great and famous rabbi, Gamaliel, the most renowned rabbi of his period, was a very, very prestigious thing in the Jewish community. This attests to the fact that Paul's father was a wealthy and influential man who was able to get his son into a school such as that.

What we find is that the Apostle Paul (or as he was at that time, the Jewish lad, Saul of Tarsus) grew up in a prosperous Jewish family that was very orthodox and strict in their practice of the Jewish religion. His father was engaged as a tent manufacturer. He grew up having commercial and business dealings with a variety of Gentile people from many nationalities that would converge in the crossroads there at Tarsus. This meant that he had a far broader outlook and knowledge of people than did most of the Jews who grew up in Judea who never had dealings with anyone other than other Jews and the occupying Roman troops. He grew up in a city that was dominated by Greek culture and education. He was very educated in Greek culture. We find him quoting Greek poets in Acts 17:28; on Mars Hill he was able to quote the Greek poets of the day. He was learned in the culture and in the philosophy of his day.

I might just point out something. Sometimes in school or college, our young people are exposed to the ideas, literature and philosophies of some of the so-called great philosophers, writers and thinkers of our age—some of whose stuff is nothing but a bunch of garbage. Many times the thought is: What is the value of knowing any of this? The Apostle Paul was exposed to many of the things of his day (much of which was a lot of garbage), but it enabled him to understand the thinking of the people with whom he dealt.

We live in a world that is dominated by people who think a certain way, who have a certain philosophical mind-set, a certain way of thinking and set of values. Paul understood where they were coming from. But he also understood where they were in error. He was conversant with the literature of the Greek and Roman world. He was able to quote from it when he needed.

He was also very well educated and well grounded in the Bible. The Epistles of Paul are absolutely loaded down with biblical quotations

from the Old Testament. We will see that as we go through it. He was very much acquainted with the education and philosophy of his day. God had him prepared. God had a job in mind for him a long time before. He grew up in an environment that, unknown to him, prepared him. He had a business background. He learned principles of how to administer and how to handle many things. He was trained at business.

Mr. Herbert Armstrong, in his autobiography, makes comment on the way that he feels that God prepared him for his job, in terms of the advertising profession and business. These are the things that prepared him in many ways.

God prepared the Apostle Paul for many of these things in a variety of ways. He had a much broader background than did most of the other apostles who were natives of Judea and simply had a much more limited background.

To set the stage, we might notice briefly in the book of Acts. Saul of Tarsus was a very zealous individual. He was a man of strong convictions. What he believed, he believed with his whole heart. He was not a "wishy-washy" sort of person. He was not the kind of person who had a kind of "ho-hum," lackadaisical approach. You would never refer to Paul as a "Laodicean" sort of person—there was nothing lukewarm about him. He was hot or cold. He was on fire; even when he was wrong, he was wrong in a grand way. We pick up the story.

Acts 9:1, "Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem."

He was stirred up. He viewed Christianity as a heresy that was a threat to the religion of God. He was determined to do whatever it took to wipe it out and he was prepared to do it. He was a "gung-ho" sort of fellow. He was not one who was simply content to sit back and say, 'I sure think they are wrong.' If Paul thought something, he thought it very, very strongly.

God had plans for him.

Verses 2-3, on his way to Damascus, he was struck down. We have the story of his dramatic encounter. There was this blinding light and this roll of thunder. Everybody heard the sound. Paul understood the words, but none of the others did. What Paul saw and encountered when he was blinded by this blast of light was Jesus Christ in vision.

Verse 4-5, "Then he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you

persecuting Me?’ And he said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting....’”

Verses 6-8, he was told to go on into Damascus.

Verse 9, “And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.”

Verses 10-12, Ananias, a disciple there, was instructed of God to go to Saul.

Verses 13-19, he went and talked with him, laid hands on him and Paul was healed. He was then baptized and received God’s Holy Spirit. We find Saul’s conversion.

One thing I would like to point out. God works through human instruments and God works in an organized, orderly way. Saul did not appoint himself to his job. God worked through the authority that He had set in His Church. When He struck Saul blind, He sent a man who served there in some capacity as an elder to come and anoint and lay hands on him, and he was healed. He sent the elder to counsel with him and then take him out and baptize him. God could have done all these things without the use of human intermediary, but He wanted it made evident that He was working through the constituted authority of His Church.

If you want a chronology of Paul’s life, we would date his birth at approximately 1 A.D. This is a general date. It places him just slightly younger than Jesus Christ and a few of the other apostles. Stephen’s stoning was in 33 A.D. (Acts 7). This is two years after Jesus was crucified and resurrected and the miracle of Pentecost. In the aftermath of Stephen’s stoning in 33 A.D., the disciples began to spread out from Jerusalem.

We’re first introduced to Paul at Stephen’s stoning. He was holding the coats for some of the men who were throwing the stones. Two years later, in 35 A.D., is when we pick up the story of the Apostle Paul in Acts 9. This is the time of his conversion. In the aftermath of this, he then spent three years in Arabia. He was being taught directly by Jesus Christ in visions and revelations. He spent a time of preparation and then returned to Jerusalem in 38 A.D. He spent two weeks with James and Peter; then he left and went back to his hometown of Tarsus in 38 A.D. where he remained until 42 A.D.

Acts 9:17, we find that Paul was healed.

Acts 9:19-23, “And when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent certain days with the disciples at Damascus. Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. Then all who heard were amazed, and said, ‘Is this not

he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests.’ But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ. Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him.”

Verses 25-27, “Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket. And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.”

Verse 30 describes that when the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.

We actually are skimming over several years here. You wouldn’t realize that from Acts 9, but there are about three years that transpired in this account. To get the chronology of it, let’s go to Galatians 1. We have to put the Bible together to get the whole story.

Galatians 1:11, “But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.” He said, ‘It’s not some human invention. It’s not something I got from what other people told me.’

Verses 12-24, “For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the Church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord’s brother. (Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.) Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; and I was unknown by face to the

churches of Judea which were in Christ. But they were hearing only, 'He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.' And they glorified God in me."

Galatians 2:1, "Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me."

We have here the basis of establishing the chronology of Paul's life. The event that he makes reference to in Galatians 2:1 is the ministerial conference that is recorded in Acts 15. We date that as 49 A.D.; Paul refers to going up to Jerusalem in 49 A.D. He was going up there for the conference fourteen years after his conversion. That would place his conversion in 35 A.D.

In Galatians 1:16-17, we are told that when he was converted, he did not immediately confer with flesh and blood or go up to Jerusalem. Rather, he went up to Arabia and then returned to Damascus.

Verse 18, after his return to Damascus, he went to Jerusalem three years after he was converted. He was there two weeks, and the only apostles he talked to were Peter and James. He was instructed by them to go on back home.

Verse 21, he went back to Cilicia; Tarsus, his hometown, is the capital of Cilicia.

What we find when you put that account together with Acts 9 is that he was in Damascus and preached for a short time. He was there and had access to the synagogues. He was given letters of recommendation. He was a highly educated Jew, and there is some indication that he was a member of the Sanhedrin. The indication of that is a reference to his consenting unto the death of Stephen (Acts 8:1). Why did he have a voice in the matter? Because this was normally something that was decided in an official capacity by the Sanhedrin, it's very possible that he was even a member of the Sanhedrin. He certainly was connected with it in some capacity. He was an individual of note and highly educated; his credentials were recognized throughout the world by the Jewish community.

Acts 9:3, when he was going to Damascus, He was converted before he ever got there.

Verses 8-9, he was sitting in Damascus, blind, fasting and praying.

Verses 17-19, an elder came in, counseled with him, anointed him and laid hands on him. His sight was restored. Then he was taken out and baptized.

Verse 20, immediately, he was so excited that he did what most of us do when we start coming into the Church. We start trying to convert

everybody. He stirred up a real "hullabaloo." People said, 'This is the guy who had the letters to put all these people in jail' (Acts 9:1-2). 'What in the world has happened to him?'

He didn't stay there very long. He left immediately from Damascus.

Acts 9:23, "Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him." The "many days" is the equivalent of the three years he was in Arabia.

I Kings 2:38-39, "...So Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days. Now it happened at the end of three years..." The expressions "three years" and "many days" are used interchangeably. "Many days" can certainly refer to a period of three years.

In fact, it refers to exactly that in I Kings 2. It makes a reference to a period of "many days" in Acts 9:23, but when you put it together with Galatians 1, we find that Paul, within a matter of a few days after his conversion and baptism, left and went to Arabia.

Verses 17-18, he was there three years and then he returned to Damascus.

When he returned to Damascus is what it talks about in Acts 9:23, "...many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him." He disappeared and was gone from the scene; nobody heard of him for three years. Suddenly, when he came back, he appeared on the scene and began once again to speak in the synagogues. This time the attitude toward Christians had hardened to the point that he barely got out of there with his life.

Then, v. 26, he went to Jerusalem.

Galatians 1:18, the first time he went to Jerusalem was three years after his conversion. He went up to Jerusalem and talked with Peter and James.

In Acts 9:26, after Paul got away from Damascus, he came to Jerusalem. He wanted to come there and be a part of the group, but everyone was a little bit skeptical. They wondered what he was up to. He had simply dropped out of circulation. The last they had known, he had left Jerusalem going down there to arrest Christians. They had, undoubtedly, gotten the story of his baptism and the fact that he disappeared and was gone for three years. Nobody heard of him or knew what happened to him. The next thing they know, he pops up in Jerusalem as though he is a part of the Church. They are not sure of how to receive him.

How did Paul react? Did he suddenly get offended and say, 'If you people can't be more "Christian" than that, I'm going to leave.' No, he didn't say that. Maybe they didn't receive him as well as they could have, but they were

suspicious. They didn't know and understand what he was up to. There was something kind of odd about this whole thing. They were nervous and acted funny around him. Nobody wanted to have anything to do with him.

Verse 27, Barnabas kind of took him under his wing, talked to him and brought him to Peter.

Galatians 1:18-19 and Acts 9:28, he spent two weeks with Peter and James, the brother of Jesus—the two leading apostles. James presided over the Church in Jerusalem and Peter was the chief of the twelve apostles. He was talking and fellowshiping with them. Undoubtedly, there were a lot of deep conversations about the things that he had experienced. At the end of this time, they came to the conclusion that it was not yet time for whatever God had in mind for him. They told him that instead of his remaining in Jerusalem as a part of the ministry, what he needed to do was go back to his hometown. In effect, “don't call us, we'll call you.”

Have you ever volunteered for something and felt like you kind of got the “brush-off”? It's important to understand that he did not simply appoint himself. We're going to read a little later in the book of Acts of his ordination as an apostle. Previously, he had been ordained as an elder.

God works in an organized way. A period of time went by. We can skim over it in a few pages and not realize years went by. He went back to Tarsus. He was respectful and responsive to the government in God's Church. At this point, they didn't have a need for him. They didn't see a place for him right there in Jerusalem as a part of the ministry at that time. He was in his hometown for four years, from 38 A.D. to 42 A.D. He lived a Christian life, was engaged in his own business and did the things that he was to do.

In the meantime, we have the story in Acts 10. Just a short time after Paul left God opened the door for the gospel to be preached to the Gentiles. Remember the vision that Peter had of the sheet coming down from heaven? God opened the door for a work to be done among the Gentile nations through Peter. Previous to this time, there was not any grasp of an organized preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles. In fact, the concept was that unless they became circumcised and converted to Judaism first, they could not be baptized as a part of the Church.

Peter's vision in Acts 10 is the story of Cornelius and his household. The revelation that uncircumcised Gentiles could be converted was major revelation.

Acts 11 continues with the story of the Gentiles accepted into fellowship.

Verse 19, we find the scattering abroad that took place after the stoning of Stephen and that the word was preached.

Verses 20-21, word came back that there was a group of disciples in Antioch.

Acts 11:22, “Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch.”

Verse 24, “...And a great many people were added to the Lord.”

Verses 25-26, “Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch...” This is 42 A.D. Paul had disappeared from the scene; he had gone back to Tarsus.

Things had gone along. A lot of the Jews had been converted there in Jerusalem. There were a lot of Jews coming to Jerusalem for the festivals. Jews from all over the Roman world came to Jerusalem for the festivals. The word spread and several of them were baptized. They went back to their own home areas; certain areas were major commercial centers that people moved to.

Just as today, some of you are not from this area. You are here because of job circumstances. People sometimes relocate. They go to certain major urban areas because of jobs that are available there. This is what happened in ancient times as well.

So, in Antioch, there were several Jews who were converted. They were excited about it and this set the synagogues “abuzz.”

Verse 22, word got back to Jerusalem and they decided they had better send a minister down there.

Again, we see organization and leadership. We see the headquarters Church taking a leading role and making a decision. We see that the group in Antioch did not organize themselves into a Church and decide whom they would call to be their minister. For some of you who come out of a Baptist background as I did, that comes as a little bit of a revelation. They didn't send out and listen to various ones preach and then elect who they wanted to hire to be their preacher. The Church in Jerusalem heard that there were some down there and said, ‘We better send somebody down there.’ They sent Barnabas who was probably at the time holding the rank of evangelist. He went down there and preached.

He saw what the situation was and within a fairly short time, v. 25, he left and went on up to

Tarsus where Paul was. He had, perhaps, kept in some sort of contact with Paul.

In Acts 9:27, we find that he had befriended Paul several years earlier when Paul had come to Jerusalem. By this time—four years later—Paul had proved himself and Barnabas offered Paul the opportunity of coming full time into the ministry (Acts 11:25-26). At this point, Paul was brought down to Antioch. He came to Antioch as an elder and entered full time in the ministry working with Barnabas in Antioch.

Acts 11:27, “And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch.” They were dispatched by the apostles.

Acts 12 is somewhat of an inset. It is an account of Herod seeking to stir up certain trouble.

Verses 1-2, he killed James, the brother of John. James was one of the twelve apostles; this was not James, the brother of Jesus.

Acts 12:3, “And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread.”

But, v. 7, God delivered Peter from jail.

In the meantime, Saul and Barnabas had taken some foodstuffs up to Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30).

Then in Acts 12:25, they came back.

Acts 13:1, “Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger [Niger was the term used at that time to refer to Blacks from the area of West Africa. The word “Niger” is the Greek word for Black. The term “Ethiopia” was the term used to refer to Blacks from East Africa. The Niger River in West Africa, the nation of Niger, as well as the nation of Nigeria, all derived their name from this.], Lucius of Cyrene [Cyrene is a city of North Africa up in the modern-day nation of Lybia.], Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch [Manaen could have either been considered one of the prophets but more likely was one of the elders], and Saul.” Barnabas is mentioned first because he was the pastor of the Antioch Church.

We see that Simeon and Lucius, at least, were prophets because it mentions prophets were sent down from Jerusalem on a mission there. We read the details of that in Acts 11:27-30.

Acts 13:2-3, God revealed to the prophets (to Simeon and Lucius) that Barnabas and Saul were to be set apart (separated, ordained) for the job He had. When they had fasted and prayed and laid hands on them, they sent them away. Simeon and Lucius fasted and prayed, which is

customary prior to an ordination. They laid hands on them (set them apart) and sent them away. This is the ordination of Saul and Barnabas as apostles.

Acts 13:4, “So being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.” They departed.

We find here the story of Paul’s first evangelistic journey. This would bring us to 45 A.D. Paul, if we’re following through, was converted in 35 A.D. He was in Arabia until 38 A.D. and then came back to Damascus very briefly. He had to flee for his life to Jerusalem. He spent a couple of weeks there with Peter and James, the brother of Jesus. They sent him back to Tarsus in 38 A.D. He remained in Tarsus in business from 38 A.D. to 42 A.D. Then in 42 A.D., the Jerusalem Church dispatched Barnabas to Antioch. Barnabas went to Tarsus and brought Paul to Antioch to assist him and to serve in the ministry full time. Paul remained in the local ministry there in Antioch from 42 A.D. to 45 A.D. In 45 A.D., he was ordained as an apostle and began his first evangelistic journey. Interestingly enough, this is twelve years after the stoning of Stephen and ten years after his own conversion.

We see that even when God has a special mission for someone, He still works through the constituted authority that already is present in His Church. He does it in an organized, orderly way. God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). God does not have all kinds of conflicting groups working against one another. There is order.

We see in Acts 13:4 **Paul’s first evangelistic journey** which began in 45 A.D. The journey took a period of about three years. It was completed in 48 A.D. with Paul’s return to Antioch.

He first sailed from Antioch down to the island of Cyprus. If you look on a map, you can see that Cyprus is in the Mediterranean Sea west of Antioch.

Verse 5, Paul began his teaching there.

Verse 13, he sailed from Cyprus up to Asia Minor (Galatia). He went through some of the cities of Galatia, which is in Central Turkey or Central Asia Minor. He went through there from city to city then retraced his steps back.

Acts 14:26, then instead of coming back to Cyprus, he sailed directly back to Antioch. We find the story of his first journey in Acts 13 and 14. He came to Cyprus in Acts 13:4; he preached the word. It goes through the details of what he did, and they came from Cyprus to Asia Minor.

Acts 13:13-14, they went to Pamphylia and to Antioch in Pisidia. This is not the Antioch of Syria that Paul had as his headquarters but an area in central Turkey or Asia Minor.

Verses 14-41 give the account of his sermon in the synagogue. You find the extent to which Paul was very, very conversed with the Old Testament by the amount of quotations that he gave.

A couple of things we might note.

Verse 14, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath. When he was given an opportunity to speak, he did. Some would say the only reason he went in on the Sabbath was because he was preaching to the Jews and not because he viewed the Sabbath as a day of worship.

Acts 13:42, “And when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.” Why didn’t Paul tell them, ‘You don’t need to wait until next Sabbath? The Sabbath is done away. We are going to have church for you Gentiles ten o’clock tomorrow morning.’ That is what any self-respecting Protestant or Catholic would have done.

Verse 44, “And the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.” It wasn’t just Jews. These were Gentiles.

Verse 45, “But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.” They were mad about it and a lot of trouble stirred up. Paul traveled through this area.

Acts 14 lists Iconium (v. 1), Lystra and Derbe (v. 6); these are areas of Galatia. He preached in many of these areas and then he retraced his steps.

Verses 21-26, “And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.’ So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. Now when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed to Antioch....”

Antioch is the area that served as Paul’s headquarters for the Gentile work.

Acts 13 and 14 tell of Paul’s first evangelistic journey in the area through Cyprus and the area

of Galatia. A period of three years transpired as he traveled through that area and spent time place by place. Then on the way back, he fully organized them into Churches and ordained elders. By that time, it was apparent who God was choosing to be used in those capacities. Things were organized; then he and Barnabas left and returned to Antioch.

After they returned to Antioch, Acts 15:1, individuals from Judea came and stirred up quite a bit of controversy by claiming that it was necessary to be circumcised in order to be converted and be a part of the Church.

Acts 15:2, “Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.” After the matter had been discussed and Paul and Barnabas had sought to explain the situation and settle the controversy, it became apparent that this was stirred up to the point that it was necessary to go to Jerusalem and receive an official clarification about this question.

Verse 5, “But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the Law of Moses.’” There came up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who had come into the Church from this background; they were very adamant of the necessity of circumcising the Gentiles and instructing them in the ritual laws.

Verses 6-7, “So the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. And when there had been much dispute [a lot of discussion], Peter rose up and said to them: ‘Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.’”

Verses 7-11, Peter set and expounded the matter. He explained how God made it plain to begin with that circumcision was not necessary for conversion and gave the story. James, as the pastor of the Jerusalem Church, was the presiding apostle over the conference.

Verses 13-19, he went through and reiterated what Peter had said. Then he stated the judgment of the Church.

Verse 19, “‘Therefore I judge [“krino,” a legal technical term which means “my decision; the binding decision of the Church”] that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God.’” His judgment is that we are not going to insist that the Gentiles be

circumcised. God had already revealed by a direct miracle that this was not necessary.

However, v. 20, they were to be instructed in terms of other questions that had been raised involving idolatry, fornication, things strangled and from blood. They were to abstain from these things. These were not ceremonial laws and should not be regarded as such.

The issue came up as to what was ceremonial. Once you make the statement that circumcision is not necessary then the question arises. If the rituals are not necessary, then what is a ritual? There were questions they raised concerning meat offered to idols, meat improperly slaughtered and immorality (fornication). There are some who sometimes have misunderstood some comments Paul made in I Corinthians and think that Paul just arbitrarily took it upon himself to change the statement of the Jerusalem Church in regard to meat offered to idols. If you read carefully what Paul says in Romans and I Corinthians, it is very plain that Paul reiterates the decision of the Jerusalem Church (Romans 14:1-23; I Corinthians 8:4, 7-13; 10:7-8, 16-33).

The Jews misunderstood. The point that he makes is that meat offered to idols did not physically taint the meat. The only reason to avoid meat offered to idols was to avoid the appearance of being involved in idolatrous worship. The meat itself had not been hurt. If you ate meat that had been offered to an idol, this was not the issue. If you didn't know that it had been offered to idols, and somebody made comment about it having been, the meat hadn't been hurt and that was not the issue.

It was stressed that the Gentiles coming into the Church were to culturally withdraw from the society and culture of which they had been a part. The Greek and Roman culture around them took immorality very lightly. They were very casual in their approach to morality as well as the issue of idolatry.

Notice why the apostles didn't feel it necessary to go into greater detail.

Verse 21, "'For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.'" Everything else you will hear being read in the synagogues on the Sabbath.

Verse 22, "Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas...." They sent a deputation back from Jerusalem.

Verse 23, "They wrote this letter by them...."

Verses 23-29 were the official decision.

The account of Acts 15 is the ministerial conference of 49 A.D.

There was the decision in Acts 15 (latter part) for **Paul's second evangelistic journey.**

Verse 40, Paul this time took Silas and departed.

Verse 39, Barnabas took a different route. He took John Mark and they went in a different way.

Verse 41, "And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches." Paul is going back to the area of Galatia, but this time, instead of sailing to Cyprus and going up by water, he travels up overland. This would be in the spring of 50 A.D.

Acts 16:1, "Then he came to Derbe and Lystra...." This is the area of Galatia where he had established Churches several years earlier. He now travels up from Antioch overland and through the eastern part of the Turkish peninsula.

Timothy (vv. 1-3), whom he had known earlier as a younger teenager, is now up in age, perhaps eighteen or nineteen. Paul takes Timothy with him. He did go ahead and circumcise Timothy because Timothy's mother was Jewish and he knew this would be a matter of controversy. Timothy was at least part Jewish; he was Jewish on his mother's side and Greek on his father's side. Paul knew the fact that Timothy was uncircumcised would be a matter that the Jews would really take exception to. At this account, Paul and Silas have traveled on across the Turkish peninsula or Asia Minor peninsula.

Acts 16:9, "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'" Paul has a vision; he sees a man of Macedonia, which is across into northern Greece and southern Yugoslavia, the modern area of Macedonia. Paul crossed into Europe.

Verse 13, "And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there."

We can show this to be the day of Pentecost of 50 A.D. The gospel was first preached in Europe exactly nineteen years after the gospel was first preached on Pentecost in 31 A.D. The word "Sabbath" in v. 13 is a different form. It is literally "Sabbaths." "And on the day of Sabbaths..." would be a more literal rendering. It is a term that the Jews used to refer to Pentecost. We find here the preaching in Macedonia. This is his second evangelistic journey. He comes down further into Greece proper.

Acts 17:1, "...they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews."

Verses 2-4, he preaches in Thessalonica.

Then, v. 10, he went to Berea.

Verse 15, he went into Athens.

In vv. 22-31, we have his sermon on Mars Hill.

Acts 18:1, "After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth." This is the fall of 50 A.D.

Verse 11, he stays there for about eighteen months. It is during that period of time, while Paul is in Corinth from the fall of 50 A.D. to the spring of 52 A.D., that Paul wrote the first letter (actually the first two letters) that we have preserved for us in the New Testament. During that eighteen-month period that he was in Corinth, he wrote the books of I and II Thessalonians. Now we come to a period, fifteen to seventeen years after his conversion, five to seven years after his ordination as an apostle and in the midst of his second evangelistic journey, that we have the first of the letters that Paul wrote that makes up such a crucial part of our New Testament. We will go into those letters next time.

I want to give you a little background leading up to the beginning of Paul's letters. I'd like to review a couple of things. What we are going to do in this series is study the life and the writings of Paul with emphasis on doctrine and Christian living. We want to get the overview of Paul's background and the background of each book. We want to understand the message of the book in the light of its historical setting.

Paul's letters are very important. First, they are essential for understanding the historical development of the New Testament Church. They provide the record of the development of the New Testament Church over a fifteen to seventeen-year period. That was the period during which Paul wrote. We learn a lot about how the New Testament Church developed.

Second, we can learn much from the examples of the early Church. We learn about Church authority and organization. We see mistakes that were made that we can avoid. We have examples of the early Church pointed out. There are things we should copy and things we should avoid. That's why God has examples recorded. Every generation doesn't have to "reinvent the wheel." We can learn from what has gone before.

Third, Paul's letters are very important because they are the chief repositories of what might be termed "the systematic theology of the New Testament." It is the clearest and chief place

where we have a detailed exposition of what the Church believed and taught.

Paul wrote fourteen letters that are preserved as a part of the New Testament canon. There are nine letters that were written to seven specific Churches. The Churches at Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossi and Thessalonica represent seven Churches. There are nine letters written to those seven Churches because two of the letters were written to the Church at Corinth and two to the Church at Thessalonica. Paul wrote one General Epistle, the book of Hebrews. He wrote four Pastoral Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon. He wrote two letters to Timothy, making four. We have fourteen letters altogether.

It's very interesting the way in which the letters of Paul are arranged. One of the things we will notice as we go through is that Paul's letters are not arranged in the order in which he wrote them. He wrote I and II Thessalonians first. Why don't we have them in the order in which he wrote them? We are going to go through and study them, in this series, in the order in which Paul wrote them because we're going to study it going through the book of Acts and from the Life and Letters of Paul.

When you go through and read it in the New Testament, the order that they were preserved in is important. There are some important concepts there. In fact, we could divide Paul's fourteen letters and there is a specific order. You might be aware that the order of the Greek Bibles (the Byzantine text of the Bible that has been preserved by the Greek Church) is different than the Latin order that has been preserved in the western world. It's the same books but a different order.

The Greek order is sometimes referred to as the inspired order because it was the order that was preserved by the Greeks who preserved the New Testament. The order they preserved the New Testament books in were first, the four Gospels and Acts, just as we have them. The next section that they preserved was the General Epistles: James, Peter, John and Jude and then the Epistles of Paul. They preserved the Epistles of Paul as we have them, with one change. They preserved Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Thessalonians. Then in the Greek order came the book of Hebrews, followed by I and II Timothy, Titus and Philemon, then the book of Revelation.

This makes four sections of the Greek New Testament that the Greeks preserved: (1) the

Gospels and Acts, (2) the General Epistles, (3) the Epistles of Paul and (4) the book of Revelation. You take those four sections and combine them with the three that the Jews recognized of the Old Testament: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. Altogether, you have seven divisions or sections of scripture that constitute the Bible and shows a stamp of completion. There isn't any room for an Apocrypha. There isn't any room for some of the extra books that have gotten in. They don't fit with either the Old or the New.

Why are Paul's Epistles arranged in the order in which they are? The interesting thing is that if you look at the first ten of Paul's Epistles (Romans through Hebrews), you find that these books basically follow the order of the Holy Days and the message that they expound. Romans and I and II Corinthians are books that deal with the subject matter of the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread.

We have scriptures in the book of Romans that clearly deals with these subjects.

Romans 3:23, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Romans 5:8-10, "But God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

Romans 6:12, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts."

Romans 6:16, "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness?"

What we find here is the message of Passover and Unleavened Bread. The emphasis is on the message of Passover and Unleavened Bread, the matter of Christ's atonement, the necessity of putting sin out of our lives, of being justified by Christ's sacrifice.

I Corinthians focuses in on much of the message. I Corinthians 5 is the famous chapter that we read nearly every year prior to Passover and Unleavened Bread.

I Corinthians 5:6-8, "...Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old

leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

I Corinthians 11 gives instructions about observing the Passover service.

II Corinthians 7:1, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." This certainly deals with the matter of the Days of Unleavened Bread. The subject matter of Romans and I and II Corinthians is the subject matter of Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread—the emphasis on the Savior and the necessity of our coming out of sin and putting sin away.

The next four Epistles—Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians—would tie in and parallel the message of Pentecost. They consist of deeper spiritual things. They talk about the covenants and about the fruits of the Spirit. We find much of these things in Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. The day of Pentecost focuses in on the Old and the New Covenant, on the giving of God's Holy Spirit, the fruits of God's Spirit—many, many things that could come out.

I and II Thessalonians tie in with the message of the Feast of Trumpets. There are many places we could look at.

I Thessalonians 4:16, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first."

I Thessalonians 5:2, "For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night." It goes into details.

II Thessalonians continues and talks further about some of those same things. Clearly, there is an emphasis on the subject matter of the Feast of Trumpets, the return of Jesus Christ.

The book of Hebrews deals with the subject matter that relates to the Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day.

We have Hebrews 9 and 10 that deal with the subject matter of the Day of Atonement. It explains and goes through the symbolism in great detail of the high priest entering into the Holy Place. It goes through and explains the symbolism of the Day of Atonement.

We have in Hebrews 3 and 4 the information about entering into God's rest, the parallel that ties in with the Feast of Tabernacles.

Hebrews 11 also has a lot concerning the fulfillment of that.

There's insight into the Last Great Day, the time of judgment. I will summarize on some of that.

We went through it at a much earlier Bible study when we went through the canonization of Scripture. If you want more details, you can go back and get one of those tapes.

Basically, the Pastoral Epistles were in the order of the rank of the individual to whom he wrote. Timothy was an evangelist, Titus was a pastor, and Philemon was a local elder in Colossi.

We find that there is a systematic arrangement in his letters, in terms of subject matter. I think from this we can get a little bit of insight. Paul's letters come in an appropriate place.

The Gospels, the personal teachings of Jesus Christ, form the basis. That is logically where you start. The book of Acts picks up the story and goes on through and shows the continuity of the ministry of Jesus Christ. The first five books of the New Testament correspond to the first five books of the Old Testament. They correspond to the Law, to the books of Moses.

These are the books of the second Moses, of Jesus Christ who was prophesied in Deuteronomy 18:18 (KJV), ""God will raise up for them a Prophet from among their brethren like unto me....""

Hebrews 9:15, "And for this reason He is the Mediator of the New Covenant...."

We have the direct teachings of Jesus Christ in the Gospels, and Acts continues the work of the ministry of Jesus Christ.

The General Epistles are the teachings of the senior apostles, the ones who were with Jesus, either in the case of James and Jude (two of his physical brothers) or in the case of Peter and John, two of the original twelve. They pick up the story and they deal with very basic fundamental issues.

In II Peter 3:15-16, Peter even tells us that Paul wrote some things hard to be understood. When you have that background, then you get into Paul's writings. Paul's writings are arranged in an order that follows a subject flow that really, in terms of emphasis, follows the basic outline and plan of God, concluding with letters of pastoral instruction.

Then the New Testament concludes with the book of Revelation. Revelation is the logical place to end. It is the counterpoint to the book of Genesis.

In our survey of Paul's life and letters, we are going to follow them through in the order that he wrote them. We are going to get their message in the context of the background provided by the book of Acts. Hopefully, this different approach will give us a little more of a fresh insight into these letters and into the message that they

contain. They contain a timeless message. It is a message for us today. It is a message that is just as important for us today as it was for those to whom it was originally addressed.

This will be our last Bible study prior to the Feast of Tabernacles, which is an incredible thing. Our next scheduled Bible study would have been the evening that begins the Feast of Trumpets. Two weeks from tonight, we will be observing the beginning of the Feast of Trumpets and two weeks from then, we will be observing the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles.

On the evening that we are gathered around the world observing the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles—the evening of Wednesday, October 3—there will be something else of note that will take place at the same time we are meeting. Documents will be signed in Berlin on the evening of Wednesday, October 3, that will officially reunite Germany as one nation. One year ago at the Feast you saw the Berlin Wall begin tumbling down. An awful lot has happened in the last year. Can you imagine where we will be if the world changes as much in the next year as it has changed in the last year?

Bible Study # 59
November 13, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Life and Letters of Paul Series—I and II
Thessalonians

We have started into our series of the Life and Letters of Paul. We went into basic background on Paul's life. We have noted in the book of Acts the story of Paul being struck down on the road to Damascus and his conversion.

I would like to give you a little insight into why we are going through the Epistles of Paul in the order that we are. Basically, we **are going through them in the order that he wrote them.** How do we know in which order he wrote them? How do we know when he wrote each book? I'd like to share a little of that with you here in the beginning.

We went through a lot of these things last time. I am just going to briefly refer to his conversion in Acts 9.

In Acts 10, Peter has a vision and the gospel goes out to the Gentiles for the first time.

Acts 11 is the story of the Gentiles being accepted into fellowship; Peter explains his vision to others there in Jerusalem, and the headquarters Church sends Barnabas to Antioch to raise up a Church.

Acts 11:25, "Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul." This is several years after Paul's conversion. He had been dispatched back to Tarsus, his hometown. In effect, he had been told, "Don't call us, we'll call you."

You have to understand the situation. Paul was the leading persecutor of the Church prior to his conversion. He was struck down on the road to Damascus in a very dramatic way (Acts 9:3-9). He was blinded, subsequently anointed and healed of his blindness and then baptized (vv. 17-18). He went into the synagogue. They were expecting him to speak and he started teaching that Jesus was the Messiah (vv. 20-22). People couldn't believe it. It's kind of like Billy Graham getting up and preaching a sermon on the importance of keeping the Sabbath. It created quite a stir. It stirred up a hornet's nest.

Within a matter of a very few weeks, he left Damascus. Paul left and was gone for three years in the Arabian wilderness (v. 23; Galatians 1:17-18), was directly taught and worked with by Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-16). After three years he came back to Damascus (vv. 17-18). The situation had hardened. When he showed up, within a week or two he had to flee for his life.

They actually let him down the city wall at night in a basket so he could escape (Acts 9:23-25). Some of the Jews were literally ready to kill him. They felt he had betrayed them and that this was too much.

Therefore, he went to Jerusalem (Acts 9:26). Nobody in Jerusalem wanted to deal with him very much. Barnabas finally took him and introduced him to Peter and James (vv. 27; Galatians 1:18). He spent a couple weeks with them, and at the end of that two weeks or fifteen days, as he mentions in Galatians 1:18, they simply told him, "Don't call us, we'll call you." He went back to Tarsus (Galatians 1:21) and stayed there for about four or five years. He went back to his business and remained there. It is important to realize that God does work through the government in His Church. Paul had to prove himself. He was called and converted. God had called him for a specific job. God had revealed that to him, but he had to wait. It wasn't enough that he knew it. God had told him, but he had to wait until it became apparent to others, to the leadership in the Church.

Can you imagine what it must have been like when Ananias contacted Jerusalem with word that Paul had been baptized? Can you imagine Peter's and James' reactions and responses? It would be like calling up and saying, 'I just baptized the Pope; he's keeping the Sabbath and everything.' Because it was such a total shock, it was literally a matter of years before matters had settled to the point that Paul was given an opportunity to be directly used in the ministry.

He was converted in 35 A.D. and it was 42 A.D. (seven years later) when he came into the ministry as Barnabas' assistant to be used in Antioch. From that time, it was still about three and one-half years later before he was ordained, in 45 A.D., as an apostle. He was sent forth on the first evangelist journey. Even after he was in the ministry, he didn't start out at the top.

In Acts 11:25-26, Paul is brought by Barnabas to Antioch.

Acts 12 primarily deals with other things.

Acts 13 starts out with Paul's ordination. Paul and Barnabas were ordained as apostles by prophets sent down from Jerusalem.

Acts 13:1, "Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul."

"Cyrene" is an area in North Africa on the Mediterranean coast, perhaps the area of modern-day Tunisia. "Niger" was an area that

would refer to West Africa. The term is still utilized in context of Nigeria or the Niger River. It was normally used to refer to West Africans as opposed to East Africans who were generally termed “Ethiopians.”

The ordination of Paul and Barnabas is recounted in Acts 13:1-3 and their **first evangelist journey** in Acts 13:3—14:28. Paul and Barnabas left Antioch sailing to Cypress (Acts 13:4). They went through and preached in Cypress, then sailed up from Cypress into Asia Minor (v. 13). If you have a map in the back of your Bible, you might notice the mid-section of modern-day Turkey. He went through the areas that we would term modern-day Turkey, anciently the area of Galatia. He came through, as he mentions in the latter part of Acts 13, Antioch of Pisidia (v. 14), which was part of that area, then on to Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (14:1,6), areas in Galatia, central Asia Minor or modern-day Turkey.

In Acts 14:28, they completed that first journey in the area of Galatia. They had gone through Cypress and Galatia and retraced their steps, except they didn’t go back to Cypress; they went directly back to Antioch. The first journey lasted about three years, 45 A.D. to 48 A.D.

Paul came back in late 48 A.D. He returned to Antioch and was there for a number of months. In 49 A.D., there was the ministerial conference in Jerusalem (Acts 15) to resolve the issue of circumcision in the Church and to ensure uniformity of practice. The decision was made there. Paul and others had gone up to Jerusalem about the question. We have the account of that. Paul came on back to Antioch. Basically, he wintered there in Antioch (Acts 15:30-35).

Then Paul began his **second evangelistic journey** (Acts 15:40 through 18:22) in the late winter or very early spring of 50 A.D., perhaps February or early March, but more likely February because of the timing a little later on and the distance it would have taken him. This time he went overland, going from Antioch, which is modern-day Syria, up into ancient Asia Minor, the area of Galatia, what is now modern-day Turkey. He went back across through Galatia to the Churches that he had been to before (Acts 15:41—16:1). This was in 50 A.D.

Paul had been there two years earlier. He had originally helped to raise up those Churches about five years earlier. He had been there, about two years earlier, at the end of his first evangelistic journey. Now on his second journey, he starts back by retracing some of the areas. He took a little different route. He went up overland all the way across Asia Minor (Acts 16). He

came through Asia Minor rather quickly. By the late spring (around May), he crossed from Asia Minor into Europe (Acts 16:9-10). He came into ancient Macedonia, what is now the northern part of modern-day Greece. Actually, a portion of it is in southern Yugoslavia. But the portion Paul appears to have preached in, Philippi (v. 12), is in Greece. He crossed over from Asia into Greece, into Europe and was there around the time of Pentecost (vv. 12-13) in 50 A.D. He preached in Philippi.

In Acts 16:14-15, we have the account of Lydia being baptized. There was a synagogue in Philippi. The indication is several women who were Jews gathered outside of town in a little park-like area on the side of a river bank (v. 13). They met there every Sabbath to visit and fellowship together. Paul went out there to fellowship with them and wound up baptizing at least one lady and her household.

Paul was not able to stay in Philippi very long. Great controversy was stirred up, so he left Philippi and came to Thessalonica, a little further down (Acts 16:39—17:1).

In Acts 17:2-3, Paul went in and preached several Sabbath days; he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures showing that the Messiah must have suffered and risen again from the dead. They understood that there was a Messiah to come, but they had not grasped the fact that the Messiah was to come a first time and suffer. They had, exclusively, focused in on the prophecies in the Old Testament about the Messiah coming in power and glory. Paul focused their attention on prophecy such as Isaiah 53—of the suffering servant—showing that the Messiah was to come and suffer and to be raised from the dead. Undoubtedly, he was preaching out of Isaiah 53. The result was that it stirred up such a controversy, that Paul had to flee the city (vv. 5-10).

In Acts 17:8-9, Jason, a man with whom Paul was staying, actually had to post bond. Paul had to leave because there was about to be riots in the city of Thessalonica. After Paul was forced to leave Thessalonica, he went down to Berea. He preached there in a synagogue (v. 10) and then came down to Athens (v. 16).

In vv. 17-31, we have the account of Paul’s sermon on Mars Hill given in detail.

Acts 18:1, “After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.”

Verse 11, “And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.” By this time, we are only into fall. If you trace it, there’s only a few weeks coming down

through. He spent the summer going through Thessalonica. He was only there for about three weeks. He came down to Berea and stayed a longer time there. He spent, perhaps, a couple of weeks in Athens, a little travel time, and then he came down to Corinth, arriving there by September or so. He pretty well spent the summer traveling. He gets to Corinth and stays with a couple of Jews there (Acts 18:1-3). Aquila was of the same profession as he was—a tentmaker.

Verse 4, we find that shortly after he had gotten there, he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath persuading Jews and Greeks.

Verse 5, Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia.

Let's go back to **I Thessalonians**. We find that at this point, Paul wrote I Thessalonians. He wrote it in the fall of 50 A.D., only a matter of a few months after he had been in Corinth. Our basis for saying that is that we know Paul didn't write it before this because he hadn't been to Thessalonica before and there weren't any Churches there. Paul didn't even get to Greece until around Pentecost of 50 A.D. He had worked his way down through Greece that summer and wound up in Corinth. He was there for a year and a half. Shortly after he got to Corinth, Silas and Timothy caught up with him. They were coming from Macedonia, which is the area where Thessalonica was.

I Thessalonians 1:1, "Paul, Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians...."

Verse 7, "so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe."

I Thessalonians 3:1-4, "Therefore, when we could no longer endure, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know."

Verses 6-7, "But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you—therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith."

What we see here in I Thessalonians, as we put it together with the account in Acts, several weeks had gone by when Paul got down as far as

Athens. Paul was the chief spokesman. He was the one who was known and recognized. They all left. They had to flee Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-10). They had only been there about three weeks, just enough time to preach. There had been some who were baptized, and then they had to leave.

He was very concerned about that because there was a need to give deeper instruction.

These were people who, obviously, had a strong background of the Old Testament. They understood the law, the Sabbath, clean and unclean meats—those things weren't issues. But there were a lot of things they didn't fully understand. There were things that needed to be more fully explained that Paul had not had opportunity to do. There wasn't a magazine or booklets or that sort of thing. There weren't any Bible lessons or literature that he could send them.

By the time things had settled down and they got to Athens, he sent Timothy back (I Thessalonians 3:1) because Timothy was not known there. Because he had not been someone who had attracted public attention in Thessalonica, he could go back and go into the city. His job was not to go back in and evangelize the unconverted. He was to go back to the Church that was meeting in Jason's house and work with the brethren. He was to instruct them, to quietly and privately deal with them, and to bring Paul a report back of how things stood. That's what we read in Acts 17.

Acts 17:16, "Now while Paul waited for them at Athens...." He sent Timothy back.

Then we are told in Acts 18:1, "After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth."

Verse 5, Paul got to Corinth and Timothy caught up with him coming from Macedonia.

We read in I Thessalonians 3:1-2, "Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith."

Verse 6, "But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you—"

When we put the account in I Thessalonians together with the account in Acts, we can see that Paul, obviously, wrote I Thessalonians just a short time after he got to Corinth. He wrote it from Corinth and sent it back.

Let's understand a little bit about Thessalonica. The original name of the city was Therma; it was re-named by Cassandra about 320 B.C. in honor of his wife, the sister of Alexander the Great. Thessalonica was the largest city in Macedonia in the first century. It was a major trading center located on one of the main Roman roads. It held the status of a Roman free city. It was the capital of Macedonia. It was a major city on a trading route.

There was a sizable Jewish community in Thessalonica due mainly to its status of a trading center. The majority of the population followed pagan mythology, which by that time had lost its hold. The stories and the accounts of pagan mythology were such that they really did not answer the questions that people had.

There were philosophies that had arisen that had begun to have a certain amount of influence throughout the Greek world, but there wasn't any real concept of salvation and an afterlife. The Greeks, as with many of the others, did not have much concept of the resurrection of the body. The concept of the resurrection was alien to the Greek world. Some of them following Plato had a concept of an immortal soul. The teaching of the philosophers was that the physical represented something bad and you wanted to be freed from your body. The concept that the body was going to be resurrected was a little difficult because it was so different from the ideas that most of them had grown up with.

We will see that II Thessalonians was basically written a short time after I Thessalonians. As we look at the book itself and at the message it brings, we find that there were a couple of major purposes in Paul's writing. Certainly, he wrote to strengthen them during persecution. There were a lot of problems, a lot of persecution that broke out that directly impacted him and spilled over to the brethren. He wanted to encourage and build them up during persecution.

I Thessalonians 2:2, "But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict." He spoke the gospel in the midst of a lot of contention and problems. He says they had already gone through problems in Philippi, but that didn't stop them from coming down there to teach them.

Verse 14, "For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they

did from the Jews." He talks about how they had gone through many things.

I Thessalonians 3:1-7, "Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain. But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you—therefore, brethren in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith."

Paul seeks to encourage them and to build them up in the midst of trials. Timothy came back and clearly pointed out things to his attention. The people were suffering a lot of trials and persecution, so he wanted to encourage and strengthen them during persecution. Also, he wanted to give them instructions concerning the return of Christ, about the resurrection and the proper attitude for Christians to take during the time preceding these events. This was clearly a major issue.

He spent a great deal of chapter 4 and a portion of chapter 5 dealing with instructions about the resurrection. He talks about the fact that there would be a resurrection. He discusses the Day of the Lord and gave them instructions as to what they were to do. Chapter 5 has a lot of short exhortations and things that he did.

II Thessalonians, which he wrote a little while later, again gives more detailed instructions concerning events relating to the Day of the Lord, to the return of Christ and to the attitude that Christians are to have. We are going to notice that there was a problem that came in.

Paul laid great stress on the fact that Christ was going to return and there was going to be a resurrection. He laid great stress on that in I Thessalonians. Then he had to turn around in II Thessalonians and explain to them that there were things that had to happen first because some were ready to "jump the gun" and figured that things were just about over. Therefore, he

had to explain that there were prophesied things that had to happen first.

The other problem was that there were those who felt that with the end being that close, there wasn't any point in them doing anything—they were just kind of “bumming” off the charity of others. Paul admonished them in I Thessalonians and then really “chewed them out” in II Thessalonians that if any would not work, neither should he eat (II Thessalonians 3:10).

Verse 11, he was concerned that some were just going around being busybodies and not really being productive.

If you put I and II Thessalonians together, one book stressed that, ‘Yes, Jesus Christ is going to return to this earth as King of kings and Lord of lords, and there is going to be a resurrection of the saints. Our focus and attention needs to be on that, and that is the basis of our hope that brings us through trials, difficulties, stresses and things of that sort, but it’s not going to happen immediately.’

I Thessalonians 5:2, “...the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.” It will come on the *world* as a thief in the night.

Verse 4, “But you, brethren are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.” He told them there were things that had to happen first. They needed to be conscious and aware of those things. Paul brings that out in I and II Thessalonians.

Until these things do happen, we need to be productive people, doing the things that we should do. We are to be living our lives in a responsible way and be in a position to help and share and give. God has not called us to go off and sit in a cave somewhere and wait for Christ to return.

Paul wrote I and II Thessalonians to (1) strengthen them during persecution, (2) to give them instruction concerning the return of Christ and the resurrection, and (3) to explain the attitude that we need to have in the time preceding these events.

It’s clear that the bulk of the Thessalonians Church was Gentiles.

I Thessalonians 1:9-10, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” He said, ‘You turned to God from idols.’

When we look at the background of the Thessalonians Church, we’re basically looking at

people who were Greek. Acts 17:1-4 make plain that there were some Jews. You have to realize that Greeks in some of these cities made a practice of going in and sitting in the back benches of the synagogue on the Sabbath and listening to the law being read. They were searching for something. They did not participate in the life of the Jewish community, but they recognized that the religion of the Jews had answers that they didn’t have. Their own mythology and philosophies really did not provide fulfilling, satisfying answers. It was not uncommon in many of the cities, particularly of the Greek world, that people would go in and simply sit on the back benches of the synagogue and listen to the law being read and expounded on the Sabbath. The Gentiles had a certain familiarity, but we see clearly that these were people who had turned from idolatry.

We will note what seems to have been a problem in Thessalonica. Thessalonica was a big commercial trading center and tended to attract a lot of people who were what we would term some really “smooth operators,” real “sharpies”—guys who really weren’t that interested in working hard but liked to turn a “fast buck.” Thessalonica was on a major route. It was a major area where you had trading caravans coming through from the east on their way to Rome. You had a lot of different people, different nationalities, and that was a great place for a “sharpie” to try to turn a “quick buck” because you are dealing with people who don’t speak the language very well.

There seemed to be a lot of this sort of thing in Thessalonica. The city seemed to have attracted people who had this sort of attitude—people who were not anxious to be hard workers and productive but were anxious to make a few dollars quickly.

There’s a problem with that; people tend to suspect others of being like them. We will notice in Thessalonians that people seemed to have been a little bit suspicious about Paul’s motives. Paul recognized that and made a special effort to work hard while he was in Thessalonica. The first thing Paul did when he conducted a service was not to “pass the hat;” he, particularly, didn’t do it in a place like this because this was exactly what they were suspicious of.

I Thessalonians 2:2-12, “But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict. For our exhortation did not come from deceit or uncleanness nor was it in guile. But as

we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, that we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged everyone of you, as a father does his own children, that you would have a walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”

Paul made a special effort there because he knew the attitude of the people. He knew they were suspicious. They were suspicious of his motives. They kept waiting for the “hook.”

Verse 6, “...when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.” In other words, it was not that Paul did not have the right to have received monetary support. He was only there for a very short time (about three weeks). Whatever he had to say on the subject and whatever instruction he gave, he evidently made a point that any monies were to be utilized there locally. He did not take any of it. He made a special point of working during the time that he was there to set an example, not because he had to, in the sense that he did not have the right to receive monetary support. He makes the point that it was not that he couldn't have in the sight of God; it was simply that it was not the best time to stress that.

“...we might have made demands of you as apostles of Christ.” The prerogatives of the office were such that we had the right. That's what Paul means when he mentions in I Corinthians 6:12 and I Corinthians 10:23 that all things are lawful are not expedient (helpful, profitable) or beneficial. It was not necessarily going to be for the best at that particular time. Paul dealt with them in a special way because he was dealing with people who had certain hang-ups and certain problems. They were suspicious of motives. It was a city full of salesmen, a

bunch of “slick operators,” and as a result, people were very suspicious of everybody else who came through. They kept waiting for “what's in it for him?” He wants to stress to them that he wasn't doing what he did to get rich. That was not his motives.

There were people who only knew or became aware of Mr. Herbert Armstrong in his latter years at a time when the work had grown greatly. They looked at Ambassador College and all the things and trappings of the work and said, ‘He was just in it for the money.’ Well, if he was just in it for the money, why was he in it for about thirty years before there was any money? Why was he in it through the years when there wasn't any money at all or during the years when his salary was \$2.50 a week—not an hour, but a week! Why was he in it then? The same reason Paul was.

You don't come along and do something and say, ‘I know there's nothing now. I know I will suffer for thirty years, but when I am eighty years old, the income of the work will increase and I'll be able to fly places in a jet plane.’ There weren't any jet planes back when the work started. Do you know what will happen thirty years down the road? Of course not! You don't even know if you're going to live for the next thirty years.

We have Paul's example. Paul did not immediately lay claim on their tithes for his livelihood. He brings out in v. 6 that he wanted to make a point that he had a right to it, but he hadn't done it. Tithing was not the first sermon he preached.

He admonished them in v. 14, “For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus....” What did Paul do in the Gentile area? What did he do in Greece? He pointed the Churches there back to headquarters. How do they do it there? They became followers of the Churches in Judea. They were practicing the same thing.

The commentators like to say the Jerusalem Church kept the Sabbath. They can't deny that the Jews kept the Sabbath. You can read the book of Acts and what James told Paul in the latter part of Acts.

Acts 21:20, “...‘You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law.’” The Jerusalem Church and the Jews were zealous of the law. There isn't any way that the modern commentators can deny that the Jerusalem Church in the first century kept the Sabbath and the Holy Days. They all acknowledge that. But

they claim the Jerusalem Church kept the Sabbath and the Gentile Churches kept Sunday. No, they didn't! Paul told the Churches in Greece to be followers of the Churches in Judea. The Churches in Greece were taught by Paul to do the same thing the Churches in Judea did. And guess what? They got the same persecution. They were just as popular with their neighbors as the Church in Jerusalem was popular.

In I Thessalonians 3, Paul recounts the background of how he came to write the letter and why he was doing it.

I Thessalonians 3:13, "so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." He was warning them to be established and to be dedicated in serving God.

I Thessalonians 4:3, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality." Immorality was taken very lightly in the Greek and Roman world, particularly the Greek world. All sorts of immorality including premarital sex and homosexuality were treated very casually. They were very common sins. As he writes back to the Thessalonians, Paul lays stress—"this is the will of God: God wants you to be holy. He wants you to live holy lives. He wants you to be set apart as a holy people; one aspect of that is you have to abstain from immorality."

Verse 4, "that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel [how to gain a wife, and how to do so] in sanctification and honor." He says, 'There is a different way of doing it then the way you've done it.'

Verse 5, "not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God." He's telling them that they needed to go about getting married and to conduct themselves in a totally different way than their unconverted neighbors. Their conduct was not to be motivated by lust and lawlessness.

Verse 6, "that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified." What does he mean that no man should defraud or overreach (KJV, margin) his brother? This is tied in with what he is saying about immorality. You need to know how to go about obtaining a mate in sanctification and honor. You don't do it the way the unconverted do it. You need to make sure that you don't go beyond the bounds of propriety because if you do, you are defrauding your brother. You're taking what doesn't belong to

you. When you engage in immorality, you are taking from the future mate of this person that which they are entitled to. Paul laid great stress on this because the whole culture of the Greek and Roman world was, frankly, very similar to some of the worse areas of our modern world.

I guarantee you that a place like San Francisco would not have been out of place in pagan Greece. The big Halloween blast they had, has been sort of adopted as "the big gay extravaganza" in San Francisco. They have big parades. It's really a desire to flaunt a lifestyle. There were some Pentecostals who got the idea that they were going to come in. They rented the Civic Center and were going to hold a big revival service and cast out all the demons of San Francisco. Well, they didn't cast out all the demons; they attracted all the demons. If you saw the news, I think every demon within fifty miles congregated outside there and it was literally pandemonium. "Pandemonium" is a Greek term that literally means "all demons." There was a chaotic, confused mess. There was a horrible sort of confrontation and things that was going on there. It was the sort of thing that was certainly a very pagan extravaganza that would not have been out of place in ancient Greece.

Paul lays stress on some of these things in v. 7, "For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness."

Verses 11-12, "that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing."

God called us to be different, to be clean and not to conduct ourselves the way the world does. God wants His people to be different. He wants us to exemplify a different attitude, different actions and to carry and deport ourselves in a totally different way. The world emphasizes a totally false set of values—values that revolve around the lusts of the flesh and a lifestyle that is completely at variance with God's law and the concept of holiness. We find it flaunted in actions, entertainment, television shows, movies, music, magazines, styles of dress and grooming—in virtually every aspect of our society.

The thing to realize is that the solution is not simply changing and cleaning up of the external. We have to realize that inner values are reflected by outer actions. The two go hand-in-hand together. In some cases, people have changed their outer actions, but the inner values really

remain the same. That is backwards. If we change our inner values, our outer actions will reflect a different way. It will reflect a Godly lifestyle and set of values, as opposed to a worldly lifestyle and a worldly set of values. Paul laid great emphasis on this to the Thessalonians.

Verses 11-12, “that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.” We see over and over where he emphasizes people need to be productive and set a good example. There was a real problem. There were too many ways to get by; panhandling and making slick deals with the traders who were coming through and doing some of these things, and really not doing anything of productive value. The people had a reputation for laziness and they looked on working hard as somehow demeaning.

Verses 13-14, “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.” Paul talked about the coming of the Messiah. Evidently, even some who had been baptized had, perhaps, died in just a matter of months. Some were concerned, “When the Messiah comes back, what about the ones who have died? Are they going to share in it?”

Verse 15, he said he didn’t want them to be worried about those who were asleep in Jesus. We are not going to precede them.

Verses 16-17, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” This is clearly not talking about being raptured up to heaven.

Zechariah 14:4, “And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives....”

I Thessalonians 4:17, “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” We are going to be with Him from then on. Where is He going to be? Is He going back to heaven? No.

Zechariah 14:4, “...in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives....” If we are with Him, then we are going to be standing there, too.

The Protestants want to read the rapture into the Scriptures. Most don’t even know where they got the idea of a rapture. The doctrine of the rapture originated with a Catholic mystic during the Middle Ages who had all sorts of visions and ideas. He was the source of the teachings about the rapture; it was absorbed by early Protestant thinkers. Now they try to take various scriptures to read the rapture into them.

I Thessalonians 5:1-2, “But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.”

My old Baptist preacher liked to quote the Bible about that point, and then he would close the book. He could really kind of “warm up the fires”; “The Lord is going to come as a thief in the night. He may come back tonight. You better come down and give your heart to the Lord or burn in hell forever.”

He is going to come as a thief in the night, but upon whom? The Church? God’s people?

Verse 4, “But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.” Paul didn’t expect that day to come upon him as a thief. A thief is someone who sneaks up unexpectedly. The return of Christ should not come upon God’s people unexpectedly.

Verse 6, “Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.” We are to have an approach that is going to be constructive. It will come as a thief on the world, as a whole, but not on Christians who are watching and praying.

Verses 9-10, “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.” Death, in the Scriptures, is compared with sleep. You see that over and over. The state of the death is not consciousness.

Verses 11-13, “Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing. And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves.” He encouraged them to look to and to know the ministry and those who labored among them, to respect them for the work that they did, and to have peace among them.

Verse 14, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted [KJV, “feble-minded”], uphold the weak, be patient with all.” He admonished and exhorted the brethren—or he beseeched (KJV, margin) the brethren. It was to warn or admonish those who are unruly or disorderly. There are those who need to be admonished, strongly corrected and exhorted because their conduct is disorderly. There are others who need to be comforted, encouraged and cheered up.

This term “feble-minded” (KJV) basically means “those who are depressed or discouraged.” That is the sense of the original word. Feble-minded has a different connotation in modern English. We think of it as someone who doesn’t have all their mental faculties. But it means those who are depressed or discouraged. There are those who need to be told to “shape up” or “ship out”; there are others who need to be encouraged because they are discouraged, somewhat depressed and need to be encouraged and comforted. There are some others who are weak who simply need to have somebody pay attention to them and give them some help. Different problems call for different things.

Verse 17, “pray without ceasing....” The concept of this is to never break the prayer habit. Never get away from prayer. Pray without ceasing. He exhorted them in these areas.

II Thessalonians 1:1 begins again with Paul, Silas and Timothy writing to the Church of the Thessalonians.

Acts 18:11, he was in Corinth for a year and a half. Clearly, this would have been written fairly soon after he wrote I Thessalonians because the problem was that some had jumped to conclusions with all his warnings about the end. **He has to let them know that there are things that have to happen first.**

II Thessalonians 2:3, “Let no man deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.” He had to go back and explain that there were things that have to happen first. This was to help clarify some of what he was getting across in I Thessalonians.

II Thessalonians 1:3, “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other.”

In vv. 4-5, he says that they were still going through persecutions and tribulations. He brings out that God is going to recompense tribulations.

Verse 6, “since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you.”

Verses 7-9, “and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”

What does “everlasting destruction” mean? The term “everlasting” here is Greek “*aionios*” and it means “age lasting.” The destruction that is being spoken of here is a destruction that is to endure for the remainder of that age; in other words, the Millennium. It is a wrath that is to be executed. The lake of fire is not being referred to here. It is the wrath that Jesus Christ is going to pour out at His return on those that don’t know God, those who are actively rebelling against God. They are going to be punished with age-lasting destruction. They will be destroyed for the entirety of that millennial age.

We’re told in **Revelation** 20:5, “The rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years are finished.” The “rest of the dead” will rise up in the second resurrection.

But these are going to be destroyed at the return of Christ. Those who are actively opposing God and God’s people are going to be dealt with. It will be an age-lasting destruction. It is not the ultimate lake of fire because that doesn’t come at the return of Christ but rather after the Millennium and White Throne Judgment period (**Revelation** 20:7-16).

Verse 8 shows those who don’t know God. Christ is going to come back with power and glory and put the rebellion down; then they will be dealt with at a later time.

II Thessalonians 2:1-3, “Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or trouble, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.”

Two things had to happen: a falling away and the man of sin will be revealed. This individual called “the son of perdition” or “the son of destruction” is an individual whose purpose is to be destroyed—someone who is cut out for destruction. Who is this individual?

Verses 4-11, “who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining [what’s holding things back], that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains [or hinders] will do so [will continue to restrain or hinder] until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie.”

Who is this talking about? There are those who have misunderstood and tried to apply II Thessalonians 2 to various individuals. I’ve heard various ones. Some have applied it to somebody that they are upset with in the Church in a leadership capacity—most of whom have long since gone by the wayside and are not around anymore. It doesn’t refer to any of them. This is clearly a reference to the final false prophet. I don’t care how far off track anybody in the Church gets; they are not going to be elected pope.

Verses 3-4, there will be a falling away, and the final man of sin will be revealed, the son of perdition. He is going to sit in the temple of God showing himself that he is God. What does that make reference to? What does that bring to mind?

Does that remind you of what Jesus said back in Matthew 24:15, ““Therefore when you see the “abomination of desolation,” spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand).” There were those who thought it was different ones in the Church leadership. In effect, what happens is that people get mad at somebody; they get upset and then try to find something in the Bible really bad to hang on them. We don’t want to read into the Bible; we want to read out of the Bible.

Luke 21:20, ““But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near.””

Mark 13:14, ““But when you see the “abomination of desolation,” spoken of by

Daniel the prophet, standing where it [he; “it” is not a neuter in the Greek] ought not (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.””

Matthew 24:15, ““...spoken of by Daniel the prophet....””

What do we find? We find what’s called the “abomination of desolation.” Mark makes plain it is going to involve an individual standing where he should not. This is the abomination of desolation that Daniel spoke of. This is going to have to happen before the return of Christ. Paul brings it out here in II Thessalonians 2 but in different words. He says you are going to see this man of sin stand in the temple saying he is God. That’s pretty abominable. It is an abominable thing that brings about desolation and destruction.

We find Daniel said, Daniel 11:31, ““And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress, then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.”” What is Daniel talking about?

Daniel 8:11, ““He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down.””

Verses 23-25, ““And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king shall arise, having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes. His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; he shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people. Through his cunning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without human hand.””

We find various other places where he is alluded to. There was a forerunner. The final abomination that makes desolate is what is going to happen just shortly before the return of Christ. It is going to begin the Great Tribulation. Christ emphasized that it would be an abomination that Daniel had talked about (Daniel 8 and 11).

In context, you find that there was a forerunner, an event that occurred in the second century B.C. when Antiochus Epiphanes was the king of the area of Syria. Antiochus Epephanes invaded Jerusalem. He came into the temple, stopped the daily sacrifices, set up an idol of Jupiter Olympus in the Holy Place. He took it into the Holy of Holies and stood there and proclaimed

that he was God incarnate. “Epiphanes” (in the Greek) meant “the glorious appearing.” He claimed to be deity in the flesh; he was there as the personification of deity. He set up this idol and stopped the daily sacrifice. He had a pig slaughtered on the altar. What Antiochus Epiphanes did was a forerunner. The slaughter that he launched against the Jews is clearly referred to in context in Daniel 8 and 11. He is used as a forerunner for an individual who is his spiritual successor.

We are also told in II Thessalonians 2:9-10, “The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”

Verse 8, we are looking at an individual who is going to be destroyed at the return of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 19:20, “Then the beast was captured and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.” The false prophet works great signs (wonders) to impress the whole world.

Matthew 24:11, 24, “Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many...For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”

Revelation 13:13-14, “He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.” We find lying wonders (false miracles); things that are so impressive and appear so right that if it was possible, even the very elect would be deceived.

When we go back to II Thessalonians 2, we find that there will not only be a falling away from the truth, but there will be that final man of sin who will be revealed. He will oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped; he’s going to stand there in the temple of God proclaiming himself God incarnate. He is going to work great lying wonders and he is going to be destroyed by Christ at His coming.

When you put II Thessalonians 2 together with Daniel 8 and 11, Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Revelation 13, it is talking about the same thing. It is talking about the events that relate to the abomination that makes desolate—that final false prophet. There is going to be a daily sacrifice stopped, which means that there is going to be a literal temple, a holy place. It doesn’t mean the temple is going to be completely built. but certainly an altar will be dedicated in some way or another. We have to take some of these things in their context.

Events are being held back until that final false prophet is on the scene.

II Thessalonians 2:6, “And now you know what is restraining [withheld], that he may be revealed in his own time.” Events are being held back until the final individuals are in place. The man and the events have to come together for things to happen as they are prophesied to happen. There are events on the world scene that can’t happen or progress too rapidly in certain areas until the right people are in place, so that when the event occurs, the response is what is prophesied.

God has a time schedule. Events are being held back until it’s time. Then the right individual will appear and be in place and things will come to a head. Paul explains that.

The mystery of iniquity was already at work even in 50 A.D., which had its beginnings with Simon Magus in Samaria in 33 A.D. Things were already stirring. The groundwork was being laid for some to fall away from the Church, but that final man of sin was not and has not been so. But once that occurs, things are going to come together very, very quickly.

Paul lays great emphasis on working. It evidently continued to be an ongoing problem.

II Thessalonians 3:7-9, “For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.”

Some take this out of context, and say, ‘Since Paul didn’t take a salary from the Church, ministers shouldn’t do that.’ There are many other places where it is clearly shown that Paul did receive his livelihood from his ministry. We will go through them in some of his Epistles.

When Paul was in Thessalonica raising up the Church, he did certain things, “not because we have not power [authority]...” (3:9). He did it for

the purpose of setting an example. He wanted them to see a little bit of what hard work was like.

Verses 10-14, “For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good. And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.”

In other words, he is to be disfellowshipped. “You are not to have company with him” is what “disfellowshipped” means. If an individual is going to conduct himself that way, then that individual needs to be noted and you need to leave him alone. He is not free to continue in the fellowship of the Church—with the hope that he will be ashamed of himself and realize the seriousness of what he’s done.

Verse 15, “Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.” You are not doing it because he is your enemy. You admonish him as a brother because you care what happens to him.

Paul had to come down really hard on this because there were some who would not do what they should do. They had this kind of lazy mentality. They didn’t want to work and wanted to “bum off” of some who were working and had money. They were saying, ‘You’re supposed to have love and you’re supposed to share—so why don’t you share with me.’

It’s not that we should be weary in well doing (v. 13) But on the other hand, it’s taking advantage and it’s taking it out of context to say, ‘You’re supposed to love me and share. I’m going to show up at your house every day to eat and “bum off” of you.’ As many times as Paul brought up the issue, it was obviously a problem—a problem that affected more than one or two. People are a product of their background.

The mystery of iniquity that Paul makes reference to certainly refers to the Simon Magus followers.

II Thessalonians 2:7, “For the mystery of lawlessness [iniquity] is already at work....” The mystery religion that teaches lawlessness—it certainly refers to the Simon Magus followers, which ultimately grew into what became the Catholic Church. It is an outgrowth of the old Babylonian Mystery Religion that taught that the

law was done away. It’s called the “mystery of iniquity.”

II Thessalonians 3:14 deals with the subject of what we term “disfellowshipping.” An individual is unwilling to listen to the Church and respect admonition after he has been admonished on a serious matter, and he won’t listen. There comes a point where we simply say, ‘You really don’t have any basis for continued fellowship with those who are trying to live the right way.’ Those individuals are to be noted and simply left alone in terms of any sort of spiritual fellowship—with the idea that they will eventually wake up, realize the seriousness, repent and be restored to fellowship.

Hopefully that will give you an overview of I and II Thessalonians. There’s a lot that is packed in there.

Bible Study # 59 Questions

SURVEY OF THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF PAUL SERIES

I and II Thessalonians

(Give scripture references.)

1. What were the two main purposes of I Thessalonians?
2. What was the ethnic background of the Thessalonians Church?
3. Explain I Thessalonians 2:6.
4. Explain the significance of I Thessalonians 2:14.
5. Prove from one other scripture that I Thessalonians 4:17 is not talking about being raptured off to heaven.
6. Explain I Thessalonians 5:2.
7. Explain I Thessalonians 5:17.
8. What is the “everlasting destruction” of II Thessalonians 1:9 referring to?
9. Explain II Thessalonians 2:6.
10. What does Paul teach about working?
11. What is the “mystery of iniquity”?
12. Quote a scripture giving authority for disfellowshipping.

Bible Study # 60
November 27, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Life and Letters of Paul Series—Galatians

We are getting into the book of Galatians this evening. It is an important book to understand. It is one that the world frequently misunderstands. There probably isn't a book that the Apostle Paul wrote that has been more misunderstood, distorted and taken out of context than has been the book of Galatians. As we get into the book itself, let's **understand a little bit of the background of Galatians.**

The commentators are not even sure where Galatia was. What they're not sure about, really, is what they understand best, and it kind of goes downhill from there. They are not sure where it was located and everything becomes less clear as they go along. Why do I say that they were not sure where it was?

The term "Galatia" was used in several different ways in the New Testament period. In some cases, it was used as a broad geographical term. It referred to a specific Roman province, but even the borders of the province changed a couple of times as Roman administration (in terms of the way they administered the Roman Empire) made some alterations. The result was that there's about two or three different areas that can be labeled Galatia. All of them are in the same general area.

If you were looking on a modern-day map, it would be the central area of modern-day Turkey, and what was anciently Asia Minor. Specifically, there is what the commentators call the "Northern Galatian theory" and "Southern Galatian theory" in terms of where Paul was writing. If we simply let the New Testament be our guide, then it is pretty apparent the Churches Paul was addressing were the Churches of Southern Galatia. The only areas we have any record of Paul going, in the book of Acts, are the Churches of Southern Galatia—the area of Derbe, Iconium, Listre and Antioch of Persicia. Those cities are in the area of Southern Galatia. That was the area where Paul went on his first evangelistic journey and again on the second evangelistic journey. This was one of the first areas Paul preached in and one of the first areas that he raised up Churches. It's an area where he spent a lot of time. Because it's an area from where Timothy came, this is an area where he had close connections.

There isn't any record of Paul going to the area of what is termed "Northern Galatia." There's specific reference in Acts 16:6-7 to the fact that God did not allow Paul to go there. Paul was on his way up into one of those areas on the southern shore of the Black Sea, and it says the Spirit did not allow him to do that. What we find is that the area of Northern Galatia was distinctly different from the area of Southern Galatia. Southern Galatia was Gentile. Northern Galatia, up in the area of the Black Sea, was the ancient habitation of the Gauls—the tribes that moved from that area across the Black Sea up into France and gave their name to ancient Gaul. Those up in that area were Israelites. Paul's ministry was to the Gentiles, not to the Israelites. "Galatia," the area where he went, was a geographical term in the New Testament. It stretched across the central portion of Asia Minor to the Mediterranean Sea on the south. The northern part was heavily Israelite—the Gauls who later migrated to France. Paul never went there.

There is a reference in Acts 16:6-7 to some of the specific geographic locations of that area in Northern Galatia, and the fact the Spirit did not lead Paul to go there.

Acts 16:6-7, "Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them."

In reality, Peter went to that area.

I Peter 1:1, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." Peter is addressing the area of Northern Galatia—the ancestors of some of you sitting right here because the ancestors of the French (the Gauls) were the primary group to whom Peter addressed the book of I Peter.

Southern Galatia which includes the cities of Listre, Iconium and Derbe was almost entirely Gentile. It was primarily Greek with a few Jews who settled in there. The Greeks moved into the area of what is now modern-day Turkey after Alexander the Great's conquest. They were major settlers in that area and were the predominant population until centuries later when the Turks invaded from Asia and gradually dispossessed them.

One thing that is very important to understand, in terms of the background of Galatia, is the background of the people in that area. In addition to the pagan mythology that was taught, there

were the Hellenistic philosophies that were extant at the time. There were Greek philosophers who had gained great prominence throughout the Greek-speaking world. One of these philosophies was Stoicism. Stoicism was a very popular philosophy in that area. Stoicism places a great deal of emphasis on astrology. It emphasized what is termed “pagan dualism”—the concept that the flesh is evil and the spirit is good.

In Lamphear’s Classical Dictionary, the Stoics maintained that, “man alone in the present state of his existence could attain perfection.” This was the concept of the Stoics. It was a concept of penance, a matter of enough good deeds to outweigh the bad deeds. This was the background of the people who were in the Church in Galatia.

The book of Galatians itself was written by the Apostle Paul to the Churches in the Southern Galatian area in the winter of 52-53 A.D.—December of 52 to January/February 53 A.D.—from his headquarters in Antioch, Syria. Paul had visited this area on his first evangelistic journey back in 46 A.D. He went through that area on his first evangelistic journey and spent considerable time there. Then he finally went back to Antioch. It was in the aftermath of going back to Antioch that the issue of circumcision “came to a head” and he went to Jerusalem for the ministerial conference of 49 A.D. We have that recorded in Acts 15.

Subsequent to the conference in the later winter/early spring of 50 A.D., Paul visited Galatia once more on his second evangelistic journey. He came through Galatia traveling through in the spring of 50 A.D., crossing from Asia Minor into Greece (into Europe) around Pentecost of 50 A.D. He spent quite a number of months in Greece. He was originally in Philippi, then went down through Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and came down to Corinth. He stayed eighteen months in Corinth. We read that last time and saw that it was from Corinth that he wrote his letters back to the Thessalonians.

After eighteen months in Corinth, he left and sailed back over to Ephesus and went back to Jerusalem for the Feast of 52 A.D.

Acts 18:21, he needed to go back for the Feast that was in Jerusalem.

Verse 22, he wintered in Antioch, which was his headquarters for the Gentile work when he wasn’t on the road. He was in Antioch the winter of 52-53 A.D. It was from there that he wrote to the Galatians. He had heard some things that concerned him. **Because he had received**

some disquieting news of events that had transpired, he dispatched this letter to answer the questions that had arisen. As we get into the book itself, we will see a little bit about what is addressed.

Galatians 1:2, “and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia.” The Churches that are specifically in the area of Galatia are Derbe, Iconium and Listre. They are the main areas there. I have already made comment of the population of the area of the Galatian Churches.

Let me call your attention to Galatians 4:8, “But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods.” Clearly, he is addressing people who were of a Gentile background—people who at one time had not known God and had served idols. “...are not gods...” This is not a reference to Jews because they had known the true God and they had not served idols. The people Paul is addressing are people who came out of idolatry, people who had a pagan background. There were a few Jews in there, but the whole came out of a pagan background. We’re all a product of our background. We are shaped and molded by certain thoughts and concepts of which we have grown up.

Galatians 1:1, “Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised Him from the dead).” Paul lays emphasis on the fact of his apostleship, the work that God had done through him, and the scriptural authority that he had that originated from God.

Clearly, one of the major problems in Galatia was that somebody had been in Galatia and problems had been stirred up. What was the subject of things being stirred up? One issue is that somebody had been challenging Paul’s authority. They were saying, ‘Paul is really a second-rate apostle, if you can even call him an apostle. You don’t need to pay any attention to what he says. He really doesn’t have very much authority. In fact, I have more authority because I have come from Jerusalem.’ These were self-appointed individuals who had come down from Jerusalem and had not been officially dispatched by James.

The issue of the book of Galatians has to do with access to God. What all the peripherals in Galatians get back to is how you gain access to God. What is necessary to establish and maintain a relationship with God that will ultimately result in salvation? This is why circumcision was such an issue. The reason circumcision was such an

issue in the New Testament period was because it concerned access to God. Understand what we mean.

Remember when God made the covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17). The physical sign of the covenant that God gave to Abraham was the physical outward sign of circumcision for Abraham and his male descendants (vv. 10-11). At the time of the Exodus when Moses gave instructions from God to the Israelites concerning the Passover, one of the things he said was that no uncircumcised person was to partake of the Passover (Exodus 12:44-49). You had to have entered into that covenant relationship.

Paul was writing at the time that is termed the "second temple," the period of Herod's temple. There was much more courtyard to the temple than there was anything else. The temple itself consisted of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Only the priests went into the Holy of Holies. Out in front of the Holy Place was the altar of sacrifice. This was inside a courtyard that was the court of the Israelites. There was a gate that led out to the court of the Gentiles.

Remember the issue in Acts 21:26-39 that came up where Paul got arrested and it resulted in Roman imprisonment. Somebody nearly started a riot in the temple with an accusation against Paul. They accused him of bringing a couple of uncircumcised Gentiles into the temple compound, into the inner court. This provoked a near riot.

When emotions got all charged up, pretty soon the people didn't even know what the charge was, but they were mad and had a "lynch-mob" mentality. When one of the soldiers finally got him, he thought that Paul was the Egyptian robber. But he said, 'That's not me at all; they are accusing me of something else.' He didn't even know what the charge was. He thought they must have a terrible "desperado" in there that the people had cornered. Paul wasn't bringing anybody who was uncircumcised into the temple. That wasn't even true, but he was accused of it.

The point I am making is it was an issue of access. If you couldn't enter into the court of the Israelites, you couldn't offer a sacrifice because that's where the altar of sacrifice was. When the sacrifices were made, the animal was slain and the fat and some of the entrails were burned on the altar. Then the carcass was divided. The priest took some and the worshipper took some. The symbolism involved was one of communion or fellowship with God.

That's made reference to in I Corinthians 10:16-20, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons."

I would like to call your attention to what is not obvious from the English translation. The words "communion" in v. 16, "partakers" in v. 18 and "fellowship" in v. 20 are all the same words in the Greek language. The concept of "fellowship" or "communion" is the same root word as to "communicate with." "Community" is another word that is derived from that. The point he is making is that when we all partake of the Passover symbols, there is a fellowship that we have with one another and with Christ.

Verse 18, "...Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" They were in fellowship with the altar.

Verse 20, the Gentiles sacrificed to demons, and if you partook of that, then you were having fellowship with demons. The concept was that God's part was burned on the altar, the priest took his part to eat and the worshiper took his part. Symbolically, what you had was fellowship between the worshiper, God and the priest.

It was the picture of sitting down at a table and enjoying a meal of intimate fellowship. It was the concept of entering into a close, intimate relationship. When you have somebody at your table and you sit down and share your food with them, a particular fellowship is involved. This was the concept. That's why some of it was burned on the altar. That was in a sense what God partook of. What the individual took, he partook of and the priest partook of. There was a fellowship, a communion, a community that included God, the priest and the worshiper.

Circumcision was crucial to entering into that relationship (fellowship) because the uncircumcised couldn't come past the court of the Gentiles. You didn't have access to the altar of burnt sacrifice. The issue at stake was: What is necessary in order to have access, communion and fellowship with God? This is where things have gone astray.

We recognize that access to God is through Jesus Christ. In fact, no one had direct access to the Father. Jesus said, 'I have come to declare the Father' (John 1:18; John 5:37; John 14:7).

In the temple itself, you had the Holy Place then the Holy of Holies. There was a big thick curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. The high priest was the only one who could enter into the Holy of Holies and he went in once a year on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:34; Hebrew 9:7).

Matthew 27:51, when Jesus was crucified, there was a great earthquake, the veil of the temple was torn in two, and now the way was open into the Holy of Holies. This symbolized the fact that Jesus Christ's sacrifice (His death) made possible our direct access to God. Access is through Jesus Christ. It still comes through a sacrifice, not through a lamb or a goat or ox, but through Jesus Christ who offered Himself as a sacrifice, one sacrifice for sin forever (John 1:29; Hebrew 9:12). We have access through Him. He is the source and means of our access to God.

The issue that came up in Galatia was that it was difficult for some to accept that access to God was that simple. You had various concepts that blended pagan ideas and philosophies with certain Jewish attitudes and ideas, and then they threw in an overlay of Christianity. People tended to accept a mixture of truth and error. There were those who were telling the Galatians that if they really wanted to guarantee and ensure access to God, they needed to be concerned about other things.

The issue that they had made, specifically, regarded circumcision. Their approach to circumcision was as though it were a matter of penance. This is why Paul made such a major issue of circumcision and the fact that they should not do it. It got to the very heart and core of the Gospel.

Paul was not opposed to circumcision from a physical standpoint. He himself had been circumcised and he had circumcised Timothy, who had a Jewish mother and Gentile father, when he took him with him in the ministry. Because Timothy had a Jewish mother, he felt that it would make a difference in terms of the way Timothy was regarded and accepted by the Jews.

But the issue was that there were those who were seeking to make circumcision a test of access and fellowship with God. They said that if you weren't circumcised, you weren't guaranteed access to God; therefore, there was no guarantee of salvation unless you were circumcised. That

was why Paul chose to make such a crucial issue of it and not to give one inch or quarter inch. It got back to the very heart and core of whether or not the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was sufficient to gain access to God as a means of salvation, or whether there were physical things you had to do.

We need to understand that because some think you have to do "this or that" to be saved. How many Sabbaths do you have to keep in order to be guaranteed salvation? How many Passovers? How many Feast of Tabernacles? Think about it a little bit. What if somebody was baptized between Passover and Pentecost and the next year were killed in a car wreck on their way to Passover services and never kept the Passover. Is it necessary to keep the Passover to be saved? How many Sabbaths did the thief on the cross keep? He died the very day that he repented. It is not how many you have kept. The real issue gets back to the heart and the mind. If he had lived, would he have done it? Yes, he would. It's not the physical things you do that save you. It's not how many Sabbaths, Feasts, etc. that you have kept.

But if you're not willing to obey God, if you're unwilling to keep the Sabbath or Feast or do the things God says to do, then you have never repented and have never accepted Christ as your Savior. You're not on the way to salvation. It is an issue of the heart and mind. No amount of Sabbath keeping earns salvation. *Jesus Christ paid the penalty for sin and through Him we have access to God and salvation.* When we accept and avail ourselves of that access, we will act on the things that God tells us to do. Acting on that access means we repent and turn away from sin and accept the Lordship and rulership of Jesus Christ in our lives. We want Him to live His life in us.

Paul says that in [Galatians 2:20](#), "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." The issue is not that we can live a life of rebellion and disobedience. No. If we are Christ's, then symbolically we are crucified with Christ and it is Christ who lives in us. He is living His life in us, so there is a yielded life, a surrendered life.

Access to God and, ultimately, salvation is not achieved by what you do. Your actions don't gain you access to God. Christ's action made possible your access to God. You could do everything perfectly and that would never earn you access to God. If it would, then why did

Christ have to die? If access to God can be accomplished and achieved by simply going out and becoming circumcised or by doing “this” or “that,” then why did Christ die? He died in vain. It would have been far simpler to have just said, ‘Go and do this and you will have gained access.’ That is why it is such a fundamental issue because the issue goes back to: How do you gain access to God? If there is another way, then Christ didn’t have to die. We are saying Christ’s sacrifice really was in vain. Protestants want to twist the book of Galatians and say that Galatians means that you shouldn’t keep the law. That is not what Galatians is about.

It makes plain, in the latter part of Galatians (Galatians 5:16-26), the contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit. There are tangible fruits that God’s Spirit will bear in our lives.

But how do you gain access?

Galatians 1:1, “Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead).”

Verses 11-17, Paul addresses the issue of his apostolic authority. The message he preached was not something that he figured out for himself nor was it something other people told him, but it was revealed directly by God. He gave a little of his background and how Christ worked with him and taught him even after His resurrection. The resurrected Christ dealt with and taught Paul.

Galatians 2:1, “Then after fourteen years [after his conversion] I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me.”

Verse 2, “And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.” This is reference to the ministerial conference (Acts 15) in 49 A.D. Fourteen years previously would date Paul’s conversion in 35 A.D. He went up to Jerusalem. Notice how he went. He went up and talked to those who were the leaders but privately to them who were of reputation.

Verse 9, “and when James, Cephas and John...” Cephas is the Aramaic equivalent of the Greek word “*petros*” for Peter. Cephas was the name he was commonly known by his contemporaries because it was the Aramaic form of his name. It was the name that Jesus Himself would normally have used.

Verse 9, “and when James, Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars...” “Seemed” is the same word that is rendered “reputation” in v. 2.

Those who were acknowledged and recognized to be pillars of the Church were James, who was the brother of Jesus and the presiding minister in the Jerusalem Church, Peter, who was the chief of the twelve apostles, and John, who was a part of the inner circle of the twelve. These were the ones who were acknowledged or recognized by others to be the pillars of the Church—to be the leading ministers. When Paul went up, he went up to those in authority. He privately conferred with them.

He said, v. 2, “...privately, lest by any means I should run or had run in vain.” He knew that if he was not working in harmony with the government God had set in His Church, his best efforts would be in vain. You can’t work contrary and be off in some rebellious way, doing your own thing, and think that’s acceptable. Paul recognized that and went up privately. Before he said anything to anybody else, he went to the ones who were the leading ministers. He sat down and talked it out with them because he didn’t want his efforts to be futile.

Verse 3, Titus was not compelled to be circumcised.

Verse 4, there were false brethren who came in unawares seeking to bring them into bondage. The issue was not so much that physical circumcision was such a harsh or terrible thing. The bondage was that you had to earn access to God through some form of penance. The bondage was the whole concept that the Stoics, Gnostics and various philosophers of the day had of how you went about gaining access to God. There were all sorts of concepts that the pagan world had. These pagan concepts ultimately came into what became the professing Christian church, and those were not acceptable.

Verses 7-8, the decision was made at the conference that Paul was to be placed in charge of the work for the Gentiles. He would go to the Gentiles and Peter would head up the work among the Israelites. Christ sent Peter and the twelve apostles primarily to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5-6).

Verses 11-15, at a later time Peter came to Antioch; Antioch was Paul’s headquarters. Peter visited there for a period of time. Some have speculated this may have been a Feast of Tabernacles. The implication is that this was something that took place over a period of several days.

Certain ones came down from Jerusalem and an issue of fellowship arose. Many of the Palestinian Jews had very little occasion to have

fellowship with the Gentiles one way or the other because there really weren't any to speak of. There certainly weren't any in the Church there in Jerusalem and the Judean area. About the only ones would have been Roman soldiers and Roman administrators. So it had not really been an issue there because the only ones in the Church were Jews.

Antioch had a sizable Gentile community. By this time, the Church there was primarily Gentile. Peter made an error in judgment and Paul saw that it was going to create a problem and division. He met the issue head on. Peter acknowledged that he had made a mistake and the matter was resolved. He needed to make clear that the Gentiles who were uncircumcised did not have some lesser relationship with God. Their contact and relationship with God was not on a lower "rung of the ladder." There wasn't anything about these matters that regulated spiritual access to God.

Galatians 2:16-18, "'knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law... [You are not going to accomplish justification, which is what makes possible access to God, by doing physical things]...but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.'"

It is not that we don't have to obey God and just live in sin because we're not justified by the works of the law. That's not what He said. He goes on to reiterate that because he knew people would want to take it out of context and say, 'We're not justified by the works of the law, so we can just do anything we want to.' That's not what Paul said. But the issue still is that the works of the law do not justify us.

Verse 21, "'...if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.'" Why did He go through what He went through if His sacrifice wasn't necessary? If you can do it yourself, then why did Christ die? This is the issue Paul keeps coming back to. That's the crucial point. There was a reason why Christ had to die. If access is not through Jesus Christ, then why do you need a Savior? Jesus Christ is the means by which we have access to the Father.

Galatians 3:2, "This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of

the law, or by the hearing of faith?" How did you receive God's Spirit? You received God's Holy Spirit when you were baptized. How did you gain that access to God? You wouldn't have the Spirit if you didn't have access to God. How did you gain that access? Was it because you circumcised yourself and you did these physical things? Did that gain you access to God? Was it because you believed the gospel, repented and was baptized? Where did you gain the Spirit? If you have the Spirit of God, then you have access and contact with God and you don't need something else in order to gain it. How did you get what you have? Where did that come from? He brings them back to the fact that they believed Paul's message.

Verse 2, "...by the hearing of faith." They believed the gospel, repented and had been baptized.

Verses 3-5, all right, you already have the Spirit, why do you need to do this?

Verses 6-9, then he goes through and begins to explain using the example of Abraham. What gained Abraham access to God? Did circumcision gain access to God? No, Abraham had a relationship with God before he was ever circumcised. Circumcision was something that was added as a physical outward sign of the covenant God made with Abraham. It was predicated upon the relationship that Abraham already had with God through faith. Abraham's relationship with God was through faith, not through something physical. God gave him circumcision as a sign when he was ninety-nine years old. God had been working with him for at least twenty-four years prior to that. God called him when he was seventy-five to come out of Ur of the Chaldeans and go to a land that he would show him (Genesis 12:1-4).

Our access to God is ultimately predicated upon faith, and that is directed toward Jesus Christ. He makes that access possible.

Verses 10-11, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.' But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'The just shall live by faith.'"

Verse 13, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law... [What is the curse of the law? The curse of the law is the death penalty. What's the curse?...]...having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')."

Deuteronomy 21:22-23, “If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God.”

The curse is they will take you out and hang you. They will execute you. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). The curse of the law is the death penalty. That is the curse that the law imposes. Upon whom is that curse imposed? Upon those who obey? No.

Galatians 3:10, “...Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” The curse is upon anyone who disobeys. And since all have disobeyed at one time or another (Romans 3:23), then everybody is under the curse. How do you get out from under it?

The works of the law, the labors imposed by the law, are labors that had to do with gaining access to God through the sacrificial system. The rituals, washings and all of these labors that were carried out were predicated on the fact that you had sinned and needed to regain access to God. So when you performed any of those things, you were in effect acknowledging that you had sinned. If you sinned, then you are under the curse. The way you get out from under the curse is not the performance of certain ritual acts. It is through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, through our faith in that sacrifice and our acceptance of it. The works of the law make reference to the ritualistic labors that were imposed by the law as a schoolmaster.

Galatians 3:19, “What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions...” Is this talking about the Ten Commandments? Remember the Sabbath is part of the Ten Commandments. Were the Ten Commandments added because of transgression? No. The Ten Commandments defined what transgression was to begin with (I John 3:4, KJV).

Romans 5:13, if there were no law, there would be no sin.

Before Israel ever came to Mount Sinai (Exodus 19 and 20), remember the miracle of the manna (Exodus 16). If they gathered extra manna on any day, it stunk and bred worms—except on Friday. On Friday, they were told to gather an extra portion. It lasted over the Sabbath and they didn’t have to go out and gather on the Sabbath. There was somebody that went out on the

Sabbath because he figured it had been there the last six days; therefore, it should be there today, too. He didn’t see why it wouldn’t be. And sure enough, it wasn’t. The Sabbath was known. It was revealed miraculously to Israel and was being enforced by God before they ever got to Mount Sinai. The Sabbath was in effect. It wasn’t introduced at Mount Sinai.

At Mount Sinai, Israel said, ‘All that the Lord has said we will do’ (Exodus 19:8; Exodus 24:3, 7).

Galatians 3:19, “What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.” The Ten Commandments were not ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator (Exodus 20:19); they were spoken by the mouth of God Himself (Exodus 20:1; Deuteronomy 5:22). After they were spoken, Moses went up into the mountain.

While he was gone for six weeks, Exodus 32, they built the golden calf. They transgressed the commandments they had accepted as part of the covenant. Clearly, idolatry and adultery stand out and everything else connected with it. What happened when Moses came back down? Remember what came next? Instructions for the tabernacle and the Levitical sacrificial system are what were given next (Exodus 36-40; Leviticus 1-7). What was added because of transgression (Galatians 3:19)? The ritual laws are the basis of what Israel went through and how they enacted regaining of access to God. There were things that were added as a schoolmaster.

Galatians 3:24, “Therefore the law was our tutor [KJV, “schoolmaster”] to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” The “schoolmaster” is there to teach a lesson. What was added? The law was added because of transgression until Christ would come.

Hebrews 9:8-10, “the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.”

Here was something that was added because of transgressions, until Christ, that was symbolic of how we gained access. Four things symbolized how you gained access: 1) meat offerings (the

oblations), 2) drink offerings (the libations), 3) the washings (the ablutions) and 4) the physical ceremony. The sacrifice of Christ was pictured by the sacrificial offerings burned on the altar, the pouring out of the blood and the water that was ceremonially poured out at the altar, and the drink offerings. In order for the priest to go into the presence of God, first there was the sacrifice (meat offerings, drink offerings). Then he approached closer to the tabernacle and he went through the ceremonial washing. Then following specific ritual, he took the golden censor into the tabernacle or temple.

How do we gain access? Christ made it possible by paying the penalty. He offered Himself as a sacrifice. The meat and drink offering pointed to what Christ did.

Christ took the first step. What do we do in response? If we accept that, we then must clean up—we must be washed. Repentance is what the different washings pictured, a symbolic washing or cleansing. You can't come into God's presence dirty and unclean. Then we have to follow God's instructions to the letter and beyond the letter; we have to follow them in the spirit. The various physical ceremonies and rituals pointed to the fact that God has a specific way He wants things done.

Galatians 3:19, "...It [the law] was added because of transgression...." They were not the means to access. They were merely things that illustrated God's plan for how access would be given. The access comes through Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:19, "...It [the law] was added...till the Seed should come...." It was to last until the time of Christ. It was to teach a lesson and to point out what the Messiah would do. Paul lays great emphasis on it.

Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death...." Death is the result of lawbreaking. If you had a need to engage in these ritualistic activities to gain access to God, then you were acknowledging that you had sinned and were cut off. The curse is on everyone who hasn't perfectly obeyed. If you ever sinned, you were in trouble, which includes all of us. We don't gain justification from that sin by doing it right from now on. We gain justification by the fact that Christ paid the penalty.

Galatians 3:13, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us...." He paid the penalty in our stead.

Verse 19, "...It [the law] was added because of transgressions...."

Jeremiah 7:22-23, "For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I

brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices. But this is what I commanded them, saying, "Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.""

God did not originally speak to them about burnt offerings and sacrifices (Exodus 19, 20). When they disobeyed, there were rituals added because of transgressions. This makes reference to the whole book of Leviticus.

Galatians 3:27-28, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This clearly refers to spiritual relationships, not physical relationships.

It is incredible how people will misuse and distort scriptures. I read the other day a couple of homosexuals who wanted to get married in some church—if you can even call it a church. The scripture they used to justify that was that there is neither male nor female in Christ. That is not what it's talking about. I think we all understand that. Hopefully we do.

What is obliterated is not the physical distinctions of our ethnic background, our economic status or our sex. The issue that Paul is addressing is access to God. You don't have a "leg up" in terms of how much money or how little money you have. That has no bearing on your access to God. Money will gain you access to the rulers of this world, but it won't gain you access to God one iota. You don't have a "leg up" because of your ethnic background, economic status or sex. When it comes to access to God, none of those things count for anything. That is what Paul is emphasizing.

Verse 29, "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Galatians 4:10 is often greatly misunderstood and taken out of context, "You observe days and months and seasons and years." At that point they like to close the book and say you're not supposed to observe the Sabbath. If that proves you are not supposed to observe the Sabbath, does it prove that you are also not supposed to observe Sunday? It just says, "observe days," not which days. The ones who are making an issue of this are observing Sunday, Christmas, Easter—all kinds of things. That is a selective use of the Bible. You have to get the context of which days and months and times and years are

being referred to. It doesn't mention the Sabbath or the Feast days.

Verse 8, "But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods." You could make a better case for Christmas, etc. These were people who came out of a pagan background, not Jewish. These were people who were idolaters.

I was just recently going through a Bible Handbook. It's a new one and they had a quote in there in reference to Sunday. They referred to the original decree that the Emperor Constantine issued to make Sunday a day of rest. They even acknowledge that Sunday was not a day of rest until Constantine's decree about 315 A.D. In his decree, he referred to it as the venerable day of the Sun (capital "S"). Constantine was, by background, a sun-worshiper—a worshiper of the sun god. So he made this day of the sun god a day of rest throughout the Roman Empire.

Galatians 4:8, when you didn't know God you served idols.

Verse 9, "But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?" Here are people who came out of idolatry who are turning back to the very same thing they came out of, "to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto you desire again to be in bondage." People who came out of idolatry were turning back to some of the very things they had turned loose of.

Verses 10-12, "You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain. Brethren, I urge you to become as I am..." Now, how was Paul?

He said in I Corinthians 11:1, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."

I Peter 2:21-22, "...Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 'Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth'."

I John 3:4 (KJV), "...sin is the transgression of the law."

Luke 4:16, "...And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read."

Hebrew 13:8, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever."

Acts 18:4 shows that Paul went into the synagogue on the Sabbath, "And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks."

Galatians 2:20, the life Paul lived—it was Christ living in him.

Galatians 4:12, "Brethren, I urge you to become as I am..." How was he? Christ lived in him. Christ set an example. Follow me as I follow Christ. Christ hasn't changed. Christ kept the Sabbath. Paul kept the Sabbath.

Is Paul condemning Sabbath keeping? No. Really, the primary emphasis in this section has to do with astrology. Astrology was a very major thing in the pagan and Hellenistic world. Clearly, it involves people who were turning back to Gentile customs.

It mentions in v. 10, "...days and months..."

Leviticus 19:26 shows that the Jews were forbidden to observe times (KJV). This is a reference to astrology.

"Elements" in Galatians 4:9 is explained in The Art Gingrich Greek English Lexicon as coming from "*stoicon*" and refers to the elemental spirits and to the heavenly bodies that were also regarded as personal beings and given divine honor. Heavenly bodies—the signs of the Zodiac—astrology.

Galatians 4:9, "...turning back to the weak and beggarly elements..." It was a reference to the things that controlled the elemental spirits of the universe, as one version renders it. It was a term that was used to refer to the pagan deities that controlled astrology. Here, they were getting encumbered and observing days and months and times and years. What we have in Galatia is clearly what's termed a "Gnostic" influence.

"*Gnostic*" was a Greek term that meant "we know." It was a philosophy and a reference to an approach that mixed elements of the Stoic. They mixed together several different things of how you gain access to God. It placed a lot of emphasis on astrology and "lucky" and "unlucky" times, "lucky" and "unlucky" days—things that you did or didn't do on certain times. It had to do with a lot of physical things you had to do to somehow gain favor.

What we have in Galatia, are people who are getting caught up in a total misunderstanding of what circumcision is all about, people who were being caught up in these ideas of what was necessary for them to gain access to God. They were beginning to slip back into some of the paganism that they came out of. They were bringing some of that in to "cover all the bases." Paul speaks very clearly in regards to this.

Galatians 4:21, we have already made reference to what "under the law" means. Paul goes through an analogy in the latter part of chapter 4, speaking of the contrast between Hagar and

Sarah, and what came naturally and what came by promise from God. In other words, what you can engender, what you can do on your own, is not where the solution lies. It lies in what God can and will do if you trust Him and you believe Him.

Galatians 5:1, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” The yoke of bondage was this concept that you have to earn it by the things that you physically do.

Verse 14, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Verses 15-16, “But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” There are two contrary natures: the desires generated by the flesh and those generated by the spirit.

There are consequences: the works of the flesh are the sins that are enumerated in vv. 19-21, “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like....”

The fruits of the Spirit are enumerated in vv. 22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control....” We need to be oriented toward serving God.

Galatians 6:7-8, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” Showing that we are ultimately going to reap what we sow.

Throughout the book of Galatians, Paul emphasizes that you can’t earn access to God through what you do. You can’t earn salvation through penance. You don’t gain access to God by the carrying out of certain works or rituals.

We have a book that is written to explain God’s law to Gentiles and to explain the relationship of law and grace to those who were filled with the Hellenistic philosophy. It is a book that has been very commonly and frequently misunderstood, distorted and twisted because of the attitudes that the world has had.

We will get into I Corinthians next time.

Bible Study # 60 Questions

SURVEY OF THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF PAUL SERIES

Galatians

(Give scripture references.)

1. What Churches are in the area of Galatia?
2. What was the background of the people in the Galatian Churches?
3. To what event does Paul refer in Galatians 2:1-2?
4. What are the “works of the law”?
5. Explain Galatians 3:10.
6. Explain Galatians 3:19.
7. Explain Galatians 3:24.
8. Explain Galatians 4:10. Prove from the context.
9. What does “under the law” mean?
10. What is the chief theme of Galatians?

Bible Study # 61
December 11, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Life and Letters of Paul Series—I Corinthians

We are getting into the book of I Corinthians this evening. I would like to comment by way of background on I Corinthians, particularly the background of the city of Corinth. Corinth was a city in Greece. It was, really, the commercial capital of Greece. It was a major port and it had all the major problems of ports. In some ways, it was the “New Orleans” of its day, perhaps in more ways than one. Corinth, at the time of the Apostle Paul, had a population of about four hundred thousand, just a little bit smaller than the city of New Orleans. It was a very major world city in that day. There were only three cities that had a larger population than Corinth at the time of Paul: the cities of Rome (Italy), Alexander (Egypt) and Antioch (Syria). The population was mainly Greek, but there were others there because Corinth was a very cosmopolitan city. As a result of being a very busy seaport, the wealth and the life of Corinth were really proverbial in the ancient world.

The temple of Aphrodite, the patron deity, sat on a large hill that overlooked the city of Corinth. “Aphrodite” was the Greek name for the one that the Romans called “Venus,” the goddess of love, or perhaps more accurately, the goddess of lust because that’s what Aphrodite amounted to. The worship of Aphrodite involved temple prostitution. There were sacred prostitutes who served there in the temple. It was a climate of immorality that, in some ways, even surpassed most places today. I don’t know that it would surpass San Francisco, but it would certainly “run them a good race.” I think the cities we have today that are proverbial for their vice and immorality really don’t have a whole lot on Corinth. Corinth was quite noted for that kind of thing.

The city of Delphi was located a few miles north of Corinth. This is where the famous Delphic Oracle, the priestess of Apollo, resided. The Delphic Oracle was quite famous throughout the ancient world. People from various areas would make pilgrimages to Delphi to ask a question of the god Apollo.

The priests there had quite a show that they put on. They would begin to dance around, “hoop” and “holler,” work themselves up into this, as the historians or commentaries term it, “ecstatic frenzy.” It was kind of like a Pentecostal church;

that is about what it amounted to. They would “hoop” it up until this Delphic Oracle, a woman, would finally get so wild eyed and worked into such a state of frenzy that she would fall over and begin to babble incoherently. At that time, it was felt that she was speaking in the language of the gods. Speaking in, as the Greeks termed it, “an unknown tongue”—the tongue of the gods.

The priests would dutifully take this down and then claim to interpret what she said. Basically, they would say whatever they wanted to say and claim that this was the interpretation of what she had said. They were quite noted for coming up with some enigmatic interpretations.

One of the most famous was back several centuries prior to the time of the Apostle Paul. A king who was contemplating an attack on the Persian Empire traveled there to the Delphic Oracle. He was told by the priest who claimed to interpret what the oracle had said, ‘If you attack Persia, a great empire will be destroyed.’ He assumed that meant he would win. In reality, he lost. They said, ‘That’s what we said. We didn’t tell you which empire.’ They were kind of noted for “playing both ends against the middle” on their prophecies. You could take it a variety of different ways.

People are affected, shaped and influenced by their background and by the things that are around them. The people in the Corinthian Church grew up in a city that was noted for its wealth and luxury. It was a commercial center. There was a lot of trading and a lot of ships that came and went. Since it was a major port, the people were materialistic; they tended to think in material terms. It was a comparatively wealthy area.

They were influenced by the very casual attitude toward immorality. Immorality was taken very lightly. Many had grown up in a religious background where immorality was even utilized in that context. They were influenced religiously. We are going to notice the impact of the surrounding area, even the impact of the Oracle of Delphi a short distance away.

One of the things important to understand is that the word for “tongues” in the New Testament is very plain. When you go to Acts 2, the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit was the gift of speaking in foreign languages. The individuals in Jerusalem from other countries were able to understand in their own language. “*Glossolalia*” in the Greek is translated “tongues” and means almost exactly what our English word “tongues” means. In the Greek language there are three different connotations. It was used in three

different ways: (1) the physical organ in the mouth. James 3:5 says your tongue is a little member but boasts great things. (2) It refers to foreign languages. Acts 2 clearly refers to people hearing the sermon in their own language. We sometimes refer to “my native tongue,” using tongue to refer to a foreign language. (3) It is also used by the Greeks to refer to the so-called ecstatic speech of the Delphic Oracle. There were other lesser oracles, but realize that ecstatic speech (speaking in tongues) played a role in pagan Greek religion. There were aspects of pagan Greek religion that would have not been dissimilar to a lot of Pentecostal meetings. That’s not commonly recognized, but it was, nevertheless, the case that existed.

When you hear a word, you understand and interpret that word on the basis of the way you have heard it used. What it means to you is not necessarily what it means to the person who said it. That’s one of the reasons that people have a lot of problems sometimes in reading the Bible. We have grown up with certain false religious teachings and we tend to read those into the Bible. We have things to unlearn.

Many of the so-called “difficult scriptures” that people come up with are only difficult because we have a pre-conceived idea of what it means. It doesn’t “square” with the truth, but the verse seems to say that. Yet if someone just looked at it objectively, it wouldn’t say that at all. But it says it to us because we have had a background of where that has been, perhaps, misused or misapplied. This “colored” some of the problems that existed in Corinth.

We are going to see that the latter part of the book of I Corinthians deals with the subject of tongues. In reality, there are several chapters. Chapter 14 specifically deals with the subject, but chapters 12 and 13 lay the basis for what Paul is going to say in chapter 14.

Paul wrote the book of I Corinthians. He came to Corinth on his second evangelistic journey in the fall of 50 A.D. We went through that last time. Paul, after the ministerial conference of 49 A.D., returned to Antioch. Then, leaving in the spring of 50 A.D., traveled across Asia Minor, and finally entered into Greece (Europe) on Pentecost of 50 A.D. He came from Philippi, up in northern Greece (Macedonia), down through Thessalonica, Berea, down a little further to Athens, and finally wound up in Corinth. He stayed there eighteen months. It was from there that he wrote I and II Thessalonians. Then he left just in time to return to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles in 52 A.D. (Acts 18:21).

In Acts 19, we find that Paul came to the area of Ephesus on his **third evangelistic journey**. If you have a map, you might check. Ephesus is right on the coast of modern-day Turkey, right on the edge of Asia Minor, just across the water from Corinth. It is a little over a hundred miles away by water. Ephesus was a major port. There were ships that went back every day. Roman cargo ships carrying mail made that journey, leaving Ephesus several times a day. Paul came back to Ephesus on his third journey and he stayed there in Ephesus quite a while. It was toward the end of his stay in Ephesus that he wrote I Corinthians, which would be dated to the Days of Unleavened Bread 55 A.D. I will show you why we would date it to the Feast of Unleavened Bread of that year.

The thing that we see right off in the book of I Corinthians is that it was written in response to problems.

I Corinthians 1:11, “For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you.” You can imagine this went over really well. Chloe was evidently a wealthy lady who lived in Corinth, and there was a congregation that evidently met in her home. There were perhaps two or three similar home congregations that met in the greater Corinth area. They perhaps all assembled together only on Holy Days and special occasions. This was probably one of the things that created a situation where there was more divisiveness. There did not seem to have been a resident local pastor in Corinth at that time that had the oversight of the whole city. Problems existed.

So someone from the house of Chloe had been dispatched over to Paul with some news. They had evidently caught a Roman cargo ship out of Corinth to Ephesus. The trip would have taken a couple of days. They came to Ephesus and told Paul some things that were going on. Paul, in turn, wrote this letter.

He starts off by saying, ‘I’ve heard some news and I’m not really happy about what I’ve heard.’ You can just know all the people were in a “wonderful” attitude when they found out that some of Chloe’s people had gone over and told Paul what was going on. People always tend to “like” that sort of thing.

They had divisions beforehand and knowing human nature, they probably had a few more for a little while. There were problems with divisiveness. There were a variety of problems. There were problems addressed in chapter 5 with immorality. There was an individual in the

Corinth Church who was living in an incestuous relationship with his stepmother. Nothing was done or said. There wasn't any Church discipline that was exercised in the matter. The people sort of prided themselves with their broad-minded outlook and all the love that they showed. They had a misguided understanding of what love is.

God is not broadminded and tolerant toward sin. God is very merciful and forgiving to repentant sinners, but there is a vast difference between being broadminded and tolerant of sin and being merciful toward repentant sinners. A repentant sinner is one who has turned away from sin.

This individual had clearly not turned away from sin because he was living in sin. Repentance is not a matter of sinning every night and repenting every morning. That is not repentance. This wasn't a situation that was acceptable. It was brought to Paul's attention, which he had evidently not known before, but was common knowledge in the Corinthians Church.

I Corinthians 5:2 "...you are puffed up...." Paul said, 'You're actually proud of yourselves about how tolerant and broadminded you are.'

Some were taking each other to court. I Corinthians 6 deals with that.

They had written to Paul at an earlier time.

I Corinthians 7:1, "Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me...." He was perhaps in the process of answering the letter when he really got stirred to action by some things that were brought to his attention. So he answered in the course of their letter. There were some questions they asked about marriage and divorce.

In chapter 8 and again in chapter 10, he addressed some issues that they had raised about things offered to idols.

In chapter 11, we come to the fact that there had been problems at Passover. There were serious problems—to the point that people had gotten drunk. Verse 21 indicates that. It was a real mess.

In chapter 12, there were misunderstandings about spiritual gifts. This was a spin-off of a lot of the divisions, and it probably aggravated a lot of the divisions and divisiveness. There was great misunderstanding about spiritual gifts and what is real spirituality. Paul had to deal with this in chapters 12, 13 and 14.

There were really serious problems that were brought to Paul's attention. The impetus of the letter seems to have been several of these things—particularly the Passover abuses and the fornicator who was there in the congregation—which prompted him to write when he did.

We date it to the Days of Unleavened Bread on the fact of chapter 5.

I Corinthians 5:7, "Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us."

"Since you truly are unleavened." How can someone be unleavened? What does that mean? There are two ways you can take it. He either meant it physically or he meant it spiritually. Were they spiritually unleavened? Is that the way he meant it? He had just said in v. 2 that they were puffed up. So, spiritually, they weren't unleavened. Spiritually they were puffed up. They were the very opposite of being unleavened spiritually.

The only way that they could have been unleavened was physically because it's very plain from Paul's use of the term in chapter 5 that they weren't spiritually unleavened. He could only mean it in the physical sense. He was writing during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

There had been a problem at Passover and this had brought matters to a head; this was the "icing on the cake." Someone had been dispatched from Chloe's household. They had caught one of the Roman mail cargo ships the next morning. Within a couple of days (by the second Day of Unleavened Bread), they'd have been in Ephesus. If Paul took a couple of days to compose his reply and they caught the boat back (let's say on the fourth Day of Unleavened Bread), they would have been back in Corinth by the sixth day. This letter could have been read in the congregation on the final High Day. I think this is perhaps the most likely scenario. The context of chapter 5 makes plain it was written during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

In chapter 11, you read that there were problems at Passover; it was this previous Passover. Now was the time to correct it. It was fresh and he really "lined them out." The Days of Unleavened Bread are all about putting sin out, and by the time they got through reading I Corinthians, they found out about two or three whom they needed to put out. They had only unleavened physically; they had not unleavened spiritually. That's the need that Paul addressed.

In I Corinthians 1, he addresses the subject of division and the importance of unity. The division was that people wanted to choose their own champions and do their own thing.

In vv. 26-29, he emphasized our calling.

In I Corinthians 2, he brings out the fact that his preaching had not been some clever manipulative way of impressing them. He did

not try to impress them by the things that the Greeks were impressed with or by man's wisdom and great philosophies.

I Corinthians 2:4, "And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Paul wanted their faith to be anchored, not on the cleverness of men, but on the power of God.

He addresses something that is important to understand.

Verse 11, "For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God."

We are told that there is a spirit in man. The spirit in man is what sets apart the human mind from the animal brain. It enables us to function on a human level. "For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man..." If it weren't for the spirit of man that enables us to function on a human level, then we would be functioning on an animal level. "...Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God." You understand things on a physical level because of the spirit of man. The spirit of man, which is in you, enables your brain to function on something above an animal level. It imparts to you that "spark" that raises humanity above the level of animal concept. In the same way, there are things on the spiritual level. If God's Spirit is not working with someone, you simply can't grasp spiritual things.

I can't read over this without thinking about Mr. Herbert Armstrong going over and over this. He said you couldn't go out and teach arithmetic to a cow because it doesn't have the spirit of man. In the same way, it takes God's Spirit working with us to enable us to grasp and to comprehend on a spiritual level.

In I Corinthians 3, he addresses the spiritual state of the Church; their spiritual state was that they were carnal.

I Corinthians 3:3, "for you are still carnal..." They weren't spiritual.

Verses 1-3, "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?"

If you read through I Corinthians and this is the "milk" of the word, I'd hate to have been on the receiving end of the "meat" because Paul has

some pretty "tall" stuff here in I Corinthians. Here were people who were not maturing spiritually. We grow and mature physically, and in the same way, we have to grow and mature spiritually.

Verse 9, "For we [referring to the ministry; himself and other ministers] are God's fellow workers together with God; you [the congregation] are God's field, you are God's building."

Verses 10-11, "According to the grace of God...I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Then he discusses what is built on the foundation.

Verse 12, "Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw." Paul uses the analogy of a building project.

It's kind of interesting. The Greek word that has been translated "bishop" in the New Testament comes from the Greek word "*episcopa*," which literally means "an overseer." The analogy that is drawn is that God has a building program. God is constructing a spiritual edifice, a spiritual temple.

Ephesians 2:20, Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone. The prophets and apostles comprise the foundation.

In I Peter 2:5, Peter uses the analogy and compares us to being living stones.

Paul tells us in Hebrews 9 that the things that were done, relative to the tabernacle and the temple, all had a spiritual counterpart and were types of the heavenly. They were all typical of something.

Have you ever given consideration as to why, when you go back to I Kings 6:7, it was stressed that when Solomon built the temple, there was not the sound of a hammer or chisel that was heard on the temple site? While it was being built, all the stones were exactly pre-cut to where they exactly fit when they were constructed. You can go back and read the account of the building.

It was a very unusual building site. Normally you go to a building site and hear all kinds of noise and racket, hammering and beating away. It was a pretty quiet building site. In other words, everything fit. Why did God insist that it be done that way? One of the primary reasons is to serve as a type of a spiritual temple. It was to teach us a certain lesson.

As Paul says, Hebrews 8:5, “who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, ‘See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.’” These were analogies of the heavenly.

Hebrews 9:24, “For Christ has not entered the holy place made with hands, which are copies of the true....” That’s why God had it done according to specific instructions.

When the spiritual temple is assembled at the resurrection, that’s not when Christ is going to get out the hammer and chisel and start working on some of us to make us fit. We are being quarried right now, and sometimes it hurts to get a few of the knots knocked off as we’re “squared off.”

Christ is the Chief Cornerstone. In the ancient practices of building, the cornerstone was crucial because it was laid and everything was measured from it. Things were measured out using the plumb bob and the plummet. The cornerstone was the basis by which everything else was set. The cornerstone was the orientation in terms of the exact direction or configuration of the building. Everything was measured off the cornerstone. If the cornerstone was out of kilter, the whole building was going to be out of kilter.

We all have to fit in around Christ. He’s not changed to conform to us; we’re changed to conform to Him. The cornerstone is laid and then everything else is fit in. Everything else has to be cut to measure, to fit the configuration that is determined by the cornerstone.

I Corinthians 3:9, Paul draws this analogy and he says, “...we [referring to the ministry] are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building.” The term “*episcopos*” means “bishop” or “overseer.” The analogy is that the ministry was pictured as being in the role of a construction site overseer.

We’re told, in Ephesians 4:11-13, that one of the jobs of the ministry is the building up, the edifying, of the body of Christ. “Edifying” simply means “building up.” It’s the analogy of a construction project going on.

Paul has said, I Corinthians 3:10, “...I laid the foundation....” Paul said that was his role.

We could say in terms of this work and this era today that Mr. Herbert Armstrong laid the foundation. God used him to lay the foundation for this phase of God’s work. Others have in turn built on that foundation. Various ones come in and may build different parts; maybe some are

working on this area and some on that area. We’re working together to build up a temple fitly framed together (Ephesians 2:21-22; 4:16). Paul uses this analogy.

He talks about the construction material.

I Corinthians 3:12, “Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw.” He talked about the components that made the temple. The temple consisted of cut stones, precious and semi-precious stones, gold and precious metals. You might contrast that with something built out of wood, hay and stubble. By the time you get down to the hay and stubble, you don’t have something that’s going to last. If you light fire to it, it certainly isn’t going to last very long.

Verse 10, “...But let each one take heed how he builds on it.” Paul is addressing the ministry. In context, it applied to those in Corinth, but it’s a warning that God has given to His ministry down through the centuries through the pen of the Apostle Paul. You had better take heed what you build and what kind of construction material you are utilizing. Will it stand the test of fire? Fire is used as descriptive of the Tribulation or of fiery trials. In other words, when the pressure is on, what’s going to happen? Is it going to go up in flames or is it going to be purified and refined?

Paul says, v. 10, “...I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.” Those of us in the work today have to be careful what we build because the Day will ultimately declare it.

Verse 13, “each one’s work will become manifest; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.” As we move toward the consummation of the age and the Great Tribulation, it is going to become apparent how well things have been constructed. The quality of the work of the ministry, in any given area, is going to be revealed as the pressures and trials came on.

We’ve gone through some serious problems in the Church over the years in times past. Serious trials and difficulties came up. Some areas were devastated and lost large numbers of people; some were barely scathed. To an extent, part of it was a reflection of the quality of what had been built in that local area. When an area is devastated, it becomes apparent that there’s been an awful lot of wood, hay and stubble that went into the construction and not as much gold, silver and stone.

There is a point that applies here. It applies to the ministry in Corinth. Problems and trials, things

that were going to come, would try the Church at that time, and it was going to be apparent what others had done. Paul had laid a foundation and had gone on. Others were responsible to build upon that foundation. If they didn't do it in a sound way, when the problems came, it would be revealed.

Verse 13, "each one's work will become manifest; for the Day will declare it..." It applied then, and it has applied down through the centuries. It applies down through the history of God's work in our time as far as the ministry is concerned, and it applies on further out. Also, by analogy, we can apply it in our lives. It involves the quality of the character that we build. Certainly, the analogy is a valid one, though in context, it more specifically referred to criteria by which the ministry was being judged, and the quality of workmanship becomes apparent.

We're told the importance of respecting the temple of God.

Verse 17, "If anyone defiles [destroys] the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." It is important that we recognize the sanctity of what God has made holy. That applies in our own lives and it applies in terms of the Church as a whole.

Verse 16, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"

I Corinthians 4:1-2, "Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." Paul uses the example that the ministry is pictured as God's stewards. One of the great criteria of a steward is that he is faithful.

Verses 3-4, "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you...For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord." Paul says, 'I am not worried about your judgment. I am not accountable to you. I am not your steward. I am God's steward; I am accountable to God.'

The greatest criterion of a steward is that he has to be faithful. When you hire somebody to manage your affairs, if the guy is a crook, this is the quickest thing that will disqualify someone from serving as a steward (manager). Paul says, 'I am accountable to the One whose steward I am.' Paul tells the Corinthians their opinion is not what concerns him. 'God's opinion is what I'm thinking of and what I am concerned about because I know that I am going to have to give

an account to Him. It's not your opinion that counts, and it's not mine—it's God's opinion. I'm going to have to give accountability to Him; I'd better be faithful with my charge. If I'm not, then I am going to be held accountable.'

He is setting the stage for what he gets into.

I Corinthians 5:1-2, "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife. And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you." Paul really begins to "lay into" them. He says, 'You don't seem to know what to do about it.'

Verse 3, "For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged, as though I were present, concerning him who has so done this deed."

'I'll tell you exactly what to do.'

Verse 5, "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." In other words, this individual was to be put out of the

trivialize sin is, in effect, to regard the sacrifice of Christ as cheap and contemptible. God made the ultimate sacrifice. Sin is a big deal. We have to take sin seriously or we trivialize the sacrifice of our Savior. Why do we even need a Savior if sin is not serious business?

We can't have a casual, careless, tolerant attitude toward sin. God's attitude is an attitude of great love and mercy toward repentant sinners because when we repent, God removes our sin. It's not that you have to live under this guilt forever because of sin. God makes it possible to have the guilt removed. Christ paid the penalty.

When we get to II Corinthians 2:6-11, we will see that the individual that Paul had to deal with very severely repented and was then received back with open arms. Paul said to make him welcome, confirm your love toward him. It's not a matter of something held against someone. God's way is a way of mercy upon repentance. But judgment precedes mercy. It sets the stage for mercy. If there was no judgment, then mercy is trivialized. It becomes of no account. It becomes your due rather than of grace.

Paul had to deal with them. It was a very fundamental concept of the Days of Unleavened Bread. They really didn't grasp the concept of the importance of putting out sin.

I Corinthians 5:2, "And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned..." You should have been really grieved and bothered by this. Ezekiel talks about those who sigh and cry for the abomination in Israel (Ezekiel 9:4).

Paul is very explicit. He is just getting warmed up.

I Corinthians 6:1, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?" Why weren't some of these matters, disputes that came up, settled in the Church? Why do we hear of members airing their dirty laundry before the outside?

In fact, v. 6, brother was going to law with brother. Christians with legal disputes should not go to worldly courts. The matter should be settled in the context of the Church.

Verse 7, "Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be defrauded?" Why wouldn't you rather suffer wrong than contribute toward open scandal for the Church? You should have an attitude where you would suffer wrong and you would put up with something that is not right. You would

suffer wrong before you would contribute toward giving the Church a "black eye."

Verse 8, "No, you yourselves do wrong and defraud, and you do these things to your brethren!" Instead of not being willing to suffer wrong, you are doing wrong.

Verse 9, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites."

Verses 8-16, he really begins to "line them out" on this. He stresses the matter of immorality.

Verse 18, "Flee sexual immorality...."

In I Corinthians 7, he gets into the questions they had raised about the state of marriage and issues involving divorce.

Verses 1-5 address the issue about the fact of a married couple having proper relations with one another and not defrauding one another.

It's kind of an amazing dichotomy that you have in some of these societies such as Corinth. On the one hand, you have rampant immorality; on the other, you have those who want to swing to the opposite end and say that celibacy is the way to go. That just sets the stage for other problems as far as morality. Paul laid stress that marriage is the proper approach.

He then deals with several specific issues.

Verse 8, he addresses the issue of those who are unmarried and those who are widows. He says that it would be good if they remained that way, even in the way that he was.

Verse 9, if it was a problem for them to remain single and they wanted to get married, they were to go ahead and marry.

He mentions a little further the present distress.

I Corinthians 7:26, "I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress—that it is good for a man to remain as he is." It was a time of trial—a time of impending trial and persecution in which whole segments of the population may have to literally flee for their lives. In the area where they were and with the circumstances, this was really not the ideal time to be establishing a family and taking on family responsibilities.

However, vv. 28-29, it is not a matter of sin. If you feel like it is going to be a problem, then go ahead and get married. But he was just warning them that they were entering a time of a lot of pressure and difficulties and persecution.

Verse 8, he addresses those who were unmarried or widows.

Verse 10, "Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from

her husband.” The context is clearly that both mates were in the Church. His emphasis is that the husband is not to put away the wife and the wife is not to depart from her husband.

Verse 11, “But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.”

If she does depart, she must remain unmarried or be reconciled. There can’t be divorce and remarriage within the Church. That just flies in the face of what Christ said. He says, ‘Don’t depart.’

He recognizes that there may be certain circumstances where, at this point in time, they simply can’t live together. He recognizes that there are grounds for separations that are not grounds for divorce and remarriage. There may be grounds for not living together. “But if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband...” When two are in the Church, you either work it out or live alone. Those are the two options.

Verse 12, “But to the rest I, not the Lord say... [In other words, he was not directly quoting Jesus Christ as he had the previous verse.]...If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her.” This is referring to being married to someone who is not a believer. The fact that she is an unbeliever is not grounds to dissolve the marriage.

Verse 13, “And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.” She does not have grounds to leave him.

In v. 14, he continues and stresses the unbelieving mate and children are sanctified, set apart, by the believing mate. There is a benefit and a blessing that is extended to the whole family.

Verse 15, but if the unbeliever initiates the separation, is unwilling to continue the marriage and leaves, then in that narrow circumstance the brother or sister is not bound.

Verse 16, it goes on to stress the fact that people can change.

Verse 17, “But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches.” Basically, whatever our circumstance when we’re called, we just need to make the best of it. Then he addresses the subject of those who were divorced when they came into the Church. He addresses several different subjects.

Verses 27-28, “Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed [don’t seek a divorce]. Are you loosed from a wife [are you divorced]? Do not seek a wife. But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you.” This is based on the fact of the present distress he had mentioned in v. 26.

The point was that as he addressed earlier in v. 20, “Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.” Basically, make the best of your circumstance. But then farther down, he addresses that he didn’t mean it to be taken out to the extreme in terms of marriage because he said that if you’re called and married, don’t seek to end the marriage. If you’re called and you have been divorced, he is not advocating that you go and seek marriage. But if you do marry, there’s not a sin involved because the sins that were a part of the previous relationship were washed away at baptism and you have a chance for a fresh start. In the same way, someone who has never been married is certainly free to marry. Paul is not forbidding marriage. He is simply counseling that in the context of the present distress, marriage may not be a really good idea. But it’s not a matter of sin. It is just the circumstances that are involved.

Where married couples are both in the Church, they are not free to divorce and remarry. Divorce and remarriage is not permitted inside the Church. There may be circumstances where they are not going to be able to live together. In that case, they will have to be single. They are to remain unmarried or become reconciled. For those who have been divorced before they came into the Church, marriage is permitted though not necessarily recommended because of certain problems. When an unconverted mate is unwilling to live with the mate in the Church and terminates the marriage, the converted mate is not bound in that case.

In I Corinthians 8, Paul addresses the issue of things offered to idols. The greatest emphasis is the importance of not letting your liberty become a stumbling block to others.

I Corinthians 8:13, “Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.” The issue was food offered to idols. It is important to grasp the circumstances.

In many of the Gentile cities in the major areas, much of the meat that was available in the meat market had been slaughtered earlier that day at an idol’s temple. When sacrifice was made,

whether to God or to an idol, it didn't mean that the entire animal was consumed on the altar. Normally, only a small portion of the blood was poured out or some of the fat or entrails were used. A certain portion was reserved for the priest. But, basically, most of the meat was available. Now, in most of the idol's temple, the priests got a lot more than what they could consume, so they would sell it. It would be sold through the meat market. It was actually a source of income.

I Corinthians 10:14-17, "Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread."

He talks about the Passover cup and bread, how it has to do with the communion or fellowship of the Church with Christ, and we're all partaking of the same thing.

Verse 18, "Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" The same root word is translated "communion" in v. 16 and "partakers" in v. 18. The terms "communion" in v. 16, "partakers" in v. 18 and "fellowship" in v. 20 are all the same word in the Greek language.

The point that is being made is that there is a communion (a fellowship) that is entered into when ancient Israel sacrificed. They were picturing a fellowship, a meal, a close communion and fellowship with God that involved the one that offered the sacrifice, the priest and God. And as they all partook of the same meal, so to speak, it was a picture of an intimate, close relationship.

The Jews understood this concept. For that reason, they viewed partaking of anything that had been offered to an idol or that had been connected with an idol's temple as meat that was forever tainted and polluted; it had been rendered "common."

That's the difference, by the way, between "common" and "unclean."

In Acts 10:14, Peter said, "...For I have never eaten anything common or unclean." There is a difference, though most don't realize it. "Common" simply means it "wasn't kosher." Food can be clean and still not be kosher—not meet the standards of slaughter and bleeding, etc. Primarily, the issue at that time would have involved meat that had been offered to an idol.

The reality was that when you went into a meat market, the slabs of meat were hanging and you couldn't tell which had been offered to an idol. There wasn't anything intrinsically that had been physically changed in the meat. Some of it hadn't been offered to an idol, but probably a large part of it had. When you looked at it, there wasn't any particular way of knowing one way or the other. As a result, in most areas, if the Jews did not have a source of kosher meat slaughtered by someone who was skilled in ritual slaughter, they simply abstained from meats rather than take a chance on eating meat that had been offered to an idol.

It became an issue because the Christians were not to partake in idolatrous worship and meat offered to idols was to be avoided. But to what length did you have to go to avoid it? The Jerusalem conference said to avoid meat offered to idols (Acts 15:29). Some tried to say that Paul contradicted the Jerusalem conference. He didn't at all.

He makes it very plain in I Corinthians 10:21, "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons."

Verse 20, "But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons." Paul is very plain and speaks out extremely strong on that. But to what extent do you have to go to determine whether the meat was sacrificed to an idol? Do you have to go to the length of avoiding all meat unless you could be one hundred percent sure it wasn't sacrificed to an idol?

Paul makes the point in I Corinthians 8:4 that the problem is not that the meat has been polluted. The idol is really nothing, and the problem is not the meat itself.

The point that he makes in chapter 8, when you put it together with chapter 10, is that you have to be conscious of your example. The problem is not the meat. If you eat meat that had been sacrificed to an idol, and you don't know it, there's not a problem. The meat has not been hurt, and there's not some intrinsic act of worship. But if you knowingly and consciously partake of an idolatrous feast or in an idolatrous ceremony, that's not right because you're going to set a bad example and you're going to create a problem.

If someone not in the Church invites you to eat and you decide to go.

I Corinthians 10:27-28, "If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire

to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake. But if anyone says to you, 'This was offered to idols,' do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake...." By the way, the issue is not clean and unclean meat. The issue is food offered to idols.

The Jews would not eat with a non-Jew on the basis that there was a chance that they may be served something that was offered to an idol.

That's why Peter said to Cornelius, Acts 10:28, "...'You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation....'" The Jews didn't simply do it on the basis that the Gentiles were so mixed up in idolatry that there was no telling what they were going to "run past them."

Paul said that's not necessary. Sit down and enjoy the meal. But while you're there, if somebody brings it up and says, 'By the way, did you know that this came from the idol's temple?', then at that point, you don't eat it. Once it comes to your attention and you know it is connected with idolatry, you're going to give the appearance of compromise with idolatry. At that point you need to back off.

Don't do something that is going to create a stumbling block for others (I Corinthians 8:9-13). This was a problem to some. Be concerned about the effect of your actions on others. Everything that is lawful for you to do may not always be a good idea. It's not always expedient (I Corinthians 6:12; I Corinthians 10:23).

The most important factor is to consider the impact on others. Some things will look bad and may give a wrong impression. Paul was not watering it down and saying they could eat things offered to idols. What he is saying is that you don't have to go to the lengths that the Jews do of avoiding anything. The problem is not that the food has been hurt. You're not taking part in some idolatrous service. There isn't any harm done in eating a hamburger or piece of steak. But, if the issue of religion comes in, and because issues of conscience have been brought up, then you avoid it and back off. Don't let our liberty become a stumbling block for others (I Corinthians 8:9). Be concerned of the impact of our example.

I Corinthians 9 deals with the issue of money. The Corinthians were materialistic; evidently some of them were griping about money. Accusations were being made about Paul.

I Corinthians 9:1, "Am I not an apostle?..."

Verses 4-5, "Do we have no right to eat and drink? Do we have no right to take along a

believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord [James and Jude], and Cephas [Peter]?" All of the others do.

Verse 6, is it only Barnabas and I that can't do these things? Paul clearly indicates here that he was the only one of the apostles who was unmarried.

The Catholic teaching on celibacy and marriage is completely contrary to the Bible. If Peter was the first pope, how is it that Christ healed his mother-in-law (Mark 1:30-31)? If he had a mother-in-law, that means he was married. If he was the first pope, then didn't he know that popes weren't supposed to be married? He wasn't the first pope, and there wasn't anything wrong with marriage. That was ordained of God. Verse 8, "Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also?" Is this just my opinion or doesn't the law say it also?

Paul brings out a couple of different things in terms of quoting from the Scriptures. He gives the example from Deuteronomy 25:4 about muzzling the ox.

Verse 9, "For it is written in the Law of Moses, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.' Is it oxen God is concerned about?" This should teach us several things. Do you think the only reason God says that is because He's worried that the oxen won't get enough to eat? There are principles that are to be derived from various statements in the Scriptures. While they may have a literal application, many times there are principles that can be derived through other circumstances. There are principles that apply. Paul gets more specific when he refers to the Levitical priesthood.

Verses 13-14, "Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel." The Levitical priesthood received their livelihood from the tithes of the holy things—the sacrifices. In the same way, that's what God's ministry does. Paul is addressing the fact that it was appropriate for him and the other ministers to receive compensation from the Church. The other apostles did it; they were all married and took their wives with them on trips at Church expense (v. 5).

I Corinthians 10 makes reference of a pagan religious service.

Verse 14, "Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry." He talks about some of these things that, as a Christian, we're not going to involve

ourselves in; things in what the Bible would term “idolatrous worship.” In other words, if you want to be plain and blunt about it, you are not going to go and take communion at the Catholic Church. This is a pretty apt description right here.

Verse 24, “Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well-being [interest or good].” Be concerned about others.

Verse 25, “Eat whatever is sold in the meat market [KJV, “shambles”], asking no questions for conscience’ sake.” You don’t have to go in there and quiz them about whether this came from the temple of Zeus or not.

But, vv. 27-28, if an issue is ever made, then do not eat it. As long as an issue is not made, you just eat it. Take your chances on it because you’re not buying it in order to worship the idol. You’re not seeking out meat offered to idols. You don’t know that it was offered to an idol. It hasn’t been hurt, and you’re not engaged in any overt kind of worship.

I Corinthians 11 starts out with what God has given as an indication of respect and submission to His government, and an acceptance of the government that God has established, which extends down to the home. It specifically gets into the outward sign or identification of masculinity and femininity. A couple of these verses are sometimes misquoted on the premise that a woman should wear a hat in church. The issue is not a hat or a veil; the issue is hair length.

Verses 4-5 talk about a man having his head uncovered and a woman having her head covered. It discusses back and forth having his head covered or uncovered. That doesn’t mean that men should take their hats off when they come into church and women should keep their hats on, which is, by the way, where the social custom derived. Men or women don’t wear a hat very commonly any more, as they did back a few years ago. Hats began to go out when John Kennedy broke tradition and didn’t wear a hat to his inauguration as President. You can date it to about 1960.

It’s kind of interesting when you look at old pictures. Some of you can remember back. Men, who were out in public in the 50s, 40s or the 30s, always had a hat on. John Kennedy broke tradition. Because a hat messed up his hairstyle, he didn’t wear a hat on his inauguration day. Hats are just not that commonly worn anymore. This is just a little interesting footnote.

The common tradition was that men would take their hats off when they came into a building or a

church. Women didn’t take off their hats. The social custom went back to a misunderstanding of the verse that a man should have his head uncovered and a woman should have her head covered.

I Corinthians 11:14-15, “Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering.” The covering that is being discussed is hair. It is long hair that covers her head that is a glory to her. If a man has long hair, it is a shame to him. Long hair is an outward sign of a woman’s appreciation and acceptance of her femininity and her role in the government of God. A lot of people say men used to wear long hair. No, they didn’t. Long hair on men came in as a social custom, basically lasted through the 1600s and 1700s, and then went out. It was not the custom previously and it hasn’t been the custom since.

The custom derives from Louis XIII who was a transvestite. The king of France was a homosexual and liked to dress in women’s clothing. He grew his hair long and everybody else tried to copy it. His father, Louis XIV, had his own problems. He tried to go even further in more ways than one. People follow the customs. That’s why what leaders do is so important. They set styles and trends, even in matters of dress and grooming that sometimes last for decades. People have forgotten why they did it. They did it because they were copying somebody else. Styles come and go.

The subject of Passover is discussed in the latter part of the chapter (vv. 17-34).

In I Corinthians 12, Paul then addresses spiritual gifts. He is setting the stage for chapter 14 where he addresses tongues.

I Corinthians 12:1-2, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led.” He said, ‘You have misunderstood a lot of things because of your background; you have been influenced by things like this Oracle up at Delphi and various places to where you really don’t understand spiritual gifts. You know what kind of things have “paraded” as spiritual gifts and what has been called spiritual gifts in your society. Because you have been carried away with idolatry, the very words that are used to describe various spiritual gifts, in some cases, have a wrong connotation to you because you have come out of a idolatrous background and

have heard these terms used to describe other things.’

Just like the term “communion.” For any of you who have come out of a Catholic background, when I say “communion,” you think of mass and communion in church. That’s not what the word means. That’s the way it was misused. The word has to do with fellowship and what binds us together as a community, which is our common acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ. It has been misapplied and misused.

Verses 4-5, “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.” There are many different kinds of gifts, but there’s one body. There is a unity. The problem of those who tend to get carried away in problems of this area is that they tend to look for something that has outward show and that points them out as being spiritual. It goes in for a lot of emotionalism, so-called ecstatic utterance and things of this sort. They get carried away with that and think that’s the only thing that counts. Paul said there are a lot of different kinds of spiritual gifts.

Verse 31, “But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.” ‘Let me show you what’s most important.’

In I Corinthians 13, he says, ‘I don’t care what kind of tongue you speak with.’

I Corinthians 13:1, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.” There isn’t any evidence in the Bible of God ever giving someone the gift of speaking in the tongue of angels, but evidently that’s what some of the Corinthians claimed they were doing. Paul says, ‘I don’t care if you speak with the tongues of men and of angels; if you don’t have love, you’re just making a lot of noise.’ So he is setting the stage. He’s saying that there’s hollowness to what you’re doing; it’s like an empty shell. He goes through and shows that love is the most important Christian virtue (vv. 2-13).

I Corinthians 14:1, “Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.” Desire spiritual gifts, but the most important spiritual gift is to speak an inspired message. Then he begins to draw a contrast between someone who is speaking an inspired message and someone who is speaking in what the Corinthians were calling a “tongue.”

Verse 2, “For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.” Paul is quoting what the Corinthians

were saying and doing. Now, anybody who is doing that is not speaking to people; nobody understands what he is saying. The Corinthians’ excuse was that he was not speaking unto men but speaking to God. These things are coming out, and it’s a mystery to everybody (nobody knows what’s going on).

Verse 3, “But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.” If somebody is speaking under the inspiration of God and speaking an inspired message, then he’s speaking it to people. He’s building them up, exhorting them and comforting them.

Verse 4, “He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.” If any of you are speaking in some kind of tongue, as the Corinthians were using the term, you’re just building yourself up. If you speak an inspired message, you’re building up the Church.

‘I wish you all had the gift that God gave in Acts 2, the gift of languages.’

Verse 5, “I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.”

Verse 6, “But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?” In other words, ‘If I come to you, it doesn’t matter what language I speak in or how many languages I speak in or what kind of sounds I make if what I’m saying doesn’t make sense. If it’s not a valid message—if it doesn’t help you, if it doesn’t instruct, comfort, exhort or edify you, if there’s not some substance to it—what’s the point?’

Verse 7, “Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played?” You can play a musical instrument, but if you don’t play a tune, nobody knows what’s going on.

Verses 9-11, “So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance. Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me.” There are a lot of voices and all of them have significance, but if you don’t understand it, then it doesn’t mean anything to you.

Verse 12, “Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.” Getting carried away with some of this nonsense and thinking you really have something. You need to concentrate on something that’s going to build you up and help somebody else—not something that points you out as being some great thing. That’s not what God does. If somebody thinks that they have a miraculous gift of speaking in another language, what they better be able to do is interpret and explain it to the Church in a language that everybody can understand; otherwise, how can they say “Amen” to it (vv. 13-16).

Verse 19, “...I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, then ten thousand words in a tongue.” Paul says, ‘I would rather speak five words that are understandable and that are going to help somebody else, than ten thousand words in something that nobody understands.’

Verse 20, “Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.” Grow up and be mature.

Verse 32, “And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.” He probably “hit it on the head.” Someone had been saying, ‘You know the spirit just grabs me and I have to say it.’ No, not if it’s from God. The spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet. So if it takes control, you have the wrong spirit.

There is another way that you know if you have the wrong spirit.

Verse 33, “For God is not the author of confusion but of peace....”

Another way you know if you have the wrong spirit, v. 34, “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak....”

It’s interesting. Most of the charismatic churches, Pentecostals, had women preachers years before any of the other churches thought of it. They like to take two or three verses out of context in I Corinthians 14, but they always skip v. 34.

The one chapter in the Bible they like to quote, God put the verse in here that “nails” them because what they want is this emotional free-for-all. God said through Paul things need to be done in an orderly way (v. 40).

Verse 37, “If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of God.” Paul says, ‘If anybody thinks he’s a prophet or spiritual, then he had

better realize I’m giving instructions from God and he had better follow them.’

Verse 40, “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

I Corinthians 15 deals with the subject of the resurrection and explains the misunderstandings about that.

I Corinthians 16 winds up with the collection for the saints (v. 1).

I Corinthians 16:2, “On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.” This does not mean you drop your money in the plate on Sunday morning.

I remember years ago when I went to the Baptist Church, our little offering envelopes had a portion of I Corinthians 16 printed on them: “On the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God has prospered him.” They put a period. The only thing is there’s not a period there; there’s a comma.

Verse 2, “...that there be no collections [KJV, “gatherings”] when I come.” This is concerning the collection for the saints. He was taking up an offering of foodstuffs, and it was going to be hauled back to Jerusalem. It was read on the Sabbath. He said, ‘First thing tomorrow morning [the last Day of Unleavened Bread came on a Sabbath that year], you guys “get out” and “hit it.” Get in the field and get this stuff gathered up. Start filling these things so that there will be no gatherings when I come.’ They were going to get out and do a hard day’s work on Sunday morning—not pass the plate.

Verse 8, “But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost.” He was going to remain in Ephesus. That’s the way we tie it in with Acts 19 and know the “when.” He says he was going to be there. Because he was writing it during the Days of Unleavened Bread, that would give them about six weeks. He would be there right after Pentecost. ‘I am going to stay here till Pentecost, and then I’m coming. So you guys be gathering everything up starting tomorrow morning. Don’t put it off. Get it ready because I am going to come and check on you, see what you’ve done based on what I told you, and we will dispense matters.’

We will get into II Corinthians next time.

Bible Study # 61 Questions

SURVEY OF THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF PAUL SERIES

I Corinthians

(Give scripture references.)

1. Why did Paul write the letter when he did?
2. Explain I Corinthians 2:11.
3. What was the overall spiritual state of the Corinthians Church?
4. Prove from the book of I Corinthians at what season of the year it was written.
5. What did Paul say about Christians with a legal dispute between themselves?
6. What does Paul say about divorce between a married couple both in the Church?
7. What does Paul teach about an individual who is divorced when he comes into the Church?
8. What if an unconverted mate deserts his converted mate?
9. What is the primary thing that Paul stresses about meat offered to idols?
10. Prove that Paul was one of the only unmarried apostles.
11. Is there any harm in taking part in a pagan religious service? Prove.
12. Prove that I Corinthians 11 does not refer to women wearing hats or veils.
13. What is the most important Christian virtue?
14. Should women be allowed to preach in Church? Prove.
15. Explain I Corinthians 16:2.

Bible Study # 62
January 8, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

Life and Letters of Paul Series—II Corinthians

We are into the book of II Corinthians this evening. Let's understand a little bit about the background. We have already addressed some of this in our study on I Corinthians. The background of the cities is the same. There is a similarity in terms of the background of the book because they were written within close proximity of one another.

Let's go to Acts 18, 19 and 20 because I think it is good that we **understand how we can date some of these particular books.** Last time we saw that Paul had remained in Corinth for about eighteen months (Acts 18:11). Then, v. 21, he was anxious to keep the Feast in Jerusalem. This would have been the Feast of Tabernacles 52 A.D. He left so as to arrive in Jerusalem in time for the fall festival. He landed at Caesarea, went up ("up" is an expression referring to Jerusalem) and saluted the Church and then, v. 22, went back down to Antioch.

He spent some time there. He would have, undoubtedly, been wintering there. Normally, winter was a difficult time to travel either overland or by sea. The weather became more unpredictable and traveling was more difficult, so he stayed in Antioch. Antioch was sort of Paul's headquarters of the Gentile work. He wintered there the winter of 52 A.D.—53 A.D.

Then, Acts 18:23, we find that he left and went on his third evangelistic journey. He traveled through what is modern-day Syria and went up into ancient Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). He began to go overland through the peninsula, going through Galatia and that area, and then headed west toward the coast of Asia Minor. Over a period of time, he worked his way through and came to Ephesus, which was on the coast.

He found certain disciples there, and we find, Acts 19:8, he continued in the synagogues speaking there for three months. He arrived in Ephesus somewhere between Passover and Pentecost. If he left overland as soon as traveling became permissible, it would have probably been in the very early spring, maybe the end of February or the first of March. He probably spent March, April and May (about three months) working his way through to Ephesus. He wasn't in a giant hurry, trying to go straight through. He was staying in the various Churches for a week

or two, preaching and spending some time, working his way across. The implication is that he was in Ephesus until around Pentecost (latter part of May). He stayed there three months, which would coincide with the summer.

Verse 9, we find that he rented a school. We're not the first ones to rent a school for services. Paul rented a school that was nearby because they kicked him out and wouldn't let him keep speaking in the synagogue. So he went next door, utilized this school and continued there about two years (v. 10). This would be from the late summer or early fall of 53 A.D. to the beginning of fall of 55 A.D. that he stayed in Ephesus. Acts 19 describes various things that were going on.

We saw last time that he wrote I Corinthians from Ephesus. We dated it to the Passover season of 55 A.D., which would have been about six months before he left Ephesus. Because of the references that are there, we find that Paul ran into problems. There wound up being a riot that broke out in Ephesus and there was quite a bit of difficulty (Acts 19:21-40).

Acts 20:1-3, "After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to him, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia. Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece and stayed three months... [This would coincide with winter. Undoubtedly, he wintered in the area of Greece.] ...And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia." He had intended to sail directly from Greece back to Antioch, but when he found out there was a plot to assassinate him if he had taken the boat, he decided to retrace his steps overland to go back to Macedonia.

Macedonia is northern Greece. That's where Philippi is. If you have a map, you may find it easier to follow by consulting that. Otherwise, it can get a little bit difficult going from this city to that city (all these places) and it kind of jumbles up.

He went to Ephesus, which is on the coast. He crossed over the straits (we call it the Dardanelle) into northern Greece (what was anciently called Macedonia) to the city of Philippi. He started up in northern Greece and worked his way down through Greece into Greece proper, which is the area where Corinth is. He spent about three months there. Undoubtedly, he wintered there the winter of 55 A.D.—56 A.D. Then he was going to return directly to Jerusalem by sailing a direct route, but when word reached him that there was an

assassination plot, he decided he would just retrace his steps. So he went back overland up to Philippi.

Verse 6, “But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread...” He had wintered down in the southern part of Corinth, retraced his steps during the month of March and worked his way up to Philippi, stopping and preaching in several Churches on the Sabbath along the way. He spent a short time in Philippi. Then it was time for the Passover, so he stayed for the Days of Unleavened Bread and then left. He caught a boat that was taking him back to Jerusalem in order to reach Jerusalem for Pentecost (v. 16). This was the Days of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Pentecost in 56 A.D.

We saw that he had written I Corinthians during the Passover season of 55 A.D. from Ephesus. When he wrote I Corinthians, he sent Timothy to check things out.

In II Corinthians 1:1, Timothy has rejoined Paul. There are a couple of things to date it.

In Acts 20:1-2, we are told that Paul left Ephesus and went to Macedonia and worked his way down by land into Greece.

I Corinthians 16:5-6, “Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am passing through Macedonia). But it may be that I will remain, or even spend the winter with you....”

Verse 8, “But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost.” He stayed on until a little while after Pentecost. It was hard to break loose from Ephesus, but he did. A riot broke out and that solved the problem of when to leave Ephesus. This was his plan when he wrote I Corinthians.

We find in II Corinthians 1:1, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother....” Timothy was with him at that particular time.

What we had seen earlier in Acts 19:21, “...Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem....” That was what he told the Corinthians. He planned to go to Philippi, come down to Achaia (Corinth was the capital of the province of Achaia) and then go to Jerusalem.

Verse 22, while he was still in Ephesus, “So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.”

He wrote I Corinthians shortly thereafter. He sent Timothy and Erastus over there to follow up. He wrote the Corinthians a letter. Remember in I Corinthians, he really “chewed them up one

side and down the other.” He told them he was going to visit. In fact, he was going to spend the winter there because he thought it was going to take more than one week. He was going to utilize the help and the financial resources from there to take him on his journey further. It was a relatively wealthy area. Putting it together with Acts 19, we find that he had sent Timothy on before, and he stayed in Asia for a while. Then there was a riot that came up and there were problems.

Acts 20:1, “After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to him, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia.”

Now when we get to II Corinthians, we find that Timothy has rejoined Paul because Paul mentions Timothy in the salutation in II Corinthians 1:1. So Paul is in Ephesus and he writes I Corinthians. A little while later he dispatches Timothy. Then he, himself, leaves Ephesus that summer and goes on over to Macedonia. When he gets to Macedonia, he meets Timothy. Timothy comes and reports to him. He tells him how his letter was received in Corinth and brings him up to date on the situation. Paul then writes II Corinthians from Philippi, the area where he is. He has to dispatch it. He tells them in II Corinthians that he is coming to them. He is planning on coming to where they were.

II Corinthians 9:1-2, “Now concerning the ministering to the saints [the offering taken up for the Jerusalem Church] it is superfluous for me to write to you; for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians....” Paul says, ‘I am bragging about you up here in Macedonia. I have “laid it on pretty thick.”’

Verses 3-4, “Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting.”

Paul says, ‘You had better really do well because if some of those from Macedonia come with me, you are going to be embarrassed if we get down there and you have some little paltry offering.’

Corinth was probably the wealthiest city in Greece. They were capable of doing more than any of the other places. But the reality was that some of the poorer Churches, such as Philippi, were really the ones who were giving sacrificially. In Corinth, they wanted to keep what they had. Paul was trying to stir them up a little bit because he knew that they had a

tendency to be a little selfish. He was using a little psychology in the right way to embarrass them into doing what they should do.

When we put it together, it is pretty clear that Paul wrote II Corinthians a matter of a few months after I Corinthians. Paul wrote I Corinthians during Passover season 55 A.D. He probably wrote II Corinthians at the end of the summer or, let's say, the early fall of 55 A.D.—about six months later. Then, after he wrote, he worked his way down through Greece, arriving in Corinth perhaps a couple of months after he had written the letter. If he wrote the letter in what we would term early September, spent the fall festivals there in Philippi, worked his way down through the rest of Greece the remainder of October and November, then he would arrive in Corinth about December—and that's where he wintered. It gives a little bit of an idea.

Acts 20:1-6, he went back up to Macedonia, stayed through the Days of Unleavened Bread of 56 A.D.

Verse 16, he sailed from Macedonia back to Jerusalem in time to be there for Pentecost 56 A.D. That's where he was arrested. It gives us a little bit of a feel for the time flow when we put Acts together with these epistles.

As we look into II Corinthians itself, Paul has to address several things that seem to be major issues. Paul spends a lot of time in I Corinthians defending and emphasizing his apostolic authority. Why did he do that? Obviously, it was because it was being challenged. We tend to make an issue of those things that are challenged. In his letter to some of the other Churches, he doesn't make that nearly the issue. We will notice as we go through II Corinthians the fact that he was an apostle.

It reminds me of some of the things that we confronted in the Church around 1979, 80 and 81. For those who have been in the Church for a number of years and have a perspective, you realize Mr. Herbert Armstrong laid emphasis on Church government and his apostolic authority in a way he had never done in the 60s and early 70s (particularly in the 60s) because it was not an issue at that time. He virtually never raised the point in the 60s because nobody ever questioned it. The issue had to be made when it was questioned. When the state of California tried to come in and take over in some of these things, then the issue needed to be made. How does God work? Through whom is he working? –Things of that sort.

That's what Paul was doing here in Corinth. There were, obviously, some people who were

seeking to challenge and undermine Paul's authority. 'Who does he think he is, telling us these things?' They were seeking in some way to put down and demean his authority.

We find in II Corinthians that Paul spends a fair amount of time emphasizing his office in a way that you don't find him doing in the book of Ephesians or Philippians. II Corinthians and Galatians stand out as the epistles where you know that Paul was under attack in Galatia and Corinth. There were people who were seeking to undermine his credibility and his claim to authority. Some, perhaps, did it in more subtle ways, others overtly. There were various motives that came in.

First he spends some time emphasizing his apostolic authority. **Second**, he also is involved in making the decision to re-admit this fornicator to fellowship. This individual by this time had repented; fruits of repentance had been evidenced. The issue came up as to what should occur. Paul explained it, and he was re-admitted into fellowship (II Corinthians 2:6-11).

Third, II Corinthians 1:15-17, he also had to explain why he had been unable personally to come to Corinth. He had intended to come to Corinth earlier than what he had. Originally, he had told them that he was going to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost and then he was going to come. When you put it together with Acts, you find out that he stayed longer than Pentecost. He pretty well stayed the summer. There were other things that came up. Some were saying he never intended to come. Since people had their various attitudes and accusations, he had to explain why he had not been able to get there earlier. It was not something that he had just lightly said, but there were other things that came up. Sometimes there are matters that arise in terms of fulfilling the responsibilities that he had.

Fourth, II Corinthians 8:1-24—9:1-15, he also wanted to again lay emphasis on the collection for Jerusalem that he was taking up because he was going to transport it with him when he went to Jerusalem. His original intent had been to sail directly out of the port of Cenchrea there at Corinth. As it was, he went overland back up to Macedonia and sailed out from there (Acts 20:1-16).

As we go through II Corinthians 1, we find that Paul mentions why he had been unable to come.

II Corinthians 1:15-17, "And in this confidence I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit—to pass by way of you to Macedonia to you, and be helped by you on my way to Judea. Therefore, when I was planning

this, did I do it lightly?...” Paul says, ‘I intended to do that. My intent was to sail out of Ephesus and come to Corinth. I intended to come see you first and then go up to Macedonia. I was going to come back and winter with you and then sail out. That was my intent, but I obviously haven’t done that.’ He is writing to them from Macedonia. ‘By now you realize my plans have changed. Some of you are saying that I never intended to come anyway.’

Verse 17, “Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No?”

He says, ‘Was I fickle in my promise? No, that’s not true. I make my plans, but I am a human being. Sometimes there are things that occur over which I am powerless that change those plans. You were preached to; Silas and Timothy came. God is consistent and He can keep His promises (vv. 18-20), whether we may have to change our plans or not.’

In fact, he tells them in v. 23, “Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth.” He says, ‘I was still pretty “steamed” from what I wrote in I Corinthians, and I decided I would give you a little longer to get this thing straightened out. I decided to spare you.’ It gave Timothy a chance to meet up with him in Macedonia and report back to him as to what was going on before he decided to go down there.

II Corinthians 1:21-22, “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a deposit.” KJV, “who has also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

There are a couple of things we are told here about the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the means by which we are sealed and it is the earnest of the Spirit.

It’s important to understand those two things. A “seal” is that which authenticates genuineness. If you have a legal document, you may get it notarized. One of the things the notary does is he affixes his seal to that document. You can feel that raised seal. The purpose of that is to authenticate genuineness. That’s what the notary does. He is authenticating that this is the genuine article. He is authenticating that the individual named on the document really did sign it. That seal is the mark of authenticity. In ancient times, it was very common that kings and rulers wore a special signet ring, a ring that had their seal. Today we use the same principle—the notary

seal, the seal of the United States or the seal of the State of Louisiana that is affixed to official documents. Many times you may have to get a copy of something, and it has to be a notarized copy. You can’t just go in and give them any old Xerox copy. They want one that has that notary seal.

God’s Spirit seals us. It authenticates that we are the genuine article. It is the means by which we are sealed. We are authenticated as being God’s people. It identifies us. God’s Spirit seals us and it is also the earnest of our inheritance. We use that term.

If you bought a house, one of the things you did when you made a proposal (if you wanted that property taken off the market), you put earnest money. You put a small portion to prove that you really intended to come back and pay the whole thing. You made a promise and gave them something to demonstrate that you were earnest that you really meant it.

God’s Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:14). It is, in that sense, the evidence and the proof that God really is going to transform our mortal bodies into a spirit body. God, in giving us His Spirit, sets us apart. He authenticates us as the genuine thing, a real Christian. What’s the proof (the evidence) that somebody is a real Christian? The Spirit of God is the proof.

Romans 8:9, “...Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.”

Verse 11, “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

In II Corinthians 1:22, we are told that the Spirit seals us and Ephesians 1:14 tells us it is the earnest.

Paul then goes on and talks about the fact that the correction he had given had been motivated by love.

II Corinthians 2:4, “For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.” He was concerned for them. Too many times people have the misconception that there is love and there is discipline. If somebody is viewed as being a disciplinarian, that means they don’t have a lot of love. Paul had a tremendous amount of love. The discipline that Paul imposed on the Corinthian Church and on this individual who was living in sin was motivated by love.

Hebrew 12:6, “For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” If God doesn’t chasten us, it’s because He doesn’t claim us. That’s what it says in Hebrews.

Verse 8, you’re not sons; you’re illegitimate. God doesn’t claim you.

The point is that Paul was motivated by love. He cared too much for them to just let them drift into the lake of fire without trying to shake them up and wake them up.

Now word had reached him. Evidently, Timothy had told him that this man who had been singled out in I Corinthians 5 had, over a period of months, really demonstrated a marked change.

II Corinthians 2:6-8, “This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.”

Verse 11, “lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.” Here, the point is made that this individual had learned a lesson and had repented. Paul said, ‘Now that he has repented, receive him back with open arms.’ Judgment and mercy are fundamental issues.

In Matthew 23:23, Jesus said that those two, together with faith, are the weightier matters of the law. Judgment has to do with drawing proper distinctions. Judgment and mercy—the two go hand-in-hand. The balance between the two is very crucial.

So many times people don’t understand the balance. The Corinthians, on the one hand, had been doling out mercy when judgment was called for. When you dole out mercy when judgment is called for, then what you’re really doing is turning grace into license. That’s what they had done and that’s what Paul had rebuked them for in I Corinthians 5. They were allowing this to just go on. Nobody did anything and the situation continued. Here was an individual just openly living in sin. It was common knowledge in the congregation and it was just accepted. Their concept of love was much distorted.

On the other hand, when an individual learns his lesson and repents, then his past is not to be held over him. He doesn’t go through life having to drag his past like a ball and chain after him.

Too many times people want to show mercy when they should show judgment. If discipline is imposed on somebody, they feel sorry for them

and want to miserate with them. They say, ‘You surely got a raw deal.’

Then, on the other hand, somebody repents and they come back. People kind of view him and think, ‘You’ve been gone for a while; wonder what you did?’ Then they want to gossip about him, judge him and wonder whether he’s repented. ‘He says he’s repented, but how do I know?’—This sort of attitude.

There’s the wrong kind of mercy extended when judgment should be imposed; then there’s judgment (the wrong kind) imposed when mercy should be extended. That’s backward and it’s an important concept for us to understand. The whole purpose of judgment, whether it is directly visited by God or whether it is in the context of Church discipline, is for the purpose of bringing an individual to repentance so that mercy can be extended. God desires to extend mercy, but mercy is available to those who repent. God does not extend His mercy and forgiveness in a way that is going to perpetuate us in our sins. That wouldn’t be love. That would just serve to confirm us in a way of life that is destructive and painful.

Paul is now addressing the issue. If the man repents, receive him back lest he should be swallowed up over much sorrow. Now that he has really come to see it, he really hates the whole thing and has deeply repented. You need to encourage him because the tendency is for the pendulum to swing. The guy can become discouraged and depressed and just feel like this is so bad and terrible that God will never forgive him and he can never look anybody in the eye again. This is just horrible. He becomes all discouraged and is ready to give up.

We don’t want Satan to get an advantage with us. We are not ignorant of his devices. Satan can take advantage either way. A person can be swallowed up over much sorrow. They can become so depressed and overwhelmed by a sense of guilt as to become deeply depressed and discouraged. Satan can take advantage of that and pull a person down. On the other hand, a person can have a flippant, casual attitude toward sin and treat it in a very cavalier fashion and go “sailing” right along. That’s not good. Either way takes us to destruction. There is an appropriate balance to learn. Paul is seeking to teach the Corinthians and, through this letter, to also teach us.

II Corinthians 3:1, “Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you?”

Some were asking, 'How do we really know that Paul has all of the authority that he says, and that he's really an apostle? Have you ever seen any proof or any evidence of that? What credentials did he have to prove that? Have you ever seen any letters signed by James and Peter? How do you know?' Somebody was evidently coming into Corinth saying that and trying to "stir things up."

Paul said, 'Do I need that kind of thing? Do you want to know what my credentials are?'

Verses 2-3, "You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; you are manifestly an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart."

He said, 'You want proof? The fact that you exist as a Church is proof of what God has done through me because it's through me you heard the gospel. It's through me that the Church was raised up. You received God's Spirit, either through the laying on of my hands or other people on whom I have laid hands.'

It's a very apt comparison to those who wanted to challenge Mr. Herbert Armstrong back several years ago. The very existence of the Church, the institution, the knowledge and the things that we had came directly or indirectly as the result of God's work through him.

Someone in the Church wanted to ask, 'Where are your credentials?' Well, Paul says, 'The fact that you exist as a Church, that you have God's Holy Spirit and the fact of your conversion is proof that God has worked through me. Because if God hasn't worked through me, how did you learn the truth, how did you become converted, and where did you get God's Spirit? Either I taught you, baptized you and laid hands on you or someone I taught, taught you, baptized you and laid hands on you. You are my epistle. What more do I need? I don't just have something written by ink. I have something written with the Holy Spirit.'

II Corinthians 5:1, "For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." We will age and eventually break down and die.

Verse 2, "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven." He didn't say that we are going to heaven to get it. He is going to come and his reward is with Him.

Revelation 22:12, "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to

every one according to his work." Eternal life is what He is going to bring. We look forward to that.

As we go through trials, difficulties and adversities and as our body begins to "grind down" and to decay, we begin to recognize how temporary it is. We begin to earnestly desire to be clothed with something permanent. When you're young and think you have all the energy in the world, you figure you are going to last forever and you don't see the point. But as the years pass, we all become more and more convinced; those who are older among us are more convinced of that need. That's just a part of it. God has designed that to make us more and more deeply aware of how temporary and transitory we are and how much we need what He has to give.

II Corinthians 5:4, "...that mortality may be swallowed up by life."

Verse 7, "For we walk by faith, not by sight."

Hebrew 11:1, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith and sight sometimes contradict one another. Faith is based on what God says, what He promises. Sight is based on physical evidence, what you see. If you have to make a choice in believing what God says or what you see, which do you choose?

We look around at the world; the things we see around us look pretty firm, strong and substantial. God says this world, this orderly arrangement of things, is going to pass from the scene and a new age is going to come. There will be a new world order, and it will not be one that President Bush or Gorbachev put together. That is not the new world order that is going to come about. The real new world order that is going to come about is the one that Jesus Christ brings about. The devil may try to run his counterfeit; in fact, he is. It's called Mystery Babylon the Great. That's the counterfeit of the new world order. But the real new world order is the fact that Christ is going to return and He is going to establish it.

What's the evidence, the proof? The evidence that Christ is going to return isn't based on scientific evidence that you can measure, taste and feel. It's based on the promises of God. We walk by faith, not by sight. As a Christian, we have to live our lives predicated on faith, on what God says. We either believe God or we don't. We deepen our relationship with Him as we walk with Him. If we walk with Him and spend time with Him, we deepen our relationship with Him.

II Corinthians 5:14-15, “For the love of Christ constrains us, because we judge thus; that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live not longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” Christ died and gave Himself for us. When we recognize that, our lives need to be devoted to Him.

Verse 17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” We don’t want the old man and the old way. We become a new creature and old things have passed away. You don’t want to go back or drift back into the things you got rid of, put away and stopped when you came into the Church. You don’t want to drift back into the things of the world. We want to go forward in newness of life. We want to be a new creature, not drift back into the world or never come out of the world. Recognize that a new creature has to do with a whole new set of priorities, a new set of values and a new set of what’s important to us.

Verse 18, “Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.” Understand where the reconciliation is. We are being reconciled to God; it doesn’t say that God becomes reconciled to us. There’s a difference.

When you get a bank statement, you can go through and reconcile your checkbook to the bank statement. You better do it the right way. If you start reconciling the bank statement to your checkbook, you may wind up in trouble. The bank really won’t be impressed with that.

Reconciliation done the wrong way won’t do anybody any good. God is reconciling us to Himself through Jesus Christ. He didn’t say He would become reconciled to us—‘I guess you’re never going to change, so I will just adapt to you.’ God says ‘no,’ and God is right. Now the bank may occasionally make a mistake, but God doesn’t even occasionally make a mistake. God never needs to be reconciled to us. We always need to be reconciled to Him. He is the standard, and we have to become reconciled to Him. We have to come to match Him, to be brought into harmony with Him. We can be brought into harmony with God through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ makes possible our being brought from a state of disharmony into a state of harmony with God. So we have the ministry of reconciliation.

Verse 19, “that is, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself....”

Verse 20, “Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ....”

Verse 21, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” He paid the penalty to make possible our reconciliation to God. The whole purpose of God reconciling us to Himself is to change and transform us to make us like Him. So it is important that we understand the concept of reconciliation and what it means. It is not that God says He will meet us halfway or that God is going to water down His standards. If we surrender to Him, God makes it possible for us to be brought into harmony with Him. That’s what He desires in our behalf.

II Corinthians 6:1, “We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.” God extends His mercy. Don’t receive it in vain; use it for a good purpose.

He begins to talk about being unequally yoked together and about our relationships. He talks about our relationship with God and how that renewed relationship is made possible. Then he begins to talk about our relationship with society around.

Verse 14, “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” —“Yoking together.” Primarily oxen were yoked. Why were animals yoked together?

Some of us are familiar with horses or mules being hitched up. You would have a wagon pulled by two or maybe four. When you look at the way animals are harnessed together, it is so that they have to pull together. If they are not tied together, then one can go in one direction and one can go the other. Any mules I have known, that is exactly what they would do.

What if you have two creatures that are vastly unequal? In the Old Testament, they were told not to yoke an oxen and an ass together (Deuteronomy 22:10). You have a tremendous amount of disparity. When two creatures are yoked together, the larger the disparity, the more difficult it is for them to pull together. They can’t pull together on the load. Animals that are different sizes have different steps. One has a big step, the other a short step. And there is disparity in strength. It’s just a problem. It is never going to work well. It’s going to be difficult and will be hardship on both.

God utilized a physical principle that He gave to ancient Israel, but there was a spiritual lesson that was intended when He said that an oxen and an ass couldn’t be yoked together. It wasn’t just

because God was concerned about donkeys and oxen, though obviously, His tender mercies are over all His works as we are told in Psalm 145:9. God is certainly concerned about the physical creation and the animals, but His primary concern was the fact that there are spiritual lessons and implications. If God gave instructions even for animals, there were principles that applied to people.

When He said the ox and the ass shouldn't be yoked together, it had to do with trying to tie together, to pull together through life, something with great disparity. You want to be able to pull together. So anything that involves the need to pull together, you make a mistake to yoke up with someone who is not going to be pulling in the same direction. There isn't any way you can pull together.

So the principle would apply to business partnerships, marriage and various things. In some cases, people find themselves in circumstances as they come into the knowledge of the truth. They are already yoked in a way that is unequal. Sometimes people have to make the best of a situation. But the principle is that if you're not yoked, don't seek an unequal yoking. Seek an equal yoking, a yoking that is going to enable people to pull together. Two working together—when they are really pulling together—can accomplish far more than either individually. Two working together can more than double what either individually can do because it consolidates and maximizes that effort.

Verse 17, "Therefore 'Come out from among them and be separate....'"

Verse 16, "And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God...." There is a relationship here.

II Corinthians 7:1, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." We are to go forward and become like God. We're to recognize the importance of partnerships in any sort of thing.

Verses 8-10, Paul begins to address the issue of repentance and the fact that there are two different types of sorrow. Being sorry and being repentant are two totally different things. Being repentant is different than being sorry. There are two different kinds of being sorry. One of them leads to repentance, the other doesn't. Even godly sorrow is not repentance of and by itself. It leads to repentance. There is worldly sorrow and

godly sorrow. Worldly sorrow works death. It is a one-way street.

I think that the clearest illustration or example that I know to illustrate the difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow is the response of Peter and Judas. Judas betrayed Christ. When he realized that they were actually going to go through the crucifixion, he was sorry. He even took the money back (Matthew 27:3-5). But it was a worldly sorrow. Whatever idea he had in mind didn't work out that way. He became despondent, went out and committed suicide. That was worldly sorrow.

On the other hand, Peter denied Christ three different times. When the cock crowed and what he had done dawned on him, he felt horrible (Matthew 26:75). His sorrow was a godly sorrow because it produced a change in his life.

With worldly sorrow, any time you get into trouble it's easy to be sorry. Ever notice that? From the time you were a little kid, any time you got caught, you're sorry—sorry you got caught. That's normal and that's natural—sorry for the penalty, consequences and sorry we're in trouble. Sometimes we're sorry and wish we hadn't done this or that.

But godly sorrow goes beyond that. Godly sorrow is not just sorry for the consequences. It is not even that you wish you hadn't done this or that particular thing. It's a sorrow for what we are on the inside. We have come to see ourselves. Godly sorrow produces repentance.

It enumerates the qualities of godly sorrow.

II Corinthians 7:11, "For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

"Diligence" (KJV, "carefulness") is a desire to really be careful. We have confronted sin in its enormity. We don't want to cut right along the edge anymore. We don't want to live kind of skirting the edge of the cliff.

"Clearing of yourselves" is a desire to have the guilt cleared away, which means we go to God and we confess it.

I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The way to clear yourself is not to make excuses and use self-justification. It is to admit it to God; go to Him and really acknowledge it and ask God to clear it away.

“Indignation” is really being stirred up and indignant when we see sin for what it is. We are stirred up about it.

“Fear” is reverence and awe for God.

“Vehement desire” is a yearning and earnest desire to do what’s right and that earnest yearning for more of God’s truth. We are told by Peter in I Peter 2:2 to desire the sincere milk of the word just like a newborn baby. Have a craving for more of God’s way.

“Zeal” is really being stirred up, really being on fire.

“Vindication” (KJV, “revenge”) means, literally, “an avenging of wrong.” In the context, it would be best understood as making restitution. In this context, it doesn’t mean going and doing something to somebody. We recognize that we are the one who has done something wrong. We avenge the wrong and make it right—a desire to make restitution.

You might look at an example. Remember Zacchus, the publican?

Luke 19:10, he was a little short guy who wanted to see Jesus and climbed up a sycamore tree so he could get a good view. Jesus saw him and told him to come down. ‘I am coming over to your house to eat. So you had better get down out of the tree so you can “beat it on over there.”’ Jesus talked with him. Zacchus told Him that he really saw what he had done and the way he misused his office. Half of what he had he was willing to give to the poor. Anybody that he cheated, he was going to make restitution to them plus “square things up.” He evidenced the qualities that are shown right here in II Corinthians 7:11. One of the things Zacchus did that convinced Jesus that he was really repentant was this attitude.

When he got through telling Christ what he was going to do, Christ said, Luke 19:9, “...‘Today salvation has come to this house....’” What if Zacchus had said, ‘I know I’ve been a crook; I know I have cheated a lot of people. But I tell you what, why don’t we just have kind of a clean slate? I will quit cheating people, but I get to keep everything that I have stolen so far. Can I cut a deal with you? Would you okay it if I quit cheating and stealing from people, but I get to keep everything I have stolen? We will call it even.’ What do you think Jesus would have said? Do you think Christ would have been really impressed and said, ‘Zacchus, you really have the big picture?’ Somehow I don’t see Jesus having been really impressed with that sort of an attitude.

It’s kind of like in the Old Testament—if you stole a sheep from your brother or neighbor, you couldn’t just come and offer a sacrifice. You had to make restitution for the sheep (Exodus 22:1-4). If you defrauded your neighbor, you couldn’t just go to the priest and say, ‘I really cheated that guy. I’m sorry, let me offer a sacrifice and we will call it even.’ No. You need to offer the sacrifice, that’s right, but first you go and get reconciled to your neighbor. You give him back those cattle you rustled. You can’t just keep his herd, offer one of them to square you up with God and keep all the rest. You have to make restitution. It was evidence of repentance. Repentance has to do with a changed direction. Christ brought this out.

Paul said, ‘You have evidenced that you don’t just have worldly sorrow. Timothy has told me that there has been some real change [fruits] that has taken place. I see that there have been some significant changes, and I’m very glad of that. I’m not glad I made you sorry. I don’t like to be corrective and I’m sorry that I had to do it, but I’m not sorry that you’ve changed (vv. 8-9).

I think that any of us as parents can understand what Paul meant by that. I don’t think any of us enjoy having to be sternly corrective to our children. Sometimes you really feel badly; on the one hand, you had to be corrective. Yet on the other, you’re not sorry because you know that they needed it. You just feel badly that you had to. That’s the way Paul was. He felt badly that he had to, but he wasn’t sorry for the results. He now finds some change.

In II Corinthians 8, he begins to address the subject of giving and the example of the people in Macedonia.

II Corinthians 8:5, “And this they did, not as we had hoped, but first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.” That’s what God desires. God doesn’t want what we have; He wants us.

Verse 12, “For if there is first a willing mind....” The issue with God is not nearly so much the amount as it is the attitude. God wants us to develop His nature, His attitude of giving and helping and sharing.

II Corinthians 9:1-4, “Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority. Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; lest if some Macedonians come with me

and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting.” Paul said, ‘Some Macedonians are probably going to come with me, and we don’t want to find you unprepared.’

Verse 5, “Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time....” He’s on his way and this is going to be taken up. He talks about giving and God loving a cheerful giver (v. 7).

This was a big issue in Corinth. The Corinthians were able to do a lot. They were a very wealthy area, but the tendency so many times in areas that have a lot of material things is that the people can be pretty possessive and covetous of that. They needed to use what God had given them as a blessing, rather than to have the attitude they tended to have.

II Corinthians 10 continues to address certain issues with them.

Verses 3-5, he talks about changing and casting down imaginations. He talks about the fact that he’s not going to get in a “match” with some.

II Corinthians 10:12, “For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” We’re not out to do that.

II Corinthians 11:2, “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”

He is concerned.

Verses 3-4, “But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it.”

Verses 13-14, “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.”

You have several things going on. You have those, even in the time of the New Testament, who were clearly false apostles. Simon Magus and those who were in league with him, those who were seeking to subvert a congregation to their own use, were clearly false apostles. They claimed an office they never had. The heresies that sprang from them ultimately developed into what became the Catholic Church.

There were others who had various brands of heresies. All of the heretics who gave Paul problems were not necessarily united in perfect order. There was a certain amount of confusion. There were certain brands of heresies that converged in Rome that became the basis of the teachings of the church at Rome. The teachings of the church at Rome ultimately became the standard brand of “Christianity” that Constantine enforced throughout the Roman Empire. There were various groups and various ones who had their “axe to grind.” They were seeking, for whatever their reasons, to make comments about Paul.

In vv. 13-15, he talked about the fact that there were going to be false ministers, those who were in reality ministers of Satan but don’t show up claiming that. The devil doesn’t show up wearing a little red suit, a pitchfork and a sign around his neck saying, “I’m the devil and I’m here to deceive you.” He appears as an angel of light. He claims to be that which he is not. That’s always the way of it. Paul addresses a little bit of his credentials and some of his background in the latter part of chapter 11.

In II Corinthians 12, he deals with a vision of heaven that he had. He tells it in the third person. It is not something that he wants to focus attention on him in a wrong way. This would have been to address the subject of a vision.

If Paul was writing in the fall of 55 A.D., fourteen years earlier would have been the fall of 41 A.D. It’s interesting that this would have been only a few months before he entered the ministry. Paul had been sent back to Tarsus after his conversion and time in Arabia. The apostles basically sent him back home to Tarsus. They told him to go back, get a job and go to work. “Don’t call us, we’ll call you.” He stayed there for four years. Barnabas went and sought him out and brought him down to Antioch to assist him. That was in 42 A.D. So the timing of this vision would have been, maybe, just a few months prior to that. You think maybe God, in preparation for the job the He had ahead for Paul, wanted to encourage him because Paul had had to learn some patience waiting for God to work through His government. So the timing on this would have been just very shortly before Paul entered the ministry.

Verse 2, God gave him this vision of the third heaven.

The Bible speaks of three heavens. The heaven of the earth’s atmosphere—scripture talks about the clouds of heaven or the birds that fly in the midst of heaven. Heaven can be used just to refer

to the earth's atmosphere. Sometimes it is used to refer to outer space—the stars of heaven. That would be the second heaven. The third heaven is the heaven of God's throne. So there are three different heavens. The term "heaven" can be used in different ways. It depends on the context. God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). The implication is referring to the stars, sun, moon, all that, along with the third.

Paul mentions a thorn in the flesh that he had.

II Corinthians 12:7, "And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure." He had this revelation, but God didn't want him to get puffed up. Even though he had a very special relationship with God, there was a particular thorn in the flesh. We are not told what it was. It was something that he felt really hindered him.

Verses 8-9, on three specific occasions he really sought God with prayer and fasting; God never chose to remove that particular problem. It was something Paul needed to learn to live with through God's help. Sometimes God removes the problem. Sometimes He gives us the grace and the strength to survive through it.

Verse 13, "For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong!" In other words, Paul had not taken wages of Corinth previously, though he planned to do so. He had said earlier that he was going to come to them and let them bring him on his way back to Antioch. In other words, he would do so when he came. But he had not done so previously in the time that he had been in Corinth earlier because money had been such an issue. He allowed the money to be used there locally in Corinth; he did not take a wage from them while he was there. Paul said, 'How have you been inferior to other Churches? The only way I treated you any differently than the others is I didn't collect a salary from you. Forgive me.'

He may, by this time, have had some second thoughts and felt that maybe he was too gentle with them to begin with. It maybe gave way to some of the problems that had developed. He had allowed all the funds to be utilized there locally and not taken any of it. He had either worked or received supplies and sustenance from the Churches in Macedonia while he had been in Corinth. Now he makes allusion to that.

We have already seen why he wrote II Corinthians. In chapters 3, 11 and 12, we found Paul defending his apostleship.

In II Corinthians 3, he talks about what commendations do we need; what credentials do we need? You are our credentials (vv. 1-3).

In II Corinthians 11, he talks about false apostles and all the things he had gone through in the latter part of the chapter.

In II Corinthians 12, he continues that same theme, defending his apostleship. That's one reason he wrote the book. The second reason he wrote the book was to reinstate the repentant sinner who had been disfellowshipped in I Corinthians 5 (II Corinthians 2:5-11).

In II Corinthians 8 and 9, he dealt with the collection for the saints in Jerusalem. This was the third reason he wrote the book.

There were evidently several accusations made against Paul. Some had charged that he was fickle in his intent to come to Corinth.

We saw that earlier in II Corinthians 1:17 where he said, 'No, it wasn't with lightness that I said that.'

Some, evidently, made disparaging comments about him personally, that his speech was contemptible and his bodily presence weak. He was not very impressive.

II Corinthians 10:10, "'For his letters,' they say, 'are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.'" They said, 'Yeah, he sounds pretty impressive when you read those letters, but he's not much to look at.' Some were making disparaging comments of that sort. Some had evidently made allusion to the fact that he perhaps was not really on a par with the other apostles because he really didn't have the authority to take salary or wages from the Churches.

II Corinthians 11:7-9, "Did I commit sin in abasing myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what was lacking to me the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself."

This, evidently, had been "thrown up" to them. Some of the false apostles had come in and were trying to use that as proof. 'See, Paul really isn't an apostle because the others that have come have received salary and livelihood from the Church. Now Paul never did that. You know

Bible Study # 62 Questions

SURVEY OF THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF PAUL SERIES

II Corinthians

(Give scripture references.)

1. By comparing II Corinthians with the book of Acts, at what time period must it have been written?
2. Explain II Corinthians 1:22.
3. What did Paul say were his “credentials”?
4. Explain II Corinthians 5:7.
5. What does Paul teach about a Christian becoming involved in a full partnership with an unbeliever?
6. What are the two types of sorrow? Explain.
7. How did Paul characterize certain ones who came in Jesus’ name but preached a different gospel?
8. Explain II Corinthians 12:13.
9. Why did Paul write II Corinthians?
10. What were four charges that were probably being leveled against Paul in Corinth?

Bible Study # 63
January 22, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

Life and Letters of Paul Series—Romans

We are getting into the book of Romans this evening—moving through our Bible study series. This is the halfway spot in this series of the Life and Letters of Paul. After this evening, we will be halfway through this particular series. **We are focusing this evening on Paul's letter to the Romans.**

Rome was the capital of the Roman Empire. It was the great city of the ancient world. At the time of Paul, Rome had a population in excess of 1.2 million. It was the largest city that existed up until modern times. I think London surpassed this population somewhere around 1800. London was the next city to reach this sort of population. Rome went into a decline in later years. During the period of the Middle Ages, the population was dramatically lower than this. After the decline of the Roman Empire, it was all the way up into the 1800s before London, and later Paris, reached a population of this magnitude.

Rome was a sizable city. A city of a little over a million people is a large population. Rome had a population about like Houston, Texas; only it was more compact. You'd have trouble getting around in Houston if you had to depend on horses and chariots. Even in being more compact, it was a big place. With that many people together, it still had to be somewhat spread out because you didn't have the multi-story buildings that we have now.

The size of the building was limited up until the late 1800s when two things were discovered. One was the use of interior steel girder construction where they went up multi-stories. Another was the elevator. This made possible the skyscrapers. Up until then, there was much more of a limit that was imposed in terms of the height of buildings and what it was practical to do. At that time, you had to go out rather than up. There is only so far out that you can go and still have a city that's going to get over a certain size. Then you have to go up, too. Rome was a very sizable place.

It had a pretty sizable Jewish community. Over half of the population of Rome was slaves. This was a part of the economic base of Rome and the empire. The first settlement of Jews in Rome had been somewhere around 70 B.C. At least, it was the first documented settlement of any size.

The Christians in Rome were more of what we would think of as a loose-knit Bible study rather than a fully organized Church. There wasn't any record of any Church having been, officially, established in Rome. There were individual Christians in Rome who met together. They assembled together at homes. There were probably different groups of them because, again, if you have a city of over a million population spread out, just getting from one end to the other, if you're depending on walking, can be a pretty sizable distance even though things tended to be more compact.

Rome would naturally have had Church members because it was a large metropolitan area. There were people continually coming in and out of Rome. It was the center of the empire. Because of trade, commercial reasons and a variety of things, there were people who were coming in. There were Jews from Rome who had been in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost 31 A.D. They are specifically mentioned in Acts 2:10. Some of them were converted. What happened to them?

Well, eventually, they went back to Rome. People tend to move into a place like Rome. So, over a period of time, you had people from Rome who had been converted elsewhere. They had been somewhere else for a short time on business. The Jews were very much involved in trade, commerce and business, as many of them are today. These things took them to different areas; then they returned to Rome.

The nucleus there was Jewish converts. There were others who had come in contact with the Church through either friends in the synagogues or through members. Not only did the Christians in Rome have Jews among them, there were also a number of Gentiles, many of whom had come from Antioch, Greece and various places in the surrounding areas. There were individuals who had congregated there.

We are going to notice when Romans was written. We can show from the context that Paul wrote it from Corinth in the winter of 55 A.D.—56 A.D. Phoebe, who was a deaconess in the Church in Corinth, carried it to Rome. She was evidently a widow who had considerable property and was traveling to Rome on something related to business. She took the letter with her. Paul entrusted that to her, and she delivered it when she got to Rome.

There is one thing that I really want to focus in on because it has to do with a very basic claim—the claim for papal supremacy, the claim of the pope as the Bishop of Rome. His “claim to

fame” is that St. Peter was the first Bishop of Rome. As Bishop of Rome, he was the Successor of Peter, the Prince of the Apostles. Bishop of Rome is part of his title. Some of the titles that he claims for himself are Pontifex Maximus, the Successor of the Bishop of Rome, the Successor of St. Peter and the Prince of the Apostles. He goes through a long list. Someday, I will bring a copy of his titles; all the titles he claims for himself takes up about six or seven typewritten lines.

The point is that the whole basis of papal authority and the authority of the Catholic Church gets back to the claim that Peter established the church at Rome. They claim that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome and that all subsequent Bishops of Rome have been successors of Peter; therefore, they have primacy over all other bishops worldwide. This was the basis of the claims to papal authority that were made even anciently.

What we are going to see, very clearly, is that Peter was not in Rome. The Catholic Church dates Peter being in Rome to 42 A.D. We’re going to show that there wasn’t any way in the world that Peter had been in Rome for the last twelve years when Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans. I’ll show you what I mean by that.

How do we date the book of Romans? As we have gone through this series, I’ve tried to cover the books in relationship to the book of Acts. Let’s go to the book of Romans and we will see a little bit of how we date the book internally.

Romans 15:24-28, “whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while. But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.”

Notice the timing; we are told the timing right here. This is when Paul is getting ready to leave and go to Jerusalem. He is going to Jerusalem to take the offering from the area of Macedonia and Achaia (Greece, Corinth and Philippi). He’s getting ready to take that back to Jerusalem.

That’s where we were in II Corinthians, where Paul told the Corinthians Church that he was on his way to come to them.

II Corinthians 9:1-5, “Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority. Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared...Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your bountiful gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.”

When Paul wrote II Corinthians, he was getting ready to come to Corinth and collect the foodstuffs he had told them about earlier.

We tie this in with Acts 20:1-3, “After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to him, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia. Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece and stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.”

There accompanied him these various individuals (v. 4). We find that Paul was in Corinth.

Remember the story we went into last time. Paul had written I Corinthians in the spring of 55 A.D. from Ephesus. Then in Acts 19, we see how he had to leave Ephesus. He went on over, crossed into Macedonia up to Philippi. When he got to Philippi, he met Timothy whom he had sent down to Corinth to check up and see what the results from the letter were. Timothy reported to him; so he sent a letter (II Corinthians) back.

He told them he was coming to see them. That’s when he left and came through Greece and stayed there three months (Acts 20:3). This is wintering months (December, January, February), very difficult in which to travel. He wintered there in Corinth. He was originally going to sail, but he decided to go overland back up to Macedonia. This is when he is leaving to go back to Jerusalem in the spring of 56 A.D. to be there for Pentecost.

Acts 20:16, “...for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.”

We find here the story of Paul’s return to Jerusalem. But when Paul wrote Romans, he had

not left to go back to Jerusalem. He was telling the Romans that he was planning to come visit them. He said, 'I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. I am going to take this offering that I have from Greece to Jerusalem, and then when I get through with that, I am going to leave. I am planning to go to Spain and stop and visit you on my way to Spain' (Romans 15:24-28). We have the setting. The setting is right around the time before he left to go back to Jerusalem.

We know he wrote it from Corinth because he makes reference to that in Romans.

Romans 16:1, "I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea." The word "servant" in the Greek is "*diakonos*." It is the feminine form of deacon. She is a deaconess of the Church at Cenchrea. Cenchrea was a suburb of Corinth. It was the port of Corinth. Phoebe was a deaconess from Corinth. He told the Church at Rome, 'I commend to you Phoebe, our sister, who is a deaconess here at Corinth.'

Verse 2, "that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also."

Paul is sending this letter from Corinth by Phoebe. He is sending it right at this particular time. We can pretty well date when Paul is doing this. It would have been the time during the three months that he was wintering in Corinth. It was probably towards the end of that because it was approaching the time he was going to leave and it was also approaching the time Phoebe was going to be able to set sail. He wrote the letter and since she was going to Rome, he entrusted it to her that she would deliver it.

We know that Peter wasn't in Rome as the Bishop of Rome. The church at Rome wasn't even what we would call an established church.

Notice what Paul says in Romans 1:9-11, "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I might find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you might be established."

Paul wanted to come and impart to them a spiritual gift so that they could be established. That says they weren't established.

Now if Peter had been there as the first pope for twelve years, that would be kind of an insult. If that was the case, it would be like if a minister in an adjoining area wrote a letter here to Lafayette and says he is anxious to come and visit you because he would really like to establish you as a Church. That would be a little odd. We have been a Church here for years. I might take a little bit of exception to that.

This is what it would have been like if Peter had been there for the last twelve years. **Paul writes a letter and says he is really anxious to come and visit the people so that he can impart a spiritual gift to the end that they may be established.** That's not all because, as we come back a little further in the book of Romans, we find something else.

Romans 15:19, "in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."

Illyricum is an area north of Greece. It would be a portion (just the very bottom tip) of what is now modern-day Yugoslavia. It is right on the Adriatic Sea across and just east of Italy. Italy comes down as a boot. There's a sea that comes down. You have Yugoslavia and then Greece down on the bottom. Well, Paul had gone up as far as Greece, and even north of Greece, but he had never been over into Italy. He says, 'I have gone all the way from Jerusalem, over to north of Greece and I have fully preached the gospel.'

Verse 20, "And so I made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation." Paul says, 'I have been preaching the gospel all the way from Jerusalem to up north in Greece. I haven't gotten to you yet. Wherever I have gone, my purpose has been to go into areas where Christ has not been preached, so that I am not building on someone else's foundation. It's my job, my commission, to lay a foundation. Other men come in and build on that foundation.'

Paul is telling them he desires to come and see them to the end that they may be established. He's telling them that he's not in the position of going in and building on other men's foundations. He goes in and preaches in areas where the gospel has not been proclaimed. Now, if Peter's been in Rome for the last twelve years, he must be doing a "slow boil" about this time because this is quite an insult—saying Peter hadn't established them, hadn't preached the gospel and hadn't laid a foundation. That would really be insulting.

Romans 16:1-3, “I commend to you Phoebe ...assist her in whatever business she has need of you...Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus.”

Verse 5, “Likewise greet the church that is in their house....” Priscilla and Aquila were friends of Paul that he had met at an earlier time. They were Jews from Rome who had been expelled from Rome at an earlier time. There was an expulsion of Jews from Rome that had occurred; Priscilla and Aquila had been caught up in that and had been affected by it.

We’re moving back in time several years earlier, going back about six years from the time Paul is writing Romans 16. Let’s turn the clock back six years.

Acts 18:1, “...Paul had departed from Athens and went to Corinth.” This was the first time Paul went to Corinth.

Verses 2-3, “And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.”

Paul had gotten acquainted with them because he had stayed with them and they had worked together being of the same craft. It started out as a friendly relationship where he was rooming with them. He was probably renting a room in their house, working, doing piecework out of Aquila’s shop. They had taken an interest in the Church and had become converted. In the meantime, the Jews had been allowed to return to Rome.

The reason they had left Rome was because Claudius had expelled all the Jews. Ever so often the Roman emperors would get “hard up” for cash, so they would expel the Jews. They would confiscate and liquidate their assets. It was a good way to raise a little ready cash and kind of blame somebody for all the problems going on.

This is an old story that’s been going on for a long time. Politicians always like to blame somebody else for all the problems. They like to have a scapegoat. There have been different scapegoats at different times. The Jews have traditionally been a popular scapegoat. They are easy to blame.

Priscilla and Aquila were back in Rome, and there was evidently a group of Christians who were meeting at their house.

In Romans 16:3-15, Paul greets the Church there at their house. He starts listing all these various

people, a number who had come from Corinth. He names off a gigantic list of people. But, when you go through the whole list, one of the things you find is there isn’t any mention of Peter. Paul names more people by name in the book of Romans than he does any other book. Everybody that he knows in Rome, he says “Hello” to. He tacks it on the end of his letter. But there is never a mention of Peter. Now, if Peter was there as the pope, you talk about being insulted! Paul ignores him totally.

Paul says, ‘I need to come over and establish you. The foundation hasn’t been laid. I go in and preach where nobody has preached yet, so I’m going to come to you people and preach. I don’t build on another man’s foundation. And you need to be established. Say “Hi” to everybody I know, starting out with Priscilla and Aquila, whose house the Church is meeting.’ He kind of works his way down. There isn’t any way that you can truthfully and objectively look at the book of Romans and think that Peter was in Rome as the Bishop of Rome.

The whole basis of the claim of authority that the Catholic Church has absolutely collapses on the basis of an objective look at the book of Romans. It collapses on several other bases as well. We don’t have time to get into all of those. We will get into some of them at a later time. I think it’s important to understand this because it is a major issue. The claim of papal supremacy is the claim of supremacy of the Bishop of Rome because he is the successor of Peter. Peter is not in Rome. Peter didn’t establish the Church in Rome. He was not in Rome up through this time. This is made plain.

Let’s get on into more of the book of Romans. There were Jews and Gentiles in the Church at Rome; the Gentiles being primarily the Greeks and Romans. There were some problems as there traditionally are. They all had a problem with each of them looking down on everyone else. The Jews knew that they were superior to everybody else because they had the Bible. Since they were God’s own special people, this obviously made them better than everybody else. On the other hand, you couldn’t convince the Romans of that. The Romans knew they were the superior people. They were the master race because they ruled the world. That was pretty much evidenced.

The Greeks knew that they really were the ones who were superior to everybody else because they were the ones who conducted the schools to teach the Romans. So, in their minds, that proved that they were smarter than the Romans because

they were employed by the Romans to teach them. The pagan religions of Rome and the great philosophers all quoted Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, the great Greek philosophers. The Greeks claim to superiority was their culture and philosophers.

The Romans claimed the superiority because they ruled everybody else. That should make them number one. And the Jews looked down on them and said, 'Neither one of you really have what we have. We're number one. We are the ones on speaking terms with God. The rest of you are not.'

You have people in the Church who have come out of these backgrounds—each of which kind of looked down a little bit on the others and figured what they had made them better than the others. They all took pride in certain things. Paul begins to address that subject.

The first thing he started into was the Greeks and Romans. He really "chewed them up and spit them out."

Romans 1:18-22, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."

Paul blasts the philosophers of the Greco-Roman world in about as strong terms as possible. He says they are a bunch of fools. Paul says, 'The things you take pride in are your great philosophers, your great educational system. Let me tell you about the great educational system; the people that founded it were fools.' You can imagine a few people were probably squirming in their seats about that time. They maybe thought he had quit preaching and gone to "meddling" because he was really beginning to take apart the things in which they had pride.

He begins to go through and talks about how God had given them over to a debased (KJV, "reprobate") mind (v. 28), and God gave them up to uncleanness (v. 24). You don't have to dig very far before you realize what a major role the sexual sins, sexual perversion and homosexuality played among the intellectuals and the intelligentsia of Greece. There were vile things

that were a part of some of these things. Paul really begins to go through and "rake them over the coals" for the things in which they took pride.

This is being read orally. About the time we've gotten down this far, some of the Jews are sitting there feeling pretty smug because this is what they thought all along.

Then he gets on down.

Romans 2:11, "For there is no partiality with God."

Verses 13-15, "(for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things contained in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts....")

The Gentiles didn't have the Ten Commandments given to them. Moses didn't come to Rome or to Athens and give the Ten Commandments. 'You Jews are pretty proud of that; He gave them to you. But let me tell you something. It's not the hearers of the law that are just; all you Jews have heard the law. It's the doers of the law.'

Which do you think God is most pleased with: a Roman who never heard the Ten Commandments that didn't commit adultery or a Jew who heard them and did? Which do you think God is the most pleased with: a Jew who heard the Ten Commandments yet worked some shady deals and stole, lied or murdered or some Greek or Roman who never had the law taught to them (in terms of the Old Testament), but figured out you shouldn't lie or steal or murder somebody?

You have people all over the world, whether they are Arabs or Chinese or people in Africa or South America. You can go anywhere in the world and find some nice people, the kind you would like to have as next door neighbors. They don't go around raping, murdering, pillaging and doing all kinds of terrible things. Just because somebody's not in the Church doesn't mean that they are a thief, murderer and rapist. The point he's making is that the Jews were smug.

He says, 'Let's understand; it's not the hearers of the law but the doers.' There were people in Rome of Greek and Roman background. Even though the law was not delivered to them as a codified canon of law, if they understood and did some of these things, God was pleased with that.

Verses 17-20, "Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, and

know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, and are confident, that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.”

‘You Jews are pretty proud of yourself, aren’t you? You rest in the law. This really gives you “one up.” Well, let me tell you something.’

Verses 22-24, “You who say, ‘do not commit adultery.’ Do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? ‘For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,’ as it is written.”

Oh, now, all of a sudden, the Jews are the ones squirming in their seats. They’ve been sitting there looking pretty smug until a few minutes ago. Now, as the letter proceeds to be read, Paul says, ‘You Jews, the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of your lousy example. You rest in the law and make your boast in the law and you’re not keeping the law. People know the kind of example that you’ve been setting and the name of the God of Israel is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of your lousy example.’

About this time, there are some who are uncomfortable and squirming in their seats because they weren’t really comfortable either. He says, ‘Look, where does righteousness come from?’ The Jews’ “claim to fame” was that they were circumcised; they’re the seed of Abraham. Circumcision is the sign of the covenant; they’re identified as the children of Abraham (Israelites) to whom was delivered the law. This was the basis of their claim to a relationship with God. They had this patronizing approach toward the Gentiles, which in turn, some of the Gentiles (particularly the Greeks and Romans) had a pretty patronizing approach toward everybody else. They said, ‘Maybe you have a few things, but after all, we’ve developed this wonderful educational system and we’ve produced this great culture and civilization.’

Greek and Roman civilization was a major accomplishment. There are many beautiful things. Look at some of the great architecture and art. Many great things come from the Greco-Roman civilization. It is the basis of much of western civilization. These are positive things, but the problem is that’s the basis of people’s confidence.

Paul says, v. 25, “For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.” You know what circumcision profits? If you keep the law and you’re doing what God says, it is fine.

Verse 26, “Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?” If he’s doing what God says, that counts a whole lot more than someone who is a Jew that is not doing what God says.

Verse 29, “but he is a Jew who is one inwardly....”

He’s gotten through “slamming” the Gentiles and the things they were proud of. Then he turned around and “slammed” the Jews and all the things they were proud of. So nobody has anything to be proud of. This is the point that Paul wanted to make.

Romans 3:23, “for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.” Paul says, ‘You’re all in the same boat. You Gentiles and Jews don’t have anything to be proud of. You’re all sinners. You’re all in the same boat, and the question is how to get out of that boat and into another.’ This was Paul’s approach in dealing with a situation where there was a certain amount of rivalry and friction—this sort of attitude and problem that some had towards one another.

Now he needs to come back and address the subject of the advantage of being a Jew.

Romans 3:1, “What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?” Is there an advantage to being a Jew?

Verse 2, “Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.” Yes, there is one great advantage because unto them were committed the oracles of God, the Word of God. The Jews were given the truth—the Bible. Even if some didn’t believe it, their unbelief will not make God’s faithfulness of non-effect (v. 3). In other words, God faithfully preserved His word through them, even if some of them didn’t believe it and practice it. So there was a tremendous advantage they had. They had access to the written and preserved Word of God.

The oracles of God, basically, consist of three things. Some of it was written; some, not written. The oracles of God consist of the Old Testament Scriptures preserved by the Jews. You know two other things the Jews preserved? They preserved the knowledge of which day is the Sabbath. You can read in the Old Testament; it tells you, “Remember the Sabbath ...keep it holy.” It tells you, “...the seventh day is the Sabbath of the

Lord your God...” (Exodus 20:8-11). But, if somebody had not been keeping every seventh day, how would you know which day is the seventh? The Jews preserved the knowledge of which day is the seventh. If there had not been a people keeping the Sabbath consecutively every week through every generation, then how would you have kept up with it?

We pretty well use one standard calendar in the world today. Anciently, that was not the case. Every nation had some calendar. The Jews preserved the knowledge of which day was the Sabbath. In the Old Testament is preserved the knowledge that the seventh day is the Sabbath, but which day is the seventh day? The Jews preserved the order of the days of the week.

Another thing they preserved was the knowledge of how to calculate the calendar. That was another part of the oracles of God. God tells us that the Passover comes on the fourteenth day of the first month. That’s great. But how do you figure that out? That didn’t mean that the fourteenth of January was Passover, did it? It is not the fourteenth day of the Roman calendar but the fourteenth day of the first month of the *sacred calendar*. Who preserved the calendar? The Jews did. That’s why it is called the Jewish calendar or the Hebrew calendar.

So, the oracles of God consisted of: (1) the Old Testament, (2) the knowledge of the seventh-day week and (3) the knowledge of the sacred calendar and how to compute it. The Jews preserved that information.

And according to what Paul said here in Romans 3, they preserved it faithfully. Even though some of them didn’t believe it, in the full sense of the word, God used them to preserve that knowledge. That’s a tremendous advantage.

But the point is, Romans 3:10-12, “...There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.” Everybody’s culture and civilization has gotten off the track. ‘Greeks, Romans and Jews—you’ve all missed the point. You’ve all sinned. None of you have an inherent “leg up” in terms of a relationship with God.’ So this was important.

We get into the concept of law and grace. There’s a lot about that in the book of Romans.

Verse 28, “...a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.”

Verse 31, “Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.”

Again, we get back to the issue of circumcision. Circumcision revolved around the issue of access to God. We went through this in greater detail in the book of Galatians. This was what the whole controversy was about. This was the thing that was difficult to grasp. How do you gain and maintain access to God? What is the basis of our relationship with God and of having access to God? Is it simply a matter of ceremonial requirements?

If you go into the Old Testament, there were requirements in terms of circumcision and even in terms of serving in the temple—things of that sort. There were certain bodily impairments that someone was not able to have and serve in the temple. There were physical things of uncleanness that would temporarily exclude you. There were physical things that determined your access to the sanctuary and to proximity to God.

But those were simply to teach a spiritual lesson. The issue that had to be understood was that the basis of our relationship with God is a spiritual relationship. It is not simply the performance of a ritual or a penance or doing certain things. Grace is not conferred through the seven sacraments. That’s not where you get God’s grace. Those of you who were Catholics know that’s not the way grace is conferred.

Grace is God’s gift, and Paul makes plain that our relationship with God is predicated on faith. It is a spiritual relationship. This does not make void the law (v. 31). This does not tear up the Ten Commandments and throw them away. It is not the performance of a ritual that determines access to God because we are looking at a spiritual relationship.

The Jews needed to understand that they didn’t have some inherent, automatic relationship with God simply because the ritual of circumcision had been performed. That was not the basis of a spiritual relationship with God. Circumcision was the outward, physical sign that identified them as the covenant people, the descendants of Abraham. That was fine, but it did not give them a “leg up” toward inheriting the Kingdom of God.

As the covenant people, they did have access to the Scriptures and knowledge of the truth. That’s well and good, but you still have to act on it. It’s not the hearer of the law that is going to be justified (Romans 2:13). The fact that you sat in the synagogue and heard the law read doesn’t put you one “leg up” on anybody else, unless you have acted on what you have heard.

The same can be brought down and applied to us in the Church today. It doesn't matter how many years you've sat in the Church or if you grow up in it or if your parents were in it before you were born. It doesn't matter how many generations of your family has been in the Church or how long or how short a time you've been in the Church. It's not the hearers of the law that are going to be justified; it's the doers. It's not how many sermons you've heard; it's what you've done with the ones you have heard. A person who has only heard one and acted on it is a whole lot better off than the guy who has heard a thousand and hadn't really gotten around to doing anything with any of them. It's not how many; it's what you've done with the ones you have heard. This is the key, and Paul is bringing this out.

Then he gets into the matter of justification. Again, justification is the basis of our relationship with God in the sense of gaining access to God. How are you justified? Was Abraham justified before God by circumcision? Was that the basis of Abraham's spiritual relationship with God?

Paul says, 'Let us go through and analyze.'

Romans 4:2-3, "For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something of which to boast, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'" Genesis 15 says this was before he was circumcised.

Verse 10, "How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised." He says he was uncircumcised when he believed God, acted on it and when God received him.

Verse 11, "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had while still uncircumcised...." Paul is trying to explain a concept to them.

Abraham's relationship with God was not established by the performance of the ritual of circumcision. That's not what gave Abraham his relationship with God. God established that as a covenant sign with Abraham, but there was a relationship with God that Abraham already had for over twenty years. God made the promises to Abraham before circumcision was ever mentioned.

He uses this to illustrate to the Jews who had trouble turning loose of the fact that you really couldn't be assured of access to God if you were uncircumcised. This was based on the fact of physical exclusion from the court of the Israelites. Remember, around the tabernacle and

later the temple, there were courts. There was an outer court, the court of the Gentiles, beyond which someone couldn't pass unless he was a circumcised Jew.

We will see it in the next Bible study or two, Acts 21, when Paul went back to Jerusalem. He was arrested and charged with bringing uncircumcised Gentiles into the temple precinct. The issue of access is the whole thing. The issue is not doing away with the law. The issue is: what do you do that gains access to God? How do you gain access to God? What is the basis of your having access? Paul is explaining that here.

What is the promise to Abraham?

Verse 13, "For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." What is the promise to Abraham? He would be the heir of the world. God didn't promise to Abraham that he was going to go to heaven. He promised him he would inherit the earth.

If he is going to inherit the earth, that's why we are told, "And if you are Christ's then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). Which promise? The promise God made to Abraham, the promise that he would be the heir of the world. We, spiritually, all become accounted as the children of Abraham and we inherit through him, in effect, as his spiritual offspring. The promise was that he would be heir of the world.

Therefore, it shouldn't surprise us when Christ said in Matthew 5:5, "...the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" or surprise us when we read in Revelation 5:10, "And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth." The earth is what God promised.

Abraham was going to be the heir; the inheritor. Romans 4:20-21, "He did not waver [KJV, "stagger"] at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God. And being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform." This was the basis of Abraham's relationship with God. He believed God. He trusted God. He developed a relationship with God based on confidence. That needs to be the basis of our relationship with God.

Romans 5:1-2, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand...." So how do we gain access to God? Through Christ we have access by faith. Christ

made the access possible, but we have to believe it. We have to act by faith, and it is through Him that we have access through faith. He discusses this and shows that God took the initiative in establishing our approach to Him.

Verse 6, “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

Verses 9-10, “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”

We’re reconciled by the death of Christ. We’re saved by His life. There was an old Protestant hymn about “Saved by the Blood.” We are not saved by His blood; we are saved by His life. We are reconciled by the blood—by the death and by the shedding of blood. Restitution for sin was made that paid the penalty. We have the opportunity to live because Christ not only died, He lives again and became the Captain (Author) of our salvation (Hebrew 2:10).

Again, we get into this issue of reconciliation, this issue of justification. God took the initiative to bring us into a relationship with Him. We were cut off. We were alienated by sin. Whether we are Jews, Gentiles or whatever—regardless of our ethnic origin—we were all in the same category and alienated from God through sin. God took the initiative to bring us into a relationship with Himself. That initiative was taken through Jesus Christ. Our relationship with God is a spiritual relationship, and it is not based on performance of physical rituals.

Let’s notice one thing. The question comes up about the Ten Commandments existing between the time of Adam and Moses.

Verses 12-14, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all have sinned—(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is not law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses....”

If there hadn’t been any law, there wouldn’t have been any sin; if there hadn’t been any sin, there wouldn’t have been any death. Right? That’s what it says. Sin entered into the world and death entered by sin. Death passed upon all men because all have sinned.

The Ten Commandments were in effect between Adam and Moses because sin was imputed—sin was counted. It was still a sin. When Joseph, back in the book of Genesis, was tempted to

commit adultery by Potipher’s wife, he said, ‘how could I do so and sin against my master and against God. How can I do this sin?’ Joseph knew it was a sin to commit adultery. How did he know that? If there is no law, there is no sin.

That’s the way they want to solve the crime problem. They want to do away with some of the law. We have a big drug problem. If we make it all legal, then it won’t be a crime anymore and crime will go down. Right? If you legalize murder, you can say the crimes of murder have dropped to zero because it’s not a crime anymore. What if you abolished the speed limit? Then you wouldn’t have the speeding violations anymore.

Up until the energy crunch in the 70s, Montana didn’t have a speed limit during the daytime on the major highways. There simply were not speed limits. There were practical reasons for that. You could probably drive fifty miles and not see another vehicle. You would have to go to some trouble to have a wreck.

The point is that if there is no law, there is no sin. We know that there was sin between Adam and Moses; therefore, there was a law. Paul had to deal with some of the misunderstandings that had arisen. He’s bringing out how we’re justified and the basis of a relationship with God is not predicated on the performance of physical ritual. Some want to “jump into the other ditch” and say, ‘It doesn’t matter about sin and keeping the law because grace comes freely; we can do whatever we want to do and God will just give more grace. Since God likes to give grace, the more we sin, the more God can give grace. God’s happy and we’re happy.’ That’s not the way it works.

Romans 6:1-2, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” He said, ‘What do you mean? Do you mean that you can just keep on doing whatever you want to do because, after all, God will give grace?’

Don’t you realize that when you become a partaker of grace, you died to sin? You turned from sin. You said, ‘I don’t want that way anymore.’ There’s a difference between living in sin and tripping up and making a mistake sometimes. There’s a difference between missing the mark and not even aiming for the target.

It is interesting. The primary word that is most commonly used for sin, both in Hebrew and Greek, refers to sin in the sense of mistakes that Christians make. It comes from words in the original that basically mean to miss the mark. In

the Hebrew, it's the word that was once used to refer to an archer who was able to shoot a target and not miss the mark. So, what it is talking about is missing the mark, not quite hitting the bull's eye. It's talking about conduct not quite being on target. Paul is bringing this out. There's a difference between missing the mark and not even aiming for the target. Missing the mark is predicated on the fact you were shooting at the target. You were aiming, but we don't always hit it "right on" as we should.

But shall we continue in sin? No. We died to sin. We're not trying to live that way anymore. We may miss the mark sometimes, but in terms of sin as a way of life, we've turned our back on it. He goes through that we're to walk in newness of life. We're not to serve sin (v. 6). Sin is not to reign in our mortal bodies (v. 12).

Verse 16, "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slave whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness?"

Verse 23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." We are not under the law in the sense that we're not under the penalty of the law. We've died to that. We're delivered from the penalty of the law.

Romans 7:6-7, "But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'"

Paul said, 'I wouldn't have known sin except God had spelled it out in the law.' The purpose of the law is to define sin. You wouldn't know right from wrong if God didn't tell you. You don't know what the speed limit is unless there's a sign posted. This is the purpose. This is what the law serves.

Verse 12, "Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." The problem is not the law.

Verse 14, "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin." The problem wasn't the law; the problem was with the people.

Verses 18-21, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I

practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good."

So what am I going to do? In my flesh dwells no good thing. I have made up my mind that I desire to serve God, but the pulls that I have inherent within me are taking me in the other direction.

Verse 22, "For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man."

Verse 24, "...who will deliver me from this body of death?"

God will through Jesus Christ.

Verse 25, "I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." With my mind I have made a decision and I'm locked on to serving the law of God. As long as I am in the flesh, I am still battling the pulls that can take me in the other direction.

Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." He is talking about not continuing to walk after the flesh. We have a battle going on. We're pulled in two different directions, but we've chosen the direction we're going in. We're going in that direction even though there may be pulls and may be occasional slips in terms of completely and perfectly walking the way of God.

Verses 6-7, "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be." Carnally minded is being primarily motivated by the pulls of the flesh that is pulling and taking us in a direction contrary to God. In the flesh we can't please God; we need the Spirit of God.

How do you know if you're going to be in the Kingdom? Here's the key.

Verse 11, "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

The Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14). It's the proof that God intends to do what He says. "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead dwells in you...." How do you know if you're going to be in the Kingdom? –If you have the Spirit of God.

God doesn't give you His Spirit and then takes it back and then gives it back—on and off again

like a light switch. That's not the way it works. When God gives you the Spirit, you have the Spirit. You can drift far enough from God to finally come to the point of the unpardonable sin. There can finally come a point of no return when God would take His Spirit from you. But it's not something that just goes back and forth. Once you have it, you have it as long as you use it, exercise it and seek it. Sometimes you may be on low supply because you haven't been renewing it. But it is something that we have as a gift of God and God does not desire to take it from us. He desires to give us more.

I Peter 5:5, "...God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Romans 8 goes through a very powerful section of Scripture.

Verse 15, we have received the Spirit of sonship.

Verse 16, we are God's children.

Verse 17, we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

Verse 23, we have the firstfruits of the Spirit.

Verse 31, if God is for us, who can be against us?

Verse 35, nothing can separate us from God's love and God's power.

In Romans 9, Paul begins to address the subject of Israel. Israel as a whole was not being converted now. That was a mystery to many trying to understand.

Verse 3, Paul had a great desire to see his countrymen converted, but he explains something.

Romans 11:25-26, "For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved...."

Verse 32, "For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all."

He is bringing out to the Gentiles that it's not because they were somehow inherently smarter or anything else. God has blinded or allowed them to be blinded temporarily. He's concluded them in unbelief that He may have mercy upon all. He will deal with them in His time. Israel is not converted right now because they are blinded.

God goes into the fact that He chooses whom He will call and when.

Romans 9:16, "So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." He chooses upon whom He will have mercy and who will be blinded. That's God's choice. You and I understand what we

understand because God has opened our minds to understand. It's not because there may be others who are not somehow inherently worse than we are. It's not because we were smarter than everybody else or because of some inherent quality of us. God in His mercy chose us; we have to understand the credit goes to God, not to us. God chose us. We didn't take the initiative in our relationship with God. He took it with us. It's not that we didn't do our part in terms of seeking and searching. But if God had not revealed Himself, we could have never found Him. God revealed Himself. Paul goes through and explains some things.

There is one scripture that I always took a lot of encouragement in. I remember back at some "low times" in the state of the Church back in the 70s when there didn't seem to be very much being accomplished and there were a lot of things that shouldn't have been. This was one of the verses that I zeroed in on and took a lot of comfort from.

Romans 9:28, "'For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth.'" God is going to finish His work. He's going to finish it and He's going to cut it short in righteousness. That's something to understand. God knows who's who and He knows what's what. He has a job to do and He's going to finish His work. He's going to cut it short in righteousness. He's going to make a short work.

The full prophetic implications of that short work is something that I think we will just have to wait and see in terms of what God is going to classify as the short work. I don't think that term would necessarily apply to the entire length of this age (era).

There have been various periods in the overall phase of the work. There have been times of great activity and accomplishment and times of somewhat of a lull. That's been the state of things. It is one of those enigmatic statements that become clearer at the appropriate time. But it is a basis of faith and of confidence that God knows what He is doing. I think this has to be the basis of our relationship—*God knows what He is doing*.

If you take a bus or plane trip somewhere, you have to operate on the basis that the pilot knows how to get to the destination. If you don't think the pilot knows how to get to the destination, then you better find a different bus or plane. I'm not going to get on a bus and tell him every turn to make, when to show down and stop. If I don't think he can drive, I am going to get off the bus.

The basis is: you identify where God is, where He is working, and then you trust Him to do it. And if you don't see why He's made that turn or this turn or why He's doing that or this other, just realize you are not the one who is driving. You don't have a road map. We have a general idea. In one sense, you can say the Bible is a road map. But all the details prophetically and exactly everything God is going to do, you can't second-guess God. God has things in mind that go beyond our ability to entirely perceive.

Romans 11:2, "God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew...."

Verse 8, "...God has given a spirit of stupor [KJV, "slumber"]...."

Verse 26, "And so [eventually] all Israel will be saved...."

You can tie this in with Ezekiel 37 and other places that show a future time when there will be a time of salvation. God is not a respecter of persons, as Paul makes plain earlier in the book of Acts (Acts 10:34, KJV). If the time is coming when all Israel will be saved, then the time is also coming when all the Gentiles—all the nations—will also have their chance for salvation. That is made plain.

Matthew 11:24, Christ alluded to that in the instructions to the Pharisees when He said, "...it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment than for you."

Matthew 12:42, "The Queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon and indeed a greater than Solomon is here."

Matthew 12:41, "The men of Nineveh will rise in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here."

Some of these people have acted more and have done better with the chance they had than you've done with yours. They are going to rise up in judgment with you and they are going to ask, 'What's wrong with you? If we'd had the chance you had, we would have done something with it.' Christ made plain that there's coming a time when all Israel is going to be saved. Since God is not a respecter of persons, there's going to be a time when they also shall have that opportunity.

Romans 12 talks about our relationship to God as one of total sacrifice; we are to be a living sacrifice. We belong to God. We are His possession. We are to recognize that we are in the body (Church) where God has placed us and

we are to carry out and serve in what ever opportunities we have available to us.

Romans 13 says we are to be subject to the civil authorities.

Romans 13:1, "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God." We are not to be involved in civil disobedience. We are to be subject to the civil law, realizing that God holds the civil government accountable and He deals with them. A Christian's job is not to be out trying to lead a revolution somewhere. We are to seek to live peaceably, to pay our taxes and to do the things that we should do. We are to try to be a good citizen and be respectful to government authority.

The one debt that everybody has is made plain.

Romans 13:8, "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law." We owe a debt of love.

Verse 7, "Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor." We are to show proper respect and proper deference. We are to show the appropriate signs of respect. A Christian is not going to be out burning the flag, whatever country he lives in. We are to be paying our taxes. We are to show respect and honor to individuals in authority and the symbols of that authority. The one thing we owe everybody is to love one another.

In vv. 9-10, he explains a little bit of what love is.

In Romans 14, there was a problem concerning meats. But the issue was not clean and unclean meats. The issue was not that some were eating unclean foods and Paul didn't think it made any difference. The issue concerns vegetarianism.

Romans 14:1-2, "Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables." What does it mean that one believes he may eat all things? Does it mean ground-up glass, arsenic, poison ivy salad? What about the verse, "...whatever is set before you eat, asking no questions for conscience's sake" (I Corinthians 10:27)? A poison ivy salad—are you going to eat that? That's not what it is talking about.

Verse 2, "For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables." The issue is eating meat or not eating meat. The reason some were not eating meat was not because they were following Ellen G. White's

vision, the Seventh Day Adventist “star.” Some say she had a vision that meat in the latter days was going to be polluted. Yeah, it is “shot” full of chemicals, that’s right. So are your vegetables; so is your water and your air. Anybody who lives along the Mississippi River is in trouble. What are you going to limit yourself to that doesn’t have any pollutants?

I am not saying that we shouldn’t try to be careful of what we eat and that we shouldn’t obtain the best that is available to us. I certainly believe that we should be careful of our health and our diet and obtain the best that is available to us. But a little bit of common sense and balance has to come into the matter, too. You may die from breathing polluted air, but you are going to die a whole lot quicker from not breathing air at all. You’ll last years longer breathing polluted air—minutes not breathing air. So, if your choice is between polluted air and not any air, then you better go for the polluted air. Now, if your choice is between polluted air and good air, then go for the good air. Go for the best you have available. A little bit of common sense comes in.

But their issue was not some crackpot theory in those ways. The issues had to do with the fact that it was meat offered to idols. Paul goes on and addresses the subject.

Verse 14, “I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean [KJV, margin, “common”] of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.” “There is nothing common of itself....” Now the issue is not food that is unclean but food that is common. And there is a difference.

Remember when Peter had his vision in Acts 10. He saw the sheet and all the four-footed creatures.

Acts 10:13-14, “And a voice came to him, ‘Rise. Peter; kill and eat.’ But Peter said, ‘Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.’” Common or unclean are two totally different things. Food can be clean and yet not kosher. “Common” simply means it “wasn’t kosher.” Generally it was because it had been offered to an idol. That was the primary reason. Also, there were certain matters of ritual slaughter.

What it amounted to was that in the major metropolitan Gentile areas, to obtain meat at the meat market or the places you went to buy meat, many times it was difficult to obtain meat that was kosher. There wasn’t any guarantee that meat that you obtained at the major meat markets was kosher. You could not be assured that some

of it hadn’t come from an idol’s temple where it had been offered in sacrifice.

They slaughtered the animals, burned the entrails there on the altar, poured out the blood and the meat was carved up. The priests had a lot more than what they needed so they sold it to the meat markets. A large part of the meat the meat market had was bought from various idols’ temples that morning.

A really strict Jew, unless he could be absolutely and totally assured that this meat had not been offered to an idol, wouldn’t eat it. They viewed it as having been polluted. It had become a major issue. Some of the people were saying they didn’t see that it was a problem for them to eat meat offered to idols. ‘If I go down to the store and buy some meat (some of the meat was not offered to idols), I don’t know if it’s offered to an idol. I’m not buying it to participate in the idol’s service.’

[Tape ends. Notes added may come from another Bible study or a sermon Mr. Ogwyn gave.]

Romans 15:23-24, “But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while.”

Paul had planned on going to Rome and then to Spain after he delivered the aid to the Jerusalem Church. But he was arrested and brought to Rome (Acts 22:25—28:31). He dwelt two whole years in Rome in his own hired house (Acts 28:30). At that point the Biblical record of Paul’s life ceased.

Evidently, from what Paul had said, his plans were to go from Italy to Spain, and there is every reason to think that he did so. He said he would in the book of Romans. Secular history and tradition maintains that he did. From Spain he went on up to Britain, which was the furthestmost outpost of the Roman Empire. He spent some time there, and then by the mid 60s, he returned to the Mediterranean area, particularly to the area of Ephesus, for a short period of time. He then left Ephesus and went over to Macedonia. From there he was arrested and taken back to Rome.

Next Bible study we will cover the book of Colossians and the book of Philemon.

Bible Study # 63 Questions

SURVEY OF THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF PAUL SERIES

Romans

(Give scripture references.)

1. Give proof from the book of Romans that Peter was not and had not been in Rome.
2. How does Paul describe the philosophers of the Greco-Roman world?
3. Who preserved the Old Testament Scriptures faithfully?
4. What was the ultimate promise to Abraham?
5. Are we saved by Christ's death? Prove.
6. Prove that the Ten Commandments existed between the time of Adam and Moses.
7. How does Paul characterize God's law?
8. What is the one thing that determines whether you will be in God's Kingdom?
9. Why is Israel, as a whole, not being converted now?
10. What should a Christian's attitude be toward the civil government?
11. What does Romans 14:14 mean?
12. What is the one debt that all Christians have?

Bible Study # 64
February 12, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

Life and Letters of Paul Series—Colossians and Philemon

In the last Bible study, we **came up to the fact of Paul's Roman imprisonment** in the book of Acts. We had noted in Acts 19 and 20 that Paul, after a great length of time in Ephesus, had written the book of I Corinthians during the Days of Unleavened Bread of 55 A.D. This was his third evangelistic journey. Then a little later after Pentecost, there came up a great deal of difficulty and problems. Paul left Ephesus and sailed across into Macedonia to the area of Philippi. He stayed there a while then came down through the area of Greece. He came down further south through Athens and into Corinth. He wintered there. He spent the winter of 55 A.D.—56 A.D.

When he crossed from Ephesus to Philippi (Macedonia), perhaps in the fall of 55 A.D., he wrote II Corinthians. He wrote II Corinthians about six months after he wrote I Corinthians. Timothy reported back to him as to how the first letter had been received and what had transpired. He made his way down over the course of the next couple of months to Corinth and wintered there.

The last Bible study we saw how he wrote the book of Romans from Corinth in the winter of 55A.D—56 A.D.; perhaps we would date it around February. It was written just prior to the time that navigation occurred once again in the Mediterranean, after the three winter months when there wasn't normal shipping. The book of Romans was taken from Corinth to Rome by Phoebe when she sailed from Corinth. This perhaps would have been in March of 56 A.D.

We see in Acts 20 that Paul had originally intended to sail directly back to Jerusalem, but he changed his mind because of rumors of a plot against him. He went back overland through Philippi (Acts 20:3) and left after the Days of Unleavened Bread (v. 6). Then we find that he took the boat to Jerusalem, stopped over and met the Ephesian elders on the way (v. 17).

Verse 16, he was in a hurry to be in Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost. It is interesting. You can go all the way through the book of Acts and you never read where Paul was in a hurry to get somewhere in time for Christmas. But he was in a hurry to get somewhere for Pentecost.

In v. 6, we find that he didn't leave until the Days of Unleavened Bread were over. People go through the book of Acts and want to claim that the Holy Days and Sabbath are just Old Testament scripture that doesn't apply to us. You go through the book of Acts and you find that Paul thought it applied to him. He kept it, and the early New Testament Church kept it. It is good that we note this.

I have made a point over the years that everywhere in the book of Acts when I come across the word "Sabbath" or the name of a holy day like Days of Unleavened Bread or Pentecost, I have taken that word and colored it in red. As I flip through the book of Acts, all these red words every couple of pages just stand out. You come across Sabbath or Pentecost or the Feast or the Days of Unleavened Bread or Passover over and over. When you do something like that you realize, as you turn through, how frequently the issue of the Sabbath and Pentecost comes up, or whatever festival it may be they were celebrating.

Paul did get back to Jerusalem in time for Pentecost. You read of that in Acts 21:17. We find, v. 30, that Paul, in fact, was arrested in the temple on Pentecost weekend. As he was there on that occasion, he was arrested on a "trumped-up" charge. The Jewish religious leadership had a great deal of animosity against him. Acts 22, 23 and 24 all deal with aspects of his trial.

In Acts 24, Paul is before Felix, the Roman governor. He winds up staying in jail two years because the governor didn't want to make a decision. He didn't want to turn him loose and antagonize the Jews, and he didn't want to convict him because he knew he was an innocent man.

We find that Felix would have done well in an elected office in Louisiana.

Acts 24:26, "Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him." This sounds like some recent ones we have had. Felix hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. He wouldn't be the last one that did that kind of thing. It simply shows that human nature hasn't changed. Since he was hoping that somebody would pay him off, he just let it "sit" until the next guy came to office. It's known as "passing the buck."

In Acts 25, Paul is on trial before Festus. Because he tried to "pass the buck" to King Agrippa, this matter drags on even further. Finally, Paul gets sick and tired of it.

In Acts 26, Paul appealed to the “Supreme Court.” He wanted this case tried in Rome at the court of Caesar. They didn’t have to make a decision; they just loaded him on a boat and shipped him off.

Acts 27 is the account of Paul sailing for Rome in 58 A.D.

Acts 28, he shipwrecked in Malta. He wintered there the winter of 58 A.D.—59 A.D. and finally comes to Rome in 59 A.D. He spends two years there in Rome (v. 30) under house arrest. He was able to live in a place he rented but chained to a Roman soldier. He is allowed to receive visitors but not to go anywhere. He remained there for two years, 59 A.D. to 61 A.D.

This is the point at which the book of Acts ends. We will talk more in a future Bible study as to why Acts ends there.

This brings us to where we are this evening because we **are at the point of some of the letters Paul wrote while he was in prison in Rome 59 A.D. to 61 A.D.**

Colossians and Philemon were evidently written at that time. We are taking these two books together. The reason is that Philemon is a short little book and the two go together because Philemon lived in Colosse, and the books were written at the same time. It was, undoubtedly, carried by the same messenger. **One was a letter to the Church; one was a letter to a Church member. We will take the two of them together because the background ties together.**

Colosse started as a Greek colony. It is located in Phrygia, which is a portion of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). It is in the general area where the Churches were to which John wrote in Revelation 2 and 3. Colosse is right in there. In fact, it was just a few miles from Laodicea. When John wrote Revelation 2 and 3 under God’s inspiration and addressed the seven Churches of Revelation, those were not the only seven congregations of the Church of God in that area. There were many others. Colosse and Hierapolis were right in the vicinity (kind of in the middle) of those seven. They were certainly on the same mail route.

The point to understand is that those seven Churches were specifically selected because they typified something. They illustrated certain things that God wanted highlighted. There were some things that had prophetic significance, so they were selected for that reason. It was not just a general letter to all the Churches there, addressed in a random fashion. They were selected because of special significance.

Colosse was in that area. It was located on the main road between Ephesus and the Euphrates River. That made it a city of commercial importance because the main Roman road connected Ephesus, which was a major port there on the coast. It had great significance in terms of trading with Greece. Colosse lay right on the main overland road or route from Ephesus across to the Euphrates River.

There was a Jewish community in the city. There were various Greek schools of thought. There were the Stoics who were a major Greek philosophical school. There were their ideas and various other ideas.

We have to realize that many times the problems that existed in some of these Churches were not simply because some group of outside troublemakers came in and stirred up trouble. People tend to be susceptible to certain types of things because of their own background and experience.

The people in Colosse grew up with a certain religious and philosophical background that was common to the Roman world. They had a certain mind set. Stoicism certainly influenced that quite a bit. Not that all of them were Stoics, by any means, but it was a major philosophical school of thought that heavily influenced the thinking of a large number of people. Whether they actively tried to practice all the tenets or not, it still affected the way they thought.

We are going to talk a little later about another group of people, the philosophical school called the Gnostics. It’s kind of like “agnostic,” the word we use today. “Gnostic” means “we know.” They were proud of their knowledge. They had an inside track. Now, we’ve made a lot of progress today; we now have “agnostic,” which means “we don’t know.” After two thousand years, we have come from where the intellectuals prided themselves on what they knew to what they don’t know. Progress marches on.

Neither of them knew. But the Gnostics thought they did. The Gnostics represented a blend of mysticism—Jewish and pagan thought all mixed up together. There were various schools of Gnostics. Many of the early writers give credit to Simon Magus as having been the father of the Gnostics. This is mentioned in the 11th edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica. Eusebius makes reference to that.

Eusebius was a Catholic Church historian of the fourth century. He was contemporary with the emperor Constantine. If you are looking for something that is a blend of pagan and Jewish

thought with a lot of mystic ideas, it shouldn't come as any surprise to find something like that originating in Samaria. After all, didn't the Samaritans appropriate a lot of the trappings of Jewish religion and pay lip service to certainly accepting the first five books of the Bible? Didn't they acknowledge and utilize the name of the God of Israel and call themselves by that name?

We are told back in I Kings 17 that the Samaritans were, in reality, Babylonians by origin; they worshipped the Eternal and served their own god. They paid lip service to the God of Israel. They acknowledged orally, YHWH, the God of Israel, the Eternal, but in reality they just continued the same old pagan religion. They practiced a mixing. The technical term was "synchronism." It's like pouring it all into a pot and mixing it all up—a little bit of this and that. It's kind of like making a gumbo, and it was just as unclean as some of the unclean gumbos today.

They borrowed things from a variety of different religions. There was an overlay that had biblical overtones in the sense that biblical terminology was used. There was a certain tie-in to the Old Testament, but it was really more Babylonian pagan religion—the Old Babylonian Mystery Religion—with the addition of much of the Greek philosophy of the day that was kind of all mingled with it. Simon and many of his followers accepted Christ.

Remember Acts 8:13, 'Simon believed.' So there were many of his followers who had this sort of acceptance, at least outwardly. They paid lip service to Jesus Christ being the Messiah.

They had an influence that began to pervade in many areas in the New Testament congregation. At first it was simply various competing ideas inside the Church. There were people inside the Church who were a part of this or were heavily influenced. Some were, perhaps, direct followers and disciples of Simon Magus and they influenced others. So you have various shades of opinion. There were many in the Church who were influenced by these things. At first, they were a part and seemingly indistinguishable in the Church. It ultimately came to a point that there was a division and a distinction—a separation—between those who were truly the people of God and those who were not.

By the time we get to John's writings in the 90s A.D., in some cases, some were actually being cast out of the Church. When John wrote in I John, he is writing to the very area of Colosse, the area of Asia Minor. There is a lot of evidence

of the Gnostics and many of their teachings that come out in I, II and III John. The background of I, II and III John tie in very directly with the background of Colossians because you're looking at the same geographic area. John is thirty years downstream, so he's another generation removed. Things had degenerated quite a bit from the time Paul had written.

Paul is addressing the Church of God, but there was clearly an element that was a part of the Church that had brought in many of these ideas. It was having an influence on many of God's people. I don't want to go into great details, but I will mention a few concepts of the Gnostics. We are going to cover it in quite a bit of detail. When we finish the Life and Letters of Paul, we will have a Bible study on some of the heresies of the first century—some of the things that actually gave rise to what became the Catholic Church.

We need to understand, just a little bit, because it sets the background for why Paul stressed the things he did in Colossians. When a sermon is preached or a letter is written, not everything that can be said on the subject is said. What you tend to do is focus in on the issues that have been raised. You focus in on the questions that have been asked and you stress certain things.

Mr. Herbert Armstrong may have stressed proving the fact that the Sabbath was in force and effect today, in a way that Peter or Paul did not have to stress that in their sermons because it was simply not an issue. The audience to which they were preaching understood that the Sabbath was in effect. That was not the question. The question was: Is Jesus the Messiah?

Most people today don't have a problem with the fact that, yes, Jesus is the Messiah. The problem today is: What did He teach? Now that is an issue. But the issue that He Himself was the Messiah is not that commonly debated, at least among the professing Christian world. We tend to stress, in the context of the truth, those things that are issues and those things that are misunderstood and need to be clarified. Paul stressed certain things about the person of Jesus Christ—about His divinity and the things that He did—in his letter to the Colossians because these things were being challenged.

The Gnostics had this sort of idea that went back to a pagan dualistic approach—the idea that the spirit is good and the flesh is evil. Then the idea was, if flesh is inherently evil and spirit is inherently good, how can God who is inherently good make something that is flesh, which is inherently bad? How can something good

make something bad? That created a problem for them.

They came to a solution but not a correct solution. They decided that God had created other spirits that were pretty good but were not quite as good as He was. They were the first things that emanated out from Him. They were kind of a step below Him. And they in turn gave rise to the next spirit realm that was a step below them. They went down through what they called twenty-four emanations. They kept getting a little further and further down and finally got down to something that was so far removed from God that it could come into contact with flesh. And that's what made man.

They developed this elaborate hierarchy of angels, demons and all these crazy things. They identified it with astrology, with all the names of the stars and astrological significance and various groups of angelic order and demonic order all the way down. They identified the God of the Old Testament with something that was pretty far removed from what actually gave rise to people.

If you operate on the premise that the flesh is inherently evil, then what you need to do is punish the flesh. Anything that is physically pleasurable is obviously suspect. This is not that far removed from us today.

The Catholic Church has vows of poverty, chastity and humility. The monastic vows—the idea that if you are really holy, if you're really going to be a saint, then everything that would be enjoyable you forswear. You certainly would never marry. You would never enjoy a physical husband-wife relationship. That involves fleshly pleasure. Since you couldn't be holy and do that, you have to make this vow of celibacy. You couldn't sit down and enjoy a good meal or enjoy nice beautiful things.

You get to the basis of all the monastic orders and their vows of poverty—and it kind of trickled down to the masses. By that time, it got down to meatless Fridays. They figured they couldn't really give up very much, so they give up a little bit. Now, we get down to where people give up chocolate or whatever it is for Lent, and they figure they are really mortifying the flesh. These are vows of “giving up”—this great asceticism.

You had groups of Jewish thought that absorbed some of these concepts from the pagan world around them and were somewhere between the Jews and the Samaritans in terms of their concepts. You had all these little obscure groups.

The Essenes were one. They were very, very ascetic; they had many of these things that they got from pagan thought. These were pagan concepts because they didn't come from God or out of the Bible. If you didn't get them from God, where did you get them? God is the only source of truth.

Even if they were absorbed into a small sect of Judaism (these groups of varying shades), certain concepts were popular. This concept of asceticism, self-denial and the concept of penance somehow made you holy. Some of these attitudes of the Gnostics and the concept that was a part of Gnostic philosophy certainly seemed to have impacted the Church in Colosse.

Paul wrote this letter from Rome. We would date it about 60 A.D. Evidently, Epaphras, the minister who had been instrumental in raising up the Churches in Colosse, Laodicea and Hierapolis, had journeyed to Rome to visit Paul, and it made him aware of certain problems in the area.

Paul dwelt a long time in Ephesus. He had not been to Colosse, though he had met and dealt with many of the people. Some of the individuals in Colosse, certainly some of the long-time Church members and certain ones who had probably traveled to Ephesus, knew Paul.

Philemon, for instance, had evidently been personally taught and baptized by Paul. He was a wealthy individual and would have, undoubtedly, traveled to Ephesus on numerous occasions just on business. Paul had not actually been to Colosse, and there were certainly many brethren there whom he did not personally know. But word came to him that there were problems that were creating some misunderstandings and difficulties there in Colosse and through several of the other Churches around there. Laodicea seems to have been impacted.

Paul must have written a letter to the Laodiceans about the same time because he specifically made the request in Colossians that he would like them to read the letter he wrote to the Laodiceans and to let the Laodiceans read the letter he wrote to the Colossians. This tells us Paul wrote many letters.

The idea that Paul only wrote fourteen letters in his life doesn't make a whole lot of sense. There's no telling how many letters Paul wrote. There are certain ones that God had selected to be preserved for the Church at all times. It was not necessary to preserve every word Paul wrote. All of it didn't have a universal message to it. Some of the letters dealt with things that would have been a certain amount of repetition. God

selected those things that He wanted preserved. God selected the things that were going to have value for the Church at all times.

At the time this book of Colossians was written, it seems that Archippus was perhaps serving as a local pastor there in Colosse. This seems apparent in the way that he was addressed. It appears very likely that he was the son of Philemon. Philemon was an elder. He was what we would term a local elder there in Colosse. He was a wealthy individual in the Church, and they actually met in his home. It was perhaps a Roman villa type of place. He was perhaps a wealthy merchant, and the Church met in his home. He was not the Church pastor, but it's very likely that his son Archippus was the Church pastor.

We find in Colossians that Paul is seeking to smash this philosophy. Understand that the term "philosophy" was a general term that basically referred to "any school of thought" or to any school of thought that was current in the world at that time. It could refer to not merely two or three specific Greek philosophical schools of Stoics or Epicureans, etc., but even the varying groups among the Jews were sometimes designated as philosophies. Philosophy was kind of the general term.

He wanted to smash these philosophies that had grabbed hold and were influencing the Church away from the simplicity of Christ. He wanted to expound certain principles of Christian living and also to explain what the mystery of the gospel really was because these Gnostics really went in for the "mysteries." They would initiate you, and through the secret knowledge, the initiated could move up step-by-step. They could progress by degrees up to a relationship with the supreme god. But you had to be "in the know," and they had this sort of inner knowledge.

Let's also look at **Philemon**. It is a short little book. We are going to notice Philemon first and then summarize Colossians.

Philemon was a resident of Colosse. He was a local elder whom Paul had originally baptized. It was written by Paul from Rome at the time that he wrote Colossians, and it seemed to have been prompted by the conversion of Onesimus who was Philemon's runaway slave. There are several things that come out in the book of Philemon.

The story seems to be that Onesimus had run away, as was frequently the case. Rome was filled with runaway slaves and people from throughout the empire. Rome was a big place, and if you wanted to get lost, what you did was

to go to a big city. There is certain anonymity in a big city.

Onesimus had gotten away and had come to Rome. Somehow he had met up with Paul. He had probably known Paul, maybe not personally, but had known of him. He was somewhat familiar with him because of Paul's impact on the family of Philemon. At some point, perhaps he wound up "down-and-out" in Rome. Whatever it was, at some point he met up with Paul.

Paul talked and counseled with him. He worked with him over a period of time and ultimately brought Onesimus to conversion. He was baptized, stayed on for a period of perhaps months and served Paul by doing things for him. Paul was confined to the home, and Onesimus probably took care of all sorts of physical duties—going out and shopping for food, fixing things, and running errands—just being a very valuable assistant and servant who was a lot of help to Paul.

Epaphras had come to Rome and had discussed the situation in Colosse. Paul was preparing to write this letter to the Colossians. He knew that Onesimus had been there for a period of time and he needed to go back and "face the music." He had run away from Philemon and perhaps had stolen some money when he did. That's the logical thing; you don't run away broke. It was important that he take responsibility for his actions. He needed to go back to where he had been. Yet he was apprehensive. He was afraid of what kind of trouble he was going to be in.

Paul was concerned on his behalf. He felt that Onesimus had repented of any sins that had been involved in his actions. He was prepared to follow Paul's advice and go back to the household of Philemon. **But Paul wanted to do what he could to ensure that Onesimus was not going to be severely dealt with.** He wanted to ensure that he was going to be kindly and gently dealt with and not punished for the problems in the past.

He wrote a personal letter to be sent to Philemon. There are a lot of things we can learn from that. We can learn about the proper psychology and tact. Paul was involving himself in what was a personal matter. He didn't choose to just get in and start ordering Philemon around. Philemon 1, "Paul a prisoner [This is part of the basis for knowing he was in Rome.] of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer." This gives us an indication that Philemon was ordained an elder.

Verse 2, “to the beloved Apphia [a woman’s name and most likely Philemon’s wife], Archippus our fellow soldier....” The indication would be someone that was a part of the household, most likely a son. He is addressed as a fellow soldier, which would indicate that he was part of the ministry.

When you go back to Colossians, we find the last admonition Paul had.

Colossians 4:17, “And say to Archippus, ‘Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.’” Archippus is addressed as a minister, undoubtedly as the pastor of the Church there in Colosse. He is addressed in the final admonition of Colossians, as the pastor there, to follow through on the things Paul had told the Church and to fulfill his ministry. When you put Colossians 4:17 together with Philemon 2, we would conclude that Archippus was most likely the pastor of the Church there, and based on Philemon 2, he was very likely the son of Philemon.

In Philemon 2, Philemon and his wife are addressed, as well as Archippus and the Church that meets in Philemon’s house. That would be the Colossian Church. Paul addressed and greeted them.

Philemon 4, “I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers.” He says, ‘I always thank God for you.’ He starts out in a very nice, kind, gentle and positive way. ‘I’ve been praying for you. I’ve heard a lot of the things you have done and how you have helped and served many people (vv. 5-7).

Verses 8-9, “Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, yet for love’s sake I rather appeal to you—being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ—” He says, ‘I realize that I could start giving you orders as an apostle, but I don’t want to do that. I’d rather, for love’s sake, just ask you a favor. I’m an old man. I’m in jail and I’d like you to do me a favor.’

Verse 10, “I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains.” This would certainly be a reference to the fact of Onesimus having been baptized by Paul while Paul was in a Roman prison.

Verse 11, “who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me.” Paul says, ‘I know in times past he was unprofitable to you, but now he’s profitable to both of us.’

Verse 12, “I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart.” ‘I have sent him back to you and I want you to receive him.’

Verse 13, “whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel.” ‘I would have liked to keep him with me. He was helping me. He was serving me and taking care of a lot of needs that I had. He was really kind of taking your place here because I know if you had been here, you would have been anxious to help, to serve me and do whatever you could. It’s like he’s been doing it in your stead. He’s your servant and he’s been here; that’s kind of like you being here doing it.’

Verse 14, “But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.” He tells him, ‘I wouldn’t want to do anything without instructions from you because then your service would be of necessity, not willingly. I started to keep him, but any service you were rendering to me would have been because you were “between a rock and a hard place.” And I wanted any service to be willingly, not because you couldn’t get out of it.’

Verses 15-16, “For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother, especially to me but now much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.”

‘I am going to send him back to you. Maybe the whole point of his running away and coming here was lessons he had to learn. Now he can come back and enter back into a relationship with you that is going to last forever—not simply as a servant, but above a servant, a brother. He is beloved to me, but I know more so to you because you have known him for a long time.’

Verses 17-18, “If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me. But if he has wronged you or owes you anything, put that on my account.” This is an allusion to the fact that he may have stolen some money when he left. Paul says, ‘Put it on my account; charge it to me.’

Verse 19, “I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay—not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides.” He says, ‘I will repay it. Though I am not going to mention to you how you owe me even your own life. If he stole the twenty bucks, charge it to my account. I’ll repay it if you want me to pay it. And I certainly will never mention to you how much you owe me.’ About this time, it’s going to be kind of hard for old Philemon to be too upset at Onesimus.

Verse 20, “Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord.” ‘I really want to hear some good news.’

Verse 21, “Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.” ‘I know you are going to do a whole lot more than I am suggesting. I’ll leave to your imagination ways that you can do this.’

Verse 22, “But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you.” He says, ‘I would like for you to prepare a room for me because I know you’re praying that I am going to be released from prison; as soon as I get out, I am going to come visit you.’ That carries the very subtle implication—‘I am going to know whether or not you did as I suggested because you’re praying for me to get out. I’m sure God is going to hear your prayers, and when I get out, I am going to come see you. Then I will really know whether you did as I suggested for you to do or not.’

He ends up with conclusions. He mentions various others who were there with him.

There is a lot of tact and wisdom used in Philemon. We can certainly learn an important lesson in tact and gentleness in dealing with people about personal matters. **That’s one of the most important lessons we can learn from the book of Philemon in terms of how to deal with people in personal matters.**

We now get on into the book of **Colossians**.

Paul mentions, Colossians 1:7-8, “as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.” Epaphras was the one who had told them these things when he had come there. He remained there in Rome with Paul. He is referred to as a fellow prisoner with Paul in Philemon 23.

Colossians 4:12-13, “Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.” Very likely, he had actually been the one to raise up those three congregations.

When Paul was based in Ephesus, he had various ones working with him whom he sent out and they raised up these congregations. Certain ones, particularly some of the leading ones, probably traveled to Ephesus and were personally instructed by Paul.

Epaphras had traveled from Colosse and had come to Rome. He told Paul what was going on. **Paul’s writing in Colossians is based on what Epaphras had said was going on in Colosse.**

Paul was sending back Tychicus.

Colossians 4:7-9, “Tychicus, who is a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here.”

Paul sent Onesimus back and Tychicus to accompany him. Onesimus had a legal obligation to go back to Philemon. Paul did not presume to start interfering in some of those things, though he wanted Philemon to learn some lessons and to deal with things in a godly way. There are responsibilities depending on the state in which we find ourselves in society. That is why in Colossians Paul gives admonition both to servants and masters.

Colossians 3:22, “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.”

Colossians 4:1, “Masters, give your servants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.” Just coming into the Church doesn’t change all the physical and social relationships and things that exist. The point Paul makes is that there is a transformation of those relationships. If someone was in a position of a master, what he needed to realize was that he had a Master, and he had better deal with those who were his servants the way he hoped God would deal with him.

That would certainly transform the relationship, wouldn’t it? Then you have a relationship that is based on love, giving, serving and helping. You have a transformation from a despotic tyrannical overlord sort of relationship to a relationship like God has with us. God expects us to do what He says. But God deals with us in love, kindness, gentleness and mercy—all these attributes.

Paul addresses husbands, wives, parents, children, servants and masters. He addresses the whole social fabric of the world. He addresses the fact that when we become a Christian, it should transform relationships because the basis of the way we treat others has changed.

In Colossians 1:7-8, he mentions that Epaphras is the source of his information.

Paul's desires for the congregation are given in Colossians 1:10, "that you may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

Verses 12-13, "giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." God the Father has already done this. It's not a matter that you have to work yourself up by degrees, as the Gnostics taught, from darkness to light. God has already translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son. He has already delivered us from the power of darkness. You don't work your way up degree, by degree, by degree.

It's an interesting aside. If you were to read in the writings of the Masonic Order, they have their thirty-three degrees, thirty-two of which are earned degrees. They will tell you in the official writings of the Masonic Order that they trace their system of degrees back to the Gnostics philosophers. The whole basis of working your way up by degrees goes back to that concept. They readily acknowledge that.

I have a book that is the official standard. It's not some book written against or about them. It is the standard work, morals and dogma of the Masonic Order. Most Masons don't have any idea that's the case and would probably deny it. If you have ever seen the book, you would realize that most Masons have never read it. It's a great big thick book. For most, the Masonic Order is a social or fraternal matter. They go through the degree work just as so much "mumbo-jumbo," never realizing where some of it went back to. There are a lot of things that go back to these concepts. Most involved in that today really don't take it seriously as the way of salvation. However, if you look at what it says, that's what it purports to be.

Paul makes plain that we have already been delivered out of the power of darkness. You don't have to work your way out degree by degree.

Verses 14-16, "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him." All of that didn't emanate one out from another. Everything that

exists was created by Jesus Christ as the instrument of creation.

Verse 17-19, "And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell." This really blows the minds of some of these philosophers because the idea that all the fullness of deity would dwell in flesh was kind of beyond them. That flew right in the face of what the Gnostics would have taught.

Verse 20, "and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross." In other words, He brought everything into harmony with Him.

It's important to understand the direction that reconciliation works. We are to be reconciled to God. God does not bring Himself to be in harmony with us. We have to come to be in harmony with Him because He is right and we are wrong. Why should God change to be like us? Why would God say, 'I'll meet you halfway'? Then He'd be half wrong, and half wrong is as good as being entirely wrong. It's kind of like drinking half poison. Generally, it doesn't even take that much to "finish you off." He made peace through the blood of His cross. He paid the penalty for sin. The reason we need to be reconciled is because we have sinned.

Let's go through the context.

Verse 20, "...to reconcile all things to Himself..."

Verses 21-23, "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and irreproachable in His sight—if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel..."

Verse 24, "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you..."

Notice what Paul is saying. We were at one time alienated from God, enemies in our mind because friendship with the world is enmity with God. You can't be the friend of the world and the friend of God.

James 4:4, "...Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." The world is not on God's wavelength. We were at one time friends of the world. We were comfortable with the world and the world was comfortable with us. The only problem was

that when that was the case, we were alienated from God. The reason we got along well with the world was because we lived like the world and acted like the world. We were motivated by the world's set of values. We blended in as a part of the world. We fit in. We don't fit in anymore.

You can't fit in with God and with the world. That's why we're here and not down on Bourbon Street in New Orleans this evening. You don't fit in down there. If you do, then you don't fit in here. If you would feel right at home and in place down there tonight, in the midst of all that Mardi Gras revelry, well, you wouldn't entirely feel in place here. And if you took some of that Mardi Gras crew from down there and stuck them here, they wouldn't feel comfortable. Their mindset is different.

God is going to solve the problem by sending Jesus Christ to condemn sin in the flesh and to pay the penalty for sin to make possible the reconciliation of humanity to God. Paul stresses this to the Colossians. He stresses that we have been reconciled in the body of His flesh. When you understand the overtones of the concepts they had, as far as the distinction between flesh and spirit, this really went against the grain for them.

Verse 23, "if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister." Paul mentions that you have to continue in the faith, grounded and settled, not being stirred up and going off on some tangent. You have to keep anchored on the hope of the gospel.

Verses 25-26, "of which I became a minister according to the stewardship [KJV, "dispensation"] from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints." The Gnostics talked about mysteries. He is going to explain the mystery.

Verses 27-28, "To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." The mystery has to do with Christ in us, the hope of glory. Jesus dwells in us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He lives His life in us.

That is what Paul said in Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not

I, but Christ lives in me, and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Paul explained that to the Galatians. The mystery that has been hidden for generations, the mystery that had never been understood before, was the mystery of conversion and of Christ dwelling in us through the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to be transformed from the inside—renewed and transformed from within.

Colossians 2:1, "For I want you to know what a great conflict [KJV, margin, "care"] I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." This is an indication that he had not actually been to those cities. He knew a number of the individuals personally. He had a special concern for some of these areas that did not have the same personal relationship with him.

Verses 2-3, "[desiring] that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Where are the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? Are you going to find that in some of these various philosophies? No. It is hidden here in God the Father and Christ.

God consists of the Father and of Christ. Just in terms of the trinity, can you imagine a Catholic epistle leaving out the so-called third person of the trinity?

Colossians 1:2, "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Over and over you go through Paul's epistles, and it's always from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The pope would never write anything that way. It would be from Father, Son and the Holy Spirit (or Ghost). There would always be the trinity.

If it had been left out of one or two verses, it wouldn't be so bad. But if the Holy Spirit is a person, it should be getting its feelings hurt by now because it got left out here. Why didn't Paul mention it? Maybe Paul didn't know that. Maybe he hadn't read the Nicene Creed. He was about three hundred years too early. He only knew what Christ had said. He hadn't found out what Constantine and the Bishop of Rome had come up with.

Colossians 2:6, "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him." Stick to the trunk of the tree.

Verses 7-8, “rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”

Verse 10, “and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.” What he is saying “flies in the face” of what some of these people were saying, introducing various philosophical ideas. They weren’t coming in trying to teach against Christ. The Gnostics that came in were not trying to say, ‘Don’t be a Christian anymore.’ They were saying, ‘That’s fine. We are Christians, too. Simon Magus claimed to be a Christian, didn’t he?’ They said, ‘We have some deeper understanding; there are some things that you haven’t heard. There’s a way. We have the “inside track” to spiritual growth and to enlightenment.’

Paul says that you need to be rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught. You need to be anchored and steadfast. Beware of this philosophy, vain deceits, from the society around that didn’t originate with Christ.

Verse 9, “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” Which is the idea that the fullness of the Godhead could dwell in flesh—something that flew in the face of the Gnostic teaching.

Verse 10, “and you are complete in Him...”

Verse 11, “In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands [the circumcision of divine origin]...” The expression “made without hands” signifies divine origin.

In Daniel 2:31-35, Daniel saw the great image, and then at the end, a stone cut without hands smashed the image on its toes and the whole thing turned to dust. “A stone cut out without hands” means that it was “not of human origin.” It was of divine origin.

The circumcision “made without hands” is a circumcision of divine origin.

Verse 11, “In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.”

Evidently circumcision was a factor here. There was a misinterpretation of the significance of circumcision. The Samaritans practiced circumcision. That was one thing they acknowledged because that was mentioned in the first five books of the Bible. They did acknowledge that was right. Many of the Jewish

philosophical groups did that. But we find that those in Colosse who were discussing circumcision completely misunderstood or taught what it was all about.

Verses 12-14, “buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses [KJV, “sins”] and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” If you look up this term “writing of requirements” (KJV, “handwriting of ordinances”), most of the commentaries will bring out that the Greek expression, the sense of it, is a technical term that has reference to a bond of indebtedness.

It is a reference to a handwritten bond of indebtedness, a bill of debt, which is what Christ blotted out. He blotted out our bond of indebtedness, our handwritten “IOU,” as it were, as a result of our sins. This is what was against us—our sins. It was contrary to us. He nailed our sins to the cross. He didn’t do away with the law. Why would He do away with the law? The law was not against us or contrary to us. What He blotted out was our sins. He blotted out the bond of indebtedness, the catalog of our sins, the things that are against us.

Verse 15 (KJV), “And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” He triumphed over Satan and his entire realm.

Verse 16, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink or in respect of a holy day or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days.”

As a result of what Christ has done, of blotting out our sins and taking them out of the way, having triumphed over everything, don’t let anybody call you into question in respect of matters of eating and drinking.

“Eating and drinking” is the sense of the word “meat”; it is translated meat and drink. My margin says, “for eating and drinking.” It’s not so much “food or drink” as it is the act of eating and drinking. Our sins have been taken out of the way and blotted out. Christ has triumphed over everything. Don’t let somebody call you into question in matters of eating and drinking or in respect of Holy Days or a new moon or Sabbath.

Verse 17, “which are a shadow of things to come; but the body of Christ.” Don’t let

somebody call you into question in these regards. He specifically mentions eating and drinking, as well as other aspects of these festive occasions. The one thing Holy Days, Sabbath and new moons all had in common (new moons were never commanded as holy time) was they were festive occasions. They were occasions that were normally accompanied by eating and drinking, a time of festivity. The festive nature of all these things looked forward to a time when Christ is going to make a feast of fat things for all people (Isaiah 25:6).

Verses 18-19, "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind."

This gets into some of these mystic ideas of the Gnostics. There were various sectarian groups and the influence of many of the Samaritans. Many of them were influenced by the pagan thought that filtered through the Samaritans and influenced other little groups of Jews with all this sort of mystic ideas. Don't let anybody beguile you in this, intruding into things with all these human ideas and these dogmas. He summarizes what they are.

Verse 21, "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle." That's pretty much the equivalent of the ascetic vows of touch not (being a reference to celibacy), taste not (this ascetic forswearing of meat or wine and milk—some of these ascetic groups gave up all sorts of things, living on very rigorous diets, which were all human ideas) and do not handle (giving up or forswearing physical wealth).

Verse 22, "which all perish with the using...."

Verse 23, "These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh." These things all look impressive to the world. People are impressed with that. They look at somebody who sits cross-legged wearing nothing but a loincloth and lives on grapes. They think this is a holy man. The term referring to these men in India is "fakers." I think they are closer to the truth than they realize. They are "fakers." It's a distorted concept of holiness and of sainthood.

If you want to get some laughs about the misunderstanding of what is a saint, go to a library and get a Catholic book on all the saints. You will come up with the craziest things you can imagine. One guy stayed perched on top of some tall obelisk for so many years that this

really made him a holy man. People made pilgrimages to come and hear his "wisdom." Just crazy! But the pagan world has gone in for that, whether it's the Catholic world or you can go over to Asia and the Buddhists.

Paul said not to let someone call you into question about these festive occasions. These things foreshadow; they are a shadow of Christ. The whole festive nature of God's celebration and the things that God's people did, all look forward—they foreshadow a reality. Don't let them trick you out of your reward by getting you to go and do all these things, getting involved in worshipping angels and all this silly mysticism that they have and not focusing on Christ, the Head (v. 19).

Verse 20, "Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—" If you are no longer a part of this world, then why get tangled up in some of these concepts. These things that look impressive to the world certainly require a lot of willpower and tremendous exercise in self-discipline, but that's not the way to salvation. They miss the whole point. It's a distorted concept.

Colossians 3:1, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above...." That's the point.

We realize that if our lives are wrapped up in Christ, then, v. 4, when He appears, we are going to be like Him in glory, just like He is.

Therefore, vv. 5-9, what you need to mortify, get rid of, are the old ways of living. We are to put to death the sexual uncleanness and the covetousness, the things for which the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience. We may have formerly done those things, but we are not to do them any more. We have to get rid of the anger, malice, wrath, blasphemy and the filthy communication. Don't lie to one another. You're getting rid of the old man.

Verse 10, "and have put on the new, who is renewed in knowledge [the real knowledge], according to the image of Him that created him." From a spiritual standpoint, the physical divisions are not relevant. From a physical standpoint, our ethnic origin or our social status does not impact our relationship with God. Paul is not talking about a physical revolution in the sense that some have tried to distort it. There are crazy ideas like communal living, having everything in common. Certain communes share everything, wives, property, etc. People want to read things into what the Bible says.

Verses 18-25—4:1 speak of wives, husbands, children, fathers, servants and masters. Physical relationships still exist in the physical realm, but they, themselves, are transformed. Our relationship with God and our opportunity to be a part of God's Kingdom is not based on our physical standing, either from an ethnic standpoint, gender, economic status or social status.

Colossians 3:11, "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all."

Verses 10-12, we are to put on the attitude of God.

Verse 13, "bearing [KJV, "forbearing"] with one another, and forgiving one another..." This is one thing we all owe one another. This is the attitude we are to have: if a misunderstanding or a dispute arises, "Forbearing and forgiving one another." "Forbear" means "to put up with." Sometimes that's all you can do with some people. But then, God puts up with us. That should tell us something. God forgives us. We should forgive one another.

Verse 14, "But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection." That's what binds us together.

Verse 15, "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful."

He talks about the transformation of physical relationships that should take place. Our lives as a Christian should be different.

Colossians 4:6, "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one." What does that mean "seasoned with salt"? Sometimes we have heard the reference of somebody being a "salty" character. This is not what you think of. What does it mean? When we think of salt, most of us think of a flavor enhancer. Salt enhances the flavor.

[End of tape]

Bible Study # 64 Questions

SURVEY OF THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF PAUL SERIES

Colossians and Philemon

1. What was Paul's purpose in writing Philemon?
2. Who was Philemon?
3. What important lesson can be learned from Philemon?
4. Who is revealed in Colossians as the instrument of creation?
5. What was the biggest problem in Colosse?
6. What was the "handwriting of ordinances" which was against us?
7. Explain Colossians 2:16-17.
8. What should a Christian's attitude be toward a brother if a misunderstanding or a dispute has arisen?
9. Prove that Paul was in prison when Colossians and Philemon were written.
10. Explain Colossians 4:6.

Bible Study # 65
February 26, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

Life and Letters of Paul Series—Ephesians and Philippians

We are continuing our survey of the Life and Letters of the Apostle Paul, covering the books of Ephesians and Philippians. They are both very short little books, and yet there is a lot that is in these books. They were written during the time of Paul's Roman imprisonment. Some of the modern commentators choose to disagree with that. Some of them just like to come up with anything that is different from what everybody else has always said. They figure their "claim to fame" is to have something different to hear—some new thing.

We are going to notice as we go through, that there's certainly reference to the fact that Paul was in prison in Rome. He mentions Caesar's household (Philippians 4:22), and the fact of those before whom he was coming (Philippians 1:12-13) as certain evidence it was written at the time when he was in prison in Rome.

Ephesians 6:20 mentions, "for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." He specifically mentioned that he was chained.

He mentions in v. 21 that Tychicus was the bearer of this letter and would make known the details when he came there to the Church in Ephesus. This Tychicus is also mentioned in Colossians 4:7 as the individual who bore the letter to the Colossians. Ephesus and Colosse were near one another. It is certainly very likely, based on this, that Ephesians was written at about the same time as Colossians. It was clearly sent by the same individual, Tychicus. Reference is made there.

Ephesus was a major city. It was the capital of what was called Roman Proconsular Asia. When we say "Asia" today, we think of a whole vast continent. "Asia," as the term was normally used in classical Greek and Roman history, had to do with a portion of what is today modern-day Turkey. There was the peninsula that is called Asia Minor and there was a Roman Province of Asia, which was where the Churches were located that the Apostle John addressed in Revelation 2 and 3—the letters to the seven Churches. Those Churches were all located in that general area of Asia or Asia Minor. The Roman Province was the western portion; the western edge of Asia Minor.

Ephesus was a major trading city. It had sea connections with Greece. It had connections with both Achaia, which is southern Greece down where Athens was, as well as Macedonia, which was up in the northern part where Philippi was. There were overland connections from Ephesus, coming down overland through what is now modern-day Turkey to Syria. It was a major trade route because it was located close to the sea. It was just a matter of a few miles away from the coast. It was involved in a lot of trade. It was kind of a connecting point, a jumping-off point, for Greece and Europe to the west, as well as a route overland to cut through to the Euphrates River or down through to Syria.

The worship of Diana, one of the goddesses of the Romans and Greeks, was the state religion. A huge statue of Diana dominated the Ephesus harbor. The city had an ancient origin as a Greek colony. That's the way it had originally been established. There was a sizable Jewish population as well as an established synagogue there.

Philippi was in Macedonia. Macedonia is northern Greece and actually extends up into a portion of what is today southern Yugoslavia. Philippi was built and named by Philip of Macedon, who named it after himself. It's amazing how many people build things and name them after themselves. The world is filled with "humility."

It's kind of like the nation of Saudi Arabia, which takes its name from the father of the present king. His name was King Saud. He thought that was a nice name and just named the whole nation after himself. Philippi was named by Alexander the Great's father; he named it after himself.

There had originally been an ancient Phoenician city there. It was a very strategic trading location. The Phoenician city had been wiped out, but Philip of Macedon built a Greek city there. It was later rebuilt by the emperor Augustus. It's a very fertile area. There was a gold mining industry in that area, about twelve miles from the coast. It was a major Macedonian mercantile center because it was on one of the major Roman roads.

There were, however, very few Jews in Philippi. There wasn't a synagogue. The evidence from the book of Acts was that there were only a few women who met on the Sabbath out by a riverbank out of town (Acts 16:12-13). It was sort of a secluded park-like setting. The indication is there was just a handful.

Lydia, who was a seller of purple, we are told, was the first convert (Acts 16:13-15). This was the first area where the gospel was preached in Europe.

Paul had spent quite a bit of time in Ephesus on his third evangelistic journey. He spent two years in Ephesus (Acts 19:10). Since the Apostle Paul was there that length of time, the Church was very solidly established and very well organized.

Paul left Ephesus and went on to Greece. Remember he spent several months there, went through Macedonia, spent three months wintering in Corinth and came back up to Macedonia (Acts 20:1-3). Then he left to go back to Jerusalem in order to be there for Pentecost of 56 A.D. (v. 16).

He made arrangements to meet with the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17-18). It was obviously a well-organized church. There were elders and deacons, and Paul had utilized the time there. It seems to have been, in many ways, sort of the leading or headquarters Church of the area of Asia Minor. In fact, in later years after the destruction of Jerusalem, it was the area where the Apostle John (the last of the apostles living) lived in the latter years of his life. In that sense, the true Church was centered in Ephesus.

The Ephesian Church was the heart and core of the Church of God in the last portion of the first century because the Jerusalem Church had been destroyed by that time. There were remnants of the Church in Pella, but it was scattered. We find the Apostle John living there until almost the end of the first century. In the second century, we find Christians who were keeping the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread—observing the Holy Days. There are specific references to that.

When we pick up the story (those events were many years after what we read here in the Bible in the book of Ephesians), it would tell us that if the Ephesian Church was that strong at a later time in history (fifty, seventy-five, almost one hundred years down the road from when Paul was writing this), then it would certainly tell us that it would have been a strong, well-established Church that stood the test of time for another generation or so.

The Philippian Church was also one in which Paul had spent a pretty fair amount of time. It was a well-organized Church. It seems to have been very generous and spiritually mature.

We will notice there is not a lot of correction in Ephesians and Philippians. They did not have the

sort of problems that Corinth or Thessalonica had. Paul, in some of his epistles, was very highly corrective. He did not have to be so here because these were areas that were not encountering major problems.

Some Churches encountered problems in terms of lifestyle. In Corinth, there was a tendency toward immorality. Not just immorality but also a tolerance of immorality. There was a tolerant attitude toward immorality in the congregation. In other areas, such as Galatia and Colosse, there was a tendency toward heretical movements and towards ideas and concepts that “smacked” very strongly of the Gnostic influence and things that ultimately gave rise to the Catholic Church. Some Churches had their problems with lifestyle; others, with doctrine. Ephesus and Philippi seemed to not have had those major problems.

Paul dealt with some deep spiritual and philosophical concepts. He wrote both of these Epistles pretty close together. He dealt with a lot of things.

Notice in **Ephesians**. Before we get into it, just to set the stage, one thing I might mention is what was known in history as the “two-church theory.” Maybe you have never heard of the two-church theory, but there is a progression that people use to reason themselves astray.

One of the early Catholic historians makes reference to the Millennium. He said that what was at first routinely and commonly believed everywhere, became by degrees simply one opinion on the subject, and then ultimately became viewed as heresy—as a superstition. In other words, there was a progression on the doctrine on the Millennium.

At one time everybody was in agreement. That’s the way it was. When you moved fifty to seventy-five years down the road, it was merely an opinion that some held. It was a tolerated opinion. There were those who literally believed in the one thousand-year reign of Christ, and there were others who didn’t believe it was to be taken literally. By the time you progress another fifty to seventy-five years down the road, it had come to be viewed as an error and superstition, and something of which the proponents were to be persecuted for and driven out of the Church. There was a progression in terms of how some of these things came about in the first century.

We recognize there was a fundamental problem concerning the law. How do we know there was a fundamental problem concerning the law? We read what Jesus said and did in the gospel accounts. When we read the book of Acts, we

find a Church that kept the law. James referred to the headquarters Church and those who constituted the Church in Jerusalem as zealous for the law (Acts 21:20). When we are introduced to the Church of God in the New Testament, we are introduced to a Church that kept the law. When we meet up with the earlier incipient Catholic Church (as the curtain begins to rise in the third century), we find a church that wasn't keeping the law. How did they make a transition? How do you make a transition from keeping the Sabbath and holy days to not keeping the Sabbath and holy days? One of the major ways that this progression was made was by a doctrine that began to be promulgated.

We will notice from the book of Ephesians that it was already getting started at that time. Some of the Gnostics that we met up with in Colosse were already getting some groups that were propounding this. It did not really become a popular doctrine until right around the end of the first century. Really, it began after the destruction of Jerusalem and in the last years of the Apostle John's life. Once he was dead, it became the ascendant doctrine and the official teaching of the church at Rome, and then it became absorbed elsewhere.

The so-called two-church teaching was that there was one set of rules for the Jews and another set for the Gentiles. The original transition was the Sabbath and the holy days. They said it was fine that the Jews continued to do that, but the Gentiles didn't have to. They said the Gentiles were not obligated to observe the law, although the Jews were. In areas of Judea or areas where the Jewish population was the majority, this was fine. But Gentiles didn't observe the law; it wasn't necessary because those things only applied to the Jews.

Their original doctrine was one of tolerance. That's fine; they didn't try to interfere with the Jews keeping the law. It's just that it didn't apply to the Gentiles. They sought to make a distinction between what God expected of Jews and what He expected of Gentiles. There was a great emphasis on different sets of standards that they had that was clearly beginning at the time Paul wrote Ephesians. By the end of the first century, the idea that there was a different set of standards that God expected of Jews and Gentiles was a major controversy in many areas. As they ultimately got the ascendancy and the power, then it was the fact that not only should the Gentiles not keep the law, but also the Jews shouldn't be doing it either.

Then there began to be an open hostility toward the law and toward any who kept the law. There was an attempt to stir up persecution against it as the Roman church moved closer to becoming the official religion of the Roman Empire. There was a gradual shift between a tolerance of the law and yet teaching that it was not necessary for Gentiles to keep it. In many areas where there were Jews, it was fine to go ahead and do that. But in areas where it is just Gentile congregations, it was not really necessary.

This was the original excuse of the group at Rome—some of the followers of Simon Magus and others. This was their explanation of why they didn't keep the law. It wasn't necessary because they were centered in the Gentile areas. They sought to spiritualize away the law saying it was not to be taken literally. They said a lot of it was allegory and there was also a difference in what was expected of Jews and Gentiles. They confused the fact.

The Jews continued to circumcise their children, and there wasn't anything in the New Testament that expected them to do otherwise. The emphasis of the controversy of circumcision was the fact that it was not a matter of spiritual salvation. Gentiles who were being converted and coming into the Church were not required to be circumcised in order to be received into the Church. The controversy over circumcision had to do with access to God. But it was a physical sign of the covenant of the people of the descendants of Abraham, and there wasn't any expectation that Jewish Christians would cease doing so—nor did they.

All the way on up to 135 A.D., the statement is made that the Church in Pella, which was the remnants of the Jerusalem Church, was presided over by circumcised Jews. All of the leadership and ministry there were circumcised Jews. This was all the way up to a hundred years after the time of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. It was never an issue among the Jewish population.

Some of these Gnostic teachers and other early heretics sought to make a distinction. They said, 'Some of those things, the Jews do it, but it doesn't apply to us. Really, none of the law, the Sabbath, all of these matters of the law, these things really don't apply to Gentiles. If we are living in a Jewish area, it's fine to go to church on the Sabbath, but there isn't any point for us to. We are not expected to.'

Paul stresses in the book of Ephesians that this was just getting started. It didn't really become full blown until several decades later, but Paul

could see it already beginning. These heresies of the “two-church theory” were already beginning to be promulgated. **Paul lays great emphasis in the book of Ephesians on the fact that it was one body. There was not a distinction. There was not a basis of spiritual distinction between Jews and Gentiles.** That is not valid. There isn’t a spiritual distinction to be made whatsoever.

Notice:

Ephesians 1:1, “Paul an apostle by the will of God....”

He greets them.

Verses 1-5, “...To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us [the Church] in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.”

God has preordained. Here, we come to predestination or election or choosing. The world does not understand predestination.

The followers of John Calvin emphasized predestination and their belief in election. Because others emphasized their beliefs in free will, they had great controversy. None of them understood either subject; that is what it amounts to. You can’t understand predestination if you think that today is the only day of salvation.

The universal lie that is believed by all of them is the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. If the soul is immortal, you have to do something with it when it dies. You have to send it somewhere—heaven, hell or the Catholics who are stuck in purgatory. The Protestants had to get rid of purgatory because they couldn’t find it in the Bible. If they had looked a little harder, they couldn’t have found going to heaven or hell either. But if you hold on to the immortality of the soul, you have to send the soul somewhere. And if you have to send the soul somewhere when you die, then that means it is all over with; that is when judgment is made.

You can’t understand predestination or elected or chosen if you think that the issue is whether or not you will be saved. God has not predestined some to be saved and others to be lost. What He has predestined is that there will be a Church—firstfruits. He predestined that before the

foundation of the world; God knew where He was going before He started.

Can you imagine somebody setting out to build a house and he doesn’t have any house plans? He doesn’t know the dimensions of the house, doesn’t know the details of how it is going to be built, what the pitch of the roof is going to be and what materials he is going to use, etc. I have seen a house or two that I suspect was built that way, but that’s not really the best way to do things. There’s a lot of work and effort that goes into planning out what you are going to have before you ever get started. God didn’t just start kind of creating a few things, throwing it out and saying, ‘That looks pretty good; maybe I’ll stick something else over here.’ Before He ever started, God knew where He was going. He had a great master plan.

It’s just like the seven-day week. God didn’t work as hard as He could for six days and, finally, at the end of it, He was tired and had to rest. Then afterwards He thought, ‘That’s a pretty good idea; I think I’ll just have everybody do that from now on.’ That’s not the way it happened at all. It took six days because God determined that it would take six days. He had determined to sanctify the Sabbath because He was illustrating a great master plan. A day with the Lord is as a thousand years (II Peter 3:8). He had a plan in mind.

The festivals, which were not introduced to the Church until the time of Moses, were nevertheless in mind.

In Revelation 13:8, we are told, “the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world.” In other words, before God ever started, He had a plan in mind and that included the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, and the whole works. God had a plan. He knew where He was going. The first law of success is to have a goal.

There was a little book written for young people back a number of years ago. The title of it was a little catchy title, If You Don’t Know Where You are Going, You Will Probably End Up Somewhere Else. That’s the way a lot of people are. They don’t know where they are going, and sure enough, they end up somewhere else. Well, God hasn’t ended up somewhere else. He is going to end up exactly where He intended to end up because He had a plan to begin with.

He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Before He ever got started, He had in mind that He was going to call out firstfruits. That doesn’t mean that God had plotted out the genealogy of every human being that would ever

be born and every combination of parents that has occurred since Adam and had that planned out ahead of time. No, that's ridiculous. Start thinking through what would have to be done to do that.

God planned out an overall scope and scheme of things. That doesn't mean that predestination means that everything you do is already preprogrammed.

The statement was made of Judas that this betrayal was done to fulfill the scriptures (Matthew 26:54-56), but woe be to him by whom it is done (Matthew 26:24). It was determined that somebody was going to betray Him. That's not hard to predict. You put the right people in the right place and somebody's going to do something like that. God knew that some of these things were going to happen, but He didn't pick out and make somebody fulfill that prophecy against his will.

The Beast and the false prophet are going to arise on the world scene, but God's not going to make somebody fulfill that role against his will. It is a matter that those roles are going to be fulfilled. God has pre-determined and will move things around, but there can be various individuals who, if they got the opportunity, would jump for the chance. God doesn't have to really look too far for volunteers on most of that. It is just a matter of letting the right person get into the position.

I'll use the illustration with the prophecy where it talks about the king of the South. God wouldn't have to look very far for volunteers. Saddam would like to volunteer. If God is taking volunteers, he has his hand up. He'd like to be the one, whether he will be or not. But you know, if he's taken out of the way, somebody else will be there—'Let me be next. I would like to do it.' It isn't a problem. God doesn't have to force somebody into fulfilling a role against his will. It's just that circumstances that are conducive come along, and God allows these circumstances.

God talks about a final stage in the history of the Church that is characterized by a lukewarm, watered-down attitude. That's a part of prophecy, just as much as the coming together of the Beast power. God hasn't picked out you or me and said, 'I am going to make you become lukewarm.' We just live in a society that is conducive to that. God knows that is going to be the tendency. That doesn't mean He has picked somebody out, and it doesn't matter how much you pray and study and fast, you are going to have to be lukewarm because God is going to make you lukewarm. No, that's not what

predestination means. It doesn't mean that God is going to make you fit into a role that you don't choose.

But God has predetermined ahead of time that there's going to be a Church. He's outlined a basic history and development of that Church. He made decisions before He ever got started. Predestination involves firstfruits who would be holy, who would be without blame, who would become His children.

Ephesians 1:7, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins...." We have redemption through Christ's blood.

It continues, vv. 11-12, "in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, that we should be predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things out to the counsel of His own will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory."

It talks about being sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise and the guarantee (KJV, "earnest") of our inheritance (vv. 13-14).

God gives us His Spirit, and He likens that to being the earnest of our inheritance. That's the guarantee that He is going to ultimately change out mortal bodies from flesh to spirit. Jesus Christ is described in the book of Colossians as the firstborn from the dead (Colossians 1:18). None of us has been born from the dead yet. Christ is the firstborn from the dead. Now, if He's the firstborn, that means there are others who will be born later.

Flesh and blood can't inherit the Kingdom of God. Corruption doesn't inherit incorruption (I Corinthians 15:50). We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. God gave us His Spirit, and we are ultimately going to be born into His very Family. Not a physical birth, but a spiritual birth. We are sealed, set apart and authenticated as genuine, and that is the guarantee (KJV, "earnest") of our inheritance. It is the proof that we are going to be born into His very Family.

Just like if you are going to buy a house, you put down earnest money, which tells the owner that you are going to come back and pay for it. God gives us a little bit of His Spirit; that's the earnest of our inheritance. We haven't received that inheritance yet, but we have the guarantee because God is going to fulfill what He says.

There are many scriptures in the book of Ephesians that relate to the Day of Pentecost. I am going to come back and tie in with that.

The book of Ephesians probably relates to, expounds and explains the spiritual significance of Pentecost more than any other single book in the New Testament. In many

ways, you could correlate it with the book of Ruth in the Old Testament. We will notice the correlation of a tie-in with the book of Ruth.

Ephesians 2:1-3, “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who [which] now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”

We were a part of the world. We lived like the world. We fit in with the world and were comfortable with the world. We shared the world’s values and priorities and we fit in with that. We were as good as dead because of sin. God has had mercy and has given us the opportunity for life. When we walk according to the course of this world and not in the paths of righteousness, the course of this world is motivated and determined by the prince of the power of the air, Satan the devil. He’s the same spirit that works in the children of disobedience.

Verses 4-5, “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).”

Verses 8-10, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” It’s not a matter of you earning your salvation. “By grace are you saved...we are His workmanship.” God is making something out of us. He is transforming and changing us.

Verse 11, “Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—” The Church that Paul is addressing here is a Church that was primarily Gentile.

Verse 12, “that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” He reminds them of their state. You were cut off; you had no connection. You were without Christ and were outside of the physical commonwealth of Israel. You were not a descendant of Abraham; you were not an heir of

the promise. You were outside the scope of what God had promised. You didn’t have any hope; you didn’t know God.

And yet, vv. 13-14, “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us.”

In the temple, there was a wall of partition, a wall that separated the court of the Israelites from the court of the Gentiles. Unless the Gentiles were circumcised and had undergone the conversion rite of Judaism, they could not enter into the area where sacrifices were made. They didn’t have access to God. Jesus Christ has made peace. He’s made both Israelites and Gentiles one. He broke down the middle wall of partition between us, the things that made for separation in the spiritual sphere. Other statements in Colossians and Galatians make similar statements.

Colossians 3:11, “where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.”

Galatians 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Obviously, we still are male and female in the physical sense. We still are whatever our ethnic origin or economic status in the physical sense, but those things, in terms of our relationship to God, don’t have relevance. Whether you are a man or a woman, whether you are Gentile or Israelite, rich or poor, these things only have meaning and significance in the physical realm—in the physical society and community. But in terms of the Family of God and in terms of being a part of God’s Kingdom, those distinctions don’t have any relevance to our relationship to God. Whether you are a male or female—regardless of any other physical factor—we can all have the same access to God. There was a court of the women in the temple. The court of the Israelites, if you wanted to be technical, was the court of the Israelite men. You can go back and you had the varying distinctions that were made. The point Paul is making here is that access to God no longer has physical distinctions. Physical distinctions don’t have any bearing in terms of access to God.

Ephesians 2:15-18, “having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man, from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile

them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”

We all have access to God through Christ. It doesn't matter how much money you have or who your ancestors were; that's totally irrelevant to our access to God. We all have to enter (our access to God) through the same One, which is Jesus Christ. Paul is stressing this.

Verses 19-22, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.”

What we have is a spiritual unity, which is in direct contrast to this so-called two-church doctrine that was being promulgated—the idea that there was the one set of rules for the Jews and another set for the Gentiles. Paul is making plain that we all have access to God through one Spirit, through Jesus Christ. Our access is not based on these physical distinctions. Our access is based on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Nobody had a “leg up” or “down.” We are all on the same “leg” when it comes to that.

Ephesians 3:1-2, “For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you.” It was because of some of this that there had been so much enmity stirred up by some of the Jews in Jerusalem. Not the converted ones, but others who really resented the teachings that Paul had. Remember the original charge they had against him was that he had brought a couple of Greeks into the court of the Israelites at the temple, which he had not done (Acts 21). It was ultimately because of Paul's teachings in these areas that “trumped-up” charges had been brought against him.

Verses 4-6, “by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel.”

Verses 9-12, “and to make all people see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.”

Verses 14-21, “For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

He talks about a mystery, which has to do with the fact that all human beings (Jew and Gentile) may, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, become children of God to ultimately be born into the Family of God. That is something the world does not understand.

Verse 6, “...fellow heirs and partakers of His promise....”

He mentions “the mystery” in vv. 3-4.

Verse 9, “...the fellowship of the mystery....” – Things that haven't been understood.

Verse 17, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts....”

Verse 19, “to know the love of Christ....” We have a covenant relationship that is brought out here.

The Church is being built up as a spiritual temple.

Ephesians 2:20-21, “having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.” The prophets were the writers of the Old Testament; the apostles were the writers of the New Testament.

Verse 22, “in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.” God is carrying out a vast construction project. The physical temple was to be built according to a certain specified way. The reason why it was so important to follow the instructions is because all of those physical specifications were representative (illustrative) of the spiritual plan that God is working out. We have this description that is brought out here.

We commented earlier on how Christ had abolished in His flesh the enmity, the law of commandments contained in ordinances (Ephesians 2:15). In other words, He abolished the things that made for artificial separation between Jew and Gentile, the artificial separation in spiritual matters. In terms of access to God, He abolished the things that made for artificial separation and distinction. In terms of access to God, it was illustrated by this partition in the temple that separated those who were circumcised and those who weren't. Christ abolished that.

He abolished the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. It came down at the time He was crucified—at the time He died (Matthew 27:51). It was symbolic of our direct access to the Father. It is through Jesus Christ and His sacrifice that all of us share access to God.

This was one of the great issues of the early New Testament period and why circumcision kept “cropping up.” The whole issue had to do with how you gain access to the presence of God. It is ultimately the presence of God that is the source of holiness. What makes us a holy people is the indwelling of the presence of God. This matter of the basis for access to God was a difficult concept for some to grasp.

I mentioned Ruth. We have explained in sermons and Bible studies that the book of Ruth is the book the Jews traditionally read at Pentecost. Ruth is the story of a marriage between a Gentile and an Israelite. Ruth was a Gentile; she was a Moabite, which meant the same basic family of Abraham. The Moabites were descendants of Lot who was Abraham's nephew. But they were not circumcised. They were not heirs of the promise to Abraham.

They were Gentiles, therefore, outside of the covenant even though it was a similar family and came from the same basic stock. Lot followed Abraham when he left Ur of the Chaldeans, but God didn't make the covenant with Lot. Lot's family—even though they were related, a kindred people—were still outside the scope of

God's promises and outside the scope of the covenant. The covenant did not apply to them. The same thing with Ishmael; Ishmael is a descendant of Abraham. He was a son of Abraham, but the covenant didn't apply to him. It only applied to Isaac. Isaac was the son of promise. Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. But the covenant didn't apply to Esau. He was outside the scope of it. It only applied to Jacob and his twelve sons. That's part of God's election, God's choosing.

Why are you in the Church and your neighbor isn't? Because God decided to call you and decided that He wouldn't call your neighbor right now. Why did God make His covenant with one group of people and not with another? Because He chose to! It's part of the sovereignty of God. God is the Sovereign of the Universe and has the right to make choices, and He does. He chose to call you and me now and not our neighbor, friends or relatives who may be just as good, maybe a better person, than we are. It's not a matter of what you deserved. God made the choice because He decided to. He has His reasons and He doesn't have to explain them to us.

Do you know why, exactly, He chose to call you right now? I don't know why He chose to call me right now. I would like to ask that someday. I'm glad He did. I can look around and think of a lot of people He could have chosen. But He didn't choose to. God has the right to make choices, and that's what “election” is all about. “Election” is what we think of as one man, one vote. This is one man, one vote in the literal sense. God has the only vote. That's the way the election is—God electing or choosing. The term “election” simply means “choosing.” The “elect” are those who are “chosen.” God has chosen us as His people.

The story of Ruth is the story of a marriage between a Gentile (one who was without the promises of God and outside the covenant and election) and a prince of Israel. She was married to Boaz who was a prince of Israel. Because of the marriage, Ruth became an inheritor of the promises to Abraham. The Jews have traditionally read Ruth at Pentecost. Pentecost is representative of the covenant, of the marriage relationship, between Old Testament Israel and Christ, and later on, between the Church (New Testament Israel) and Christ.

Ephesians 2:22 explains Gentiles become part of spiritual Israel through the power of the Holy Spirit.

If you read Ephesians 2 with the story of Ruth in mind, you find that was Ruth's category and situation.

Verses 11-12, "Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."

She made the choice.

Ruth 1:16, "...Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God."

She embraced the covenant of God. She married Boaz and actually became an heir of the throne of David and of Jesus Christ. In that way, that story was read at Pentecost to symbolize the fact of God calling His people out of the world, joining them into a marriage covenant with Him through which they could become heir of the promises. There was a symbolism that the book of Ruth illustrated.

The book of Ephesians explains the spiritual significance of the story of Ruth. The Jews could read it and understand it was a nice story, and they could see a few parallels to God calling Israel and the marriage covenant at Sinai, the Old Covenant. But Ephesians 2 explains the spiritual significance. It was really a type of the relationship of Christ and the Church because all of us were, at one time, in this category.

As we come on back through the book, Ephesians 4:1, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling [KJV, "vocation"] with which you were called." Being a Christian is a full-time job.

Verses 3-6, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord; one faith; one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

There are not two churches. There's not a Jewish and a Gentile church with different sets of rules. There is one body and one Spirit, and we are to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Verse 8, "...When He [referring to Christ] ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men."

When did Christ ascend on high? The Catholics work up quite a deal on this. I know a number of you were Catholic prior to coming into the Church. According to the official Catholic teaching, Abraham and David and all the patriarchs of the Old Testament—none of them

went to heaven. Did you know that? The Catholic Church doesn't teach that any of them went to heaven. They went to a compartment of hell. But it wasn't the bad part of hell. They claim there are a lot of parts of hell, and they went to a part called "limbus potrim," which is limbo—this vague existence—the limbo of the fathers.

Their teaching is that when Christ was in the grave (or his soul in hell), they believe that He went down there; then when he ascended up to heaven, he took Abraham and all the others with Him. He led them out and limbus potrim is empty now because He emptied it out. They had been held captive, and he took them up to heaven. This is their explanation of that. That's incorrect. That's not what happened. The simple proof text is in the book of Acts.

Days after Christ had finally ascended to heaven and taken anybody He was going to take, Peter said, Acts 2:29, 34, "'Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day...For David did not ascend into the heavens...'" That didn't mean Christ had forgotten him. What is the ultimate captivity? Death!

I Corinthians 15:54-55, "So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?'"

The point of Ephesians 4:8 is it refers to Christ's activity on the day of the wave sheaf, the day during the Days of Unleavened Bread. He was resurrected at basically sunset at the end of the Sabbath, three days and three nights after He was buried. Early the next morning, prior to the time the wave sheaf was offered in the temple, He was seen by Mary Magdalene, but He didn't allow her to touch Him.

He said, John 20:17, "...I have not yet ascended to the Father...." Later on that day He allowed the disciples to embrace Him because He had ascended to the Father (John 20:17; Matthew 28:9). He was the wave sheaf, the first of the firstfruits of them that slept (I Corinthians 15:20), the firstborn from those who have fallen asleep (died) (Colossians 1:18). He ascended to the Father to be accepted as the first of the firstfruits. When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men.

I Corinthians 15:54 tells us about a time when death is swallowed up in victory.

I Corinthians 15:55-57, “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades [Grave], where is your victory?” The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” We are given the victory through Jesus Christ. We read here about death being swallowed up in victory.

Romans 6:16, “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness.”

Verse 23, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.”

John 8:32, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

Verses 34-36, “...‘whoever commits sin is a slave to sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.’”

Ephesians 4:8, “...‘When He [Christ] ascended on high, He led captivity captive....’” He triumphed over death.

I Corinthians 15:54, “...‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’” Death is the ultimate captivity from which no one can escape.

In the early decades of this century was a very famous magician, Harry Houdini. He was the Amazing Houdini, the great escape artist. He could escape from anything. This was his “thing.” He had debunked a lot of fortunetellers, mystics and all this sort of thing. He was always intrigued by that and wondered if somebody could come back from the dead. Shortly prior to his death, he had a private conversation with his wife. He gave her a secret code or signal, and he told her he had never met anything he couldn’t escape from. If it were possible to escape from death (the grave) he would do that, too. He was sure a lot of these fortune tellers were going to try to claim he had come back, and this code was going to be a way that she would know that it was really him. And, of course, Houdini never escaped. That was the captivity that he couldn’t get out of. He had escaped a lot of captivities, but he couldn’t escape that one. That is the captivity that nobody, not even the great escape artists, could escape from.

But Jesus Christ “led captivity captive [He triumphed over death], and he gave gifts to men.” Why did he tell the disciples it was expedient for Him to return to the Father? –So that He could send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit (John 16:7).

What are the gifts?

Ephesians 4:11-12, “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping [KJV, “perfecting”] of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” This is why there is a ministry. “Perfecting” is the fully furnishing of the saints. “The work of the ministry” is serving God’s people. “Edifying” is the building up of the body of Christ.

Verse 13, “till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” We are not going to totally come into the unity of the faith until Christ returns. We are not going to totally come to understand everything the same way and be totally unified with Christ and with God the Father until Christ returns. But the purpose of having a ministry in the Church is to work towards that end.

Verse 14, “that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive.” –To produce a certain level of stability.

Verses 22-24, “that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness.”

Ephesians 5:1, “Therefore be followers of God as dear children.”

In vv. 3-5, he enumerates putting away the various works of the flesh. Then he goes into a description of husbands and wives and the marriage relationship.

Verse 22, wives submitting and adapting themselves to their husbands.

Verse 25, husbands loving their wife.

But, v. 32, he compares that to the relationship of Christ and the Church. Ephesians 5:32 makes plain that Christ and the Church is the model for the relationship of husbands and wives. He goes on to instruct in other physical relationships. Physical relationships are transformed when we come into the Church. They don’t impact our access to God, but we are still physical creatures. There may not be male or female (Galatians 3:26-28, we are all one in Christ), but that’s only in the spiritual sphere. I think we understand that.

Certain homosexuals in San Francisco have tried to take that verse out of context to say that it is

okay for men to marry men. People can twist and distort scripture. That's not what it is talking about. I trust we all understand that.

Physical relationships remain on the physical realm, but it is not a determining factor in terms of spiritual relationships. Physical relationships are transformed when you come into the Church in the sense that our relationship as a husband, wife, parent, child, employer or employee—all of those physical relationships are transformed in that the fulfillment of them takes on a deeper spiritual implication than we ever contemplated before. We should, as a Christian husband, parent or child, etc., be different than we were. It should make a difference in our lives in the way we fulfill our appointed role in society.

Ephesians 6:11, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

He describes the armor in vv. 13-18.

Verse 15, "...having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace."

Isaiah 52:7, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who bring glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" Maybe you never thought of yourself as having pretty feet.

This analogy is used in Ephesians 6:15, "...having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." We need to be doing something. We need to be doing the work. This is what is being addressed right here.

Verse 20, "for which I am an ambassador in chains..." The implication is that Paul is in prison at the time he wrote this. The Ephesian Church was very active in their prayers for the Apostle Paul and known for their generosity.

The book of **Philippians** is a shorter book and a book that has several themes. To a great extent, **it is a thank you and an encouragement. It was an exhortation to humility and the avoiding of striving. It was a warning about the circumcision.** In the same way as Colosse, there were individuals who were seeking to undermine the truth of how we gain access to God and how we maintain that access. **It was also a general exhortation on Christian living.** Philippians 1:1 starts out addressing the saints in Philippi with the bishops (elders) and deacons. This shows a very organized, fully-developed and organized Church.

Philippians 1:6, "being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." God started a work in you and He intends to

finish that work. That's important to realize. He goes on here through the book of Philippians, desiring to see them "filled with the fruit of righteousness" (v. 11).

Verses 12-13, "But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard [Praetorium], and all the rest, that my chains are in Christ." This is a reference to the court of the Praetorian Guard or Caesar's Court. The Praetorium was the court of Caesar's elite guard. Paul, in his imprisonment in Rome, was well known in "high circles."

Verses 23-24, he talks about the fact that he was in a strait between two things: having a desire to depart and be with Christ or to abide in the flesh, which was more needful for them. Paul didn't mean he thought he was going to go to heaven when he died. He knew that if he died, his next split-second of consciousness would be in the Kingdom of God. He was kind of torn "betwixt and between."

He was in jail. He had gone through a lot of trouble and difficulty. He thought, on the one hand, it would be nice just to lie down, go to sleep and wake up in the Kingdom. He was undergoing a lot of stress and difficulty. From a human standpoint, he looked at it and thought it would be good. He had certain desires for God to just let him go to sleep. And yet on the other hand, he looked at the Church and the needs of the Church and knew he still had a work to be done.

He admonishes them in vv. 27-30.

Philippians 2:3-6, in terms of humility he says, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery [thought it not something to be grasped or seized] to be equal with God."

He did not cling to His equality with God and the Godhead.

Rather, vv. 7-8, "but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." He divested Himself of that relationship He had shared with the Father from eternity. He did not have this attitude of ego. Some people would never

give up something that was prestigious for something that was less prestigious. Jesus Christ exemplified an attitude of service, willing even to divest Himself of the glory of God and come down and take upon Himself and live a human life.

In Hebrew 2:16 (KJV), we are told that He took not upon Himself the nature of angels but the nature of the seed of Abraham. He took upon Himself our nature. He didn't go down one notch—just kind of move down from God to angel. He took upon Himself the nature of the seed of Abraham.

Philippians 2:9-11, “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Paul admonishes them in vv. 12-13, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” God is working in you. You need to go forward and to finish up. Allow God to finish in you what He has started.

Verses 14-15, “Do all things without murmuring and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.”

Verse 17, Paul went on and talked about what he was going through and the fact of various difficulties that he was facing.

Verses 23-24, “Therefore I hope to send him [Timothy] at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.” He still did not know exactly what was going to be the outcome of his imprisonment, but he still had faith that God was going to release him and let him come.

Philippians 3:1, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.”

‘Be aware of some of these who were stirring up trouble.’

Verse 2, “Beware of dogs...” This is not talking about cocker spaniels and collies. “Dog” was a slang term that was used to refer to “false ministers.” It was a term that had its origin in Hebrew, in the Old Testament. The priests of the pagan temples who practiced the immorality and

the things that were generally associated with Baal worship were called “dogs.” There are obvious implications if you give it a little bit of thought. It was a term that the Jews used to refer to an idolatrous priesthood—the leaders of false religion. This was the term Paul used. Continuing, “...beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! [KJV, “concision”—“cutting”].” —Those who were seeking to invest in circumcision. That was something God had never intended.

Verse 4, he talks about having confidence in the flesh. Their emphasis was on what you could do to guarantee your relationship with God.

The point is that if you could do something to guarantee your relationship with God, why did Christ have to come and die? If you can guarantee your relationship with God through circumcision or by some physical thing—that's going to gain you access to God—why did Christ come and die? That would have been much simpler. It undermines the full significance and impact of the sacrifice of Christ. That's why Paul emphasized it so much.

Verses 8-10, he talks about knowing Christ and having Christ in us.

Verses 12-13, “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do. Forgetting those things which are behind...”

He's talking about the things that had been his sources of pride in the past, the things that had given him status and were sources of pride in the past. He had forgotten those things. He was not concerned about those things. That had nothing to do with his standing with God. The things in times past he had trusted to give him standing with God—he has forgotten those things, which are behind. The things he mentioned earlier in vv. 4-6, the things he had that would have given him status or access, as far as they were concerned. He had forgotten about those things, the things he used to place his trust in.

Continuing v. 13, “...and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.”

Verse 14, “I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” He was reaching forth for the promises of God and pressing toward the mark.

Verse 17, “Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.”

Notice vv. 20-21, “...we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform

our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body....” At the resurrection, we are going to put on immortality.

Philippians 4:1, “Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.”

Verse 4, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice.”

Verses 6-7, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Get our minds on the things that are excellent and good and positive and uplifting (v. 8).

Verses 11-12, “Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound....”

Verse 13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” ‘I can do all these things.’

Verse 19, “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

It is very apparent, as you go through, that Philippians is a very powerful little book. It is short, but it has a lot of strong encouragement. It is a very encouraging book, focusing in on the power of God. We have to realize that Christianity and conversion are not so much what we can do for God as it is what God can do in and through us as we yield ourselves into willing instruments. We yield ourselves to Him, desiring Him to change, shape and mold us, to fashion and form us, to make us conformable to His image. That’s really what conversion is all about. It has to do with a transformation in our values, our priorities and every facet of our lives.

I mentioned earlier the allusion to Pentecost. These books very directly relate to Pentecost because Pentecost has to do with conversion and with God giving His covenant. There are many, many sections, particularly in Ephesians, where you can go through and find it talking about the elect, about being chosen as firstfruits, those who first trusted in Christ. In Ephesians 2, it talks about being called out and made a part of the commonwealth of Israel. It talks about Christ dwelling in us. He talks about the relationship of Christ to the Church as a husband-wife relationship, all these things. The working of God’s Spirit has to do with the spiritual meaning of Pentecost—one of God’s festivals.

There’s an awful lot that’s packed in Ephesians and Philippians. It was clearly written in Paul’s imprisonment. They contain things that are helpful for us. We only got an overview of it this evening.

As you have gone through and had a chance to study them on your own, hopefully, you have gotten a taste of some of the depth of content that God, through His Spirit, packed into these books. We have tried to hit some of the high points on them this evening. Many of the significant things that Paul wrote he wrote during the time that he was in Roman imprisonment.

Next Bible study, we will go through the book of Hebrews, which was also written during the time of Paul’s Roman imprisonment. An awful lot is packed into the book of Hebrews. I think these things can give us a little bit of depth and insight into, not simply the historic teachings of the Apostle Paul to the early New Testament Church, but principles that each of us need to be aware of and relate to in our lives today because God’s Word is a living Word. It applies to not only the people to whom it was written at that time, but it is preserved for us. It has a message that directly applies in our lives today.

Bible Study # 65 Questions

SURVEY OF THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF PAUL SERIES

Ephesians and Philippians

1. Explain Ephesians 1:4-5.
2. Quote scriptures in the first five chapters of Ephesians that relate directly to the meaning of Pentecost.
3. In what way does Ephesians explain the significance of the book of Ruth?
4. Explain Ephesians 2:15.
5. What is the “temple” that God is building now?
6. What is the “mystery” that Paul speaks of in Ephesians?
7. What is the purpose of the ministry?
8. What is Christ’s relationship to the Church likened to?
9. Explain Ephesians 6:15.
10. Prove that Paul was in prison when he wrote the book of Ephesians.
11. Explain Ephesians 4:8.
12. What are the main themes of the book of Philippians?
13. How does Paul characterize the Christian life in Ephesians?
14. What was the condition of the Philippians Church?
15. Explain Philippians 1:23.

Life and Letters of Paul Series—Hebrews

We are getting into the book of Hebrews. This is a very important book. There is an awful lot packed in here, and we are going to try and cover it. **We will focus on an overview of God's great plan and purpose: the primary emphasis of the role of Jesus Christ, His role as our High Priest, our Mediator, the role of the priesthood and a transition to take place. We will also notice the theme of perseverance.** It plays a major role in Scripture.

Hebrews was written to Israelite Christians in general, but particularly to those of Jewish background. It was evidently written at the end of Paul's first imprisonment. We will note some places that give us indication of that. You will find that many of the commentators want to dispute the fact that Paul wrote the book of Hebrews. This is something that is commonly done today. There's a reason for that and there's a reason why we would accept Paul's authorship. In fact, **I can give you seven reasons for accepting his authorship, and I will explain why many of the critics don't want to accept Paul's authorship.**

(1) Who was better qualified than Paul to write a book like this? One-third of the book of Hebrews is a direct quotation out of the Old Testament. Whoever wrote it was thoroughly grounded in the Old Testament, in the intricacies ("ins" and "outs") of the Jewish religion, the symbolism and all the things connected with the temple, priesthood, the tabernacle, all the various ceremonial aspects, sacrifices, etc. Who was better qualified than Paul? He was more highly educated than any of the other apostles. He was more qualified to explain the intricacies of Judaism. He was a student of Gamaliel, the foremost Jewish teacher of the day. Most likely, just in terms of qualifications, there wasn't anyone who was better grounded in the Old Testament than Paul to write a book like this.

(2) We find that the author of the book was writing from Italy.

Hebrews 13:24, "Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you."

Verse 19, "But I especially urge you to do this, that I may be restored to you sooner." Here is a reference of someone writing from Italy and who was in prison. The author was not at liberty; he

was in prison in Rome, which of course, Paul was.

(3) Whoever wrote this, Timothy was his companion.

Verse 23, "Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly." Here was someone writing at Rome. He and Timothy had been there. Timothy was now at liberty and was hoping to be shortly restored to them.

(4) Peter testifies of a book that Paul wrote like this.

II Peter 3:15, "...as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you."

I & II Peter address basically the same audience. I Peter 1:1, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." Israelites dispersed in Gentile areas. This is the same audience that Hebrews is written to—people of the Dispersion.

II Peter 3:15-16, "...as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures." Peter acknowledges to the audience he addressed (the Israelites of the Dispersion) that Paul had also written a letter to that group. Now if Paul didn't write Hebrews, then he had to have written a letter addressed to that group that has been lost because Peter testifies to it.

(5) The letter has Paul's style. I won't go into all the reasons for that, but there are many aspects of it to show that. The critics write that off as someone trying to copy Paul's style.

(6) The unanimous tradition of the early Church recognizes Paul's authorship. The earliest writers (up through the second century) and any tradition in the Greek world are pretty unanimous in acknowledging that Paul wrote this book. It was only in the aftermath that these questions began to come in. The reasons for the questions was to undermine the authority of the book because there isn't any book in the New Testament that more clearly speaks of tithing, Sabbath keeping and various things like this. It is a book that has a "Jewish flavor."

Frankly, the real objection to Paul's authorship by some of the early so-called "church fathers" was simply an effort to undermine its authority in the canon. Some of the later critics, and even some of the early Protestants, reject Paul's authorship. It kind of "fed on itself." They

quoted Augustine and various ones. Augustine didn't think Paul wrote it. Of course, he didn't! Augustine really didn't want the book in the Bible because it contradicted what he taught and was a little harder to wrest and twist than some of the other things. So, they objected to it on that basis.

The reality is that while the Catholic Church likes to claim the credit for "giving the world the Bible," they had nothing to do with it. The only thing they tried to do was take it away. They didn't put it together. It was already in existence when they came on the scene. The church council didn't put the Bible together. They simply recognized the canon that was already in existence. The only thing they argued about was how they could get the books out of it. Primarily, they desired to somehow discard James, I & II John, Hebrews, the book of Revelation and various ones like that. They looked for ways to try to get rid of anything that had a few pointed hints at them.

However, the books were simply too widely known and recognized to be effectively discarded. The reality is that the Apostles Peter and John were responsible for creating and providing the canon of the New Testament. The earliest Church sources and records recognized Paul's authorship. It didn't begin to be questioned until later.

(7) If the book of Hebrews was not written by Paul, it would totally break the pattern of "seven" in the New Testament and in Paul's writings. Counting the book of Hebrews, Paul wrote fourteen books. In the sequence, the order that was preserved by the Greek Church, it comes "sandwiched" in with Paul's epistles. The order that the Greek Church preserved (the order that we have commonly called the inspired order) consisted of four parts or divisions: the Gospels and Acts (the historical books that told the story), the General Epistles (James, Peter, John and Jude), Paul's Epistles, and fourth came the book of Revelation.

Paul's epistles were arranged. First are his nine letters to the seven Churches beginning with Rome and ending with II Thessalonians. Then came the book of Hebrews and the Pastoral Epistles (Timothy, Titus and Philemon). In that order, Hebrews is "sandwiched" in with his epistles. If you take it out, you don't have fourteen. If you take it out, you mess up the sequence because you have four divisions: the Gospels and Acts, General Epistles, Epistles of Paul and Revelation.

When you take the four divisions of the New Testament and add it to the three of the Old Testament (the Law, Prophets and Writings) that Christ discussed (Luke 24:44), you have seven divisions. There's completion in the New Testament. The Jews counted twenty-two books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven in the New Testament. That's forty-nine—seven times seven. When you take out the book of Hebrews and try to rearrange it or assign it to somebody else, you mess up a consistent pattern that runs all the way through the Bible, a pattern that "smacks" of God's design and purpose and the fact that there was an order and harmony to it.

Let's understand a little bit about the audience to whom he is writing. If Paul is writing toward the end of his Roman captivity, we're looking at about 62 A.D., which means the destruction of Jerusalem was only a few years away. The deaths of the Apostle Paul, the Apostle Peter and the other apostles were coming very quickly. In fact, if James was not dead when the book of Hebrews was written, he was probably executed right around that time or very shortly thereafter because he died in the early 60s. He was thrown from the precipice of the temple. He was thrown over and dashed on the rocks below.

You have to put yourself in the situation a little bit. At the time Paul was writing, probably around 62 A.D. during his Roman imprisonment, there was a situation where you had many of the people to whom he was writing who had been in the Church twenty-five or thirty years. There were a number of those who were receiving this letter who were there on the Day of Pentecost in 31 A.D. and when the thousands were converted during those early weeks. Primarily, the book of Hebrews is written to old-time Christians, long-time Church members, people who were in the Church for twenty-five to thirty years. Here were individuals who came into the Church in those earliest days of exuberance, excitement and miracles; individuals who came in with that eagerness, anticipation and sense of urgency; individuals who sacrificed for the work.

Remember in the book of Acts, in 31 A.D., many of those who were in Jerusalem for the Day of Pentecost came only for the holy day season. They came into the Church and all the excitement was going on, the gospel was being proclaimed, great miracles were being worked. There was a sense of imminence and urgency and they didn't want to leave. Many of the people who were based there in Jerusalem liquidated property; they converted their property into money and gave it to the apostles. They

gave everything they had. This was the situation. There was a sense of imminence and urgency of Christ's return. That was the last question the disciples asked Jesus when He ascended to heaven.

Acts 1:6, "...'Lord will you at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?'"

Verse 7, "And He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.'" He didn't tell them the time setting.

What happened? A couple of years later, in 33 A.D., Stephen was stoned. Stephen was the first in the New Testament Church to suffer martyrdom. Many there in Jerusalem began to be scattered as time went on.

When Peter was arrested and put in jail, God sent an angel and brought him out (Acts 12). Great miracles occurred even to the point that when Peter's shadow passed over someone, they would be healed (Acts 5:15). But thirty years had gone by and Paul had now been languishing in jail for years. James, the brother of John (one of the twelve) had been executed years ago (Acts 12). Some of the other apostles were scattered and some were dead. James, the brother of Jesus was at the point of being executed.

What had happened? Well, there was an erosion of that first love, of that zeal and intensity. There were some tired old Christians—people who had sort of lost that sense of zeal and urgency. Individuals who, when they first came in the Church, never anticipated that they were running a marathon and would still be around for twenty-five or thirty years.

I think we have to understand that Hebrews has some special significance for all of us if we stop and put it in that perspective. I saw a man who was in college with me back in the late 60s. Did he expect to be here in 1991? I didn't. Various ones of you started hearing Mr. Herbert Armstrong way back in the 50s and 60s. We didn't expect to be sitting here in the 90s. The 90s seemed forever away. But they are here.

So Paul is writing to people who were in that circumstance. He is writing to people who were maybe in their twenties and thirties when they came into the Church, and who were now getting on up into their sixties. People were going through and experiencing things that they hadn't expected.

There were heretical movements that were beginning to make inroads. There were various ideas floating around. We are told that the Ephesians era of the Church ultimately lost its

first love (Revelations 2:4). We find Paul dealing with some of those things.

Notice the way he starts out.

Hebrews 1:1-2, "God who at various times and in different ways ["many different times and many different ways" would be the more literal rendering from the Greek] spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds."

Paul is writing with a couple of major things in mind. **First**, he wants to clearly explain and establish the rank and function of Jesus Christ and the Melchizedek priesthood in relationship to the Levitical priesthood. **Second**, he wants to exhort old-timer members to persevere to the end.

Think about it. Most of the Jewish element and those in Jerusalem had been accustomed to continuing to go up to the temple and participate in temple service. They would go up to Jerusalem for the Feast or many of the Festivals. It was common that they would travel to Jerusalem and took part in the temple service. The temple had continued to function. It seemed a part of the eternal order of things. It would have been very difficult to imagine that something would happen to it. It was certainly hard to imagine that something would happen to it and that Christ wouldn't instantly return. But that was going to be the case.

There was going to come a transition. The temple was going to be destroyed and the Levitical priesthood was going to cease to function. Yet when we go through the book of Acts, we find that many in the Church (particularly there in Jerusalem and Judea) continued to take part in certain of those things. There needed to be an explanation of the transition; a transition had already been made on a spiritual level and a transition that needed to be understood on the level of those in the Church there.

Paul starts out by showing different ways and different times God had spoken in the past through the prophets.

Verses 2-3, "has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person...." The word translated "express image" is "character" in the Greek language. In fact, it is spelled the way we spell it. What it really means, the sense of the word in the Greek language, is something that is

engraved or etched very deeply into your character—the traits that are fundamental to you and are etched deeply into you. Jesus Christ reflected exactly the character of the Father. He was the engraved image. He reflected exactly the same attributes.

Verse 3, “who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person and upholding all things by the word of His power when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

Verses 4-8, “having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say: ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You?’ And again, ‘I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son?’ But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: ‘Let all the angels of God worship Him.’ And of the angels He says: ‘Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire?’ But to the Son He says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom.’”

He shows that Jesus Christ possesses a rank far above any angel. He is not an angel. He is the express image of the Father. He is the Son of God and holds the rank of God.

We are told that angels are ministering spirits. Verse 14, “Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?” The world has a distorted idea that if you are good when you die, you will go to heaven and become an angel—you sprout wings and have a halo, etc. It’s a pretty vague idea, and you don’t find anyone anxious to go do this. They don’t seem really excited about trying to hurry up and get there.

That’s not where angels come from. Human beings were not created to become angels. Human beings were created to become God. Angels are ministering spirits. They are servant spirits; spirit beings created for service. They are sent forth to serve those who will be the heirs of salvation. We are not going to rise to the level of spirit servants. We are inheritors. We are heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). We become heirs of salvation. We will inherit because we literally become a part of God’s Family and will literally be born into God’s Family.

Hebrews 2:1, “Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away [KJV, “let them slip”].”

Now he begins to exhort a little bit.

Verses 2-3, “For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast [referring to the Old Covenant], and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation...”

Verses 4-5, “God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will? For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels.” The world that then was, the world that has been and is, has been under the subjection of angels. Satan the devil is the god of this world (II Corinthians 4:4). But the world to come will not be put in subjection to angels.

Verses 6-8, “But one testified in a certain place [a quote from Psalm 8], saying: ‘What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You made him a little lower than the angels [You made him temporarily lower], You crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet.’ For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.”

He is quoting from the Old Testament from Psalm 8. —All things being put under man. But he makes the point, “...but now we do not yet see all things put under him.” When God created man, He gave him dominion over all things (Genesis 1:26; Psalm 8:6).

Man, right now, is a little lower than the angels because man can die and the angels can’t. He kind of leaves us hanging.

Then in v. 9, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death...” He was also temporarily made lower for the suffering of death. When Jesus came to this earth, He was made lower than the angels where it was possible for Him to die. We see Him now “...crowned with glory and honor, that He, by grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”

Verses 10-11, “For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.”

We are all of one. We share one Father. We literally become partakers of the divine nature. Peter tells us that in II Peter 1:4. Our sonship is in God’s Family. “*Huiiothesia*” is a term used in

Hebrew that was a common term for adoption in the Roman world. If you take the word literally, it means “sonship”; “*huio*” is the normal Greek word for “son” and “*thesia*” means “position of” or “rank of.” So the word literally could be rendered “position of a son” or “rank of a son” or “sonship.” It was the term commonly used for adoption in the Greek and Roman world. Our relationship with God is “adoptive” only in the sense that we are “chosen” sons. It goes beyond the relationship of an adoptive child with his adoptive parents. The adoptive parent can bequeath property to the son; he can bequeath his name, all things, but the one thing he can’t bequeath is his own genetic inheritance. You do not become a partaker genetically of the nature of the adoptive parents.

That’s where the adoption analogy breaks down because Peter tells us we become partakers of the divine nature (II Peter 1:4). That’s what God’s Holy Spirit is. It’s the mind of Christ in us. There is actually a transformation that takes place at the resurrection because flesh and blood can’t inherit the Kingdom of God (I Corinthians 15:50). This mortal puts on immortality (v. 53). We make a transition from physical to spiritual. We step into eternity. That’s why Jesus Christ is called the firstborn from the dead.

Colossians 1:18, “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead...” If He is the firstborn from the dead, then that means there are others born from the dead. We will be born from the dead. Not an obvious human physical birth but into the realm of immortality. Jesus Christ became flesh, as we are flesh. He did not become an angel or an angel in disguise.

Hebrews 2:16-18, “For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted [tested].”

Verse 14, “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.” Jesus Christ became flesh. He took upon Himself the nature of the seed of Abraham. He became born as a human being. He lived life. He knows what it is to be a human being because He went through the things that we go through as a human being.

Verse 10, “...to make the author [KJV, “captain”] of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” The sense of the word “perfect” is completely mature, fully developed or matured.

Christ learned through the things that He suffered. He learned what it felt like to suffer pain. He learned firsthand what it’s like to be a human being. He went through that experience and therefore is able to lead us to salvation. Christ’s role is described and the fact that He has gone before. He is the firstborn from the dead. He is the captain of our salvation, but we can ultimately share life with Him on the God level, the God plane. We can literally be born into the very Family of God, having and becoming in this life a partaker of the divine nature, and ultimately transformed completely from physical to spirit. Right now the process begins—the transformation, the conversion process.

We speak of being converted or when we were converted, but I think we realize that in the true and full sense of the word, we are not completely converted until we are born of the Spirit into the Family of God at the resurrection. That will be when all the change takes place. Conversion simply means change. There is a level of conversion that takes place at the point we make the commitment. We are baptized and God places His Spirit within us. That begins the conversion process, and He begins to write His law in our hearts and in our minds through the power of His Spirit. That’s the beginning of conversion. But it’s only the beginning.

You’re not completely converted are you? Is God’s law completely written in your heart and mind to where the only way you ever react to anything is spiritual? I wish it were completely written in mine, but I’m sorry to admit to you it’s not. It’s in the process. In that sense, the new covenant will not have been completely made until the resurrection. At that point, we will have been completely converted from flesh to spirit.

God begins the conversion process with our minds to change the way we think. He ultimately changes us from mortal to immortal, from flesh to spirit. He can accomplish that in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet (I Corinthians 15:51-52). But what can’t be accomplished like that is the mind because if God changed your mind that way, you would lose free moral agency. Your mind has to change because you choose for it to change. You voluntarily surrender your will to God and want Him to take control. You want His Spirit. You want Him to write His laws in your heart and mind. You want Him to change and transform

you and make you something that you're not. You can't make yourself that way. You can't convert and transform yourself. It's not a matter of human willpower. You have your part to do; you have to follow. But it's the power of God to transform, and that transformation process will not be completed until the resurrection.

Christ has a function now as our High Priest.

Hebrew 3:1-2, "Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house."

Then, vv. 3-5, he goes through and talks about how Moses was faithful.

Verses 7-8, "Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: 'Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness.'" He is quoting from Psalm 95, which in turn is quoting back in Exodus 16 and 17. Paul begins to go into an exposition of Psalm 95. It is a Psalm of David that takes the lesson of Exodus 16 and 17 and develops it from a spiritual standpoint. Paul quotes it in Hebrews 3 and 4 and develops it even further. He is quoting the Psalm, which in turn is alluding back to what Moses said. Paul is expounding the spiritual significance of it.

Verse 11, "'So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.''" We find in Deuteronomy 12 and other places (Joshua 1, 21, 22, 23) a reference to the fact that through Joshua the children of Israel ultimately entered into rest. They spent forty years walking through the Sinai. When they got to one place and they didn't have to pick up and move the next day, this was rest. If you have been on the move for forty years and somebody finally lets you sit down, you're going to think you've entered rest. All you have been doing is camping.

I have gone to Big Sandy many times and camped there, and I enjoyed it. But I tell you what, by the time eight or nine days were over with, I was kind of glad to have something a little more permanent than a tent.

For forty years! We're not talking about eight or nine days. We're talking about forty years. It took them six years to subdue the land; the seventh year, which was the Sabbatical Year, they moved into the dwellings where the Canaanites had lived. They now lived in fixed homes and dwellings and ate the crops that had been harvested the previous year. They weren't on the move. They weren't fighting. They were

settled. They finally had rest. They could finally stop; so, in that sense, Joshua gave them rest.

They were denied rest because they didn't believe Joshua and Caleb. They could have had it almost thirty-nine years earlier than what they had, but they wouldn't cross the Jordan. They wouldn't go into the Promised Land because they didn't believe Joshua and Caleb (Numbers 13-14). They believed the ten spies and as a result, they wandered in the wilderness forty years.

Hebrews 3:10-11, God said, "'Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.''"

God said, 'This generation that doesn't believe will not enter into rest. They'll never know what it is to just dwell in one place and be able to settle down. They are going to die on the move in the desert. And the next generation will enter into rest.' This is just a matter of history. It is alluded to in Deuteronomy 12:9 and Joshua 1, 21, 22 and 23. David quotes that and uses some of that terminology in Psalm 95. It talks about entering into God's rest.

Paul then begins to quote it here in Hebrews 3 and 4.

Hebrew 4:8, he says, "For if Joshua [KJV, 'Jesus']..." "Jesus" is derived from the Greek spelling of "Joshua." In the New Testament, instead of "Elijah," it will say "Elias." It's just a matter of a different spelling. Jesus is simply our English spelling of the Greek form. In the Old Testament, we translate it Joshua because that's the English rendering of the Hebrew form. But it's the same word and the reference is to the Joshua of the Old Testament. A lot of modern translations for the sake of clarity render it Joshua because when we see Jesus, we think of Jesus Christ.

We have to realize that was a very common Jewish name. There are many Jews who were named after Joshua. The name had significance. "Joshua" means "the Eternal is Savior." All the names had significance and had meaning. It had special significance for Him because He was literally, in the flesh, the Eternal who was the Savior. But there were many Jews who were named after Joshua, the hero of the Old Testament.

What Paul is saying in v. 8, "...if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day."

Verse 7, "...saying in David [quoting from Psalm 95, a Psalm of David]..." The point he is

making is that it's true that Joshua gave them rest. The Israelites entered into rest under Joshua, but was that all God was talking about when He talked about the promises and entering into rest? If he did, Paul says, 'then why (writing over four hundred years later) did David talk about listening to God? If you listen to God, you can enter into God's rest?'

David wouldn't have been talking about it in the future tense four hundred years later. The account we have in Deuteronomy and Joshua was a literal account, but it was a figure, a type of something that had significance for us. So, he quotes Psalm 95 and shows the ultimate rest into which God's people may enter; the Kingdom of God is the rest.

Right now we are pilgrims, sojourners. We are travelers through this world. When we enter into the Kingdom of God, we will finally enter into rest. The rest into which ancient Israel entered through Joshua of old was merely a type of the permanent and eternal rest that the people of God can enter into.

It's interesting. All the way through Hebrews 3 and 4, Paul keeps using this word "rest" over and over and over again. It is the word "*katapausis*," which means "rest" or "repose." But what's not obvious in most English translations (some have marginal notes) is in Hebrews 4.

Hebrews 4:9, "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God." The word "rest" in v. 9 is totally different than any other place in Hebrews 3 and 4. It's the word "*sabbatismos*." You don't have to be a Greek scholar to figure out that "*sabbatismos*" kind of sounds like Sabbath and that's what it means. It means "Sabbath keeping," "a Sabbath rest." "There remains therefore a Sabbath keeping to the people of God." Paul uses play on words because in the Hebrew, the word "*shabat*" came from a word that meant "rest." "There remains therefore a Sabbath to the people of God."

The example and what he is using here is a reference to Hebrews 4:4, "For He has spoken in a certain place [in relationship to rest] of the seventh day in this way: 'And God rested on the seventh day from all His works.'" The rest Joshua gave the Israelites, which, interestingly enough, if you go through the chronology of Joshua, was entered into in the seventh year. The Sabbath which God rested on (the seventh day) was a type of the Millennium, the Kingdom of God, the thousand years. The first six thousand years are a time for man's work, effort and endeavor; but finally in the seventh one-thousand-year period, it's a time of rest.

That's why we are told in Isaiah 14:7, "'The whole earth is at rest and quiet....'" That is ultimately God's rest—His Sabbath rest. The seventh one-thousand-year day is the millennial Sabbath, the Millennium. There remains therefore a Sabbath keeping to the people of God.

Hebrews 4:10, "For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His." If you're entering into the eternal rest that God promises His people, then you quit doing your work on the Sabbath just like God quit doing His work on the Sabbath. There remains a Sabbath keeping for the people of God because when you keep the Sabbath, you are being reminded of the rest that God's people will ultimately enter into.

When you really go through Hebrews 4, it is one of the strongest places in the New Testament to clearly prove that there remains a Sabbath keeping for the people of God. It's about as plain as you can get. The Protestants and commentators claim they're not sure what Paul meant by this. What do they mean they're not sure what he meant? If he had said, 'There remains a Sunday keeping to the people of God,' I'll bet they would be able to figure that one out.

That's kind of on the par with I Corinthians 5:8, when he said, "...let us therefore keep the Feast..." and they say they don't understand exactly what Paul meant by this. What if he had said, 'Let us therefore keep Christmas.?' They would understand that one. They wouldn't have any trouble figuring that one out. But when Paul says, 'Let us keep the Feast,' they say, 'Paul must have meant something by this, but we're not quite sure what he meant.' Why don't we just figure he meant what he said? That's a good assumption. You just kind of start from the premise "people mean what they say and they say what they mean." This is one of the reasons why some desire to dispute Paul's authorship of Hebrews. They would have liked to conveniently dispose of Hebrews altogether because it's a little bit inconvenient.

In fact, we are told (it's kind of a play on words), Hebrews 4:11, "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest..." KJV, "Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest..." Let's work to enter into rest. You appreciate rest when you have been working. The Sabbath means the most to somebody who's been working hard for six days. Then you really appreciate the Sabbath.

Christianity involves work, but it's not our effort that does it. Let me give you an example. It's

like a power tool. You plug in your power saw to do something. What if we plugged in the saw and sat back under the shade tree and watched. How many two-by-fours would that saw cut? It wouldn't do a whole lot. What if you didn't plug it in at all? You could work hard all day and not cut very much.

What's the point? If you're not plugged into the power source, it doesn't matter how hard you work, you are not going to accomplish anything. If you are plugged into the power source, you can't just sit back under a shade tree and wait for everything to happen. You have to work hard, but no matter how hard you work, if you're not plugged into the power source, it is of absolutely no avail.

When we receive God's Holy Spirit, we are plugged into the power source. We are tapping into all the power we need, but we have our part. If we don't exercise the Spirit and do what we need to do, the Spirit is not going to do it all. But on the other hand, it doesn't matter how hard you work, if you're not plugged into the power source, you might as well be trying to vacuum your floor without plugging in the vacuum cleaner or trying to use a power saw without plugging it in. It's only usable if it's plugged in *and* if the individual picks it up and does something with it. It takes the two together. You can't have one without the other and get anything accomplished. We have to labor to enter into that rest, but our labor is not what does it. It's Christ in us. But we can't sit back under a shade tree and wait for Him to do it all.

The world wants to go to one extreme or the other. Some have the concept of work and penance that you do it yourself. Others have the concept that it's all done for you and all you have to do is sit under the shade tree and wait for it. Neither is true.

Verse 12, "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword...."

Verses 14-16, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest...For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Hebrews 5:1-2, "For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also beset by weaknesses."

Verse 4, "And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was." The point he makes is that the priesthood is not something you take to yourself. A priest was taken and ordained as an intercessor between God and man. His role has to do with making access to God possible through the offering of sacrifices and gifts. He deals with people and is able to mediate between God and man. He is able to have compassion on people because He was a human being and He knows what it is like. In fact, the priesthood of Aaron had to offer sacrifices for their own sins.

What he is explaining here in Hebrews 5, 6 and 7 is the transition of the priesthood. He starts out by explaining the priesthood of Aaron and then showing that there is something on beyond the priesthood of Aaron.

Verses 5-6, "So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.' As He also says in another place: 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'" It refers to Christ being a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Who is Melchizedek? The only place you run into Melchizedek is back in Genesis 14 where Melchizedek, the king of Salem, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings. He just kind of "pops up" there, and we are not introduced to anything else about him. None of the commentators understand who he is.

Mr. Herbert Armstrong wrote an article on that many years ago. If we just take what it says in Hebrews 5, 6 and 7, it is very clear who Melchizedek is.

Hebrews 7:1-2, "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated 'king of righteousness,' and then also king of Salem, meaning 'king of peace.'"

"Melchizedek" means "king of righteousness." "*Melech*" is the Hebrew word for "king" and "*zedek*" is the word for "righteousness." He's also the king of Salem. "Salem" is derived from the Hebrew word "*shalom*," which means "peace." So, He is the king of righteousness and the king of peace.

Paul interprets his name here to the Greek speakers because he wants them to understand that the meaning of the name was significant. If the meaning of the name is significant, if that title legitimately belongs to this individual and He is King of Righteousness and King of Peace,

that doesn't sound like any human being I know. It refers to the Messiah as being Prince of Peace. Are you going to call some human being the king of peace or the king of righteousness?

This is the clincher; v. 3, "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually." If Melchizedek abides a priest forever, didn't have a father or mother, is without beginning of days or end of life and is the king of righteousness and the king of peace, that doesn't sound like any human being I ever met.

Hebrews 5:6, "...you are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

Melchizedek abides a priest forever, and Christ is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7:4, "Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils." "Spoils" are what Abraham took from the kings in Genesis 14.

Verses 5-7, "And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who received the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law...but He whose genealogy is not derived from them [He preceded them] received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better."

This was a lot greater than Abraham. Which human being was greater than Abraham? None. This was clearly the One who became Jesus Christ, manifesting Himself in the role of Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God.

Verse 8, "Here mortal men received tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that He lives."

Paul is explaining the transition because we are told in Acts 6:7, there were a great company of the priests that believed. The law in the Old Testament was very clear. Who did you pay your tithes to? -To the Levites, the priesthood in the temple. There was a specific place to take it. There were specific individuals to give it to.

The Jews in the Church had grown up understanding and doing that all their lives. They came in the Church and continued doing that because they were doing what the law said right now. There were a number of the priests who believed. There needed a clear understanding that God's people should no longer be giving their tithes to the priesthood of Levi, but rather to the priesthood of Melchizedek, which had prior claim.

What you have to do is explain a transition to people who would go back to verses in Numbers and places like that, to where God said very explicitly that the tithes were to be given to Levi for ministering in the sanctuary. Paul is explaining, 'yes, God did say that, but there was a prior claim that the priesthood of Melchizedek had. That's the priesthood of Jesus Christ and that priesthood is functioning today.'

Within a short time, the priesthood of the Levites was going to cease to function entirely. The temple was going to be destroyed. The scriptural basis for the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant needed to be explained and clarified in detail. There is nothing comparable today because we are under the New Covenant. This was a unique generation because it was the generation of transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. The changes that are described are the changes that were being made from the administration of death to the administration of the Spirit—the administration of the old and the new. The only other comparable period will be when Jesus Christ returns and there is a transition made from the way things are now.

The Church is called out of the world to function as God's people in a world that is Satan's world. There will be a transition when Jesus Christ returns and He takes over the rulership of the world and Satan will be put away. There will be a transition in the way that God's people will function. We are given insight into the government being set up and things being administered, judgment being rendered, things that we don't do today. There will come a transition as we move to that point.

This was the transition period between the Old and the New Covenant. There were many things that had to be explained, particularly to those who had been observant Jews who were doing what the Bible said, or what they had understood it to say. There were explanations that needed to be given to make the transition to what we, in a sense, take for granted but what was new to them.

He spends this time focusing on the role, rank and position of Jesus Christ and how He came as God in the flesh. He became a partaker of the nature of the seed of Abraham. He lived as a human being, died for our sins, was resurrected and is at the right hand of the Father. He is our High Priest, the One through whom we go and through whom we have access. He is the Mediator of the New Covenant.

Paul talks to the people to whom he is writing. One of the things he gets after them for is in Hebrews 5.

Hebrews 5:12-14, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age [those who are mature], that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

Hebrews 6:1, “Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ [the beginning of the doctrine of Christ], let us go on to perfection [completion, maturity], not laying again the foundation....”

There are actually seven basic doctrines of the Church. The seventh one is listed first—going on to perfection, to spiritual maturity and completion. We need to go on to become like God. There are six things that are necessary before Christian growth. Going on to spiritual completion and maturity is the final point.

Hebrews 6:1-2, the first six are: “...the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.” You need to be coming to a point where you are concentrating on going on to become like God, to become like Christ. You need to be going on to spiritual maturity. But instead, you have to go back and figure out the first foundational things (the first six).

He says, ‘You should be able to teach; yet I have to go back and explain simple things to you.’ Here were people who had been a little shaken and affected by things and were not as solid as they needed to have been.

In vv. 4-6, he encourages and reminds them of the danger of falling away once they have really known the truth.

Verses 10-12, “For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish [lazy, slothful], but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

God made a promise to Abraham (v. 13). Abraham patiently endured and obtained the promise (v. 15). The point he is stressing is endurance because there were people who had

been around a long time that had gotten tired and were letting down. Various ideas were creeping in. There were various heretical movements around the periphery of the Church. Some of these people were being a little bit affected by certain things. Paul is saying, “As much as you have done and as far as you have gone, you can’t afford to let it slip now. Don’t be lazy. Hold fast. Remember God makes a promise. It doesn’t come instantly. Remember how long Abraham had to wait. God promised him a son. In fact, God promised to make his descendants like sand of the seashore, and Abraham had to wait twenty-five years for one son. He had to patiently endure. So, if you have to wait for a while, what’s the big deal? Haven’t all of God’s people had to wait?”

Hebrews 7:21, he then goes on into more depth on Melchizedek and shows how Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7:24-28, “But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.”

Hebrew 8:1, “Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.” Then he goes through and explains the spiritual significance of the sanctuary, how it was patterned after heavenly things, that Christ has a more excellent ministry, He is the Mediator of a better covenant, established on better promises (vv. 2-6).

There was a fault with the first covenant; the fault was with the people.

Verses 8-10, “Because finding fault with them, He says: ‘Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I

disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

God is in the process of doing that right now. When God began giving His Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, He began the process of making the New Covenant. That process won't be completed until we are born into the Kingdom of God at the resurrection. But it is in the process of being done. God, through His Spirit, is changing and transforming us in the way we think. This is the New Covenant.

Hebrews 9 explains a great deal about the spiritual significance of the covenant and the fact of sacrifices.

Hebrews 9:28, “so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many...”

Hebrews 10:1, “For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.” The ceremonies and rituals of the law simply foreshadowed the reality, the substance of Christ. It was a reminder. That's why it was called a “schoolmaster to bring us to Christ” (KJV, Galatians 3:24).

This is ultimately the covenant that God says He is going to make.

Hebrews 10:16-19, “‘This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days,’ says the Lord: ‘I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,’ then He adds, ‘Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’ Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin. Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus.” We have access through Christ to come right in to the Father.

Verses 22-27, “let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a

certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.”

He is warning to be faithful and zealous, of the danger of drifting into willful sin and the consequences of turning our back on God's calling once we have known and understood.

Verses 31-32, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings.” He tells you to remember back when you first learned the truth. Remember the things that happened, the things you went through and the problems you faced. Remember the things that happened and all the things you went through.

Verses 34-38, “for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.”

He goes on and explains what faith is.

Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Then he shows how all the men and women of God have gone through and endured, faced all the things they had and “hung in there” through faith.

Hebrews 12:1-3, “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [all the men and women of faith in Hebrews 11], let us lay aside every weight [things that weigh us down, discourage and beset us], and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.” Consider what He went through.

Verse 4, “You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.” Christ, that final night, prayed so intently that He sweat great drops of blood (Luke 22:44). None of us have done that.

Verses 5-6, “And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My

son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.”

Verses 7-11, God deals with us for our benefit. We are warned and exhorted in Chapter 12. We see that Paul places great emphasis to stir up and exhort the people.

He concludes in Hebrews 13 with a reminder to the people as to what to do. They are to look to God. They are not to be covetous, recognizing that God will never leave us nor forsake us (v. 5).

Hebrews 13:6-7, “So we may boldly say: ‘The Lord is my helper, I will not fear. What can man do to me?’ Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.” He refers to the leadership of the Church.

He brings out in v. 17, “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.”

There is ultimately an accountability that the ministry has. That’s why there is a certain government in the Church. There is a responsibility that the ministry has of teaching God’s people and teaching God’s truth. God is going to hold us accountable for what we do and for being faithful. He emphasizes these things.

There’s a tremendous amount that is packed into the book of Hebrews, a tremendous overview of God’s great plan and purpose. There is a primary emphasis on the role of Jesus Christ, His role as our High Priest, our Mediator, and the role of the priesthood. The transition is explained to people who are going to be going through and experiencing that transition.

He even makes the point in Hebrews 13:14, “For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.” Jerusalem was going to cease to be the center point of the Church within a few years after he wrote this. You have to realize to what extent this was going to come as a shock to a lot of people. Things had been a certain way all their life. They had been in the Church for years. These things in terms of Jerusalem—the temple, the priesthood—all these things had been functioning for centuries before they ever came on the scene. Yet prophetically there were things that were going to be swept away. They needed to understand the transition.

There was going to be great change as the outward manifestation and functioning of the

Old Covenant was swept away. It ceased. God’s people needed to understand how that fit in with Scripture and the fact that it was not permanent. It was a shadow of things to come. It was simply something that foreshadowed the reality and the substance of what Jesus Christ did. There remains a priesthood and that is Jesus Christ. He is our priesthood. There is one Mediator between God and man and that is Jesus Christ. That’s the role of the priesthood.

In the Catholic Church, the priest is the mediator between God and man. That’s where the doctrine of transubstantiation comes in. According to Catholic doctrine, the priest literally transforms the host (round wafer bread) into the reality of the body of Christ; you are literally partaking of the body of Christ. They claim there is a literal transformation that takes place. There is a “miracle” that takes place and that is the basis of your being able to commune with God in communion. They claim the basis of your fellowship with God is that you have to partake of this host that has been magically transformed into the body of Christ by the priest exercising his power. So, the priest becomes the mediator between God and man. You have to go to him and confess your sins. He has to remit those sins and has to give you of the consecrated host for you to have communion with God. You don’t have access to God unless you go through him because that’s the function of a priest.

We have a priest in the Church, but it’s not me or any leader at headquarters, etc. It’s *Christ*. He’s alive. We go to God through Him. God’s ministry is just that. It’s a ministry. They are servants. That’s what “minister” means—servants of God, of Jesus Christ and of God’s people. They may function in the role of elders, counselors, advisors, pastors, shepherds, bishops or overseers. They ultimately function in the role of ministers as servants, but they are not priests. They are not mediators between God and man. They are not intercessors through whom you have to go when we are to have access to God.

We have a Priest, a Mediator, Jesus Christ. Paul expounded and explained that. You see the balance here. On the one hand, he expounds the role of Jesus Christ, the role of the priesthood, the things of transition, as well as an exhortation to people who were tired and for whom the tendency was to let down and to feel like they lost that “spark.” We have to be on guard against that. The longer we have been around, the easier it can happen to us. If we are not careful, we can take it for granted and sort of lose the “sparkle”

and the newness. This is what was on the verge of happening to this first era of God's Church.

Paul wrote this letter as an exhortation to those people. This letter is very important and is preserved for us.

We will conclude our Bible study in Hebrews. Next Bible study we will be going through the books of I Timothy and Titus.

Bible Study # 66 Questions

SURVEY OF THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF PAUL SERIES

Hebrews

1. What are the two main themes of the book of Hebrews?
2. What is the purpose of angels?
3. What is man destined to inherit?
4. Prove from Hebrews that Sabbath keeping is still required by God.
5. Prove the identity of Melchizedec.
6. Why is the New Covenant better than the Old?
7. What is the basis of the New Covenant?
8. Why don't we offer animal sacrifices today? Prove.
9. What are the two essential elements of faith?
10. Does sufficient faith always ensure protection from physical harm?
11. What should the attitude of Church members be toward the ministry?
12. Demonstrate from internal evidence that Paul wrote Hebrews during his Roman imprisonment.

Bible Study # 67
April 9, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

Life and Letters of Paul Series—I Timothy and Titus

We are getting into the books of I Timothy and Titus this evening. We are going through the Life and Letters of the Apostle Paul. We have been focusing in on the period when he was in prison and the letters that he wrote from prison.

The book of Acts ends abruptly. At the end of Acts we will note, Acts 28:30-31, “Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.”

Paul was under arrest. He was confined. Indications are he was actually chained to a Roman soldier. But he was allowed to dwell in a residence, a rented house, and be under house arrest. He was not allowed to go out and travel, but he could receive visitors.

We will focus in on the abrupt ending of Acts. Virtually all the books of the New Testament end with “Amen.” This is not the end of Paul’s life. This is a period that everything sort of drops out of sight. There are reasons for that. Evidently, Paul was released from prison at the end of this time. He was released from prison in Rome in the spring of 61 A.D. He had spent two full years there.

While there, his influence had extended even to the Praetorian Guard and its commander Burrus. The Praetorian Guard was the palace guard of the emperor Nero. It was a very powerful force. It was so powerful that, in many cases, it raised up and deposed emperors. The Praetorian Prefect, the man who was the commander of the guard, was a man by the name of Burrus. He was very, very powerful in terms of influence in Rome and held not only the supreme military and judicial authority but also even legislative power and control of the finances for the province. He was a very powerful man. The Praetorian Guard had a great deal of influence.

Burrus, together with the Roman philosopher Seneca, held great influence over Nero. Burrus died in 62 A.D. Once Burrus died (there are indications that he may have been the victim of a poison plot by Nero’s wife) and was out of the way, Seneca, by himself, was no longer able to be a restraining influence on Nero. Things really

went from bad to worse as far as persecution for the Christians.

It is significant to understand what happened because in the aftermath of some of this, we have the account of Rome burning. Nero was implicated as perhaps being responsible for having originally set the fire. He’s famous for “having fiddled while Rome burned.” He considered himself a great artist. He was putting on a concert and didn’t want to be interrupted. He got quite a bit of bad publicity out of it, particularly when rumors got around that Nero may have even been responsible for starting the fire. He wanted the opportunity to rebuild great sections of Rome and to sort of glorify himself as the great builder and artist that he considered himself to be.

So what does a politician do when he gets in trouble? He immediately tries to shift the blame to somebody else. And the best thing to do is to figure out some unpopular group and blame them. You want to pick a group that is well enough known, that everybody knows who they are, but few enough in numbers that it’s not going to impact most people. Previously, Nero and other Roman emperors had “picked on” the Jews. They were good ones to “pick on.” Most people didn’t like the Jews.

We read earlier in the book of Acts of a time when his predecessor had expelled all the Jews from Rome. Generally, if the Roman emperors got “hard up” for money, they would come up with some pretext, cast out the Jews and confiscate their property. That would sort of alleviate the “cash crunch.” The “rub” on that—this time around with the fire—was that Nero’s mistress was a Jew. So, she exercised a little influence on him in terms of not blaming the Jews this time. Well, Burrus (who was the Praetorian Prefect) and Seneca had a great deal of influence on Nero and they had been favorable toward the Apostle Paul. Paul had influence that had gone all the way up that high.

Philippians 1:13, “so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ.” This is one of the prison epistles. He is writing from Rome. The term “Palace” in the Greek is “Praetorium,” “the court of the Praetorium Guard.” He was well known in the Praetorium, in the area where all this was going on.

Philippians 4:22, “All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar’s household.” At the time Paul was writing the letters that we’ve been reading, he was in his Roman imprisonment. Paul had influence that went all

the way to the top of the Roman government. There were converts right there in the palace. Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house. Nobody appeared and accused him. Roman law was that if two years went by and there wasn't a formal accusation brought and you hadn't been brought to trial, charges were dismissed. So, at the end of two years, charges would have been dismissed against Paul because there wasn't any real basis in Roman law to hold him. We have the book of Acts ending abruptly at the time of Paul's release.

What happened following his release in 61 A.D.? We are told in the book of Romans where Paul had intended to go when he wrote to the Church at Rome. He had written this prior to coming to Rome as a prisoner. That wasn't originally the way he had intended to come, but that was the way it had worked out.

Romans 15:28, "Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain." Paul told the Church in Rome that his plans were to come through Rome and to go from there on to Spain. Now, when the book of Acts ends, he is in Rome. He had spent two years there.

Every indication is that he traveled on to Spain from Rome. There are plenty of secular historical accounts that show that he went on to the island of Britain, which was a part of the Roman Empire at that time. He returned to the area of the Middle East, perhaps around 63 A.D. or 64 A.D. He came back to the area around Ephesus in Asia Minor and then went on into the area of Macedonia, which is northern Greece. When he left Ephesus, we have a gap of about three years.

Paul left Rome. His imprisonment was over. No accusers showed up, charges were dismissed and he left Rome. Within a matter of a few months, his protector at Rome, Burrus, the Praetorian Prefect, was dead. Seneca, the Roman philosopher, was out of business. He had lost his "hold" when he didn't have someone there to sort of support and back him up.

At that point, intense governmental persecution from the Roman government against the Christians began. You have to realize, prior to that time, persecution against the Christians had primarily been on a local level and had generally been stirred up by the Jews. At this point, after the death of Burrus, the official government persecution of Christians began in Rome. They became the new scapegoats. If Paul had not left when he did, he would have never left. He would

have been executed. That was the tenor of things within six months after his departure.

But the situation was that he did leave. He went to Spain, left Spain and went up to Britain, left there and came back into the Middle Eastern area. It's possible that he went to Antioch, but we don't have any direct reference of that. We know that he went to Ephesus and stayed there for a period of months. He left Ephesus, sailed across that little narrow stretch of water over into Macedonia in northern Greece.

When he left Ephesus, he left Timothy in charge. Timothy was a young evangelist by this time, perhaps in his thirties. Paul went on to Macedonia.

Paul then writes this letter of **I Timothy** to Timothy from Macedonia. It was written before Paul's second Roman imprisonment. Paul was arrested again in Macedonia and transported to Rome. He was probably arrested in about 64 A.D. I Timothy was written a short time prior to that while he was in Macedonia.

The main purpose of this book is to give Timothy instructions in his ministerial duties regarding ordinations, the administration of Church funds (such as the third tithe fund), dealing with heresy and related Church problems. Timothy was a young evangelist that was now in a situation where he was on his own. Paul probably realized that the circumstances were such that it was very likely that he might find himself under arrest. He knew that if he ever went back to Rome again, unless God just supernaturally intervened, he would never come out alive. Undoubtedly, at this point, Paul felt the need to put some things in writing that would give instruction to Timothy that Paul, on his own, may have done under other circumstances, but now he writes it. He gives us a written record. **We are going to focus on some of that.**

Titus was written at about the same time. It was written to Titus who was in charge of the work in Crete. Crete was a little island down in the Mediterranean, a little ways down from where Paul and Timothy were. **We will notice that the subject matter to Titus is similar to I Timothy, but there were some different statements.** These letters were, basically, instructions to the ministry. Paul wrote them at a time prior to his final imprisonment.

I Timothy 1:1-4, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope, to Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. As I urged you when I went into

Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.”

We are told right here where Timothy was; he was in Ephesus. That’s where Paul told him to stay. When he left and went on into Macedonia, Paul told him to stay in Ephesus. Very likely the scenario was that Paul returned from Britain, sailed across the Mediterranean and landed in Antioch, which had been his headquarters, his “jumping-off” point for previous journeys. Then he left to come back to Ephesus. It’s possible that the situation in Antioch was such that he went directly to Ephesus.

There is one thing to realize about Ephesus. In the latter period of the New Testament time, Ephesus became more and more the focal point, and was really the headquarters of the New Testament Church. Right around this time (64 A.D.), after James was executed in Jerusalem, it really stirred things up. By 69 A.D., the Christians had fled Jerusalem, and by 70 A.D. Jerusalem was destroyed. This really marked a major cutoff.

Ephesus was a Church Paul had raised up. It was a Church that he left Timothy in charge of.

In the last period of the first century, we find that the Apostle John lived in Ephesus. He died and was buried in Ephesus. He wrote letters to the Church, which was addressed in the book of Revelation and other places.

The interesting thing is that in the second and third century, where do we find the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread being kept? We find them being kept in Ephesus, which was primarily a Gentile Church. The remarkable thing is—the people who think that Christ and the apostles did away with the Sabbath and holy days—why do we find the Ephesus Church keeping the Sabbath and holy days?

The Ephesus Church was a Church that Paul raised up and personally taught and pastored, a Church that Timothy was left in charge of, a Church where the Apostle John spent his last years all the way to the very end of the 90s. Why do we find that Church and the area around there as the ones who were keeping the Passover, observing God’s festivals and Sabbath? —Because they were doing what John, Timothy and Paul had done. There is a very clear record of history in the area. Ephesus had major import. It is used in the book of Revelation, figuratively, to symbolize the first stage or era of God’s Church. And interestingly enough, in the

period of that era or first phase, the Church was headquartered in Ephesus. We see that it was the residence of the last apostle, John.

Timothy is there and is being instructed.

Verse 5, “Now the purpose [KJV, “end”] of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith.” Some completely misunderstand that and say the commandments are done away—that they are ended and all you have to do is have love. That’s not what this verse says at all. The sense of “the end of the commandment” is “the end result.” You can look it up in any of the commentaries or books that bring it out. One of the commentaries renders it “the goal, the true end to be reached.” The goal of the commandment is love out of a pure heart. What is the end result? What is the purpose? What is the end focus? Where does the commandment lead? Where does God’s law lead? God’s law leads to “love from a pure heart, from a good conscience and from sincere faith.” In other words, you are doing what you should do. You are not a put-on or pretending. You really mean it. God’s law reflects itself because what is the love of God?

I John 5:3, “This is the love of God that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome [KJV, “grievous”].” God’s law and God’s love go hand-in-hand together. When lawlessness and a disregard and disrespect for law grow, love grows cold.

I Timothy 1:6-7, Paul talks about certain individuals who desire to be teachers of the law who didn’t understand what they said or what they were teaching.

I Timothy 1:8, “But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully.” What was the law made for? It was made to define right from wrong. It was made for those who are breaking the law.

Verses 9-10, “knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.”

The whole point of the law is to define what is right from wrong. These are the things that the law is focused on.

Verses 15-17, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy,

that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Notice the word “immortal” is used referring to God. You can look through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and you will never find the phrase “immortal soul.” The words “immortal soul” are not anywhere in the Bible. You find “immortal” and “immortality” only mentioned a few times. We are told that God is immortal. We are told in terms of immortality that God only has immortality (I Timothy 6:16). We are told that we will put on immortality at the resurrection (I Corinthians 15:53-54). God is the source of immortality. God is immortal. We’re not; we are mortal. We are doomed to death. It is only through Jesus Christ and God’s promises that we can receive immortality.

I Timothy 1:18, “This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare.” Paul uses the metaphor of the Christian life being like warfare. He told Timothy to fight a good fight.

Verse 19, “having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck.”

I Timothy 2:1-2, “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.” Paul said to pray for the leadership, the rulers, for those in authority. What was it they were praying? Well, the primary thing Paul told Timothy was to pray for the leadership, the leaders. Pray that they will leave us alone. Pray that we can live a quiet and peaceable life and pray that God will deliver us from persecution.

Verses 3-4, “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

This certainly proves that God has not ordained or predestined some to be lost. There are some who totally misunderstand what predestination is all about. They claim God has predestined some to be saved and some to be lost. They read about predestination. They assume that since you have an immortal soul, when you die you have to go to either heaven or hell and if God predestined anything, then He predestined some to be saved and others are to be lost. That’s not true.

Predestination only has to do with *when* God chooses to call. Some are called as the firstfruits; some are called later. But God’s will and purpose is to have all men to be saved. That’s God’s desire, but each in his own time. God’s purpose and God’s desire is to have all come to a knowledge of the truth.

Verses 5-6, “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” There is one Mediator, one go-between. That’s what a Mediator is.

In some cases, when you have a labor strike, they bring in a federal mediator. He sits down and talks with management for a little while and then goes and talks with labor. He mediates the strike and tries to work it out. A mediator is a go-between.

There’s one Mediator between God and man. There’s one go-between the Father and us. That’s Jesus Christ. It didn’t say there are two, Christ and Mary. It didn’t say one mediatrix. It didn’t say there are many saints that also do a little mediating on the side. Let’s face it, if you pray to somebody else—if you pray to Mary or one of the saints—you are in effect looking to some other mediator. You are asking somebody to go to God on your behalf. We are told right here there is only one mediator.

There are two problems with praying to Mary or the saints. First is the fact that they are dead and in their graves and are not hearing your prayers because Ecclesiastes 9:5 tells us the dead know nothing. It’s not doing any good from that standpoint. Second, we are told right here that there is only one Mediator, Jesus Christ.

Verse 8, “Therefore I desire that the men everywhere, lifting up holy hands...” What does it mean to “lift up holy hands”? What do you do the things you do with? Good or bad, you do it with your hands. You work with your hands; you play with your hands. All the things you do, you use your hands. That is the symbol of action. The things we do, we do with our hands.

If we’re going to pray to God and, in effect, lift up our hands to God, they need to be holy hands. They shouldn’t be hands that are dirtied by practicing sin. I can’t be out doing a lot of things I shouldn’t do and think that I can go to God and that’s okay. I can’t be living a lie. Paul says, ‘I want men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands—hands that are not dirtied and sullied by the practice of living in sin.’

Continuing in v. 8, “...without wrath and doubting.” In other words, we are supposed to be what we say we are. We go to God as His

children. We are trying to practice His way of life. We are not trying to practice all the things the world does.

Verse 9, “in like manner also [referring to what he had mentioned earlier], that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation [KJV, “shamefacedness” and “sobriety”]...” The word “shamefacedness” is sort of a funny word. It’s not a term that we use in modern English and gives sort of an unfortunate connotation because when people read that, they think in terms of being ashamed. That’s not what the word means.

It is a term that’s very difficult to translate into English with one word. It has to do with a sense of modesty, an inner attitude that is displayed outwardly and, in many ways, even by the way we look. We reflect our attitudes and our feelings by the look on our face. We can display many different things. It is not talking about being ashamed of yourself, hiding your face behind a veil like some of the Moslems do and only their eyes peeping out. That’s not what it is talking about. It is an inner attitude of modesty and respect for God. It is an attitude of humility, a demeanor and a way of carrying ourselves that shows out in the expression in our face.

If you look at someone, you look him in the face. Basically, where do you look? You look at the eyes and the mouth. Those are basically the areas that display the inner person, and you can tell a lot about somebody. If you notice, sometimes a person may put a smile on their face. They say something, and you look at their eyes. They may be smiling with their mouth but not with their eyes. You know something is wrong. The inner person, the inside of us shows out. Our face is the expressive part of our body. You don’t look at somebody’s elbows. You don’t show expression with your elbows. You can be in a good or bad attitude and your elbows look the same, but your face doesn’t. The sense of it is a word that just means an outward manifestation of an inner attitude, an inner attitude of modesty. What it details here is the concept that God values—women adorning themselves in modest apparel and show from their faces a spirit of modesty.

Verse 9, “...not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing.” If you read some of the Bible helps, they describe some of these big elaborate gaudy sorts of styles, faddish-type styles that were done. Basically, what it is talking about is a Christian woman is not trying to call undue attention to herself. She’s not trying to copy the haughty demeanor of a model

off the cover of Vogue or Glamour or something. You wouldn’t read v. 9 and really apply it to some of those. There’s an attitude that just sort of shows forth in everything, even from the way they carry themselves. It says here that there is a set of values that, in God’s sight, is of great price—a set of values that God thinks is valuable, but the world does not consider valuable.

Various churches are getting into the subject of ordaining women. There is even a controversy in the Catholic Church of why can’t women be priests? The Episcopal and Methodist Churches have ordained some women priests. Various ones have and various ones haven’t. I attended a funeral a few months ago (because of some Church members) which was conducted by a woman Episcopal priest. They didn’t get this out of the Bible. They think Paul is old fashioned. What they didn’t know is that Paul really didn’t originate all of this. God did.

Verses 11-12, “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.”

Verse 14, “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.” Eve was conned by Satan. Adam really wasn’t deceived on it. He was just weak-willed and went along with what she wanted to do.

Verse 15, “Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control [KJV, “sobriety”].” The point is that a woman does not have to occupy man’s responsibilities in the Church in order to have just as high a salvation and just as high a reward in the Kingdom as a man. It’s not that men get to do all these things and women don’t, so how can they have any reward in the Kingdom?

If we carry out the responsibilities that we have, in whatever sphere of life we are, God is pleased with that. God is pleased to see us do what we can do and the best we can do to put His principles into action, to live His way of life in whatever our sphere or whatever area of life represents our calling. It does not have to be a matter of everybody doing the same thing or occupying the same office or position in order to achieve anything of value or worth. That’s not true.

I Timothy 3:1-7, Paul discusses the issue of ordinations. He talks about ordaining a bishop or elder—an overseer.

Verse 15, “but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct

yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” Paul didn’t know how long he was going to be tied up. Timothy was being left to take responsibility, and he said, ‘I am leaving you these instructions so that you will know how to carry it out and how to go about doing it.’ He enumerates qualifications for an elder.

Verse 2, “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach.” Many of these qualifications are also quoted to apply to a deacon, except this term “able to teach.” The primary responsibilities of an elder are in the area of teaching God’s people. This may be in counseling, in one-on-one situations, in teaching situations or it may be preaching. All elders don’t necessarily have to be able to preach, but they do have to be able to teach—and there is a difference. Some elders are able to do both. Some are very effective in terms of teaching and counseling in one-on-one situations and small group circumstances; yet they would not be nearly as effective, perhaps, in preaching to a large group. But there is that ability to teach, to convey and explain God’s principles.

Verse 3, he describes personal characteristics.

Verses 4-5 talk about being able to properly administer our own household, realizing that’s a pretty good indication of what we are going to do with the Church. The way we rule our home is a pretty good indication of how we are going to rule in the Church.

In v. 8, we focus on the deacons. They also must have high spiritual qualifications. It is a physical office that requires spiritual qualifications.

Verse 10, “But let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless.” They are to be proved. They have to have been serving and practicing these things.

Verse 11, “Likewise their wives....” The word literally is “the women.” It’s not a reference to deacon’s wives because there isn’t any reference to the wives of elders. You wouldn’t have separate qualifications for the wives of deacons and not any qualifications for the wives of elders. Rather, it is talking about the qualifications of special service for the women. This, as even the commentaries bring out, must be a deaconess, not wives of deacons. It is from this basis that the Church has understood for many, many years that there is an ordained office that can be and is utilized and set apart that women can have. It is not an office of public instruction and teaching in

the Church in terms of men and women, but it is an office of service.

Then, v. 12, we are instructed once again about the deacons and their example in their own family.

I Timothy 4:1-3, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.”

There are a couple of applications of this. This prophesied of what became of the Catholic Church. What two things did the Catholic Church introduce early on? The doctrine of priestly celibacy (forbidding to marry) and the abstinence from meats on Fridays and the Lenten season. In many of the Monastic orders, there were vows that abstained from meat entirely—that sort of enforced vegetarianism. They are labeled as doctrines of demons.

God created certain meats to be eaten. Now what does it say? Some want to say this means you can eat pigs, oysters, shrimp and everything. They will quote part of a verse.

Verse 4, “For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused....” Or, “Every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving.” All you have to do is say the blessing and “dig in” to all the shrimp and catfish you can eat. That’s not what it says. You have to read the whole sentence. It says, “Every creature is good and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving, for...” the sentence continues, “...it is sanctified [set apart] by the word of God and prayer.” What meat is set apart by the word of God? –Read Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 13.

I Timothy 4:3, “...nothing to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving of those that believe and know the truth.” What is truth?

John 17:17, “...Thy word is truth.” If you know the truth—which means God’s word, the Bible—and you realize that everything God made is good (buzzards are good, pigs are good), everything is good. It is good for the reason it was made. Horses are good, cows are good, dogs and cats are good. But this still doesn’t mean I want to barbecue my cat when I go home this evening. He’s good. He serves a useful purpose. The horse is good, but that doesn’t mean I want to mount up my cow and go chase down my horse to slaughter it and stick it in the freezer.

God made horses to ride and cows to eat and to milk. He didn't do vice versa. It's not an accident that we don't ride the cows in order to herd up the horses. We ride the horses to herd up the cows.

God made certain things for certain purposes. Certain creatures were created as the garbage collectors. The buzzards serve a useful function, but that doesn't mean I want to eat one for Sunday dinner. Fried buzzard! Every creature is good for the purpose for which it was created. It's all good, but it's not all good for the same thing.

I Timothy 4:5, the key is if it is sanctified by the Word of God, set apart and made holy by the Word of God and prayer. It takes both. When you put the whole thing together it becomes clear.

Verses 6-8, "If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself rather to godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come."

He uses an example. Bodily exercise is good for you temporarily. It's good for a short time and for the short term, but godliness is profitable forever.

Verse 12, "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Set an example. You are young, but don't conduct yourself in a way that causes others to look down on you.

Verse 14, "Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." This is speaking of that extra measure of God's Spirit given in ordinations.

He instructs Timothy in terms of dealing with members in the Church.

I Timothy 5:1, "Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, the younger men as brothers." He explains the way you deal with people. He told Timothy, 'For those who are older, deal with them with respect. Show them the kind of respect you would to your own father. Deal with the younger men in a little different way, more on a peer level as brothers.'

Verse 2, "the older women as mothers, the younger as sisters, with all purity." He explains the way we deal with one another. Timothy was

instructed in terms of appropriate conduct, ways of handling things and showing proper respect.

Verses 3-4, "Honor widows who are really widows. But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God." He is talking about the fact that widows who are really needy are to be helped by the Church. But if a widow has children and grandchildren, it would be a good idea for them to give a little help. That's the starting point. Widows who are widows indeed, who are desolate, who don't have any other means of support are to be helped by the Church.

We are told in v. 8, "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." He is speaking of the responsibility we have. We are not to be negligent and careless in providing for our own. We have a responsibility. This, obviously, is not meant to make reference to those who are injured or incapacitated in some way or physically unable to go out and do what they normally would. It has to do with people who are irresponsible, people who don't take their responsibility seriously to take care of their family. And, certainly, that carries on over into elderly parents and things of that sort.

Verses 9-12, "Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work. But refuse the younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith."

There's a special enrollment of widows in some sort of service in the Church and, perhaps in this particular case, for Timothy and some of the other ministers. There's an indication that Timothy was not married at this time. Paul made reference that the widows involved in this specific enrollment should be age sixty and above, primarily so that there would be no taint of scandal involved.

This probably had to do with some matters of personal service. Maybe some who were receiving livelihood from the Church were helping out with cooking, housekeeping and things and matters of this sort. They were able

to render service to Timothy and to some of the other ministers who perhaps did not have their own wives or some ministers who were traveling. This would be the case. They were traveling on a circuit. You couldn't just pop into a restaurant and buy something. There was a lot of preparation involved in food. There were some widows who had a chance to serve because of specific opportunities and needs.

Paul gave Timothy instruction. He said, 'Be careful with it. You don't want to get some of the younger ones involved. It can look bad. It can give a wrong connotation.'

Verse 14, his desire was that the younger women think in terms of marrying, having children and learning to guide their own household. Learning to be responsible in that way was something they should do, rather than thinking that this special service in the Church was something they should do.

Verse 16, "If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows." He said there are those that are dependent on the Church, and Church funds should be used to relieve them. Those who have family members who can take care of them—charity begins at home—let the family do some things so that the Church's funds aren't used up for those who have other means of support. The Church can concentrate its efforts on those who are totally dependent upon it. This is clearly a reference to the third tithe fund providing for the widows.

Verse 17, "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine." The word "honor" that is used here is a word that really has to do with pay. In fact, some of the translations render it that way. The New English Bible renders it "stipend." It is a term that has to do with "the laborer is worthy of his hire."

Timothy was responsible for administering to a large area. There would have been many ministers under his jurisdiction. He would be responsible for setting salaries, for making decisions and determining the way in which some of these things were set. Paul gave him instructions. It was appropriate that Timothy not consider everybody under the employ would just automatically receive the same amount. Those who were doing an outstanding job, those who worked harder and did a lot more, it was not inappropriate that they receive more. Paul is instructing Timothy. He is a young man now on his own. Paul may not have much dealing with

him in the future. Paul didn't know exactly what was going to happen, so he is giving him instructions as to how to administer the Church.

Verse 22, Paul admonished him, "Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure." Don't jump in. Don't ordain someone too suddenly. Know what you are getting into.

Verse 24, "Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later." He cautioned him not to be hasty in dealing with people.

In I Timothy 6, he continues and admonishes servants to show proper respect to those that they are under (vv. 1-2).

In vv. 6-12, he deals with the matter of materialism and what our priorities should be.

I Timothy 6:10, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil..." He didn't say it was the only root.

You know what a root on a plant does. The root is the source of nourishment for the plant. Materialism, a preoccupation with money, has been a root that has fed just about every evil that you can think of. What is it that people have never done for money? People have murdered for money, stolen, lied, committed immorality, sold out on everything they believed and sold out friends, family and country. People have done just about anything you can think of for money. That's what he means when he says the love of money is a root of all evil. If somebody is preoccupied with money and their great goal in life is to get rich, this can be trouble. If you love money too much, it can lead you into just about anything that a person can ever do. So, he warned to have a balanced perspective.

We are told of God.

Verses 15-16, "...He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen." Only God has immortality. You don't have immortality. How can people say we have an immortal soul? Here it says, speaking of God, only He has immortality. If you have an immortal soul, you have immortality, too. How did you get it? God is the only One who possesses immortality inherent within Himself. We will put on immortality at the resurrection.

Isn't that what we're told in I Corinthians 15:53, "This mortal must put on immortality." We don't have it on yet.

I Timothy 6:20, "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane

and vain babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge [KJV, “science falsely so called”]—” It sounds like they had evolution already stirred up back then. Is that “science falsely so called”? Actually the word “science” is a word that just means “knowledge.” Certainly it could apply to false knowledge in the sense of evolution, but it just has to do with knowledge. He told Timothy to hang on to the “trunk of the tree.” Avoid getting off on some of these tangents and some of what purports to be knowledge and really isn’t.

Now we are going to notice the book of **Titus**. It’s a little shorter than I Timothy. **It deals with similar things and was written right around the same time.**

Titus 1:1, “Paul, a servant of God....”

Verses 4-5, “To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior. For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—”

Paul had left Titus in Crete. Crete is a little island down in the Mediterranean.

He left Timothy in Ephesus and he went over to Macedonia. Now Paul never came back to them. Paul was arrested in Macedonia and transported to Rome. He didn’t know, but perhaps God had given him a premonition that he was going to be arrested at this time. He wanted to give detailed instructions for these ministers he had left behind and left in charge. He gave these younger men, who had been under his direct supervision, a written letter to give them instructions as to how to carry out their job. And these instructions have been preserved as a part of the Bible. These are instructions to God’s ministry, all the way down through the centuries, as to how to carry out responsibilities.

He describes the elders who were to be ordained. Verse 6, “if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.” The terms “elder” and “bishop” are used interchangeably. Verse 5 says “elder”; v. 7 says “bishop.” The word “bishop” simply means an “overseer,” a spiritual overseer.

Verse 7, “For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money.” A steward is someone who manages something in behalf of someone else. He is there as God’s manager.

Verses 8-11, “but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.”

Verses 14-16, “not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.”

Titus 2:1, “But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine.” How is sound doctrine described? Sound doctrine is described in the next few verses as the way we live. It relates to a way of life, not just to a list of abstract beliefs. Sound doctrine should be the way we live.

Verses 2-3, “that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—” We find a variety of things given here.

Verse 4, “that they admonish [KJV, “teach”] the young women to love their husbands, to love their children.” –To have a set of priorities. It’s not that women can never teach. Specifically here, older women were to teach younger women. Teaching does not have to be done merely in a formal classroom setting. Some of the most effective teaching is done by example and one-on-one situations.

Verse 5, “[teach them] to be discreet [which simply means to be decent, modest, to be using good judgment, to be chaste, to be pure and innocent], chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”

Verses 6-7, “Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded [self-restrained], in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility.” It has to do with a way of life, a way of conducting ourselves, a way for men and women, young and old to conduct themselves and to set an example. These are things that lead to sound doctrine. This is what sound doctrine is

all about—a way of living the Christian life, a set of priorities, and a set of values that is quite a bit in contrast to the values of the world.

Verses 9-10, “Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering [stealing], but showing all good fidelity [honesty], that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.” In other words, it’s a matter that we should be faithful in carrying out the responsibilities that we have.

Verses 12-15, “teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.”

We need to keep our eyes set on the reality of the Kingdom of God, but we need to be living our lives here and now in a responsible way. We need to live a life that denies ungodliness, denies worldly lusts and is a right example. We’re living our lives as Christ would live in us, with our focus, our attention, our hope set on the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of God’s Kingdom. Jesus Christ gave Himself for us, to buy us back, to release us from all iniquity (lawlessness). That’s why Christ gave Himself for us, to bring us out of that. We are to be purified as a peculiar people, a special people. We are to be different from the world. We are to be zealous of good works. If there is nothing different between the world and us, then we are in trouble.

Titus 3:1, “Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work.” Show respect to the government.

Verse 2, “to speak evil of no one [don’t be out stirring things up], be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.” There was a time when we were involved in all kinds of thing, but our lives should be different after we have been called (vv. 3-4).

We’ve been called and set apart.

Verse 5-6, “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior.”

We’ve been baptized, and the Holy Spirit is the source of renewing and regenerating. There is a cleansing effect that is brought out and described here. It is a reference to the beginning of a new life. When it talks about “generate,” it has to do with starting. If something is generated, that means it’s begun or started. Generate used in the sense of life has to do with beginning a new life. “Regeneration” has to do with a beginning of a new life, but a second time. The physical life, that we now live, had a beginning. Life began in us when we were conceived. It had a generation. It was originally begun and it continues on to this day.

Paul is talking about another life that begins at the time of baptism—a new beginning spiritually. We have a new beginning when God places His Spirit within us. We are in the beginning of that now. We will completely put on the spiritual at the resurrection when this mortal will put on immortality. We will, at that point, be completely a part of the Kingdom of God and the Family of God forever. This began at baptism. It began with a washing, a renewing. It began what represented a spiritual new beginning.

Verse 7, “that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” We are not yet inheritors. We are heirs.

Verse 8, “This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.” What is the real sense of this? The expression is best rendered in the New English Bible, which is simply, “those who’ve come to believe in God should see that they engage in honorable occupations, which are not only honorable in themselves, but also useful to their fellow man.”

Again, it gets back to the way we live our life. Paul says, ‘This is something that is faithful and I want you to constantly affirm it.’ If we believe in God, we need to conduct ourselves properly. Those who come to believe in God should see that they engage in honorable occupations, which are not only honorable to themselves, but also useful to the community. A Christian needs to maintain good works by the way he conducts himself, even in his daily life and daily business. There are jobs a Christian simply shouldn’t have. For instance, I would have trouble reconciling this verse with getting a job as a blackjack dealer in Las Vegas. I would have trouble reconciling that with being in an occupation that was not

honorable in itself and also not useful to my fellow man. In other words, what he is saying is a Christian needs to be a productive member of the community. He needs to do something that is of value. A lot of things can be of value. There's a place for many things, but I think it's something that we need to examine.

On this basis, for instance, we have counseled people who come into the Church from certain areas of the country (let's say Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina) who are involved in tobacco farming. This is a verse that they need to consider. There are things on this basis that our members who have done that go into other kinds of farming; they farm something else, a different cash crop. As a Christian we need to be careful to maintain an honorable occupation, which is not honorable in itself, but is useful to our fellowman. There's some value to it. We want to examine the things that we do in this way. There's value to a wide variety of things, but there are some things that are very questionable and some things that are more than questionable.

Verse 10, "Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition."

It continues and describes some detailed instructions.

Verse 14, "And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful." There is an emphasis here on being a productive person. God wants his people to be productive, to be useful, and to set an example in the community. This is important. The thing we come down to is—from a Christian standpoint—Christianity is a way of life and has to do with all of the things we do and the way that we live. One of the things stressed in I Timothy and Titus is that Christianity is a way of life. It should impact us in our regular life. In whatever area of our life and whatever our circumstances, there are many principles and things that apply.

Paul wrote these things in the latter portion of his life. He had not yet been arrested for his final imprisonment.

We are going to be going through II Timothy next time. II Timothy was written during Paul's final imprisonment in Rome, just prior to his execution. So, in the aftermath of I Timothy and Titus, within a matter of months, perhaps six or eight months after Paul had written these, he was arrested and transported to Rome. Next Bible study we will go through II Timothy and we'll see the final admonitions that Paul stressed. There's a great deal packed in here. We are

almost at the end of our study of the Life and Letters of Paul. I hope that the study has been helpful to you in focusing in on various bits of instruction that were given in God's word.

Bible Study # 67 Questions

SURVEY OF THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF PAUL SERIES

I Timothy and Titus

(Give scripture references.)

1. Where was Timothy stationed when Paul addressed this letter to him?
2. Explain I Timothy 1:5.
3. Prove from I Timothy that God has not predestined some people to be lost forever.
4. Is it permissible for a woman to serve in a ministerial capacity or a situation of teaching mixed groups in the Church of God? Prove.
5. Why did Paul write Timothy the instructions contained in I Timothy 3?
6. To what does I Timothy 3:11 refer?
7. Explain I Timothy 4:3-5.
8. Explain I Timothy 5:3-8, 16. What Church fund is referred to?
9. Explain I Timothy 5:17-18.
10. Where was Titus and what was his responsibility?
11. Where does Paul define “sound doctrine” to Titus?
12. Explain Titus 3:8, 14. (Check the New English Bible for help.)

Bible Study # 68
April 23, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

Life and Letters of Paul Series—II Timothy

This evening we are continuing our series on the Life and Letters of the Apostle Paul. In fact, we are virtually to the conclusion of it. We **are focusing in on the book of II Timothy this evening, which was the last book the Apostle Paul wrote.** We will have one other Bible study, which will serve as sort of a wrap up to the material of Paul's life. We **are in this final period of Paul's life in this book of II Timothy.**

Last Bible study we went through the books of I Timothy and Titus. We found that the Apostle Paul had been released from his Roman imprisonment. We found that the end of the book of Acts ends abruptly with Paul's release. We found the fact that he dwelt two whole years in his own rented house at Rome and that came to an end. At that point, the Biblical record of Paul's life ceased. The book of Acts did not continue.

The obvious reason is that there were details and things that God simply did not choose to have recorded for us. That could be the subject of an entirely different Bible study—a study about where the rest of the apostles went and why certain things dropped from the scenes after a certain period in New Testament history. There are some very interesting stories and background that tie into that.

Evidently, from what Paul had said in the book of Romans (put together with secular tradition that have continued down), he went to Spain. Paul said that he planned to go from Italy to Spain, and there is every reason to think that he did so. He specifically said that in the book of Romans (Romans 15:22-28) and secular history and tradition maintains he did that. From Spain he went on up to Britain, which was the furthest outpost of the Roman Empire. He spent some time there, and then by the mid 60s, returned to the Mediterranean area. He returned to the area of Ephesus for a short period of time. Then he left Ephesus and went over to Macedonia. From there he wrote I Timothy and Titus. Then at some point after his writing of I Timothy and Titus, he was arrested and taken back to Rome.

The situation in Rome had drastically changed. The emperor Nero had made Christians the new scapegoats. They were being blamed for all the

problems. Politicians have long made use of scapegoats. Unpopular minorities come in very handy for that. You blame all the problems on them. The Christians served as the newest unpopular minority there in Rome. Nero had previously blamed it on the Jews. But since he had taken a young Jewish woman as his mistress, he was looking for a different scapegoat. The Christians were good ones on which to blame things.

The situation had really turned nasty since Paul had been there during his previous imprisonment. Some of the ones who had befriended Paul and had been impressed with him and the message he had brought had subsequently died, been demoted or had fallen out of favor. It was a different group of people, even though only a few years had transpired.

II Timothy was written fairly soon after the start of his second Roman imprisonment, perhaps during the summer of 67 A.D. In writing this final letter to Timothy, it was clear Paul realized this to be the final letter of his life. From a Church standpoint, it served as a summing up. He knew the situation had changed and that he would not leave Rome alive.

One of the major things that Paul did in the final period of his life, undoubtedly, involved the collecting together and the final editing of his own letters. We will see a reference to that in II Timothy. It is only logical that Paul would have been involved in doing that. Who is the logical person to edit and put into final form the letters that he had written.

Peter was, at this point, in the process of compiling the first New Testament canon, which ultimately consisted of twenty-two books. The only others to be added were the five that John himself wrote. John and Peter were entrusted with the responsibility of sealing up the New Testament and giving it to us in the form that we have it—in the form that the Greek Church preserved it. Undoubtedly, the Greek Churches of Asia Minor (particularly Ephesus) were the repositories of the form of the canon that was put together. We will get into some of that at a later time.

One of the things that becomes obvious, as we read II Timothy, is the extent to which the New Testament Church was in a crisis condition. We read the story and are aware of how things worked out. But when you are in the process of living the story, you don't know what is going to work out, except through faith. When you are in the midst of it, it is hard to see it in perspective.

There are many things in our own lives that we can look back on and see in perspective. There are things in the history of God's work that we have lived through in our lifetime that we can look back and see in perspective. Certainly, we can look at and see, in perspective, the events that transpired and are recorded in the Bible. Yet in each of those cases in the process of going through it, that perspective is not so easily obtained.

Take, for example, the crisis the Church went through back in January, 1979. Most of you in the Church at the time remember the state of California's lawsuit against the Church—the receivership that was announced and all sorts of accusations and rumors flying every which way. There were those who panicked and decided, 'This thing is all over with. They are taking over. They are going to shut it down. It's over with.' There were some who immediately started trying to sort of protect themselves and ensure their future as they thought.

What we find when we go through II Timothy is a similar situation. You have to realize what's happening. By the time Paul wrote this, most of the original apostles were dead or in prison. Paul himself was now in prison. Peter probably knew that his days were numbered. Those who weren't in prison were already up in age, into their late sixties or early seventies. They were at a point in life, even if imprisonment didn't take place, that they knew the productive years they had left were very limited. Most of them were already dead.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the New Testament Church was a short time away. Within three years, Jerusalem would be totally destroyed. Within two years, the New Testament Church would be gone from Jerusalem because it left at Pentecost before the destruction. The Church fled Pentecost of '69, prior to the destruction in the summer of '70.

We have a crisis situation. You couple that with the fact that various ones who, in some cases, had actually left the body of the Church and were teaching their own doctrine. Others were clinging to fellowship in the body of the Church but were introducing other various ideas. There were things that the apostles had been combating. Things were in a crisis situation.

There was a real crisis atmosphere and Paul perceived, through God's inspiration, that things were going to get a lot worse. **He writes the book of II Timothy, encouraging and instructing Timothy on how he was to function and carry himself during this time of**

impending and approaching crisis. He realized that things were going to get considerably worse before they would get any better, and many of the others were going to live through things that he would not be around for. He had sought to combat certain ideas and keep the Church on track during his lifetime. Now his departure was at hand.

There were final admonitions that he had for Timothy. We will find in II Timothy that heresy was rampant, especially the idea concerning grace into license. This was something that was already being twisted out of context and misapplied. Church authority was being ignored. Many ministers, as well as many members, were just simply "checking out." They were "dropping by the wayside."

Paul exhorts Timothy, individually, in the midst of these troublesome times. There were difficulties and things that were being faced. He gave him instruction and advice as to how he was to function as a minister in the midst of a worsening crisis in the Church. Paul also gave him specific instruction on what he needed him, personally, to do in terms of specific service that needed to be rendered, particularly involving the manuscripts that, undoubtedly, had to do with the final canonization. Timothy had been left behind in the area of Asia Minor. We saw that in I Timothy.

Paul admonishes him in terms of holding on, of keeping the deposit of truth and handing it to others. So this sort of exhortation is there. Already people were twisting and distorting the things that Paul himself had said.

II Timothy 1:1-3, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus. To Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day."

Verse 5, "when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also."

It's interesting to note that Timothy grew up in a circumstance where one of his parents was in the Church and the other was not. Timothy's father was not at all favorable toward either the Jewish religion or Christianity. That is apparent by the fact that Timothy was not circumcised and could not participate in the life of the Jewish community until the time the family had already

come into the Church and Paul was going to take him with him. Everyone knew that his mother was Jewish, but his father was Greek.

Understand what that did. That meant that Timothy had never been able to partake of the Passover service, which was a center point of Jewish life. Timothy had never been able to partake of that because in Exodus, the instruction was given that only those who were circumcised could partake of the Passover (Exodus 12:43-49).

It's clear that Timothy's father wished Timothy to be imbued with a Greek and Roman pagan approach to life. He wanted him to have a pagan outlook, the outlook of the Greek and Roman world, as opposed to the outlook of his mother. We don't have any particular record of Timothy's father other than that clear implication. He is not mentioned, and we are not told whether he had died or had simply divorced Timothy's mother.

But at the time we pick up the story in Acts, Timothy is an older teenager of perhaps age seventeen or so. His mother and grandmother had come into the Church. I think it should be an encouraging example for those in similar circumstances to realize that, even in the midst of difficult circumstances, Timothy's mother and grandmother had a tremendous impact and influence on his life. Paul mentions them specifically.

Verse 5, "when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also." Their example had greatly influenced Timothy.

Then he reminds Timothy to stir up the gift of God.

Verse 6, "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands." What gift is he referring to? Clearly it was the gift of the Holy Spirit—in context, that added measure of the Holy Spirit that came through ordination. But certainly, the principle would apply in any context of the Holy Spirit.

The analogy he draws is to stirring fire. Most of us don't think in those terms. We turn on the butane, turn up the thermostat on central heat or we turn up the knob on our electric heater. But the reference Paul is making is an analogy drawn from a wood fire. The fire and flame dies down and you have embers and coals. With a wood fire, every so often you have to stir it up. That's what Paul is describing.

The gift of God's Holy Spirit hasn't gone out, but the tendency is for it to become lukewarm. When the flames die down and gradually dies away, it has to be stirred up. What happens when you stir it up? Air and the oxygen gets to it. Maybe you add some more fuel and it blazes up. That's what happens to the gift of God within us. It has to be stirred up. More of God's Spirit has to get in there. It has to be stirred up. So Paul admonished Timothy not to become lukewarm and lethargic but to stir up the gift of God's Spirit.

Verse 7, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

He continues to discuss the state of things in v. 9, "[speaking of God] who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began." God didn't call us because of what we are. He called us because of what He is.

Verse 10, "but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Here's another proof that you don't have an immortal soul. Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to life through the gospel. Only God has immortality (I Timothy 6:16). Immortality is brought to light through the gospel. It is clearly preached that we can also have immortality as a gift from God brought to light through the gospel.

Verse 11, "to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles."

Verses 13-14, "Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who [which] dwells in us." It's an interesting play on words here when he talks about "that good thing which was committed to you." The term that is used for "commit" or "committed" is a term in the Greek language that had a technical meaning. It always implies the situation of one who has to take a long journey. He deposits his money and other valuables with a friend and trusts him to restore it on his return.

Back in those days, they didn't have banks and safety deposit boxes, credit cards, traveler's checks and all the things that we do. Many times they would deposit valuables with a trusted friend. Now, it better be a trusted friend because if you deposit very much with him, you can

come back and he is long gone. This was a common thing that was done. If you went very far, it was a long journey because you walked or rode on a donkey or sailed in a boat. You didn't have to go very far for it to be a long journey. It was not uncommon for it to last several weeks or even months.

Paul knew he was going to die. He used this term, this expression, referring to the truth of God having, in effect, been committed. 'The most valuable treasure I have, I am leaving on deposit with you Timothy. I am committing it to you. It is your responsibility to [as he brings it out a little later] pass it on to other faithful men.'

That is the circumstance, the situation that was being dealt with. Timothy was going to have to contend and preserve the faith once delivered because there were already various ones who were trying to water down and distort. There were the beginnings of what was, in a couple of centuries, clearly recognizable as the Catholic Church. In fact, within a century, what was clearly recognizable as the Catholic Church was already on the stage. Paul had already mentioned it years earlier.

II Thessalonians 2:7, he said, "the mystery of iniquity does already work." It was clearly at work and then gained quite a bit of ground by the time Paul wrote II Timothy.

Jude was writing at the same time Paul was writing II Timothy. In Jude's writing, he admonishes the brethren.

Jude 3, "...contend earnestly for the faith once delivered..." The faith once delivered was in danger of slipping away at the time. This was in the period of the New Testament.

II Timothy 1:15, "This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes."

In vv. 16-18, he beseeches God for mercy on the house of Onesiphorus who had shown Paul much kindness in times past.

We are going to see a little later that quite a number had forsaken him. They had left, headed out, saying, 'This thing is over with. It's about to fold up, and I'm getting out while the getting is good.'

We will notice in chapter 4 that Paul mentions several ministers who had left and gone back where they came from. In times of crisis, there are those who panic and throw in the towel. There are those who say, 'I didn't realize there were going to be trials and troubles. I didn't realize that I wouldn't always be able to walk by sight.' There are others who walk by faith. In

times of crisis, it is only with God's help that we can maintain a proper perspective.

We read the story and think, 'I'd sure hate to have my name mentioned in the Bible.' How would you like to be Phygellus or Hermogenes? The only time you get mentioned is when you "flaked out." The only thing anybody knows about you or remembers you for is the fact you turned away from Paul. That'd be kind of embarrassing. The only thing that any of us know about those two individuals is that they didn't do what they should have done. They didn't respond in a period of crisis the way they should have. It's an important thing to keep in mind.

How would we like to be summed up that way when periods of crisis come? —And they will come. You can't read the things Christ said in Matthew 24 and think that we will never have any crisis in the Church. We can't think we will always have smooth sailing in the Church and that things will always be really simple and easy. If you think that, you simply have not read the New Testament. What will the summation say about us? Will our names be mentioned like theirs or will we be mentioned in the way that Timothy is or some of the others.

II Timothy 2:1-2, "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." Paul had mentioned earlier to hold on to that which has been committed to you. 'You have to hold on, diligently look out for and commit the same truth I taught you—not changed, not watered down, not turn aside from the right hand or the left—but the same thing I taught you in the presence of many witnesses. Pass it on to faithful men.'

It needed to be faithfully transmitted, not changed, turned around and all sorts of things. When you read early Church history, you realize how quickly so many things were taken out of context, misapplied and completely turned upside down.

Verses 3-5, "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules."

Verse 7, "Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things." Paul did not want to amplify his explanation of these points, for whatever reason, but he

alludes to several things. Basically he stresses the conditions of true service. It involves wholehearted devotion to the job. It involves loyalty to the rules and hard work. You have to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. How do you do that? He warns him that if you go to war, you don't entangle yourself with the affairs of this life. The word used here is the term for business (literally, negotiations, transactions) by which men earn their livelihood. It involved simply that the fulltime ministry was something that involved abstinence from secular trade.

You can't serve two masters (Luke 16:13). If Timothy was going to faithfully carry out his responsibility that Paul had given him in terms of the ministry, he couldn't be getting preoccupied with various secular trades. God made provision for the Levitical priesthood and later for the New Testament ministry and their livelihood.

II Timothy 2:5, "And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules." Paul said, 'Don't try to take shortcuts.'

Verse 6, "The hard-working farmer [KJV, "husbandman"] must be first to partake of the crops." It's the one who works hard that would be first partaker of the fruits. You have to work hard.

Verses 10-13, "Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself." It doesn't matter whether we believe it or not; God's word endures and will prove sure.

Verse 14, "Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers." There were those who were striving about words to no profit. People wanted to wrangle about all sorts of things and get out on all sorts of "twiggy" points. Paul admonished Timothy about that. The Jews, particularly, and many of the Gnostics would go into great complicated things that they would read into certain words.

One of the things about it, in the Greek and Hebrew language, every word has a numerical value. When we were kids in school, most of us learned Roman numerals. We learned that certain letters had numerical value to the Romans—"V" is five, "X" is ten, "I" is one, "L" is fifty—this sort of thing. The number system that we use

(the so-called Arabic numerals) didn't become common in the western world until the time of the Middle Ages.

In the ancient Greek and Roman world, the letters of the alphabet doubled for numbers. There was numeric value to those letters. That meant you could go through any word and figure a numeric value to it. For example, take the word "life": "L" is fifty, "I" is one, "F" and "E" don't have numeric value—that equals fifty-one. Some of these Gnostic sects would go through and make a great deal of figuring out the numeric value of certain words and attaching significance. If a word added up to twenty-one, that made three times seven, etc. They would go off on all sorts of farfetched tangents and really completely miss the point. They would get so "buggy" trying to figure some hidden significance.

Paul is telling Timothy, 'You need to put people in remembrance; you need to remind them to stick to the "trunk of the tree" and not go charging off and getting all bogged down in a bunch of silly stuff.'

Verse 15, "Be diligent [KJV, "study"] to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Really stick to it and properly apply the Bible.

Verses 16-17, "But shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort." It's just going to eat away and that's no good.

Verse 18, there were those who had erred concerning the truth and had come up with some crazy idea that the resurrection was past. Where did they get that? I don't know, but people have come up with crazy ideas down through the years. The thing is that other people are crazy enough to believe them. So, I guess that makes the people who believe them even crazier than the guy that came up with the ideas.

Verse 19, Paul gives the bottom line, "Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.'" The bottom line is you don't fool God. The foundation stands sure. The Lord knows those who are His. God knows who's who and what's what. Sometimes people have gotten all worried because they thought "so-and-so" was getting by with something. God knows those who are His and those who name the name of Christ had better depart from iniquity, had better leave

behind lawlessness. We can't live in sin. We can't make sin our habitual practice. We have to depart from, turn away from disregard for the law of God. Turn away from lawlessness.

Verse 20, "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor." In a great big house, you have fancy china and gold and silver vessels; you also have some old scrub pots, cracked bowls that you put the dog scraps in or whatever. He is using the analogy of the Church being a great house. Take note of the fact that there are vessels to honor and vessels to dishonor. Everybody and everything is not always what they claim to be. This is what Paul is saying.

Verse 21, "Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work." We will be something that Christ will use. But we have to be purged from lawlessness. We have to be cleaned up.

Verses 22-24, "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient." There is a way to deal with people. He admonishes Timothy in that regard: be gentle, be apt to teach, be patient.

Verse 25, "in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth." The people who were becoming entangled in these things were, in reality, opposing themselves. They were hurting themselves. There were those who claimed to be part of the Church and were not living godly lives. They simply were not God's. God knows His own. We see that.

II Timothy 3:1-2, "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves...." Dangerous times will come. They are times that involve a preoccupation with self.

It's interesting. One of the commentaries brings out the main thought is that love of self will lead to neglect of the duty to others and God and eventually to active wrongdoing, too. The true center of life has changed. Self has taken the place of God. So, all sense of the duty to others, whether to man or God, disappears. That's a very apt description, a very apt statement. I think that is very characteristic of our society, of the latter twentieth-century western world. The true center

of life has changed. The self has taken the place of God; therefore, a sense of duty to other people and to God disappears. People become wrapped up and absorbed in what is convenient to them. We are, perhaps, in the most convenience-oriented society in the history of mankind. He describes this sort of thing.

Verses 2-3, "For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving [KJV, "without natural affection"]...." I can't help but believe that, in some ways, this is a clear reference to the abortion controversies that exist today and the emphasis on that because clearly the most natural affection that there is, is the love of a mother for her young. That exists even in the animal world. That is natural. That is nature. That is, certainly, an example of natural affection. Certainly, it can apply to other things as well, but I think it is certainly descriptive of that.

Verses 3-5, "unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!"

In this nation, we like to pride ourselves for being a godly nation. We like to think of ourselves (the United States) as a religious people. We have churches all over, and over eighty-five percent of the people will tell you that they believe in God. In fact, in a recent Gallup poll carried in U.S. News & World Report, the majority of the people even admit to believing in the devil. The majority of people claimed to believe in hell, but none of them thought they were going there. They must figure that is reserved for somebody else.

They have "a form of godliness," but the real key is that they are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. If people had a choice between going to some sporting activity or church on a particular weekend, which would they go to? They are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." They don't want God ruling in their lives. They claim to believe in God.

James 2:19, "you believe in God you do well, the demons also believe—and tremble." If all you do is believe in God, you're not even "one step up" on the devil. At that point, you are where Satan is. If all that someone has going for him is that he believes in God, he is not even "one up" on the devil. It is a form of godliness, but it denies the power and authority of it. This is the sort of

thing that entangles people and gets them messed up. It describes various ones (v. 6).

II Timothy 3:7, “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” It likens them to Pharaoh’s court magicians who withstood Moses. It says their folly is ultimately going to be manifest (vv. 8-9).

Verses 10-11, “But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endure. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.” He said, ‘You know the things I went through, and God delivered me.’

Verses 12-14, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them.”

‘Remember what you learned and where you learned it.’ This was Paul’s admonishment to Timothy and certainly would be God’s admonishment to us. What did you learn and where did you learn it? Very important! You hold on, continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of. You have proven it. You know it. Don’t be fickle in your faith and your understanding. Hold on to the “trunk of the tree” and remember where you learned that precious knowledge.

Verses 15-17, “and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

From childhood, Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures. What Scriptures had he known? Was he conversant with the New Testament when he was a child? Did he grow up memorizing John 3:16? No, it wasn’t written until thirty years after II Timothy was written. He hadn’t even read it at the time Paul was writing this, much less having known it as a child. The only Scripture that existed in Timothy’s childhood was the Old Testament. This doesn’t in any way take authority from the New Testament, but the point that I am making is that various ones want to disparage the authority of the Old Testament. They say, ‘That’s back in the Old Testament;

that doesn’t really count.’ Paul thought it did. Paul is the one that they all thought did away with the Old Testament.

There is an interesting article in the last issue of the U.S. News & World Report. There’s a little section on the Apostle Paul. One of the things they claim is that Paul did away with all the requirements of the law. They say he changed the church. Christ started it out, but it never would have grown very much if Paul hadn’t come along and did away with the law. Once he did that, things started growing, and it was one of the great moments in history. Well, Paul didn’t know that. He told Timothy, “the Holy Scriptures which you have known from childhood.” In other words, the Old Testament, the law, “this is able to make you wise unto salvation.” That would shock a lot of people. A lot of Protestants don’t think you can learn anything about salvation from the Old Testament.

What did Philip preach out of to the Ethiopian eunuch? –The book of Isaiah, the Old Testament. He was able to teach him enough about salvation out of the book of Isaiah that he baptized him (Acts 8:26-38). The Holy Scriptures certainly includes the New Testament, but in context here, it is specifically referring to the Old Testament that “are able to make you wise unto salvation.” They are able to reveal God’s plan.

“All Scripture...” includes the Scripture Timothy had known from childhood and clearly focuses on the Old Testament and certainly includes the New Testament as well. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” It is God-breathed. “Inspiration” clearly means “God-breathed.” And it is profitable for doctrine. It says so right here.

II Timothy 3:16-17, “...it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly finished unto all good works.” God’s word is God-breathed. It is inspired by God and for our benefit.

II Timothy 4:1, “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His Kingdom.” When is the time of judgment? It is at the return of Christ. He didn’t say we would go off to heaven when we die. The time of judgment will be when Jesus Christ returns.

Verses 2-3, he charged Timothy, “Preach the word [stick to the Book]! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching [doctrine]. For the time will come when they will not endure sound

doctrine....” Paul could already see the “handwriting on the wall.” He told Timothy, ‘Look, don’t be surprised. The time is going to come when you are going to find people who do not want to endure sound doctrine.’

Continuing v. 3, “...but according to their own desires [lust], because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers.” They are going to have itching ears. They are going to want somebody who is going to “tickle their fancy” and say what they want to hear.

Verses 4-7, “and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” He said, ‘It is over with for me.’

Verse 8, “Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” When did Paul think he was going to receive his reward? Was he expecting to die and go to heaven? No. He said, ‘I have fought a good fight. I know there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord is going to give me at that Day.’ Which day? Well, ‘not to me only, but to all of them that love His appearing.’

—To those whose hope is anchored on the return of Jesus Christ and on the establishment of the Kingdom of God. He told Timothy, ‘Look, it’s over with for me. I have finished mine; you have to hang in there and finish yours.’

That is an echo of what God’s servants have said down through the centuries. That’s the admonition as one generation passes and the other carries on. That’s what Paul admonished Timothy. That certainly was the equivalent of the admonition that Mr. Herbert Armstrong gave to us at the end of his life. ‘I have finished my fight. I’ve endured. Now it’s for the rest of you to continue.’ That’s always been the continuing story of God’s people. As God’s servants of one generation pass from the scene, then it is the responsibility of others to carry on. Timothy had to carry on.

Verses 9-11, he told Timothy, “Be diligent to come to me quickly; for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.”

Various ones had left. Even Titus is mentioned here as having left. Evidently, they thought it looked like the “ship was sinking.” ‘We had better get out of here quickly. Maybe they will throw me in jail next.’ What’s going to be our response when trials and persecutions come? How are we going to respond? He said, ‘Luke is the only one here with me.’

He said in v. 11 (KJV), “...Get Mark and bring him with you: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.” A commentary brings out that this literally could be for a personal service. He needed Mark to do something or to perform a service. There is not a definite article in the Greek. He is profitable to me for a ministry or literally for a service.

Verses 12-13, “And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments.” What is he referring to? Two different words are used here. The commentary brings out that the “books” would refer to papyrus letters, possibly copies of his correspondence. What is called the “parchment” is a term that probably refers to the scrolls of the Scripture. The term that is used for “parchment” is a term in the Greek language referring to a writing material made from the skins of animals. Vellum comes from the membrane (the skin) of the animals.

Membranous was a parchment type of thing. It was much more expensive writing material and was only used for things of permanent value, things that would endure for centuries. They were harder to work with. It was harder to make a good copy on, but they had an enduring quality. They were expensive and were only used for things of great permanent value. It was what the Scriptures were kept on. Papyrus was used for normal letters, correspondence and everyday business.

Paul wants two sets of things brought. What it amounts to is that Mark was Peter’s assistant. We find in I Peter 5:13 that Mark was normally with Peter. Timothy was told to bring Mark. Paul needed him to do something. He gave him instructions to go to Troas. He was sending someone else to Ephesus. He told Timothy to bring the parchments and the scrolls. He needed Mark to do something for a service. This is, undoubtedly, a reference to the fact that Paul, at the end of his life, was going to put his manuscripts in final form. He was going to send the final and official copy of his manuscripts by Mark to Peter. Peter had, undoubtedly, been in correspondence with Paul. They had

communicated the fact that as their departure was at hand (the passing from the scene of the original apostles), there was need to provide the Church with an official canon of Scripture.

There were many false gospels, false letters and things that were written. There were things that were taken out of context. Already, these sorts of things were beginning to surface and would get more so. As the first generation was passing, it became apparent that an official canon needed to be provided for the Church—an official canon as to what represented authoritative teaching and what did not.

Peter and Paul had, undoubtedly, communicated on the subject. Peter had communicated with Paul the need to get copies from him, an official copy that would be included in this. This was Paul's part in sending it via Mark to Peter to put in final form.

That's why in II Peter 1:12-15 (which was written perhaps within the year after Paul had written II Timothy), Peter says that he was ensuring that after his death, the Church would be able to call to remembrance the things that he had said and the truth of God.

He makes reference in II Peter 1:19 to preserving for the Church a complete and accurate record, a sure word of prophecy. He said that he and John were the ones who had that sure word of prophecy. Peter was responsible for that first canonization. About thirty years later, John added the final finishing touches, primarily by adding his own five books.

Paul concludes and admonished Timothy.

Verse 21, "Do your utmost to come before winter...." He was admonishing him to hurry up and get there. There were things that needed to be done. According to tradition, Paul was executed the following spring; he was executed in the spring of 68 A.D. Peter was perhaps executed in the summer or fall of 68 A.D. Peter and Paul finished the job that God had given them to do.

Next Bible study we will go into information on the battles against heresies in the New Testament period. It will be sort of a wrap-up and a tying together of several of the things that surfaced in our study of Paul's epistles—things that we do not have time to go into in great depth. We will go back and tie it together and bring in several of these things.

It is important as we go through and study to realize that God's Word is a living Book. The stories, the examples and the illustrations are there for our benefit. As we read it, we need to put ourselves in the place of the individuals who

were living it and to realize that as we also encounter trials and tests. We will come up against adversities. We will come up and find ourselves in the midst of things. How are we going to make it? The same way they did—by walking with God, by walking in faith, by committing our lives into the hands of Him who judges righteously, by turning it over to God, by focusing in on the truth of God and on what God has given us to do, by focusing on what God has revealed to us, by holding on, persevering, enduring to the end, being faithful, putting one foot in front of another and following where God leads in the paths of righteousness. As we focus in and get a perspective, as we look and see the things that other men and women of God contended with, we realize our part in learning from their examples and dealing in a faithful way the tests and trials that will come upon us.

Bible Study # 68 Questions

SURVEY OF THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF PAUL SERIES

II Timothy

(Give scripture references.)

1. Who else in Timothy's family was in the Church?
2. What kind of condition was the Church of God in at the time Paul wrote this letter to Timothy?
3. Explain II Timothy 1:6.
4. Explain II Timothy 2:4. How does this apply to the ministry today?
5. What did Paul tell Timothy about those that called themselves a part of the Church and yet weren't really living Godly lives?
6. Where does Paul prophesy of our modern, convenience-oriented society with its increasing neglect of elderly parents, its upsurge in abortion, etc?
7. Is the Old Testament a valid guide to salvation and to Church doctrine?
8. At what stage of his life did Paul write II Timothy?
9. Did Paul expect to go to heaven and receive his reward immediately after his death? Prove when he did expect to receive it.
10. Explain II Timothy 4:11, 13.

Bible Study # 69
May 14, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Battle Against First-Century Heresies

This evening we **are going to be wrapping up some of the things from Paul's letters.** What we are covering is not directly a letter that Paul wrote. It is sort of a wrap up of the background with which he dealt and many things that were issues that arose. **We are going to deal with some of the battles against first-century heresies that the Apostle Paul had to carry out and that he certainly was a leading part in, and then going on from there.**

I wanted to start out by reading an excerpt from a book entitled The Story of the Christian Church. It is a book that gives a little bit of background and history. It makes a very interesting statement. Chapter 5 is entitled "The Age of Shadows, From the Martyrdom of St. Paul, 68 A.D., to the Death of St. John, 100 A.D."

He makes the statement in this book, "We name the last generation of the first century from 68 to 100 A.D. "The Age of Shadows," partly because the gloom of persecution was over the church, but more especially because of all periods in the history, it is the one about which we know the least. We have no longer the clear light of the Book of Acts to guide us, and no author of that age has filled in the blank in the history. We would like to read of the later work by such helpers of St. Paul as Timothy, Apollos and Titus, but all these and St. Paul's other friends drop out of the record at his death. For fifty years after St. Paul's life, a curtain hangs over the church through which we strive vainly to look, and when at last it rises about 120 A.D. with the writings of the earliest church fathers, we find a church, in many aspects, very different from that in the days of St. Peter and St. Paul."

Now, that is quite an amazing and remarkable admission. When the curtain rises with the writings of the earliest church fathers in 120 A.D., the author says, '...we find a church, in many aspects, very different from the church of Peter and Paul.' The reason that the curtain rises on a church that is far different is because when the curtain rises, what is seen on stage is a different church. It not only appears to be different and it not only looks different—**it is a different church.** It is sort of an old conjurer trick. You see one thing and the curtain rings down; when the curtain rises, you see something

else. You are given the impression that one was changed into the other, when in reality, that was not the case.

The Church of God did not become a different church. A different church—this other group that had its beginnings at the time when Peter, Paul and other apostles passed from the scene—took over and became the visible professing "Christian" Church.

Let's get a little background on it. We will start out in Thessalonians because the earliest books Paul wrote were I and II Thessalonians. II Thessalonians was written in the fall of 58 A.D.

II Thessalonians 2:7-8, "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming."

The mystery of iniquity, Paul said, was already at work. Things would be held back in such a way that things would not fully emerge. The final wicked one (that man of sin), the final false prophet, is not going to come up out of the midst; he is not going to be revealed until the appropriate time. But Paul was explaining to the Thessalonians in 50 A.D. that the mystery of iniquity was already at work. The mystery of iniquity has to do with the mystery religion, the Babylonian Mystery Religion that works lawlessness. It works iniquity, and this was already at work.

In fact, let's go back a little further to the book of Acts. In Acts 8, we pick up the story of a man that we are introduced to later on in secular history. But we are first introduced to him in the book of Acts.

Acts 8:5, "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them."

Verses 8-11, "And there was great joy in that city. But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, to whom they all gave heed from the least to the greatest, saying, 'This man is the great power of God.' And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time."

Here, we are told that there was in Samaria a certain individual who was a great religious leader. According to v. 10, he was one who was acknowledged by the Samaritans as being the great power of God. He was a great religious leader of the Samaritans. He was one to whom they all gave heed. Everyone was impressed with

him; yet the source of his power and influence was not of God. It was of Satan. He was a sorcerer. He is known in history as Simon Magus.

“Magus” is the Greek word for “sorcerer.” It is the word from which our word “magician” derives. He is called Simon Magus or Simon the Sorcerer. Simon the Magician was the great religious leader of the Samaritans. We are told that when Philip came to Samaria and preached, Simon heard him and was deeply impressed. He was impressed by the message that Philip brought and by the miracles that he saw. Simon knew this was something more impressive than any of the tricks he had worked. Then the apostles came down. Peter and John laid hands on the brethren and they received the Holy Spirit (vv. 14-17).

Verses 18-23, “Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’ But Peter said to him, ‘Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion [KJV, “lot”] in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.’”

Peter had some very stern words for this individual. Peter could perceive his heart and his attitude.

What did Simon seek to purchase here? Simon sought to purchase an apostleship. That’s what Simon is asking for. He is seeking to purchase the office of apostle.

Peter said in v. 21, “you have neither part nor lot in this matter.” What does that mean? That expression is used one other time in Scripture.

Acts 1:15-20 is the story of how Judas had committed suicide and there were only eleven out of the twelve apostles left. There was a need to round out the number to twelve because twelve was the foundational number, the number of organized beginnings. They were going to choose a twelfth member. This is prior to the giving of the Holy Spirit. It needed to be someone from among the group that had followed and heard Jesus from the beginning of His ministry (vv. 21-22).

Verses 23-24, they narrowed it down to Justus and Matthias and prayed and asked God’s guidance.

Acts 1:25-26, “to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”

They gave forth their lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias that he might take part of the ministry and apostleship. The term “part” has to do with “a part of the ministry,” and “lot” has to do with “an apostleship chosen by lot.”

When Simon was offering money, Peter understood what he wanted. He wanted the office that Peter held. Peter said, ‘You have neither part nor lot in this matter. You don’t have any part in our ministry and apostleship. You haven’t been chosen by lot to share a part in our ministry or apostleship because your heart is not right in the sight of God. You had better repent because I know what you are thinking in your heart. You had better repent of the thought of your heart that you may be forgiven. I see in you, Simon, I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness. You are poisoned with bitterness and you are in the bond of iniquity.’

Simon was the slave of lawlessness. Simon was the great religious leader of the Samaritans. He was the one to whom all of the Samaritans paid heed, from the greatest to the least. He was someone who was acknowledged and recognized by the Samaritans. He was looked to as though he were some great one. They said he was the power of God.

In this particular book that I have here, Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History, Eusebius was a Catholic historian in the fourth century A.D. at the time of Emperor Constantine and gave a history of the time until him. It has a chapter in the book devoted to Simon Magus. He talks about Simon on page 63.

“Simon, however, we have understood to have taken the lead in all heresy; from whom also, down to the present time, those that followed his heresy, still affected the modest philosophy of the Christians. From this, however, they appeared again to depart and again to embrace the superstitions of idols, falling down before the pictures and statutes of this selfsame Simon....”

At this time, the Catholic Church hadn’t yet fully adopted some of those things.

Did you read the article on the Pope this morning? He’s been to Portugal and he met with the last of the three little Portuguese children who saw the vision of Fatima back in 1917. There’s one of them left—an elderly lady who is a nun there near Fatima in Portugal. The Pope met with her privately. There is a statue of Mary

there at Fatima and this statue is crowned. The bullet that the Pope was struck with at the assassination attempt years ago has been placed there in the crown of this statue at Fatima as an offering of devotion, giving thanks to this idol for having delivered him and spared his life. That's the whole sense of it. They had a big deal. The bullet is up there in the crown because she is being given the credit for having saved his life. He came to consult this elderly nun who had seen this apparition in 1917. That's been almost seventy-five years ago. These sorts of things are interesting.

Eusebius mentions how Simon was the one who brought in and encouraged his followers (calling themselves Christians) to embrace the superstitions of idols, falling down before pictures and statues.

A lot of you have come out of a background where you are not unfamiliar with people falling down before pictures and statues. We see a lot of that. You can drive down the road and people have these little shrines in their yards. They have a little covering for the idols to sit under so they won't get wet.

He also says of Simon Magus on page 62, "The faith of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, having now been diffused abroad among all men, the enemy of salvation devising some scheme of seizing upon the imperial city for himself, brought thither Simon, whom we mentioned before. Coming to the aid of his insidious artifices, he attached many of the inhabitants of Rome to himself in order to deceive them. This is attested by Justin who was one of our distinguished writers, not long after the times of the apostles..." He continues talking about Simon.

There is an article on Simon the Sorcerer in the old 11th edition of the [Encyclopedia Briticana](#). It labels that he was the father of the Gnostics. Gnosticism sprung out from him.

Let's understand a little bit about the Samaritans themselves, of whom Simon was the religious leader even prior to his adoption of Christianity. In II Kings 17, we read of what we term the "Samaritans." Originally, Samaria was the capital city of Northern Israel. It was where the northern ten tribes were. Northern Israel sinned against God, and God let the Assyrians come in and take them into captivity.

II Kings 17:6, "In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes." If you look at a map, it's up

in the area between the Black and the Caspian Sea. It's up in the area above Turkey and Iraq and the southern part of the Soviet Union that is between the Black and Caspian Sea. They were a little further south than that. They were down in the area where Iraq, Turkey, Iran and the Soviet Union come together, all this area in here. They settled them in that northern area, from whence they subsequently migrated across the Black Sea, then up the Danube and the Rhine and into the heartland of Europe at the appropriate time. This is where he settled Israel. The children of Israel sinned. It goes through and recounts all the things that they did (vv. 7-15).

Verse 16, "So they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal."

Verses 23-24, "until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day. Then the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities."

In the process of this, there was a lag of time. What happens when you depopulate an area? Very quickly it becomes overgrown; wild animals begin to reproduce, multiply and invade areas that formerly were villages and fields. You have an area laying for a matter of a few years time, pretty well depopulated because they didn't just load them up on train cars, take them all out and show up next week with a new batch. We are looking at a period of several years of depopulation—of moving them out. There was some lag time, and then colonists began to move in.

Verses 25-26, the lion population had increased and there were wild animals that came in. The people were superstitious and they decided the problem was that they did not know the manner of the god of the land. They needed instruction.

Verse 27, "Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, 'Send there one of the priests whom you brought from there; let him go and dwell there, and let him teach them the rituals of the God of the land.'" Now, what kind of job is he going to do? He is one who helped to get them into trouble to begin with. The whole reason they went into captivity to begin with was

because they weren't serving the true God. They had been worshipping the golden calves.

They brought in all these Babylonians and then a renegade priest to teach them how to serve the god of the land.

We are told in v. 28, "Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the Lord." You know he was going to do a good job of it.

Notice in v. 29, "However every nation continued to make gods of its own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in the cities where they dwelt."

Verses 32-34, "So they feared the Lord, and from every class they appointed for themselves priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. They feared the Lord, yet served their own gods—according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away. To this day they continue practicing the former rituals; they do not fear the Lord, nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances, or the law and commandment which the Lord had commanded the children of Jacob, whom He named Israel."

He says they feared the Eternal and served their own gods.

Verse 41, "So these nations feared the Lord, yet served their carved images; also their children and their children's have continued doing as their fathers did, even to this day." What did they do? They continued the same old Babylonian Mystery Religion, but they changed it by introducing the name of God into it. Now they were calling it by the name of the God of Israel. Now they were utilizing the name of YHWH—the name of the God of Israel, the Eternal God, but they kept the same old pagan customs. They just sort of "baptized" them. It's kind of like "there's nothing new under the sun."

The same old idolatry is being practiced in a lot of places. You find that the only thing that was changed was the name—the virgin of Fatima (Our Lady of Fatima) in Portugal and down in Mexico, they have the virgin of Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe). If you go back to the ancient Indians, the Aztec, the area of Guadalupe was a great religious center, and they had a goddess they worshipped there. When the Spaniards came in, the Indians had this big religious shrine in Guadalupe and they were worshipping the goddess. So the Spaniards just let them keep doing the same thing; they just changed the name. Now, they were not paying

homage to the goddess of Guadalupe but to the virgin of Guadalupe. They just kept the same thing, identified it with Mary, and went right on along. They let them keep doing the same old pagan superstition; they just called it by God's name.

In Rome, they continued to observe Saturnalia, the pagan festival that was observed there at the winter solstice. But instead of calling it Saturnalia, they thought "Christmas" had a little better sound to it—the mass of Christ. They said, 'We will do the same things; we will have it at the same time. We will have many of the same customs and things associated with it. We will just change the name. Also, we won't call it Lupercalia anymore; we will call it St. Valentine's day.' What does a saint have to do with little cupids shooting arrows at people?—And all this sort of things.

To set the stage, you have the Samaritans (who were Babylonians) who continued to practice their pagan religion, but now they introduced the name of God—the true God—the God of Israel. They used the right name for the wrong things.

Now we move about seven hundred years down in history and we come to the Samaritans in Acts 8. We find their religious leader, a man who was acknowledged by all of them as the great power of God, who used the name of God and paraded as God's representative—a man by the name of Simon the Sorcerer. He believed when Philip preached. He was really impressed by what Philip had to say. And, he wanted to buy an office of apostle. Peter recognized what was going on, rebuked him for it, and said he was in the bond of iniquity. He was a slave to lawlessness.

II Thessalonians 2:7, "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work..." We find that the mystery of iniquity was already at work. The mystery religion, the Babylonian Mystery Religion that promoted lawlessness was already at work. This was at the time Paul wrote II Thessalonians. We are looking at perhaps seventeen years after Simon's encounter in Acts 8.

Let's notice a little bit of the other things Paul has to say.

Galatians 1:6-7, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ." Here, Paul is writing two or three years after he wrote II Thessalonians and he is talking about churches having another gospel being preached, which he

says is not another gospel (in the sense of an alternative that is just as good), but it is a perversion of the true gospel.

There are other places. Let's go back to II Corinthians 11.

II Corinthians 11:13-15, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness...." Here, we are told there are false apostles, deceitful workers who are transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

That's what Simon was doing. Simon was a false apostle. He transformed himself into an apostle of Christ. He didn't go around saying, 'I am a false apostle and I am here to preach a false gospel to you. You guys loosen up because I want to deceive you.' He appeared as an angel of light. Satan appears as an angel of light. Paul was discussing a problem now extant in the mid-50s A.D., when there were false apostles who were preaching a false gospel.

Verse 4, "For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it." The false gospel is going to be tied in with the mystery of iniquity. It's going to be tied in with the mystery religion, with iniquity and lawlessness. We see the stage that Paul was dealing with.

It had reached that point by the time Peter was dealing with the subject in the late 60s A.D.

II Peter 2:1, "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction." Peter was talking about the fact that there were false apostles and false prophets who were going to come in among God's people. He describes these individuals.

Verse 15, "They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness."

Notice back in the book of Jude, which was written approximately the same time that Peter was writing II Peter.

Jude 3-4, "Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you

to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness [lawlessness] and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."

Jude admonished Christians of his day to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered.

By the late 60s A.D., we are seeing an escalation. It started out that Paul said the mystery of iniquity was already at work. A couple of years later, he said, 'There is a false gospel, and I am amazed that you are being turned aside to another gospel so quickly.' A couple of years later, he tells the Corinthians there are false apostles out there claiming to be the apostles of Christ when they are not. He said that shouldn't shock them because Satan claims to be what he is not. By the time we pick it up a dozen years later, Peter is talking about false prophets. Jude told the Church to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered. Certain men had crept in unnoticed who were seeking to turn the grace of God into lawlessness.

The whole issue ultimately involved the law of God. You can have matters of peripheral questions on various things that are not fully clarified. But when you start talking about the law of God, then you are talking about something fundamental. You are not talking about a minor technical point somewhere that someone is attempting to understand. You are talking about the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath and the holy days. You are talking about the fundamental law of God. They were attempting to turn the grace of God into lawlessness, to equate grace with doing away with the law and to claim that the law is not in force and effect any longer.

John had to deal with the issue. By the time he was writing thirty years later, he was discussing the matter of what had to be dealt with throughout I, II and III John.

I John 4:1, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." Many false prophets had gone forth.

John added a little later in I John 5:2-3, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome." We find that the issue involved the law of God.

II John 7, “For many deceivers, have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.” I will make a little comment about the issue they were disputing.

Verses 10-11, “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.”

Verse 12, “Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.” He had other things to say, but he didn’t want to put it in writing.

III John 9-10, “I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.”

Now, by the end of John’s life, the situation had deteriorated to the point that the visible church that was emerging was actually being controlled by false prophets—individuals who didn’t want to accept the authority of John and the original apostles.

You know how they did that? How can you get by doing something like that? How do you excuse it? There are a couple of techniques they used. One technique was an ingenious doctrine they came up with known in history as the “two-church theory.” The two-church theory was the idea that there are two sets of rules—one for Jews and one for Gentiles. The theory was that Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, and Peter and John and the others were the apostles to the Jews. And, yes, the Jews continued to keep the law and continued to observe the Sabbath; that was alright for them to do at that time. But those things never pertained to anybody except the Jews. The Gentiles said they were not under the law and that Paul said they didn’t have to obey any of those things.

This was the line of reasoning that began to be used. They said, ‘The law doesn’t apply to us. We are Gentiles; they are Jews. Sure the Jerusalem Church keeps the Sabbath. That’s fine. Let them do it. But they are Jews and we are not. We don’t need to do that. So, if John writes something, we don’t have to receive that. John is not the apostle to the Gentiles. Sure, he was one of the twelve, but what he says really doesn’t apply to us because we are Gentiles. He’s kind of old and everything.’

The theory gained great vogue among the followers of Simon in the latter first century and second century. Then, once they got control, they did away with the two-church theory and said everybody had to conform to what they were doing. They said, ‘I don’t care, even if you are a Jew, you have to quit keeping the law.’

I want to read to you some interesting quotes from The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire by Edward Gibbon who was a famous historian of the Roman Empire. He has some interesting things to say about the early church. He deals with some of that. I will read a little bit of Gibbons. Notice the progression.

Chapter 13, “The ancient and popular doctrine of the Millennium was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ. As the works of the creation had been finished in six days, their duration in their present state, according to a tradition, which was attributed to the prophet Elijah, was fixed to six thousand years. By the same analogy, it was inferred that this long period of labor and contention, which was now almost elapsed, would be succeeded by a joyful Sabbath of a thousand years, and that Christ with the triumphant band of the saints and the elect who had escaped upon earth till the time appointed for the last and general resurrection.”

Now, that sounds like a summary from some of our literature. We have had articles that said something similar. He was writing back in the 1700s. He was writing a history of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. This particular chapter was called “The Triumph of Christendom in the Roman Empire.” He is writing about the early church. He says this is what the early church taught. It is a matter of history.

The idea of the doctrine of the Millennium, or six thousand years, is not something Mr. Herbert Armstrong invented. That was something the early church was teaching. That was a matter of secular history. Here was a secular historian who was not a part of the true Church. He was a part of the Church of England, writing over two hundred years ago. He was writing that this is what they taught. Notice what he says.

“The assurance of such a Millennium was carefully inculcated by a succession of fathers from Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, who conversed with the immediate disciples of the apostles, down to Lactantius, who was a preceptor to the son of Constantine. Though it might not be universally received, it appears to have been the reigning sentiment of the orthodox believers; and it seems so well adapted to the desires and

apprehensions of mankind, that it must have contributed in a very considerable degree to the progress of the Christian faith. But when the edifice on the church was almost completed, the temporary support was laid aside. The doctrine of Christ's reign upon earth was at first treated as a profound allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism."

So, there was a progression of changing it and getting away from it. It changed from acceptance to toleration, to branding it as anathema and ready to persecute them.

Gibbon has a number of interesting things. He says, "When we discover that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is omitted in the Law of Moses...From these specious and noble principles, the philosophers who trod in the footsteps of Plato deduced a very unjustifiable conclusion, since they asserted not only the future immortality, but the past eternity of the human soul..."

He talks about the Gnostics. We will discuss the Gnostics a little bit. The term "Gnostic" is the Greek word for "knowledge" or "we know." The concept of the Gnostics really stemmed from Simon Magus. The Gnostics had a very great impact in the first century. In fact, a lot of the issues we read of in the New Testament in terms of Paul and John's epistles have to do with refuting the Gnostics.

Now, Gibbon has some comments to make about the Gnostics. "The Gnostics blended with the faith of Christ many sublime but obscure tenets, which they derived from oriental philosophy and even from the religion of Zoroaster concerning the eternity of matter, the existence of two principles and the mysterious hierarchy of the invisible world."

We find that the Gnostics sort of blended in, as he says, the faith of Christ with many sublime but obscure tenets. In effect, the Gnostics utilized a technique of interpretation called "allegory." Now allegory is important to understand because this was the way that the truth of God or the law of God was explained away. The word "allegory" comes from a word in the Greek language which means "to speak in riddles." The concept of allegory was that something doesn't really mean what it says—it is an allegory, simply a riddle to teach a spiritual truth. The reason allegories came in and came to be used so prevalently was because the religion of the ancient Greeks was contained in the mythology written by Homer.

If you have ever read any of the old Greek mythology, you realize that it is sort of like one big soap opera in the sky. It was some pretty raunchy stuff. As the Greeks progressed and various philosophers rose, they were a little bit embarrassed that their religious works were nothing more than just tales of rape, pillage, adultery and fornication, and this goddess and that god, and all of these crazy things going back and forth. It was a little embarrassing that this was all they had by way of religious works. So, the philosophers figured out that when Homer wrote these things, he didn't really mean that this happened and that happened; it was an allegory. It was simply to teach us about spiritual truths. It was to teach about truth, fear, anger, evil desire and knowledge. So they came up with the idea that these stories were allegories. They were to teach us about certain things about spiritual truths, and this became the popular way of the Greek philosophers explaining their own books. They sort of explain away everything that was embarrassing as an allegory. This spread and became a very popular method of interpretation.

It had its effect even on certain Jews. Philo, who was a Jew in Alexandria, Egypt, became a famous author. He really went in for allegories and applied a lot of it to the Old Testament. This was tailor-made for Simon and the Samaritans. The Samaritans paid lip service to accepting the first five books of the Bible and the Law of Moses, but they didn't really keep the Law. This was tailor-made.

The Gnostics adopted allegory. This is why it became the mystery religion. They said they had the key and you couldn't understand without their key. When you read it, all you're reading is a story about Abraham; you don't realize that it's not what it is talking about. It is teaching various "spiritual" things. The Gnostics really went in for this sort of thing. They blended these things together.

(This may not be word-for-word from the book)
"One example: The Gnostics had objections against the authority of Moses and the prophets. The objections were eagerly embraced and urged by the vain science of the Gnostics. As those heretics were, for the most part, adverse to the pleasures of senses, they morosely arraigned the polygamy of the patriarchs, the gallantries of David, these things, the conquest of the land of Canaan and the extermination of the unsuspecting natives. They were lost as to how to do this, so what they did was the Mosaic account of the creation. The fall of man was

treated with profane derision by the Gnostics. They would not listen with patience to the response of the deity after six days of labor, to the rib of Adam, the Garden of Eden and the tree of life and knowledge. So, they treated these things as an allegory. And they said that the literal sense is repugnant to every principle of faith as well as reason, and they deem themselves secure and vulnerable behind the ample veil of allegory, which they carefully spread over every tender part of the Mosaic dispensation.”

What it amounts to is that if you treat the law as an allegory, then when it says, “Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy,” that doesn’t really mean you can’t work on the Sabbath. That’s just sort of allegory. They began to undermine the authority of Scripture by simply treating things as allegorical. You combine this with the so-called two-church theory and they had the basis of undermining the authority of the Bible.

The term “Gnostic” is a general term that is applied to heresy. It’s used primarily to designate the dualism between God and matter. Gnosticism tore away at the authority of the Scriptures by saying that the real meaning was allegorical. They taught that their initiates were no longer subject to the moral commandments. This was simply a continuation of the old mystery religion.

The primary goal of the Gnostic movement was to introduce a no-law doctrine and to attempt to wrest their own meaning from the Scripture, primarily from Paul’s writings. This laid the groundwork for much of what later became the Catholic Church. They laid groundwork. They would not literally accept any of the statements of Scripture. They would not accept the fact that Jesus Christ literally was God and that He was born as a human being to live as a human being. They denied many of these things.

There arose a number of heresies. It wasn’t just simply one heresy. There were a lot of heresies. There were all kinds of false doctrines and false ideas going on. What ultimately became the Catholic Church did not accept and absorb every one of them. It is simply an outgrowth of one set of heresies that was influenced in certain areas by other heresies. Certain elements of truth were clung to and certain elements of heresy were accepted. As the years went by, there were more changes and modifications. There were more acceptances of all sorts of paganism that came to be a part of it. Even many of the early Catholic fathers would be amazed and flabbergasted at

some of the things that are done today because they hadn’t gone that far.

Take Christmas for example. Even the church at Rome didn’t popularly accept that until up into the fourth century. It was up into the fourth century before that even began to get acceptance in the church at Rome. Even some of the heretics of the second and third century would have been surprised at that one.

The widespread use of idols was something that only gradually gained prominence. It didn’t really begin to come in until the second century. In the third century it became more and more utilized.

The Gnostics took a blend of oriental mysticism. In other words, the Babylonian Mystery Religion took a blend of Judaism and the Old Testament, which they treated in an allegorical fashion. They blended those things together with the doctrine of Christ and came up with a hodge-podge. There were a variety of different things. But there was one thing that set the stage for a lot of problems. Just as the Jews had been dispersed to cities throughout the known world, so also, after the time of Alexander the Great, the Samaritans had been dispersed. There were large settlements of Samaritans in Rome and in Alexandria, Egypt.

Simon the sorcerer was the great religious leader of the Samaritans to whom they all gave heed from the greatest to the least. He was acknowledged as the power of God (Acts 8:9-10). When Simon and his followers (claiming to be Christians) came into these areas, they quickly gained influence—particularly in Rome and Alexandria where there was a sizable Samaritan population. Simon was acknowledged as the religious leader to the Samaritans.

These concepts of Gnosticism influenced many different ones, particularly certain Jews and certain ones even as a part of the Church. There were those who had accepted more truth and some who had accepted less truth. But there was a fatal flaw because there wasn’t an acceptance or a spirit of yielding to the authority of God’s Word in the literal sense. There was an absence of commitment to the integrity of the law of God. The real issue ultimately got back to the authority of the law of God.

There were various ones and various other things that came in to add to all of this “stir and mix.” There were Greek philosophies and the stoics who had their ideas. They had a great deal of public influence in the first century. They taught that man alone in his present state of existence could achieve perfection. It was a concept of

penance. The stoics really went in for that. They taught that there were things you could do. By some system of rigorous penance, you could bring yourself to perfection. When you take in that this is a general and popular concept of much of the Greek world and you add in the increasing influence of the Gnostics, you have a real mix. That sets the stage to completely misunderstand the role of the law of God in the plan of salvation because if you can save yourself, if you can do enough good things to outweigh the bad things, then why did Christ have to die? It strikes at the very root and core of Christianity. If you can atone for your own sins, why did Christ have to die? Why did He go through that? Paul admonished and warned Timothy of these concepts of knowledge falsely so-called.

I Timothy 6:20-21, "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and vain babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—by professing it, some have strayed concerning the faith..." There were all these ideas floating around that were becoming more and more prevalent. It ultimately gave rise to the visible professing Christian Church. Yet there was also a different group.

In his history, Gibbons talks about some interesting things concerning the early Church. "The Jewish converts, who acknowledged Jesus in the character of the Messiah foretold by their ancient oracles, respected Him as a prophetic teacher of virtue and religion; but they obstinately adhered to the ceremonies of their ancestors...They affirmed that if the Being who is the same through all eternity had designed to abolish those sacred rites, which had served to distinguish his chosen people, the repeal of them would have been no less clear and solemn than their first promulgation...that the Messiah Himself, and His disciples who conversed with Him on earth, instead of authorizing by their example the most minute observances of the Mosaic law, would have published to the world the abolition of those useless and obsolete ceremonies without suffering Christianity to remain during so many years obscurely confounded among the sects of the Jewish church. Arguments like these appear to have been used in the defense of the expiring cause of the Mosaic law...The history of the church of Jerusalem affords a lively proof of the necessity of those precautions and of the deep impression which the Jewish religion had made on the minds of its sectaries. The first fifteen bishops of

Jerusalem were afterwards called the Nazarenes, who had laid the foundation which they presided, united the Law of Moses with the doctrine of Christ..."

Now here's an admission of secular history. The first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem were all circumcised Jews, and they united the Law of Moses with the doctrine of Christ. Here is a clear admission by a secular historian that the early New Testament Church, the Church that Jesus founded, the Church at Jerusalem, kept the law.

"But when numerous and opulent societies were established in the great cities of the empire, in Antioch, Alexandria, Ephesus, Corinth and Rome, the reverence which Jerusalem had inspired to all the Christian colonies insensibly diminished. The Jewish converts, or as they were afterwards called the Nazarenes, who had laid the foundations of the church, soon found themselves overwhelmed by the increasing multitudes that from all the various religions of polytheism enlisted under the banner of Christ and the Gentiles who, with the approbation of their peculiar apostle, had rejected the intolerable weight of Mosaic ceremonies, at length refused to their more scrupulous brethren the same toleration which at first they had humbly solicited for their own practice. The ruin of the temple, of the city and of the public religion of the Jews was severely felt by the Nazarenes...The Nazarenes retired from the ruins of Jerusalem to the little town of Pella beyond the Jordan where that ancient church languished above sixty years in solitude and obscurity..."

"But at length, under the reign of Hadrian, the desperate fanaticism of the Jews filled up the measure of their calamities and the Romans, exasperated by their repeated rebellions, exercised the right of victory with unusual rigor. The emperor founded under the name of Aelia Capitolina a new city on Mount Zion to which he gave the privileges of a colony, and denouncing the severest penalties against any of the Jewish people who should dare to approach its precincts, he fixed a vigilant garrison of a Roman cohort to enforce the execution of his orders. The Nazarenes had only one way left to escape the common proscription, and the force of truth was on this occasion assisted by the influence of temporal advantages. They elected Marcus for their bishop, a prelate of the race of the Gentiles and most probably a native either of Italy or of some of the Latin provinces. At his persuasion, the most considerable part of the congregation renounced the Mosaic Law in the practice of

which they had persevered above a century. By this sacrifice of their habits and prejudices, they purchased a free admission into the colony of Hadrian and more firmly cemented their union with the Catholic Church. When the name and honors of the Church of Jerusalem had been restored to Mount Zion, the crimes of heresy and schism were imputed to the obscure remnant of the Nazarenes, which refused to accompany their Latin bishop. They still preserved their former habitation of Pella, spread themselves into the villages adjacent to Damascus, and formed an inconsiderable church in the city of Berea... They soon received from the supposed poverty of their understanding as well as of their condition, the contemptuous epithet of Ebionites... He ventured to determine in favor of such an imperfect Christian, if he were content to practice the Mosaic ceremonies....”

He continues and talks a little bit about them. It’s interesting that even secular historians can see that the early Church was not at all the church that emerges from the shadows. The church that emerged from the shadows, the church that was identified as the Christian Church or as the Catholic Church, is a far different group than the people among whom Peter and Paul labored.

Groundwork was laid and the true Church was established. In Revelation 2 and 3, we have the outline of the history of the true Church of God. It is a great contrast with the outline that we find in Revelation 17 and 13 of a false church, a great powerful church. A great fallen woman is described in Revelation 17, called a great whore that sits upon many waters (v. 15), the one who rides the beast (v. 7). A great false church is descriptive of something totally different than that which Paul describes as the Bride of Christ.

What we have in the first century was a battle, a battle for the Bible or the truth of God. It was a battle for the law of God because the issues involved were ultimately not peripheral issues. They were not little things here or there. They involved a fundamental acceptance and adherence to the law of God, to observing the Sabbath, the holy days, to the basic law of God and the plan of God. As these things began to give way to all of the pagan ideas around, it was subtle. It didn’t occur at the “snap of a finger.” Within a period of time, the things that Paul warned about, the mystery of iniquity that he said was already at work (II Thessalonians 2:7), continued to work.

We find ourselves today as the successors of the Jerusalem Church, not the church at Rome, not the church at Alexandria. We find ourselves

as the spiritual descendants of the Jerusalem Church. It is important that we understand some of these things and how it set the stage. Even by the admissions of secular history, the church that emerged was far different than the Church that Jesus built. Various ideas and philosophies came in and served to subvert and undermine the authority of the Scriptures. When you undermine the authority of the Scriptures to determine our life, the way we should live, the things we should do and not do, then you subvert the very basis of God’s authority in our lives.

With these things, we focused a little bit on some wrap ups of Church history and some major influences in the first-century Church history.

Next Bible study we are going to start a brand new series. We are going to start into the Minor Prophets. We are going to go into some things about prophecy and the Minor Prophets in particular. The twelve Minor Prophets are short books, but an awful lot is packed in there. So the next Bible study will be the first Bible study of the new series on the Minor Prophets.

Bible Study # 70
May 28, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

Minor Prophets Series—Introduction

This evening we **are getting into a new Bible study series, a series on the Minor Prophets.** The Minor Prophets play a very important role in the understanding of the Bible and the understanding of God's plan. There are many, many things that come out.

The Minor Prophets are minor, but not in the sense of importance. They are referred to as Minor Prophets to distinguish them from what are called the Major Prophets. The difference in them has nothing to do with importance. It is reflective of the length or size of the books.

The Jews traditionally recognized three divisions of Scripture: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. These divisions would refer to what we term the Old Testament.

The **Law** was the most basic revelation of God. It consisted of the five books of Moses called in Hebrew, the Torah. The word "Torah" simply means "Law." The books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy form the most basic revelation of God. This is the starting point. God introduces Himself to us in Genesis as the Creator and He begins the process of teaching and instructing with His basic law.

Some of this sets a stage. What we **are going into this evening is introduction and background as far as the Minor Prophets are concerned.** But the term "Law" or "Torah" is a lot more inclusive than what we sometimes think. We tend to think of law where everything is spelled out. Our concept of law is more akin to rules. We think of "do this, that or something else," or "don't do this, that, etc." We think that's what law is. Those kinds of statements are law, but law consists of much more than simply "thou shall" and "thou shall not."

The entire first five books of the Bible are called "the Law," "the Book of the Law," "the Law of Moses" or "the Torah." We find that the law consists of testimonies as well as commandments, statutes, ordinances and judgments. It consists of all these things. Much of God's law is given by way of example or illustration—by what the Bible terms testimonies. Testimonies are simply a witness or a testified account of God's working that has transpired. So, one of the main ways we gain insight into the will of God is through the examples and illustrations that God records.

God introduced Himself to us at the creation. He gives us the basis for understanding who He is and the right that He has to establish commandments. God introduces us to Himself and to His most fundamental revelation in the first five books of the Bible. Everything else in the Bible is based upon and built upon the five books of the Law. That is the starting point.

After the Law came the Prophets and then the Writings. The **Prophets** consist of what are termed the Former and Latter Prophets. The Former Prophets were the books that we term historical: Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. The Latter Prophets are the books we think of as prophetic: the Major and the Minor Prophets. The Major Prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel and the Minor Prophets are The Twelve, beginning with Hosea on through Malachi.

Prophecy and history are the same thing seen from different directions. We look back on history and we look forward on prophecy. It is simply where you are in the continuum of time that makes the distinction between history and prophecy. Much of what we study today is prophecy. In the Millennium, we will study it as history. It is already there. Some of the things prophesied in the Old Testament were fulfilled with the first coming of the Messiah. Those things we study as a matter of history. They were given as prophecy; now, they are history. There are events that relate prophetically, but as these things come to pass, they then fall in the category of what we call history. It is a continuum of time and depending on our perspective (the point where we are), we look backward on certain things and forward on certain things.

Since God inhabits eternity (Isaiah 57:15), there is not the same distinction we would make. That is sort of mind boggling when you consider it because God exists outside the realm of time. Time exists for human beings. Time was created and established for human beings. Time is regulated by the workings of the interaction of the heavenly bodies and the cycles that God established. Before God created the physical universe, there wasn't any such thing as time.

The Prophets build upon the law. The Prophets show you the results and the consequences when the law is obeyed and when it is disobeyed. The law is the basis for all the prophets. Everything in the prophets is simply an expansion of the blessings and curses that are contained in the law.

Remember when Moses gave the law in Deuteronomy? We have the account before

Israel went into the Promised Land. He gathered them together, put them on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim and gave them the blessings and curses (Deuteronomy 11:26-29). You are blessed for obedience and cursed for disobedience. That ultimately sums up the prophets. *The message of the prophets is the consequences of either obedience or disobedience to the law.* That's what gives predictability because when you obey the law, there are results; when you disobey the law, there are results. God's law carries consequences, both good and bad.

From what we term the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings), we see the way God responded and dealt with Israel. We see the historical account of what happened when Israel obeyed and disobeyed. We see the distinction that comes in.

In the Latter Prophets, both the Major ones (Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel) as well as the Minor Prophets (The Twelve), we look forward and anticipate the consequences and results. We see the curses of Israel's disobedience that ultimately resulted in their captivity. We see the blessings that are going to occur when Jesus Christ returns and the government of God is set up on this earth. The Millennium is going to be a wonderful time. The earth will be a wonderful place during the thousand-year reign of the Messiah. The reason is because a King will reign in righteousness and princes will rule in judgment (Isaiah 32:1). God's law is righteousness.

Psalm 119:172, "...For all Your commandments are righteousness." The Millennium will be a wonderful time and place because the law of God will be the basis by which society will conduct itself, and there will be results and consequences.

The **Writings** are the poetic books: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, the five festival scrolls (Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther), and then conclude with the books that were written after the exile: Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles. For the most part, most of the Writings serve as a poetic amplification of the law as well as including the wrap up, the concluding accounts that were written after the exile to sort of finish off the Old Testament—God's revelation in the Hebrew language. Again, it represents an amplification of the law. It all gets back to the law.

The Minor Prophets that we are focusing on over the next number of Bible studies are the twelve books. In fact, sometimes in Hebrew, they are simply referred to as "The Twelve." They were

normally in one long scroll because they were short, and if you put them all together, they would be no longer than many of the longer books of the Bible.

They consist of several things. There are several different periods during which these books are grouped. There is dispute as to why they are arranged as they are. There are various theories developed on it. However, if we look at the pattern of the Major Prophets and at the pattern of the Minor Prophets that are dated, there is a pattern that establishes itself. If we look at Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel as something to establish a pattern, why are they arranged as they are?

Isaiah 1:1, we are told, "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." The period of Isaiah was a period that had its beginnings considerably before the captivity of Northern Israel.

Isaiah 6:1, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple." He began his writings in the last year of King Uzziah, which was about 732 B.C. We would reference that in Isaiah 6:1 when Isaiah dates his vision to the year that King Uzziah died. So, we would date Isaiah beginning his ministry about 732 B.C. and continuing on down to the end of the lifetime of King Hezekiah in 686 B.C.

When we come down to Jeremiah, it says in Jeremiah 1:1-2, "The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign."

Jeremiah, according to v. 2, had his beginning in 625 B.C., which was the thirteenth year of Josiah. It continued on down until after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.

We notice that Isaiah began his ministry considerably before Jeremiah did. In fact, Isaiah's ministry had ended almost sixty years before Jeremiah's began.

We come down to Ezekiel a little later.

Ezekiel 1:1-2, "Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the River Chebar, that the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. On the fifth day of the month, which was in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity." We would date this to 591 B.C. because the year of King Jehoiachin's

captivity was the second invasion of Nebuchadnezzar in 596 B.C. Therefore, we would date this to 591 B.C. when Ezekiel began his prophesy and it continued until 569 B.C.

We notice that Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel are clearly arranged in chronological order. We know the Major Prophets were arranged in chronological order because they are clearly dated. This gives us a little bit of a pattern. The pattern is not quite as easily established in the Minor Prophets as they are in the Major Prophets, but it gives us some insight and ideas.

You can read commentaries and find that different ones say different things. They will argue about the dates of the Minor Prophets. Most of them don't have any idea why they are arranged as they are. Clearly, at least in a general sense, *they are arranged in chronological order.*

We know that the first seven of the Minor Prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah and Nahum) are all books that date to what we would term the Assyrian period. It is called that because Assyria came to an end as a world power in 612 B.C. with the fall of Nineveh. The Medes teamed up with some other nations and sacked Nineveh, and it was destroyed in 612 B.C. This set the stage for the rise of Babylon. The first seven Minor Prophets clearly fall within that range. Most of those can be dated.

The books of Habakkuk and Zephaniah fall in what we would term the Chaldean period. They date to a time of Babylonian ascendancy and their warnings have to do with Babylon. Babylon is the emerging power.

The last three books, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, are what are termed post-exilic. That is, after the exile, after the Jews returned with Zerubbabel from Babylonian captivity. Clearly, we find at least a general chronological order. I can demonstrate that.

Hosea 1:1, "The word of the Lord that came to Hosea the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel." We find that Hosea would have been approximately contemporary with at least the early part of Isaiah's prophecies. His period ends with Hezekiah, King of Judah (Isaiah 1:1). The prophetic career of Hosea lists kings of Israel and Judah, and if you overlap them together, you will find that his prophetic career began about 770 B.C. during the reign of Jeroboam II, King of Israel and came on down to around 710 B.C., which was after the captivity of the ten tribes. Hosea is clearly an early prophet during the

Assyrian domination. We would date Hosea to that early period.

When we come to Joel, Joel does not start off by giving us a date. There is not a clear internal date in the book of Joel.

It just starts off, Joel 1:1, "The word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Pethuel." It goes through and gives the prophetic message. It goes through the things that are going to occur, but it is not clearly dated.

Amos is the third of the Minor Prophets.

Amos 1:1, "The words of Amos, who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake." Amos would clearly date as contemporary with the very early part of Hosea's prophecies. We can clearly date Hosea and Amos. Joel doesn't say.

Jonah is not clearly dated except in a couple ways. One, Jonah went to warn Nineveh of impending destruction and Nineveh was spared. We know from this that we are talking about a period earlier than 612 B.C. because Nineveh was destroyed in 612 B.C.

If we go back to II Kings 14, we will notice something. Sometimes people are unaware of this.

II Kings 14:23-25, "In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, became king in Samaria, and reigned forty-one years. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amitai, the prophet who was from Gath Hopher."

Jonah 1:1, "Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai..." Clearly we are talking about the same Jonah. We can date the book of Jonah to the latter part of the reign of King Jeroboam II. We can date Hosea, Amos and Jonah. All three of those are clearly dated as beginning at the same general time.

We can put a question mark by Joel and Obadiah. Micah clearly dates a little later (around 740-690 B.C.) based on the kings whose reigns he overlapped and based on the other dates. Hosea we would date about 770-710 B.C.; Amos, 760 B.C.; Jonah, 750 B.C.; and Micah, about 740-690 B.C. This is based on internal

dating. Joel and Obadiah we would put a question mark by them because you can't date them internally in the same way you can the others.

Nahum does not date itself in the same way. Nahum is a prophecy against Nineveh. We can date it prior to 612 B.C. because Nineveh was destroyed in 612 B.C. and there wasn't any point in prophesying against Nineveh after 612 B.C. Nahum doesn't date internally except that we could say that Nahum was prior to 612 B.C., a time when Assyria was the enemy. His prophecy is against Assyria.

Habakkuk prophesied against the Chaldeans. We can date Habakkuk generally but not specifically. It doesn't date itself exactly. There's not an internal date, but he is dealing with the Chaldeans. They began to arise about 620 B.C. They came into dominance and achieved world status after the fall of Nineveh.

We can date Zephaniah to about 620 B.C., to the time of Josiah's reign.

Zephaniah 1:1, "The word of the Lord which came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah." Josiah began to be king about 620 B.C. Zephaniah would clearly be contemporary with the early part of Jeremiah's ministry. It might be helpful to have a list of the Minor Prophets because I am going to keep jumping back and forth, giving you some overview. So, you may want to write some of these dates down and line them up so you can visually see it.

Haggai 1:1, "In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozakak, the high priest...." The second year of Darius would be 520 B.C. Haggai is dated to the sixth month of 520 B.C., which would be the month before the Feast of Tabernacles. So, he started prophesying in 520 B.C., the month before the Feast.

If you turn to Zechariah, he starts prophesying in the eighth month of the second year of Darius. Zechariah 1:1, "In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet...." He prophesied the same year. Notice there is a two-month difference. Haggai prophesied in the sixth month; Zechariah prophesied in the month after the Feast. The arrangement of Haggai and Zechariah is

interesting because clearly it is chronological, even if it was only a distinction of two months. The one that was dated first came first.

Malachi is not clearly internally dated, though by all tradition, it is considered the very last book to have been written. Malachi is, at least from a traditional standpoint, considered to tie in with the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

What do we find? We find that Joel, Obadiah, Nahum and Habakkuk cannot be clearly dated in terms of internal evidence. From all the ones that are clearly dated, we see that they all run in a chronological order. Based on the fact that the Major Prophets are clearly chronological and based on the fact that every one of the Minor Prophets that we can date are in chronological order, we see that God does things in a logical way. He doesn't just throw them in hodgepodge and just kind of stick them in any old way. God does things in a purposeful way. He is not the author of confusion, so undoubtedly, there was a reason as to why the books were arranged the way they are.

The most logical reason, that I am aware of, is that the Minor Prophets were probably arranged and preserved for us in the Canon in chronological order. That way we would date Hosea 770-710 B.C. Hosea is clearly dated internally by the scriptures. Joel we would date to about 770 B.C. We would date him about the same time of Hosea. Amos is internally dated. The date that it gives for itself, internally, is about 760 B.C. Obadiah is not clearly dated. Jonah is dated to about 750 B.C. We would date Obadiah about the same, 750 B.C. This would run 770, 770, 760, 750 and 750. Micah is dated from 740-690 B.C., so he would come next. Nahum we would date about 650 B.C. Nahum clearly comes after Jonah when Assyria's repentance hadn't lasted. So God is really going to "put it to them" this time. We would date these seven prophets to a period of Assyrian ascendancy.

Most of the commentators will agree on that part of it, but then they want to come up with some other dating method for the books that aren't dated. They seem to have a problem concluding that the books are chronological. But when you look at the way they are laid out, I think that's the most logical way. Habakkuk and Zephaniah, clearly date to the Chaldean period. Zephaniah we date to about 620 B.C., Habakkuk about the same, coming a little before Zephaniah. Haggai was written a couple of months earlier than Zechariah. Last of all, Malachi, we would

probably date in the vicinity of 400-420 B.C.—something like that.

We would date the Minor Prophets or figure their arrangement primarily on a chronological basis. We see that slightly over half of them (seven out of the twelve) can be internally dated very clearly. Malachi is a very probable date attested to by tradition. That leaves us only four, and they fall in this sequence that would lend itself logically to what we are saying here.

Let's understand a little bit about prophecy. When we think of prophecy we tend to limit it to strictly a prediction of the future. But prophecy is really an oral or written disclosure in words through a human mouthpiece, transmitting the revelation of God and setting forth God's will to man. Prophecy, used in the term that is used in the Bible, does not necessarily have to be predictive, though we normally think of it that way. The Hebrew word for prophet is "*nabi*." It comes from a word that means "to summon" or "announce" or "to call." It means one who has been called or appointed to proclaim, as a herald, the message of God. It is someone that God has appointed to announce or proclaim His message. In that sense, a prophet of God was not necessarily predicting the future.

Elijah is considered the greatest of the prophets, and yet we don't find that his main mission seems to have concerned itself with a whole lot of prediction as we think of it. There were certainly predictive aspects. In fact, Elijah's life and ministry was predictive because Malachi tells us that prior to the coming of the Messiah, God would first send Elijah the prophet to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers (Malachi 4: 5-6).

Jesus Christ clearly identifies the fact that prior to His first coming, John the Baptist was raised up in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way and to make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Luke 1:16-17). John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy of coming in the spirit and power of Elijah in terms of Christ's first coming. But when you read the context of the prophecy in Malachi, it is clear that what we would term the second coming of the Messiah is even more directly referred to.

I think it has been our understanding over the years in the Church that Mr. Herbert Armstrong was raised up by God to fulfill a similar mission—a mission to prepare a people made ready for the Lord, to carry out the work of Elijah and to do an Elijah work. Certainly, he referred to that many times himself and, certainly, he felt and

understood that God was using him in that way. I think that, certainly, the vast overwhelming majority of us in the Church felt the same way—that he was established in that way.

So, you can say that Elijah's work and ministry was itself predictive and prophetic because it set the stage. Elijah came when the nation of Israel had lost sight of the true God and had gotten off into other things. Elijah was called to restore the knowledge of the true religion in Israel. John the Baptist came and did something similar to that.

God raised up Mr. Herbert Armstrong back in the 1920s at a time during the fifth era of God's Church, the Sardis era. The Sardis era is described as a dying remnant that had a name and that it was alive, but for all practical purposes, it was spiritually dead (Revelation 3: 1-6). It was certainly not in a position to proclaim any message to the nation or to the world. Mr. Armstrong was raised up in the context of restoring the knowledge of the true religion in Israel. That was a part of the way that God used him.

I think we have to understand that God has used His different servants in different ways. Every messenger and servant of God has not had exactly the same mission. God has used different ones to warn different groups. He has used His servants in the overall scheme of performing His work, but He has used them differently.

We have to understand and recognize that God worked through each of the Minor Prophets in different ways. If you go through each of the Minor Prophets, you find that God worked through these individuals in different ways. They were all God's servants, but He worked through them over a period of time in different ways. Some were utilized and did a work in a certain context. Others, God used to focus on a different aspect of His work or message. The point is that prophecy is not simply prediction. It is the announcement or proclamation of God's will. There is often a predictive element to prophecy.

One of the things to recognize is the distinction between the prophets and the Levites. The Levites were professionals. They didn't receive their office directly by divine call. They received their office by a hereditary succession in the Levitical priesthood. If you were a Levite, then obviously your father was a Levite. It was a tribal distinction, and the priesthood was a subdivision of the Levites through the descendants of the family of Aaron.

The prophets differed from the Levites. They were not automatic successors to an office. They did not inherit their prophetic office. The

emphasis of a prophet was that he was one who was called to go out and announce or proclaim God's message. He was not someone who appointed himself to the job. He was not someone who inherited the job. You weren't a prophet simply because your father or your grandfather had been a prophet. The prophets were raised up by God.

God used individuals from a variety of walks of life. Some, evidently, were and could have been of Levitical background. Elijah, evidently, was a Levite. But that seems to have been the exception rather than the rule. Most of them who are recorded were not of Levitical ancestry at all.

Amos was a herdsman (farmer). He describes himself as a gatherer of sycamore fruit. He said he wasn't a prophet nor was he a prophet's son (Amos 7:14). He said he was not a professional; he was not in the prophet business. That was not his profession or his business, but rather, God called him and gave him a job to do. God thrust him into that. Over and over when we find God's servants used in that way, and particularly for a special mission or job, we see that God thrusts them into that job. It was not something they sought or sort of orchestrated or brought about and ensconced themselves into.

There are two kinds of prophets: oral and written prophets or oral and written prophecy. There are prophecies to which reference is made in the Scriptures that we don't have any record of. There isn't a book of Elijah or Elisha. We are told about Nathan the prophet, but there is no book of Nathan. There are many prophets to whom reference is made in the Scriptures of whom we don't have any record in terms of what they said. Or, we have what they said summarized in two or three verses and that is the entirety of what we know about their message.

Oral prophecies were announcements or proclamations from God that had significance for their day and time. The primary significance of the prophecies that were simply delivered orally was that they were not messages that were particularly relevant for all time. They were messages that zeroed in on a specific time and place. They were things that had significance at that time, but they really don't have a whole lot of implication for us today. God used many of the prophets primarily in their own day as His representative, and their mission was pretty well limited to that point in time.

However, there are a number of prophets whom God used (fifteen specifically) whose works are recorded in the Scriptures (in books that carry

their names), whose works were not primarily for their day. They were written down for our admonition. One of the important things to understand about these Scriptures is that the prophets were writing messages that had implications far beyond their day. They were not simply social reformers as some of the modern commentaries like to think. They were not out leading marches and crusades, trying to campaign for this or that fellow to get elected in order to bring about some social reform for their day.

As Jeremiah put it in Jeremiah 10:23, they understood, "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps." We are not going to reform the world or nation or bring about social justice simply by the hand of man. If man could establish government the way it should be, then why does Jesus Christ have to come back and set it up? The whole point of Biblical prophecy is the fact that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps. The only solution to the problems that exist in this world is the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Jesus Christ came with the announcement, the proclamation of the good news of the Kingdom of God.

Daniel expressed it when he had gone through the succession of the world ruling empires in Daniel 2 and 7.

Daniel 2:44, he said, speaking of the final ten kings, "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."

The Minor Prophets have a message that relates to the establishment of that Kingdom. It also relates to other nations and other powers.

One of the most important keys to understanding Bible prophecy, and perhaps the single most important key, is to understand the truth of the identity of Israel. That is crucial in importance because if you don't understand the identity of where Israel is, then you don't understand to whom reference is being made in the Minor and Major Prophets or any of the prophecies of the Old Testament.

If you don't know who Israel is, then you are in the same category as Jimmy Swaggart, Billy Graham and all the rest of the worldly ministers. They like to throw in a little bit about prophecy now and then, but they don't understand it. Why don't they understand it? Primarily because

every time they read the word “Israel” in a scripture (and you read it an awful lot when you read the Bible because it is mentioned quite a bit), they assume that it is talking about a nation in the Middle East today by the name Israel. They assume it is talking about the nation of the Jews. If that’s what you think, then all of the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, and all the way down through Malachi only relate to the Jews and that nation that calls itself Israel.

Mr. Herbert Armstrong used to raise this point years ago: ‘Isn’t it amazing that the Bible, in prophecies about the end time, would go into great detail about little nations such as Egypt (which you read of prophetically) and various other nations that exist in the world, and yet no mention is made of the United States, Great Britain and the western European powers—the great world powers that have dominated the last two centuries.’

When the Napoleonic wars ended in 1814, Britain stood absolutely supreme on the world scene from 1814 to 1914. The British Navy was larger than the navies of the next two powerful nations combined. Britain stood unchallenged throughout the nineteenth century. In the aftermath of World War I, the United States emerged, having been gradually moving up. Between the world wars, the United States and Britain together were clearly the dominant and most powerful nations on earth. In the aftermath of World War II, Britain’s decline became very rapid. The United States had a period of dominance though it was, in terms of actual time, a much shorter period.

The point is: Where are our nations mentioned? Where does it talk about the United States? All the various ones—Hal Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth—none of them know where we are identified. They can’t tell you what’s going to happen to the United States (to our nation) because they don’t know where we are talked about in the Scriptures. And as a result, they don’t have the key.

In The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy booklet, Mr. Herbert Armstrong called that knowledge the key that unlocks Bible prophecy. It’s sort of interesting. In Revelation 3 (the prophecy of the Philadelphia era), it talks about this era as having the key of David (v. 7) because the key that unlocks Bible prophecy is the knowledge of where the throne of David is. It is the key to understand where Israel is. The understanding of Israel unlocks the Minor

Prophets. That’s why we have an insight into what these twelve prophets are talking about.

An understanding of Bible prophecy is not necessary for salvation. The vast majority (even the prophets who wrote it) didn’t understand it. So, is it necessary to understand where Israel is in prophecy in order to get into the Kingdom of God? No. Probably, all through the centuries, the vast majority of God’s people lived and died, never understanding some of these things. Daniel didn’t understand the book of Daniel. He wrote it and didn’t understand it.

Daniel 12:8, he said, “...‘My Lord, what shall be the end of these things?’” ‘What’s all this “stuff” talking about?’

He was told, v. 9, “And he said, ‘Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.’”

Verse 13, “‘But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.’” ‘You are going to die and sleep in the ground. You will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days, but these things are closed up until the time of the end.’ It didn’t say they were closed up forever. It said they were closed up until the time of the end.

Knowledge would be increased (v. 4), knowledge of the Bible would be increased. There is knowledge of things that have relevance for us today that simply did not have relevance in the same way for generations and centuries past. So, those things were understood only in a very generalized way. Now, we don’t understand everything. The closer we get to the end, the more details will be understood.

Peter compared that to the dawning of a new day.

II Peter 1:19, “We also have the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star [which is the sun] rises in your hearts.” The point is: How does daylight come? When it is still pitch black, you can’t see anything. Then as the day star begins to dawn (the sun begins to come up), a little light appears in the eastern horizon and you begin to see shadowy outlines. Maybe you see clouds in the sky or trees, houses or barns. You can’t make out any details like color of a horse or deer, etc., but as the dawn gets a little lighter, you begin to pick out a few details and recognize things for what they are. Finally, when the sun actually comes up, there is quite a bit of light coming through the sky from east to west, and as the light gets brighter, you can pick out and discern

more and more detail. You see distinctions that you couldn't determine earlier.

That's the way prophecy is understood. The further we are from the return of Christ, the more pitch-black things occurred. This was the state of things at the time most of the prophets wrote. It was pretty pitch-black. The closer we come from a prophetic standpoint, the more a dim outline begins to appear. You see the dim outline; that must be a house or barn. You think you know what it is. Maybe you're right and maybe you're not. As it gets a little closer and the light gets a little brighter, you say, 'No, that's not what I thought it was. That's something else.' You can see it more clearly. The closer we get, the more details unfold. Finally, when Christ returns, everything is totally clear and light. This is an important aspect to understand.

The understanding of the identity of Israel is very important to understand the implications of Bible prophecy. Without that knowledge we don't have any basis of understanding what applies to us and where our nations are going to fit in. God, obviously, takes up quite a bit of space dealing with these matters.

There are four basic elements of Hebrew prophecy. There are four principle elements that are involved as to why prophecies were given and the purpose that prophecy serves.

First, the prophets had the responsibility of encouraging God's people to trust only in God's power and not in allies. The prophets made plain that it was futile to trust in other nations as deliverer. One message that runs through the prophetic writing of all the prophets is Jeremiah 17.

Jeremiah 17:5, "Thus says the Lord: 'Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord.'"

Verse 7, "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord." If you trust in man and make flesh your strength, then what you trust will fail you. If our only confidence (and the thing we have to support us) is other nations or other human governments, then we are heading for problems and trouble. The prophets all encouraged God's people to look to God for deliverance and for protection, not to put their trust in other nations.

That is a message that applies to our people today. It's a message that our people have not taken seriously. We think that we can ensure our protection. We're looking to all these nations that are our "friends," and we think that they will be there to back us up. We are very vulnerable in some areas. The great sophisticated technology

that we were able to show off during the Gulf War—do you realize the little most necessary electronic components that make those things work are made in Japan? The Pentagon buys them from Japan. Some of them are not even any longer made in the United States. We are dependant upon Japan for about one-third of those things. It hasn't been all that long ago that the last American company that made some of those things went bankrupt. We said, 'Why the Japanese are our friends; we can depend on them. Surely, they would never refuse to sell us those things. The Germans and Russians are our friends. Right? They would never take advantage of us.' We have a false confidence.

The prophecy focused in on the importance of God's people looking to God, trusting God and not trusting in allies.

Second, prophecy serves to remind people that safety was conditioned upon faithful adherence to the covenant. The prophets stressed a sincere, heartfelt, moral religion. Safety, blessings and prosperity were conditioned upon Israel's faithful adherence to the covenant. You couldn't go out and do whatever you wanted to do. They couldn't feel like they had some sort of special dispensation—that they could live any way they wanted to live and it would never come back to haunt them.

The prophets certainly illustrated the fact that the blessings and benefits that God's people enjoyed were conditional upon obedience. God was not after a religion that simply involved going through the motions and outward show and conformity. It was a matter of putting God's way into practice. The prophecies served, therefore, to warn nations of the consequences of disobedience.

Third, they also served to encourage Israel with respect to the future. One of the great rolls of prophecy is encouragement. Remember back in one of the dark times (in '79) when we were having a lot of difficulty? Mr. Herbert Armstrong, in one of his sermons that he sent out, made the point in encouraging us. He said to the effect, 'Brethren, I've read the book. I've read the end of the story and the end of the story is we win. We win. That's the way the book ends.'

One of the purposes of prophecy is to encourage the people of God in the midst of adversity and difficulty. When it looks like everything is going the wrong way, prophecy is there to remind us that the God of heaven is working out a great plan and purpose, and we have something we can look forward to. We have a reality that we can

look forward to, that goes beyond the things that can be seen, touched, felt and measured—the things that can be physically discerned. If the only source you have for knowledge of the future is looking at the television news or weekly new magazines, you don't have a whole lot of encouragement. Things can look like they are going one way when they are not.

It was only a couple of years ago that the idea that the Soviet Union would lose its domination of Eastern Europe and slide from being the major world power offsetting the United States was viewed as something so remote and so far off that it really didn't have any particular application for us. There wasn't any indication of the idea that the nations of Eastern Europe would be free to choose their own government. Nobody had any reason to think that would ever come about. In fact, all the experts had all kinds of reasons why it would certainly never be within the lifetime of any of us. It didn't work out that way.

The point is that in the midst of circumstances, God declares, as He says in Isaiah, the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). There is encouragement. As we see our nation headed down, we read in the prophets about a future re-gathering after Christ returns and a restoration of benefits and blessings that will result from national repentance. So, there is encouragement with respect to the future that the prophets provided.

Fourth, prophesy also served to seal the authoritativeness of God's message by the verification of fulfilled prophecy. One of the roles is that certain prophecies preserved in the Bible have already been fulfilled. Those prophecies serve to seal the authoritativeness of God's message. They make plain that one of the proofs of the Bible is fulfilled prophecy. Certainly, many prophecies that relate to the Messiah have been fulfilled.

And there are places you can go in Ezekiel, for instance, that prophesied that Egypt would be conquered by Babylon and never again be ruled by a native prince (Ezekiel 30:10,13). People can quibble about when the book of Ezekiel was written if they want to, but any amount of quibbling doesn't do away with the fact that it's certainly been around for about twenty-five hundred years. The point is that prophecy is still being fulfilled. Regardless of quibbling about the exact date it was written, Ezekiel said, "a native prince would never again rule Egypt."

You have to understand that Egypt had been one of the primary nations that had existed. Egypt, at

the time Ezekiel wrote, had existed as a major world power ruled by native princes for twenty-five hundred years. It passed into obscurity in a matter of years and it never again, from then until now, emerged as a major power and has never again been ruled by a native prince. Outsiders and foreigners have ruled it for decades and centuries, all the way to our time.

We see that there are many prophecies that certainly testify to the authoritativeness of the Word of God. There are prophecies of cities that would be destroyed and never rebuilt and prophecies of other cities that would endure and continue to endure. Prophecy serves as a sign and a proof of the authority of God. It serves to verify the authoritativeness of God's message. It serves to encourage His people with respect to the future. It serves to remind His people that safety and blessings are dependent upon faithful adherence and obedience to God. It encourages God's people to look to and trust God and not to depend on the physical allies and other things of the around. We have in the Minor Prophets things that very directly focus in on these things.

Some of the Minor Prophets are very short. Hosea is a little longer. There are fourteen chapters in Hosea. Joel is pretty short. We are going to lump some of the prophets together and cover them in the same Bible study because we are looking for a sort of overview, and I think we will have time to adequately go into it.

The next Bible study we will cover the books of Hosea and Joel. The book of Hosea is a very important prophecy. It has very detailed prophecy about Israel, things that are going to occur with God's people, Israel, and the way that God views them. Joel focuses in on the Day of the Lord and on the events surrounding the return of Jesus Christ. Clearly, the setting of it is not ancient.

Joel 2:1-2, "Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the Day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand: A day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations."

Verse 11, "The Lord gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the Day of the Lord is great and very terrible; who can endure it?"

And ultimately, Joel 3:17, “So you shall know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, and no aliens shall ever pass through her again.”

Verse 20 describes a time when Judah will dwell forever in Jerusalem from generation to generation. It is clearly a time on into the future. The primary implication of these prophecies has to do for the future. Some of them, and some of the messages, will focus in as more contemporary. We will see that as we go through it.

There’s a lot in the book of Hosea. There’s a lot of detailed prophecy about the fall and captivity of Israel. There’s a lot of insight into some of the specific things that are going to happen and take place.

Notice Hosea 1:11, “Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel!” Here is a time when Israel and Judah are going to be gathered together. That is a time yet future. There are many things that we will see as we go through Hosea that clearly focus in on what God is going to do, and we will see the obvious proof that Israel and Judah are not synonymous. Hosea is a detailed prophecy of many of the things relating to Israel and Ephraim. If you don’t know who Israel and Ephraim are, then you can’t understand Hosea.

Joel focuses on the Day of the Lord. It is in some ways, a more general prophecy in terms of identifying specific nations. We will go into that next Bible study.

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Mr. John Ogwyn

Minor Prophets Series—Hosea and Joel

We are going to get into the books of Hosea and Joel this evening. Hosea was a native of the Northern Kingdom. The nation of Israel had split into two sections: the Northern Kingdom (the northern ten tribes called Israel) and the Southern Kingdom called Judah. The nation had split soon after the death of King Solomon. At the time we pick up the story, the split was approximately one hundred thirty years downstream. So, quite a bit of time had transpired. A lot of time had passed as far as the history of the nation when Hosea came on the scene.

One of the things interesting to note is that a whole cluster of prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah) all flourish right in the same general time period. The prophet Isaiah was in that same general time period. It's the greatest cluster of prophets of which we have any record or evidence. The interesting thing is that their work began at a time when Northern Israel was at its height. It was approximately fifty to sixty years before the collapse and the Assyrian captivity. There are several things we learn from that. One thing we learn is expressed in the book of Amos.

Amos 3:7, "Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets."

God will warn Israel prior to intervention, prior to punishment and captivity. God's greatest work in ancient Israel was done in a time of warning and witness. The nation was warned about where they were headed and the consequences of those actions. The warning came at a time when the nation was riding a crest of power. Now, that's an interesting thing, too. The warning didn't begin when the nation was on the way down and out and everybody could look around and say, 'Things are sure headed down; things are sure in trouble.' God began to warn when there was not any physical evidence that things weren't just going to get bigger and better.

When God raised up this work, Mr. Herbert Armstrong was used to raise up the radio program. The magazine began to go out, back in the 40s in the aftermath of World War II, through the 50s and through this time. America really was at a pinnacle of its power in the world. There are some of you sitting right here whose

contact with the work goes way, way back to the early 50s or late 40s at a time when it seemed like America was on the way up and was at the pinnacle. Mr. Armstrong was giving warning that the nation was going down. And, at the time when Germany was down and at the bottom, he said Germany was going to come back. Germany was going to rebuild. He wrote the article "Will Russia Attack America" way back around 1951. That article was printed many times since because it was always a popular article. Up until the last few years, everybody thought that was the most likely thing. He had written an article on it way back at the beginning of the cold war. He understood from Biblical prophecy that would not occur. The point that I am making is that there is a parallel. *God raises up His work at a time when the nation needs to be warned based on what God says, not on all of the physical evidence.*

There's something interesting I am going to read to you. I'll read a little bit out of the Soncino Commentary, which talks about the circumstance in Israel and Judah at the time of this cluster of prophets—Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, plus Isaiah (seven prophets) clustered in about that fifty to sixty-year time span. There certainly were individuals who saw all of those men and heard their message. There was this great concentration of prophets because of what was taking place.

The Soncino Commentary, "The Introduction to Micah" says, "The eighth century witnessed the emergence in Israel and Judah of a commercial civilization of great material prosperity. [Now you could substitute the words "twentieth century" and you would have a very good parallel to today.] Its foundations were laid in the peace and security, which Jeroboam II, who reigned from about 783-743 B.C., won for Israel, and Uzziah, who reigned from 778 to 740 B.C., for Judah." They overlapped considerably. The foundations of this commercial civilization were laid in the peace and security of Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah.

"And in the extensions of the borders of their kingdom from Damascus to the Red Sea, from the desert to the Mediterranean, giving the Hebrew states command of all of the main trade routes of ancient days. But it was a civilization which displayed all the evils of a society making haste to be rich. Greed and covetousness, reckless and unscrupulous competition, a pitiless disregard of the claims of sympathy, charity and brotherly consideration, extremes of wealth and poverty which had been impossible in an

agricultural society based on the Biblical system of land tenure were dividing the nation into classes of possessors and dispossessed. The rich built up large estates with the help of corrupt judges; they added house-to-house and field-to-field, while the oppressed and dispossessed peasantry sought in vain for legal redress. The pursuit of commerce encouraged the development of cities and city life. And it was to the city that the landless farmers migrated in search of a livelihood where wealth, luxury and vice dwelt side by side with poverty, misery and squalor. With the exchange of goods went the exchange of ideals. New religious cults, standards of luxury and splendor and materialistic aims of living, which had hitherto been foreign to Israel, were introduced from Assyria and Egypt.”

Now, does that sound familiar? With just the change of a few words, you could be describing twentieth-century America. Interestingly enough, from the 1790 census, the nation was ninety percent rural and ten percent urban. Amazing changes have taken place and most of that has taken place in the twentieth century. I believe it was the 1900 census that saw the shift from majority rural to majority urban—the rapid urbanization of this country.

Interestingly enough, what is described in the “Introduction to Micah” from the [Soncino Commentary](#), which is a Jewish Commentary, actually includes all twelve of the Minor Prophets. In the Jewish order, they regard The Twelve as one book and this is the way they publish it. They have Hosea through Malachi.

Micah was a latter contemporary of Hosea. The introduction applies just as much to Hosea as it does to Micah because after all, Hosea starts out, [Hosea 1:1](#), “The word of the Lord that came to Hosea the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam [II] the son of Joash, king of Israel.”

The time that Hosea wrote (the eighth century) witnessed the emergence of a great commercial civilization and an urban civilization. The foundations were laid in the peace and security that Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah won. You can compare their control of the great trading routes to the early part of this century—the period that culminated at the time of Franklin Roosevelt, World War II and the emergence of our nation from there as a great superpower. What he describes is the exact problems. We find individuals writing against the background of their time and their circumstances. One of the

reasons why God inspired this—you’ve heard it explained and Mr. Herbert Armstrong stressed over the years—was that prophecy was dual. Do you know why there is a duality? Because you put the same people in the same circumstances and they do the same thing. You have Israel in the same circumstances, a circumstance of power and prosperity. What did it do? Well, the last time it happened to them was the period that ultimately set the stage for the Assyrian invasion and captivity. As we look at the book of Hosea, there is much in the background that is a parallel to our time today. What we’ve found is the same circumstances, which sets the stage for the same sins. And those sins set the stage for the same punishment.

As he describes the problems that came in—the extremes of wealth and poverty, the corruption, the rapid urbanization and landless farmers migrating to the city in search of a livelihood— isn’t that descriptive of what we have today? We have a lot of the urban ghettos and things built up that are very descriptive of that. The major cities have wealth, luxury and vice dwelling side by side with poverty, misery and squalor. Also, the exchange of ideas, the new religious cults, standards of luxury and splendor—haven’t we been inundated with all of these things coming in? It set the stage.

These are the circumstances that we find as we get into the Minor Prophets and as we get into the book of [Hosea](#) in particular. **At a time when Israel was at the height of her economic and military power, Hosea was beginning to warn of impending collapse and captivity.**

Hosea’s wife, Gomer, is used as a type of Israel. We will see some of that in just a few moments. God used much in Hosea’s life, as He did with many of the prophets, as things that took on a symbolic significance. Hosea married a wife who went into harlotry. The land was filled with immorality.

It was, in that way, not much different than in our land today—a land that is absolutely filled with immorality, where just recently they are having controversies in some of the so-called mainline churches about whether or not they should bless homosexual marriages. What do you mean marriage? There also is the controversy of whether they should ordain clergymen who are practicing homosexuals. Now that shows how far they have gone from the Bible. Go back and read what God says in Deuteronomy. He didn’t say anything about ordaining them. Now He did say something about “laying hands” on them, if I remember

correctly, but they didn't lay hands on them to ordain them. We have come so far in terms of standards that here are places that call themselves churches that are arguing over trying to redefine morality. And you wonder why they call themselves a church. Why do they even claim to be associated with the Bible and Christianity? They are free to start their own religion, but why drag God into it? Why claim that they have some sort of connection with Christianity or the Bible? It is totally their own invention. We live in a society that is not at all unlike the society that the prophet we read of here addressed.

Hosea married Gomer who proved to be and was utilized by God as a type of Israel. She lapsed into immorality and harlotry. Hosea ultimately put her away. There is a period of years that goes by in the first three chapters of Hosea. She is continually degraded. Hosea ultimately buys her back. He purchases her at a slave auction.

There is an analogy to God's dealing with Israel. God's relationship with Israel is a marriage relationship. God ultimately put Israel away because of spiritual harlotry. That involved the wife's responsibility of fidelity to her husband. Israel of old entered into all sorts of illicit relationships, looking to the kings around. Israel looked to the kings of other nations as her protectors and providers, rather than being loyal and faithful to God. Gomer ultimately hit bottom. Hosea extended mercy. He bought her back. He took her back and gave her another chance. There is an analogy through that period of years in his life. Those first three chapters of the book of Hosea go into that. It is used as an analogy to God's relationship with Israel.

Chapter 4 goes into the catalog of Israel's sins and why the nation was destroyed.

Chapter 5 deals with the fall of Judah and Israel. Both of them were seeking to Assyria instead of God.

Chapter 6, Israel finally learns a lesson.

Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10 deal with Israel seeking the help of other nations. It shows her glory departing. It's a warning to Israel of future captivity.

Chapter 11 deals with the future deliverance of Israel.

Chapter 12 deals with God's warning and His ultimate deliverance.

Chapter 13 makes the point that Israel's punishment is her own fault. Israel's deliverance is the consequence of God's mercy.

Chapter 14 focuses in on that ultimate promise of mercy from God.

As we get into the book of Hosea, who is the book addressed to? One very crucial factor in understanding Biblical prophecy is to know the identity of the nations being addressed. If you don't know, then you really can't claim to understand the prophecy at all. It's a mystery.

Now the most fundamental error of most of the Protestant fundamentalists who discuss prophecy today is the lack of knowledge of the identity of Israel. When you read the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel and Amos and for that matter, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum on through Malachi—when you read all of the Major and Minor Prophets—over and over again the prophecies are directed toward Israel. Now, if you don't know who Israel is, if you think Israel is simply that little nation in the Middle East that calls itself Israel, if that's what comes to your mind and if that's what you understand when you read the book of Hosea or the book of Ezekiel, then you've come to one set of conclusions that's totally different than if you understood the fact that Israel and Judah refer to two totally separate nations.

When we go through the book of Hosea, it's very clear to whom Hosea is writing.

Hosea 1:10-11, “Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, “You are not My people,” there it shall be said to them, “You are the sons of the living God.” Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel!”

He is speaking of the end time. Hosea makes a distinction between the children of Judah and the children of Israel. Hosea didn't think they were all Jews. And for that matter, anybody who has carefully studied the Bible knows Northern Israel went into captivity over one hundred twenty years before the Southern Kingdom of Judah went into captivity. Israel went into Assyrian captivity. Judah went into Babylonian captivity one hundred twenty years later. That's a long time.

It talks about the children of Israel abiding many days without a king.

Hosea 3:4, “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim.”

Hosea 4:16-17, “For Israel is stubborn like a stubborn calf; now the Lord will let them forage

like a lamb in open country. Ephraim [Great Britain] is joined to idols, let him alone.”

Hosea 5:5, “The pride of Israel testifies to his face; therefore Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity; Judah also stumbles with them.” He is making a distinction between Israel and Judah. You can continue down.

Verse 13, “When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria and sent to King Jareb; yet he cannot cure you, nor heal you of your wound.”

Hosea 6:10-11, “I have seen a horrible thing in the house of Israel: there is the harlotry of Ephraim; Israel is defiled. Also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed for you, when I return the captives of My people.” He talks throughout about Israel and Ephraim. Ephraim is the leading tribe of Israel.

It’s, very specifically, a message for the modern-day nation of Britain and, secondarily, for the United States. In the book of Hosea, over and over, Ephraim is singled out. It is fundamental to understand the book of Hosea. You can’t understand the end time if you don’t understand the identity of the people being described.

That’s why, when most of the Protestant fundamentalists try to talk about Bible prophecy, they don’t have any more idea than the “man in the moon” where the United States is discussed in Bible prophecy. They find reference to little obscure nations like Syria and Egypt. They recognize those, but they don’t have any concept of where the United States, Canada and Great Britain are. They don’t understand that because they don’t understand the identity of our people. If you are going to understand Biblical prophecy, if you are going to understand the Minor Prophets and their application for our time today, then you have to understand the identity of the people being discussed. That shouldn’t be really hard to figure out.

We find Hosea’s family life (as already mentioned) had prophetic significance. His wife Gomer went into harlotry, was put away, ultimately came to repentance and was brought back—literally bought back and redeemed in the literal sense. She was forgiven by Hosea. It is a picture of God’s relationship with Israel.

As we get into the book of Hosea, God talks about a time when mercy will be extended. There will be a time of forgiveness.

Hosea 2:18-20, “In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, with the birds of the air, and with the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, to make them lie

down safely. I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in loving kindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord.”

Verses 21-23, “It shall come to pass in that day that I will answer,’ says the Lord; ‘I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth. The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine, and with oil; they shall answer Jezreel. Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, and I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; then I will say to those who were not My people, “You are My people!” And they shall say, “You are my God!””

What is the setting of that? Clearly, that’s the Millennium. That’s when Christ returns. That hasn’t happened yet. That’s talking about conversion. It’s talking about God’s blessing. It’s talking about breaking the sword, the bow and putting an end to warfare—all of these things. Hosea’s message went on far beyond his day. There are implications for our time.

Hosea 4:1-3, “Hear the word of the Lord, you children of Israel, for the Lord brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: ‘There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed after bloodshed. Therefore the land will mourn; and everyone who dwells there will waste away with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air; even the fish of the sea will be taken away.’”

Verses 6-7, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. The more they increased, the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame.” The more we have prospered, the more we have been blessed; the more that we have increased materially, the more we have sinned against God.

Most of us sitting here are living on a standard far beyond anything we grew up in—things we never dreamed of years ago. Our conveniences have been taken for granted. We are sitting here enjoying the air conditioning. It hasn’t been that long since air conditioning has been readily available. This school wasn’t built with air conditioning. It was built with windows to take advantage of the breeze. A lot of us sitting here didn’t grow up with air conditioning. I remember the first time I ever saw a car that had air

conditioning in it. A neighbor of ours had it, and I was really impressed with it. I was really fascinated with that. We now take it for granted.

Also, contemporary to that, it hasn't been that long ago when, particularly in rural areas, about the only lock most of us had on our doors were the latches on the screen door—and that was more to keep the cats and dogs from coming in or out.

The more we have multiplied and prospered materially in this nation, the more we have sinned against God and the further away we have gotten from God. We see evidence of that. God says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Now we have a knowledge explosion. We have all sorts of technological knowledge. But the knowledge that we are destroyed for lack of is knowledge we have rejected. It's the knowledge of God's truth.

Now, the Supreme Court of the state of California has, "in its great wisdom," ruled that when you have high school graduation, they can't open the service with a prayer because they don't want to, in any way, acknowledge there may be God involved in it. They don't want them standing for something like "God Bless America" and having an opening prayer at the high school graduation. We have rejected knowledge that has any sort of connection with God's law or with the Bible. It's absolutely incredible.

Several months ago, the Gideons got in trouble for trying to pass out Bibles in Bossier City in north Louisiana. They were coming around and had been passing out Bibles for years. But this was horrible. The ACLU jumped in on it. You couldn't do that; passing out Bibles was unconstitutional. Now, at exactly the same time, New York City started passing out condoms in their schools. Nobody challenged that. Nobody saw anything illegal about that. You could give out stuff like that to kids in school without their parents even knowing anything about it and paying for it with the taxpayers' dollars. The taxpayers weren't buying the Bibles the Gideons were passing out. The taxpayers were buying these other things they were passing out in New York City.

Let me ask you something. Doesn't it say something about a society and its values when it takes for granted and sees nothing wrong with taxpayer dollars buying condoms and passing them out to school kids all the way down to seventh and eighth grade? Yet is it horrified at the idea that somebody might give them a Bible?

Well, I would suggest that if they want to stop the spread of AIDS, it would be a whole lot better to pass out Bibles than the rest of the stuff they are passing out because that's where the key is. If they really want to prevent the spread of some of these things, then they should hand them a Bible and say, 'Read it and follow the advice.' It's incredible.

Hosea 4:6, "'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.'"

Verse 11, "'Harlotry [KJV, "Whoredom"], wine and new wine enslave the heart.'" You know what has sapped the heart of the nation? – Immorality and drug and alcohol abuse; whoredom (immorality), wine and new wine (talking about drunkenness), which would certainly, by implication, cover the whole realm of substance abuse. It would cover not only alcohol but the whole realm of various drugs that people try to get their "highs" and "kicks" out of. God says whoredom and wine and new wine has enslaved the heart. They have sapped the very fiber of the nation. Immorality and substance abuse have greatly impacted our nation. God focuses on that here.

Verse 12, "'...For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray. And they have played the harlot against their God.'"

Verses 16-18, "'For Israel is stubborn like a stubborn calf; now the Lord will let them forage like a lamb in open country. Ephraim is joined to idols. Let him alone. Their drink is rebellion. They commit harlotry continually. Her rulers dearly love dishonor.'"

Hosea 5:5, "'The pride of Israel testifies to his face; therefore Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity; Judah also stumbles with them.'" Now, that didn't happen the first time. It is going to happen this time.

Verse 7, "'They have dealt treacherously with the Lord, for they have begotten pagan children. Now a New Moon shall devour them and their heritage.'" KJV, "'...Now shall a month devour them with their portions.'" We have gone into earlier studies on prophecy and the fact of where this month fits in.

If you go back to Daniel 12:11, "'And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.'"

He also describes the great tribulation as lasting a time, times and half a time or three and one-half years or one thousand two hundred sixty days (v. 7). Now, between the abomination that makes desolate and the onset of the tribulation is thirty days—one month. We find our missing month right here in Hosea.

Hosea 5:7, “...a month devour them...” In other words, this thirty-day period is the period of time that it takes for the “mop-up” operation. It takes a month for the nation to actually be completely devastated. Things begin and there is a month that sees this calamity to fruition.

It talks about Ephraim being desolate in the day of rebuke (v. 9).

Verse 13, “When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria and sent to King Jareb; yet he cannot cure you, nor heal you of your wound.” The difference between a wound and a sickness is that a wound is external and a sickness is internal. Ephraim saw his sickness—internal problems, economic difficulties; Judah saw his wound—external problems, things that were inflicted from an outside force.

Based on this verse (Hosea 5:13), Mr. Herbert Armstrong said back in the 1960s that Britain would try to join the Common Market and very likely would even be part of the Common Market for a while but would never be a part of the Beast Power. Britain would try and get involved in that because when they saw their sickness, they went to the Assyrians to bail them out. They looked to the Germans to help them out. They looked to join up with this thing. Whether that is the final fulfillment of this verse or whether there is more yet to come, time will tell.

The latter part of the verse, Judah seeing his wound and going to the Assyrians, has not yet happened. But that is ultimately very likely the pretext on which European troops are going to enter the Middle East. There is an enigmatic statement that Christ makes in Matthew 24:15-16 and Luke 21:20-21 that helps to understand this.

Luke 21:20-21, Christ said, talking to His disciples, “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her.”

Let me ask you something. If the armies are hostile armies and are coming at you with guns blazing and bombs falling, do you need

somebody to tell you that the desolation thereof is near? Even a “dummy” could figure that out by that time. Even Dan Rather and company or Peter Arnette and all those by that time will be able to figure that out. When the bombs start dropping, it begins to dawn on some of them that the desolation thereof is near. Anybody can figure that out once it is here.

The other thing is, isn't it going to be a little bit late to flee to the mountains if the armies are coming in and the guns are blazing and the bombs are falling? You say, ‘I think it's about time for me to flee to the mountains; see you guys later. It says right here I am supposed to flee, so I have to leave.’ That's a little late. If one bunch doesn't shoot you trying to get out, the other bunch will shoot you when you do. You are in trouble. Once the bullets are flying it's too late to flee to the mountains.

Christ's statement in Luke 21 and Matthew 24 only makes sense if the armies surrounding Jerusalem do not give the immediate appearance of being hostile armies. Christ told His disciples, ‘When you see the armies surrounding Jerusalem, then you will understand it's all over with. The desolation of Jerusalem is near and the abomination will be set up. That will lead to the desolation. You had better get out of there right now because if you wait, it is going to be too late. You won't have a chance to make a getaway.’

Tie in Hosea 5:13, “...when Judah saw his wound he went to the Assyrians...” Evidently there's going to be something that's going to occur in the future that Judah is going to come out of feeling wounded and enter into some sort of pact with the Germans. The Germans are going to use it as a pretext to bring troops into the Middle East. The only thing is, when they get there, they are going to do something far different than what people suppose.

It's kind of interesting. I don't know how many of you saw it. There was an article in U.S. News & World Report a week or so ago about the change of NATO—that the Americans right now are agreeing to withdraw a large portion of their troops and what's left are going to be put under European command. We've never had that before. The only United States troops that have ever been under anybody else's command were some American troops under British command in World War II. But we're looking at putting some under German command, which is a totally different matter. We are looking at a totally different circumstance with our brother Ephraim.

And another thing, there was a little article in the Morning Advocate in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, buried way back on the back pages. I don't know if any of you saw it. It was just a little short article. It said that negotiations are taking place between the United States and Germany for German troops to now be stationed in the United States. The article pointed out that's the first time since 1812 that foreign troops will be stationed on American soil. They will be stationed here as part of an agreement. Up until 1812, there were British troops that were stationed up at what was then called the Northwest, some of the area like Michigan and Ohio. There were some British troop soldiers there. But for the first time since 1812, German troops will be stationed over here in this country. Some of the bases they are closing out, they are going to give them to the Germans. Just a small number of troops, you understand, here to help us and protect us. Anyway, Hosea discusses some of these matters. Hosea is a very up-to-date book.

Notice God talks about how they are going to be brought down.

Hosea 5:15 (KJV), "I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early."

Let's follow on in the context.

Hosea 6:1-3, "Come, and let us return to the Lord; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight. Let us know; let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth."

What's being discussed here? If we go through the context of chapter 5, we see Israel going into the tribulation, and now we see the fact of repentance. It makes this sort of enigmatic statement, "after two days will He revive us and the third day He will raise us up." The tribulation—the three and one-half years or one thousand two hundred sixty days—is the prelude to Christ's return. The last year of that is really God's wrath on the Beast power. The first two and one-half years of that three and one-half-year period represents Satan's wrath against physical Israel and against the Laodicean Church, the remnant that is left behind as Revelation 12:17 defines it. The circumstance described here—as the Israelites in the concentration camps of the future in areas of South America, North Africa,

Germany—as time progresses on into this period of tribulation, as they languish in some of these work camps and some of these places, they are going to think about and remember the message that they heard. It talks about people remembering the message they heard (Ezekiel 33:32-33).

Brethren, we have a great work yet ahead of us. We have a great work. The work is not finished; there is a work that remains to be done. Exactly when it is going to "blast out" to really shake the nation and world, this is God's time. We don't know exactly. But it's discussed and talked about in the Bible.

Ezekiel 2:5; 33:33, "They shall know there has been a prophet among them."

I don't think you can say that is really the case if the nation were to go into captivity today. The people would not really know to that great extent that there had been a prophet among them. A foundation has been laid. But there is coming a time when the message of Ezekiel, etc., is literally going to shake this nation. In Ezekiel 33:30, it talks about how everywhere they are going to be talking about the message that is being broadcast.

Our responsibility, individually, is to be ready. We need to be close to God and ready to be used by God when it comes His time to really revive His work in the midst of evil. When the time comes to really go forward, a foundation has been laid. Our responsibility is to be close to God, so that we are receptive to God's leading and can be used by God to accomplish what He wishes us to do. The timing is in God's hands, and we have to recognize and accept that. We need to not just go charging off "half-cocked," trying to do our own thing.

Hosea 6:2, "...after two days..." As people languish in these camps, they are going to say, v. 1, "Come, let us return to the Lord, He has torn and He will heal us." How are they going to know that? They will know it because they have been told by this work!

After two days—after the first two years or so have gone by—God will begin to give them some relief. If they follow, then they are going to know—to really know—God. They are going to begin to understand the message that they heard, talking about His going forth and being prepared. They are going to understand how He is going to come (talking about the return of Jesus Christ) and various prophecies.

Hosea focuses primarily on Israel. A little bit of it focuses on Judah. Let's notice; we will pick out some places.

Hosea 7:1-2, “When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was uncovered, and the wickedness of Samaria. For they have committed fraud; the thief comes in; a band of robbers takes spoil outside. They do not consider in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness; now their own deeds have surrounded them; they are before My face.”

Verses 8-11, “Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake unturned. Aliens have devoured his strength, but he does not know it; Yes, gray hairs are here and there on him, yet he does not know it. And the pride of Israel testifies to his face, but they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek Him for all this. Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without sense—they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.”

It talks about the involvement with various things that have sapped the strength of Britain and certainly America, as well. And the pride that is there, stood in the way of real repentance.

Hosea 8:1, “Set the trumpet to your mouth! He shall come like an eagle against the house of the Lord, because they have transgressed My covenant and rebelled against My law.”

Verse 3, “Israel has cast off the good; the enemy will pursue him.”

Verses 7-9, “They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind. The stalk has no bud; it shall never produce meal. If it should produce, aliens would swallow it up. Israel is swallowed up; now they are among the Gentiles like a vessel in which there is no pleasure. For they have gone up to Assyria, like a wild donkey alone by itself; Ephraim has hired lovers.” Ephraim has entered into various alliances.

Verse 14, “For Israel has forgotten his Maker, and has built temples; Judah also has multiplied fortified cities; but I will send fire upon his cities, and it shall devour his palaces.” “Israel has forgotten his Maker and has built temples.” That is sort of an interesting statement. It is sort of a paradoxical statement. On the one hand, we have forgotten our Maker and yet on the other hand, we really go in for the outward show and display of religion. Oh, we have temples all over and churches on every street corner. We like to pride ourselves on being such a religious people and yet we don’t follow what God says.

There was an interesting article; I believe it was U.S. News & World Report that had the article on American attitudes regarding sex and immorality. The statistics they give is just incredible. It shows that the Bible is almost

irrelevant in the eyes of the vast majority of people in terms of what they do and practice.

We have forgotten our Maker and build temples. Judah has not made nearly the outward show of religion. They have just multiplied fortified cities. They have built up missiles and all this kind of thing. God says, ‘I am going to send fire upon them.’

They had a little bit of a taste of that in the Persian Gulf War. It was just a little bit of a taste of that; there is going to be more. Our false religion can’t deliver us, and all their fortified cities can’t deliver them. There is going to be captivity.

Hosea 9:3, “They shall not dwell in the Lord’s land, but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and shall eat unclean things in Assyria.” They are going to eat unclean things in Assyria. They are going to be transported.

Verse 11, “As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird...” It describes these things over and over.

Hosea 10:1, “Israel empties his vine; he brings forth fruit for himself. According to the bounty of his land they have embellished his sacred pillars [images].”

Verse 5, “...because its glory has departed from it.”

Verse 13, “You have plowed wickedness; you have reaped iniquity. You have eaten the fruit of lies, because you trusted in your own way, in the multitude of your mighty men.” It describes all these things that are going to come. Israel, over and over, is described as having sought after all kinds of allies as her protector, rather than God. The very ones that she put her trust in as deliverers are ultimately going to destroy her.

From a spiritual standpoint, as far as Israel is concerned, God labels that as adultery because God entered into a husband-wife relationship with Israel. Israel was to look to God to protect her and provide for her, rather than to put her trust in others. In that sense, God views Israel as a wayward wife. She is going to have to learn a bitter lesson and repent. Then God will take her back.

Hosea 12:1, “Ephraim feeds on the wind, and pursues the east wind; He daily increases lies and desolation. Also they make a covenant [treaty] with the Assyrians, and oil is carried to [or, through] Egypt.” It is very possibly some sort of reference to the Suez Canal—something that is going to transpire in the future.

Verse 2, “The Lord also brings a charge against Judah...” KJV, “The Lord also has a controversy with Judah...” Judah is separate

from Israel, but they are going to be dealt with, as well.

Hosea 13:9, “O Israel, you are destroyed, but your help is from Me.” KJV, “O Israel, thou has destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help.” *That’s the key!* We have destroyed ourselves; our destruction is the consequence of our own actions.

We need to understand these things are real. It is talking about being carried into captivity into North Africa, Germany and various places. That is literally going to happen. That’s going to happen to those who don’t take this warning and this message seriously. It’s going to happen to some who have warmed seats in God’s Church. It’s going to happen to some who have grown up in God’s Church who sort of tuned it out and haven’t paid any attention to it. It’s going to happen to people who have heard the broadcast and read the magazine. It’s going to happen! *It’s going to happen!* It is something that we had better take seriously and realize that God puts these warnings in here for our good and for our benefit. We ignore them to our peril.

Hosea 14:1-3, God says, “O Israel, return to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity; take words with you, and return to the Lord. Say to Him, ‘Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips. Assyria shall not save us, we will not ride on horses, nor will we say anymore to the work of our hands, “You are our gods.” For in You the fatherless finds mercy.”

Hosea 14 ends with the focus on repentance and return and God’s mercy and forgiveness.

The book of **Joel** is a little short book. We find a focus on economic and agricultural devastation. **The whole theme of Joel is the day of the Lord.**

Joel 1:4-7, “What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; what the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; and what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten. Awake, you drunkards, and weep; and wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the new wine, for it has been cut off from your mouth. For a nation has come up against My land, strong, and without number; His teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he has the fangs of a fierce lion. He has laid waste My vine, and ruined My fig tree; He has stripped it bare and thrown it away; its branches are made white.”

Verse 10, “The field is wasted, the land mourns....”

Verse 12, “The vine has dried up, and the fig tree has withered....”

Verses 14-15, “Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord. Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty.”

The first chapter of the book of Joel focuses in on the agriculture sector. We have to realize that agriculture underlies the whole strength of the economy. I once saw a bumper sticker when we were traveling through the Midwest. A pickup truck had a bumper sticker on the back, and it said, “If you eat, you are involved in agriculture.” That’s how basic agriculture is. If you eat, then you are involved in agriculture—and everybody eats. The basis and starting point of economic strength and economic stability goes back to the agricultural sector.

According to what Joel says, we are going to experience some real devastation.

Joel 2:1-2, “Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand: A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations.” It describes this army.

Verse 3, “A fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns; the land is like the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; surely nothing shall escape them.”

Verses 10-11, “The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. The Lord gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; who can endure it?” Christ is going to come back and He is going to have a great army with Him.

Verses 12-16, “‘Now, therefore’, says the Lord, ‘Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. So rend your heart and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him—a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast; call a sacred assembly. Gather the people,

sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and nursing babes; let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, and the bride from her dressing room.”

This talks about a warning message that God is going to take to His people Israel, a warning of the events that are going to come and a call to repentance.

Verses 28-32, “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the remnant whom the Lord calls.”

We find part of vv. 28 and 29 quoted back in Acts 2:15-21—the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. So at least part of this has been partially fulfilled in Acts 2. But the great fulfillment is yet future. Revelation 6:12-17 focuses in on the time when the sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood—the time of the great day of the Lord.

Revelation 6:12-14, “I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.”

Verse 17, “For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

Joel 2:30-31, “And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.” You have to tie that in with Revelation 6.

Joel 3:1-4, “For behold, in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom

they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land. They have cast lots for My people, have given a boy in exchange for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink. Indeed, what have you to do with Me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the coasts of Philistia? Will you retaliate against Me. Swiftly and speedily I will return your retaliation upon your own head.” It describes the things that have occurred.

Verses 9-10, “Proclaim this among the nations: ‘Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords and our pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, ‘I am strong.’” That is pretty descriptive of what we have going on right now with the arms race. “Let the weak say, ‘I am strong.’” That sounds like old Saddam Hussein going around bragging about the “mother of all battles” and all that he was going to do—this type of thing.

Verse 9, “Proclaim you this among the Gentiles. ‘Prepare for war. Wake up the mighty men....’” Get ready! We have this gigantic, obscene expenditure for arms in all these third-world nations that can’t feed their own people. They are beating their plowshares into swords. They are spending the money on weapons that they should spend on an agricultural infrastructure. They are going to have a chance to use all those weapons because all nations are going to be gathered together in the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:2). God is going to finally put a stop to this foolishness. He is going to gather all nations and bring them into battle there in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. That is outside the area of Jerusalem. Armageddon is the place where the armies gather. They converge on Jerusalem, and when Christ returns, the destruction takes place in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

Joel 3:12-17, “Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow—for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness, the Lord also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the Lord will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So you shall know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then

Jerusalem shall be holy, and no aliens shall ever pass through her again.”

It will no longer be the place that is trodden down by every rampaging army going back and forth as has been the case all the way down through time.

Verses 19-20, “Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom a desolate wilderness, because of violence against the people of Judah, for they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall abide forever. And Jerusalem from generation to generation.” God describes these events that are going to culminate in the return of Jesus Christ. The focus is the day of the Lord. Clearly, when you go through prophecies in Hosea and Joel, it is not primarily talking about what happened twenty-five hundred years ago. Did these things happen exactly that way then? Go back to Revelation 6 where it describes the sun becoming black, the moon becoming blood red—the events of the day of the Lord, the events that are going to culminate in the return of Jesus Christ to this earth and the establishment of the government of God.

The phrase “Blow the trumpet” is used over and over. The blast of the shophar was a signal of warning and alarm. The implication is that God’s work is going to sound that alarm, the admonition, “blow the trumpet in Zion.” Who is going to blow that trumpet?

Isaiah 58:1, “Cry aloud spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet and show My people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins.” That’s going to be fulfilled.

What we’ve done up until now has only been a partial fulfillment of that. It has only laid the groundwork for the great fulfillment yet to come. What we need to be doing is staying close to God, really walking with God and drawing close to Him, so that God will allow us to be used to finish the job that He has called us to do. We, individually and personally, can be a part of the great work with which God is going to shake this earth and this nation. We are living in what the Bible describes as perilous times (II Timothy 3:1). If you are navigating a perilous stream, it’s important that you depend on a very experienced navigator.

I remember one time where we were going through an area on a canoe trip. We were going to shoot some rapids. I had not been on this stretch before, but there was an individual who had. He knew the river. When we got up to the spot, some just went bounding right on through, and it didn’t take long before they crashed. I kind of stopped and paddled so as to just stay still

because I wanted to watch the guy who knew his way through. I saw what he did and I waited until he got through. I saw what he did and the way he went through. After he was out of the way, then I tried to follow through and do exactly what he did. We got through, too. We were a couple of the only ones who made it through without capsizing because he knew what he was doing and I followed him. I didn’t know what I was doing, but I knew that he did.

There’s a lesson there because we are in the process of navigating a pretty perilous stream, a pretty perilous set of rapids known as “the end time.” Jesus Christ knows how to navigate the rapids. He knows exactly how to do it. If we think we know how to do it and go charging ahead, we are going to crash somewhere in the process. But if we follow through exactly as He leads, we will be fine. That’s one of the key things to keep in mind at the point in which we find ourselves. We need God’s help, guidance and direction. We need to stay close to God to fulfill that for which God has called us.

Joel refers to the valley where the last battle is going to be fought. Joel 3, vv. 2 and 12 refer to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The world talks about the Battle of Armageddon. In reality, there is not a battle of Armageddon. The armies gather there, but the battle is outside Jerusalem in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. That’s where the armies are destroyed. The armies are gathered to Armageddon to converge on Jerusalem. It’s the Valley of Jehoshaphat where they are actually going to be destroyed.

God is going to win. He is going to set the stage at this time to begin the events of the Millennium. We converge on Jerusalem, here in the book of Joel, and see a focus on the end time—on the Day of the Lord.

The book of Hosea focuses in on Israel and it’s primarily for the end time. If it was primarily for back then, why is it in the prophets? If all Hosea is, is a historical book that’s talking about something that occurred twenty-five hundred years ago, then it’s pretty much irrelevant to us except as a part of the history. We have the history back in II Kings. Hosea is here to tell us the events that are going to come to pass. Joel is here to tell us the events that are going to come to pass.

These books of the Minor Prophets have a tremendous amount packed in. There are things that apply very directly and very emphatically to us in our time and day and in the time ahead of us. We are going to sort of skim through them rapidly. We will come back at later times and

pick up other portions. But the way to get the maximum benefit out of it is to read the books and study them in conjunction with other literature that we have published over the years. Go through, read and study the books. Use the study guide and then we will try to hit the high points next Bible study. We will sort of pick up speed. The books that we are going to cover next time, Amos, Obadiah and Jonah, are fairly short books. We will get a little bit of an overview on some of those.

Bible Study # 71 Questions

SURVEY OF THE MINOR PROPHETS SERIES

Hosea and Joel

1. Who is the message of Hosea primarily directed at?
2. What was the prophetic significance of Hosea's family life?
3. According to Hosea why are God's people to be destroyed?
4. What events do Hosea 5:5-13 refer to?
5. What events do Hosea 6:1-3 refer to?
6. Give evidence from Hosea that Britain would join the Common Market.
7. How did Judah figure in Hosea's prophecies?
8. According to Hosea, who has sapped the strength and wealth of Israel?
9. What is the great sin of Israel that Hosea lays emphasis on?
10. According to Hosea, how does God view Israel?
11. What is the theme of the book of Joel?
12. What prophecy in Joel was fulfilled in Acts 2?
13. What does the term "blow the trumpet" signify?
14. According to Joel, where is the last battle to be fought? Give reference.

Bible Study # 72
July 9, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

Minor Prophets Series—Amos, Obadiah and Jonah

We are getting into the books of Amos, Obadiah and Jonah this evening. We're taking three books in the Minor Prophets. Primarily, we are going to focus on Amos. It is the longest of the books; there are nine chapters. Obadiah is one short little chapter; Jonah is fairly short with four chapters. **We are going to focus in on these books this evening, but primarily on Amos.**

Amos was a prophet who prophesied about the same time as Obadiah and Jonah. In fact, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah all prophesied in the same general time period. Roughly speaking, they were all contemporaries. There is a little bit of variation, but they all overlapped some. In fact, not only were there those six Minor Prophets, but also the prophet Isaiah. So there were actually seven prophets of God who flourished at that same time period. As I mentioned last Bible study, their period of prophecy was at a time when the nation of Northern Israel had reached sort of a height or peak of its prosperity.

Northern Israel had its beginnings at the time of King Solomon's death when the kingdom of twelve-tribed Israel split. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, took the southern tribe Judah in Jerusalem and portions of Benjamin and Levi. The northern ten tribes originally went with Jeroboam, the son of Nebat who put himself forward as king and founded a dynasty that continued for a short time and then was replaced by other dynasties.

There was a lot of turnover in Northern Israel. But finally in the early part of the eighth century, there arose a period of prosperity in Northern Israel and in Judah. There were two very lengthy reigns: King Jeroboam II, the king of Israel reigned for about forty years and King Uzziah of Judah reigned for a comparable period of time. They both reigned in the neighborhood of forty years. They were roughly contemporary—not exactly, but for a considerable period of time. Their periods of reign overlapped thirty to thirty-five years. Since there were monarchs who were in that position for a period of time, it was a time of stability for Israel and Judah.

The Hebrew states gained control of the major trade routes at that particular point in time, and as a result, there was commercial prosperity that

began to build up both in Israel and in Judah. This produced not only material benefits, but also various problems. As a commercial civilization grew and thrived, there were also difficulties that came in. A greater and greater percentage of people moved off the land and into the cities in search of jobs.

In effect, it was not dissimilar to what we have experienced in the course of the twentieth century in terms of the number of families who have moved off the farms and into the cities. In fact, next Bible study when we study the book of Micah, we will go into a little more detail and depth on the background and you will see an amazing parallel between eighth-century Judah and Israel and twentieth-century America and Britain. It's interesting because you see that when you put the same people in the same circumstances, they tend to do the same thing over and over and over. There is predictability to human nature.

Prophecy and history are simply the same thing seen from different directions. There is a time setting of the background of these prophets. As Israel, and to a lesser extent Judah, went through some of these things, there were problems that were engendered. There were various things that happened and there was a consequence that came about. God raised up these prophets. There were seven who flourished at this time—from the beginning of the eighth century down to the captivity and shortly beyond. God raised up these prophets to give a warning at a time when Israel seemed to be reaching a pinnacle of power. God raised up His prophets to sound an alarm, to sound a warning to the nation. The nation of ancient Israel did not heed that warning.

We are going to see that what Amos had to say was not popularly received. As we study through the Scriptures, we find that God's prophets have never been very favorably received. A little later we are going to notice one exception that stands out because it is such an exception. But, as a rule, God's prophets have not been popularly received. Their message has not been popular because God's prophets have never taken a poll to find out what was popular so they could go and preach it. They preached what God said, and that's enough to get you into trouble. After all, Jesus Christ was crucified for it, wasn't He?

We find that Amos was not very popular as a result of what he had to say. One of the things they told him was, 'Why don't you leave? Just head back to where you came from. You came from Judah. Go! We don't need you here in Israel. We don't need you here in Samaria; this is

the king's city, the king's palace and temple. We don't need you here, and we don't like what you have to say (Amos 7:12-13).' They didn't like it because it was not a popular and pleasant message.

There is a great deal of parallel between what we find in our nation and what we find at this time in the eighth century. **The events that served as a background of Amos' writings served as a prelude and background to the things that set the stage for the Assyrian captivity and deportation of Northern Israel.** The same things that set the prelude for the captivity and deportation of ancient Israel set the same prelude for the captivity and deportation of modern Israel. As we go through the book of Amos, we are going to find that the message Amos had went far beyond his time and his day. **Amos had a message for his day, but the impact of his message went beyond eighth-century Israel.**

As we get into the study, we might notice briefly the time setting in Amos to sort of set the stage.

Amos 4:12, "Therefore thus will I do to you, O Israel; and because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel."

Amos 5:15, "Hate evil, love good; establish justice in the gate. It may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph."

Verse 18, "Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord..."

Verse 20, "Is not the day of the Lord darkness, and not light? Is it not very dark, and with no brightness in it?"

He talks about the calamities and the upset conditions in the heavens.

Amos 8:9, "'And it shall come to pass in that day,' says the Lord God, 'that I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight.'"

Amos 9:8-9, "'Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,' says the Lord. 'For surely I will command, and will sift the house of Israel among all nations, as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground.'"

Verses 11-15, "'On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name,' says the Lord who does this thing. 'Behold, the days are

coming,' says the Lord, 'when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,' says the Lord your God."

Obviously, the time setting of the end of the book of Amos goes down to the time when Christ is going to return. There are certain ones who read Amos and disregard the fact that much of the Bible is prophecy. They want to read the prophets and say this is all about long-dead nations and long-dead peoples, and it certainly doesn't have any connection with us today. Well, has God raised up the tabernacle of David? Have you seen David walking around anywhere here lately? Has David been raised up? Has Israel been re-gathered? Have they built up the old waste places? Have they been planted in their own land, never again to be pulled up?

There are those who don't understand the identity of Israel. They think this is just talking about the Jews and that they have gone back to Israel after World War II. Do you think they are planted in their land and are never going to go forth again? Well, go back and read the book of Zechariah.

Zechariah 14:1-2, "Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city." It talks about the inhabitants of the modern-day state of Israel in the Middle East (the Jewish state) going into captivity.

It is going to take Jesus Christ coming back as King of kings and Lord of lords to redeem them and to bring them back.

Verses 3-4, "Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives...." We are going to see that the nation that has been re-gathered in the Middle East is not all of Israel. They are the nation of Judah, the remnant of Judah. There are two nations.

Amos was from Judah, but he went up to Israel to prophesy. Israel was taken into captivity over

one hundred years before Judah went into captivity. Israel was taken into captivity by a different nation (the Assyrians) and to a different place.

II Kings 17:6, we are told, “In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.” This is in the area up between the Black and Caspian Sea.

Judah was taken into captivity by the Babylonians and settled in the southern Mesopotamian Valley in the area of Babylon and the environs of greater Babylon. They were in a different location. It was a totally different group of people and a different place.

Amos clearly focuses in on events that will culminate with the return of Jesus Christ and the re-gathering of Israel. The message that Amos had, though it is set against the background of his day and the circumstances in which Israel found itself in his day, contains a message that has implications down to our time today.

The first chapter or so of Amos are prophecies against the Gentile nations.

Amos 2:4-5 would be prophecies against Judah. Then the rest of chapter 2 would be a prophecy against Israel.

Chapters 3 and 4 prophesy punishment on Israel. Chapter 5 is Israel’s captivity.

Chapter 6 is Israel’s complacent attitude. You’d almost think Amos was talking a lot about Israel! Chapter 7 makes for a little bit of a historical inset.

Chapter 8 then goes back again to Israel being condemned for its greed.

Chapter 9 is the final punishment and millennial restoration.

Israel reached a high point militarily and economically during the time of Jeroboam II. After his death, the stability and prosperity of Israel ceased. Within a matter of about forty to forty-five years from the death of Jeroboam II, Israel went from being on top to being on the bottom. Then the Assyrians ultimately invaded and took them captive.

Amos 1:1, we are introduced to Amos, “The words of Amos, who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam [II] the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.” Tekoa was a little village in Judah. It was about six miles south of Bethlehem. Yet Amos’ ministry was primarily in Northern Israel. He was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit (Amos 7:14).

He was given a message that he was to go to Israel. We find in chapter 1:3 he starts out by talking about Damascus, Gaza (v. 6), Ashdod, Ekron, Philistine (v. 8), Tyre (v. 9), Teman (v. 12), the children of Ammon (v. 13) and the Moabites (Amos 2:1).

You find they are all Middle Eastern nations. Even today, Damascus is the modern-day capital of Syria. He starts out with a focus on the Middle East, on the modern nation of Syria and on the area down in the Gaza strip.

There’s an area called the Gaza Strip. You know what they are having over there? They are having riots and trouble. They are having what the Palestinians have called the “Entefada.” The areas of Ashdod, Ashkelon and Ekron are in the same area down there. The word “Palestinian” is derived from “Philistine.” So you have problems in Syria (Damascus). You have problems with the Palestinians. You have problems in Lebanon; Tyre is located in the modern area of Lebanon. Edom is addressed in vv. 11-12. Teman is a subdivision of Edom; Edom basically is a reference to Turkey. Ammon (v. 13) would certainly refer to Jordan. Moab (Amos 2:1-2) would be portions of Jordan and Iraq.

So, what do you have addressed? –The whole Middle East! Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, the Palestinians—that sort of sounds like today’s newspaper, doesn’t it? –The same bunch. God named them off, every one of them. And what are they doing? They are having problems and there are going to be more problems. God is going to deal with it. He talks about some of the problems and some of the warfare that is going to break out over there.

Amos 1:4, ““But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad.”” That refers to Damascus, the capital of Syria. It talks about sending a fire there. That’s a pretty good description of launching some missiles. When war breaks out over there, you had better believe there is going to be fire sent over Damascus. When the Jews unleash some of what they have, there’s going to be a regular firestorm in Damascus.

It talks about the various problems that are going to come, the warfare and strife that are going to occur. These events were pre-staged in ancient times, and we are going to find parallels in the modern times. There are events that are going to bring about a European presence in the Middle East. There’s going to be a warfare that is going to break out in the Middle East that is going to set the stage for European intervention. Some of

these things are addressed in the first chapter of Amos.

Then he addresses Judah in chapter 2.

Amos 2:4-5, “Thus says the Lord: ‘For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept His commandments. Their lies lead them astray, lies after which their fathers walked. But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.’” You are going to see full-scale warfare breaking out in the Middle East. It talks about fire coming on the palaces of each of these areas. That’s talking about missile attacks. They are going to be launching missile attacks and there’s going to be fire coming on all those places. That’s going to set the stage for European intervention in the Middle East.

Verse 6, “Thus says the Lord: ‘For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals.’” Now if Judah and Israel are the same ones (the same people), why is Israel addressed separately here?

This is why the Protestants don’t understand. Even though Jimmy Swaggart and some of these others may talk about prophecy from time to time, they don’t understand prophecy. They can’t begin to understand prophecy. They can’t understand any of the Old Testament prophets because they don’t understand the identity of Israel. You can waste your time listening to some of these characters or reading what they write. They may know in a general, vague way that Christ is going to return, but they don’t really understand what He is going to do when He gets here. They certainly don’t understand the events that are going to lead up to that. They don’t understand events that set the stage for it because they don’t understand the identity of the people addressed. They don’t know how the United States and Britain and the Commonwealth nations fit into prophecy. They don’t understand that because they don’t know where we are identified.

Why is God going to deal with Israel? What is reflected here? It talks about greed and materialism.

Verse 6, he says, “...I’ll not turn away the punishment thereof because they sold the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes.”

Verse 7, “They pant after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor, and pervert the way of the humble. A man and his father go in to

the same girl, to defile My holy name.” It talks about greed, materialism, sexual looseness and immorality. These are problems for which He indicts modern Israel. Where he says, “...they sold the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes,” there is sort of a play on words. In ancient times, there was a custom of sealing a legal agreement where one pulled off his shoe and handed it to the other.

Go back to the book of Ruth and read the account of Boaz when he made the agreement with old “What’s his name” about Ruth (Ruth 4:7-9). I refer to him as “What’s his name” because he was an individual who was unwilling to do what God said. So, his name was blotted out of the genealogy. It doesn’t give you his name in the book of Ruth. The name of the fellow who was actually the closer kin than Boaz was blotted out. So, he goes down through history as old “What’s his name.”

You read how, when Boaz made the agreement with him, he pulled off his shoe. That was a custom showing that a legal transaction was rendered. The Jewish commentary brings out that the expression, “selling the poor for a pair of shoes,” had to do with taking advantage of people under the “color” of the law. It’s pretty descriptive of some of the modern lawyers and “shysters” who use the law to their own advantage. It may be justice, but it’s not justice with equality. It is a matter of people using the law in a manipulative way to dispossess and take advantage of others who are maybe not in a position to defend themselves. So, God indicts the nation for its greed, its obsession with materialism and immorality.

Amos 3:3, “Can two walk together unless they are agreed?” This is a fundamental principle. If we are going to walk with God, we have to agree with God. As a nation, if we want God’s blessings and benefits, we have to agree with God. As a nation, any agreement that we ever had with God has been very quickly left behind. It’s incredible the things that people want to do. They want to rewrite the rules. There was a great “hue and cry” in the media over the proposal that was in the Presbyterian Church to redefine morality. Basically, it was to put the stamp of approval on immorality, whether it was fornication, adultery, homosexuality or anything. People don’t like the idea of God telling them what to do.

Verse 7, “Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.” Before God intervenes in world events, God sends His servants to proclaim and

announce that intervention. God doesn't just do something in a corner. Inevitably, when you look through the Scriptures, God sends His servants to announce and proclaim that intervention and to announce and proclaim the need to repent. When God gets ready to do something, He is going to make it plain.

Verse 9, "Proclaim in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say: 'Assemble on the mountains of Samaria; see great tumults in her midst, and the oppressed within her.'" Samaria was the capital of Northern Israel. Samaria is used as symbolic of the ten tribes of Israel. They are defined as being riddled with great tumults, as well as a lot of oppression. A great tumult means a lot of internal civil strife.

One of the things that is going to riddle this nation is civil strife and discord. We are going to come unraveled in our major cities with civil strife. When things start getting really serious economically, you are going to find some major civil strife and unrest in our cities. God talks about dealing with these things.

Amos 4:1, "Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, 'Bring wine, let us drink!'" He is not talking about cows in the field. God is not indicting cows for their sins. This is a reference to people; specifically, the reference is to a "fat-cow" society. The Jewish commentary brings it out as the women who encourage and nag their husbands causing them to be cruel in getting ahead.

Verses 1-3, "Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, 'Bring wine, let us drink!'" The Lord God has sworn by His holiness: 'Behold, the days shall come upon you when He will take you away with fishhooks, and your posterity with fishhooks. You will go out through broken walls, each one straight ahead of her, and you will be cast into Harmon,' says the Lord."

The term "Harmon" in the Hebrew would better be rendered as a place name. It is a reference to Armenia, which is where much of Northern Israel went into captivity.

Verse 6, "'Also I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities... [He is not talking about good dental hygiene. He is saying there won't be anything to eat.]...And lack of bread in all your places; yet you have not returned to Me,' says the Lord."

Verses 7-9, "'I also withheld rain from you, when there were still three months to the harvest. I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city. One part was rained upon, and where it did not rain the part withered. So two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water, but they were not satisfied; yet you have not returned to Me,' says the Lord. 'I blasted you with blight and mildew...'"

He talks about upset weather conditions. Some places are not getting any rain and other places are getting too much rain. It sounds familiar, doesn't it? Have you seen any mildew around lately? He is talking about the upset conditions and the things that are going to endanger the food production because you can be wiped out with too much rain or too little. That's going to happen. We are obviously not in the throes of some massive famine right now, but that doesn't mean it won't happen. It simply means that it is not yet that time. It is not here yet.

We are in the midst of upset weather conditions, but it has not yet taken that serious a toll. Some farmers in this area have taken a toll because it has been so wet and they haven't been able to get into their fields and do the things that they need to do. It depends on how long it goes on as to how bad the toll is. One of the things we have to realize is how vulnerable we are. We are dependent on what God gives—rain, sun and wind. Man likes to think that he is so much in charge of his own life and yet everything around us depends on what God provides and gives.

Verse 10, "'I sent among you a plague after the manner of Egypt...'" We find described in Amos 4 the drought, famine and disease that are going to be national punishment.

Then he talks about the captivity that is going to come on the house of Israel.

Amos 5:1, "Hear this word which I take up against you, this lamentation, O house of Israel." Here's a lamentation for the house of Israel.

Verse 3, "...'The city that goes out by a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which goes out by a hundred shall have ten left to the house of Israel.'" Ten percent of those who go into captivity are going to survive and be alive at the end of the tribulation.

Verse 4, "...'Seek Me and live...'"

Verse 5, "'But do not seek Bethel, nor enter Gilgal, nor pass over to Beersheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nothing.'" Don't look to the places that you have been looking to.

Verse 6, "'Seek the Lord and live...'"

Verses 11-13, “Therefore, because you tread down the poor and take grain taxes from him, though you have built houses of hewn stone, yet you shall not dwell in them; You have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink wine from them. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins. You afflict the just and take bribes; you divert the poor from justice at the gate. Therefore the prudent keep silent at that time, for it is an evil time.” God talks about His judgment that is going to come.

Verse 21, “I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your sacred assemblies.” Some want to take that out of context and say, ‘God hated all those old feast days; you shouldn’t keep them.’ Did God say, ‘I despise My Feast Days’? He says nothing about despising His Feast Days. He said, “I despise *your* feast days.”

Which feast days did Northern Israel keep? Go back to I Kings 12:25-33. What was the very first thing Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, did when he established an independent kingdom in Northern Israel? He changed the festivals. He substituted man-made feasts for God’s Feasts. Israel never again kept the right days.

God hates our feasts—Christmas, Easter and all that junk. He hates the things that Israel does using His name. People want to invent their own religion and then attach God’s name to it. Why don’t they call it by their own name and quit calling it Christianity? It doesn’t have anything to do with Christ. Some of these churches want to perform homosexual marriages. Well, call it by their name. Why drag God into it? Why try to bring Jesus Christ and the Bible into it. Why not call it the Sodomite religion or the Church of Gomorrah? Why bring God into it?

Amos 6:1, “Woe to you who are at ease in Zion... [They say, ‘Oh, nothing is going to happen to us.]. . .and trust in Mount Samaria [modern Israel]... [Samaria was the capital of the house of Israel. People trust in our great power and strength]. . .notable persons in the chief nation [first rank among the nations], to whom the house of Israel comes!” Here are a people who put great trust and confidence in our great national power. This is the area to which the house of Israel came.

Verse 3, “Woe to you who put far off the day of doom, who cause the seat of violence to come near....” Oh, they think bad times are way far off. They say, ‘We will just elect the right guy and everything is going to be great.’

Verse 4, “Who lie on beds of ivory, stretch out on your couches, eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall.” They are

really enjoying the good things of life. This is talking about a very materialistic self-indulgent society.

Verses 5-6, “Who chant to the sound of stringed instruments, and invent for yourselves musical instruments like David; who drink wine from bowls, and anoint yourselves with the best ointments, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” They are really boozing it up, drinking wine by the bowlful. They are caught up in sort of an “eat, drink and be merry; wine, women and song.” There is nothing wrong with eating a good meal or with enjoying a glass of wine or good music. It is not talking about these things in moderation and in a proper way. It is talking about a society that is obsessed with revelry and partying. It’s very descriptive, “[they] are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” They are not bothered by the things that are going on. They are not bothered by sin. They are all caught up in materialism, in listening to the newest group and getting high or stoned, getting what they can get. They are not concerned about the problems of the nation. They are not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph.

Verse 7, “Therefore they shall now go captive as the first of the captives, and those who recline at banquets shall be removed.” God says those who have that attitude will be in the front of the line when the Germans march them off.

Verse 14, “But behold, I will raise up a nation against you. O house of Israel,’ says the Lord of hosts; ‘And they will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath to the Valley of the Arabah.”

Amos 7 is a little bit of an inset. The people accused Amos of being a traitor. They said the nation couldn’t put up with him. They wanted him to leave.

Amos 7:10-13, “Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, ‘Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. For this Amos has said: “Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive from their own land.”’ Then Amaziah said to Amos: ‘Go, you seer! Flee to the land of Judah. There eat bread, and there prophesy. But never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is the royal residence.”’

They said, ‘We don’t need your kind around here. We were getting along just fine. We like our religion, and all our preachers say nice things and tell us how good we are. We like that and

we're comfortable with it. Here you come along saying that we are going to go into captivity. You are saying God indicts this nation and He's going to punish this nation. You have conspired against us. You are a traitor. You shouldn't say things like that. Why don't you get out of here! Go someplace else. Get you another place to preach. We don't need you around here.'

I'll tell you what brethren, before the end of this age we are going to find ourselves in the same position because when the time comes for God's message of warning to really be "let loose" and to really shake this nation, we are going to find about the same reception that Amos and all of God's other prophets have ever gotten. Amos didn't back off from the situation. He said he didn't ask for the job. God put him there and told him to go prophesy unto the house of Israel.

Verses 15-17, "'Then the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to My people Israel.'" Now therefore, hear the word of the Lord: You say, "Do not prophesy against Israel, and do not spout against the house of Isaac." Therefore thus says the Lord: "Your wife shall be a harlot in the city; your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword; your land shall be divided by survey line; you shall die in a defiled land; and Israel shall surely be led away captive from his own land."'"

How do you think they liked that? When they got through reading Amos, they said, 'We think you had better get out of here, buddy. We don't like your kind around here telling us those things.'

Amos didn't "tuck-tail" and run. He looked them in the eye, pointed his finger in their face and he said, 'Let me tell you something. I didn't ask for this job. I am here because God told me to be here, and I have a message for you. Your wife is going to be a harlot in the city and your sons and daughters are going to die by the sword. You are going into captivity.' Amos was not very popular when he said that.

Amos 8:5, "...'Making the ephah small and the shekel large, falsifying the balances by deceit.'" That means selling less and less for more and more. The ephah is what they are selling; the shekel is what they are getting in return. So they are selling less and less for more and more. What they are describing kind of sounds like inflation.

Verse 6, "'That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals....'" Who gets hurt the worst by inflation? The elderly and people on fixed incomes. They are the ones who really suffer the most. The widow and fatherless

are those who are least able to defend themselves. So, God indicts a nation whose priorities are greed and materialism.

He talks about the events and things that are going to come.

Verse 11, "'Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord God. 'That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.'" They didn't want Amos to tell them those things. Amos told them, 'The time is going to come when you won't be hearing them because I will be gone and there is going to be a famine in the land. When things really start getting bad, you are going to wish somebody were around to tell you what's happening.'

Amos 9 focuses on God's intervention.

Amos 9:8-9, "'Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,' says the Lord. 'For surely I will command, and will sift the house of Israel among all nations, as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground.'"

In other words, when ancient Israel went into captivity they are known in history as the lost tribes of Israel. Were there going to be any lost tribes of Israel? Were they going to be the lost ten tribes? To whom were they lost? Did God lose them? Did God forget where they were? Did they get lost in the shuffle and God hasn't been able to find them? So, He's not going to fulfill all the prophecies of the Bible because the tribes of Israel got lost? They went into captivity, were sifted among all the nations and they got lost? No! He said, 'I will sift you among the nations, but I am not going to lose you.' "...as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground." He said, 'I am going to collect all of you.' Israel went into captivity anciently and was sifted through the nations. Yet at the end time (the right time and place), they are collected. God prophesied that.

Verse 11, it talks about David being resurrected. It talks about the time of the Millennium, the time of plenty.

Verse 13, "'Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'when the plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.'" It discusses a time when the bounty is going to be so much that those who are ready to plow the field have to wait on the ones who are harvesting. The harvest

is so great they are overwhelmed trying to get all the harvest in.

Verses 14-15, “I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,” says the Lord your God.”

It describes a time of great abundance and great plenty. It describes a time when Israel is going to be re-gathered and the old waste places rebuilt—a time when they will be planted in their own land, never to be taken out forcefully again. That’s a prophecy that has not been fulfilled yet. It’s a prophecy for the end time. If that’s been fulfilled, when was it fulfilled? When was Israel planted in their own land never again to be removed? That’s yet future.

Obadiah is a little short book. It has one chapter. There isn’t any clear proof in the book of Obadiah exactly when it was written. **It is primarily a prophecy against the Edomites who anciently dwelled nearby.** The Edomites were descended from Esau. There are various groups of people who are descended from the Edomites. One particular branch, Teman, is addressed here in Obadiah.

Verse 9, “Then your mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed...” Teman was one of the major tribes of Edom. We would trace back the modern-day nation of Turkey primarily to the Teman branch of Esau. Turkey, up until after World War I, was known as the Ottoman Empire. It was spelled very similar to this. This was an ancient name. They were the Ottoman Turks. There are many different kinds of Turks, some of which don’t have any connection with Esau. There was an area in Soviet central Asia that was ancient Turkistan, and there were various peoples in Soviet central Asia that was ancient Turkistan. There were various peoples who lived there. The generic name “Turks” was applied to anyone in that general area. Many of these peoples were unrelated to one another. They lived in a general geographic area.

The Ottoman Turks or Temanite Turks descended from Esau. Back a little less than a thousand years ago (back about eight or nine hundred years ago), Turkistan came out and invaded the Middle Eastern area. Over a period beginning about 1200 A.D. on up to about 1450 A.D., they moved across and conquered what is now the modern-day nation of Turkey. They forced out the Greeks and other peoples who

were previously there. They conquered a great deal of the Middle East and on up even into Europe and the Balkan areas. Then in the aftermath of World War I, they were sort of pushed back and forced into the Asia Minor peninsula, which took the name Turkey. They were a people that had the reputation in the Middle East as the most brutal warrior peoples that the Middle East had ever seen. They were known for their brutality and for their oppressive regime. And they are noted for that in the Middle East today. There aren’t any people in the Middle East that are more feared and hated by the Arabs and all the Middle Eastern peoples, even the Armenians. In fact, the Armenians to this day nurse a great grudge against the Turks because of the massive slaughter of Armenians right around the time of World War I. They were noted for wanton brutal violence and that sort of thing. They ruled the Middle East in that way.

The Edomites are addressed here in Obadiah. It is a prophesy against them.

Verses 9 and 18 basically describe an annihilation (a destruction) of the nation.

Verse 9, “Then your mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that everyone from the mountains of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.”

Verse 18, “The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame; but the house of Esau shall be stubble; they shall kindle them and devour them, and no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau,’ for the Lord had spoken.”

We find that Jeremiah bears in a little bit more on this.

Jeremiah 49:10-11, “But I have made Esau bare; I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself. His descendants are plundered. His brethren and his neighbors and he is no more. Leave your fatherless children, I will preserve them alive, and let your widows trust in Me.”

When you tie in Obadiah with Jeremiah, you find that basically the women and children will be preserved, but for all practical purposes, the adult male population is going to be pretty well exterminated. There’s evidence of that here.

Obadiah 10-14, “For your violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever. In the day that you stood on the other side—in the day that strangers carried captive his forces, when foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem—even you were as one of them. But you should not have gazed on the day of your brother in the day of his captivity; nor should you have

rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; nor should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress. You should not have entered the gate of My people in the day of their calamity. Indeed, you should not have gazed on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity. You should not have stood at the crossroads to cut off those among them who escaped....”

The crossroads is very likely Turkey that sits astride one of the major crossways—the Dardanelles—that controls their entrance from Asia to Europe.

It describes treachery, deceit and betrayal that are going to take place, and severe punishment that is going to come as a result.

Verse 21, “Then saviors [plural] shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.” Christ and the saints with Him are ultimately going to return to Mount Zion. At that time, there will be saviors that will come to judge the Mount of Esau. Saviors (plural)—that’s Christ and those with Him who will finally bring the way of salvation and set things straight. It will be the time when the Kingdom is the Lord’s.

Obadiah is a short little book; but nevertheless, it is an insight into some of the events that are transpiring and will transpire in that area.

Jonah is also a very short little book. The story of Jonah is a little different than the other prophets. There is a lot that can be learned from Jonah. **There’s a lot that we can learn in terms of the attitude that we need to have as God’s people and doing God’s work.** Jonah was given a job.

Jonah 1:1-3, “Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ‘Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.’ But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.”

If you look at a map, you will find that from where Jonah was Nineveh was one direction and Tarshish was the other. Nineveh was to the northeast and Tarshish was to the west. Tarshish was a city on the coast of Spain. So, instead of heading east, Jonah headed west. God told Jonah He wanted him to go to Nineveh; Jonah hopped on the first boat going the other direction. He did not want to go to Nineveh. That is almost an understatement.

He did not want to go and give Nineveh God’s message. That’s fine. God has ways of getting your attention. If God wants you to do something and you don’t want to do it, God can get your attention. God says, ‘Go here,’ so you take off and go the other direction. God can get your attention. So, Jonah hopped a boat, and here they are sailing along the Mediterranean when a storm comes up. Jonah goes to sleep down in the bottom of the boat. The storm was going, and they thought the ship was about to break up. All the soldiers were hollering out in these various languages to their gods. Finally, the shipmaster came down there, saw Jonah asleep, and said, ‘We need everything going for us that we can get. You had better wake up and pray to your God, too. We’re about to drown here.’

Because they decided that they needed to find out who brought this evil upon them, they cast lots. They were a superstitious lot, but God used that. When they cast the lot, it fell on Jonah. God sort of guided that. He doesn’t generally involve Himself in that sort of thing, but He wanted old Jonah pointed out. They asked, ‘What have you done to get us into all this trouble?’ Jonah told them. So they threw him overboard. As soon as they did, the waters became as calm as it could be.

Verses 15-16, “So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.” Boy, you had better believe they got religious in a hurry. They came up with a real “foxhole religion.”

Verse 17, “Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.” People sometimes wonder what kind of fish it was, and how Jonah could have survived in the fish. Was it a whale? Well, it says right here what kind of fish it was. It was a special Jonah-fish. It says the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. How could Jonah have survived in the belly of the fish? –Because the fish was prepared for Jonah to survive. This was a special fish that had been prepared to swallow up Jonah—a special Jonah-eating fish. It was what it was designed to do, so it did it very well. The fish swallowed up Jonah, and Jonah was down there three days and three nights.

Jonah 2:1, “Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish’s belly.” You better believe he prayed. Here he was trying to get away from God and now he was awfully glad that God could find him. He was surely hoping that God

could find him because he was down there in the belly of this fish and he had to do some serious praying. Sometimes people wonder what position we should get into and what's the best position for prayer. Well, I don't know. Jonah might have been in a variety of positions as this old fish was sailing through the water, just bouncing around. But I suspect that whatever position he was in was a good position to really be fervent because he was really crying out to God.

Verse 2, "And he said: 'I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, and He answered me. Out of the belly of sheol I cried, and You heard my voice.'"

Just get the picture here.

Verse 5, "'The waters encompassed me, even to my soul; the deep closed around me; weeds were wrapped around my head.'" Here's old Jonah down there. Fish smell bad enough from the outside; can you imagine what it smelled like from the inside? And old Jonah was down there covered with slimy seaweed. This fish was moving right along. He was zooming up through the Mediterranean and Black Sea. It came down and spit out old Jonah right there near Nineveh.

Verse 10, "So the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land." Jonah had been praying for three days and three nights. The fish comes skidding to a stop right up there on the shore. The fish got indigestion really bad about this time, and out comes Jonah. I don't know what else came up with Jonah, but he must not have been a pleasant-smelling individual. He was certainly not an attractive-looking sight when he sort of picked himself up off the beach.

Jonah 3:1-2, "Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.'" This time Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh (v. 3).

A few things had happened to change Jonah's perspective. He wasn't looking for the next boat out. When he considered what the alternatives were, going to Nineveh didn't seem like such a bad deal. And to top it off, the Ninevehites (the Assyrians) worshipped Dagon, the fish god. If Jonah had just gone like God had told him to, he probably wouldn't have been paid any attention to more than anything else. But by being delivered on the spot by this great fish that just kind of shows up and spews him out, this is their god that they worship. Here comes this great fish and a man pops out of it. They were pretty impressed. So, all of a sudden, Jonah had an audience that he wouldn't have had before.

So, he comes through Nineveh, looking like something a fish spit out, and smelling like something that a fish spit out.

Verses 4-5, "And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!' So the people of Nineveh believed God... [It scared them to death when they saw this and heard the message.]...proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them."

Verses 6-7, "Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, 'Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water.'" Everything and everyone was going to fast with typical German efficiency.

Verse 8, "'But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.'"

Even let the cows join in. I tell you what—if you didn't feed a cow for three days and three nights, it will be crying out for all it could cry out, too. Can you imagine the commotion that must have been going on there by about the third day? All these people were wailing and lamenting and crying out to God. Since they didn't even feed the livestock, you can imagine by the third day every cow was lowing and every sheep and goat and dog was howling. That must have been pandemonium around there. They even put sackcloth on the cows. It was real German efficiency. When they were going to repent, they were *all* going to repent, right down to the last cow. So, they were all lined up there. And God looked down and He just kind of shook His head.

Verse 10, "Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it." God saw what they were doing, and God thought, 'You know, you have to appreciate the effort.' So, He changed from what He was going to do and said, 'I think I'm going to give you a little more time.'

Jonah 4:1, "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry." You would think Jonah was happy because the people listened. No, Jonah wasn't happy. Jonah wanted to see them "fry." Jonah wanted to see them really "get it"—

which is probably part of the reason he didn't want to go down there to warn them to begin with. He was afraid something would happen and they might change.

The Ninevehites were great enemies of Israel. They were a threat. They were a great nation that was sort of rising up on the horizon. Jonah would really have liked to see them "get it." 'God is mad at them? Good! Let God just wipe them out.' He didn't like the Assyrians anyway. God told him to go down and preach to them. He didn't want to go preach to them. God got his attention and sort of persuaded him. God gave him a little incentive. Jonah went down and he preached, but he didn't really want them to act on what he said. But sure enough, wouldn't you know it, he preaches to them and they repent. Jonah was displeased.

Verse 2, "So he prayed to the Lord, and said, 'Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, One who relents from doing harm.'"

He said to God, 'Isn't this what I told You? This is why I left and went to Tarshish. I knew You were a gracious God and merciful. I just knew as soon as I came down here and told them, You were going to feel sorry for them and let them "off the hook."'

Verse 3, "Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!" Jonah said, 'I wish you would just go ahead and let me die. I would rather die than live if this is the way it's going to be.' Jonah was really feeling sorry for himself. He didn't like it. Things hadn't turned out the way he had expected.

Verse 4, "Then the Lord said, 'Is it right for you to be angry?'" God said, 'Do you think you have a good reason for being mad?'

Verse 5, "So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city." He was just going to sit there on the mountaintop and watch. Countdown until the forty days was over, but he was hoping that maybe God would change His mind and "fry" them. Jonah was just sitting out there.

Verse 6, "And the Lord God prepared a plant [KJV, "gourd"] and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant."

We have a lot of special things in the book of Jonah. We have a special Jonah-eating fish, and here we have a special Jonah-shading gourd. It's not your ordinary run-of-the-mill gourd. It's a gourd that came up in a day's time. You talk about "Jack and the Beanstalk!" This is Jonah and the gourd stalk! And it grew just about as fast.

Old Jonah was sitting out here. The sun is beaming down. He's hot and mad. He's sitting there in a bad attitude. He's sweating, and he's watching to see what's going to happen. So, this gourd begins to grow up. It springs up very quickly and all the dense foliage comes out. He was exceedingly glad because of the gourd. Now isn't this nice and pleasant. But God played a dirty, rotten trick on him.

Verses 7-8, "But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, 'It is better for me to die than to live.'"

So, God prepared a gourd and a worm. This was a special gourd-eating worm, and this worm had a very healthy appetite for a worm because the worm basically devoured the gourd. The gourd wasn't anymore. Then God sent in this extra hot desert wind and the sun was blistering. Jonah was miserable and passing out. He was really feeling sorry for himself. He wanted God to just go ahead and take his life.

Verse 9, "Then God said to Jonah, 'Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?' And he said, 'It is right for me to be angry, even to death!'"

Jonah said, 'I am so mad; I wish You would just let me die.' God said, 'You really liked that gourd didn't you?' And Jonah said, 'You bet I did. That was my gourd and I liked it. It was nice. You took it away from me, and I am mad.'

Verse 10, "But the Lord said, 'You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night.'"

God said, 'You really felt sorry for that gourd. You're feeling all terrible because your poor gourd died. You just feel terrible about that. You had pity on the gourd. You didn't labor for the gourd. What did you do to make the gourd? You didn't plant it. You didn't make it grow, but you feel sorry for it. Here you are being sorry for the gourd, which you have not labored, neither made it to grow. It came up in a night and perished in a night. It was a special quick-growing gourd. Zoom, it was here. You didn't do anything to

make it grow and now you are all depressed and feeling sorry for yourself. You are all miserable and sad because the gourd is gone. If you can feel bad because of the gourd, can I not pity Ninevah?’

Verse 11, “‘And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left, and also much livestock?’” God said, ‘You feel sorry for the gourd. You wish the gourd were still here. You miss the gourd. You didn’t have anything to do with making the gourd. You didn’t create it or have anything to do with making it come up. You feel bad because of the gourd. You miss the gourd. Well, what about Me? Here’s one hundred twenty thousand people down here in Nineveh, plus all the livestock. Don’t you think I should have a little pity on them? After all, I made them. They are the work of My hands. I brought them into being. If you can have pity on the gourd, then I can have pity on the Assyrians.’ Jonah had never really looked at it that way before.

There are various things we see in the book of Jonah. The book of Jonah shows God’s great mercy. It shows that God will accept anyone’s repentance, as long as it is genuine and heartfelt. God is merciful and God desires to be merciful. God desires to give us a chance to change. Certainly, there are other lessons we can derive from it. If God wants you to do something or if God wants you to go somewhere, you had better go. If God wants you to do it, you had better do it. If you try to duck out and hide to get out of it, God has ways of getting your attention. You will wind up really wanting to go and to do what God wants you to do. God has ways of dealing with us and ways of getting our attention.

One other thing about Jonah is that Jonah’s three days and three nights in the fish’s belly was symbolic of Jesus Christ being three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Matthew 12:38-41, “Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, ‘Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.’ But He answered and said to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed of greater than Jonah is here.’”

Jesus Christ prophesied that what Jonah went through was in effect a type of a death and a resurrection. If God hadn’t intervened and if this fish hadn’t spit him out, Jonah would have died. That would have been Jonah’s grave. He would have been buried in the fish’s belly. But God brought him forth after three days and three nights. God worked that miracle and actually used it as symbolic of the length of time the Messiah would be in the grave before He would be brought forth—in His case, to a literal resurrection, a resurrection to power and glory.

There’s a lot that can be learned from the little short book of Jonah and the things that are packed in there. There’s an awful lot packed into the Minor Prophets. The book of Amos is more of what we think of as a prophetic book in the sense that the focus of it is prophecy. The focus of it is the end time. The book of Obadiah is a very short book that focuses on one aspect of end-time prophecy. The book of Jonah gives us a little insight into prophecies altogether.

Those who are doing God’s work, those who are representing God, need to be filled with a desire and a yearning to carry God’s message. There needs to be willingness and a desire to carry God’s message, to proclaim God’s message and to appreciate and to value God’s mercy. He should never take those things for granted. There’s a lot packed in there.

Next Bible study we are going to go through the books of Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah. Again, they are fairly short little books. There’s some overlap that we will see. Micah is the primary one of these books and the lengthiest of the group. We will go into those next Bible study as we progress through this series on the Minor Prophets. We will have a chance to wrap up those books next time.

Bible Study # 72 Questions

SURVEY OF THE MINOR PROPHETS SERIES

Amos, Obadiah and Jonah

1. What was Amos's background?
2. According to Amos, what will God always do before He sends a punishment?
3. What is the form of national punishment that Amos mentions primarily?
4. From what scripture in Amos do we understand that only 10% of the Israelites that go into captivity will survive the tribulation?
5. What does Amos 5:1 refer to?
6. What sins of Israel does Amos lay emphasis on?
7. What was the reaction of the leaders of Israel to the prophecies of Amos?
8. Cite a scripture in Amos that shows that though Israel would go into captivity, they would not be amalgamated and completely lose their identity.
9. What is the theme of Obadiah?
10. Who are the Edomites today?
11. What will happen to them when Christ returns, according to Obadiah?
12. What did Jonah's being three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish later symbolize?
13. Cite a scripture in the book of Jonah to show that the "great fish" was not a whale or any other identifiable variety.
14. Why did God spare Ninevah?
15. What is the lesson of the book of Jonah?

Bible Study # 73
July 23, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

Minor Prophets Series—Micah, Nahum,
Habakkuk and Zephaniah

We are getting into several of the Minor Prophets this evening. These are all short books and yet they are books that have a lot of meaning packed into them. We **are going to cover four books this evening—Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah.** Most of them are short. Micah is the longest of the four and it is the one that we will spend the most amount of time on. Micah was written at a time roughly contemporary with that of the previous prophets we covered. We have gone through Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah and Jonah. Micah was roughly contemporary with those individuals. Those six prophets, together with Isaiah, were all roughly at the same period of time. They prophesied in the latter years of the dominance of Northern (ten tribes) Israel.

Remember, the ten tribes went into captivity at an earlier time than did the southern tribes. Northern Israel was transported into captivity well over a hundred years prior to the tribe of Judah. Certainly there were a few remnants of the northern tribes that escaped the earlier deportation and there were some individuals who came south at the time of King Hezekiah's Passover. The deportation by the Assyrians took place over a period of years, but the bulk of them were transported in bulk over a hundred years earlier. And gradually others were transported. There were some small remnants that migrated at a later period of time, but that gets off into another subject.

I would like to read a few comments on Micah from the "Introduction to Micah" in the Soncino Jewish Commentary because Micah's time greatly paralleled our own twentieth century. One of the ways God used Micah and the other prophets was to write of events that mirrored our time, day and age because there was a very strong parallel between the events that went on in the eighth century B.C. and the events that went on in the twentieth century. These events set the stage for the same sort of problems. Human nature is such that if you put the same people in the same circumstance, they tend to do the same thing. The reason why there is a repetitive basis to history is because we see over and over the same people getting into the same circumstances and they tend to respond the same

way. When we read the book of Micah, we find the events dealt with our ancestors, the tribes of Israel.

The comments in the Soncino Jewish Commentary say: "The eighth century witnessed the emergence in Israel and Judah of a commercial civilization of great material prosperity. Its foundations were laid in the peace and security which Jeroboam II (783-743 B.C.) won for Israel and Uzziah (778-740 B.C.) won for Judah during their long reign."

They each reigned for periods of about forty years in the early eighth century B.C. Both of their reigns ended about twenty to twenty-five years prior to the Assyrian invasion. So, we are looking at a period of prosperity where Israel reached its height. One thing to understand, and it is sort of an interesting parallel, Israel reached the height of its prosperity only about twenty-five years before they went into the depths of captivity. It's sort of an interesting point because when people are riding high, it seems very difficult for them to imagine that life won't always go on that way. They think it's all taken care of and life is always going to go on that way. And that is not reality; that's not the way it is.

It goes on to mention that these kings "extended the borders of their kingdom from Damascus to the Red Sea, from the desert to the Mediterranean, giving the Hebrew states command of all the main trade routes of ancient days. But it was a civilization that displayed all the evils of a society making haste to be rich—greed and covetousness, reckless and unscrupulous competition and a pitiless disregard of the claims of sympathy, charity and brotherly consideration. Extremes of wealth and poverty, which had been impossible in an agricultural society based on the Biblical system of land tenure, were dividing the nation into classes of possessors and dispossessed." It talks about how "the pursuit of commerce encouraged the development of cities and city life. And it was to the city that the landless farmers migrated in search of a livelihood, where wealth, luxury and vice dwelt side by side with poverty, misery and squalor."

That's pretty descriptive of some of our major cities. Wouldn't that be pretty descriptive of a place like New Orleans, New York or for that matter Houston, Dallas or Washington D.C. where wealth, luxury and vice dwell side by side with poverty, misery and squalor.

You have extremes. It talks about how this period of time saw the influx of a great rural

migration to cities. Now, that is what has happened in the twentieth century. It happened at the beginning of the century for the nation as a whole. For most of the South, it did not happen until after World War II. Most of our cities didn't really begin to "take off" until the aftermath of World War II. Since World War II, the South has undergone the urbanization that the rest of the country had undergone half a century or more earlier.

So, there are problems. **Micah is describing a civilization, a society that in many ways mirror social patterns that we have undergone centuries later. Social problems beget social problems. There are various problems that are dealt with in the book of Micah.** We are going to focus on Micah perhaps a little more than the others. It is a much longer book. Most of the others are short little books, but we are going to focus on them as well.

Micah 1:1, "The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem." This is concerning all of the tribes of Israel. Samaria and Jerusalem represent the capitals of the northern ten tribes as well as Judah to the south.

Verse 2, "Hear, all you peoples! Listen, O earth, and all that is in it! Let the Lord God be a witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple." Who do we have addressed here? To whom is the book of Micah addressed? It is addressed to the entire earth. So here is a message that has worldwide implication. What is the time setting of the book of Micah? Was he primarily writing for his day and time—the eighth century B.C.?

Verses 3–5, "For behold, the Lord is coming out of His place; He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth. The mountains will melt under Him, and the valleys will split like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place. All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? Are they not Jerusalem?"

We notice here that we are focusing on a time when God is going to come forth—a time when the Messiah is going to come and exercise His government and His rule.

The historical setting is clear because we are told the kings who were ruling during the time that Micah prophesied. Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah were the kings of Judah during the time that Micah prophesied. We are given some insight.

Micah prophesied in the very latter part of the time of Northern Israel before they went into captivity. It talks about the transgression of the house of Jacob and the sins of the house of Israel. This is clearly a reference to the time period prior to Northern Israel's captivity.

Verse 5, "...What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? Are they not Jerusalem?" This focuses on the fact that the capital cities epitomized the sins of the nation in the things that were going on there.

Verse 9, "For her wounds are incurable. For it has come to Judah; it has come to the gate of My people, even to Jerusalem."

Micah 2:1-2, "Woe to those who devise iniquity, and work out evil on their beds! At morning light they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand. They covet fields and take them by violence, also houses, and seize them. So they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance."

I want to read a comment from the Jewish translation that brings out a little bit extra.

"Woe to them that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds for the morning is light, they execute it because it's in the power of their hands. They covet fields and seize them and houses and take them away. They oppress a man in his house, even a man in his heritage. [The comment brought out here is on coveting fields and seizing them.] This reference to seizing them is seizing them by corrupt legal processes, rather than by force. This legalized robbery was more galling and immoral than violent ex-appropriation. Against it there was not defense."

It's talking about individuals who were in power (control) and manipulate that power to get their own way. It is talking about individuals who control the wealth, power and legal resources to sort of manipulate, maneuver and gain their own way. That is a descriptive aspect. You can manipulate things through taxation, through raising and lowering of the discount rates and interest rates. It's a matter of inflation. There are many, many processes.

God indicts many of those who are at the very helm of society for the greed and corruption that have motivated them and the pitiless disregard for fairness and for justice with equity.

In this century, we have seen the destruction of rural communities and rural life in this country. There have been many factors in that. But, certainly, some factors have included the greed and manipulation by those who are in a position

to do such things. And it has brought about extensive consequences for our nation.

Micah 2:1, “Woe to those who devise iniquity, and work out evil on their beds! At morning light they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand.” They go to sleep thinking about how they can take advantage of somebody, how they can manipulate, maneuver and take advantage of somebody. As soon as it gets daylight, they go out and act upon a new scheme.

Verse 6, “‘Do not prattle,’ you say to those who prophesy. So they shall not prophesy to you; they shall not return insult for insult.” KJV, “Prophesy you not, say they to them that prophesy: ‘they shall not prophesy to them, that they shall not take shame.’” They don’t want to hear the truth.

Micah 3:1, “And I said: ‘Hear now, O heads of Jacob, and you rulers of the house of Israel: Is it not for you to know justice?’” Here, again, is an indictment to the house of Israel, not to Judah. It’s not to the Jews of today, but to the house of Israel.

These books, such as the book of Micah, only make sense and are only understandable if you understand who is being addressed. That’s one of the reasons why some of the evangelicals and fundamentalists among the Protestants who comment on prophecy do not understand it. They do not understand it because they do not understand the key that unlocks Bible prophecy—which is the identity of Israel. They read Micah and think it is talking about the Jews—that little nation in the Middle East today called Israel. And because that is what they think, they misunderstand and misapply the entire message.

Now, there are prophecies that focus on the state of Israel, and we are going to get into some of those next time. There are interesting things that are coming up in the Middle East right now. There are some very remarkable events. By the way, don’t hold your breath until Secretary of State Baker brings peace in the Middle East. Though I don’t question his good intentions, I think that’s going to prove slightly beyond him.

He indicts them in v. 2, “‘You who hate good and love evil; who strip the skin from My people, and the flesh from their bones.’” Boy, they’d pick it clean. Here are the leaders who should know right from wrong and should be teaching the people and setting an example. Instead, they are out to pick the carcass clean. They are out to get what they can get. We have had scandal after scandal of people in high places who have been up to something. We had

the latest thing (sort of a midnight raid) that the United States Senate made. They waited until late at night when the reporters and cameras were gone, and then they very quickly came up and voted themselves about a \$25,000 raise. That’s quite a deal! If you want a raise, all you have to do is vote in favor of it. How many companies do you know that all you have to do is get together and vote yourself a raise?

It gets off into another subject.

Verse 8, “But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.” The job of God’s work and His true servants filled with the power of the Spirit of God is to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin. So, here is a message of repentance for the nation.

Verses 9-11, “Now hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert all equity. They build up Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with iniquity: Her heads judge for a bribe, her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the Lord, and say, ‘Is not the Lord among us? No harm can come upon us.’”

What do you think is going to happen when this message is delivered by God’s work to the nation? They are going to be glad to see us leave. They will probably help us pack and encourage us to go. That time is going to come. It is going to come in God’s time. God is the one who orchestrates the time. God has reserved the times and the seasons unto His own power (Acts 1:7).

Here is a message that is going to shake this nation because it is addressed to the heads of the house of Jacob, to the rulers of the house of Israel who are to be indicted by God’s work, as those who abhor judgment and pervert all equity.

Verse 10, “Who build up Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with iniquity.” They are in it for what they can get. They are in it for the money (v. 11). You talk about an expose! There are some things that are going to be laid bare.

Micah 4 addresses something that is important. It again sets the stage for the time period Micah is describing. Is Micah primarily talking about his own day and his own time?

Micah 4:1, “Now it shall come to pass in the *last days* that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it.” In the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord is going to be exalted. God’s

government is going to be established in the last days. Now, if you want to read another description of it, you can go back to Daniel 2 and Daniel 7.

Daniel 2:44, “And in the days of these [ten] kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed....” The God of heaven is going to step in and set up a kingdom and a government.

Micah 4:1-2, “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

Jerusalem is going to be the world capital. It’s not going to be in Washington, New York, Moscow, Rome, Berlin or some other such place. It’s going to be in Jerusalem. After God’s government is established, there are going to be many nations that are going to come and look. They are going to want, and they are going to be seeking what they see. Israel is going to be re-gathered and begin to blossom and bud as a rose (Isaiah 35:1-2). They will blossom and bud and fill the earth. As Israel begins to prosper, (blossom and bud) the surrounding nations are going to want that. The government of God, within a matter of years, is going to expand out into the entire world. Within a matter of a few years, the entire earth will be brought under the government of God.

Verse 3, “He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off....” There are going to be those who come voluntarily and seek to learn of God’s way. They want to know what works. They want the blessings they see. And there are going to be others that sort of have a belligerent, recalcitrant attitude and are going to have to be rebuked, to be dealt with. They are not going to be allowed to abuse their neighbor. They are not going to be allowed to go in and take their neighbor’s property. They are not going to be allowed to learn war any more. Rather, continuing v. 3, “...They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

Verse 4, “But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make

them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.”

There are two or three things that come out here. Many times over the years and centuries, there has been the concept that a utopian society would involve some form of communism or socialism. There have been various utopian schemes that have attempted to be carried out in that way—none of which has ever built an enduring society because you remove the incentive. Some of them have lasted longer than others. Those that have been voluntary, where people have been committed to a cause and pitched in for the common good, lasted for a while. But that’s not the way God will do it.

God is not going to build a communistic or socialistic society in Tomorrow’s World. Every man will sit under his vine and his fig tree, not under the community vine or fig tree. There is that principle. One of the Ten Commandments protects private property—thou shall not steal. That recognizes there are things that could be stolen. Since there is property and there is a right to property, there are many ramifications to that commandment.

We see here a couple of things. “Every man will sit under his own vine and fig tree.” We see that there will be individual possessions; individuals will own property. And we also see that it says, “and none shall make them afraid.” There’s not going to be fear and the things that intimidate people.

It’s interesting. There are so many different ways a society is structured. Just one small way—look at the taxation structure. In ancient Israel, there was no such thing as a property tax. That may seem like a small thing, but over the years there have been farmers who have lost their property, particularly years ago in the aftermath of the War Between the States. There were many of those who lost their farms because they couldn’t pay the taxes. This sort of thing happened.

My grandfather came from Arkansas to Louisiana as a young boy. That’s what had happened to his family. Back in certain times, it has not been an uncommon thing. The whole concept of property tax really means that even though you have a deed to your property, you don’t own your property. It goes back to a feudal concept that the title to all the land ultimately resides with the king and, in effect, you have to pay him rent on it every year. You may not think he does, but just don’t pay it for a few years and you will find out who owns it. It’s a concept of ownership that ownership ultimately resides in the crown. In this country, since we don’t have a

monarch, it resides in the state. And in order to use this property, you have to pay the state a fee every year—a fee that the state assesses. And if you fail to pay it over a period of time, they can come in and take it away from you.

In ancient Israel, that was not the case. Title of the land ultimately belonged to God. God gave it to individual families, and under God's law, the family could not lose it forever. They could mortgage it. In effect, the most they could do was lease it for forty-nine years because at the Jubilee it always reverted back to the family. If somebody was a "ne'er-do-well," a spendthrift and not a good manager, he could bankrupt himself, but it wouldn't have implications for generations to come because, in effect, every generation got a fresh start. You had a chance to learn lessons from the past and get a fresh start.

"...everyone shall sit under his own vine and fig tree and none shall make him afraid..." There won't be terrorists or a lot of crime in the streets. Today, sometimes, you would be afraid to sit under your own vine and fig tree unless you had security lights around and maybe put up a big fence. Some people are almost living in a jail. There are bars on their doors and windows because they are afraid of people breaking in, robbing or murdering them. Can you imagine living in a society where "...none shall make you afraid?" You can sit out in the yard and you don't have to fear anyone. The government's not going to come take it away, nobody is going to come and steal it, and no one will do violence to you. This is the sort of society that is being talked about.

Verse 5 (an interesting verse), "For all people walk each in the name of his god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever." All the commentators scratch their heads about this verse. They can't understand it. What does this mean? Does it mean that in Tomorrow's World, everybody will worship every god they want to? No, all people will walk in the name of his god. Who is going to be the god of those various people? Well, various members of the God Family—you and me and others. We are going to be assigned as the God-Being who is ruler over this or that community or this or that state. All these people are going to walk in the name of their god.

Continuing in v. 5, '... but we [those of us in God's Family] will walk in the name of the Eternal our God.' They will orient toward us and through us, to Christ and the Father because we will also be part of the Family of God. When we

put on immortality at the resurrection, we become a part of the very Family of God. We will be worthy of worship. It says so in Revelation to the Philadelphians.

Revelation 3:9, "Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you." That can only be done to a God-Being.

You remember when the Apostle John fell down before the angel.

Revelation 22:8-9, "...I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, 'See that you do not do that, for I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.'"

He said, 'Don't worship me. I am only an angel; you can't worship me.'

Remember in Acts 14:11-15, some of these people were worshipping Paul and Silas (or Barnabas) and they said, "'Why are you doing these things? We also are men...'"

In fact, there is an account of Peter concerning that (Acts 10:25-26). It is a good account to remember. It is good proof that Peter wasn't the first pope because if he had been, he would have said, "Kiss my toe." He didn't tell them to kiss his toe. He told them to stand up.

There is a statue in the Vatican where the big toe is literally worn away because so many people have kissed the toe over the centuries—probably millions of people when you consider how many centuries it's been. They've come in there and have done obeisance to that big black, ebony statue that's supposedly Peter. It's called St. Peter today. When it was originally built, it was called Jupiter Olympus, but they just changed the name. They cut the scepter away and replaced it with a set of keys. They sprinkled a little water on it and said, 'You were Jupiter Olympus, now you are St. Peter,' and everything goes right along.

By the way, if it's not the identical statue that Antiochus Epiphanies set up in the temple that was the abomination that made desolate in ancient times, it's an exact copy. It is very likely that statue is going to be the physical object that will be moved to Jerusalem in the future as the abomination because it was exactly the same thing that Antiochus Epiphanies set up (Daniel 11:31). It's interesting that there is an exact counterpart that is set up there.

Another thing set up in St. Peter's Square is the great obelisk. I am sure many of you have seen

pictures of it. That's not just any obelisk. That one was transported from Egypt. That was the ancient obelisk of the sun. It's made direct reference to by way of a prophecy against it. It's an interesting story in history because they did it centuries ago. It was a mammoth feat to transport that thing across the Mediterranean from Egypt to Italy to bring it up there and set it up. They didn't have any mechanized equipment to do it, but they did it. They went to a lot of trouble to get the exact thing that God singled out that He hated. They went to a lot of trouble to get it, bring it up there, set it up in the middle of St. Peter's Square and say, 'This is great, we have the real thing!' I'll tell you, there're some people that are going to be in for a surprise.

Micah 4:5, "For all people walk each in the name of his god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever." This is an important verse.

Verses 6-7, "'In that day,' says the Lord, 'I will assemble the lame, I will gather the outcast and those whom I have afflicted; I will make the lame a remnant, and the outcast a strong nation; so the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on, even forever.'" It describes the time when the government of God is going to be set up.

Micah 5:2, "'But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.'" Here is a direct prophecy of where the Messiah would be born.

This is the verse that the priests and scribes quoted to Herod in the New Testament when the wise men had come to Jerusalem to inquire, "'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?'" (Matthew 2:2)

Matthew 2:3-6, Herod was a little bothered by that because he thought he was king of the Jews. This disturbed him somewhat, and he decided he ought to look into this matter. He called the chief priests and scribes in and demanded of them where the Messiah was to be born. And when he put them on the spot, they told him that it was written in the prophets and quoted Micah 5:2.

Micah 5:2, "...from everlasting." In the Hebrew, literally, it is "from the days of eternity." The Messiah was not simply to be a human being. He was to be God in the flesh.

Verse 2, "...His goings forth has been from of old, from eternity."

Verse 3, "Therefore He shall give them up, until the time that she who is in labor has given birth;

[In other words, until the Church is established and prepared.] Then the remnant of His brethren shall return to the children of Israel."

Verse 4, "And He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God; and they shall abide, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth."

In vv. 7-8, he describes events that will take place, "Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples, like dew from the Lord, like showers on the grass, that tarry [wait] for no man nor wait [delay] for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep, who, if he passes through, both treads down and tears in pieces, and none can deliver."

He is speaking here, prophetically, of the might and the power that the Israelite nations would have.

Verse 9, "Your hand shall be lifted against your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off."

Then God talks about how He would deal with Israel and would ultimately punish them.

Micah 6:1-4, "Hear now what the Lord says: 'Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, O you mountains, the Lord's complaint, and the strong foundations of the earth, for the Lord has a complaint against His people, and He will contend with Israel. O My people, what have I done to you? And how have I wearied you? Testify against Me. For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.'"

Verses 6-8, "With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

What is God after? Is He just after great sacrifices and great ritualistic observances? Can we just go through the motions of religion and God is satisfied and pleased with that? What God wants is *religion from the heart*. God doesn't simply want the outward show and outward

manifestation. He doesn't want us to simply go through the motions.

He says, "...what does God require..." Three things! Very simple! –To do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with your God. It is interesting if you look at the three. The first—to do justly—has to do with our own personal conduct. It has to do with what we do. It has to do with our relationship in terms of what we expect of ourselves. That we do justly. The word "justly" could just as easily be rendered "righteousness." It comes from the Hebrew word "*tsidqah*," which means "righteous" or "righteousness." What does God require? He requires us to do righteousness. What is righteousness?

Psalm 119:172, "...All Your commandments are righteousness." We are to do righteousness. We are to keep the commandments. In terms of our relationship with ourselves, in terms of what we expect of ourselves, we are to obey God.

What about our relationship with our neighbor? We are to love mercy. This has to do with the way we treat others. In our own lives, we are to concentrate on obeying God and doing what God says. We are to do what's right and just. We are to have an attitude of mercy towards others. We are not to have an attitude of condemnation, gossip, judgment, put-down and all these other things. We are to love mercy.

In our relationship with God, we are to walk humbly with God. We are to see ourselves in proper relationship with God. We are to see ourselves in perspective with God, how we stack up. We are to walk humbly with God because when we see how great God is and how weak and puny we are as human beings, how can we walk any other way than humbly?

You know, Nebuchadnezzar walked before God in pride.

Daniel 4:37, Daniel told him, "...all that walk in pride He is able to abase." The moral of that story is to not walk before God in pride. Walk humbly with your God. You are to love mercy in terms of your dealings with neighbors. In terms of your expectations of self, you do justly. It is sort of interesting. These three categories focus on *ourselves*, our *neighbor* and *God*—*a one-word summation of relationships in each of these categories*.

It talks about the greed and corruption of the nation.

Micah 6:10-13, "Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the short measure that is an abomination? Shall I count pure those with the wicked balances, and

with the bag of deceitful weights? For her rich men are full of violence, her inhabitants have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth. Therefore I will also make you sick by striking you, by making you desolate because of your sins."

Verse 16, "For the statutes of Omri are kept; all the works of Ahab's house are done; and you walk in their counsels..." Omri was the father of Ahab. Omri is not one whom we tend to focus on very much from a Biblical standpoint. We generally have given more attention to Ahab and Jezebel. Ahab was the son of Omri. Omri was the founder of that dynasty. It was one of the most significant dynasties of the northern ten tribes of ancient Israel. He was the founder of the dynasty and gave his name to it.

In fact, in ancient history, the entire nation of Israel was known by the name of Omri by some people. The Assyrians and the Assyrian monuments of the nation of Israel are called "Bit Khumri" which literally translated means "the house of Omri." Omri was evidently an individual of renown. He founded a dynasty that came on down for several generations—the most notable of which was Ahab, who married Jezebel.

That term, by the way, on the Assyrian monuments referring to Bit Khumri or Omri is the name that Israel was known by when they went into captivity. That's where the name "Cimmerians" originates. It is the name that the Celtic peoples were known by. In fact, Langer's Encyclopedia of World History brings out some of that. This was the same name that was used in the Assyrian monuments. That's why Israel was known by those names when they began to migrate up into Europe.

Micah characterizes society with greed and corruption being rampant.

Micah 7:2-4, "The faithful man has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among men. They all lie in wait for blood; every man hunts his brother with a net. That they may successfully do evil with both hands—the prince asks for gifts, the judge seeks a bribe, and the great man utters his evil desire; so they scheme together. The best of them is like a brier; the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge; the day of your watchman and your punishment comes; now shall be their perplexity."

It describes the corruption, and I think "the judge asks for a reward and the great man utters his evil desire..." is sort of an interesting description. We've had some of those things on tape. We've had several indictments of recent

date—the guys asking for money. That’s exactly what happened. (KJV), “The great man utters his mischievous desire.” I like that description. It is a rather poetic phrase, but it is so apt and descriptive. That is the state of things. God is going to intervene, and God is going to have to punish the nation. We see that the book of Micah focuses on God’s punishment of Israel and the things that He will do. It is a major prophetic book. It is one of the longest of the Minor Prophets.

Nahum, on the other hand, has three chapters. Habakkuk has about two and one-half pages; Zephaniah is about the same—two and one-half or three pages. We find three much shorter books.

Nahum was written at a later time. It was written basically after Israel had gone into captivity but before Assyria had been punished. God used the Assyrians to punish Northern Israel, but then He was going to deal with the Assyrians and punish them. **The book of Nahum is a prophecy against Assyria.** Nahum sort of took up the story where Jonah left off. Jonah didn’t follow God’s instructions and tried to run away. He went the other way, but he got delivered to Nineveh to give his prophecies in such a remarkable way. What he feared came upon him. They repented. Things went on for another hundred years or so. But it doesn’t take people long—they gradually forget and drift back into their old ways. So, now, God sends another prophet, Nahum, with a prophecy against Assyria—against Nineveh. The book of Habakkuk and Zephaniah both deal with the events prior to the Chaldean captivity of Judah.

Let’s notice briefly the book of Nahum.

Nahum opens with a psalm of God’s majesty and then prophesies the fall of Nineveh.

Nahum 1:1, “The burden against Nineveh. [This is where the prophecy is addressed.] The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.”

Verses 2-3, “God is jealous, and the Lord avenges; the Lord avenges and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies; The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet.”

It goes on to show in vv. 6-7, “Who can stand before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him.”

God knows who’s who, and He knows what’s what. You don’t have to worry about that. God knows those who trust in Him. When God steps into history—when He intervenes—He knows who His people are and who are not.

We go down and it describes the events that are going to occur.

Nahum 2 talks about the Assyrians.

Nahum 2:3, “The shields of his mighty men are made red, the valiant men are in scarlet. The chariots come with flaming torches in the day of his preparation....”

I am going to read this out of the Jewish translation.

Verses 3-5, “The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet. The chariots are fire of steel in the day of his preparation. The cypress spears are made to quiver. The chariots rush madly in the street, they jostle one another in the broad places. The appearance of them is like torches. They run to and fro like the lightening. He bethinks himself of his worthies. They stumble in their march. They make haste to the wall thereof.”

It talks about the events.

Nahum 3:1-4, “Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery. Its victim never departs. The noise of a whip and the noise of rattling wheels, of galloping horses, of clattering chariots! Horsemen charge with bright sword and glittering spear. There is a multitude of slain, a great number of bodies, countless corpses—they stumble over the corpses—because of the multitude of harlotries of the seductive harlot, the mistress of sorceries, who sell nations through her harlotries, and families through her sorceries.”

It describes the pomp, grandeur and all of the great panoply of might—the display of greatness and grandeur. You can almost hear the clanking of metal down the street, the marching of the troops, the glistening, shining reflection off the weapons, the great evidence of war power—the power of great military might that is so impressive. It describes this great Assyrian (modern-day Germany) power, the very head of what will ultimately come to be the beast power. It describes that greatness that is there.

There is an interesting statement that I would call to your attention.

Verse 4, “Because of the multitude of the harlotries of the seductive harlot the mistress of sorceries [KJV, “witchcraft”]....”

The word “witchcraft” (both in the beginning and latter part of the verse) is a word that is derived from the Hebrew word “*kesheph*.”

This is the word that is used in Malachi 3:5 to translate “sorceries.” It is a word that is rendered “*pharmakaia*” or “*pharmakon*” in the Septuagint translation, which is a Greek translation of the Old Testament. In the Hebrew, “*mechashevetz*” refers to one specific aspect of sorcery or witchcraft, which had to do with concocting mind-altering potions. “Pharmakon” or “Pharmakaia” in the Greek language, which is also rendered “sorcery” in Revelation 18:23, is the word that our modern word “pharmacy” comes from. It has to do with drugs. And specifically in ancient times, there were various poisons and potions, many of which were hallucinogenic or what we would term “mind-altering” narcotics and things of this sort.

Anciently, these things even played a role in various religions. You can read about it. You have to look long and hard, but there are references to it. There are references to the role that hallucinogenic and psychedelic drugs played and the mystical, spiritual visions that were seen as a result of that, particularly, in the oriental religions.

In fact, the Encyclopedia Britannica claims that Buddha actually died of an overdose from psychedelic mushrooms. When you look at the size of him, you figure he must have eaten a powerful “passel” of mushrooms. He evidently overdosed on that. He took one last “trip.” Some of the hallucinogens, like LSD, that were made derived from or synthesized from things of this sort.

What I want to call to your attention is this word “*mechashevetz*.” There are different words for sorcery and witchcraft. This word had to do with the aspect of sorcery or witchcraft that had to do with concocting potions, poisonous solutions, hallucinogens and this sort of thing.

When you have that in mind, read Nahum 3:4, “Because of the multitude of harlotries of the seductive harlots....” You can go back and compare that with Revelation 17:2 where it talks about the great false church, how all nations have been made drunk with the wine of the wrath of her whoredom.

Nahum 3:4 (latter part), “...the mistress of sorceries [or the mistress of drug dealing], who sells nations through her harlotries, and families through her sorceries.” It’s sort of an interesting focus when you compare it with Revelation 17 and 18. I’ll tell you, when all is said and done, we may be shocked and amazed by some of the things we find at the bottom of some of the problems that are going on today.

God says in v. 5, “Behold, I am against you,” says the Lord of hosts; ‘I will lift your skirts over your face, I will show the nations your nakedness, and the kingdoms your shame.’” In other words, God says the time is going to come when He is going to show to the whole world exactly what’s inside of this whole system. It describes the destruction that is going to come. It describes what God is going to do.

Verse 7, “...Nineveh is laid waste....”

Verses 18-19, “Your shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria; your nobles rest in the dust. Your people are scattered on the mountains, and no one gathers them. Your injury has no healing, your wound is severe. All who hear news of you will clap their hands over you, for upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually?”

Habakkuk sort of goes on from there. It was written at a little later time. It was written perhaps twenty to thirty years after Nahum. We know that Nahum was written prior to the destruction of Nineveh. Some of the commentaries try to date it afterward. That’s because they prophesy the destruction of Nineveh and it’s hard for them to imagine that somebody could have known ahead of time that it was going to be destroyed. And that’s because they don’t really believe that there is a God who knows the end from the beginning and declares it (Isaiah 46:10-11).

Habakkuk is written a little later. He would be contemporary with Jeremiah and Zephaniah. Habakkuk is a very important book; **it deals with the struggle of faith.**

Habakkuk 1:1, “The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw.” First of all, he looks at things and sees all the sins of the nation of Judah. He sees what’s going on and he says, ‘O God, how can you let this happen? How can it go on? Why don’t you do something? These people deserve judgment.’ Then God says, ‘I’m planning on doing that. I am going to send in the Chaldeans and they are going to really wreak havoc.’

Then Habakkuk looks a little further and says, ‘The Chaldeans are worse than the Jews. How can You let them get by with it?’ In effect—‘How can You let the Jews get by with it?’ God says He is going to send the Chaldeans to punish them. ‘Yeah, but how can You let the Chaldeans get by with it? They are even worse.’ But God says He is going to “get” them, too.

It doesn’t take faith when you see everything going the way it ought to go. Think about that! When you see things the way they ought to be, it doesn’t take faith. You’re not walking by faith; you are walking by sight—you see it. It takes

faith when physical evidence contradicts what God says. Then you have to make a choice. Do you believe what God says or do you believe what you see?

That's why Abraham was the father of the faithful. God said, 'I am going to make of you a great nation' (Genesis 17:4). Abraham looked at his ninety-year old wife who was barren and, let's face it, there wasn't a whole lot of physical evidence to give Abraham a lot of reason to think, 'Boy, God I can sure understand that. I certainly see how You are going to make me a great nation.' He just kind of scratched his head and said, 'Well, alright Lord, if You say so.' He believed God. He believed God!

Habakkuk 1:2-4, "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear? Even cry out to You, 'Violence!' And You will not save. Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; there is strife, and contention arises. Therefore the law is powerless, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore perverse judgment proceeds."

I remember back in 1975, '76 and '77 when some of us in the ministry were reading these verses and wondering if they weren't descriptive of the state of things we saw around us at that time. There were a number of us that discussed some of those things privately. We took great comfort from the book of Habakkuk because it was a message of faith.

Verse 5, "Look among the nations and watch—be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, though it were told you." 'I am going to work a work in your days.' This verse is actually quoted back in Acts 13:41 referring to the work of God.

In the context of Habakkuk 1:5, it is talking about raising up the Chaldeans to punish Judah, but it's really saying that God will do something. God will step in and intervene in ways that you and I cannot imagine. God will do what He does in ways that you and I would never have imagined.

When God got ready to solve the problems in His work and in His Church back in 1978 and '79, He did so in ways that we would have never imagined. Some of you in the Church, did you imagine that God was going to do things the way He did? Would you have ever second-guessed the way that God stepped in and solved some of those problems back in '78 and '79? It would have been the most far-fetched scenario. I don't think there was a single one of us in the work that could have imagined that God would have

stepped in and done it. I can think of various ones (including evangelists) that I remember discussing some of those things with just, literally, weeks before some of those actions came about—and none of us could imagine. We knew that it was going to happen, but we couldn't imagine how.

There's a lesson of faith. God wants us to learn a lesson of faith. God wants us to trust Him and to look to Him. That's a lesson that we can look back on. Habakkuk looked around and saw the iniquity in Judah, and said, 'Lord, how can this be? How can all this go on and nothing happens?' God said, 'Look, Habakkuk, I am going to work a work in your day, and you are not going to be able to imagine it.'

Verse 6, "For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, a bitter and hasty nation which marches through the breadth of the earth, and possesses dwelling places that are not theirs." They are going to come in and deal with these things.

Habakkuk 2:2-4, "Then the Lord answered me and said: 'Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but *the just shall live by his faith.*'"

The point of Habakkuk is not just simply for ancient times. It is for our time.

Verse 3, "For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the time of the end it shall speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

That's the message of faith. Just because you don't see God doing what you think He ought to do, it doesn't mean He's not going to do it. Has God retired and gone way off somewhere? We want to put a time limit on God. We pray and ask God for help or deliverance and we want to set a time limit for it. God reserves time into His own power (Acts 1:7). The point is that even though it tarries, wait for it. It will surely come. The point is the just shall live by faith. Whose faith? It's the faith of Christ in us.

Galatians 2:20 brings that out, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." The just shall live by faith. It is not just any faith. It is not just faith that we work up but the faith of Christ in us.

It goes on in Habakkuk 2:9, “Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of disaster!” It’s an important principle; you don’t really get ahead by seeking to entrench yourself by wrong methods.

Verse 9, “...him that covets evil gain for his house...set his nest on high...” There are various ones that sought to ensconce themselves. This has been the history of God’s people, both in the physical sense (in Old Testament Israel), as well in the spiritual sense. We experienced some of those things back in the ‘70s with certain individuals—one man who thought he had ensconced himself. In fact, more than one man had ensconced themselves pretty well, and when God got ready, He intervened. He dealt with it.

It talks about a time—the time that we look forward to.

Verse 14, “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” That’s the time to look forward to. That’s the time of God’s government holding sway on this earth.

Verse 20, “But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.”

Habakkuk 3:2, “O Lord, I have heard your speech and was afraid; O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known: in wrath remember mercy.”

In Romans, God talks about the time when He will make a short work.

Romans 9:28, “For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth.” The point is that God is going to accomplish what He chooses. He will revive His work in the midst of the years.

God has a plan that He is going to carry out. The book of Habakkuk is very much a book of faith. It was written in the context of the prophet looking around and seeing everything the way it ought not be. His faith was tried. What do you do? He cried out to God and he said, ‘O Lord, how can this be? Here are your people, the nation of Judah, filled with iniquity.’ God says He is going to deal with that. God has a plan. He has a schedule.

The book of Zephaniah, which was written about the same time as Habakkuk, is also an interesting book. **It focuses in on the period of the Day of the Lord in prophecy and who is going to be protected.** Habakkuk is in many ways a lesson of faith. It is certainly appropriate

for the end time—a time when we will see iniquity, a time when our faith will be tried, a time when there will be all sorts of chaos and confusion around us and we find ourselves in circumstances and many things that we will only be able to go through walking by faith and trusting God. If God’s not in charge, then we are in trouble anyway. We are in a heap of trouble. If God is in charge, then what is there to worry about? We certainly should have an appropriate concern of going to God, but primarily, to stay close to God so that we might come into the category that it talks about in Zephaniah.

The word “Zephaniah” means “the hidden of the Eternal.” The book of Zephaniah focuses in on the Day of the Lord, and who is going to be protected in the Day of the Lord’s wrath. “The hidden of the Eternal.” –In other words, God’s people who are protected and are in a place of protection or place of safety.

Zephaniah 2:3, it talks about that, “Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness; seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the Lord’s anger.”

Zephaniah talks about the great Day of the Lord. Zephaniah 1:14, “The great day of the Lord is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the Lord is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out.” Much of Zephaniah talks about the Day of the Lord.

Zephaniah 2:3, the message is, “Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility...” Who’s doing that? Well, God’s people, God’s Church. Who is seeking righteousness and meekness? God’s people are enjoined to seek God, to seek righteousness, to seek meekness. Continuing in v. 3, “...It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the Lord’s anger.”

Zephaniah 1:14-18, “The great day of the Lord is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the Lord is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers. I will bring distress upon men, and they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like refuse. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord’s wrath....”

It talks about the great Day of the Lord's wrath. Who's going to be hidden? Who's going to be protected?

Tie that in with Revelation 12:14, "But the woman [the Church] was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half time, from the presence of the serpent."

Revelation 3:10, it says to the Philadelphia Church, "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial [tribulation] which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth."

It talks here about God's people being hidden in the day of God's wrath. Zephaniah deals with the time of God's wrath. There's sort of an interesting expression used in Zephaniah. I would call your attention to it.

Zephaniah 1:4, "I will stretch out My hand against Judah, and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. I will cut off every trace of Baal from this place, the names of the idolatrous priests [KJV, "chemarims"] with the pagan priests—"

The KJV simply renders it "chemarim," which is not a translation of the word. It is the Hebrew word. It is just transliterated into English. The Jewish translation renders it, "I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place and name of the idolatrous priests with the priests." "Chemarim" was a term that certainly referred to idolatrous priests. But it has sort of an interesting meaning because the word "chemarim" in Hebrew means "black-robed ones." It was descriptive of the idolatrous priests.

It is interesting. God's priests (the Levites) who ministered in the sanctuary always wore white robes. Sometimes there were certain colored threads and extra ornaments that went with it, but the basic robe was white. It's sort of interesting that there are priests of a particular religion that have normally been identified with black garments. Usually, it's right on down to where there's just one little tiny strip of white right there at the neck. In ancient times, the priests of Baal and some of the various ones wore black robes. It is the term used here. It means idolatrous priests. But the term that God chose to use for them was "the black-robed ones," and I think that's sort of an interesting analogy and an interesting point.

Zephaniah 1:7-8, "Be silent in the presence of the Lord God; for the day of the Lord is at hand, for the Lord has prepared a sacrifice; He has invited His guests. And it shall be, in the day of

the Lord's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with foreign apparel."

He's going to punish people.

Verse 9, "In the same day I will punish all those who leap over the threshold...." "Leaping over the threshold" is a pagan superstitious expression.

The expression goes back to an event mentioned in I Samuel 5:4-5. Remember when the Philistines had the Ark of the Covenant they had captured and brought into the temple of Dagon. The next day they came in and the idol of Dagon had fallen down before the Ark of the Covenant. The head of Dagon had broken off on the threshold in the temple of the Philistines. Well, there developed a pagan superstition of jumping over the threshold because stepping on the threshold was bad luck. It's sort of a superstition that goes back to old Dagon's head being broken on the threshold. It's an expression that has to do with pagan superstition and those who practiced various pagan superstitions.

Verse 9, "...who fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit."

Verse 12, "And it shall come to pass at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and punish the men who are settled in complacency, who say in their heart, 'the Lord will not do good, nor will He do evil.'" —Those that have sort of a comfortable, laid-back, lukewarm, lackadaisical approach and say, 'God's not going to intervene; God's not going to do anything.' God says, 'I am going to search out and find the people who think this and I'm going to deal with them.'

It talks about the events of the Day of the Lord that are going to come.

Zephaniah 1:18, "Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath...."

Zephaniah 2:3 (we have already focused on), "Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth...."

Isaiah 55:6, "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near." It goes on to talk about that sort of thing and the destruction that is going to come on various ones of the people around in the Day of the Lord.

Zephaniah 3:1-5, "Woe to her who is rebellious and polluted, to the oppressing city! She has not obeyed His voice, she has not received correction; she has not trusted in the Lord, she has not drawn near to her God. Her princes in her midst are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves that leave not a bone till morning. Her prophets are insolent, treacherous

people; her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law. The Lord is righteous, He is in her midst, He will do no unrighteousness. Every morning He brings His justice to light; He never fails, but the unjust knows no shame.”

The indication here is that Jerusalem is being used as a type of not only Judah but, certainly, also all of Israel.

Verse 4, “...They have done violence to the law.” Certainly, in many ways, you could say the Talmud crucified the law. When the scribes and the Pharisees got through with it, they had done violence to God’s law. Christ indicted them pretty severely for that in the time of the New Testament.

Verses 8-10, “‘Therefore wait for Me,’ says the Lord, ‘until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination is to gather the nations to My assembly of kingdoms, to pour on them My indignation, all My fierce anger, all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy. For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language that they all may call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one accord. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, the daughter of My dispersed ones, shall bring My offering.’”

God talks about the time when all nations will finally be turned to Him with one pure language. It talks about a time of re-gathering.

Verse 13, “‘The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness and speak no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed their flocks and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid.’” That’s not talking about the state of Israel in the Middle East now. That’s talking about Israel brought back after Christ’s return. That’s talking about conversion.

Verses 17-18, “‘The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you in His love, He will rejoice over you with singing. I will gather those who sorrow over the appointed assembly....’”

God will bring back the captives. There are many prophecies of God’s intervention and the things that God will do as He steps in.

We find that both Habakkuk and Zephaniah are set in the setting of Judah at the time of Jeremiah—a time when God was getting ready to deal with His people Judah. It’s sort of a background to the account of Josiah in the book of Lamentations.

Habakkuk and Zephaniah were contemporary. They were with that particular time period. Micah was much earlier. Nahum was sort of in-between. What we see here are four short books. Three are fairly short. Micah is a little longer. There is a great deal of messages packed in there. There are messages of faith, messages of confidence, the story of God’s intervention and the ultimate establishment of the Government of God to hold sway over all the earth.

Next Bible study we will be covering the books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi—three books that are all related to after the exile of Judah. Next Bible study will conclude our brief survey with the Minor Prophets. We will come back at a little later time and pick up quite a bit more prophecy in much more detail when we go through the book of Revelation.

Bible Study # 73 Questions

SURVEY OF THE MINOR PROPHETS SERIES

Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah

1. To whom is the book of Micah addressed?
2. The historical setting of the book of Micah is what?
3. What does Micah say of false ministers?
4. Prove from Micah where Christ's future capital will be.
5. Where in Micah is Christ's birthplace prophesied?
6. According to Micah, what does God require of man?
7. How does Micah characterize society?
8. To whom is Nahum addressed?
9. What is their fate?
10. What is the historical setting of Habakkuk?
11. Explain Habakkuk 2:4.
12. What will be the condition of the world during the Millennium, according to Habakkuk?
13. What is the main theme of Zephaniah?
14. Who are the "chemarims" of Zephaniah 1:4?
15. Explain Zephaniah 3:4.
16. What does Zephaniah tell us about the language to be used during the Millennium?

Bible Study # 74
August 13, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

Minor Prophets Series—Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi

We are finishing up our Minor Prophets series this evening—particularly the books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi—the final portion of the Minor Prophets.

The first grouping of prophets who wrote the Minor Prophets all wrote in the same general time period. They wrote at a time prior to Israel's original captivity. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah—all of those—wrote within the same scope of years. They wrote at a time prior to the captivity of Northern Israel. Those, together with the prophet Isaiah, all prophesied at the same general time period. There was a focus there at the time prior to the captivity of Northern Israel.

Nahum prophesied a little bit later. He prophesied following the captivity of Northern Israel but prior to the rise of Babylon. Nahum prophesied the destruction and judgment that was going to come upon Assyria and the rise of Babylon.

Habakkuk and Zephaniah came down a little closer to the time of the Babylonian captivity and the circumstance prior to Nebuchadnezzar's taking the Jews to Babylon. They both prophesied in that general time period. They prophesied a little bit later than Nahum and prior to the time of the exile.

We have, beginning in 604 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Jerusalem and subsequent re-invasion in 596 B.C. Finally, in 587 B.C., he came in, burned the temple, destroyed the city and took the Jews into captivity to Babylon. They were there for decades.

Then we come to a situation as recorded in the book of Daniel. The city of Babylon in 539 B.C. fell to the Medes and the Persians, almost seventy years after Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion of Jerusalem (Daniel 5:30-31). This was a period of fifty years after the final destruction of Jerusalem.

Now fifty years is a long time. Fifty years ago would take us back prior to the beginning of the American involvement in World War II. A lot of things have happened since then. Some of you remember that event. But probably most sitting here would not remember that event at all. This is what we are looking at because as we come

down about fifty years after the final destruction of Jerusalem, Babylon fell.

The Medes and Persians came in. A short time after, a decree was issued that allowed the return of the Jews from Babylon. They returned under Zerubbabel who was appointed governor by the Persians. Joshua was the high priest. He was the grandson of the previous high priest in Jerusalem prior to the exile. Zerubbabel and Joshua led a remnant out of Babylon back to Jerusalem, and they came back for the purpose of rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and rebuilding the temple. They had permission from the Persian governor to do that. They came back and problems arose.

You can read the account in Ezra. You will see what happened. Sanballat, the leader of the Samaritans, first came in and proposed that the Samaritans work with the Jews to rebuild the temple. Zerubbabel said, 'They don't have anything to do with this. This doesn't pertain to them; these people are idolaters. We are not going to have them involved in doing the work of God' (Ezra 4:1-3).

When Sanballat and the Samaritans could not get control of the situation by sort of "worming" their way on the inside, they then hired counselors and went before Artaxerxes (vv. 5-7). "Counselors" is equivalent of our word "lawyers." They hired individuals proficient in the law of the Medes and the Persians who were capable of representing them at the court of the king. They came before the Persian king with all sorts of accusations. It details those accusations in Ezra 4.

You might want to read it because it shows how you can make something that is harmless sound bad. 'You know, those Jews are building up the walls of that rebellious city and they are building up the foundations of it' (v. 12). Boy, this sounds bad. That was what they came back for—that shouldn't have been any mystery. They were given permission to come back and rebuild the city. How are you going to rebuild the city if you don't rebuild the foundation? They said, 'They are rebuilding the walls and building up the foundations of that rebellious city.'—A little bit of innuendo and accusation to make that sound bad.

They went on to say, 'The only reason we are writing this to you, king, is we really are concerned that you won't get your full payment of taxes (v. 13). We figure these people are going to rebuild the city and quit paying their taxes. You won't be getting all the money that's due you. And since we are such loyal, patriotic

citizens, we do not want to see a terrible thing like that happen.' Now, don't you know that was really their motive! Isn't it something how people can have all these accusations and impute motives? How did they know that the Jews were going to quit paying taxes when they rebuilt the wall? They didn't know that. It was an accusation.

So, they got an order by the court of the Persian king that ordered work on the city and the temple to cease and desist. He sent down a squad of soldiers and posted the notice that until further notice from the Persians, there wasn't to be any further work (vv. 23-24). They wanted things stopped. This set the stage for the book of Haggai and Zechariah.

Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi are called post-exilic prophets. That is a fancy way of saying that they wrote their books after the Jews returned from exile to Babylon. They are the last three books of prophecy written for the Old Testament.

I want to read something that I think is a rather remarkable admission. I am reading this from the Sonseno Commentary—their introduction to the book of Haggai. It is a Jewish commentary. It represents the traditional Jewish understanding of the books of the Old Testament.

“Both Haggai and Zechariah are mentioned in Ezra 5 and 6 as the prime movers in the restoration of the temple. According to Talmudic tradition [the Talmud is a record of Jewish thought], Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi were the founders of the great synagogue. Haggai is quoted in the Talmud in various places. These three [Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi] were the last of the prophets. The Talmud declares that with the death of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel.”

I think that is a rather remarkable admission. And the truth is it did not reappear again in terms of any written record of God's work until the time of John the Baptist. There was not a direct succession of prophets after that. The Jews themselves recognized in their tradition, after these men died, that was the end of it. That's why there weren't any other books accepted into the canon because they recognized that God simply didn't any longer worked through them the way He had. There wasn't any longer a succession of prophets. Even though there were many other books written, there weren't any books after Malachi that was accepted into the canon because even the rabbis understood that the Holy Spirit had departed from Israel and the canon was sealed up.

God raised up John the Baptist in the spirit and power of Elijah after an interim of about four hundred years—the time between the testaments. I think it is an interesting statement. It's a remarkable admission that they would acknowledge. But, nevertheless, they do.

This evening we are taking note of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. They wrote in the context of the work on the temple having been shut down for over fifty years. When the Persian soldiers came in and served the injunction from the Persian king, that enjoined work on the temple and the city work stopped. People got sidetracked on various other things. They began to get absorbed in building up their own homes and rebuilding their own businesses. Here were people who had left Babylon and had come back to Judea because their heart was in doing the work of God. They got there and trials, obstacles and problems arose. They became discouraged and got sidetracked. They lost the original commitment that they had.

We pick up the story in **Haggai**.

Haggai 1:1, “In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest....” God raised up Haggai, which we would date approximately 520 B.C. God's word came by Haggai to Zerubbabel and Joshua, the civil and religious leaders of the Jews.

Verse 2, “Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, saying: “This people says, ‘The time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.’”” People had excuses as to why it wasn't time to rebuild the temple. They had gotten sidetracked and had just never gotten around to really getting back to it.

Verses 3-6, “Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, ‘Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?’ Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Consider your ways! You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes.’”

Verses 8-10, “Go up to the mountain and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,’ says the Lord. ‘You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?’ says the Lord of hosts. ‘Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you

runs to his own house. Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit.”

The point was the people had their priorities wrong. They were planning on getting around and returning to the work of God, but they were going to do it when it was convenient. They said, ‘Well, you know, we are going to get back to doing it again, but things are “tight” right now and we can’t really afford to do God’s work. But once we get a “handle” and get on top of things, we will get back to it.’ Haggai said ‘You have it backwards. You know, the harder you struggle to get ahead, the further behind you’ve gotten.’

It gives a pretty good description of inflation. It described them as earning money to be put in bags with holes in it (v. 6). Have you ever felt like you were putting your money in a bag and it was going through holes in the bottom? It’s like pouring water through a sieve—it’s just rolls out. They kept thinking, ‘When I get enough collected in here, I’ll get back to doing what I need to do.’ Well, here is what Haggai told them. He said, ‘You are never going to get ahead this way.’

From Genesis to Revelation, one of the most important principles that always comes out of the Bible is nobody ever really gets ahead by putting God last. It’s a very basic principle; you simply don’t get ahead by putting God last. The Jews, here, needed to understand that principle.

There’s much in the book of Haggai that relates to the work of God. The work of God in the days of Haggai and Zechariah had to do with rebuilding a literal temple—the second temple. It was called Zerubbabel’s temple. It was the temple to which Jesus Christ came when He came to earth. There are many principles that apply very directly to the work of God. There are principles that can be derived as a message for us. **Haggai’s message is not only for us at this point in time right now, but a message for God’s people through the centuries in terms of what should be our priorities and in terms of finishing the job God has set before us.**

This was a book that many of us (Mr. Herbert Armstrong included) gave very special note to back during the period of 1979, ’80, ’81 and even back during the 70s prior to that. It seemed that there were very many parallels that we encountered in terms of some of the things that are mentioned.

Haggai 2:1, he continues, “In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet....” —On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Verses 2-3, “Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozakak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying: “Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing?”” The second temple was not nearly as magnificent and impressive as the temple that Solomon built.

God goes on to say in vv. 6-9, “For thus says the Lord of hosts: “Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations [a reference to Jesus Christ], and I will fill this temple with glory,” says the Lord of hosts. “The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,” says the Lord of hosts. “The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,” says the Lord of Hosts. “And in this place I will give peace,” says the Lord of hosts.”

People were making a comparison that the temple of Zerubbabel was not nearly as impressive as the temple of Solomon. Haggai said, ‘God’s message is the thing that is really significant—not the silver and the gold. It all belongs to God anyway. But the Desire of All Nations was going to come and the glory of the latter house was going to be greater than the former.’ In other words, Jesus Christ the Messiah was going to come during the period when the second temple was standing. He would come into the second temple, and as God in the flesh, He certainly brought with Him greater glory than all of the things with which Solomon filled the first temple.

Haggai 1:14, we find as a result of Haggai’s message, “So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God.”

God stirred up the Jews and stirred up their leadership to get back to doing the work. He stirred them up to get their priorities straight and not to wait until it was comfortable to do the work. If you wait until you get ahead, it’s convenient and you have time, you will never get around to it. It’s sort of like waiting until you have time to pray. You notice how you somehow don’t get around to it? You get up and you don’t concentrate on it at the beginning. You think, ‘Well, I’m going to wait until I really have a

convenient time.’ Somehow, things get filled up and it gets hard to find that time. Or you get your check and you think, ‘Well, when I get everything else caught up and finally situated, I am going to start tithing and being diligent with God.’ If you leave God for last, you never find a way to fit Him in. The only place God will fit in is the first place. When God comes in first, He makes every thing else fit. When we leave God out, somehow, there is never enough left for God. So that’s an important principle.

The people were stirred up to return and to finish the work of God. A lesson was to be learned.

Haggai 2:11-12, “‘Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Now, ask the priests concerning the law, saying, ‘If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?’”’ Then the priests answered and said, ‘No.’”

If somebody brought in a sacrifice offering, the priests were carrying it in a garment and if somehow the edge of the garment touched something else, was holiness transmitted to what they touched?

Verses 13-14, “And Haggai said, ‘If one who is unclean because of a dead body touches any of these, will it be unclean?’ So the priests answered and said, ‘It shall be unclean.’ Then Haggai answered and said [here’s the point], ‘So is this people, and so is this nation before Me,’ says the Lord, ‘and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.’”

It was a matter of priorities. Could the people live their life in any old sinful way, and did the fact that they were coming into contact with the work of God (building the temple and doing God’s work) transmit holiness to them and make it okay regardless of what they were doing?

It’s sort of the premise that you can go out and live like the devil the rest of the week, warm a seat in church on Saturday and somehow be better off for it. Some people have the idea that it doesn’t matter what you do as long as you show up at church. Somehow, it’s like some of God sort of rubs off on you and it’s okay. Well, he lies, steals, fornicates, gets drunk and does this “stuff” all week, but he goes to confession every Sunday morning. He’s a good fellow. It does not work that way.

The point God was making through Haggai was that the people were not to operate under the illusion that they could live any way they wanted to live. Just because they were involved in doing God’s work of building the temple and doing something holy, that did not make up for the

other “stuff” they weren’t doing. It didn’t work that way. Holiness didn’t transmit itself to everything in which it came into contact, but uncleanness did. If they came in and they were unclean, then everything they touched was unclean. So, the point is if we are going to do the work of God, we are to be clean.

It ties in with the admonition of one of the other prophets.

Isaiah 52:11, “...Be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Eternal.”

We can’t think that our involvement in doing the work makes us holy. There have been people who have operated that way in the local Church. They have sort of equated their spirituality with the fact of doing certain works of service. They were spending all the time serving and helping in this or that way and used that as though it made up for a lack of personal prayer, Bible study and personal Christianity in their own lives. Well, it doesn’t work that way. It’s not that the good of what we are doing sort of rubs off and rubs out everything else.

If we are not right and our heart’s not right, it has a contaminating effect. If we are unclean spiritually, then that has a contaminating effect on our service. When there is corruption that exists, just because it exists within the scope of God’s people, God’s Church or God’s work, it doesn’t excuse it nor can you make up for it. In fact, it has a contaminating effect. That’s the point that Haggai brought out here. If the people were really going to do God’s work and have God’s blessing, then they needed to straighten up.

Verse 14, “Then Haggai answered and said, ‘So is this people, and so is this nation before Me,’ says the Lord, ‘and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.’”

Our sacrifice, our service, is unclean if our attitude and our conduct is not what it ought to be. So, first, God wants *us* more than He wants just simply our money, our time or something we can do. God doesn’t need the things that we can do. We need God. **God can take us and use us if we yield to Him first and foremost. We have that emphasis here in the book of Haggai.**

As we come to the book of Zechariah, we find that he was contemporary with Haggai. In fact, according to Zechariah 1:1, his prophecy begins two months after Haggai begins his prophecy. Zechariah covers a little broader scope of things. Haggai dealt primarily with the work of God and there are, certainly, prophetic implications for the end time work of God. You can go through Haggai and notice there are a number of

references that tie in clearly to a time beyond simply the rebuilding of the second temple. There are references that deal with the time of the Messiah's coming and events that are connected in that way. Haggai 2:21-22 talks about a time when God shakes the heavens and the earth and overthrows the thrones of kingdoms. So, there are, certainly, very direct prophetic implications of the message of Haggai applying to the work of God.

But while Zechariah has implications of that, it is a more general prophecy. **It deals with more prophetic subjects.** It is a longer book. **Zechariah opens up with ten visions that are described in the first six chapters.** We want to briefly note these ten visions. We will see a little bit of what they mean and will see some things that very directly tie in the book of Zechariah to the time where we are today. Zechariah was contemporary with Haggai.

The **first vision** that Zechariah sees is Zechariah 1:8, "I saw by night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse, and it stood among the myrtle trees in the hollow; and behind him were [three other] horses: red, sorrel, and white."

Zechariah asked the same question you and I would have asked.

Verses 9-12, "Then I said, 'My Lord, what are these?' So the angel who talked with me said to me, 'I will show you what they are.' And the man who stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, 'These are the ones whom the Lord has sent to walk to and fro throughout the earth.' So they answered the Angel of the Lord, who stood among the myrtle trees, and said, 'We have walked to and fro throughout the earth, and behold, all the earth is resting quietly.' Then the Angel of the Lord answered and said, 'O Lord of hosts, how long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which You were angry these seventy years?'"

By that time, it had been a period of almost seventy years since destruction had come there. We have this vision of these four individuals.

Hold your place and go back to Revelation 7. You will find four horsemen are mentioned back there.

Revelation 7:1-2, "After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the winds should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the

earth and the sea." These four angelic beings that are described here tie in with Zechariah.

We find the first vision Zechariah had, in chapter 1. When we go to Zechariah 6, he ends up with pretty much the same thing.

Zechariah 6:1-3, "Then I turned and raised my eyes and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of bronze. With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot dappled [grizzle or speckled] horses—strong steeds."

Verse 5, "And the angel answered and said to me, 'These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth.'"

It talks about the various directions.

Verse 6, "The one with the black horses is going to the north country, the white are going after them, and the dappled are going toward the south country." We have described here four angelic creatures, four angelic beings, which are sent out into the four quarters of the earth, so to speak. They go forth from God's throne and go back and report to Him.

Zechariah's set of ten visions opens with something that is related to that, and closes with something that is related to that. We see a reference back in Revelation 7:1 to these four angels standing on the four quarters of the earth. Zechariah opens up with a vision. There is quite a bit of correlation between some of Zechariah and some of Revelation. We will go into greater detail in some of that in a later Bible study when we cover the book of Revelation.

The question comes up as to how much longer God's punishment upon Judah will last.

Zechariah 1:17, the answer is given, "...The Lord will again comfort Zion, and will again choose Jerusalem."

The **second vision** begins in v. 18, "Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there were four horns." Horns generally symbolize kings or kingdoms. Zechariah wondered what these were.

Verse 19, "And I said to the angel who talked with me, 'What are these?' So he answered me, 'These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.'" These specific four are not cataloged as to what they were, but the Jews have traditionally reckoned them as the four kingdoms that destroyed and scattered Israel and Judah: Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians and Syrians. Those were the empires or kingdoms

that warred against and scattered either Israel or Judah.

The **third vision** is in vv. 20-21, "Then the Lord showed me four craftsmen [KJV, "carpenters"]. And I said, 'What are these coming to do?' So he said, 'These are the horns that scattered Judah, so that no one could lift up his head; but the craftsmen are coming to terrify them, to cast out the horns of the nations that lifted up their horn against the land of Judah to scatter it.'"

These represent those whom God used to restore Judah. There are implications of end-time fulfillment, some of which may not be entirely clear to us because we are not at that particular point. The Jews have traditionally applied the four horns to the four kingdoms that made war against Israel and Judah. And they have often tied in the four carpenters with the Maccabees who led the Macadaean revolt and restored independence by driving out the Syrians who were the successors of the other kingdoms that had warred against Judah. That may have historical application, but I am not persuaded that's the only application. There is perhaps some end-time fulfillment on it. But there is a certain amount of historical correlation of kingdoms that scattered their power and individuals that God used to bring about a restoration.

The **fourth vision** begins in Zechariah 2:1-2, "Then I raised my eyes and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand. So I said, 'Where are you going?' And he said to me, 'To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length.'"

You can compare that with Revelation 11 and you will see that there is a distinct connection.

Revelation 11:1, "Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, 'Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.'"

Then it discusses the two witnesses.

Verses 3-4, "And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lamp stands standing before the God of the earth."

Zechariah 2:2, "So I said, 'Where are you going?' And he said to me, 'To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length.'"

You can also compare that with Ezekiel 9 where God describes setting a mark as he passed through the city.

Ezekiel 9:4, "...Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a

mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it."

Zechariah 2:4-5, "...Run, speak to this young man, saying: 'Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it. For I,' says the Lord, 'will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.'"

Part of the message here is descriptive of the Millennium.

Verse 8, "For thus says the Lord of hosts: 'He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye.'" God says, 'I will deal with that.'

Verse 9, "For surely I will shake My hand against them, and they shall become spoil for their servants. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me."

The **fifth vision**, a vision of Joshua the high priest, is in Zechariah 3:1, "Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel."

He is described as being cleaned up.

Verses 4-5, "Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, 'Take away the filthy garments from him.' And to him he said, 'See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes.' And I said, 'Let them put a clean turban on his head.' So they put a clean turban on his head, and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the Lord stood by."

He was representative of the priesthood. He was the religious leader and high priest of the Jews that had been re-gathered. There is a vision concerning his being cleaned up, forgiven and made clean.

The **sixth vision** is given in Zechariah 4:2-3, "And he said to me, 'What do you see?' So I said, 'I am looking, and there is a lamp stand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps. Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left.'"

Verse 11, "Then I answered and said to him, 'What are these two olive trees, one at the right of the lamp stand and the other at its left?'"

Verse 14, "So he said, 'These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.'"

If you tie that in with Revelation 11, you find a picture, a prophetic description which ties in with the two witnesses. Zerubbabel, the governor

of Judah, together with Joshua, the high priest, represented the leadership of God's people at that time. They are used as types of the two witnesses that God will use at the end time. When you go through Zechariah 3 and 4, this is made plain. The point is God works through human instruments.

There are certainly parallels to the way in which God has worked through His servants at one time in history and the way He works through servants at other times. Many of God's servants that He has used in His work in times past, in the things that He has done and the way that God has used them, have served as a type or as a representative of something that God is going to do yet future, particularly at the time of the end.

The reference here was a message to Zerubbabel, the governor, who God had used to begin His work of rebuilding the temple. God would use him to finish the job that God had used him to start. Certainly, others came along and continued the work of God, but Zerubbabel was used to finish what he had been used to start.

That principle was a parallel that many of us focused on (and Mr. Herbert Armstrong himself focused on) back at a period in the aftermath of Mr. Herbert Armstrong's heart attack in 1977 and his subsequent restored involvement in the work in the spring of '78. Much of the 70s were in many ways very lean years. Certainly, God used him to finish up the phase of His work that He had used him to begin. That doesn't mean that one particular servant of God lasts forever, but certainly there are parallels. At that particular point in time, Mr. Armstrong said, 'I know how long I will live. I will live as long as God wants me to live and as long as the job that God wants me to do is still there.' That's the case with all of God's servants down through time. God has a particular phase of His work that various individuals may have been used by Him to do.

Here was an encouragement to Zerubbabel to go ahead and finish up the temple and to do the things that God was inspiring Haggai and Zechariah to tell him. God would use him to finish what he had been used to start—that particular phase of God's work. These two leaders of God's work at this particular point in time (the two anointed ones in Zechariah 4:14) are parallels with the two witnesses that are mentioned in Revelation 11.

The **seventh vision** is given in Zechariah 5:1-2, "Then I turned and raised my eyes, and saw there a flying scroll. And he said to me, 'What do you see?' So I answered, 'I see a flying scroll. Its length is twenty cubits and its width ten cubits.'"

Here is a scroll floating in the air. Its length is about thirty feet and width about fifteen feet.

Verse 3, "Then he said to me, 'This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole earth: "Every thief shall be expelled," according to what is on this side of the scroll; and "every perjurer shall be expelled," according to what is on that side of it.'"

So, it is a curse that goes out. The scroll is symbolic of containing this curse that God sends on those who have dealt treacherously with lying and stealing. It has to do with an end-time curse that is going to come about. Actually, it is the end-time curse that is going to come upon Babylon the Great.

Verses 4-5, "'I will send out the curse,' says the Lord of hosts; 'It shall enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My name. It shall remain in the midst of his house and consume it, with its timber and stones.' Then the angel who talked with me came out and said to me, 'Lift your eyes now, and see what this is that goes forth.'"

The **eighth vision** is in v. 6, "So I asked, 'What is it?' And he said, 'It is a basket that is going forth.' He also said, 'This is their resemblance throughout the earth.'" This was the symbol of the sinners mentioned above (v. 3) who had been involved in lying and stealing. It was something that had economic implications because the symbol is a vessel, an ephah-like vessel, which is a large vessel that would hold about eight gallons. This big vessel that was used to hold or collect grain was a symbol of international commerce. It was a vessel by which grain was traded back and forth. We are told here that there's a curse that goes forth for those involved in lying and stealing.

We are told in the next vision this great eight-gallon measure of grain that was symbolic of international commerce and trade was symbolic of the sinners mentioned above (v. 3). In other words, those who were involved in lying and stealing and, "... 'This is their resemblance throughout the earth'" (v. 6).

In Amos 8:5, we read of those who make the ephah small and the shekel great—in other words, economic manipulation, selling less and less for more and more.

We are dealing, right now, with some of the implications of that. We are on the brink of seeing some major financial scandals (that are worldwide in their implications) of banks and trading companies and all sorts of things. I don't think it is going to unravel in terms of people

really realizing where the “buck stops” until it gets to the end.

You read in Revelation 18 of Babylon the Great, the great end-time economic combination. Babylon is an economic combine as well as a religious, military and political combine. The economic implications are emphasized in Revelation 18. All the merchants weep and lament (Revelation 18:11) because of this tremendous commercial endeavor. Even the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16-17; 14:11) has economic implications and is tied in with participating in economic activity.

So, here is an indictment of those who have manipulated through lying, stealing and manipulating the world’s economy. That ties in with Babylon the Great from the economic standpoint, and there is a curse that is going to come forth. The curse is the destruction of Babylon the Great. If you read this and then read Revelation 18, it sort of ties in.

Revelation 18:16-18, “and saying, “Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.” And every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, “What is like this great city?”” Everything has gone up in smoke.

So, here is the curse that goes forth, and it ties in with this symbol of economic activity, which we are told in Zechariah 5:6-7, “...‘This is the resemblance [of their iniquity] throughout all the earth: here is a lead disc lifted up, and this is a woman sitting inside the basket.’” They had this vessel that was the symbol of economic activity (this eighth vision), but when he lifted up the weight, instead of it being filled with grain, what’s inside? –A woman. And the woman is the personification of lawlessness (wickedness).

Verse 8, “then he said, ‘This is Wickedness!’ And he thrust her down into the basket, and threw the lead cover over its mouth.”

The ninth vision in v. 9 is the woman being transported back—removed from Palestine to Shinar—to the bottomless pit. The woman was lifted up in this vessel and transported.

Verses 10-11, “...‘Where are they carrying the basket?’ And he said to me, ‘To build a house for it in the land of Shinar [Babylon]; when it is ready, the basket [ephah, the symbol of such sinners and their guilt] will be set there on its base.’” The woman who’s actually inside (at

the heart and core) you read about in Revelation 17.

Revelation 17:5, “...MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”

In Revelation 18, you read about some of the same things, but you read it from a different slant. The emphasis in Revelation 18 is on the economic aspect. Revelation 17 deals more with the religious and, to an extent, military and political aspects. But you see it is one big new world order (to coin a phrase). The phrase is not original on my part, but one that is being handed about. I think some are going to find that this new world order is not exactly what they had in mind. Zechariah described it a long time ago.

Finally, the tenth vision is in Zechariah 6:1, “Then I turned and raised my eyes and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of bronze.” This is a tie-in with the first vision. It sort of ends up where we started.

Verses 2-5, “With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot dappled horses—strong steeds. Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, ‘What are these, my lord?’ And the angel answered and said to me, ‘These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth.’” It describes that.

Verse 12-13, “Then speak to him, saying, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, saying: ‘Behold, the Man [Christ] whose name is the BRANCH! [In my Bible that’s all capitalized and probably is in yours, too.] From His place He shall branch out, and He shall build the temple of the Lord. Yes, He shall build the temple of the Lord. He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne; so He shall be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.’”” He’s talking about the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Coming down a little further, Zechariah 8 describes a little bit of insight into Jerusalem during the Millennium.

Zechariah 8:3-6, “Thus says the Lord: “I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, The Mountain of the Lord of hosts, the Holy Mountain.” Thus says the Lord of hosts, “Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age. The streets of the

city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.” Thus says the Lord of hosts: “If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, will it also be marvelous in My eyes?” says the Lord of hosts.”

God says that time is going to come, the time of restoration (Acts 3:21).

Jerusalem is not yet a place that’s safe for little children to be out playing and for old men and women to be able to walk down the street. You have terrorism going on. Certainly, this isn’t descriptive of any city I know. Now, you’d better be off the streets or you would get run over, knocked in the head, mugged or something.

It’s descriptive of what it’s going to be like. Streets are going to be a safe place. Children are going to be able to play; elderly people will be able to walk not having to fear being molested, attacked, robbed or in any way dealt with in that way.

In vv. 7-8, God talks about re-gathering His people.

Verse 13, “And it shall come to pass that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel [there is a distinction], so I will save you, and you shall be a blessing. Do not fear, let your hands be strong.”

Verse 23, “Thus says the Lord of hosts: “In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’”” People are going to want to learn God’s truth. They are not going to be prejudiced against the Jews or anybody else at that time. In fact, they are going to want to learn God’s ways and will be seeking out God’s people.

Zechariah 9:9, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you: He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.” We find the fulfillment of this prophecy back in the New Testament. Matthew 21:4-11 is Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

It talks about God saving His people.

Zechariah 10:3, “My anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the goatherds. For the Lord of hosts will visit His flock, the house of Judah, and will make them as His royal horse in the battle.”

Verse 6, “I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph. I will bring them back, because I have mercy on them. They shall be as though I had not cast them aside; for I am the Lord their God, and I will hear them.”

Again, there is the distinction between Israel and Judah.

Verses 9-10, “I will sow them among the peoples, and they shall remember Me in far countries; they shall live, together with their children, and they shall return. I will also bring them back from the land of Egypt, and gather them from Assyria. I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon, until no more room is found for them.”

Zechariah 11:7 (a description of two staves that are called Beauty and Bands), “So I fed the flock for slaughter, in particular the poor of the flock. I took for myself two staves: the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bonds [KJV, “Bands”]; and I fed the flock.”

These are symbolic references with what God is going to do. The reference has to do with the covenant that God has made. The staff that is called “Bands” (or Union) had to do with covenants that God had made and God’s working with His people. We find the reference having to do with shepherds. “...I fed my flock for slaughter, in particular the poor of the flock. I took for myself two staves: the one called Beauty, and the other called Bonds [or Bands], and I fed the flock.”

Verses 10-13, “And I took my staff, Beauty, and cut it in two, that I might break the covenant which I had made with all the peoples. So it was broken on that day. Thus the poor of the flock, who were watching me, knew that it was the word of the Lord. Then I said to them, ‘If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain.’ So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me, ‘Throw it to the potter’—that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord for the potter.”

This first staff has to do with Jesus Christ and His betrayal by Judas Iscariot. The second one has to do with the national covenant that God made with Israel and Judah and breaking the band of brotherhood between Judah and Israel (v. 14). One has to do with the spiritual aspect and the other with the physical aspect of God’s covenant with His people. It has to do with the sacrifice of the Messiah, His betrayal and then also the captivity of Israel and Judah.

As we come down into chapter 12, we get into some things that really tie in with the headlines in today’s newspapers.

Zechariah 12:2-3, “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness [KJV, “trembling”], to all the surrounding peoples,”

when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy [KJV, “burdensome”] stone for all peoples; all who would heave will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.”

He talks about Jerusalem becoming a cup of trembling (or a cup of poison) and a burdensome stone for all people. Everybody who gets tangled up with it is going to get cut. This has been the case since God has been re-gathering Judah to Jerusalem.

In v. 5, he talks about the governors of Judah. That’s the ones who have been gathered to Jerusalem.

What are we having right now? The focus of things in the Middle East has to do with Jerusalem. They are talking about getting together and negotiating in the Middle East. Well, the real issue and the issue that is not going to be resolved is the issue of Jerusalem. The Jews told the Arabs, ‘We will sit down and talk with you. We will meet, but nobody in your delegation can have been born in Jerusalem.’ You know why they said that? They didn’t want anybody there that could even begin to remotely say, ‘We have a claim; I’m from there. I was born there.’ The Jews say, ‘We are not even going to talk to any Arabs that were born in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is ours and there is nothing to even negotiate about. We will discuss with you some of these other things.’

That is not going to be satisfactory. But anybody who has followed the situation knows that is one issue that is simply not negotiable.

Verse 6, “‘In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a fire-pan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left, but Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place—Jerusalem.’” That’s pretty descriptive of what’s been going on over there since 1948.

KJV, “...the governors of Judah have been like a hearth of fire among the wood, like a torch of fire among sheaves of stubble.” Have you ever seen a stubble field burn? It goes pretty fast. That’s the way most of those wars have been over there. The governors of Judah have been like somebody set fire to the stubble. Poof, it’s gone.

That’s very descriptive of the six-day war back in 1967 that saw the recapture of Jerusalem—after almost nineteen hundred years of Jewish exile from Jerusalem, their recapture of the old city. Anybody who saw on television the filmed

reports of the first Jewish soldiers to pour into the old city and to reach the wailing wall knows there isn’t any way in the world they will ever, ever, ever voluntarily turn loose of it. For nineteen hundred years, they would close every Passover service with the prayer, “next year in Jerusalem.” They didn’t do that for all those centuries simply to turn around and give it away. God talked about the fact that Judah was going to be re-gathered there in Jerusalem.

Zechariah 12 is descriptive of the end time. The events that have occurred over there had to occur because there was a time period when there weren’t Jews in Jerusalem. The Jews didn’t control Jerusalem. Zechariah 12 describes the time when they do.

He talks about when Christ returns, how he will save the tents of Judah first (v. 7) and how He will deal with the nations that come against Jerusalem (v. 9).

Zechariah 12:10, “‘And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.’” There will be a great mourning in Jerusalem when Jesus Christ returns to intervene and save.

Of course, at that time, all nations will have been gathered to Jerusalem. He will destroy the armies there in the Valley of Jehoshaphat and save the people. At that point, the scales are going to fall from their eyes.

He says, ‘I am going to pour upon them the Spirit of grace and supplication.’ Then He is going to begin to deal with them spiritually, and they are going to come to repentance. They are going to look upon Him whom they have pierced—the One for whom centuries earlier they yelled, ‘Crucify Him, crucify Him, His blood be upon us and upon our children forever’ (Mark 15:13-14; Matthew 27:25). They are then going to mourn and grieve and deeply repent. They are going to realize that their Messiah had come centuries earlier only to be rejected and crucified. But this time they are going to understand! Then God is going to begin to deal with them.

Zechariah 13:1 talks about cleaning away the sin and the uncleanness.

Zechariah 13:4, “‘And it shall be in that day that every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies; they will not wear a robe of coarse hair to deceive.’”

Verse 5 is a little bit funny. It talks about the false prophets and how they are going to be ashamed. ““But he will say, ‘I am no prophet, I am a farmer; for a man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.’”” In that time, nobody is going to want to claim or admit they used to be a priest or a preacher—to be on television. No, you are not going to get them to admit it. ‘No, I’m a farmer. That’s all I am. I am not a prophet. I’m nothing but a farmer.’ They are not going to want to admit to the fact that they deceived people for years. They will be doing something constructive for a change.

Zechariah 14:1-2, “Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.” The issue involves half the city, the old city. That’s what they are fighting about. There is going to be a multinational force that will ultimately come against Jerusalem.

But when that occurs, vv. 3-5, “Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the Lord my God will come, and all the saints with You.”

Verses 8-9, “And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; in both summer and winter it shall occur. And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—‘The Lord is one,’ and His name one.”

Verse 11, “The people shall dwell in it; and no longer shall there be utter destruction, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.” That’s certainly not true now, but it will be true in the Millennium.

Verse 16, “And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.” If anybody doesn’t want to keep the Feast, God’s going to

convince them, and they are going to want to do it. So, there is description that certainly shows the Feast will be kept in the Millennium. God’s festivals are going to be observed. The Feast of Tabernacles is clearly a time that looks forward to the time when Christ is going to rule over all the earth.

Malachi was written a little later than Haggai and Zechariah. He was a much younger contemporary of Haggai and Zechariah. He would have been contemporary with Ezra and Nehemiah. Haggai and Zechariah were evidently young men as prophets. Malachi came along perhaps forty to fifty years after Haggai and Zechariah had begun their prophecy. Tradition retains record that they were contemporary, so we would conclude from that they must have been fairly young at the time.

It’s just the same as we have those who were around and in various positions in World War II. Now we are at a later point and some of those people are still in prominent positions—President Bush was in the military service during World War II. So, it is not impossible to have an overlap of forty to fifty years.

Malachi comes along contemporary with Ezra and Nehemiah. There was sort of a lull after the completion of the temple. We really don’t read anything else of what transpired. We pick up the story later in the days of Nehemiah and Ezra. You will find that if you read through the books of Ezra and Nehemiah and notice the chronology carefully.

When we pick up the story again, we find that attraction to the world around had sort of sapped the spiritual strength and fervor of the people of God.

Ezra and Nehemiah were together with Malachi. Nehemiah was the governor; Ezra was the priest. Malachi was the prophet. God raised them up to restore His work. Malachi represents sort of a concluding or a summing up in terms of the prophets. The work that God did, you can tie in a great deal of it to sort of the aftermath of some of the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah. There are, certainly, things that we can glean from it.

“Malachi” means “my messenger.” **It has to do with the return of Jesus Christ and preparing the way for that.**

The book of Malachi opens up in chapter 1 by **focusing in on the sovereignty of God.** God chooses. He elects and makes choices. He indicts the priesthood for showing disrespect for God by treating God’s service casually and carelessly, by not being strict in their obedience to God and by having a casual, careless attitude that shows a

lack of respect for God—an attitude of people who are not zealous for God and for not doing things exactly the way God says.

Malachi 2:1-2, “And now, O priests, this commandment is for you. If you will not hear, and if you will not take it to heart, to give glory to My name,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already, because you do not take it to heart.’”

He describes the responsibility of the priesthood. Verses 6-7, “The law of truth was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, and turned many away from iniquity. For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.” That’s the job of God’s ministry, and it was the job of the priesthood anciently. They should be a source of the knowledge of God’s way. They should teach the people God’s law and should be God’s messenger.

The priesthood of Judah was indicted.

Verses 8-9, “But you have departed out of the way and caused many to stumble at the law. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi,’ says the Lord of hosts. ‘Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base before all the people, because you have not kept My ways but have shown partiality in the law.’” They have dealt treacherously, have compromised and have not been as they ought.

Verse 11, “Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, for Judah has profaned the Lord’s holy institution which He loves: He has married the daughter of a foreign god.” God is going to deal with that.

Verse 14, “Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’ Because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant.”

Verse 16, “For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce....” There had developed sort of a compromising, carnal attitude of trying to elevate self-will far above God’s will.

Verse 17, “You have wearied the Lord with your words; yet you say, ‘In what way have we wearied Him?’ In that you say, ‘Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them,’ or, ‘Where is the God of justice?’” ‘You have made excuses for those who do evil. You feel like God is way off somewhere and you don’t have to worry about Him.’

Malachi 3:1, “Behold, I send My messenger [John the Baptist], and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,’ says the Lord of hosts.” John the Baptist came as a messenger.

You can go to Mark 1:1-14 and Luke 1:13-17. Mark 1:3, “...“Prepare the way of the Lord, make His path straight.””

Christ came as the messenger of the covenant. He came as the messenger of the covenant and He is going to come back to complete the New Covenant and to refine, purge (Malachi 3:2-3) and to come to judgment.

Malachi 3:5, “And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and the fatherless, and against those who turn away an alien—because they do not fear Me,’ says the Lord of hosts.”

The term “sorcerers” is used two or three other places. There are several different words that are used in the Hebrew language referring to sorcerers and magicians. This particular word is not really a word that means “magician” in that sense. It comes from a root word in the Hebrew that means, literally, “to shred,” as in one who shreds drugs into a potion. The quote from the Hebrew Lexicon on this is sort of interesting. If you are looking in terms of “Christ coming back to judgment and to be a swift witness,” and to deal with the problems of society, who’s He coming back to deal with? Is the worse thing going on some little tiny obscure thing where somebody is practicing and muttering incantations somewhere?

One of the most pervasive problems that exist on the face of the earth right now is the problem with drugs—the international drug trade and all of the tragedy that occurs. Well, He says (in modern parlance), ‘I am going near you to judgment and I am going to be a swift witness against the drug dealers.’ That’s what this term means. And He’ll be swift against the adulterers. God says, ‘I am going to deal with those who have been involved with the drug trade. I am going to deal with immorality and its consequences. I will deal against false swearers and against those who have, through various means, taken advantage of and oppressed through manipulation and all sorts of legal subterfuge, those who are least able to defend themselves—the wage earners, the widows and the fatherless.’

Who does some of the economic manipulation (the major bank failures, etc.) hurt the most? The wage earner, people on fixed incomes and the elderly are the ones hurting.

The point that God is making is that Christ comes back to judgment, and there are going to be some people who are going to have to give some answers. They are going to be called into account. Do you think that with all of the drug trade, pornography, the economic manipulation and mistreatment and taking advantage of people, there's not going to be any calling into account for that? You better believe it! There's going to be a reordering of society and there are going to be some things that are going to have to be dealt with. When you go through and understand what's being indicted here, it has to do with the way God views the major areas of problems in the end time and the major segments of society that are going to have to be confronted—everything from all of these various things.

Verse 6, “For I am the Lord, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.” God says, ‘I am consistent. That’s why you’re still here.’

Verse 8, “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, “In what way have we robbed You?” In tithes and offerings.” It discusses the subject of tithing. The place to start is to put God first and God will take care of things.

He indicts an attitude about those who may go through the motions of serving God, but they do it in a bad attitude and are envious of what the world gets by with.

Verses 14-15, “You have said, “It is vain to serve God; what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked as mourners before the Lord of hosts? So now we call the proud blessed, for those who do wickedness are raised up; Yes, those who tempt God go free.””

People may go through the motions of serving God, but their attitude stinks. They sort of look enviously at what the world gets by with and say, ‘Boy, I wish I weren’t in the Church. Boy, I could really make some money. I could really do “this” or “that.”’ God says, ‘Fine, you are going to have to give an account because God takes that sort of an attitude personally.’

He says in v. 13, “Your words have been harsh against Me,’ says the Lord, ‘yet you say, “What have we spoken against You?”” Frankly, this is an attitude of people who are going to go through the tribulation.

On the other hand, v. 16 talks about a book of remembrance being written for those who feared the Eternal and meditated upon His name.

Verse 17, “‘They shall be Mine,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.’” It is clearly a distinction between those who serve God half-heartedly and in a bad attitude and those whose heart is really in it. God is going to return and discern between the righteous and the wicked (v. 18).

In Malachi 4 is proof that the hellfire of the Bible is not the hellfire of Protestantism and Catholicism. It is not an ever-burning hellfire that people are going to be tortured in forever. It is a hellfire that is going to burn up the wicked and leave them neither root nor branch (v. 1).

Malachi 4:3, “‘You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this,’ says the Lord of hosts.” It talks about destruction, about burning up.

Then it ends up, v. 4, “Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.” The last thing the prophets tell us is to remember the law. People read their Bible straight through and the last thing they read in the Old Testament is “remember the law of Moses.” They turn the page and promptly think they are supposed to forget the Law of Moses. Makes a lot of sense, doesn’t it?

Why is it that the last thing God says is to remember the Law of Moses and all the statutes and judgments, and people then turn the page and say, ‘I’m sure glad we can forget all of that’? Isn’t it interesting! The Old Testament ends up with the admonition “remember the Law of Moses My servant.” The New Testament opens up with, in Matthew 5, the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:17, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” So, people immediately forget the Law of Moses and think that Christ came to destroy it. He ends up by saying “remember” and starts off by saying He didn’t come to destroy any of what went before. So people get all “balled up.” How plain does God have to get?

You and I read that and it is very simple. How many hundreds and thousands of scholars have gone through and debated the Hebrew of Malachi and the Greek of Matthew and never got the point. They didn’t keep the Sabbath. They didn’t keep the Holy Days. They didn’t do any of

these things. They never got the point. So, remember the Law of Moses.

He ends up by saying in vv. 5-6, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse [with utter destruction].”

Now, clearly, John the Baptist came, as Luke 1:17 shows, in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way for the first coming of Christ (Matthew 3:2). Christ is coming again, and if it was necessary that there be a forerunner to prepare the way for the first coming, certainly there is to be a forerunner to prepare the way for the second coming.

That, of course, is why God raised up Mr. Herbert Armstrong. This work of which we are a part represents a continuation of the work that God raised up through Mr. Herbert Armstrong, going back to the 1930s. He raised up this end-time work through him and used him as one who was to restore the knowledge of the true religion in Israel—just as Elijah and John the Baptist did.

So, we end up here in Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. We end up with books that were written after the exile; **books that focused in on the importance of doing the work and reviving the work that God was doing through His people.**

There are many lessons and parallels that are applicable for God’s people throughout all ages, and particularly here in the end time, as we look toward the culmination and completion of the great plan that God is working out.

Next Bible study we will begin a new series on the Writings, the third division of the Old Testament.

Bible Study # 74 Questions

SURVEY OF THE MINOR PROPHETS SERIES

Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi

1. What did the Work of God in Haggai's day consist of?
2. Why were the people having economic problems?
3. Explain Haggai 2:6-9.
4. Explain Haggai 2:11-14.
5. What does Zechariah 1:12 refer to?
6. Show from the context of Zechariah 3 that the account of Joshua has a prophetic as well as an historic fulfillment.
7. Show from the context of Zechariah 4 that the account of Zerubbabel has a prophetic as well as an historic fulfillment.
8. Use other scriptures to explain the significance of the "flying roll" of Zechariah 5.
9. What will ultimately be the attitude of people toward the Jews?
10. Explain Zechariah 9:9.
11. Explain Zechariah 11:7, 10-13.
12. Explain Zechariah 11:14-17.
13. After the Millennium begins, what will be the attitude of present-day worldly ministers?
14. Prove where Christ and the saints will go after they meet Him in the air.
15. What change in the geography of Palestine will take place then?
16. Prove that the Feast of Tabernacles will be universally kept during the Millennium.
17. Explain the significance of the name Malachi.
18. Explain Malachi 1:6-8.
19. What is God's attitude toward divorce?
20. Prove from Malachi that there is no forever-burning hell fire.

Bible Study # 75
August 27, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Introduction

This evening we want to get into a new series. I **want to give you an introduction to a series on the Writings**. The Writings is the third division of the Old Testament (the Hebrew Scriptures) as the Jews have traditionally divided them.

Jesus talked about it in the book of Luke. Notice in the very last chapter of the book of Luke. Luke 24:44-45, “Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms [Writings] concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” Jesus Christ defined the Scriptures as consisting of the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms or the Law, the Prophets and the Writings.

This third division, the Writings, was sometimes termed “the Psalms” because Psalms was the first book of the section and it was the longest book of the section. From the time of Ezra and Nehemiah down till today, the Jews have always preserved what they have termed the “Tripartite Division of the Old Testament” (the Hebrew Scriptures). That simply means three sections of it—the Law, the Prophets and the Writings.

Now the **Law** is the most basic revelation of God. It introduces God as the Creator and reveals to us God’s instruction. The word “law” (“Torah” in the Hebrew) is broader and more inclusive than what we simply think of as “law” in English. When we say “law,” we tend to think of a list of rules that are written out: You shall do this; you shall not do that. That is the law, but that’s not all there is to law. Law can consist of more than that. Law can consist of illustrations and examples. Torah is instruction.

God sometimes instructs us by examples. You read the story of certain people—we have examples that we should not follow and we have examples that we should follow. Part of the way that God instructs us in His Word is the testimonies. They are a part of the law and so are the commandments and the statutes. The law is God’s most basic revelation.

The **Prophets**, in that sense, are commentary of the law. The Prophets are based on the blessings and the curses of the law. The law says you will be blessed if you obey and cursed if you disobey. These are the blessings and curses found in the

law in Leviticus 26. The Prophets simply tell us what happens when you obey and what happens when you disobey.

The Law is the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. They are the most basic revelation of God.

The Prophets were termed the Former and the Latter Prophets. The Former Prophets were books we would normally consider historical: Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. The Latter Prophets were the ones we normally think of as prophetic: the Major Prophets of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel and then the twelve Minor Prophets that we have just finished going through in the most recent set of Bible studies. The Major and Minor Prophets were called the Latter Prophets.

Actually, the distinction between history and prophecy is an arbitrary distinction. It simply depends on where you’re standing in the course of time. God inhabits eternity (Isaiah 57:15). He doesn’t make the distinction between history and prophecy as we do. He calls those things that do not exist as though they did (Romans 4:17). He declares the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). That’s a little different perspective than you and I have because we inhabit finite time (here and now). To us there is a very real distinction between history and prophecy. God does not make the same sort of distinction.

Much of what was written as prophecy that related to the first coming of Christ is not prophecy anymore; it is history. The prophecies of Christ’s first coming have been fulfilled, so in that sense, that’s history. Much of what we consider prophecy now, in a few years will be taught as history in Tomorrow’s World. The events that we are seeing shape up in Europe (that we are calling prophecy) is going to be in the history books in a few years. That will be a part of what we are teaching people as a part of history during the time period of the Millennium.

So, all of those books ultimately have a connection. They all tell the story of what happens when you obey and what happens when you disobey the law. In that sense, they form a commentary on the law. They focus in on consequences, good or bad.

The **Writings**, the final third division, are a little different. One thing that nearly all of the books of the Writings have in common is that they are poetic. There is a lot of poetry and poetic writing in this section. The book of Psalms dominates the section. The Writings are sort of anchored on either end by a lengthy book.

You could divide the Writings into three sections. The **first** section would be books of poetry and wisdom: Psalms, Proverbs and Job. The **second** would be the five Festival Scrolls: Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther. Each is read at a festival season. Then the **third** section of the Writings is what would be termed the “post-exilic” books. In other words, the ones that were written after the exile—the ones that were written after Nebuchadnezzar had taken the Jews captive. Daniel, at the end of the Old Testament, sets the stage for Revelation, which concludes the New Testament and the Bible. Then Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles come at the end, telling the story of the re-gathering. They sort of give the wrap-up of the Old Testament from the standpoint of the priesthood and of Jerusalem. They tell the story in a different way than what has been done earlier. It is important to understand the distinction because they focus in on the story in a totally different way than Samuel and Kings. This final section, particularly the poetic portion of the Writings, in many ways serves to amplify the law. Poetry is easier to memorize than prose because there is a rhyme, a meter. It’s easier to learn a song than it is a page of typed text. A page of typed text would be far harder to memorize than, let’s say, a song that is written out because there is a rhyme, a meter and there’s a poetic quality that makes it more easily committed to memory.

The Psalms, in that sense, were written to be committed to memory. When you commit something to memory, it is easier to meditate upon. The Psalms are written in a poetic and repetitive fashion. It’s totally different than the way that certain other sections of the Bible are written. It is written in an entirely different way. We have to understand that different portions of the Bible are written as they are for a purpose. Some things are written simply in story flow. When you read it through, you are able to get the story flow and derive information from examples and illustrations that are used.

The Psalms are written in a way that they are “food for thought.” They are things to think about. They are written in a poetic fashion, so you can more easily commit them to memory and think about them. You can meditate upon them and turn them over in your mind.

They were utilized both for the expression of the nation or the group in terms of singing praises to God or singing songs to God. The Psalms represented the national hymnbook for Israel. It was the basis of the liturgy there in the temple as

far as the Levitical choir was concerned. They certainly show the importance of music in a society and in a culture because of the fact that God inspired this entire section that can be sung. It is there both to be sung in terms of public praise and songs to God, as well as being there to be read, meditated upon and thought about by the individual.

Proverbs and Job both sort of fit into that category as well. Proverbs has much teaching that is there. The poetry of Job does not come out in most of the English translations in the way that it did in the original. But it is written in a poetic way.

Many of the Festival Scrolls—Song of Solomon, Lamentations, and Ecclesiastes—were all written in a poetic fashion. Ruth and Esther were written more in narrative fashion.

And then, the final post-exilic books were written in narrative fashion. There is a focus that is there. One thing is that virtually every book in the Writings has a connection with royalty. Psalms primarily was written by King David; Proverbs primarily was written by Solomon, also a king. Job, we are told, was a ruler on some level in the land of Uz (Job 1:1).

Many of the Festival Scrolls had that connection. Certainly, the Song of Solomon did, of course, because Solomon was a king. Ruth sets the stage for the birth of King David. It provides a background for the family of David. It ties in that way. Lamentations is specifically written as a lament for the death of King Josiah; Ecclesiastes was written by King Solomon. Esther was a Queen over the Persian Empire.

Daniel was a prince of Judah and was the number two man in the Babylonian Empire right under Nebuchadnezzar. Ezra came back as the priest; Nehemiah came back as the royal governor governing Judah. Chronicles was written from the standpoint of the Levitical priesthood and the kings of the house of David in Jerusalem. If you go through and compare the story that Chronicles tells—by comparison to Samuel and Kings—you will find that even though the same period is covered, it’s a different story. Chronicles doesn’t focus on the things that Samuel and Kings do. Chronicles focuses primarily on King David. It begins with genealogies. I Chronicles deals with genealogies that set the stage; the rest of the book deals with the life of King David. When you get to the end of I Chronicles, you’re just getting to the end of David’s life and you have an awful lot yet to go.

II Chronicles focuses primarily on Solomon. It focuses briefly, basically, on the good kings of Judah. It focuses a little bit on Asa and Jehoshaphat. It particularly focuses in on Hezekiah and Josiah. That pretty well sums up II Chronicles.

It focuses in on the times of great revival and the great Passovers that Hezekiah and Josiah had—the great revivals. It is a focus on God’s working through the house and throne of David and the Levitical priesthood. It focuses on Jerusalem—on where God was working. It was written to finish up the Hebrew Scriptures and to answer the questions as to where God was authoritatively working because in the aftermath of that, you have three different sets of manuscripts that all claim to represent the Old Testament.

You have what the Samaritans had which is the Samaritan version of the Old Testament. You have what is called the Septuagint, which was a Greek translation found down in Egypt. You had the Masoretic text, or the Hebrew text, that the Jews had preserved. Well, if you read Chronicles, you don’t have any question as to where you need to look. Do you look to the Greeks in Egypt? Do you look to the Samaritans? Or do you look to the Jewish community centered in Jerusalem?

Well, if you read Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles and you have any question about that, I would certainly like to know what it is. Because there isn’t any way that you can read those books, understand their authority and have any question as to where you want to look for the authoritative text of the Hebrew Scriptures. It makes it plain. It was important that it be made plain because it has been a source of confusion. But those books made plain where God was working. It made plain that He wasn’t working in Samaria; He was working in Jerusalem. And Jesus bore witness of that. You remember what He told the woman at the well in Samaria?

John 4:22, “‘You [Samaritans] worship you do not know; we [Jews] know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.’”

It’s unbelievable that we have had some come along over the years (even in the Church) that have questioned that. I think of one in particular who came into a fairly high position and got all “buggy” about the fact that the Septuagint was really where you needed to look. Well, it isn’t any wonder he got off into some of the other things he got off into when he started off there.

This section of the Bible is often overlooked. Most of the books contained here are books that

maybe we don’t focus on quite as much. Many who focus on the Psalms or Proverbs in the sense of sort of reading it don’t fully understand some of the messages.

The book of Psalms is the longest book. It has many authors. King David composed the majority of it. There are a couple of things that I would like to show you on the Psalms. We are going to go through Psalms in a fair amount of detail.

Psalms was traditionally regarded by the Jews to be divided into five books—five books of the Psalms. It was considered one book for the sake of the Biblical canon, but it was comprised of five sections or five books of the Psalms.

The **first** section of the Psalms or Book One consists of Psalms 1—41. Go to the end of Psalm 41. Notice the ending.

Psalm 41:13, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel. From everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen.”—A double “Amen.” That’s the way you tell the section ended.

The **second** section of the Psalms or Book Two of Psalms is Psalms 42—72. It ends the same way.

Psalm 72:19-20, “Blessed be His glorious name forever! And let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.”

The **third** section of the Psalms or the Book Three of Psalms is Psalms 73—89.

Notice Psalm 89:52, “Blessed be the Lord forevermore! Amen and Amen.”

Psalms 1—41 is Book One. Psalms 42—72 is Book Two. Psalms 73—89 is Book Three. Psalms 90—106 is Book Four. Now notice the way Book Four and Book Five end.

Psalm 106:48, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, ‘Amen!’” And then you notice, “Praise the Lord!” “Praise the Lord” is translated from a Hebrew word that’s pretty commonly known. All of you know at least a couple of Hebrew words. You may not have known that you knew how to speak Hebrew, but every time you say “Amen,” you are speaking Hebrew because “Amen” is a Hebrew word. And there’s another Hebrew word I suspect all of you know. “Hallelujah” is a Hebrew word, too, and literally translated it simply means “Praise you the Lord.” So, v. 48 ends with “Amen, Hallelujah”—A little variation on the double “Amen.” The end of the Psalm ends the same way.

The last five Psalms, Psalms 146—150, all start with the word “Hallelujah.” They start and end with the Hallelujah. That’s why the last five

songs of the book of Psalms are called the “Hallelujah Psalms.” The first word and the last word (in Hebrew) is Hallelujah—at least in the King James translation. In the King James translation, it is translated “Praise you the Lord.” Hallelujah is sometimes just printed out that way—Hallelujah. And in other cases, it is translated into English. It was there as a praise. These last five Psalms open and close with Hallelujah. There is a sense of completion when you get to the end of Psalm 150.

Psalm 150:6, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.” In fact, in Psalm 150, every verse contains the expression of praise, so there is that focus.

We find that the theme of “five” runs through the book of Psalms. There are five divisions of the Psalms. The five divisions in the book of Psalms were considered by the Jews to parallel the five books of Moses (the five books of the Torah) as well as the five books of the Festival Scrolls—the five books of the Megillot. The “Megillot” is another name for the Festival Scrolls. *So there is a parallel between the five books of the Psalms, the five books of the Torah and the five Festival Scrolls.* Then, when we get down to the end of the book of Psalms, we find the last five Psalms are all Hallelujah Psalms. Even the number of Psalms is a multiple of five—five times thirty—one hundred fifty Psalms. So, you find that theme of the number five running through the book of Psalms in an interesting way.

I want to look, briefly, at the themes of the five books of the Psalms. *Normally, the first Psalm in each book sets the stage for that particular book.* We are going to come back and spend a Bible study on each one of the five books of the Psalms. We are going to break down the book of Psalms down into five sections and spend some time going through each section of Psalms so that we can get a little better understanding.

Let’s notice briefly a little bit of an overview. Psalms 1 and 2 have traditionally been understood by the Jews to sort of set the stage for the whole book of Psalms. **Psalms 1 and 2 contain the theme for the whole book.** The material that is discussed in the book of Psalms is sort of summarized in the first two Psalms. We start out with these two little short Psalms. We find that it talks about the source of blessings.

Psalm 1:1-2, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.” **Psalm 1 tells you that one of the major themes**

of the Psalms had to do with how to reap God’s blessings.

What does it mean to be blessed? How do you derive that blessing? It has to do with focusing in on God’s law and meditating on that law. The individual who meditates on and puts into practice the law of God in his life is going to be blessed. It makes a contrast between the individual who is blessed (because his focus is on God’s law), and the individual who is not.

Verse 4, “The ungodly are not so...” One of the great contrasts drawn throughout the book of Psalms is the contrast between the godly and the ungodly. In a poetic fashion, over and over and over, we find the distinction drawn in the book of Psalms of the godly and the ungodly—what’s going to be the consequence, the end result of the godly and what’s going to be the end result of the ungodly. Psalm 1 sets the stage by explaining that.

Psalm 2 focuses in on another aspect of the Psalms; many of the Psalms have to do with God stepping into history. Many of the Psalms have prophetic implications, and this is the theme that is expressed in the second Psalm.

Psalm 2:1, “Why do the nations rage...?” It talks about God sending the Messiah, His anointed (v. 2). The word “Messiah” is another Hebrew word that all of you know. It simply means “the Anointed One.” “Christ” is the term we usually use. It is simply the Greek translation of Messiah. “Christ” and “Messiah”—one is the Greek and the other is the Hebrew. We use them as titles, but they are a reference to the Anointed One—the One chosen by God as the Savior, the Messiah, the Christ.

Verse 2 talks about taking council against the Eternal and against His Anointed, against the Messiah, against the Christ. It shows God’s stepping into history and how God looks at puny man maneuvering and manipulating—and God laughs (v. 4). He looks down, and it’s so silly to see puny little man so pompously strutting around and thinking how great and how powerful he is.

So, the first two Psalms sort of set the stage for all of the other material that is covered in the Psalms. **The theme that runs through the book of Psalms is a poetic comparison between the godly and the ungodly and the consequences of each.** We have a development and a focus on God’s involvement in history. **And, in particular, His ultimate involvement, the culmination of God’s involvement in history is His sending of the Messiah—both the first time and the second time.** That’s not the only

times God has intervened in history, but that is the culmination (the climax) of God stepping into history. Many of God's mighty deeds and actions of His involvement in the course of human events are celebrated in the Psalms. These two Psalms sort of set the stage for the whole book.

Then we come to the third Psalm, which sets the stage for the first section of the Psalms or Book One of Psalms. Running through this first section of Psalms is a focus on the role of Christ, particularly the role of Christ in His first coming as the Passover lamb. There is a focus on the individual person, the need of the individual for a Savior. There is a focus on the individual.

Many of the experiences of David's life are utilized and are the background from which many of these Psalms are written. And in that way, David was a type of the Messiah. He went through many things that mirrored events that Jesus Himself would later experience. Of course, Christ ultimately came to inherit the throne of His father, David.

Now, I might just comment a little bit about the Psalms in general and about King David's role. David was a remarkable man in a number of ways. One way in which David was a particularly remarkable individual was that David was an exceptionally expressive person. He had the ability to express the wide gamut of feelings and emotions in us in an unusual and remarkable way. Very few do so or have the capacity of doing so in the way that David did. He was an individual who felt everything—the highs and the lows. He felt everything deeply. He was very poetic and a very expressive individual, and as a result, he put into written form the whole gamut of feelings and emotions we don't even know how to quite put into words.

There are times we can't even express what we are feeling. It may be a particular trial. It may be a number of things we are going through, and many times we find it very difficult to even try to put into words what it is we are feeling. We have trouble sorting those feelings out. I'll tell you, if you find yourself in that situation and you open up the book of Psalms, you generally won't have to go very far before you will find a Psalm where David is putting into words the things that you are feeling but can't quite put into words. That's an important role the Psalms play in our own personal life because David expresses feelings and emotions that many of us have difficulty

verbalizing. We have difficulty even recognizing what it is we are feeling.

But you usually don't have to get very far into the book of Psalms before you find that David has put into words—he says and expresses—what you are struggling with inside. It can be the “ups”; it can be the “downs.” It can be the joys and the ecstasy of thanksgiving, of praise, the positive and the “up” emotions. It can be fear, despair or frustration. It can be anguish at looking around and seeing life being so unfair. There is nothing you can go through and experience—everything from the joy and ecstasy of victory and deliverance, to the despair of defeat and the hurts of betrayal—David expresses all of those. He went through a number of things. A lot of people have gone through many things, but very few people have the ability to really verbalize it.

David was a remarkable man in that he was perhaps the most expressive man. He was not only an emotional individual but very expressive. He was able to express and verbalize that expression and was able to write it down in a poetic way. He is called in one place “the sweet psalmist of Israel” (II Samuel 23:1). So, the whole gamut of feelings is mirrored in the book of Psalms.

The first section of Psalms is Psalms 1—41. Much of what Jesus said while He was being crucified is quoted from Psalm 22. If you read Psalm 22, you will find that much of it reminds you of statements that Jesus either quoted directly or paraphrased. Psalm 22 is descriptive of the experience of the crucifixion. It was obviously the Psalm that was running through His mind as He hung there because it expressed what He was feeling.

In like manner, I think Psalm 23 makes such a contrast with it and must have expressed the feelings that He had at the time of the resurrection. When you read Psalm 23 with that in mind, you can sort of read it with the shout of exultation and of victory. Psalm 22 ends up with “that He hath done this.” In the Hebrew, it can read “it is finished”; Psalm 23 ends up with “I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Let me just briefly comment on Psalm 3 since that is the one that sort of sets the theme for this section.

Notice Psalm 3:1-4, “Lord, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me. Many are they who say of me, ‘there is no help for him in God.’ But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head. I cried to the Lord

with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill.” Psalm 3 focuses on our need for a Savior, and that really sets the stage for this first section of the Psalms.

I might also call your attention to Psalm 37 in this section. If you ever find yourself really frustrated at the unfairness of life and the unfairness of things, go to Psalm 37. You will find that David went through some experiences that focused in on the unfairness of life. One of the things you see is that David expressed a range of the negative emotions—frustration, anger, disappointment and fear—but he didn’t stop with that. He worked through them.

We all feel those things at one time or another. To deny our feelings doesn’t change them. There are times that we do feel angry. There are times we do feel frustrated or scared. There are times that we feel despairing and hopeless. There are times that we feel grief and sorrow. We face and we feel, at one time or another, all the gamut of negative emotions.

While those are places where we all find ourselves at one time or another, they are not the stopping points. They are not the way station along life’s journey where we want to stop and stay for a while. They are places we have to go through. But what is important is that we learn how to work through those feelings, not just stuffing them and denying them. We are to work through them and move on beyond them. We are to bring those things to resolution. We are to work through and get it into proper perspective. That’s what David does in the Psalms.

Many of the Psalms start off with an expression of frustration, anger, disappointment, hurt or any number of these feelings. But by the time you get to the end of the Psalms, he has worked through it and the matter has been resolved. As we meditate on the Psalms that are perhaps expressive of how we feel at a given point, they enable us to sort of work through it and come to a resolution.

Now the parallel from the Torah—the *first book of Psalms would parallel with the first book of the Torah*. The first book of the Torah is Genesis. *Genesis focuses on the creation and introduces man’s need for a Savior and the means by which God will provide that Savior*. That is a theme that runs through the book of Genesis. God introduces the creation for the purpose of introducing man, for the purpose of showing how man sinned, became cut off from God and came to need a Savior. Then, as He picks up the story with the family of Abraham, He begins to work through showing how He is

going to provide that Savior. So, there is a clearer theme of the individual and the need of the individual for salvation.

The first parallel of the Festival Scrolls was the Song of Solomon. The Song of Solomon was traditionally read at the Passover/Unleavened Bread season, which is the season of the year that focuses on our need for a Savior.

The second section or Book Two of Psalms is Psalms 42—72. The theme shifts from personal experience of one man, to the collective experience of a nation. We have, in that sense, the beginning of the Old Testament Church. Psalm 42 begins this section. Notice the way it opens.

Psalm 42:1-2, “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?” It is talking about the deep thirst that we have and how that deep thirst can be quenched.

You remember, Jesus explained it. He explained it to the woman at the well in Samaria (John 4:6-14). There is only one thing that will quench the deep thirst that is addressed in Psalm 42 and that is God’s Holy Spirit, rivers of living water (John 7:38-39). That is the only thing that can quench that deep thirst.

This second book of the Psalms would parallel the second book of the Torah, Exodus, as well as the second Festival Scroll, Ruth. The second Festival Scroll was read at Pentecost. Pentecost is the story of the outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit. It is the story of God’s covenant relationship, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is the story of God calling out a church, a congregation, a spiritual nation and the ultimate pouring out of His Spirit to provide the quenching of the thirst that is expressed in Psalm 42.

As you go through this section, there are many portions we will come back to at a later time, but I would call your attention to Psalm 68 in this section, which the Jews have traditionally termed the “Pentecost anthem.” *The second book of the Psalms would parallel the book of Exodus, which of course tells the story of the first Pentecost there at Mount Sinai, the giving of the law, the establishment of the covenant that ultimately culminates in the beginning of the New Covenant, the outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2).* It also parallels the book of Ruth, which was read at Pentecost. *The story in the book of Ruth is of an individual called out of the world that forsakes her allegiance and loyalties of her old way and embraces the God of Israel and God’s*

truth. She becomes an heir of the covenant of promise. We have this theme that runs through the second section of the Psalms—the second book of the Psalms.

Book Three of Psalms is Psalms 73—89. Psalm 73 has the theme of obedience and avoidance of unclean conduct. *The third book of the Torah is the book of Leviticus.* The book of Leviticus was written for the Levites. It was instruction to the Levites—to the priesthood. What was the responsibility of the priesthood? It was to teach the nation how to be holy. *It was to instruct the nation in holiness and cleanness.* What was the consequence of the Levites and the priesthood's failure to do so? If they had done the job they should have done, the problems that came about wouldn't have come as they did because they did fail to do so. Leviticus contains in it Leviticus 26, the chapter of the blessings and the curses. Leviticus 26 is the story of what would happen if the priesthood failed to convey to the nation how to be holy. Leviticus is the third book of the Torah.

The third book of the Festival Scrolls is Lamentations. It is a lament for what happened to the nation as a consequence of the failure of the people to practice Leviticus. The theme of Leviticus is to be holy for God is holy (Leviticus 11:44-45). The job of the priesthood was to teach the people to discern between the holy and the profane, the clean and the unclean (Ezekiel 44:15, 23-24). It was to teach the people to make distinctions between what is appropriate and what is inappropriate, what is holy and what is profane, what is clean and what is unclean. That was their responsibility. The priesthood failed in their duty and the temple was ultimately destroyed, the priesthood was taken into captivity and Jerusalem was destroyed. The book of Lamentations is a lament about that, and in that sense, the events that it describes are prophetic of the Great Tribulation. They were a type of the Tribulation.

Interestingly, nearly the entire third book of Psalms is written by priests. Psalm 73 starts out, "A Psalm of Asaph." Now, if you go back and do a little checking on Asaph, you will find that Asaph was in charge of the Levitical singers. He was one of the priests in charge of music in the temple. Psalms 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83—all of those are songs of Asaph.

Psalms 84, 85, 87, 88 are for the sons of Korah who were part of the Levitical choir. Nearly all of the Psalms in this section were written either for or by priests. There is a priestly theme that runs through this section that, in many ways,

parallels the book of Leviticus and, certainly, there are parallels with Lamentations, the third Festival Scroll.

Psalm 73, which sets the theme for the third section, says in vv. 1-2, "Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled: my steps had nearly slipped." He said he was getting on a slippery slope; he was slipping up. Have you ever felt like that? Have you ever felt like your connection, in terms of God and the Church, were getting on sort of a slippery ground? Have you ever felt like you weren't as firm-footed as you wish you were?

He expresses why he felt that way.

Verse 3, "For I was envious of the boastful [KJV, "foolish"], when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." He said he really got into an attitude problem because he looked at people who were not putting forth any effort to obey God, and he was envious. It seemed to him those people were getting by with all kinds of things, and he saw the wicked who were prospering. Have you ever seen anybody wicked prosper? The world is filled with wicked who prosper. And it's easy, sometimes, if we are not careful, that our attitude can get askew. He described finding himself on a slippery slope. He was not as well positioned, as steady and stable, as he wished he were. But rather, he was beginning to develop an envy at what was seemingly the "easy time" that some of these people were having.

Verse 5, "They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like other men." It seems like some of the ones that are getting by the easiest are the worst. That's the way it is. Just because somebody is a crook and a shyster, doesn't mean they come down plagued with cancer, heart disease and everything else all at the same time. Sometimes they live to be ninety-five. That's of and by itself. There are times when it may seem like they are making a lot of money.

He continues and he describes what he saw. Verse 16, "When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me—" 'It was really bothering me. It hurt to look at all of this.'

Verse 17, "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end." Now he begins to get it into perspective. He says he went into the sanctuary (the temple) and then he began to get it into perspective. He began to consider the end and to realize that even though they may seemingly be getting by with it now for a while, they are ultimately the ones that are going to be

in the slippery places and are going to be cast down to destruction.

Then, vv. 21-22, he begins to feel foolish for the attitude that he was having. You can go through Psalm 73. He sets the stage. This is the point that the priesthood should have gotten across to the people. This was important and, in many ways, sums up a great deal of the perspective from which the book of Leviticus and Lamentations should be read.

We are obviously going to come back and go through each of these sections closely, so I am just skimming now for the sake of time.

Book Four of Psalms is Psalms 90—106. Much of this particular section of Psalms—the *fourth book of Psalms—parallels the fourth book of the Torah which is Numbers and the fourth book of the Festival Scrolls which is Ecclesiastes.* Ecclesiastes was read at the Feast of Tabernacles, which is a type of the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. **We find in this section many of the Psalms that describe the millennial conditions that will come to Israel and to all nations when God reigns on the earth.**

Psalm 90 sets the stage for that. The first Psalm in this section sets the theme.

Psalm 90:1-4, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. You turn man to destruction, and say, ‘Return, O children of men.’ For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night.”

This is the first place the expression “a thousand years” is referred to. It is a very vague sort of reference. Peter quotes and paraphrases Psalm 90:4.

II Peter 3:8, “...with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” Peter makes it a little plainer. He says that a day is equivalent to a thousand years in God’s plan. It remains yet for the Apostle John in the book of Revelation to clearly state that the reign of the Messiah is for one thousand years (Revelation 20:4-6).

We have talked about the Millennium and used the term so often that I think many are not really aware of the fact that, apart from the book of Revelation, you can’t find any clear statement that says the reign of the Messiah is going to last for a thousand years. If you had the entire Bible, except for the book of Revelation, you wouldn’t find any clear statement.

Now, the Jews had traditions that pointed in that direction. Peter alluded to it in II Peter 3. He paraphrased Psalm 90. But Psalm 90 is pretty vague. If you didn’t have what Peter said in II Peter 3 and if you didn’t have what John wrote in Revelation 20, you would be hard-pressed to have it really clear in your mind that the time of the Messiah’s reign is a thousand years. It’s a little vague if Psalm 90:4 was all you had to go on. Peter paraphrased it and made it a little plainer. John stated it clearly. When you read what John said and then look at what Peter said, you realize the comparison of a thousand years and a day and a seven-day week. Then you look here at Psalm 90 and you see sort of a reference that sets the stage.

Psalm 90:12, “So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” The point is that time is limited for human beings. Even the Millennium is limited. A thousand years is a limited, finite time. When God deals with human beings, He deals in terms of a finite period of time. We all have to learn to number our days. We are to make best use of the time we have. We are not to assume our days are going to go on interminably because our days do have a termination. We need to learn to number our days and to apply our hearts to wisdom. We are to use each day to the full, to focus in and to utilize each day.

Look at the parallel. *The book of Numbers dealt with Israel’s wandering in the wilderness, the time when Israel dwelt in booths (temporary dwellings) and God provided all their needs.* In Leviticus 23, when the Holy Days were outlined, one of the things that Israel was told about the Feast of Tabernacles was that they were to dwell in booths during the Feast of Tabernacles. It was a reminder of the time they dwelt in booths during the wandering in the wilderness (Leviticus 23:42-43). The book of Numbers is the story of that time period.

Ecclesiastes is the book of the Festival Scrolls that focuses in on a lesson that has to be learned—the lesson that there is a need for something beyond the physical. It ends up with a focus on teaching us to number our days.

Ecclesiastes 12:1, “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth....” It ends up with the fact that we need to be responsible.

Much of the theme of this section of the Psalms deals with the time when God reigns on the earth.

Psalm 93:1, “The Lord reigns....”

Psalm 99:1, “The Lord reigns....”

Actually, Psalms 92, 95, 96, 97, 98 and 99 are all Psalms that the Jews call the Sabbath Songs that made up a part of the liturgy every Sabbath in the temple. And it was felt that those Psalms focused in on the millennial fulfillment of the Sabbath because they understood that the weekly Sabbath was a weekly reminder of the time of the Messiah's reign.

Psalm 107 begins Book Five of Psalms (107—150) and, in that sense, sums up the material from the preceding four books. *Deuteronomy, the fifth book of the Torah, sums up what had been said before and brings it up to a people who could literally stand on the river bank and see their salvation.* They see the Promised Land. Deuteronomy is given to people who were within sight of the fulfillment and the realization of the promises.

The book of Esther was normally read in the twelfth month of the Hebrew year, the month Adar (February/March). It was read at the celebration of Purim, which was a celebration of God's deliverance—the story of which is told in the book of Esther. *The parallel book of Esther ends up when God had saved His people and there was great rejoicing.* We find that everybody, even a lot of the Persians, desired to be a Jew, too, because they could see the way that God was working. There is a focus on celebration of salvation in the physical sense in the book of Esther. The fifth book of the Psalms ends up with that. **It is sort of a recap of material that has been covered and ends up with the Hallelujah Psalms, which is clearly a focus on a celebration of God's salvation.**

Psalm 107 sets the theme.

Psalm 107:1-2, "O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy." It is focused on a celebration of God's redemption and, also, there is a recap in this final fifth section of much of the previous material. So, in that way, there is a parallel to Deuteronomy and Esther.

There are various categories in the Psalms. Many of the Psalms are Psalms of praise. This is a major theme that runs throughout the entire book—praise to God for His great work, the deliverance of His people, His mercy, His benefits and blessings. *Praise is a major theme that runs through the book of Psalms.*

A second theme that runs through the book of Psalms is contrition. The theme of suffering (both for individuals and for the nation) and the understanding that personal and national

calamity is a consequence of sin. Confession, pleas of mercy and forgiveness run throughout this section. This theme of contrition (of repentance), a desire for mercy, forgiveness, our need for deliverance and restoration runs through the book. Praise is perhaps the major theme of the Psalms. Contrition is a minor theme.

Another theme is the ethics that are taught.

Several of the Psalms are of an instructive nature. They give instruction concerning the things that God's people are to do and not to do.

We have seen that this entire section has a lot of material packed in it. We are going to spend the next five Bible studies going through the Psalms. We are going to go through it, spending one Bible study on each one of the five books of the Psalms. The next Bible study we will cover the first forty-one Psalms. We will spend a number of Bible studies on the Psalms. We will spend several on Proverbs (probably about three Bible studies on Proverbs), and then we will begin to pick up some speed. We will give a Bible study on each one of the five Festival Scrolls. We will give an entire Bible study for each of those books so we can spend some time and perhaps deepen our understanding of some of this section of the Bible that maybe does not get quite as much focus. There's an awful lot that's packed in here. It is a beautiful section of Scripture. There is a beauty, a rhythm of poetry and a depth of expression that is there. There are many, many important lessons and important principles that are illustrated. I think, as we read this section, we will find so much that can tie in and can be helpful to us in our everyday Christian life.

So, with that, we will conclude our Bible study this evening.

Bible Study # 76
September 10, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Book One—Psalms 1—41

This evening, we want to get into the book of Psalms. As I commented last time, the Psalms are divided into five books, or five sections. **We are going to cover Book One of Psalms this evening—Psalms 1—41. We will also note the correspondence with the first book of the Law, Genesis, and the first book of the Festival Scrolls, the Song of Solomon.** One of the things we will see is that each of the sections of the Psalms has its own individuality and its own character. The first two Psalms sort of set the stage for the entire book. The third Psalm serves as an introduction to the first book of Psalms.

Psalm 1 and 2 sort of introduce the entire book. The stress of the first couple of Psalms has to do with a contrast.

Psalm 1 starts out with a contrast between what is permanent and what is temporary, what is going to endure and last and what is going to be swept away.

Psalm 1:1-2, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.”

What is he going to be like?

Verse 3, “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.” We have a contrast. On the one hand, we have individuals who are described as delighting in God’s law. Do we delight in God’s law? Are we enjoying Christianity or merely enduring? Here is an individual who delights in God’s law and meditates on it. That individual is compared to a tree planted by the rivers of water. What is the significance of that sort of symbolism? Here is a tree that is planted by the rivers, so it is always going to be close to water. If a tree is planted in an area where the roots go down and is going to be well watered, that means it is going to be a productive, enduring, growing tree. It symbolizes permanence.

The ungodly are described like chaff, which the wind drives away (v. 4). When wheat is harvested and winnowed, the chaff is separated from the grain and the chaff is simply blown away by the wind. So, there is a contrast between

those who are going to endure and those who are going to be simply swept away. One of the themes that run through the book of Psalms is the fact that there is a way of life that leads to permanence. There is a way of life that leads to life eternal—to that which will endure forever. And, there is a way of life that those who follow it are simply going to be swept away. There is going to be a tide that simply sweeps them away, and they will no longer be around. So, here’s an important theme that runs throughout the book.

Psalm 2 goes into another theme that runs throughout the book and it has to do with God intervening into history—God stepping into the affairs of man.

Verse 1, “Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing?” It describes the nations raging and the people plotting (KJV, “imagining”) a vain thing.

Verses 2-4, “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.’ He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision.” They are going to stand up and fight against the Lord and against His Anointed (the Messiah), the returning Jesus Christ. God sits in the heavens and laughs. God says, ‘That’s funny! Look at these puny little human beings running around down there. They think they are really going to do something.’

God is going to step into the affairs of man. The sureness of that, which we celebrate at the Feast of Trumpets, is testified throughout the Psalms.

We will get into this first section of the Psalms, which is termed Book One of Psalms—the first forty-one Psalms.

In the introduction last Bible study, I pointed out that this first book of the Psalms parallels with the first book in the Festival Scrolls. This would parallel the Passover season. We are going to see that much of the message content is a parallel because this first book of the Psalms focuses in on the need for personal salvation. **In Psalm 3, there is a focus throughout this section on personal salvation, the need for it and where it comes from. It comes from God.**

Psalm 3:1-5, “Lord, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me, many are they who say of me, ‘There is no help for him in God.’ But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head. I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill. I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me.”

One of the things we are going to find, as we go through the Psalms, is that David went through a variety of circumstances and mirrored every sort of feeling and every wave of emotion. There is nothing that you can go through—no heights or depths that you can struggle with—that David did not experience. David experienced emotions from the exultation of victory, to the depths of despair and discouragement. But we see in the Psalms that David worked through and processed these feelings. He put into words things that we sometimes have a hard time expressing. Sometimes we have trouble expressing in words things we are going through. That is part of the value of the Psalms. They are written in a poetic fashion and in a way that lends them to meditation. The Psalms were written to be thought about, to be meditated upon and to be committed to memory. There are areas of the Psalms that mirror all sorts of emotions and feelings.

David wrote this third Psalm when he was fleeing from Absalom. It was a low point in his life. A lot of people were ready to desert him. You find out who your friends are, not when you are up and on top, but when you are down on the bottom. If you are on top, everybody is your friend. You can walk into a bar and say, 'The drinks are on me,' and everybody in there is your buddy. You have a room full of friends. But walk in someplace when you're "down and out." You say, 'Can anybody loan me a dollar?' You find out how quickly they can all "disappear into the woodwork."

David was king. Don't you think that everybody wanted to curry David's favor? Everybody wanted to be nice to him. Boy, David was a popular fellow. He was king. Everybody wanted to "butter him up."

When Absalom staged a coup, a lot of people thought Absalom was going to be in charge. So, everybody who had ever had anything against David, as well as those who just simply wanted to play politics, were immediately on the other side. David did not want to have to fight against his own son and he did not want Jerusalem to be destroyed—so he left. He fled. That must have been a low point for David in so many ways—all of the feelings and emotions that he was going through.

It's sort of interesting. During the last attempted coup in the Soviet Union, since some obviously took the wrong side and some wanted to straddle the fence, they were conveniently sick. In fact, some of those got fired, too. All of a sudden they had—what do you call it?—the "diplomatic flu."

They wanted to see which side was going to win. They didn't want to come down on the wrong side. So, all of a sudden they didn't feel so good and thought they ought to go to bed. Just as soon as the coup was over, they started feeling better and they knew which side they were on. They were on the winning side. 'Which one won? Okay, that's the one I am for.' Do you realize how often this is the case in life? That sort of illustrated it, but it can happen on a smaller scale in our lives. It happened to David.

He said in [Psalm 3:1](#), "Lord, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me." All of a sudden here were people "popping up out of the woodwork," people who never would have voiced displeasure with David before. But since they thought he was down and out, they were going to kick him, too. People were saying, 'Yeah, he's done for.' Verse 2, "...there is no help for him in God." 'He's history. Even God can't save him now.' That was not a very smart thing to say. But David at that depth, in terms of what he was going through and struggling with, recognized that God was a shield (v. 3).

So, he pleaded with God.

Verses 7-8, "Arise, O Lord; Save me, O my God! For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone; you have broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongs to the Lord. Your blessing is upon Your people. Selah" David recognized, in his depths, that salvation came from God.

[Psalm 4:1](#), "Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me when I was in distress; have mercy on me, and hear my prayer." David understood that God is the source of help. When you are in trouble, you can go to God.

Verse 4 (KJV), "Stand in awe [be impressed with God], and do not sin. Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still." In other words, lie there and meditate. Don't follow and practice sin; spend some time in quiet contemplation.

Verse 5, "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord." See! That's the source.

And the result of that is v. 8, "I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." David said he could lie down and get a good night's sleep because he put it in God's hands. He turned it over to Him.

[Psalm 5:1](#), "Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation."

Verse 3, “My voice You shall hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up.” David began his day by praying to God. Here is a good indication that starting our day in prayer is something important for us to do.

Verse 4, “For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with You.” God knows who’s who and He knows what’s what. We can’t fool God. We can’t play games with God. We find that God does not take sin lightly.

Verses 5-6, “The boastful [KJV, “foolish”] shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy those who speak falsehood [deceit]; The Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.” God takes deceit and hypocrisy very seriously. That’s a serious matter.

In v. 9, He talks about these individuals who are not faithful and truthful.

Psalm 6:1-2, “O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger, nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are troubled.” David goes to God and asks God to deal with him gently and mercifully. He knew that he needed God’s chastening and correction, but he asked God to please do so gently and kindly and in mercy.

Verses 4-5, “Return, O Lord, deliver me! Oh, save me for Your mercies’ sake! For in death there is no remembrance of You; in the grave who will give You thanks?”

Here’s a verse that shows the state of the dead, “...in death there is no remembrance of God; in the grave who is going to give thanks?” When you are dead, you are dead. David again focused in on this sort of thinking.

Before we get too far along, let me make a couple of comments on Psalm 2 because there is one thing I neglected to mention. It mentions God laughing at puny man’s silly attempt to throw off God’s rule (vv. 3-4).

Verses 7-9, “I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, “You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.””

God gave Christ instructions as to how to rule the nations. He said, ‘I am going to give You the nations for Your inheritance. I am going to give them to You for You to rule over.’ Then God the

Father proceeded to instruct Christ as to how the nations should be ruled.

In Revelation 2, we find this quoted as Jesus is speaking to the Churches.

Revelation 2:26, ““And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations.”” The Father gave Christ power over the nations, and Christ is going to give to those who are faithful and keep His works to the end power over the nations.

Verse 27, ““He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the potter’s vessels shall be broken to pieces”—as I also have received from My Father.””

We are seeing that Christ is going to govern as the Father would govern. And converted Christians who are in God’s Kingdom and have been given power over the nations will govern as Christ would govern. We will govern as Christ will govern, and Christ will govern as the Father would govern. God’s rule is going to be exercised with mercy and with power.

Psalm 7:1-2, again this theme of salvation, “O Lord my God, in You I put my trust; save me from all those who persecute me; and deliver me, lest they tear me like a lion...” Again, there is this focus on a need for personal deliverance and salvation.

Verse 17, “I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High.”

Psalm 8:1, “O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth. You who set Your glory above the heavens!”

Verses 3-5, “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor.”

Reading out of the Jewish translation, “What is man that You are mindful of him? The son of man that You think of him? Yet You made him but little lower than the angels and have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands. You have put all things under his feet, sheep, oxen, yes, the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, the fish of the sea, whatever passes through the paths of the sea.”

This section is actually quoted back in Hebrew 2: 6-8, “...‘What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor,

and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.”

We find in Hebrew an emphasis that man is ultimately to be given rulership over all things. “You made him a little lower than the angels...” in that we are mortal, physical and subject to death. But God has in mind a destiny for us that far transcends any of the angels. What is man’s place in the universe? Well, God has given man a very special place because He has made him to have dominion over all God has, over all the things God has created. Man has been made to have dominion.

Romans 8:17, “And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ...” If we are heirs of God, then that means we are going to inherit and are going to have rulership over the things that God has made. So, man’s place in the universe is a very special place because God has made man to share life with Him as part of His Family throughout eternity and to have a relationship with God that no other sort of being can have. David understood and expressed that.

Psalm 9:1, “I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works.” He talks about the greatness of God.

Verse 7, “But the Lord shall endure forever....”

Verse 8, “He shall judge the world in righteousness....”

Verse 10, “And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; for You, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You.”

Let me comment a little bit on the expression, “Those who know Your name will put their trust in You.” There have been various groups that have laid great emphasis on what they term the “sacred name.” There have been those who have even gone out from the Church, and there are other groups that have built virtually their whole religion around Psalm 9:10.

Psalm 9:10, “...those who know Your name put their trust in You.” They make a big deal about what they call the “sacred name,” which is the Hebrew pronunciation of God’s name. These groups have split into about three or four different groups because they can’t agree on the pronunciation of God’s name. There is The Assemblies of YHVH and The Assemblies of YHWH, and they have about three or four groups because they can’t agree whether it is YHVH or YHWH, etc. They wrangle about how it should be said.

The point that we should understand is: What does it mean to know God’s name? It doesn’t mean just to be able to phonetically pronounce the Hebrew. God’s name is not some sort of magic word like “Aladdin” and his lamp or “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves” who had the magic words, “open sesame,” and it all opened up. God’s name is not some sort of magic incantation or magic word that you say the name just right and this sort of opens things up. Names have meanings. A name describes and it identifies.

In the Scriptures, the names that people were given had meaning in the language that people understood what the meanings were. God’s names define and describe God. The language we use depends on our native language.

Some of these “sacred-name” groups make a big issue over the fact that the letter “J” (as it is pronounced in English) didn’t exist in the Greek or Hebrew alphabet. That’s certainly true. There are several other letters that didn’t exist. And there are letters they have that we don’t have. So? You make the letter “J” and an Englishman will look at it and pronounce it as “Ja.” An Englishman will pronounce Jesus, “Jesus.” But you show it to a Spaniard, and that’s not what he gets out of it. He will say, “Hasoos.” A Frenchman will say, “Jasus.”

The point is not the phonetic pronunciation that varies from language to language. The same letter has different sounds depending on the language. The phonetic sound is just the characteristic of language. It’s not that God can’t understand you unless you have somehow learned the language. Even in the same language, some of the pronunciation changes over a period of time. You don’t have to go back and learn Hebrew as it was spoken three thousand years ago for God to understand.

The thing about God’s names is that God’s names describe Him. God’s names tell you that He is Eternal and Almighty. God’s names tell you He is the Creator and that He is our Father. There are all sorts of descriptive terms that are characteristic of God’s name. “They who know Your name” means those who understand who God is, those who understand His character and His nature because God’s names describe Him. God’s names tell us what He’s like and that’s what it means to know His name. We are to put our trust in Him, to understand His nature, His character, His rank and His position.

Psalm 10:1-3, “Why do You stand afar off, O Lord? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble? The wicked in his pride persecutes the

poor; let them be caught in the plots which they have devised. For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire; he blesses the greedy and renounces the Lord." Have you ever felt like that? Have you ever wondered why doesn't God do something? Why does it seem like God is standing way off? Why is God seemingly gone way off in a time of trouble? People are doing things they should not do and they seem to be getting by with it. They are not even trying.

Verse 4, "The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts."

He goes through and describes this way of thinking and the problems and the things that result from it. He describes the attitude of the wicked.

Verses 16-18, "The Lord is King forever and ever; the nations have perished out of His land. Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will prepare their heart; You will cause Your ear to hear, to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may oppress no more." David understood, even in the midst of seeing things that contradicted it, that God was going to intervene. In the midst of seeing things that shouldn't be going on, David understood that God was going to judge.

Psalm 11:1, "In the Lord I put my trust...." 'I am going to trust in God.'

Verses 3-5, "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men. The Lord tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates." God may try and test the righteous. He may test His people. He may allow us to go through trials and tests, but He will ultimately save us. God is in charge. He is in His holy temple. What can you do? Recognize that God is in charge. He knows what's going on, and while He may allow His people to be tried and tested, God is going to take note of His people.

Here is another point in David's life.

Psalm 12:1-2, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases! For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men. They speak idly everyone with his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak." David looked around. It seemed like people who weren't trying to do what was right were multiplying and good people were in trouble and perishing. Good people were harder and harder to find and further and further between. David is crying out for salvation. As you go through, you find that

David puts into words these feelings and things that he encountered—the trials and the tests of faith.

He worked through to realize that, vv. 6-7, "The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. You shall keep them, O Lord, You shall preserve them from this generation forever." God's words are pure and true.

Have you ever felt forgotten? David did.

Psalm 13:1, "How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?" Do you ever feel like that? Do you ever feel like God isn't listening, like God was off, hiding from you, somewhere? David felt like that, too.

So he beseeches God and he says in v. 3, "Consider and hear me, O Lord my God; Enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death."

Verses 5-6, "But I have trusted in Your mercy; My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because He has dealt bountifully with me." David, again, worked through. When he started out, his focus was on how he felt forgotten and abandoned. But as he focused in on it, he realized that God was really the source of blessings and that God really had blessed him. So, by the end of the Psalm, he started to count his blessings rather than count his troubles. That's an important part of dealing with trials. If we sit down and make a ten-page list of our troubles and about a three-line list of our blessings, our perspective is all messed up. It is important that we focus, even in the midst of our trials, on the fact that God really provides help and blessings in so many ways.

Psalm 14:1, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they have done abominable works; there is none who does good." God labels a fool anyone who can look around and see all the things God has made (the witness of creation) and can simply say that there is no God. God defines as a fool somebody who simply refuses to acknowledge the existence of God in the midst of all the witness to the contrary.

Psalm 15:1, "Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?" 'Who's going to be there in Your Kingdom? Who's going to dwell there?'

Verses 2-4, "He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart; he who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend; in whose eyes a vile

person is despised, but he honors those who fear the Lord; he who swears to his own hurt and does not change.” –Somebody who is a man of his word or a woman of her word, an individual who means what he says.

One of the major factors of the multiplication of lawsuits and all sorts of civil suits that we have is simply because people don’t want to do what they agreed to do. They are not willing to swear to their own hurt and then not change. They make an agreement to do something, it gets inconvenient and they don’t want to do it anymore.

God says you make an agreement, you give your word and you stick to what you say.

Verse 5, “He who does not put out his money at usury....” This is not a reference to a business arrangement but to personal loans. This is a matter of making a profit off of somebody else’s troubles. It’s sort of a “loan-shark” type of an approach—if somebody’s in trouble and in dire straits, you make money off of their distress. One of the things that God does indict through the Scriptures, in terms of dealing with people, has to do with those who take advantage of somebody in trouble. Society has always had those who hover around the edges waiting to catch somebody in trouble and take advantage of that.

Continuing in v. 5, “...Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.”

The way to endure (to last) is to latch on to the values that will endure.

Psalm 16:1, again a plea for salvation, “Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust.”

Verses 9-10, “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in sheol [hell, the grave], nor will You allow your Holy One to see corruption.” Here is a prophecy of the resurrection of Christ. “You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.”

This is quoted in Acts 13:35 and is applied to Christ’s resurrection. The prophecy was made that the Messiah would not remain in the grave. He would not corrupt, decay and return to the earth, but would obviously be restored to life and would come forth as He did.

Psalm 17:8, “Keep me as the apple of Your eye; hide me under the shadow of Your wings.” The expression “apple of your eye” is an expression that we use in English. It is actually derived from the Bible. It is an expression in Hebrew, translated in English, so it is quoted as an English proverb.

Notice a reference to the resurrection.

Verse 15, “As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.” Here’s a reference to the fact that David knew he was going to wake up and he would see God’s face in righteousness.

Psalm 18:1-3, “I will love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised....”

It describes God’s greatness. David describes God’s greatness and power. He describes God as the deliverer. God is my Rock, my fortress, my deliverer and my strength. He is the One that we can depend on. God is the God of our salvation. He is the One we can count on. There is nothing too hard for Him. He describes these things in a very poetic way.

Verses 9-10, “He bowed the heavens also, and came down with darkness under His feet. And He rode upon a cherub, and flew; He flew upon the wings of the wind.”

Psalm 18 is a very beautiful psalm.

Psalm 18:25-26, “With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; with a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless; with the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the devious [KJV, “froward”] You will show Yourself shrewd [KJV, “froward”].”

This term “froward” is actually translated from two different Hebrew words. When it says “with the froward,” the Hebrew word here means “crooked” or “perverse.” A totally different word is used to refer to God when it says, “You will show Yourself froward” or “You will show Yourself a hard adversary.” With those who are crooked and perverse, God will show Himself a hard adversary. With merciful people, God will be merciful. For those who are upright, just and fair, He will deal justly and fairly. With those who are pure, He will deal purely. With those who are crooked and perverse, He is going to show Himself as a hard adversary. God is described as our source, the One to whom we can look.

Verse 31, “For who is God, except the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God?” God is the One who can be counted on.

Verse 46, “The Lord lives! Blessed be my Rock! Let the God of my salvation be exalted.”

Psalm 19:1, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” The glory, the power and the greatness of God are declared when you look up at what God has

made. You can imagine David as he stood out there, particularly as a shepherd boy keeping watch over his father's sheep in the field at night. There is something about being out of the city, out in an area that is clear or maybe up on a hill or an area where there is not a lot of light or anything around. It seems like the sky is just filled with stars.

I know it has impressed me several different times when I would drive to visit my mother who lives out in the country. We would get there late at night, we would step out of the car, and I would look up. It was like I had forgotten how many stars there were because you never see stars like that in Baton Rouge or Houston where we used to live. You could look up and see an odd star here and there, but there is so much diffused light that you simply don't see many stars. Even out in the country if you have a lot of lights around, you don't see as much. But if you get out into an area that is out away from town where there is not a lot of light around, it is just incredible. The sky is alive with stars.

Verse 1, "The heavens declare the glory of God...." It is so impressive.

It continues and describes God's greatness in vv. 7-9, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

God's Law (the Torah) is perfect, converting and restoring our lives. God's law is perfect and it points, leads and instructs us in the direction that leads to life. God's testimonies are sure; they make wise the simple. Testimonies are the examples and illustrations that are a source of wisdom. We may not have a lot of experience, but we can read the account of God working in the lives of people—men, women, young and old. You see the things they went through, the things they experienced and the way that God viewed it and dealt with it. It is a source of experience and makes wise the simple. God's statutes are right. His commandments are pure. God's law, when you give thought to it, directs you. That's what it is there for.

Psalm 20:1-2, again, a plea for salvation, "May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble; may the name of the God of Jacob defend you; may He send you help from the sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion."

Psalm 21:1, "The king shall have joy in Your strength, O Lord; and in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!" –Again, a focus on salvation.

Psalm 22 is a Psalm that ties in very directly with the crucifixion of Christ. We find that the first words of Psalm 22 are the words that are recorded back in Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34. They are the words that Jesus spoke as He hung there.

Psalm 22:1-2, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent." If you read Psalm 22, you will realize that most of this is what Christ would have been meditating on. It was expressive of what He was going through.

Verses 28-29, "For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth shall eat and worship; all those who go down to the dust shall bow before Him, even he who cannot keep himself alive." Nobody can hang on to life. When it starts ebbing away, you can't hold on to it. You don't have the power to keep yourself alive.

The prophecy of Christ is, vv. 30-31, "A posterity [KJV, "seed"] shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation. They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has done this." "He has done this." A preferable translation would be, "It is finished." Or it would be better rendered, "It has been done."

It ties in with the statement that Christ quoted in John 19:30, "It is finished!" It is quoted in the Aramaic form of the Greek. If you were to translate it back into the language that Christ spoke, it would be almost identical to the ending of Psalm 22:31. This is undoubtedly the tie-in.

Just as Psalm 22 reflects the thoughts and feelings of what Jesus went through as His life was ebbing away (paying for your sins and mine), Psalm 23 must certainly reflect the day of the wave sheaf (the day in the aftermath of His resurrection).

Psalm 23:1, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

Verse 3, "He restores my soul..." He restores my life.

Verse 6, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Psalm 22 and Psalm 23 go together in that sense. Psalm 22 reflects the sense of aloneness, of

being forsaken; then the recognition that God is the source of salvation and the exultation is in Psalm 23.

Psalm 24:1, “The earth is the Lord’s and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.”

The focus is that God owns everything.

Psalm 25:1-2, “To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in You; let me not be ashamed; let not my enemies triumph over me.”

Verses 4-6, “Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day. Remember, O Lord, Your tender mercies and your loving kindnesses, for they have been from of old.”

Verses 8-9, “Good and upright is the Lord; therefore He teaches sinners in the way. The humble [KJV, “meek”] He guides in justice, and the humble [meek] He teaches His way.” We can trust God. Again, God is the source of our salvation.

Psalm 26:1-3, “Vindicate [KJV, “Judge”] me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity. I have also trusted in the Lord; I shall not slip. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my mind and my heart. For Your loving kindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth.” He asks God to examine him. That’s what he is saying here in the first couple of verses. He wants God to really examine and look at him. God knows us from the inside out. God is the One who can show us our secret sins. God is the One who can help us to see what we don’t see. David was seeking to walk before God in sincerity and truth. He trusted God and he asked God to examine him, to try him and to help him to see himself.

Psalm 27:1, “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” Again, this is a matter of personal salvation; “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?”

Verse 9, “Do not hide Your face from me; do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; do not leave me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation.”

Verse 11, “Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies.” Again, God is the source of our deliverance, our salvation.

Psalm 28:1, “To You I will cry, O Lord my Rock: Do not be silent to me, lest, if You are silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit.”

Psalm 29:1-2, “Give [ascribe] unto the Lord, O you mighty ones, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; worship the Lord in the beauty [majesty] of holiness.”

It describes God’s power.

Verses 3-4, “The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders; the Lord is over many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.” It describes the greatness and the power of God. Much of the symbolism of Psalm 29 is like a storm, the thunder, etc.

In v. 3, it describes the wind and the shaking of everything.

Verses 5-8, “The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars, yes, the Lord splinters the cedars of Lebanon. He makes them also skip like a calf, Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox. The voice of the Lord divides the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the Wilderness of Kadesh.” Here is a description of all these things.

Then it ends up in v. 11, “The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace.”

I would like to read a comment from the Jewish commentary in reference to Psalm 29. “A thrilling description of a storm, a verbal symphony in which the shadowing peels of thunder reverberating around the hills is reproduced in words with realistic effect. The Hebrew poet, however, cannot rest satisfied with a word picture. His religious genius induced him to interpret the thunderclaps as the majestic voice of God. The Psalm is included in the Sabbath liturgy. It is one of the seven Sabbath songs. [Psalm 29 is the only Sabbath Psalm in this section of Psalms; the others are all in book four of Psalms.] Furthermore, the closing note ‘peace’ coming at the end of the poem of the storm is particularly apt for the day of rest which introduces a period of calm after the storm of everyday life and conflicts.”

Psalm 29 is one of the seven Psalms that were read in the temple every Sabbath. For the others, go back to about Psalm 92 (the second of those), followed by 95, 96, 97, 98 and 99. Those are the seven Psalms that were traditionally recited in the temple at the beginning of the Sabbath. Other portions were gone through, but these seven were read every Sabbath. They came to be known as the “seven Sabbath Psalms.”

Psalm 30:1, “I will extol You, O Lord, for You have lifted me up, and have not let my foes rejoice over me.”

Psalm 31:1-2, “In You, O Lord, I put my trust; let me never be ashamed; deliver me in Your righteousness. Bow down Your ear to me; deliver me speedily; be my rock of refuge, a fortress of defense to save me.”

Verse 5, “Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.”

Verse 15, “My times are in Your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.” –Again, a reference to salvation and a reference to trust in God for deliverance.

Psalm 32:1-2, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit is no guile.” The most blessed state to be in is the state of being forgiven.

Verse 5, “I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.’ And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.” When we do that, we can be forgiven. We don’t have to live under a cloud and a shadow.

Psalm 33:1-3, “Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful. Praise the Lord with the harp; make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy.”

It describes the greatness of God.

Verses 16-19, “No king is saved by the multitude of an army; a mighty man is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a vain hope for safety; neither shall it deliver any by its great strength. Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.”

The real outcome of wars and battles is determined by God—not by the size of the army, not by the implements and the technology and all of these things. Those are not the real determining factors. The real determining factor is the fact that, “the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him.”

Psalm 34:1, “I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.” David spends a lot of time praising God. It is an important thing to understand. A very important key is brought out in Romans 1. Do you know the progression that took people away from God in the world after the flood? It is exactly the same progression that takes young people out of the Church. Any young person who grows up in

the Church and leaves the Church follows that same progression.

It says in Romans 1:21, “...although they knew God...” That’s the state of somebody who grows up in the Church. That was the state of all humanity when they got off the ark. Everybody—Noah, Mrs. Noah and the three little Noah’s and their wives—they all knew God. Nobody had the question, “Does God exist?” They had just gone through pretty dramatic evidence of that.

But it says in Romans 1:21, “...when they knew God [that was the starting point], they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful [What happened as a result of not glorifying God and being thankful?], they became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” There is a progression from light to darkness, a progression from knowing God to living in spiritual darkness. The progression starts when we cease to glorify God and to be thankful and appreciative to Him for His calling. David spent a lot of time praising and glorifying God. That’s one of the things you find that comes out in the Psalms over and over. David stood in awe of God. He was impressed with God. He thought a lot about God. He counted his blessings. Some people only count their troubles. David had troubles, too. He mentioned those troubles and talked about those troubles. There were times when things bothered him, but he did not let that become the “end-all” and all of his focus. He glorified God and he was thankful.

I think that’s one of the most important and valuable things. If a young person growing up does not learn to appreciate and value God’s calling and truth, if he doesn’t learn to love God and to appreciate and value God’s calling and truth, then he will ultimately treat it cheaply and become vain in his imagination. That will lead to actually losing the understanding that at one time he had.

Psalm 34:2, “My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear of it and be glad.”

Verse 6, “This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.”

Verses 12-15, “Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry.” God hears those who serve Him.

Verses 17-19, “The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to those who have a

broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit [those who practice repentance]. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” God’s people may have many afflictions, but God will deliver.

Verse 22, “The Lord redeems the soul of His servants, and none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.” God is the source of salvation. He is the source of redemption.

Psalm 35:1, “Plead my cause, O Lord, with those who strive with me....”

Notice what David did.

Verse 13, “But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; and my prayer would return to my own heart.” How did David humble himself? He humbled himself with fasting. That’s one of the purposes of fasting. It is a means by which we humble ourselves before God and draw near to God.

Psalm 36:1, “An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes.” If God was real to people and if they were really impressed with Him, they wouldn’t do some of the things they do. It describes that.

Psalm 37 is a very important Psalm. I think it is a good one to go to and meditate on when you are having trouble.

Psalm 37:1, “Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.” Don’t get all worked up and bothered because of people who are doing what’s wrong. Why?

Verses 2-5, “For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.”

Verse 7, “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.” The point is that no matter what somebody seems to be getting by with, that’s not the permanent state of things.

It is so easy sometimes to fret because of evildoers. We get all worked up because we feel somebody is getting by with something, and that’s not right. That’s not fair because maybe they are getting by with it at our expense. That always seems so unfair. If they are getting by with it at somebody else’s expense, we feel like “that’s too bad,” but if it’s at our expense, then that becomes a matter that’s very important. What’s the joke? What’s the difference between

a recession and a depression? A recession is when your neighbor has lost his job. A depression is when you have lost yours. It is a matter of perspective. We feel “that’s too bad” when it happens to our neighbor, but when it happens to us, it’s really serious. God says don’t worry about it. What’s the alternative to worrying about it?

Verses 4-5, “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.”

What am I going to do?

Verses 7-8, “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret—it only causes harm.” Why?

Verses 9-11, “For evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; indeed, you will look diligently for his place, but it shall be no more. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”

Verse 18, “The Lord knows the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever.”

The point is that we must put it in God’s hands. We trust Him and it is ultimately going to sort out. God knows who’s who and what’s what. It is a matter of perspective. David had to work through and come to this point of realizing that the key is getting it in perspective and realizing there is a way of life that is going to last. There is a way of life that is going to endure forever because God is going to intervene and God’s salvation is coming. But just as God is going to deliver His people, there is going to come a time of reckoning to those who aren’t.

Psalm 38:1, “O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your wrath, nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure!”

We ask God to correct us, but we look for mercy and ask God to do so gently. That’s always an important thing to include. When we ask God for correction, ask Him to please do it very gently.

Psalm 39:1, “I said, ‘I will guard my ways, lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, while the wicked are before me.’”

David did not want to sin with his tongue. He wanted to control what he said.

An interesting statement is made in v. 6, “‘Surely every man walks about like a shadow [or, “every man walks in an image”] [KJV, “in a vain show”]; surely they busy themselves in vain; he

heaps up riches and does not know who will gather them.”

Human nature is such that we seek to project this image, rather than to get down to the reality. In the midst of our fears and insecurities, in a matter of trying to impress one another, we walk in an image. We project this image that we try to measure up to and live up to. The point is that we need to get down to the reality and ask God to really help us to deal with things as they are and with ourselves as we really are.

Psalm 40:1, again, the theme is salvation, “I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry.” ‘I will wait for God.’

Verses 16-17, “Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You: let such as love Your salvation say continually, ‘The Lord be magnified!’ But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God.”

Psalm 41 ends this section of the Psalms.

Psalm 41:1-2, “Blessed is he who considers the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive.”

When we put into practice God’s way of life, it is not enough to simply darken the door of church or to sort of walk in and warm a seat. That’s not what impresses God. Religion is not something you put on and put off like your Sabbath suit. It is not something to be taken off, put in the closet and kept there all week, then to be taken out, dusted off and worn again on the next Sabbath. Religion is to be a way of life. It is to be the way we function.

Verse 1, “Blessed is he who considers the poor; [This is someone who practices, in his everyday life, God’s attitude of mercy and concern.] the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble.” The person who can look to God for help in the time of trouble is the one who is trying to live and practice God’s way day in and day out. If the only time you ever make God’s acquaintance is when you’re in trouble and you go along ignoring God all the rest of the time, then all of a sudden you get in a jam—it’s like, ‘Where’s God?’ We need to be looking for God and trying to practice God’s way in our day-to-day life because God takes note of that.

Verse 9 is a prophecy that is quoted in the New Testament (John 13:18) as a reference to Judas Iscariot.

This section ends up in v. 13, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen.”

There is a reference that runs throughout the first section of the Psalms—Book One of Psalms—that is a reference to salvation, a reference to our need for God’s deliverance. This section, in focusing in on a need for salvation, focuses in on why we need salvation. We need God’s deliverance. We can’t deliver ourselves. We find ourselves in any number of problems and difficulties. We need God’s deliverance and God can be counted upon. God is there. God is the One who we can look to and count on to deliver us in time of adversity.

This theme of salvation that runs through the first section of Psalms corresponds with the first section of the Festival Scrolls that were read at the Passover season. It certainly focuses in on the theme of personal salvation.

In the book of the Law, the book of Genesis is the first book of the Law. The book of Genesis introduces what? It introduces the need for individual salvation. It introduces Adam and Eve and their sin, that God promised deliverance and salvation through the Seed of woman (that’s how God was going to accomplish salvation) and the working and development of God’s promises of the Messiah through the family of Abraham. All this is developed in the book of Genesis. So, there is this correspondence that we would note and a theme of salvation and of deliverance.

There is a tremendous amount. We have just sort of skimmed the high spots of these first forty-one Psalms. These Psalms will give you something you can go through and focus in and meditate on. We realize there is a tremendous amount that God has packed into the Psalms that are there for us to meditate on, to think about, that can help us sort of get things into perspective when we’re going through difficulties and things in our lives. Next Bible study we will cover Book Two of Psalms—Psalms 42—72.

Bible Study # 76 Questions

SURVEY OF THE WRITINGS SERIES

Book One—Psalms 1—41

1. In Psalm 1, to what does God compare the man who meditates on His way? What is the significance of that symbolism?
2. Why does God laugh?
3. How does the Father instruct Christ to rule the nations?
4. According to Psalm 5, how seriously does God take deceit and hypocrisy?
5. What are we told about the state of the dead in Psalm 6?
6. According to Psalm 8, what is man's place in the universe?
7. In Psalm 11, what are we told about the way in which God deals with the righteous?
8. How does God define a fool in Psalm 14?
9. What does Psalm 15 tell us about those who will be in God's Kingdom?
10. What verse in Psalm 16 is a prophecy of Christ's resurrection?
11. How did David describe God in Psalm 18?
12. What is to be the role of God's law in our lives?
13. What does Psalm 22:1 refer to?
14. Contrast Psalm 22 and 23. How does each of these Psalms fit into the events of Christ's life?
15. What is David requesting in Psalm 26:1-2?
16. According to Psalm 32, who is really blessed?
17. According to Psalm 33, what determines the outcome of wars?
18. According to Psalm 34, to whom does God listen?
19. How did David humble himself?
20. According to Psalm 37, should we be concerned when we see someone seeming to get by with something? How should we react?
21. What does Psalm 39 tell us about human nature?
22. Where in Psalm 41 is Judas Iscariot prophesied of?

Bible Study # 77
October 8, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Book Two—Psalms 42—72

This evening we are continuing our focus on a survey of the Writings. We are going through the section of the Old Testament Scriptures known as the Writings, and in particular, the book of Psalms. This evening we **are focusing on Book Two of Psalms—Psalms 42—72.**

As we move through this section, we start our focus on Israel's ruin and their problems. At the end of the section, we will then focus in on the Redeemer and the redemption that God will finally give Israel.

We will note that this section of the book of Psalms corresponds with the second book of the Law, Exodus, as well as the second book of the Festival Scrolls, Ruth, which was read at Pentecost. This section of Scripture opens with a lament, much as the book of Exodus opens. The book of Exodus opens with the children of Israel crying out to God in their affliction and their need for deliverance. There is a focus on the helpless condition and the need for God to act as Redeemer and Deliverer. There is a need for God's role. Our need for God is the issue that is addressed in the beginning of the book of Exodus and here in this second section of Psalms because that sets the stage for the recognition of salvation, of redemption. You have to first recognize your need in order to recognize the importance of God's plan, God's promises and the things that God proposes to us. Psalm 45, which is a part of this section, celebrates a royal marriage and this, in many ways, parallels the story of Ruth. Ruth has parallels because part of the symbolism of Pentecost is tied in with the institution of the Old Covenant and then of the New Covenant. Both covenants were marriage covenants. Pentecost represented the Old Covenant in Mount Sinai—a marriage covenant between God and Israel. The Jews have focused in on that and of the connection between that and the marriage of Israel to the God of the Old Testament. That analogy was given because human marriage is, in reality, a type of the relationship between Christ and the Church.

Psalm 68, which is also found in this section, is traditionally known in orthodox Jewish synagogues as the Pentecost anthem. The Jews have connected much of the symbolism of this

particular Psalm with the revelation at Mount Sinai. The revelation at Sinai and the giving of the Ten Commandments is understood by Jewish tradition to have been on the first Pentecost that was celebrated.

That fits right in because that was the institution of the Old Covenant, just as the New Covenant was instituted on Pentecost in 31 A.D. with the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit. Under the Old Covenant, the law of God was written by the finger of God on tables of stone; under the New Covenant, the law of God is written by the Spirit of God in the tables of our hearts and minds. That's really the fundamental and basic difference between the Old and the New Covenant. It is not that one is based on law and the other is based on grace.

To begin with, God's election (God's calling) of Israel is based on grace. Anytime God delivers benefits to human beings, God's grace is involved because none of us have ever earned or deserved the blessings and benefits that God bestows. That's an important aspect in understanding that the fundamental difference between the covenants has to do with the giving of God's Holy Spirit, and God's Holy Spirit is what makes possible putting the law of God into our hearts and minds.

Other Psalms that we will note in this particular section are Psalm 51 and Psalm 47. Psalm 51 is David's Psalm of repentance. Psalm 47, according to the Sanseno (which is a Jewish commentary), is a focus on God's universal rulership. Psalm 47 is recited in the synagogue before the sounding of the shofar (the ram's horn) on the Feast of Trumpets—a day when the liturgy dwells on the thought of God's universal sovereignty.

We will start out here in Psalm 42. It certainly ties in very directly in terms of the time of Pentecost because it opens up with a deep thirst.

Psalm 42:1-2, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God...." The focus at the beginning is on a deep thirst.

You can tie this in with what Jesus told the woman at the well in Samaria.

John 4:10, "Jesus answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, "Give Me a drink," you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.'" She wanted to know from where this living water came (v. 11).

Verses 13-14, "Jesus answered and said to her, 'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give

him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” He told her that whoever drank of the water that came from Jacob’s well would get thirsty again, but the water that He had to offer was water that would permanently quench thirst. Now, the water that Jesus made reference to was not just a physical drink of water that would quench a physical thirst. He was talking about the Spirit of God and the deep spiritual thirst.

Psalm 42 opens with this recognition of a deep spiritual thirst, a thirst that can only be fulfilled by God, “My soul thirsts for God, the living God...”

One of the things we note here in Psalm 42 is the extent to which David had to deal with many of the feelings that all of us have to contend with at one time or another. David had to deal with depression and discouragement.

Psalm 42:3, “My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say to me, ‘Where is your God?’”

Verses 5-6, “Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? [David is verbalizing his feelings.] Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore I will remember You....”

Verse 9, “I will say to God my Rock, ‘Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?’” David was discouraged. He was really down. He recognized his need for what only God was the source of or what only God could give. He recognized that what he ultimately needed was God’s Holy Spirit. He needed the quenching of that deep spiritual thirst.

One of the purposes and part of the value of the Psalms is the fact that every gamut of human emotions—from every high to every low, up and down and all the in-betweens—all of these emotions are expressed and verbalized in the Psalms. It’s a good place to go to put into words things that we are feeling and wrestling with and the ways that God’s people are to deal with those feelings. Generally, King David worked through those feelings. He addressed them. He faced and dealt with them. David likened his need for God to a deep intense thirst.

Psalm 43:1, “Vindicate [KJV, “Judge”] me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; oh, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man!” You could certainly parallel this to the cry right at the beginning of the book of Exodus.

Psalm 44:1-3, “We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what deeds You did in their days, in days of old: How You drove out the nations with Your hand, but them You planted; how You afflicted the peoples and cast them out. For they did not gain possession of the land by their own sword, nor did their own arm save them; but it was your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your countenance, because You favored them.”

Israel didn’t win the Promised Land for themselves. God intervened and gave it to them. This is brought out right here in v. 3.

It’s interesting if you study a little bit of American history. When the early settlers first came to this country, the Pilgrims came to New England. There was a remarkable thing that took place over a period of time. There are two events that took place. First, there were plagues of diseases that swept the American continent, particularly the East Coast, in the fifty years prior to the arrival of the colonial settlement. The Indian population was greatly decimated as a result of this. This occurred even before any of the settlers arrived. There were some major disease epidemics that swept across and greatly lessened the population.

Second, there was a strain of bees that were introduced by the English settlers in New England that mated with the bees here. The Indians called them English hornets. The interesting thing is a really remarkable parallel. These bees migrated about fifty miles west of the colonial settlement. In other words, they were always a little bit ahead in their migration across the continent. It was one of the things that cleared out a great deal of the Indian population in New England. It is a remarkable parallel (Exodus 23:28).

There was a U. S. News & World Report article on the subject two or three months ago. I think I may cover some of those things in a sermon at a later time because there are some very remarkable parallels in terms of how God gave the land.

When you study American History, I think one of the things you find is that our forefathers had far more in common with unconverted Jacob than they did with converted Israel. Remember when Jacob was converted, God changed his name to Israel. God made a promise to Jacob that he was going to give him the birthright blessing. But, you remember, Jacob couldn’t wait for God to do it His way. He didn’t see the answer coming. All he saw was Esau. How was God going to get rid of Esau? Since Jacob didn’t see

the answer, he assumed the solution was that he needed to do it. And, of course, he did it. And he brought a lot of penalties, problems and complications down on his life as a result. He did it by trickery, fraud and deceit. God let him keep it because it was God's purpose to give it to him. But there were problems that he had in his later life because he didn't wait for God to give it to him. He "jumped the gun" and decided what he needed to do was sort of maneuver and manipulate and get it on his own.

There are some remarkable parallels with American history. God let us keep it because He promised it to Abraham and it was His purpose to give it to us. When you study American history and some of the dealing that we had, you recognize there's a lot of similarity with unconverted Jacob. Our ancestors had a lot more in common with unconverted Jacob than they did with converted Israel. They thought in some of the same ways and that engendered some of the resultant problems in American history.

There are many parallels in the Scriptures. God's purpose stands even when He's working through human beings who go charging off in their own direction. God is able to work it around and bring His purpose to pass, but there are lessons there for us to learn. When God makes us a promise, it's a lot better to wait and let Him do it His way, rather than decide that maybe God has forgotten or maybe He got preoccupied. So, we had better jump in, maneuver, manipulate and work it out our own way.

All of us certainly want to have more in common with converted Israel than we do with carnal, unconverted Jacob when it comes to the way we live our lives. If we don't, God may let us fall into the hands of "Uncle Laban," like He did Jacob, to get the point across that this is the way it feels to be dealt with—the way you've dealt with other people. God has ways of getting our attention and letting us realize that lesson.

Psalm 44:3 makes a point for Israel to understand that God gave them the land. It was not a matter that they get full credit. It was not because of their greatness but because God intervened.

Coming down, it talks about God's intervention and the fact that God is our source of help.

Psalm 45 is the Psalm that I mentioned earlier that is a celebration of a royal marriage.

Psalm 45:6-7, you might notice, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with

the oil of gladness more than Your companions." Here is one of the clearest proofs in the Old Testament of the fact that there were two members of the God Family—the Messiah and the One that we know as God the Father. This verse is quoted in Hebrews 1:8-9.

Hebrews 1:4-5, speaking of Jesus Christ, "having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did he ever say: 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You?'"

Verses 8-9, "But to the Son He says: 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom.' You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions."

Paul quotes Psalm 45:6-7 in Hebrews 1:8-9 and says very clearly that this is a reference to Jesus Christ. "Your throne O God is forever" and "God, Your God has anointed You with the oil of gladness." The word "Messiah" in the Hebrew is a word that means "the Anointed One"—the One that has been chosen or anointed by God. The word "Christ" is simply our English form of a Greek word that means exactly the same thing—"the Anointed One." This is the term that is used right here. In fact, the term for "Messiah" is exactly what is used here when it says, "God has anointed You." That is actually the term that is used.

In Psalm 46, we focus in on the fact that through difficulty and through calamities God is our Protector.

Psalm 46:1-5, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling, there is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn."

This is talking about the fact that God is our refuge and our strength regardless of the problems that are going to come about, regardless of the calamities, difficulties, adversities, tribulation or tremendous cataclysmic events that are prophesied in the end time. It says God is our refuge and our strength. We don't need to fear though the earth be removed and the mountains be carried in the

midst of the sea. Regardless of the turmoil—all the chaos and all the things that transpire—we don't have to worry and be filled with anxiety because God is the source of our refuge and our protection.

Psalm 47 is a celebration.

Psalm 47:1-2, "Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph! For the Lord Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth."

In v. 3, it talks about him subduing the people.

Verses 7-8, "For God is the King of all the earth...God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne."

Psalm 48:1, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain."

As we go through Psalms 46, 47 and 48, it is very clear that God is going to set up a literal government. It is not just some vague feeling in your heart. It is not flitting off to heaven somewhere.

Psalm 46:7-10, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Come, behold the works of the Lord, who has made desolations in the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"

Psalm 47:2, "For the Lord Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth."

Verses 7-8, "For God is the King of all the earth...God reigns over the nations [heathens]; God sits on His holy throne."

Psalm 48:1-2, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain. Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King." Very, very specific statements that all point to the fact of a literal reign by God on the earth from Jerusalem.

A key verse to focus on and be aware of is Psalm 48:14, "For this is God, our God forever and ever, He will be our guide even to death." Or it would be best rendered, "even through death." He is our guide through death. He is our God forever and ever (for eternity) and He will guide us through death.

There are not a lot of references in the Old Testament to the promise of eternal life. There are not a lot of clear direct references. The Sadducees did not accept the doctrine of the resurrection because they didn't think it was clearly taught in the five books of the law. Jesus

told them it certainly was because God calls Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Matthew 22:31-32; Mark 12:26-27), and He made promises to them that are yet to be fulfilled.

Here is a statement in the Psalms that shows that God is going to be our God forever and ever. Then we would have to live forever and ever. He will guide us through death. He will be the One who brings us through.

Psalm 49:1-2, "Hear this, all you peoples; give ear, all you inhabitants of the world, both low and high, rich and poor together."

Verses 6-10, "Those who trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him—for the redemption of their souls is costly, and it shall cease forever—that he should continue to live eternally, and not see the Pit. For he sees that wise men die; likewise the fool and the senseless person perish, and leave their wealth to others."

The point is that it doesn't matter how much money you have, there's one thing that you will never be able to buy your way out of and that is death. People who have enough money can buy their way out of a lot of things. People have bought their way out of trouble and out of the army. People have bought their way out of a lot of different things and bought their way into some things such as a public office. But none of us possess the power or the wherewithal to redeem our souls from death. There isn't anything we can do to buy ourselves back from the grave or to redeem those that are close to us. People have a desire for self-perpetuation. We desire that.

Verse 11, "Their inner thought is that their houses will continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names."

People stick their name on things and sort of hope that somehow that's going to perpetuate a memory of them. It doesn't really do the trick. Sooner or later somebody else buys it out, changes the name, and then where are they? But there is that sense and that desire for self-perpetuation. We don't like the idea that somehow we are just "snuffed out." We cease to exist and there isn't any memory or consciousness of us that remains. Our minds rebel at the fact that we just disappear like a blip on the screen and are never around again.

God has set within us a desire for something beyond the life here right now.

Ecclesiastes 3:11, "...He has put eternity in their hearts...." He has given us a sense of time, that sense of the future. He is ultimately the One that is the source of life beyond right now.

Psalm 49:12-15, "Nevertheless man, though in honor, does not remain; he is like the beasts that perish. This is the way of those who are foolish, and of their posterity who approve their sayings. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for He shall receive me." We can't redeem ourselves, but David understood that God would redeem us.

Verses 16-19, "Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dies he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lives he blesses himself (For men will praise you when you do well for yourself), he shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light."

It is a matter that we don't have the power to perpetuate ourselves, but there is a redemption that God offers.

Psalm 50:1, "The Mighty One, God the Lord, has spoken and called the earth from the rising of the sun to its going down."

Verse 14, "Offer to God thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High." This is an answer to the question God says up a little earlier.

Verses 11-15, "I know all the birds of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world is Mine, and all its fullness. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High. Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."

God doesn't need what we have. You don't bribe God. It's not a matter of how many sacrifices you offer. God doesn't need what you have. He doesn't need what I have. God doesn't need anything and if He did, He wouldn't have to borrow it from us.

You see some of these television preachers and you think God is on the verge of a giant liquidation sale. He's going to have to hang a going-out-of-business sign on the Pearly Gates if you don't hurry up and send in a little cash. That's not the case.

What does God want? Does God want or simply need what we have? No. You know what God

says He wants? "Offer unto God thanksgiving and pay your vows unto the Most High." In other words, keep your word, do what you're supposed to do. Be thankful and appreciative, and then you can call on God when you are in trouble. It's not a matter of "cutting a deal" with God or trying to bribe God by what you give. God says that it's simply a matter of being thankful to Him, being appreciative, recognizing that He's the source of everything and be thankful. Pay your vows unto the Most High. Do what you said you would do. For those of us who have been baptized, what did you say you would do? You said you would surrender your life and your will to God, that you would unconditionally surrender to God and that you wanted Jesus Christ to live His life in you.

In that sense, we made a vow to God. What God wants is for us to simply follow through on what we've said—not to have this sort of pagan idea of sort of appeasing God by giving Him something. God doesn't want what you have. God wants you. He wants me. He wants us, our lives, our hearts, our minds—not just a little bit of what we may happen to have. Because everything we have, He gave it to us to begin with. It's all His.

Psalm 51 is David's Psalm of repentance, a very key Psalm.

One point that I think is important to understand and that is basic to repentance is that the natural human response, when confronted with sin, is either denial or blame it on somebody else—sort of "pass the buck." Go back to Genesis and in the first couple of accounts we have tells us that. God asked Cain, 'Where is your brother?' Cain said, 'How should I know? Am I my brother's keeper?' Did Cain know where his brother was? Well, of course, he did. His brother was where he left him. He had just knocked him in the head with a club. Cain sought to deny it. His first response was to deny it. He tried to make out like he didn't know anything about it. That's human nature. That's generally what happens.

When a politician gets accused of something, the first thing he does is deny it. If the denial doesn't "wash," then he finds somebody to blame it on. That's not just unique to politicians. You and I probably have done that a time or two.

What did Adam and Eve do? God asked Adam, 'Did you eat of the fruit of the tree I told you not to?' That's just a "yes" or "no" question. All you have to do is say "yes" or "no, I didn't." Adam didn't say "yes" and he didn't say "no." He said, 'Well, now, the woman that You gave me, she took of the fruit of the tree and did eat. She gave me some and I kind of took a little bite, also.' He

kind of tagged that onto the end. You know, “pass the buck.” Eve did the same thing. He asked Eve, ‘Is that so?’ She said, ‘Well, the serpent, he beguiled me. I was tricked. It’s not my fault.’

Those are the normal carnal reactions when we are confronted with sin. We try to deny it. We try to make excuses or try to find somebody to blame it on.

If you read Psalm 51, David didn’t do any of those things, and that is the reason he was a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22). When you go through what David had to say, there isn’t any mention where David said, ‘Well, God, don’t You think You’re being a little bit hard on me? After all, haven’t other people done something just as bad, and I don’t see where they got into as much trouble as I did. Why am I the one that’s getting all the “chewing out”?’ You haven’t said anything to Bathsheba, and, after all, if she hadn’t been out there on that roof taking a bath, well, this never would have happened.’

Where’s the excuse? David didn’t blame anybody else. He didn’t blame Bathsheba. He didn’t say, ‘It was her husband’s fault. He was a lousy husband. If he hadn’t been the way he was, well, this never would have happened.’ He offered no excuses. He took responsibility, and this is a key because it goes against the grain of human nature.

When we are confronted with sin, our normal response is the response that Adam and Eve had. After all, they are our first parents and they set the pattern. That’s human nature. God doesn’t tell you how everybody responded every time they were confronted with sin, but He tells you how the first people responded because they set a pattern typical of humanity. God wants us to see. He gives us the illustration because He wants us to see that this is the way it looks and this is the way it sounds.

Psalm 51:1-5, but David said, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.”

He is not talking about the Catholic doctrine of original sin. This is a poetic expression saying, ‘I

am a sinner inside out. I’m a sinner from the beginning—that’s just a part of me.’

Verse 7, he said, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

Verses 9-10, “Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” David acknowledged his sin. He recognized that sin is ultimately against God. When we sin, there may have been another person who has been wronged by our sin but all sin is ultimately against God.

Another thing that we notice about David is that he acknowledged his sin. He faced it and he didn’t offer excuses. But neither did David have the Catholic concept of penance. David threw himself on God’s mercy, but he stood ready to accept God’s forgiveness. Some people go around under this cloud of guilt and kind of beat themselves up. They never go beyond it.

David asked God, vv. 10-13, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.”

David said, “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation.” David didn’t want to just wallow around in some sort of pseudo-guilt for the rest of his life. He acknowledged his sin. He faced it. He went to God to deal with it. He went to God for forgiveness and for deliverance. He asked God to renew within him the joy of His salvation—to go forward.

God does not want penance. He wants repentance. You have to understand that the Catholic doctrine of penance goes back to a pagan concept where you can atone for your own sin through your own suffering. If that’s so, then why did Christ have to come and die? You could be your own savior if that were the case. It’s an important concept to understand. God isn’t interested in your penance. He is interested in your repentance. He is interested in your turning around and going the other direction.

Psalm 52:8-9, “But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever. I will praise You forever, because You have done it; and in the presence of Your saints I will wait on Your name, for it is good.”

Psalm 53:1, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’....” Anybody who’s come to

that conclusion, God says that's just foolish. Only a fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' It describes this particular process and way of thinking.

Psalm 54:1-2, "Save me, O God, by Your name, and vindicate me by Your strength. Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth."

Verse 4, "Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is with those who uphold my life."

In Psalm 55, David recognized that God is our Deliverer. Notice the context.

Psalm 55:1-6, "Give ear to my prayer, O God, and do not hide Yourself from my supplication. Attend to me, and hear me; I am restless in my complaint, and moan noisily, because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked; for they bring down trouble upon me, and in wrath they hate me. My heart is severely pained within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me (KJV, margin, "covered me"). And I said, 'Oh, that I had wings like a dove! For then I would fly away and be at rest.'"

Have you ever gotten to the point that you wish you could sprout wings and fly away because you were at the end of your rope? David felt like that. "Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me." David said, 'It just covered me up. I'm just overwhelmed as a result of fear and turmoil, and I just wish I could sprout wings and fly away from it all.'

Verse 7, "'Indeed, I would wander far off, and remain in the wilderness.'" He said, 'I would get far away from here. If I could sprout wings and fly away like a dove, I would go as far out into the wilderness as I could get.'

Verse 8, "'I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.'" David said, 'I would get away from here.' Since he couldn't do that, what was he going to do?

Verses 16-17, "As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me. Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice." Since sprouting wings wasn't an alternative, what was he going to do? He said he was going to go to God. He was going to call on God and he knew that the Lord will save him. He was going to draw close to God. He would pray to God in the evening, in the morning and at noon. He was going to pray and cry aloud. He was going to really beseech God.

Here's the key and here is a part of how David worked through some of those things.

Verses 22-23, "Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved. But You, O God, shall bring them down to the pit of destruction; bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; But I will trust in You." God is ultimately going to deal with everybody. He says, "Cast your burden on the Lord and He shall sustain you."

When you are in the kind of condition David is talking about, the key is to turn it over to God. Go to God, draw near to God in prayer and cast your burden on Him. Turn loose of it and give it to Him.

Psalm 121:4 says, "He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." You know, there's no point for you to stay up all night worrying about something. Since God's already staying up, you might as well go to sleep. He is going to be up anyway. "He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." God is going to be up all night anyway. You might as well go to bed and get some rest. Give it to Him. Cast your burden upon Him. Sometimes we feel the need because we are afraid He is going to go to sleep. So, we had better stay up and worry about it because who's going to be tending to it. As though, somehow, staying up worrying, fretting and wringing our hands is going to solve it.

I understand it is hard to work through and actually put that into practice. But when you go through some of these Psalms and realize the things that David experienced and had to work through, it can be very helpful to focus in on certain ones like this when you are really bogged down with things.

Psalm 56:1-3, "Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up; fighting all day he oppresses me. My enemies would hound me all day, for there are many who fight against me, O Most High. Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You." Have you ever felt like you were surrounded? You are surrounded like Davy Crockett at the Alamo, or something, and you think you are just going to be swallowed up. David didn't say he wasn't afraid. He said, "Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You."

Verses 4-6, "In God (I will praise His word), in God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me? All day they twist my words; all their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather together, they hide, they mark my steps, when they lie in wait for my life."

They are creeping around and trying to trip us up. They are trying to twist what you say. David understood that. He knew what it was like to have people trying to gang up on him and get him in trouble. Maybe you are going through something like that on the job or have gone through this at one time or another.

David goes through and talks about that.

Verse 9, "When I cry out to You, then my enemies will turn back; this I know, because God is for me."

Verse 11, "In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

Verse 13, "For You have delivered my soul from death. Have You not delivered my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?" "I know that God will be our Deliverer."

Psalm 57:1, "Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; and in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, until these calamities have passed by." God describes Himself as a place of refuge. He is our source of refuge. It is an allusion to God's protection for His people in times of trouble, particularly in the time of the Great Tribulation when Christ said we are going to look to God and pray that we will be delivered out of that. If we are close to God, we can be.

In Psalm 58, He talks about how the wicked and various ones are out to get him.

Psalm 59:1-2, "Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; defend me from those who rise up against me. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloodthirsty men."

Psalm 60:1, "O God, You have cast us off; You have broken us down; You have been displeased; Oh, restore us again!" He is talking about the correction that God has to give.

Verses 2-4, "You have made the earth tremble; You have broken it; heal its breaches, for it is shaking. You have shown Your people hard things; You have made us drink the wine of confusion. You have given a banner to those who fear You, that it may be displayed because of the truth."

Verses 6-7, "God has spoken in His holiness: 'I will rejoice; I will divide Shechem and measure out the Valley of Succoth. Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the helmet for My head; Judah is My lawgiver.'" Here is a specific reference to certain tribes of Israel and certainly to the tribes that are going to stand out as leading nations in the Millennium.

Let's notice. Manasseh, Ephraim and Judah are specifically singled out. Gilead is a poetic term

for Reuben because Reuben dwelt on the east side of the Jordan River in the land of Gilead. So, basically, He focuses in on the French, the Americans, the British and the Jewish people as being the nations that He is going to work through in a very special way. He is certainly going to work through Israel. He will be using Israel as a tool to deal with all of the Gentile nations. Those four of the great tribes of Israel are going to be the ones that sort of stand out in that way. It's an allusion to that. The time setting is clearly referring to the time when God is setting up His Kingdom on earth.

Psalm 61:1, "Hear my cry, O God; attend to my prayer."

Psalm 62:1-2, "Truly my soul silently waits for God; from Him comes my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved."

Verses 5-6, "My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved." God is the source of our stability.

Psalm 63:1, "O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water." Here is a clear reference to our need for God. It, again, likens our need for God's Holy Spirit to a thirsty person out in a desert who really craves that water. "You are my God; early will I seek You" alludes to the fact that early in the morning is a good time to focus in on our prayer. So, start off in the morning by going to God and really drawing close to God.

Verse 6, "When I remember You on my bed I meditate on You in the night watches."

The evening is also a time for prayer. But the difference is that in the evening, at the end of the day, it's a time to think back reflectively on the day. It is time for meditation. It's a time for contemplation and meditation on the events of the day and going to God for help, for forgiveness and for thanksgiving. It makes a distinction in, let's say, even the types of prayer. There is one type that is mentioned in the evening and another type mentioned in the morning. Evenings are a good time to meditate and reflect.

We miss out so much in our urban society. Most of us have occasion to be out in the country from time to time; a lot of us grew up in it. One thing always impresses me anew every time I go up to visit my mother. She lives way out in the country and there aren't any city lights or anything around there. There's not much light and the

lights are all turned off by very late at night. The thing that is so impressive is that when I look up at the sky, I find that I have forgotten how many stars there are. If you look up in the sky in Baton Rouge, you see a few stars and think, 'This is a beautiful night with beautiful stars.'

Some of you have been on our father-son /daughter campout out there on the levee of the Atchafalaya River where there aren't any lights around. When the campfire goes down, that's it. If it's a clear night, you look up and it's just incredible. It's like the sky has just exploded with stars. We live in sort of an urban environment or at least semi-urban, and there's so much diffused light around. Even in the perimeters of a semi-urban area, you really don't see the night sky as clearly as you can in a few remote areas. When you do see it, particularly in all of its glory, it just simply puts you in a frame of mind to meditate.

It's the difference between David sitting out in the field watching over the sheep by night, looking up at the sky and being just overwhelmed with the greatness and the magnitude of God, and somebody in our society who, instead of doing that, are propped up in the chair watching television impressed with the greatness and magnitude of man. It's sort of the contrast. I am not saying you shouldn't ever watch a show on television. That's not the point. I am just saying we live in a society where we tend to be removed from that.

God designed the evenings as a time to meditate and contemplate. It's just the natural order of things with all the stars and the way that God designed the evening. He designed it as a time that would be a contemplative time—a time at the close of the day when focusing in on the magnitude of God's greatness and power puts you in a meditative and contemplative frame of mind. I suspect that most of us feel that way when we have opportunity to find ourselves out like that. Most of us don't have that opportunity all that often. It's a wonderful thing to take a walk out at night and look up at the night sky. There's just a special feeling there.

David describes that a little bit here. It's something that we should take advantage of because I think that's one of the reasons why we live in such a faithless age. I really think we do, and I think most of us have to acknowledge that if we think about it.

Christ made reference to it in Luke 18:8, "...when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" I think one of the reasons is because we live in a society that

revolves so much around what man can do. We find ourselves so impressed with man that we lose sight of God. God, somehow, seems far off and unreal, and what man can do seems awfully close and awfully impressive. It's hard for us to have the outlook and the perspective that many of the men and women of an earlier time had. We need to strive to get a perspective that helps us focus in on what's real, what's permanent and what's really important.

Psalm 64:1-3, "Hear my voice, O God, in my meditation; preserve my life from fear of the enemy. Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked, from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity, who sharpen their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows—bitter words." Have you ever felt like people were sort of whetting their tongue like a sword? I mean they might as well have gotten out the whetstone. They were sharpening up to go after you. Well, David felt like that and he describes it in a very poetic way. It's like they got out the bow and arrow and were shooting bitter words at you.

Verse 10, David went to God realizing, "The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and trust in Him. And all the upright in heart shall glory."

Psalm 65:1, "Praise is awaiting You, O God, in Zion; and to You the vow shall be performed."

Verse 4, "Blessed is the man whom You choose, and cause to approach You, that he may dwell in Your courts..." Here is a reference to the fact that God has to call. "Blessed is the man whom You choose and cause to approach You." God is the One who chooses and enables us to approach Him. "...that he may dwell in Your courts." Again, it's a reference to God's power and His blessing.

Psalm 66:1-2, "Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth! Sing out the honor of His name; make His praise glorious."

Verse 4, "All the earth shall worship You and sing praises to You; they shall sing praises to Your name."

Verse 7, "He rules by His power forever; His eyes observes the nations..."

Psalm 67:1-2, "God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us. That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations."

Psalm 68 is sometimes called the Pentecost anthem. It is traditionally read in the synagogues on Pentecost. Many of the events here are considered as descriptive of the events of Mount Sinai.

Psalm 68:8, “The earth shook; the heavens also dropped rain at the presence of God; Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.” Of course, God thundered the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai that first Pentecost day, and the mountain quaked and shook and the smoke arose (Exodus 19:16-20).

One point to notice in vv. 5-6, “A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation. God sets the solitary in families; He brings out those who are bound into prosperity; but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.”

God views Himself as the special Protector of those who are unable to protect themselves, particularly the fatherless and the widow. There are people who like to make a prey of those who are helpless and defenseless. There are con men that make a special prey of the elderly and things of that sort. There is a special reckoning waiting. I don't know exactly what, but God says that He considers Himself, in a very special way, as a Father to the fatherless and a judge of the widows.

I don't want to advise you to take advantage of anybody, but your worst bet is to take advantage of the fatherless and the widow. You shouldn't pick on anybody, but if you are going to pick on somebody, you had better pick on somebody else because you're picking on God in a special way. One of the things that God absolutely hates is this cowardly attitude of people who would take advantage of those who are the most helpless and defenseless. That is the most cowardly and contemptible thing; God really hates that sort of attitude and mindset.

He makes a reference that, in one sense, I think is fulfilled, at least in type, in the Church. It's going to be fulfilled in Tomorrow's World when Christ returns and you have the survivors of the concentration camps. It says, “God sets the solitary in families....” God places those who remain in families (one here and one there). That's the way it will be dealt with. God will set in families little children who have survived some of these terrible traumas.

And even today, sometimes people are alone when they come into the Church or they're the only one in their family that comes into the Church. There is a family relationship in the Church. God, in many ways, sets the solitary in families in the Church today. A lot of you came into the Church and in some of your cases, you came in and were by yourself. It wasn't long before other people were taking an interest in you. God put you in a family context.

Verse 18, “You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell there.”

Hold your place there. Let's go to Ephesians and you will see that this is quoted and explained.

Ephesians 4:8, “Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.’” What is that talking about? It is talking about Jesus Christ. He ascended upon high. He led captivity captive. Well, He ascended to heaven. What is the greatest captivity of all? The greatest captivity of all is death and the grave. That's the captivity that nobody has ever been able to escape.

People have escaped from jail or escaped from exile. Napoleon escaped from the British exile. He got away. He came back and that didn't last too long. They exiled him again. All kinds of people have escaped from various things, but there is one captivity that nobody has ever escaped from and that's death. That is the ultimate captivity.

That's the captivity that Christ triumphed over because He conquered death. He led captivity captive. He triumphed over death when He was resurrected by the power of God. He ascended upon high. He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men, which is a reference to the Holy Spirit and to the various manifestations of it—many of which are enumerated in Ephesians 4. “And gave gifts to men” is a reference to the outpouring of the gifts of the Spirit that came on the Day of Pentecost and was the result of Christ ascending upon high.

John 16:7, he told the disciples, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send [It] to you.” There was going to be a special thing that would come. This is in the context of Psalm 68, the so-called Pentecost anthem.

Psalm 68:19, “Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, the God of our salvation!” This is a description of God's greatness and His power.

Several references in Psalm 69 are prophetic of Jesus Christ.

Psalm 69:4, “Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; they are mighty who would destroy me....” This is quoted in John 15:25.

Verse 8, “I have become a stranger to my brothers, and an alien to my mother's children.” This is quoted in John 7:5.

Verse 9, “Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.” This is quoted in John 2:17.

Verse 19, “You know my reproach, my shame and my dishonor; my adversaries are all before You.” This is quoted in Matthew 27:29. All these references are references of Christ.

Verse 20, “Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.” This is referred to in Matthew 26:37-38.

Verse 21, “They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” This is a reference to the crucifixion in Matthew 27:34, 48.

Verse 25, “Let their habitation be desolate; let no one dwell in their tents.” This is quoted in Acts 1:20. There is a great deal of the content of Psalm 69 that is quoted in the New Testament as prophetic of Jesus Christ and the thoughts and experiences that He had. A lot of things, if you just read it in the context, call your attention to that.

Psalm 70:1-3, “Make haste, O God, to deliver me! Make haste to help me, O Lord! Let them be ashamed and confounded who seek my life; let them be turned back and confused who desire my hurt. Let them be turned back....” This is a reference to the fact that God is our Deliverer.

Psalm 71:1-2, “In You, O Lord, I put my trust; let me never be put to shame. Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape; Incline Your ear to me, and save me.” The whole theme of Psalm 71 is trusting God for deliverance.

The psalmist is pictured in his old age as still looking to God for help in the midst of trials.

Verses 17-18, “O God, You have taught me from my youth; and to this day I declare Your wondrous works. Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come.”

Verses 20-21, “You, who have shown me great and severe troubles, shall revive me again, and bring me up again from the depths of the earth. You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.” It is a reference to God’s deliverance and trusting for deliverance.

Psalm 72 is the last Psalm in this section.

Psalm 72:1-4, “Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness to the king’s Son. He will judge Your people with righteousness, and Your poor with justice. The mountains will bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by

righteousness. He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor.”

As you go through, this is clearly a reference to the Millennium and to Jesus Christ’s reign.

Verses 7-8, “In His days the righteous shall flourish, and abundance of peace, until the moon is no more. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.”

Verse 11, “Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him.” This is clearly a reference to Christ.

But notice in v. 4, “He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor.”

Verses 12-14, “For He will deliver the needy when he cries, the poor also, and him who has no helper. He will spare the poor and needy, and will save the souls of the needy. He will redeem their life from oppression and violence; and precious shall be their blood in His sight.” Do you think there isn’t going to be any problems in Tomorrow’s World, in the Millennium? Do you think there won’t ever be anybody who’s poor or needy or anybody that needs to be redeemed from deceit and violence—particularly in the early part of the Millennium?

The point is that when Christ comes back, He’s not just going to snap His fingers and all of a sudden the sun is shining, the birds are singing and everybody’s happy and everybody loves everybody. There are things that are going to have to be dealt with, and there are real problems and real people. Progress will be made, but as long as we are dealing with physical human beings, we are going to be dealing with physical human beings and the mistakes, problems and difficulties that come up. Now, certainly, when Satan isn’t there to stir up trouble, things will be a whole lot better. As generations go by, there should be significant improvement.

Psalm 72, when taken in context, is clearly a reference to the Millennium. It is a reference to the fact that, yes, there is going to be real problems. There are things that need to be dealt with and problems that need to be addressed.

Psalm 72 ends with vv. 18-20, “Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only does wondrous things! And blessed be His glorious name forever! And let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.”

Psalm 72 is not the last Psalm written by David in the numerical order of the Psalms. You could

look at Psalm 103, for instance, and others that are said to be Psalms of David, but the first seventy-two Psalms constituted the original canon of the book of Psalms.

King David divided the Levites into twenty-four courses that were to rotate their service in the temple for two weeks a year, plus the Festivals. With 72 Psalms, each course would sing three Psalms—3 x 24 is 72. This would enable the whole book to be rotated through in a year in terms of the liturgy.

I'll call your attention to v. 20, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended."

Notice in Psalm 73 what it says in little letters under "A Psalm of Asaph."

Psalm 74, "A Contemplation [Maschil] of Asaph."

Psalm 75, "A Psalm of Asaph."

Psalm 76 and Psalm 77, "A Psalm of Asaph."

Notice that, and then let's go back to II Chronicles and the time of great revival under King Hezekiah when the temple was refurbished and everything was reordered.

II Chronicles 29:25, "Then he [Hezekiah] stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for thus was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets." He organized them into the twenty-four courses that David had established. David organized them into twenty-four courses because the Levite population increased and there were too many serving in the tabernacle precinct.

When Moses organized the Levites (the priests, the sons of Aaron) in the wilderness, there weren't very many. Population increased and it finally got to where you couldn't get them all into the tabernacle precincts. There were so many of them that you could hardly "stir them with a stick," if you tried to get them all in there and functioning. They were all getting in each other's way.

So, David organized it. They would all perform the functions of the temple, but they would rotate them through. They organized them into twenty-four courses based on family groupings. Everybody served two weeks at a time, and then they were all there for the Festival periods. Twenty-four courses serving two weeks out of the year makes forty-eight weeks; then you add in the Festival periods and you finish out the rest of the year.

Hezekiah re-organized that.

Verse 30, "Moreover King Hezekiah and the leaders commanded the Levites to sing praise to the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped."

It was at the time of King Hezekiah that the Psalms of Asaph were added to the canon. There were other Psalms that existed, but David prepared the first seventy-two Psalms organized as the book of Psalms that was originally given to the Levites.

Later on, when Hezekiah reorganized things, there were additional Psalms that were added and the book of Psalms was expanded.

Several years ago, we went through a Bible study on the canonization of Scripture and how we came to have the Bible. I call your attention to that since we are here at the end of Psalm 72.

There's an awful lot packed into the Psalms, and we are just touching on the high points. We can only hit the high points in a Bible study series like this, but I hope that it will be an incentive for you to go back and study it. Look into it and study some of these sections of Scripture more deeply because God has packed so much into this Book, the Bible. God has packed so much in there that is profitable and beneficial for all of us. So, let's take advantage of this. Hopefully this series of Bible studies won't be a stopping point for your study of God's Word, but it will simply be a starting point, a jumping off point to explore God's Word even more deeply.

We will pass out the questions on the next section of the Psalms—Book Three of Psalms—Psalms 73—89. We will cover that next Bible study.

Bible Study # 77 Questions

SURVEY OF THE WRITINGS SERIES

Book Two—Psalms 42—72

1. Did David ever become really discouraged and depressed?
2. To what did he liken his need for God at times like that?
3. According to Psalm 44, did Israel conquer the Promised Land based on their own prowess and ability?
4. Explain the significance of Psalm 45:6-7.
5. According to Psalm 46, why should Christians have no fear of the calamities that are going to occur in the years immediately ahead of us?
6. Prove that God is going to set up a literal government to rule on the earth (cf. Psalms 46, 47, 48).
7. Do people seek to perpetuate themselves? In what way?
8. According to Psalm 50, what does God prefer to the sacrifice of bulls and goats?
9. Who is sin directed against (Psalm 51)?
10. How does God define a fool in Psalm 53?
11. How did David respond when he knew his enemies were out to destroy him? How often did he do it (Psalm 55)?
12. What event does Psalm 57:1 allude to?
13. What does Psalm 60:7 refer to?
14. According to Psalm 63, when is a good time for meditation?
15. According to Psalm 68, how does God view the widow and the fatherless?
16. Explain Psalm 68:18.
17. What statements in Psalm 69 are prophetic of Christ?
18. What is the theme of Psalm 71?
19. According to Psalm 72, will everything be perfect during the Millennium or will Christ have to deal with problems? In what way?
20. Comment on the significance of Psalm 72:20.

Bible Study # 78
November 12, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Book Three—Psalms
73—89

This evening we **are going through Psalms 73—89, known as Book Three of Psalms.** We have noted, in our progression through the Psalms, the extent to which there is a correlation between the five books of the Psalms with the five books of the Torah (the Law), as well as with the five Festival Scrolls and the festival occasions on which those scrolls were read.

The section of the Torah that correlates with this third book of the Psalms is the book of Leviticus. The third of the Festival Scrolls is the book of Lamentations, read at the national holiday of the fast of Ob, which commemorated the destruction of the temple and the destruction of Jerusalem. It is interesting because there **is a great deal of correlation in Leviticus and Lamentations with this book of Psalms—some of which we want to note.**

Let's just note the very beginning of Psalm 73. Psalm 73 sort of sets the theme for this section of the Psalms. **We have the theme that is emphasized in each of the sections, and the first Psalm of this section tends to indicate the theme of obedience and avoidance of unclean conduct.**

Psalm 73:1, "Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart."

Before we go any further, let's think in terms of the book of Leviticus. The book of Leviticus was written to the Levites as instruction to the Levitical priesthood. What does it deal with? It is filled with instruction on holiness and cleanness. There is a very distinct correlation between cleanness and holiness. It is one that we need to understand because there are spiritual lessons and spiritual ramifications. We are told in several places in the Old Testament that the responsibility of the priesthood was to teach the people to make a distinction between the clean and the unclean, the holy and the profane.

This is what we are told in Ezekiel 44:15, 23-24, when we're told of the job of the priesthood. There are other places that mention it as well, but that's what the job of the priesthood "boils down" to. They were responsible to teach the people to distinguish between the clean and the unclean, between the holy and the profane. There was to be a distinction made.

In the book of Leviticus, we have many instructions that deal with cleanness. We have the laws of clean and unclean meat. We have numerous laws that deal with sanitation and hygiene. There are laws that deal with the contaminating effect of contagious disease and with various things of that sort. We look at it and recognize it as legislation relating to sanitation and hygiene—and, yes, it does.

If those principles were applied, particularly in many of the third world areas that are wracked by such horrible disease problems, they would be far better off just from a purely physical, sanitary, hygienic standpoint. They would learn that you don't dump raw sewage in the streets. We sort of take that for granted, but if you were to look at certain areas of Central and South America and certain areas of Africa and Asia, you would find that what we sort of take for granted is not universally taken for granted.

There are laws relating to washing. If people touched something that died of itself, they had to go outside the camp and were unclean until evening. What it amounted to is that they had to wash their clothes and take a bath before they came back. If you had to wash your clothes and take a bath the way they did, it would take you until evening to get it tended to. It was not the simple matter that some of these things are today.

There is certainly a sanitary and hygienic point. I am not taking away from that in relating to clean and unclean meats. But when you read the way it is emphasized in the book of Leviticus, one thing that becomes apparent is that there is more than simply what is necessary for sanitation and hygienic purposes. There is an emphasis on cleanness in the physical realm that carries over to cleanness in the spiritual realm. There are spiritual lessons to be derived from physical things.

There is a specific example in Deuteronomy, but it parallels much of the legislation in Leviticus. There is the statement in Deuteronomy regarding the disposal of body wastes. People in the camp of Israel were to go outside of the camp; they were to dig a hole and bury the waste matter. It was not simply dumped some place there in the camp. Obviously, from a sanitary standpoint, this is going to solve an awful lot of disease problems. But it goes beyond that because in Deuteronomy, it gave a reason why they were to do that. It didn't say that no diseases would come among them, but it is a physical benefit.

It gives the reason in Deuteronomy as to why they were to do it.

Deuteronomy 23:14, “For the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and give your enemies over to you; therefore your camp shall be holy [You are to do this.] that He may see no unclean thing among you, and turn away from you.”

The emphasis was that God is there. God is walking up and down in the midst of the camp and God does not dwell in the midst of uncleanness. This was the emphasis. Over and over it was emphasized in the book of Leviticus that they were to be clean because they were a holy people. Now, let’s understand the relationship between cleanliness and holiness.

Holiness is something that can only be imparted by God. God is holy. Where God puts and places His presence is holy. That’s why the area around the burning bush was holy ground (Exodus 3:1-5). What made it holy? God was there. The Holy Place in the temple and the Holy of Holies were holy because of the proximity to God and the presence of God. The point is that God is holy and God does not dwell in the midst of uncleanness.

We see instruction on cleanness in the book of Leviticus because God was going to dwell among them and be their God. The point we have to understand is that the Levites were to teach that lesson to the people. They were to teach them to distinguish between the clean and the unclean, the holy and the profane.

Now, if God would not dwell in the midst of physical uncleanness in ancient Israel, how much less would He dwell in the midst of spiritual uncleanness in His people and His Church today? God does not dwell in the midst of uncleanness. God does not dwell in the midst of what is unclean.

There is symbolism in terms of baptism. It’s not just a matter of happenstance that the ceremony of baptism is carried out the way it is. We don’t ever reverse the order. We don’t lay hands on people and then baptize them. We always do it the other way, following the Biblical example. There is a spiritual lesson that is taught. When you go into the waters of baptism, this is symbolic of washing away sin. First, you have to be clean. Then God will dwell within you and make you holy. You can’t make yourself holy. God’s presence makes you holy.

We are told to remember the Sabbath day and to keep it holy. You can’t keep Sunday holy because God hasn’t made it holy. You can’t keep Sunday holy any more than you can keep cold water hot. If you are going to keep something, you keep it in the state that it is. You can keep

and maintain it in a particular state, but unless you have the ability to impart that state to it, then you can only keep it the way it is. You and I cannot make something holy.

God tells us that He will dwell in us. Our bodies become the temple of His Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19). We become holy.

The word “saint” in both the Hebrew in the Old Testament and the Greek in the New Testament means the same thing. “Saint” simply means “a holy one.” Maybe you’ve never thought of yourself as a holy one. Why are you holy? What makes you holy? God’s presence in us is the only thing that makes any of us holy. God’s Holy Spirit imparts holiness to us. When God dwells in us through the power of His Spirit, we become set apart as holy, set apart as a saint of the Most High.

Ultimately, Daniel 7:18, “...the saints of the Most High shall receive the Kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.””

The saints of the Most High are those made holy by God’s indwelling presence. God dwells in us, and imparts His presence to us. We become a new creation at the time of baptism and the receiving of His Spirit. But God continues to renew the inward man. We are renewed and transformed by the renewing of our mind in an ongoing basis of the Christian life.

At the resurrection, there is a culmination of that process when this mortal shall put on immortality. We are a part of God’s Family now, but not in the full sense that we will be because, right now, we are still human beings. We are still flesh and blood. We are still subject to death and decay. We have human nature that we have to fight. But there is a culmination to the conversion process that will occur at the resurrection.

That’s when the saints of the Most High (those made holy by God) will take and possess the Kingdom. We won’t have all the political chicanery. Christ is not going to run for election. It’s not going to work that way. Who’s going to be in charge? It is going to be Jesus Christ. He is going to take charge and give responsibility—to share with Him—to those who are the saints of the Most High. They had to ultimately learn to make a distinction between the clean and the unclean, the holy and the profane.

Psalms 73:1, “Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart.”

David prayed in Psalms 51:10, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

Verse 7, he asked God to purge him and clean him up.

The book of Leviticus places an emphasis on cleanness as a prerequisite to holiness. Holiness and cleanness go hand-in-hand together. That carries over into conduct, then to obedience and then to avoidance of unclean conduct.

There's a great correlation of what happened when the Levites failed in their responsibility to transmit and to really impart to the people a clear sense of distinction between the holy and the profane, the clean and the unclean. What was the result? The result was the curses that were mentioned in Leviticus and the destruction of the temple.

It's interesting how God builds things in. If the Levites had faithfully taught and instructed the people in God's way, they certainly would have been blessed for that. After all, the people were supposed to tithe to the Levites, so the Levites would have been rewarded. God believes in being rewarded according to your work (Revelation 22:12). That is a Biblical principle. A laborer is worthy of his hire (Luke 10:7). The Levites would certainly have been rewarded with the tithe of the people.

What do you think happened when the Levites fell down on the job, became greedy and not attuned to teaching the people? The people got further and further away from God. And what is always the first thing that happens when people begin to drift away from God? They pretty quickly begin to get careless in their tithing. So, God sort of built that in. If the Levites weren't doing their job, they were going to feel the "pinch." They ultimately felt more than the "pinch" because the temple was destroyed and they were totally out of a job. In that sense, their failure to carry out their responsibility resulted in a direct punishment on them.

God built it in and designed the system to where those who were responsible would reap rewards or curses depending upon their faithfulness in carrying out their responsibility that He gave them. God has ways of designing things in and building it to where it works a certain way.

The book of Lamentations is a lament connected with the destruction of the temple. It has to do with why the temple was destroyed. Why was Jerusalem destroyed? Because the people became unclean, God no longer dwelt in their midst and provided His blessing and protection. God removed His presence because of uncleanness.

When we bring it down to the spiritual level, Paul talks about that in the New Testament.

I Corinthians 6:19-20, "...do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who [that] is in you, whom [which] you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." That's what He is talking about.

Hebrew 12:15, it says, "...lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled." Do you know what "defile" means? "Defile" means "to make unclean." "Lest any root of bitterness trouble you, and by this many become defiled" or "made unclean." That's why he mentions this.

What is it that defiles? The Pharisees didn't understand. They never got beyond the physical things. They said, 'Your disciples didn't wash their hands. They are defiled; they are unclean' (Mark 7:1-5). Christ said, 'That's not really the primary problem; that's not the main point.' Christ was not saying you should go around seeing how dirty you can get your hands before you eat a meal. Obviously, I think we understand that there are principles of cleanliness and hygiene.

Verses 17-23, he was saying, 'What really defiles somebody is not a speck of dirt on your hands. It is the fact of what is on the inside. It is attitudes that come out of the mouth.'

Why does that defile?

Matthew 12:34, "...For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

What we have to do is right here in Psalm 73.

Psalm 73:1, "Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart."

This section of the Psalms deals, a great deal, with a parallel to the material in the book of Leviticus—to cleanness and holiness.

One key Psalm in this section is Psalm 89 because of it's a description of the Davidic covenant. It's a Psalm of faith that was written in a time of national calamity, when it appeared that all the promises of God were suddenly being made of non-effect. The outward signs of God's faithfulness to His people, the temple, Jerusalem, the throne of David—all these things were apparently being cast aside and destroyed. It required faith to believe that God would fulfill His promises, even though all the physical evidence pointed to a contrary conclusion. It is not hard to believe God when you see, right before your eyes, God bringing these things out.

For instance, it takes, in that sense, a lot less faith to believe that Germany is going to emerge as the leader of the United States of Europe. I

think that requires a lot less faith in 1991 than it did in 1951. It is a lot easier to see. There are a lot of people who have never read the Bible, but just from looking at world events, it looks like Germany is sort of moving to the top. There seems to be a United States of Europe emerging. You can see that. You don't have to have read the book of Daniel or the book of Revelation to figure that out. But in 1951 when Germany was divided, lay prostrate and just helpless, there was an idea afoot that we would never, ever let them emerge as a major power. The iron boot of the Soviet Union (Stalin's troops) imposed their will on Eastern Europe and then the iron curtain. Then, West Germany was not our enemy; West Germany was our friend. Russia was our enemy. If we fought a war, we would fight with Russia. Some of you remember that Mr. Herbert Armstrong wrote an article back at that time entitled, "Will Russia Attack America?" The answer he gave was, "No." He said that. Those whose contact with this work goes back to that period and before—back in the early '50s, '60s, the time of the Cuban missile crisis—remember? When everybody answered, 'Oh, Russia and America,' this work was teaching something different.

Now, it requires less faith. When you don't see it, then it is based on faith. As things begin to emerge, it doesn't take quite the same level of faith because you can see it with your eyes and on the basis of physical analysis.

Psalm 89 reflects that. It deals with God's faithfulness to His people. God made a promise to David. We are going to see that in Psalm 89. But at the time of the destruction of the temple (at the time of King Zedekiah), the clear impression was, 'How is God going to fulfill what He said?' God made a promise and yet physical evidence seemed to indicate that things weren't going the way we expected them to go. They were going the way God expected them to go. You think God's sitting all shocked and surprised—kind of wringing His hands and not knowing what to do next? It's going the way God expected it to go. It may not be going the way we expected it to go. What we have to do is stay close to God, and that way we will be where He is.

Psalm 73:1-3, "Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

The psalmist deals with something we often have to deal with. Have you ever noticed that

sometimes people seem to be getting by with things? We almost slip because we become envious. We see all these people who were wicked. They weren't even trying to do what was right, and they were prospering and getting rich. And here we are struggling along trying to do what's right, and this guy is cheating on his income tax, cheating on his wife, beating the dog and everything. It seems like he is getting by with all kinds of things, and he is getting rich.

It's not a matter that the wicked never prosper. Sometimes they do quite well. The attitude was an attitude of envy and sort of feeling like, 'Boy, they have it better than we do.' I have even heard people make the statement, 'Boy, if I weren't in the Church, I could be doing some of this stuff.' Yeah, if you weren't in the Church, you could go through the Great Tribulation. You might even end up in the lake of fire. Yeah, there are a lot of things that could happen if you weren't in the Church. If you don't come into the Church, there's ultimately going to be a lot of things that are going to happen.

The point is, and the psalmist went through this, vv. 5-9, "They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride serves as their necklace; violence covers them like a garment. Their eyes bulge with abundance; they have more than heart could wish. They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth."

Verse 12, "Behold, these are the ungodly, who are always at ease; they increase in riches."

Verses 13-14, he begins to say, "Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning." He said, 'I have all kinds of problems. What's the point in trying to do what's right? It seems like they're getting all the breaks.'

The psalmist expresses feelings that sometimes we have. Sometimes we look around and life is unfair. Yes, it is. It is never going to be completely fair, just and equitable in Satan's world. If we could have it fair, just and equitable, what do we need the Kingdom of God for?

But he continues in vv. 16-17, "When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me—until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end." Oh! First, he was standing around and sort of feeling sorry for himself, looking with a little bit of envy at what others were getting by with and thinking, 'It's not fair.' But then, how did he work through it?

How did he resolve it? How did he deal with that? Did he just go off, get in a bad attitude and say he would join the Philistines and work for Dagon? No! He went into the sanctuary and into the presence of God. It has to do with coming before God in prayer. When he came before God and really began to pray about it, contemplated and considered it, then he understood their end.

Verses 18-19, “Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.” He began to think about the final results and realized that they were the ones set in slippery places. They are going to be brought down to destruction as in a moment.

He talks about how he repented.

Psalm 73:21-22, “Thus my heart was grieved, and I was vexed in my mind. I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You.”

Here, we have the progression. First, a matter of sort of casting envious glances at what the world was getting by with. That’s human nature. We can find ourselves in that situation. We begin to feel a little bit of self-pity and think how we have it so much harder than other people. Things seem to be going so well for all these people not in the Church. It doesn’t seem fair.

If that’s where we stop, then we bog down in resentment toward God, self-pity and depression. But that’s not where the psalmist stopped. He noticed those things. He had some of those feelings to wrestle with, but how did he resolve them? He went to God. He spent time on his knees. He spent time in the presence of God to get it in perspective. Then he began to look and see how it all works out. He began to focus on the end result and then he repented before God for his ungrateful attitude.

A thankful, appreciative attitude is one of the greatest keys to spiritual growth. An ungrateful, unappreciative attitude is fertile ground for Satan to work with because after all, didn’t Satan have an ungrateful, unappreciative attitude? Stop and think about it. Lucifer had everything. He was one of the anointed cherubs that covered God’s throne. He was right there and had access to the very presence of God. He summed up beauty and wisdom and all sorts of power. He had everything, but he didn’t have gratitude. He wasn’t appreciative or thankful, and that is one of the greatest keys to our spiritual state.

Psalm 73 is a very important Psalm. There is a lot of food for meditation. As I mentioned before, one of the purposes of the Psalms, when we find ourselves with certain thoughts and

feelings, is to express feelings and resolution of those feelings. Therefore, it is an important place to go for meditation.

Psalm 74:1-2, “O God, why have You cast us off forever? Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture? Remember Your congregation, which You have purchased of old....”

Verse 7, “They have set fire to Your sanctuary; they have defiled the dwelling place of Your name to the ground.” Seemingly, the historical setting here would be the destruction of the temple.

This section of Psalms began to be added at the time of Hezekiah. The Psalms of Asaph began to be added. There were others added later at the time of King Josiah and, undoubtedly, others that had been written were added into the canon at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah because we find different historical context relating to it. There were poetic songs written by the sons of Asaph for performance in the temple choir. The family of Asaph was the Levitical musicians.

We find different historical contexts that are here. We see the destruction that comes. We see the national lament, which certainly ties in with correlation to the book of Lamentations.

Psalm 75:1-3, “We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks! For Your wondrous works declare that Your name is near. When I choose the proper time, I will judge uprightly. The earth and all its inhabitants are dissolved; I set up its pillars firmly.”

Verse 7, he continues, “But God is the Judge: He puts down one, and exalts another.”

Verse 10, “All the horns of the wicked I will also cut off, but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.”

We find important areas focusing in on giving thanks to God and that He is the deliverer.

Notice vv. 6-7, “For exaltation [KJV, “promotion”] comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He puts down one, and exalts another.” Promotion ultimately does not come from advancing ourselves. There have been those who have promoted and advanced themselves, but that’s not really the way that is going to solve the problems. The only lasting promotion is the promotion that Jesus Christ gives. That’s where we have to look. We are to look for the promotion that comes from God.

In Psalm 76, we have the theme of the time of Jesus Christ’s return—the time when He is going to judge the world.

Psalm 76:9, it mentions, “When God arose to judgment, to deliver all the oppressed [KJV, “meek”] of the earth.”

Verses 1-2, “In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling place in Zion.” This is talking of the time when God will be dwelling and ruling from Jerusalem. His government will be firmly established at the time when He is going to arise to judgment and save the meek of the earth.

God is our hope; He is our Savior. He is the One who will solve the problems—not the Republicans, Democrats, not this guy or that guy. The only salvation and the only real solution to the problem lie in the government that God is going to set up. It is very important that we have our focus there and recognize that it is the government of God that will bring about the results the world needs. Jesus Christ came preaching and proclaiming that.

Psalm 77 emphasizes that God is the only sure safety.

Psalm 77:1-3, “I cried out to God with my voice—to God with my voice; and He gave ear to me. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; my hand was stretched out in the night without ceasing; my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.” It is a cry to God for help—recognizing and working through the fact that God is the Deliverer.

Psalm 78 addresses a very important theme of the history of Israel from the time of the Exodus to the time of King David.

It is emphasized over and over in Psalm 78 that Israel continually fell short of her covenant obligations. We also see God’s continual mercy and His forgiveness.

Psalm 78:1, “Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.”

Verses 4-7, “We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.”

He established this as a testimony in Jacob; He established the account of things that are evidence, things that should be recorded, practiced and talked about, generation to generation. We learn by example and also by direct commandment and instruction. He established the testimony and appointed a law. God teaches us both by example and by illustration of what His people did and didn’t do, as well as His direct instruction and commandment. He talks about this sort of thing.

Verses 10-12, “They did not keep the covenant of God; they refused to walk in His law, and forgot His works and His wonders that He had shown them. Marvelous things He did in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.”

Verses 17-22, “But they sinned even more against Him by rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness. And they tested God in their heart by asking for the food of their fancy [KJV, “lust”]. Yes, they spoke against God: They said, ‘Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? Behold, He struck the rock, so that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? Can He provide meat for his people?’ Therefore the Lord heard this and was furious; so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel, because they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation.”

Verses 40-41, “How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert! Yes, again and again they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.”

Have you ever thought about the fact that you can limit God? The Bible talks about that. It talks about certain ones and about an attitude that was reflected. How do you limit God? What does that mean?

Let’s notice an example:

Mark 6:1-6, “Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, ‘Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this, which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?’ And they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them. ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.’ Now He could do no mighty work there, except that

He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.”

What are we told here? Is that an example?

We are told right here in [Psalm 78:22](#), “Because they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation.”

Verse 41, “Yes, again and again they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.” They tempted God by doubting. ‘We don’t know if God’s up to it.’ –An attitude of doubt and disbelief in God’s promises. That is certainly a way that we can limit God. *We limit God’s working in us to the extent that we do not trust Him and do not believe and follow Him.* We place a limit on the extent to which God can and will work in our lives and in our heart and mind. Doubt and disbelief are the opposite of faith. Faith opens up doors. It expands the extent to which God will work through us. Disbelief (a lack of faith) imposes a limit on what God can and will do in our lives. This is an important thing.

I would call your attention to one other matter here in Psalm 78. It’s sort of interesting. Everyone has heard of angel’s food. You’ve heard of angel’s food cake. Is there such a thing as angel’s food?

It says in vv. 24-25, “Had rained down manna on them to eat, and given them of the bread of heaven. Men ate angels’ food; He sent them food to the full.” Manna is referred to as angel’s food. What do angels eat? Well, maybe sometimes they eat manna. They don’t eat in order to sustain their life. But that is not to say there is not an enjoyment of food. We see this whole setup in Psalm 78, and it culminates in v. 70 with choosing David as the king. So, there is a development through this Psalm from the time of Moses down to the time of King David.

[Psalm 79:1](#), “O God, the nations [KJV, “heathens”] have come into Your inheritance; Your holy temple they have defiled; they have laid Jerusalem in heaps.” Here we would clearly see an indication or reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by Nebuchadnezzar. It’s an appeal to God for deliverance. Yet God is punishing because of disobedience. But there are always those who are seeking to serve God, and they were crying out to God for mercy and for forgiveness.

[Psalm 80:1-2](#), “Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth! Before

Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up Your strength, and come and save us!”

Here is a clear reference to God, and His role as the Shepherd of Israel. In His role as Shepherd, God is Protector of His people. He’s the One who sees that their needs are tended to and the One who will lead and rescue them. God likens His people, both nationally in terms of Israel and spiritually in terms of the Church, to being the sheep of His pasture. God compares His people to sheep and the fact that He is the Shepherd.

One of the indictments that He has in the book of Ezekiel is that the shepherds of Israel (the physical leaders) have not properly protected and watched out for His people nationally ([Ezekiel 34:1-19](#)).

[Psalm 81:1-3](#), “Sing aloud to God our strength; make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob. Raise a song and strike the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the lute. Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, at the full moon, on our solemn feast day.” The word “trumpet” in Hebrew is “*shofar*.” Normally, there was a silver trumpet that was blown every new moon, but a different trumpet was blown for the new moon on the first day of the seventh moon (the Feast of Trumpets). It was not the silver trumpet but the ram’s horn, the blast of the shofar. The reference in [Psalm 81:3](#) to blow the trumpet in the new moon is a reference to sounding the shofar.

KJV, “Blow the trumpet in the new moon [the Feast of Trumpets], in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.” The term “time appointed” is a reference to the full moon. The reference is to the fall festival season—to the blast of the shofar on the new moon (the Feast of Trumpets) and the time appointed (the full moon, which follows, which is the Feast of Tabernacles), our solemn feast day.

Verses 4-5, “For this is a statue for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. This He established in Joseph for a testimony, when He went throughout the land of Egypt...”

God prefigured His great end-time work. He ordained it in Joseph for a testimony. Joseph went through the land of Egypt with a message of warning of God’s impending judgment—the seven years of famine ([Genesis 41:25-43](#)). He proclaimed a message; the trumpet was blown. Joseph proclaimed a message through the land of Egypt—a warning of God’s impending judgment and the only way of salvation in the physical sense. The work that God did through Joseph was a testimony, example, illustration. God’s end-time work based in the nations of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) was what? –To

blow the trumpet! Isn't that what it says in Isaiah?

Isaiah 58:1, “Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” The work that God did anciently, through the patriarch Joseph, was a type of what He would do in the end-time that sets the stage for the fulfillment of God's intervention in man's history, which is pictured in the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Tabernacles. A part of the job of God's work today is blowing the trumpet of alarm and of warning. We have this reference and sort of a little interesting note here in Psalm 81.

Psalm 82:1-8, “God stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among the gods. How long will you judge unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; free them from the hand of the wicked. They do not know, nor do they understand; they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are unstable. I said, ‘You are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High. But you shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.’ Arise, O God, judge the earth; for You shall inherit all nations.”

There is a play-on-words here. The Hebrew word “Elohim” is a word that in some contexts is rendered “judges” in the Old Testament. It is not the common word for judges, but in certain contexts, it is a term that can refer to human judges. Certainly, God is the ultimate Judge. But there is a play-on-words here. You have to understand that the Old Testament is interpreted by the New Testament and Jesus quoted Psalm 82:6 in John 10:34. Let's see how He quoted it. How did He translate this word?

John 10:34, “Jesus answered them, ‘Is it not written in your law, “I said, ‘You are gods’?””

If you have a marginal reference in your Bible, this is a reference to Psalm 82:6.

Verses 35-36, “If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, “You are blaspheming,” because I said, “I am the Son of God?””

Christ quoted this scripture to them, and they didn't know quite how to explain it or what to say. One thing to note, the Greek word here for “God” in the Greek language in John 10:34-35 is a Greek word that only means “God” and it is “Theos.” It is never used in the Greek language as synonymous with judge. So, the Hebrew is

subject to more than one understanding. Christ quoted it here, not translating it by the Greek word that means judge. You can say Christ didn't speak in Greek. No, but John wrote it down in Greek. Christ probably spoke it in Aramaic. But John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, recorded Christ's words in Greek.

The Greek New Testament gives us an insight here. This is one of the sections of the Old Testament that gives just a flash of insight into the ultimate destiny and purpose of man. It's not spelled out in great detail in the Old Testament. Even the resurrection and many of these things are not spelled out clearly in the Old Testament, but there are insights that are given. We find that it is quoted in the New Testament, and on the basis of the explanation in the New Testament, we can understand clearly what was being said in the Old Testament. The point is not what Asaph understood and meant when he wrote it down, but what God meant when He inspired it to be written down. It was certainly made clear by Jesus Christ who is the very One that inspired it—the very God of the Old Testament.

Psalm 82:1, “God stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among the gods.” It could be rendered, “in the congregation of the gods.” The word “mighty” is also derived from the Hebrew word “elohim.” “...He judges among the gods.” In that sense, the Hebrew word for “elohim” means “mighty judge.” It is normally used to refer to God, but is also applied in other contexts. Who are ultimately going to be the ones that are going to rule and reign as kings and priests under Jesus Christ?

Revelation 5:10, “And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.”

Who are going to judge the world? Well, in I Corinthians 6:2 and other places, it says the saints are going to judge the world.

Daniel 7:27, “Then the Kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High...” Jesus Christ is going to take the Kingdom and give it to the saints of the Most High.

You can say there is a reference to the responsibility of human leaders' accountability to God and the fact that God expects human judges and human leaders to deal fairly and equitably because they will ultimately give account to Him. But in the full and complete sense of Psalm 82, you have a picture of the resurrection and the instructions that will be given to the glorified resurrected saints at the

time of the resurrection—the time when God will rise and judge the earth, the time when He will inherit all nations. That’s what v. 8 says.

Psalms 82:8, “Arise, O God, judge the earth; for You shall inherit all nations.”

The context here is sort of interesting.

Psalm 83:1-3, “Do not keep silent, O God! Do not hold Your peace, and do not be still, O God! For behold, Your enemies make a tumult; and those who hate You have lifted up their head. They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, and consulted together against Your sheltered ones [KJV, “Your hidden ones”].” This could be a reference to the Church in the place of safety.

Verse 4, “They have said, ‘Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more.’” There is a nation in the Middle East that bears the name Israel. Here’s a reference to a confederation that is going to cut them off, and they won’t even be remembered. They won’t be a nation any more.

Verse 5, “For they have consulted together with one consent; they form a confederacy against You.” Here’s a reference to a confederation—a combine of nations whose aim is to wipe out Israel and wipe out the name Israel.

Verses 6-8, “The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab and the Hagarites; Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assyria [Germany] also has joined with them; they have helped the children of Lot.”

If you go through these nations, you are looking at the nations in the Middle East—nations that certainly would involve places like Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, probably Turkey and some of the North African areas. Interestingly enough, the only Middle Eastern nation left out is Egypt, which is the only nation in the Middle East that signed a peace treaty with Israel. It’s sort of interesting.

They are involved with this and Assyria (Germany) has joined with them. They have come together and have put together a secret alliance, a confederation. They have taken crafty counsel. They have been deceitful about it. ‘They have taken crafty counsel against Your people.’ This could refer both to the people spiritually and the people physically. They are going to cut them off.

So, based on Psalm 83, I would not place great hope in the Middle East peace conference, which is not even being held in the Middle East. They can’t hold the Middle East peace conference in the Middle East because none of the Arabs will

go to Israel, and they won’t invite the Jews to any of the Arab nations. They can’t even sit down at a table in the same place in the Middle East. They have to go to Spain to have a conference. They have to find a place where they all will agree to go.

Do you realize that if mapmakers in American countries are going to sell an atlas in the Arab world, they have to omit Israel from the map? When the World Almanac is sold over there, they actually glue together the pages that have Israel, and they print a special edition that leaves Israel off because in Saudi Arabia, they won’t allow something to be sold that actually shows Israel. They won’t even show the existence of it. They have to leave a blank spot there on the map. They label it Palestine, or something. If you label it Israel, you can’t sell it over there. They have a long way to go before there’s any meeting of the minds. If you won’t even admit your neighbor exists, it’s sort of hard to really work out a deal with them.

Then people say the Jews sure are uncooperative. They won’t agree to give all this back to them. Do you know why they don’t want to give back the Golan Heights? Do you know what the Golan Heights is? Do you know how many people were killed scaling the Golan Heights? Do you know what Syria did with the Golan Heights for twenty years—from 1947 to 1967?

It’s a big high spot, and they had all their guns up on top of it aimed down at Israel. They (Israel) were “sitting ducks” down there. So, when the ’67 War broke out, one of the first things they did was scale the Heights. They lost a lot of men doing it, but they scaled the Heights and conquered it. And Syria’s been howling for the last twenty years they want the Golan Heights back. Well, sure they do! It’s kind of hard to shoot at somebody if he’s on the hill and you are in the valley. It’s a lot easier to shoot at them if you are on the hill and he is in the valley. You look at some of it and ask, ‘Why won’t they give it back?’ Because they remember what happened from that area for the entire time the nation existed up until they took it. And the “great humanitarian” Asaad of Syria just does not inspire tremendous confidence in Israel.

The Bible has the news ahead of time. It already tells you that they are amassing nations. That is going on behind the scenes. They are ultimately going to put an “under-the-table, behind-the-closed-doors” agreement together, and Germany’s going to be in with it. Nobody is going to know about that. You and I can know.

Since we can read Psalm 83 and figure out some of these things that are going to be going on, we don't have to be shocked and surprised.

Psalm 84 focuses on the desire to be in God's presence.

Psalm 84:10, "For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness." There is a literal application to the temple of old, but the real application looks forward to dwelling with God in His Kingdom. That's what it is talking about.

Verses 1-2, "How lovely is Your tabernacle, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." –A desire to be in the presence of God.

Psalm 85:1-4, "Lord, You have been favorable to Your land; You have brought back the captivity of Jacob. You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin. You have taken away all Your wrath; You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger. Restore us, O God of our salvation, and cause Your anger toward us to cease." This was very likely written at the time the captives were returning from Babylon under Zerubbabel. The very likely time for the composition of this was a time when God was bringing His people back.

Psalm 86 is a Psalm of David inserted into this section. It's not part of the original canon of David's Psalms, but one that he had written that was added in later. It's on looking to God for mercy and preservation.

Psalm 87:1-3, "His foundation is in the holy mountain. The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God!" This is a description of Zion as the city of God. It's certainly a reference to Jerusalem, but Zion in many passages is often used figuratively to refer to the Church. The Church is the inhabitant of the New Jerusalem. So, there is a very definite tie-in.

Psalm 88:1-6, "O Lord, God of my salvation, I have cried out day and night before You. Let my prayer come before You; incline Your ear to my cry. For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to the grave. I am counted with those who go down to the pit; I am like a man who has no strength, adrift among the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom You remember no more, and who are cut off from Your hand. You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the depths."

Verses 10-12, "Will You work wonders for the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise You? Shall Your loving kindness be declared in the grave? Or Your faithfulness in the place of destruction? Shall Your wonders be known in the dark? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?"

Here is a reference to the state of the dead. It's described as the land of forgetfulness. It's described as a time when there is an absence of consciousness and, certainly, a reference to the fact that the psalmist didn't think he was going up to heaven when he died. It is very clear that he didn't think he was going to go flitting off to heaven, but rather the dead are dead.

He asks the question in v. 10, "Shall the dead arise and praise You?" "Is the time going to come when the dead will rise and praise You?" Other parts of the Bible certainly answer that in the affirmative. The reference is to seeking God. Psalm 89 is a Psalm that refers to and centers on the covenant with David.

Psalm 89:1-7, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, 'Mercy shall be built up forever; Your faithfulness You shall establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations.' Selah. And the heavens will praise Your wonders, O Lord; Your faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. For who in the heavens can be compared to the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the Lord? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence by all those who are around Him."

Verses 28-37, "'My mercy I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall stand firm with him. His seed also I will make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his sons forsake My law and do not walk in My judgments, if they break My statutes and do not keep My commandments, then I will visit their transgression with the stripes. Nevertheless My loving kindness I will not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail. My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me; it shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky.' Selah."

God had made this promise. The psalmist quotes it. He reminds God of the promise that had been made concerning the throne of David. If the descendants of David who occupied his throne sinned or if they departed from God, God would deal with them and punish them, but He would not forsake them. He would chasten them if necessary, but He would not remove His loving kindness from them. He would not deal with the house of David as He dealt with the house of Saul.

He had made a promise, v. 34, “My covenant I will not break nor alter the things that have gone out of My lips.” God had promised that David’s throne would endure to all generations.

The issue of faith was when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem, Zedekiah was taken captive, his sons were slain, Jerusalem and the temple were burned and the nation went into captivity. At that point, faith in God’s promise is tried and tested. How can we depend on and trust God when it seems like everything is falling apart? Well, that’s when we have to trust God the most. God showed them that He made a covenant with David.

Verses 3-4, “I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: “Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations.”” The throne of David is going to endure in every generation.

You want to know the story? This sets the stage for the booklet, What’s Ahead for America and Britain. At the time of the destruction of the temple, there was a transfer of the throne of David from the Middle East to Ireland by the prophet Jeremiah. From the things that occurred at that time, God continued His promise. It certainly took faith to understand that because they hadn’t anticipated that it was going to work that way. There is an enigmatic reference in vv. 24-25 that we can see a little more clearly now—things that they didn’t see back at that time.

Verses 24-25, ““But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him, and in My name his horn shall be exalted. Also I will set his hand over the sea, and his right hand over the rivers.”

“I will set his hand over the sea.” What does that mean? Well, the British Isles, where the throne was transferred, certainly is set in the sea. It’s one of those things that at the time it was written, the full sense of it wasn’t appreciated. We can look at it from a different perspective now. In retrospect, we can see that was not just a poetic statement. God literally fulfilled that. He literally did that.

We see that the setting of this writing is around the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the death of Zedekiah. The first part of the Psalm is a rehearsal and gives the promises God made. God made these promises to David, and they are absolute. Toward the conclusion, the writer focuses in on how events seem to contradict God’s word. The throne disappeared from common view. Then, finally, at the end, he reiterates his faith in God and God’s promises.

Verses 50-52, “Remember, Lord, the reproach of Your servants—how I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the many peoples, with which Your enemies have reproached, O Lord, with which they have reproached the footsteps of Your anointed. Blessed be the Lord forevermore! Amen and Amen.” A reiteration, ‘Yes, there’s been reproach, but God is going to remember and blessed be God.’ The psalmist who wrote this at the time, very likely did not fully understand how God was going to fulfill His promise. He just believed that God would. Sometimes we find ourselves in a situation where God makes a promise and we look at it and say we don’t see how God is going to do that. How can God fulfill that? We don’t see how that can work out. It’s not necessary for me to understand how God is going to do everything. What’s necessary is for me to trust Him to do what He says.

What was the commercial? The old Greyhound Bus commercial, “Sit back and leave the driving to us.” That’s sort of what we need to do in our lives—sit back and leave the driving to God. We don’t have to know how God is going to do everything He says He will do. That’s where faith comes in. It’s a matter of believing, trusting and depending on God, recognizing our dependence on God, and recognizing that God will do what He says. God can be depended upon.

Human leaders make promises. We generally find that there is nothing as stale and empty as election promises the day after election. All of a sudden, their memory sort of jams up. They don’t quite remember that. They begin to “crawfish” (go backwards).

God’s not that way. When God tells you something, you can “take it to the bank.” That’s the way it is. God’s not like human beings who make promises to sort of ingratiate themselves or try to maneuver and manipulate and then don’t fulfill it. In some cases, they may be sincere and are just not able to fulfill it. In other cases, they never meant to fulfill it to begin with. They just said it because they thought it would be popular.

God never does that. Neither of those criteria fits God. If God tells you He will do something, He can do it. He's not like human leaders who have limits. I think sometimes there are those who do make sincere promises and yet are unable to put them into practice. Too many other things come in or they lack the power. Well, God doesn't lack the power. He can put into effect what He said. In other cases, they make promises that they never intended to keep. God doesn't do that either. If God tells you something, He means it. That really is a focus on the basis of faith, and that has much to do with our relationship with God.

Hopefully, this evening we got a little bit of an overview of this section of the Psalms and many of things that relate to Book Three of Psalms. There is a tremendous amount that God has packed in there.

Next Bible study we will be covering the fourth section of the Psalms, Book Four of Psalms—Psalms 90—106.

Bible Study # 78 Questions

SURVEY OF THE WRITINGS SERIES

Book Three—Psalms 73—89

1. Do the wicked ever prosper and seem to get by with everything?
2. What did the writer of Psalm 73 come to understand that kept him from being overcome with envy?
3. What is the historical setting of Psalm 74?
4. Where does promotion come from (Psalm 75)?
5. What is the theme of Psalm 76?
6. What theme is developed throughout Psalm 78?
7. Do angels ever eat food? Prove.
8. How did Israel of old limit God?
9. What is the setting for Psalm 79?
10. To what title of God are we introduced in Psalm 80? What is the significance of this title?
11. What Holy Day provides the setting for Psalm 81?
12. What time setting is pictured in Psalm 82?
13. What is being described in Psalm 83:2-8?
14. What is the theme of Psalm 84?
15. What is the setting for Psalm 85?
16. What is described as the city of God in Psalm 87?
17. Prove that the writer of Psalm 88 knew that death did not mean “flitting off to heaven.”
18. What covenant did God make with David? How long was that covenant to last?
19. What does Psalm 89:25 probably refer to?
20. What events are being referred to at the conclusion of this Psalm, which make it seem as though God is going to fail to follow through on His Word?

Bible Study # 79
November 26, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Book Four—Psalms 90—
106

This evening we are **getting into the section of the Psalms that is termed Book Four of Psalms**. We have been going through and studying the fact that, traditionally, the book of Psalms has been divided into five sections by the Jews, and that there is a correspondence to two other sections of Scripture that also have five components—the five books of Moses or the five Books of the Law (Exodus, Genesis, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) and also the five so-called Festival Scrolls or Megillot, which was the term the Jews used. The Festival Scrolls consist of Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther.

As we go through, we will notice there is a correspondence and, particularly, in the fourth section of Psalms, there is a lot of correspondence. The fourth book of the Law is the book of Numbers and the fourth book of the Festival Scrolls is the book of Ecclesiastes. We **will note some interesting correlation in Numbers and Ecclesiastes as we go through this section of the Psalms this evening**.

The book of Numbers is the book that describes Israel's forty years of wandering in the wilderness prior to the time that they entered into God's rest.

Leviticus 23:42-43, ““You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”” Israel was told that dwelling in booths during the Feast of Tabernacle was to remind them—it was reminiscent—of the time that they dwelt in booths (temporary dwellings) during the period in the wilderness.

The book of Ecclesiastes was traditionally read at the Feast of Tabernacles and it clearly shows that the physical, no matter how great, no matter how much, cannot permanently satisfy. There is a need for something beyond that.

This very lesson is alluded to in this section of the Psalms. **We find in this section many of the Psalms that describe the millennial conditions that will come to Israel and to all nations when God reigns on the earth**. We will note some of that. This section of the Psalms,

beginning with Psalm 90, is a section that has many parallels with the account of Israel's wandering in the wilderness.

The time that Israel was in the wilderness, that forty-year period, was a period of temporary circumstances. They were going through the wilderness in a progression over a forty-year period. God was very directly governing. Their needs were provided and their circumstances were provided. He provided their food with manna. He provided their water with water gushing out of a rock. He overshadowed them with a cloud to protect them from the scorching desert heat. He even performed a miracle to where their clothes and shoes did not wear out. It was a time of God's very direct government. When you go through, you find that God was continually intervening. He was governing in a very direct and a very real way.

There are certain parallels to that time in the future. It was a time of temporary status and that was emphasized by the fact that they were dwelling in booths. They were looking forward to and anticipating a time of entering into God's rest.

The phrase “into God's rest” is used in the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua and Judges. It is used in Psalm 95 and Paul quotes it back in Hebrews 3 and 4. Consider that you have been on a forty-year hike where you walk for a few miles and pitch a tent. You stay there for a day or maybe two or three days or a week, and then you pick up the tent and move on and go a little further. If you spent forty years doing that, when the time comes that you are able to cross a river and enter into a land, put away your tent, settle down in a house and live there never having to move again, you would, certainly, consider that rest. It was a state of permanence and peace. It was a state of having a fixed, permanent place. Prior to that time, circumstances were changeable. So, there is that parallel.

That analogy is drawn on quite a bit in this section of the Psalms because Paul draws on that analogy and develops it in Hebrews 3 and 4. In fact, he quotes from Psalm 95, which is right in this section. Then he amplifies and expounds the spiritual implications of that. We will look at it in a few minutes. We have recognition that entering into God's rest means much more than just the historical account of Israel crossing the Jordan River and finally living in a fixed dwelling place, rather than marching through the wilderness setting up tents every few days.

Paul quotes it in Hebrews 3 and 4 showing that it was merely a type of what God has in store for

His people. When we enter into the Kingdom of God, we enter into God's rest. That's the real rest that God has for His people. The Promised Land was merely a type because it was a temporary rest.

The Sabbath is used and illustrated as a weekly reminder of that rest. We are going to look at a tie-in between the weekly Sabbath and what it symbolizes. It symbolizes the time of Christ's thousand-year reign on the earth—the Millennium.

We are going to look at the Feast of Tabernacles in the book of Ecclesiastes. We are going to look at the story of Numbers. It all “dovetailed” together right in this particular section.

We start out in Psalm 90. **This Psalm sets the theme for the entire section of the book—God is our ultimate source of rest.**

Psalm 90:1, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.” God is our ultimate place of rest.

Psalm 37:7, “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him...” God is the ultimate source of rest.

Ecclesiastes is a book of restlessness. It is a restless book. It shows that all the greatest physical blessing and benefits you can have still do not constitute fulfillment and satisfaction. None of us can ever “top” King Solomon. You can go through and read what he did. None of us can ever do that. The whole world is caught up in this materialistic binge. People think that if they could just have more, they would be satisfied. They want more and more and more and more and they are never satisfied. Solomon writes and he says he had it all, and it's just striving after wind. He had it and just was not satisfied. You see, only the spiritual ultimately satisfies. That's a lesson that those who are physical, even during the thousand-year reign of Christ, will have to understand.

The Millennium is not the ultimate. Physical abundance and prosperity during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ on this earth is not the ultimate. Physical prosperity and abundance that human beings will have is not the ultimate. Being a part of the Kingdom of God, being born into the Family of God—that is the ultimate! The ultimate is sharing life with God as a part of His Family into eternity. The ultimate is not being human with all the abundance that humans can have. That's not the ultimate. *Being God is the ultimate.* It is important to understand. We see that brought out. The concept develops that there is something beyond the physical and that is ultimately being a part of the very Family of God—the Kingdom of God.

Psalm 90:1-2, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.” There's a focus on God and His eternity, His greatness, His power and that He is our ultimate dwelling place. He is our rest.

Verse 4, “For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night.” As we read through Psalm 90, we may just sort of read over this verse. But I want to call your attention to it because if we go back to II Peter 3:8, Peter paraphrases Psalm 90:4. But he gets something out of it that's maybe a little more than what you and I would get out of it. If all we had were Psalm 90:4, you and I probably wouldn't get a whole lot out of that. But we have two other places in the New Testament that quotes this verse.

It's important to understand that the New Testament interprets the Old Testament. Sometimes we read over something and we don't necessarily see a lot of significance to it. But when we look in the New Testament, we find that God inspired a deeper significance to be brought out when the same verse is quoted in the New Testament.

Peter addresses the subject in II Peter 3.

II Peter 3:3-4, “knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.’”

They are willingly ignorant of the fact that God has stepped into history and intervened as He did in the days of the flood (v. 5).

Verses 8-9, “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness....” When he says, “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day,” that last phrase, “a thousand years is as one day” is quoted from Psalm 90:4, “...a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday....”

Peter quotes this phrase, “a thousand years as but one day,” but he gets a lot more out of it than just that. He says, ‘one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.’ Therefore, Peter concluded one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and he quotes it in the context of explaining that God has a time plan. He introduces the subject that there will be

scoffers saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? We don't see any evidence. Everything's just going like it's always has. There have always been ups and downs. There are cycles, but things just go on. Why we don't believe that God is really going to step into history; that's just old "fear religion." We don't believe that. God's gone way off somewhere.'

So, Peter says, 'Don't kid yourself and don't be ignorant that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day. God is not slack concerning His promises.' In other words, God is not indifferent. He's not careless. He's not lackadaisical. God has a time plan. He's going to do it on schedule. In His schedule, we find a day is analogous to a thousand years.

We have used the term "Millennium" so much, that many times we're not really aware that you never find in the Old Testament the period of the Messiah's rule defined as one thousand years. Did you realize that all the prophecies in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Zechariah or any of the prophets never define the Messiah's rule as one thousand years? Do you realize that you can go through all of those and never find it stated that the Messiah will rule for a thousand years? Christ didn't mention that in Matthew 24 or Luke 21. That is never defined until you get to Revelation 20. Do you realize that? The first place in the Bible it says that Christ will rule for a thousand years—the very first place—is Revelation 20. If you didn't have Revelation in the Bible, you wouldn't know for sure how long the Messiah's rule is. You couldn't point to a specific chapter and verse that said how long.

The reference to a thousand years is used three times. Each time it is further clarified. Psalm 90:4 is the first place. If all we had were Psalms, we would read over 90:4 and wouldn't think a whole lot of it. It is just sort of a nice poetic expression. But Peter quotes it in II Peter and says there is a little more to it than that. He says a day represents a thousand years in God's plan. God is not careless or slack concerning His promises. He is going to do what He said, but He is on a time schedule. Then, when John comes along in the book of Revelation, he clearly defines that after the return of Christ, His reign is a thousand years.

Revelation 20:1-2, "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He lays hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bounds him a

thousand years." That's the first place it clearly defines it.

Verse 4, "And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them... they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."

We are told in v. 6, "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

Verse 5, "But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished..."

John clearly defines that thousand-year period in Revelation 20. It is not defined before, but there are some insights that we get from Psalm 90 and II Peter 3 that adds to what John said. John clearly defines the time of the Messiah is a thousand years. Psalm 90 and II Peter 3 bring out the emphasis that one thousand years is analogous to a day in God's plan. Now, the final day in God's plan is a one-thousand-year day. That will be the time of the Messiah. If God has a time plan that's laid out in days, the final day is the time of the Messiah. It is a one-thousand-year day.

God established the analogy of His time plan in Genesis 1 when He created the heavens and the earth. In six days the creation was accomplished, and the seventh day He rested and was refreshed. Why did God take seven days? Did God work as hard as He could, just rushed through it putting out all the effort He could, and it took him six days? Finally, He was finished and He was so exhausted, He sat down and rested for a whole day. Is that what happened? No, it took six days because God chose for it to take six days. God could have done it in six minutes if He had wanted. It wasn't that God went as fast as He could and that was all He could do. It wasn't that it was God's best effort. God chose to accomplish it in six twenty-four-hour periods of time and then to set aside the seventh twenty-four-hour period of time to sanctify it and make it holy. God was establishing a pattern.

He established the pattern of the week, which He gave to Adam—to mankind. The first six days are to accomplish work and effort. God says, 'The seventh day is Mine.' Now, if a thousand years represents a day in God's plan, and the seventh and final one-thousand-year period is His, well, that's just like the week. The final day is God's and it is preceded by six days. So, if the final one-thousand-year day belongs to God, we are left with the very obvious implication that final one-thousand-year day, which belongs

to God, will be preceded by six one-thousand-year days, which are given to man to accomplish his endeavors. We have a very clear implication of this, and it ties in with the Sabbath. It's interesting to note, and I think we should note, that Psalm 90:4 is the first place that makes reference to the thousand years.

We are going to see, as we come on down a little further, that God makes reference in Psalm 90 to the temporary nature of man. He makes reference to the fact that, basically, about seventy years is the lifespan.

Psalm 90:10, "The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years...." Now, we've come a long way and we've made great progress. We spend fifteen percent of the national budget or gross national product on medical care. The average age has finally reached up into the seventies, and some live on up into the eighties. So, man has made great progress and basically landed on Psalm 90:10. Basically, people live into their seventies, and some with a little hardier constitution make it into their eighties. But it is still very temporary. Time flies away, and the older someone gets, the more conscious we are of how quickly time has passed.

It says in v. 12, "So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

Moses was the one who wrote Psalm 90, and he lived to be one hundred twenty. Whether we live into our seventies, eighties or even nineties or beyond, the point is it still has an end. None of us come into the world with a little certificate saying that you are guaranteed sixty-nine years, eleven months, ten days, three hours and ten minutes. Nobody comes along with a guarantee of an exact length of time; none of us know.

The point is: "So teach us to number our days." Teach us to recognize our time is finite; it is limited. I don't know how many days I have ahead. I do know how many I have in my past. They are gone and I can never reclaim them. It is a very vital lesson. We are to be conscious that our time is finite, that our time is limited. Teach us to number our days—to realize they are limited. What do we do with that? Do we sit around and be depressed? No. 'We apply our hearts to wisdom.' God says, 'Your time is limited. Make the best use of it. Use it wisely.' God has a plan that stretches on beyond our limited, finite time. We have limited time here and we need to gain a heart of wisdom. We need to recognize it's limited and make good use of it—not just assume we will always have certain opportunities ahead of us.

Psalm 91:1, "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." This seems to be an implication of God's people dwelling in a place of protection. It refers clearly to those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High, those who dwell in a place that God has for them.

You can compare it to Revelation 12:14, where it talks about the Church being taken on the wings of a great eagle into her place in the wilderness to be nourished there by God for times, time and a half time. God will intervene and protect. Here it talks about those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High, who abide under His shadow. God protects them.

Verses 2-3, "I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.' Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence." It talks about all the calamities and the catastrophic events going on. Yet in that midst, God is delivering and protecting His people and the way He will do that is a very beautiful description.

Notice right under the heading of Psalm 92, you have a little title written under the heading in small letters, "A Psalm or A Song for the Sabbath Day." This is a part of the original text. In the Jewish translation, it is listed as the first verse. It is put in as a title in most of our English translations. Obviously, any Psalm or any part of the Bible would certainly be appropriate for the Sabbath, but here was a specific Psalm that was set apart as a Sabbath song. God says this Psalm is specifically for the Sabbath. We know from history that this was one of the seven Psalms that the Levitical choir chanted every Friday evening as the Sabbath began. This is one of the Psalms that was used in the liturgy there in the temple. Let's notice what this Psalm teaches us, since it is specifically for the Sabbath.

Psalm 92:1-3, "It is good to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High. To declare Your loving kindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night, on an instrument of ten strings, on the lute, and on the harp, with harmonious sound." The first three verses focus on the importance of coming before God in worship. It talks about the use of music in worship. It says that it is good and appropriate to come before God for praises and thanksgiving. This focuses clearly on the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of public worship. It is a day to assemble before God and to give praise and thanks to Him. This is the first thing we learn about the Sabbath from this Psalm for the Sabbath.

Verses 4-5, the next thing we are told, “For You, Lord, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands. O Lord, how great are Your works! Your thoughts are very deep.” The next thing we are given insight into, in vv. 4 and 5, has to do with God’s great works. The Sabbath is a memorial of creation. The Sabbath was established at creation. God labored and did great works for six days and rested on the Sabbath.

So, the first thing we focus on in this Psalm is the importance of public worship. The next thing is on the great works that God has done. God is the Creator and He has made us glad through His works. How great are His works. We focus on the fact that the Sabbath is a memorial of creation. It is a time to reflect on the greatness of God’s power and on the great creation that He has made.

Now, notice something else.

Verses 6-7, “A senseless man does not know, nor does a fool understand this. When the wicked spring up like grass and when all the workers of iniquity flourish, it is that they may be destroyed forever.” Where did he get this? We can identify the first part of this verse, “the wicked spring up like grass and when all the workers of iniquity flourish....”

You know how grass just seems to grow up everywhere. If you want grass to grow, don’t try to put in a lawn; plant a garden. If I am trying to get grass to grow on my lawn, I have trouble and I have bare spots. But if I plant a garden, grass just seems to spring up everywhere. I have to put forth effort to try to get that grass out. He talks about how the wicked springs as the grass. They just seem to pop up all over; they flourish. He said he saw and understood what a lot of people didn’t. He understood that they were going to be destroyed forever.

Verses 8-15, “But You, Lord, are on high forevermore, for behold, Your enemies, O Lord, for behold, Your enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. But my horn You have exalted like a wild ox [KJV, “unicorn”]; I have been anointed with fresh oil. My eye also has seen my desire on my enemies; my ears hear my desire on the wicked who rise up against me. The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”

Beginning with v. 6 to the end of the chapter, there is a focus on the time of the Millennium, of Christ’s rule. Even though the wicked are springing up like the grass right now, the Millennium is a time when they are going to be destroyed; it is a time when God’s enemies will perish.

Verse 10, it is a time when (KJV), “My horn shall You exalt like the horn of a unicorn, I shall be anointed with fresh oil.”

Here is a reference to the Messiah. A horn is used in Biblical symbolism as a symbol of a king or a government. Remember in Daniel and Revelation, the ten horns symbolized ten kings or ten kingdoms. The horn that is described here is the horn of a unicorn. Now, what is unusual about the horn of a unicorn? Well, a unicorn has only one, not two horns like a cow, a sheep or a goat, not many like the prongs of a deer’s antlers—there is one. If His government is going to be exalted like the horn of a unicorn, that means there is going to be one government and one King—not two, not many. There’s going to be one King. The term for anointed is a reference to the Messiah. The word “Messiah” in Hebrew means “the Anointed One.” So, it refers to the government of the Messiah being exalted. There will be one King.

The enemies of God will be destroyed. The righteous will flourish like a palm tree; like a cedar. The wicked are likened to the grass. Grass grows up very quickly. But have you ever noticed that if you have a few dry days go by in the summer, it doesn’t take too many days before the yard begins to turn brown and die. There isn’t any staying power. But a tree has staying power and it endures. The wicked pop up all over the place like the grass, but they will wither and die. The righteous will flourish like a tree. They’ll continue to bring forth fruit.

Psalm 92 focuses in on: 1) the importance of public worship—the Sabbath is a day for public worship, a day of assembling to praise God and give thanks to Him, 2) the creation—the Sabbath is a memorial of creation and 3) a weekly reminder of hope—it is a reminder of the time when Christ’s government will rule on the earth. The establishment of the government of God on this earth is just as sure as the setting of Friday’s sun. You can count on the fact that the sun is going to set on Friday; the sixth day of the week is going to come to an end and the seventh day is going to start. That’s how certain it is that the six one-thousand-year days God has given man are going to end. The sun is going to set on man’s world, and God’s world will begin.

There are places in the book of Isaiah that certainly likens the time of the Messiah to a Sabbath.

Isaiah 14:7, “The whole earth is at rest and quiet....”

Notice in Isaiah 14:1, “For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will still choose Israel, and settle them in their own land...” When is He going to do that? That’s going to be when Christ comes back, right?

Verses 3-5, “It shall come to pass in the day the Lord gives you rest from your sorrow, and from your fear and the hard bondage in which you were made to serve, that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say: ‘How the oppressor has ceased, the golden city ceased! The Lord has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers.’”

You can tie this in, prophetically, with Revelation 18—the fall of Babylon the Great. It is a time when God will give His people rest from sorrow, fear and bondage. It is the culmination after God has destroyed Babylon.

In fact, we are told in Isaiah 14:7, “‘The whole earth is at rest and quiet; they break forth into singing.’”

If you go through Isaiah 14, it is very clear that God likens the time of the Messiah’s rule to a Sabbath. He compares it to a Sabbath, a time of rest. When you understand that a thousand years is as a day and the time of the Messiah’s rule is a thousand-year day of rest, then you understand that is preceded by six thousand years of labor and effort.

Psalm 92 is a Psalm for the Sabbath that focuses on public worship, creation and the time of the Messiah’s rule. Here was a Psalm that was specifically designated for the Sabbath. There is a lot packed into Psalm 92.

Psalm 93 focuses on God’s throne being established and His reign.

Psalm 94:1, “O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongs—O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth!” God is the One to whom vengeance belongs. We don’t have to avenge ourselves. God is going to intervene, and He will judge the world in righteousness. He knows how to properly combine judgment with mercy. He can do it in a perfect balance and in a way that none of us can.

Verses 11-12, “The Lord knows the thought of man, that they are futile. Blessed is the man whom You instruct [KJV, “chasten”], O Lord, and teach out of Your law.” Blessed is the man whom God chastens. Happy (or blessed) is

someone God corrects and teaches out of His law.

Verse 13, “That You may give him rest from the days of adversity....” The reason God corrects, chastens and teaches us out of His law is so He may give us rest from the days of adversity. God wants to train and teach us. When God chastens and corrects, He does so in love and in mercy. It leads to being blessed and being happy because God corrects us to teach us the principles of His law. God always does what He does in proper balance and does it because He does love us.

Psalm 95:1-2, “O come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.”

I would like to call your attention to the fact that there are seven Psalms specifically set aside for the Sabbath. These seven Psalms were a part of the Sabbath liturgy every single Sabbath in the temple. Psalms 29, 92, 95, 96, 97, 98 and 99 were a part of every Sabbath’s liturgy. They had a special significance and, certainly, they had a special significance to the Jewish community.

I emphasize that because in Psalm 95, we are going to notice that there are verses Paul quotes. He spends two whole chapters in the book of Hebrews expounding these verses. When Paul wrote the book of Hebrews, he was writing it to whom? He was writing it to Hebrews, to people who were familiar with the temple.

If we want to understand what Paul said in Hebrews 3 and 4, if we want to get out of it what the people who first read it got out of it, then we have to sort of put ourselves in their mindset. Paul was writing to people who were familiar with the temple and what the Levites did, people who were familiar with the Old Testament. Paul quotes a portion of Psalm 95, and when any observant Jew of the first century heard a few verses of that quoted, he immediately, in his mind, identified it with the Sabbath because that was recited every Sabbath as part of the Sabbath’s liturgy.

With that in mind, let’s notice what the Psalm says. Then we are going to turn back briefly to Hebrews 3 and 4 and see how Paul used it.

Psalm 95:7-11, “For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice: ‘Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, and as in the day of trial in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me; they proved Me, though they saw My work. For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said, ‘It is a people who go

astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.” So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest.”

The book of the Law, which is paralleled in this fourth book of the Psalms, is Numbers. The whole story of the entire book of Numbers is summarized in these verses.

Verse 8, “Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, and as in the day of trial in the wilderness.”

Verses 10-11, “For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said, ‘It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.’ So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest.”

Hold your place. Turn back to Deuteronomy 12 and notice what God said about His rest. Notice what Moses told the Israelites right at the end of his life and right before they crossed the Jordan River.

Deuteronomy 12:9-10, “for as yet you have not come to the rest and the inheritance which the Lord your God is giving you. But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and when He gives you rest from all your enemies around about, so that you dwell in safety.” They were expecting to cross the Jordan River and enter into rest. Right? Remember that. That’s the setting of the use of the word “rest.”

Psalm 95:11, “So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest.”

Hold your place on Psalm 95 and let’s go back to Hebrews 3 and 4.

Hebrews 3:7-11, “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years.’ Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.’ So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’” Paul is quoting Psalm 95.

Now let’s see what he says. He begins to expound it.

Verses 12-13, “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

Verses 15-19, “while it is said: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.’ For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He

angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”

Hebrews 4:1-4, “Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word, which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: ‘So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest,’ although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: ‘And God rested on the seventh day from all His works.’”

Paul now says that entering into God’s rest is a symbolism that goes all the way back to creation when God worked six days and rested on the seventh. He spoke of people entering into rest. The Sabbath is a type of God’s rest. Israel of old, those who didn’t enter into His rest crossing the Jordan, those who died in the wilderness were those who didn’t believe. Paul is applying this to Christians.

Verses 6-7, “Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David [This quotes from Psalm 95. Paul attributes Psalm 95 to having been written by David.], ‘Today,’ after such a long time, as it has been said: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.’”

Verse 8, “For if Joshua [KJV, “Jesus”]....” The term here is a reference to Joshua. Joshua is the Hebrew form and Jesus is the Greek form of the same word. We normally use Jesus (the Greek form) to apply to Jesus the Messiah. We make that distinction in English, but we should be aware that His name in the Hebrew was the same name as Joshua, of the book of Joshua. One is the Greek form and the other is the Hebrew form. The reference in Hebrews 4:8 is to Joshua, the one who led the Israelites across the Jordan River.

Verse 8, “For if Joshua had given them rest [If crossing the Jordan River and settling down was all God was talking about], then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.” Later, in Psalm 95, he wouldn’t still be talking about entering into God’s rest if all that had been done and was done and over four hundred years earlier

when Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan River. If Joshua had given them rest, he wouldn't afterward have spoken of another day.

Verse 9, "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God." Something you don't get from reading the English is that all the way through Hebrews 3 and 4 the word for "rest" has been the same word in the Greek language, "*katapausis*," which just means "rest." But in v. 9, the word "rest" is a totally different word in the Greek. It's not a word that you have to be a great Greek scholar to figure out. The word in v. 9 that is translated "rest" is the word "*sabbatismos*." You don't have to be a Greek scholar to figure out that must have something to do with the Sabbath. It does. It literally means "a Sabbath keeping."

Verses 9-10, "There remains therefore a rest [Sabbath keeping] for the people of God. For he who has entered [or is entering] His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His." If you are entering into God's rest, of which the Sabbath is a type, you've ceased from your own works as God did from His. How did God cease from His works? He ceased on the Sabbath. If you are entering into God's rest, of which the Sabbath is a type, then you are resting on the Sabbath, too. And you realize that God's rest is a lot more than what Joshua led the Israelites into. God's rest was a type of entering into the Kingdom of God.

Psalm 95, which was read every Sabbath and Paul quotes in Hebrews 3 and 4, ties in with Sabbath keeping. Now, who says Paul did away with keeping the Sabbath? Boy, I tell you, when you just take it for what it says—you read Hebrews 4 and go back and read the book of Acts—it's very clear that Paul kept the Sabbath and taught the Sabbath.

There is a lot packed into Psalm 95. The analogy of ancient Israel entering into the Promised Land as a temporary physical rest was a type of our ultimately entering into the eternal rest of God's Kingdom. The Sabbath is a type of that rest. It is a weekly reminder of the hope that lies within us. It is the seventh day, after six days of labor, just as the millennial rest is a thousand years of rest that God will give to the world after six thousand years of effort and labor. We find that theme throughout the other Sabbath Psalms (Psalms 96, 97, 98, 99)—the theme of the establishment of the government of God and the reign of the Messiah runs through these chapters.

Psalm 96:1, "Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! Sing to the Lord, all the earth."

Verses 3-4, "Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples. For the Lord is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods."

Verses 9-10, "Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth. Say among the nations, 'The Lord reigns....'"

—The time when God is going to reign over all nations.

Psalm 97:1, "The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice...."

Psalm 98:1-2, "Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory. The Lord has made known His salvation; His righteousness He has openly shown in the sight of the nations."

Verse 9, "For He is coming to judge the earth. With righteousness He shall judge the world, and the peoples with equity."

Psalm 99:1-2, "The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble! He dwells between the cherubim; let the earth be moved! The Lord is great in Zion, and He is high above all the peoples." We have a theme of God's government running through all these Sabbath Psalms. The Sabbath looks forward to the time when God's government will hold sway over all the earth.

Psalm 100:1-2, "Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing." This is why we open the Sabbath services with songs. We are told to make a joyful noise unto the Lord and to come before His presence with singing. God appreciates music. Based on this and other verses, we open the services with singing. That portion of the service should be taken seriously. It is important to God. It is a focus.

Verses 3-4, "Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name."

Psalm 101:1, "I will sing of mercy and justice; to You, O Lord, I will sing praises."

Psalm 102:1-2, "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come to You. Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble; incline Your ear to me; in the day that I call, answer me speedily."

Verse 8, "My enemies reproach me all day long...."

Verses 11-14, "My days are like a shadow that lengthens, and I wither away like grass. But You, O Lord, shall endure forever, and the

remembrance of your name to all generations. You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, has come. For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and show favor to her dust.”

Remember years ago when the work first became involved in the archeological excavation in Jerusalem and the city of David. Mr. Herbert Armstrong used to talk quite a bit about it. For many, many years we were involved there. On several occasions, he made reference to Psalm 102:14, the reference to Jerusalem and the importance of Jerusalem in that context.

Verses 15-16, “So the nations shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth Your glory. For the Lord shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory.” He’s going to rebuild Jerusalem. He’s going to build it up. We have reference that this is written down for the generation to come (v. 18).

There is a clear reference in Psalm 102 to a contrast of the temporary state and the lack of power of the psalmist, compared with the greatness of God’s power and His eternal existence.

Verses 3-5, “For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned like a hearth. My heart is stricken and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread. Because of the sound of my groaning my bones cling to my skin.” It’s very descriptive of the temporary nature of the psalmist.

Verse 12, “But You, O Lord, shall endure forever, and the remembrance of Your name to all generations.”

That’s contrasted with v. 11, “My days are like a shadow that lengthens [KJV, “a shadow that declines”], and I wither away like grass.” –“A shadow that declines.” If you’ve ever seen a sundial, which was a time measurement in that day, that’s what happens. The shadow declines. It comes down and you can tell the time. The day is drawing to a close; you can tell because of the way the shadow declines on the sundial. It comes down to the period indicating the day is almost over. What the psalmist says is, ‘My time is short. But You, O Lord, endure forever.’

Verses 25-26, “Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure....”

–A contrast between man’s finiteness and God’s infinite power and greatness.

Psalm 103:1-3, “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; who forgives all your iniquities, who

heals all your diseases.” One of the greatest physical benefits God gives to His people is the benefit of healing. Certainly, the greatest benefit is a spiritual benefit—the benefit of being forgiven of our sins and therefore being reconciled with God and having the opportunity to share life with Him in His Family.

We are temporary; in that sense, healing is a temporary benefit. But it is a very, very important benefit. It’s a great blessing that God allows us to partake of, that is made possible through Christ’s sacrifice.

We are told in I Peter 2:24 (referring to Christ), “...by whose stripes you were healed.”

That is not talking about some arbitrary distinction in His sacrifice, but the fact that there is certainly a role of healing that is there. It is through Christ’s sacrifice that we have access to God. You can’t be a partaker of God’s promises if you don’t have access to Him. Christ’s sacrifice makes possible our access to God.

Psalm 103:2-3, it says, “...and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases.”

It continues and shows God’s mercy, His greatness, His patience and all of the things God does for His people.

Verses 10-14, “He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.”

God understands that we are very, very temporary. He deals with us in mercy, compassion and tenderness just like a human parent would do toward his own little child. Any of us who are parents know how tender they are and how protective we feel toward our little tiny children. God feels that way toward us. He is willing and desirous to forgive us and to be merciful to us. He desires to extend benefits to us.

Psalm 104:1-6, “Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty, who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, who stretch out the heavens like a curtain. He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters, who makes the clouds His chariot, who walks on the wings of the wind, who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire. You who laid the foundations of the earth, so that it should not be

moved forever, You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.”

This is a very beautiful poetic description of God as the Creator. God’s greatness is conveyed. There is a poetic imagery in the first few verses of Psalm 104. God is the Creator. He is the One who made everything. He made all of the forces of nature that are so great, so powerful and so awesome. The God that we serve stands ready to forgive us, to heal us and to help us. That God is the One who did it all. Yet for all the great things that He’s done, He’s ready to hear our prayers. He’s ready to be merciful, tender and kind to us just as a parent with his child.

There is reference to the renewal of the earth that describes creation week.

Psalm 104:30, “You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth.”

The creation described in Genesis 1:1-2 is a renewal of the face of the earth.

Genesis 1:1-2, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void...” We have always explained that in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, but the earth became without form. It became void and empty. It became chaotic and confused as a result of Satan’s rebellion (Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28). Then God stepped in and in six days re-fashioned and reformed the face of the earth. It’s referred to in Psalm 104:30 when it refers to God renewing the face of the earth. The creation of Genesis 1—the creation of creation week—was a renewal.

There was a world prior to Adam—a world that was destroyed as a result of Satan’s rebellion, or Lucifer’s rebellion, when he became Satan. God then renewed the face of the earth. God formed the world for man and then formed man. Man, or humanity, is the family of Adam and had its beginning when God created Adam.

Psalm 105 provides us an overview of Israel’s history. We pick up the story with the call of Abraham and follow it down to the Exodus.

Psalm 105:1-5, “Oh, give thanks to the Lord! Call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples. Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; talk of all His wondrous works. Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord. Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face evermore. Remember His marvelous works which He has done....”

Verses 8-12, “He has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant which He

made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac, and confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel for an everlasting covenant, saying, ‘To you I will give the land of Canaan as the allotment of your inheritance, when they were but few in number, indeed very few, and strangers in it.’”

In vv. 14-15, He talks about how He protected and watched over them.

Verse 17, “He sent a man before them—Joseph—who was sold as a slave.”

Verses 23-24, “Israel also came into Egypt, and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. And He increased His people greatly, and made them stronger than their enemies.”

The Egyptians came to hate the Israelites (v. 25).

Verse 26, “He sent Moses His servant, and Aaron whom He had chosen.”

Verses 27-35, he mentions the various plagues that were sent by God.

Verse 36, “He also destroyed all the firstborn in their land....”

Verse 37, He brought His people out.

Verse 38, “Egypt was glad when they departed, for the fear of them had fallen upon them.”

Verse 40, “...And satisfied them with the bread of heaven.”—A reference to manna.

He provided them with water (v. 41).

Verses 42-45, “For He remembered His holy promise, and Abraham His servant. He brought out His people with joy, His chosen ones with gladness. He gave them the lands of the Gentiles, and they inherited the labor of the nations, that they might observe His statutes and keep His laws. Praise the Lord!”

God brought Israel out to observe His laws and to be a special people to Him. Psalm 105 gives sort of an overview of Israel’s history. We notice that Psalms 105 and 106 certainly tie in with the parallel of the book of Numbers, which tells the story of Israel in the wilderness.

Psalm 106 continues the theme. It describes the theme of Israel’s wandering in the wilderness in greater detail. It is, in many ways, a poetic summary of the events of the book of Numbers and the book of Judges.

Psalm 106:3, “Blessed are those who keep justice, and he who does righteousness at all times.”

Verses 7-11, “Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; they did not remember the multitude of Your mercies, but rebelled by the sea—the Red Sea. Nevertheless He saved them for His name’s sake, that He might make His mighty power known. He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it dried up; so He led them through the depths, as through the

wilderness. He saved them from the hand of him who hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. The waters covered their enemies; there was not one of them left.”

Yet what did they do?

Verses 13-15, “They soon forgot His works; they did not wait for His counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tested God in the desert. And He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul.”

Sometimes God gives people their way, but there are consequences that come when He does.

Verses 16-22, “When they envied Moses in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the Lord, the earth opened up and swallowed Dathan, and covered the faction of Abiram. A fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked. They made a calf in Horeb, and worshiped the molded image. Thus they changed their glory into the image of an ox that eats grass. They forgot God their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt, wondrous works in the land of Ham, awesome things by the Red Sea.”

Verses 24-40, “Then they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe His word, but murmured in their tents, and did not heed the voice of the Lord. Therefore He lifted up His hand in an oath against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness, to overthrow their descendants among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands. They joined themselves also to Baal of Peor, and ate sacrifices made to the dead. Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds, and the plague broke out among them. Then Phinehas stood up and intervened, and so the plague was stopped. And that was accounted to him for righteousness to all generations forevermore. They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses on account of them; because they rebelled against His Spirit, so that he spoke rashly with his lips. They did not destroy the peoples, concerning whom the Lord had commanded them, but they mingled with the Gentiles and learned their works; they served their idols, which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with blood. Thus they were defiled by their own works, and played the harlot by their own deeds. Therefore the wrath of the Lord was kindled against His people, so that He abhorred His own inheritance.”

What do we find? We find a poetic summary of the book of Numbers.

They ceased to be thankful and appreciative for what God had done. When people cease to be thankful and appreciative for what God has done, they begin to take it for granted and get in a murmuring, complaining, griping, faultfinding attitude, and they are setting themselves up for trouble. That’s what happened to Israel of old. Instead of valuing and being thankful for what God was giving them and for their deliverance, they looked around and everything wasn’t convenient. As soon as things didn’t go their way, they griped, murmured, complained and bellyached. They didn’t trust God.

The only ones who will enter into God’s rest are those who believe God. How can you enter into God’s rest if you don’t believe Him? The generation that came out didn’t enter in because they didn’t believe. That’s why, when the spies came back (you know the stories of giants in the land), the people’s hearts melted (Numbers 13:17-33). They didn’t want to go into the Promised Land because they didn’t really believe God’s promises. If you believe God’s promises, then you are ready to go where God leads. There’s an awful lot that we can learn because there is a parallel to the Christian life and to entering into God’s rest which is ultimately the Kingdom of God.

We see this summary in Psalms 105 and 106. We see that when Israel came into the land, they mingled and began to lose their identity. It’s important to maintain our identity. We certainly need to maintain our identity spiritually. That is very important. Israel of old began to lose sight of that.

In spite of all the things that they did, vv. 43-48, “Many times He delivered them; but they rebelled against Him by their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless He regarded their affliction, when He heard their cry; and for their sake He remembered His covenant, and relented according to the multitude of His mercies. He also made them to be pitied by all those who carried them away captive. Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the Gentiles, to give thanks to Your holy name, and to triumph in Your praise. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, ‘Amen!’ Praise the Lord! [KJV, “Hallelujah”]! “Praise the Lord” is just the translation from the Hebrew phrase “Hallelujah.”

We see that there’s an awful lot in this section of the Psalms—a section that focuses in on the

example of God's people ultimately sharing in God's rest and being a part of His Family.

We've seen, this evening, that this section of the Psalms has a great deal of parallel with the story of the book of Numbers. Numbers is the story of how God dealt with His people in the wilderness, how He took care of them under His government, how He dealt with them and brought them through and ultimately set the stage for their entering into the Promised Land. We see why some did not. We see the reference that during the Feast of Tabernacles we are reminded of the fact that we are still in a temporary status, on the verge of entering into the Promised Land, as Israel of old.

When we go through this section of the Psalms, we are focused on what's temporary and what's permanent. Man is temporary; God is permanent. What's physical is temporary; what God has is eternal. Entering into God's rest is the answer and the solution. This is very amply brought out. There is a focus on the establishment of God's government that God will share with His Family. We are concluded with this section of Psalms.

Next Bible study we will cover the last section—Book Five—Psalms 107—150.

Bible Study # 79 Questions

SURVEY OF THE WRITINGS SERIES

Book Four—Psalms 90—106

1. What scripture gives the indication that a thousand years is equivalent to one year to God?
2. What does the scripture indicate as the average age of man?
3. What did Moses ask God to teach him in this Psalm?
4. What is the theme of Psalm 91?
5. Psalm 92 is a Psalm for what particular occasion?
6. What is the time setting of much of the description given in Psalm 92? How does this relate to the Sabbath?
7. To whom does vengeance belong?
8. Does God punish people because He hates them and wants to hurt them?
9. Where is Psalm 95:7-11 quoted in the New Testament and what does it refer to?
10. What is the common theme that runs through Psalms 96, 97, 98 and 99?
11. According to Psalm 100, does it make a difference to God whether or not we sing in Church?
12. Where in Psalm 102 do we find an indication of the Work's involvement in the Jerusalem dig?
13. In Psalm 102, in what way does the psalmist compare himself with God?
14. What are the first two benefits mentioned in Psalm 103 of which God's people may partake?
15. What is God's attitude toward those who fear Him?
16. In what way is God described in Psalm 104 to convey His greatness?
17. What verse in Psalm 104 proves that the creation week of Genesis 1 was describing a re-creation?
18. What is the theme of Psalm 105?
19. What is the theme of Psalm 106?
20. Even after all of their transgression, did God ever just put away Israel and forget them?

Bible Study # 80
December 10, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Book Five—Psalms 107—150

This evening we are in the final section of Psalms. We have been going through the book of Psalms and have focused on the fact that there are five divisions of the book of Psalms, as the Jews have traditionally reckoned it. This evening we are in the section that is termed **Book Five of Psalms—Psalms 107—150, which is the concluding portion of the book of Psalms.**

One of the things we have noted in this section of Bible studies is the fact that there is a correlation between the material in each of these books of Psalms with two other sets of five books—the five books of the Law (the Torah) or the five books of Moses, and then the five Festival Scrolls called the Megillot by the Jews, which were traditionally read during various festival commemorative seasons.

We are in the final fifth section or book of the Psalms and that would correspond with the fifth book of the Law, which would be the book of Deuteronomy. It would also correspond with the fifth book of the Festival Scroll, which is the book of Esther. Now, what possible correlation or connection is there between the book of Esther, the book of Deuteronomy and this final fifth section of the Psalms? We **will note the correspondence of Deuteronomy and Ester with Book Five of Psalms.**

The Jews traditionally read the book of Esther during Purim. Purim is not one of God's Holy Days; it is a national holiday that commemorates an event that is described in Esther. Remember the story? The Persian king had issued a decree that all the Jews were to be executed. He gave permission that on a certain day they were all to be killed. The book of Esther is the story of how God delivered His people through Esther. The celebration that takes place at the end of the book is a celebration of God's deliverance. It comes out very clearly in Esther that God is our Deliverer and the One who worked circumstances. Esther was read during Purim, which was a national festival of celebration of God's deliverance and God's salvation in the physical sense.

The book of Deuteronomy is a summing up—a restatement of the law—as Israel stood on the brink of crossing the Jordan River and entering into the Promised Land. They were on the verge

of entering into God's promises and of entering into God's rest. Moses died at the end of the book. Joshua then prepared to lead them across the Jordan River. "Deuteronomy" means "the second law." It is a restatement of the law. It reiterates the fact that obedience is the key to blessings. As the people were being prepared to cross into the Promised Land and to receive God's blessings, they were reminded of the need to obey. Blessings and obedience go together, just as curses and disobedience go together.

The emphasis of this section of the Psalms is a section on praise for God and praise for God as our Deliverer. Yet much of this section focuses on obedience to God and on the benefits and blessings that God bestows upon His people. We'll find this theme of praise running very noticeably through this entire section.

We have commented before how the first Psalm of each section sorts of sets the theme.

Psalm 107:1-3, "Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south." This section opens with giving praise and thanks to God for what He has done. It pictures the redeemed of the Lord and praise to God.

The rest of Psalm 107 looks back. You can almost read it with the idea that you are standing at the end of the Millennium, on the brink of eternity, looking back at what God has done to deliver His people—how He has brought them to Himself, how God has done and accomplished this, how He has established His reign on the earth and how He brought His people back. It is praise to God for what He has done in setting up His government and delivering His people. In that way, there is certainly a lot of correlation to these other things that we have talked about.

In this section of the Psalms, there are several Psalms that merit special attention. One is Psalm 119, which is the longest Psalm in the entire book of Psalms and the longest chapter in the entirety of the Bible.

Psalm 119 is very interesting in several ways. In most of your Bibles, if you will look at Psalm 119, you will notice something very unusual. In my Bible, right under the title Psalm 119, there is an unusual little mark (sort of a little squiggle) and next to it says, "Aleph." Then, if you come down eight verses—between verses eight and nine—there's another little squiggle and it says, "Beth." If you continue down eight more verses,

between vv. 16 and 17, there is another little squiggle and it says, “Gimel.” There’s “Daleth,” “He,” “Waw,” “Zayin,” and you can just continue down. What you will find is that every eight verses you have another one of these peculiar little marks with a strange word by the side of it. What you are looking at is the Hebrew alphabet.

Why did they print the Hebrew alphabet here in this Psalm? It is to point out something. We can’t see it in the English, but if we were reading it in Hebrew, there is something that would stand out very unusual in this Psalm. The first word in the first eight verses begins with “A” or “Aleph.” In the next eight verses, the first word in each verse begins with “B” or “Beth,” as it is called in the Hebrew. In the next eight verses, the first word begins with “G”; the next eight verses begin with “D.”

You might just notice; I will point out something to you. Notice the first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet are Aleph and Beth. What do we call it? We call it the “alphabet.” That’s where it comes from.

The Greeks adopted their alphabet from the Phoenicians, who got it from the Israelites. The indication is that they picked it up during the time of King Solomon when they were handling the shipping for King Solomon. The Greeks got it from them, and so the Greek letters had similar names. “Alpha” and “Beta” are the first two letters in the Greek alphabet, which are just various spellings of the first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, “Aleph” and “Beth.” It comes all the way down to English today because we talk about our “A-B-C’s”—our Aleph Beths or our alphabet. Every time you talk about the alphabet, you are really going back to Hebrew. It’s just one of those little sidelights.

This is a very unusual Psalm. It is a poem. It is called an acrostic, which means that every letter of the alphabet is used. If you go through, you’ll find that there are twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. I won’t go through each one of them. You will notice that there’s eight verses attached to each one—that comes out to one hundred seventy-six verses in all.

That’s sort of a remarkable thing. How would you like to write a poem where you have twenty-two sections of eight verses each and in each one of those sections, the first word of each verse begins with the same letter? Most of us would have trouble coming up with eight words that started with some of the letters. How would you like to come up with eight words that started with “x” in English? It’s an unusual way of

doing it, and it stands out because it is the only section like that in the Bible. It’s what’s called a perfect acrostic. There are several that are partial acrostics. It’s very difficult to do, where you use every single letter all the way through.

There are very simple ways—like in little children’s primers that would start out with “‘a’ is for ‘apple,’” “‘b’ is for ‘bat,’” “‘c’ is for ‘cat,’” and this sort of thing. That’s a very simple sort of an acrostic where you go through and see it done. Sometimes you see it done for advertising. They will have a word spelled down with words spelled out horizontally from each letter. Well, that’s an acrostic.

Here, you have the entire alphabet written down, and then verses written across from that—only you have eight verses with “a,” eight with “b,” eight with “c,” coming down that way. The significance of that was a sense of perfection and completion because the entire alphabet was used. The sense of it was that God’s perfect law is being praised because Psalm 119 is really a Psalm of praise to God’s law. It focuses in on how wonderful, perfect and complete God’s law is. It focuses on the greatness of the law that God has designed and put together. It’s as though the entire Hebrew language and alphabet was completely used in saying everything there was to say about it in a poetic way. We will come back and look at some things in Psalm 119. It is interesting to note that.

In the next fifteen Psalms, beginning with Psalm 120 through Psalm 134, you will notice right under each of those Psalms it says (KJV), “A Song of Degrees.” (NKJV), “A Song of Ascent.” You will notice there are fifteen of them that are called “Songs of Degrees.” What is that talking about?

One indication is that there is a Jewish tradition as to why there are fifteen Psalms called Psalms of Degrees and where that comes from.

Isaiah 38:1-2, “In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.”’ Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord.” He really besought God (v. 3).

Verses 5-8, God told him, “Go and say to Hezekiah, “Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father, ‘I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; and I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city.’” And this is the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing which He

has spoken: 'Behold, I will bring the shadow on the sundial, which has gone down with the sun on the sundial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward.' So the sun returned ten degrees on the dial by which it has gone down."

In the aftermath of that, we are told in v. 9, "This is the writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick and had recovered from his sickness."

He writes in the latter part of the chapter, v. 20, "'The Lord was ready to save me; therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments all the days of our life, in the house of the Lord.'" In the aftermath of his healing and God's deliverance, Hezekiah ordained some songs (Psalms) as a tribute to God that were sung by the Levitical choir in the house of the Lord. There were fifteen years added to Hezekiah's life. The sun went backward the equivalent of ten degrees on the sundial. Here we have fifteen Psalms—Psalm 120 through Psalm 134—called "Songs of Ascents" (KJV, "Songs of Degrees"). Let me just call your attention to something. Notice that Psalms 120 and 121 say, "A Song of Ascents [Degrees]." Psalm 122 says, "A Song of Degrees of David." Now keep count. We come down to Psalm 123, "A Song of Degrees" and Psalm 124, "A Song of Degrees of David." Psalms 125 and 126 are both "Songs of Degrees." Psalm 127 is "A Song of Degrees for Solomon." So, here's the third one that has an author's name given to it. Psalms 128, 129 and 130 are just "Songs of Degrees." Psalm 131 is "A Song of Degrees of David"—this is the fourth one that has an author's name to it. Psalm 132 is just "A Song of Degrees." Psalm 133 is "A Song of Degrees of David"—that's the fifth one that has an author's name to it. Psalm 134 is just "A Song of Degrees."

What you find, if you count it, is that ten of those "Songs of Degrees" are anonymous and five have authors that are given—four by David and one by Solomon. You have fifteen Psalms—ten of which don't give the author's name; they are just called "Songs of Degrees." Then you have five more that are added that bring it up to fifteen.

Jewish tradition holds that Hezekiah wrote those ten, and there were fifteen of them in honor of the fact that there were fifteen years that God added to his life. They are called "Songs of Degrees" because it commemorated the fact that the sundial went backward ten degrees as a miraculous sign of what God was going to do. Hezekiah wrote ten songs, one for each degree. Then there were five more Psalms that had

previously been written but not added to the canon. There were five Psalms that had been written either by David or Solomon that he added in to bring the total up to fifteen. These were added at the time of King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah as a celebration of God's deliverance.

It's sort of an interesting thing. These fifteen Psalms were traditionally sung by the Jews on their way up to Jerusalem prior to the Feast. If you started with the evening that began the Feast of Trumpets and you take one a day for each song, you come up to Psalm 134 on the evening that begins the Feast of Tabernacles. We know from Jewish history that in later years the Levitical choir did that in the temple. There were fifteen steps that led down into the inner court. They did this during that fifteen-day period leading up to the Feast of Tabernacles. They moved down a step every night and culminated with Psalm 134 on the evening that began the Feast of Tabernacles, which they sang on the evening that began the Feast. It's sort of interesting if you read Psalm 134 and think of it in those terms.

Psalm 134:1-3, "Behold, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who by night stand in the house of the Lord! Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord. The Lord who made heaven and earth bless you from Zion!"

That's sort of an interesting opening to the Feast of Tabernacles. This section of the Psalms and the entire book of Psalms end with five Psalms that are called the five "Hallelujah Psalms." They are called that because the first word in each of these last five Psalms is "Hallelujah." In most of our English Bibles, it is translated "Praise you the Lord!"

You will notice in Psalm 146:1, "Praise the Lord!" The word "Hallelujah" is a Hebrew word and translated into English means "Praise the Lord." Sometimes we hear the word or we have used the word "Hallelujah" in that way. In some cases, it's just rendered that way in the Bible. It's rendered as a phrase, which is just the Hebrew word. Or if it is translated, it literally means "Praise the Lord."

There are a couple of Hebrew words that most of us have used over the years and never thought anything about; we probably didn't even realize we were speaking Hebrew. There's one Hebrew word that you and I say probably every day—"Amen." It is a Hebrew word that literally means "let it be so." It is the root word of the word that's translated "faith" in the Old Testament and is sort of an affirmation of what is said.

This section of the Psalms and the whole book of Psalms end up with the five Hallelujah Psalms. You see this number five that runs through the book of Psalms. Here it ends up with five Psalms that are the Hallelujah Psalms. The thing you notice about each of these Psalms is that “Hallelujah” is the first word and also the last word. In each of these last five Psalms, the first word is “Hallelujah” and the last word is “Hallelujah.” That’s a good reason for calling them the “Hallelujah Psalms.”

Psalms 150 begins and ends up with, “Praise the Lord!”

Psalms 150: 1, “Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty firmament!”

It builds up and, finally, in v. 6, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!” So there is that sense of climax.

The book of Psalms is a poetic book; that’s the nature of Psalms. There are several things that we might look at. I would call your attention to phrases and things that are in the book of Psalms that we may not have commented on before.

You’ll find that many of the Psalms have a title to them. Most of those say “A Psalm of David.” Some are directed to “The Chief Musician.” Many say, “A Psalm of Asaph” or “A Psalm for Asaph.”

Asaph was the chief of the Levitical musicians in the time of King David. The Levitical musicians were descendants of Asaph’s family. Asaph, evidently, played a major role under King David in originally organizing and putting together much of the book of Psalms. His descendants were the section of Levites that were the professional choir that sang in the temple. So, when you see the word “Asaph” in there, it is a reference to the chief of the Levitical musicians.

As you go through, you will notice in Psalms 4, 5 and 6, for instance, that it uses a rather unusual term. Psalm 4 says (KJV), “To the Chief Musician on Neginoth.” The spelling is a slight variation in Psalm 5, “To the Chief Musician upon Nehiloth.” Psalm 6 says, “To the Chief Musician on Neginoth.” We could go through, but you will find that phrase used in various places.

The question comes up: What do these terms mean? Some commentators connect it with some sort of musical notation that had meaning to the Levitical choir and that doesn’t necessarily have a meaning to us. The term “Neginoth” in Hebrew literally means “smiting.” Some have sort of connected that with reference for some sort of percussion instrument that was used in its

performance. There is, in most of the Psalms that use this term, a theme that has to do with deliverance from personal smiting and trouble. It may simply be a play on words, referring both to some sort of musical percussion instrument and may very well make reference to some of the subject matter. If it refers to a musical instrument, it would obviously be some sort of a percussion instrument, just by the meaning of the word.

Other terms that are used, for instance in Psalm 8, “To the Chief Musician upon Gittith (KJV)....” If you check, you will find that term is used a fair amount of times later on in the book of Psalms. That term is used in various places. Psalms 81 and 84, for instance, use it. There are various places. It’s literally a reference to wine presses, and it is thought of as a poetic term that relates to the subject matter of the autumn Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles, of course, was a time of the grape harvest, a time when the wine presses were running and wine was being made.

In ancient times when the grapes were harvested, you either made wine or you made raisins. The fresh grapes didn’t last very long. They come off the vine and you eat some of them fresh—but what you are going to have through the remainder of the year?

Sometimes people ask if it was wine or grape juice Christ took at the Passover. Well, I’ll tell you what. You go out and get some grapes. Press them out and make some juice. Set it up and see how long it stays grape juice. If you don’t put it in the refrigerator, freeze it or don’t give modern processing to it, you will find out how long you have grape juice. You may have wine or vinegar, but you are not going to have grape juice for too long because it simply won’t keep as grape juice.

So, that’s why it’s silly for some of the Baptists and different ones that want to claim maybe Christ took grape juice at the Passover. How did you keep it? You don’t harvest grapes in the spring; you harvest them in the fall. There wasn’t any such thing as grape juice in the spring until “Welch’s” came along. They didn’t go to the store and buy a bottle of Welch’s. They didn’t have pasteurization where they processed and pasteurized it. They didn’t get out a can of frozen concentrate and make it up. They didn’t have those things. Frankly, a lot of you remember when you didn’t have those things either. It hasn’t been that many years ago since some of those things came along. There is a symbolism

that wine presses tie in with the Feast of Tabernacles.

God uses it in a symbolic sense, referring to His punishment of the wicked. He talks about, in that sense, treading out the grapes of wrath. He talks about the wicked, in that sense, being treaded out. He draws the analogy to that back in the book of Revelation. We find in the Psalms that the term “Gittith” is a poetic term. You’ll find that generally the subject matter is related to the fall festival season.

There are others. We will pick up one more that is used. I don’t want to get too bogged down on that, but I think it’s good to note because there are a lot of these strange-sounding words in the titles and a lot of times we wonder what they mean.

Psalm 32 says, “A Psalm of David, Maschill.” You’ll find that term used a number of places. Psalm 42, Psalm 52 and various other places use it. That’s a term that seems to relate to understanding or public instruction.

You find that some of the Psalms make reference in the title to “Korah.” It actually relates to the sons of Korah. Psalms 47, 48 and 49 are “Psalms of the sons of Korah.” The sons of Korah were Levitical musicians. This was one branch of the Levites who were musicians. These were notations that had reference either to the Psalm as it was used in public worship in the temple or in terms of the musicians who prepared it and used it. We won’t try to get all of these terms, but just in noting a few, it may help to figure out some of the others as well.

Let’s get on into this section a little more. We already noticed a little bit of the theme of Psalm 107—that it is a Psalm of praise to God for His mercy and His redemptive power (vv. 1-2). In a lot of ways, it’s praising God right at the beginning of the Millennium.

Psalm 107:3, “And gathered out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.”

Verse 6, “Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses.”

It talks about the punishments that came on those that had disobeyed God.

Psalm 108 is, again, a Psalm of praise to God.

Psalm 109:1, “Do not keep silent, O God of my praise!”

In v. 8, there’s an interesting statement, “Let his days be few, and let another take his office [or take his charge].” We would tend to just read over that. But if you go back to Acts 1:20, you will find that Peter quoted it there and applied it

to Judas. Psalm 109 is written in the sense of David being a type of Christ.

Verses 3-8, “They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause. In return for my love they are my accusers, but I give myself to prayer. Thus they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love. Set a wicked man over him, and let an accuser stand at his right hand, when he is judged, let him be found guilty, and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few, and let another take his office.” Here’s a reference to one who was a betrayer.

Peter quotes it in Acts 1:20, “For it is written in the book of Psalms: “Let his habitation be desolate, and let no one live in it...””

That’s taken from Psalm 69:25, “Let their habitation be desolate; let no one dwell in their tents.”

Acts 1:20, “...and, “Let another take his office [bishopric].””

This is quoted out of Psalm 109:8, “...and let another take his office.”

Peter quotes this Psalm and applies it to Judas Iscariot. He used that as a basis of saying that a replacement apostle needed to be chosen to round out the number to twelve.

Now, you and I may not have known this if all we had was the book of Psalms. We’d probably never figured that out. But the point is that we understand the Old Testament by the New Testament. The New Testament provides a proper understanding and interpretation of the Old. There are many things that we could never understand completely without what the New Testament adds.

Psalms 110:1, an interesting example, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” What is being talked about here?

If you just hold your place there, notice back in Matthew 22, Jesus quoted this part. The Pharisees were trying to challenge Christ and trip Him up (v. 15).

Matthew 22:41-43, “While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, ‘What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?’ They said to Him, ‘The Son of David.’ He said to them, ‘How then does David in the spirit call Him “Lord,” saying...””

Christ said, ‘You fellows have a lot of questions for Me; I have one for you. Whose Son is the Messiah? Who is the Messiah a descendant of?’ And they said, ‘He’d be the Son of David, a descendant of David.’ And He said, ‘That’s interesting. How is it that David in the Spirit

calls Him “Lord”? If He is David’s Son, why does David speaking under inspiration call Him “Lord”? Then He makes reference to the book of Psalms. He quotes Psalm 110:1.

Matthew 22:44-45, “The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.” If David then calls Him “Lord,” how is He his Son?” It was sort of a trick question for them. They couldn’t answer. Since they were trying to trip Him up, He just asked them a question that He knew they couldn’t answer. Jesus Christ quoted it.

Verse 46, we are told, “And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.” They quit asking Him questions. That was His way of doing this.

You might notice that a lot of Psalm 110 is a reference to Christ.

Psalm 110:4, “The Lord has sworn and will not relent, You are a Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” This is quoted in the book of Hebrews 7:21.

Psalm 111 is a very interesting Psalm.

Psalm 111:9, “...Holy and awesome [KJV, “reverend”] is His name.” That is one of the reasons we don’t use the title “reverend” in God’s Church. We don’t refer to the ministry by the title “reverend” because we are told that holy and reverend is His name. That’s God’s name. “Reverend” means “worthy of worship.” I am not worthy of worship; neither was Mr. Herbert Armstrong or any human being. God is worthy of worship. He is reverend and holy. We don’t use that title because it says ‘holy and reverend is His name.’

Verse 10, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever.” That’s an important thing. The starting point for wisdom is to stand in awe of God.

The world doesn’t have a lot of wisdom because the world’s starting point is that people are impressed with themselves. The starting point for most of the intellectuals of this world is that they are impressed with themselves and how much they know. They think they are pretty smart. And as a result, they will wind up coming up with some pretty stupid philosophies and pretty stupid answers.

The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God—really standing in awe of God and being impressed with God. If you start out impressed with God, it’s amazing how everything else falls into place. You can figure out a lot of things if you realize how great God is and how small we

are by comparison. It has to do with setting our whole worldview.

It says, “A good understanding have all who do His commandments.” Do you want to understand? You have to act on what you know. It’s interesting. When God began to work with Mr. Herbert Armstrong, when God began to open his mind, the first thing was the understanding of the Sabbath. The Sabbath and the Holy Days was the test. Once Mr. Herbert Armstrong showed he was willing to start doing that, his mind was opened to other things.

It’s interesting. Right there at the beginning, the beginning was the Sabbath and the Holy days; the next had to do with the identity of Israel, which unlocked Bible prophecy and the Old Testament. Within a fairly short time—within a matter of months—he began to understand the overview of the prophetic outline and the identity of who is the beast. Those were things he began to understand early on. But he never would have understood some of those things if he hadn’t started obeying God.

Verse 10, “...a good understanding have all those who do His commandments...” Mr. Herbert Armstrong used to mention the fact that he and his wife kept the Holy Days for seven years before they understood what the days meant. If he had waited to understand what they meant before he did it, he would never have understood. See, “a good understanding have all they that do His commandments.”

If you want to grow in understanding, act on what you know. Start where you are and do what you see God says to do. You may not understand all the “whys,” but if we’re yielded to God, we don’t have to understand all the “whys.” The fact that God said it should be enough. I don’t have to evaluate whether it’s a good idea or not. If God said, ‘Do it’—that’s sufficient. And if I do it, sooner or later I’m going to come to understand.

The world wants to put themselves in the seat of being the judges. They don’t see what difference it makes. The point is not whether *I* see what difference it makes; the point is: Does *God* say it makes a difference to Him? If it makes a difference to Him, whether I see what difference it makes or not is irrelevant. The point is that God said it. I start doing it. And you know what? The longer you do it, the more you understand about it and the clearer it becomes. I think most of you can look at that in your own life and see that you have grown in understanding after you started acting on the things you saw. It’s like God will lead us as long as we follow. But if you

quit following, then all of a sudden, you don't continue to understand more and more. This is a key thing here in Psalm 111.

Psalm 112:1, again, a Psalm of praise, "Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in His commandments."

Verse 5, "A good man deals graciously and lends; he will guide his affairs with discretion." A good man is going to be kind and is going to be generous, but he's also going to use good judgment in guiding his affairs. He's going to trust God (v. 7).

Psalm 113 is, again, a Psalm of praise to God.

Psalm 113:4, "The Lord is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens." He's the One that can be looked to.

Psalm 114:1-2, "When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, Judah became His sanctuary, and Israel His dominion." This is a Psalm of praise to God for the great things that He did.

Psalm 115 talks about how really insane it is for people to make idols and to trust in those idols.

Psalm 115:2-8, "Why should the Gentiles say, 'Where now is their God?' But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; eyes they have, but they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear; noses they have, but they do not smell; they have hands, but they do not handle; feet they have, but they do not walk; nor do they mutter through their throat. Those who make them are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them."

It is absolutely futile. What's the use? What's the point? You have some statue sitting up there; it can't move, talk, see or do anything—and here's somebody bowing down and praying to it.

Verse 9, the point is, "O Israel, trust in the Lord; He is their help and their shield." We are to trust in the Eternal. We are to trust in God who dwells in heaven, and He delivers.

Verse 16, "The heavens, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the earth He has given to the children of men."

It's interesting how people always want to get "ahead of the game." We are told that as the sons of God, we are ultimately going to inherit all things. We'll inherit the universe. It talks about that in Revelation 21:7. But you know, "the heavens are God's, the earth He has given to the children of men." But, of course, what do people want to do? We have made a mess out of the earth. We have polluted it. We have gotten it dirty and made a "wreck" out of so much. So,

now man wants to conquer outer space. That surely makes a lot of sense; we can't take care of what we have.

God's principle is to start where you are. Learn to take care of what you have. Then, when you're faithful with a little, you will be given rulership over much. Man makes a mess out of what he has and then wants to quickly move on to something else. We are going to find that's something that is not for man at this time. That is something that we can ultimately have a part in on into the Millennium. But right now, the earth is what we have and what God has given us to take care of.

Psalm 116:1, "I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplications."

Psalm 117:1, "Oh, praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!"

Psalm 118:1, "Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! Because His mercy endures forever." It is, again, a Psalm of praise and rejoicing.

Verses 22-23, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes." You will find this is quoted in Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17, Acts 4:11 and Ephesians 2:20. This particular verse is quoted in a variety of places in the New Testament. The book of Psalms is heavily quoted in the New Testament.

Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible. We have already talked about that. It is praising God's law. You will find that there are seven different terms that are used.

Psalm 119:1, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord!" It talks about the law of the Lord.

Verse 2, "Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart!" The second term is testimonies.

Verse 4, "You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently." Precepts—that's a little bit different.

Verse 5, "Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!" Statutes is the fourth term.

Verse 6, "Then I would not be ashamed, when I look into all Your commandments." The fifth term is commandments.

Verse 7, "I will praise You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgment." Judgment is a sixth term.

Verses 9, 11, "How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word...Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You." We read of

God Law, His testimonies, His precepts, His statutes, His commandments, His judgment and the seventh term, His word. There is a lot of overlap between these terms. There are certain differences. Perhaps at a later time I may give a sermon on God's law and go through a little bit of the differences between these terms. There's a lot of overlap. Some of it is more poetic, but there are some differences.

The term "Law" or "Torah" includes the testimonies, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments; it includes everything. The term "the Word of God" includes everything God says. His testimonies relate more to accounts or illustrations.

Some people operate on the basis that if you can't show them a verse that says, "thou shall do so-and-so," then they are not going to do it. They don't see why they can't. We should all understand that the Bible isn't written that way. God does give commandments where He says, "thou shall" and "thou shall not," but that's not the only way God speaks to us.

When you go through and read the story of Abraham, that's part of the testimonies. When you read the story of David, that's a part of the testimonies. You see the way God worked. You see the things they did; you see what they should have done and what they shouldn't have done. You get God's evaluation of it. We should learn from that. If God had wanted to simply give us a list of three hundred seventy-five things to do and not to do, He could have written the Bible that way—where it was just a few pages long and a list of three hundred seventy-five rules. That's not the way God wrote it.

Matthew 4:4, Jesus said, "...Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." We need to study the Bible from the standpoint of trying to see how God views things. We are not to have the attitude of 'Unless you show me God says right here, "thou shall not do such and such."' God deals with a lot of things in principle. That's what's known as having the mind of Christ. There are illustrations and specifics. There are commandments that are given that certainly summarize. There are statutes that have more to do with civil matters. There are many different things. There are judgments that may apply to specific circumstances. There are a lot of different things that come out.

Psalm 119 deals with all of that. It talks about the various aspects of God's law and how God's law is for our good. We think of law as simply a list of rules. That's a mistake because the word

for "law" in Hebrew was the word "Torah" which means "instruction." The term "God's law" includes rules, but it also includes testimonies and other things. It is an overall term that refers to God's instructions. God's instructions are what we should want and what we are looking for.

Verse 97, "Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day." In God's law, there's an orientation toward God's instruction.

Verse 105, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

It's very clear that God's law is eternal because we are told in v. 142, "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is truth."

Verse 172, "...for all Your commandments are righteousness." If God's righteousness is everlasting and all His commandments are righteousness, then that sounds like the law is going to be around forever.

Verses 151-152, "You are near, O Lord, and all Your commandments are truth. Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever."

Verse 160, "The entirety of Your word is truth [KJV, "Your word is true from the beginning"], and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever." We see that God's law is intended to be around for a long, long time.

The next fifteen Psalms—Psalms 120—134—are the Songs of Degrees. We have already commented about that.

Psalm 122:1-2, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.' Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!" This is a theme that certainly focuses in on when God's people are going to go up to Jerusalem in peace in the beginning of the Millennium.

Verses 3-4, "Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together, where the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, to the Testimony of Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord."

Psalm 123:1, "Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens."

Psalm 126 describes God bringing the captives back after the return of Jesus Christ.

Psalm 126:1-4, "When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, 'The Lord has done great things for them.' The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad. Bring back our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the South."

Psalm 127:1-2, “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He gives His beloved sleep.”

If God is not behind it, it’s futile. If God is not involved in what we are doing, then it is an exercise in futility. It’s an important point (KJV): “Unless the Lord builds the house, the weary builders toil in vain.” Whether it’s our lives or family or anything that we are doing, if God is not involved in it, then no matter how hard you work and no matter how much effort you put into it, there’s never going to be anything permanent out of it. If you are trying to do something that is going to last, you don’t leave God out. You don’t leave God out and you don’t put God in last. God has to be the starting point.

Psalm 133:1, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” It shows how that is important and precious in God’s sight.

In Psalm 135, we find a Psalm of praise to God for all the great things that He has done—the things He’s done in ages past—the work of creation, His intervention for His people in times of need. Some of the great things that God has done are detailed out in Psalm 135. It is a hymn of praise to God.

Psalm 136:1, “Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.” Again, it’s a continuation of the same sort of thing as in Psalm 135.

Psalm 137 is a little different. It is written in the context of the Babylonian captivity. It is a reference to God’s people in the Babylonian captivity looking to God as their Deliverer and the fact that even on into the Millennium, God’s people, whom He’s redeemed and brought back, will look to God. They will look back on the captivity and the things that God has brought them out of.

Psalm 138:1-2, “I will praise You with my whole heart; before the gods I will sing praises to You. I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your loving kindness and Your truth; for You have magnified Your word above all your name.”

Verse 6, “Though the Lord is on high, yet He regards the lowly; but the proud He knows from afar.” That’s an important concept to realize. In this world, if you want to gain access to somebody important, you better have a lot of money. You better have great power if you want

to get in to see the governor. If you are a multi-millionaire, you can get right in. If you have enough money, your phone calls can get right through, even to the President of the United States. But if you or I were to try that, we would be doing well to get the secretary’s secretary. That’s just the way the world is structured.

But what we have to realize is that though you and I may not have direct access to all the great and mighty and powerful of this world, we do have direct access to the very headquarters of the Universe. (KJV), “Though the Eternal be high, yet has He respect unto the lowly, but the proud He knows afar off.” The way to gain access to God is to be lowly, to be humble. Come before God, have an attitude of humility and we can have direct access to Him.

There is another important point that’s brought out in v. 8, “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me; Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever; do not forsake the works of Your hands.” It’s not what you can make out of yourself or what I can make out of myself; it’s what God can make out of us as we yield to Him.

“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” To the extent that we will surrender our life and our will to Him, He will perfect that which concerns us. He will take it and develop it. He will make us what we could never make ourselves. In that sense, to the extent that we get out of the way, we let God work. His mercy endures forever and He won’t forsake the work of His own hands. We are the work of His hands. He is in the process of making us, not only physically in His image but spiritually.

Psalm 139:1-6, “O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it.”

He is saying, ‘God knows me better than I know myself. He knows everything about me. He knows when I rise up and when I sit down. Where am I going to go away from Him? There isn’t any place I can go that He is not going to find me. Even the darkness can’t hide me from Him’ (vv. 7-12). He goes on and describes that. He shows how God can see us in the most remote of places.

Verses 23-24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” He’s asking God to search him, examine him, to help him to see himself. God knows everything about me. He knows me better than I know myself. ‘Search me, try me, see if there’s anything that shouldn’t be there.’ We have to go to God for spiritual insight into ourselves. One of the hardest things for any of us to do as human beings is to be completely honest with and about ourselves.

What are we told?

Jeremiah 17:9, “‘The heart is deceitful above all things...’” First and foremost, the primary ingredient of human nature is that we kid ourselves. It’s hard to be really honest with or even about myself. But God knows. He sees us in the dark, in the daylight, when we rise up and sit down.

The psalmist (David) asks God, ‘Help me to see myself. Search me and try me. Help me to understand, to see and to perceive, what You see.’

Psalms 140 is a prayer for deliverance and preservation.

Psalms 140:13, “Surely the righteous shall give thanks to Your name, the upright shall dwell in Your presence.”

Psalms 141:1-2, “Lord, I cry out to You; make haste to me! Give ear to my voice when I cry out to You. Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.” Incense is used to symbolize the prayers of the saints. Revelation 5:8 states that specifically. He draws the analogy of prayer being likened to incense.

Verse 3, he makes an interesting statement, “Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.” What does that mean? He’s asking God to post an armed guard right at his lips to not let anything get out that shouldn’t. I’ll tell you what. We would be an awful lot better off if some people had that attitude.

Verse 4, “Do not incline my heart to any evil things, to practice wicked works with men who work iniquity; and do not let me eat of their delicacies.” ‘Don’t let me have an attitude of wanting to collect gossip and standing around to eat of their dainties.’ They have this little juicy tidbit, this little morsel of gossip. ‘Hey, did you hear what “so-and-so” did?’ That’s the normal human reaction. The ears perk up, ‘Oh, really! I can’t believe it.’

David recognized that was something that really should not be. He says, ‘What I want to do is let

my prayer come out. Let my prayer come before you as incense and please set a guard at the door of my mouth so that no wicked words escape. I don’t want things to come out that shouldn’t. I don’t want to take in all these little delectable morsels from people about wicked things. I don’t want my heart and mind to be that way.’

Psalms 142:1, “I cry out to the Lord with my voice; with my voice to the Lord I make my supplication.”

Verse 5, “I cried out to You, O Lord: I said, ‘You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.’”

Psalms 143:1, “Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear to my supplication...”

Psalms 144:1, “Blessed be the Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle...”

Psalms 145:1, “I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever.”

Verses 7-9, “They shall utter the memory of Your great goodness, and shall sing of Your righteousness. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy. The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works.” God is compassionate and merciful. His tender mercies are over all His works.

It’s interesting. I will point out here that over the years, in certain countries, there have been many sports that are, let’s say, cruel sports or “blood sports,” as they are called. I’m not making reference to hunting but, let’s say, to everything from bullfighting, cock fighting, dog fighting, bull baiting and all sorts of things like that. A lot of those things have sort of fallen into disrepute.

Jews, who have been devout, have never engaged in that sort of thing. Their basis for refusing to involve themselves in things like this—things that involve sort of a slow torturous death to animals—has been this verse. The verse that they quote is Psalms 145.

Psalms 145:9, “The Lord is good to all and His tender mercies are over all His works.” That verse was their basis of why not to be involved in, let’s say, sports of cruelty. Here’s an example that they extrapolated out of this verse. Now you can’t point to a verse that says, “Thou shall not” and come up with something like that. But here’s a principle that’s stated. “The Lord is good to all.” Now, obviously, God created certain animals to be consumed. But if you go back to the law and the instructions that were given to the priests and the Levites, a slaughter was quick. It was not something that was slow

and torturous. It didn't involve cruelty. Of course, there were certain animals that were created to be eaten. But there's a difference between slaughtering an animal to eat and putting two animals together and watching them "go for it" and goad until finally one of them kills the other. It's just sort of a little aside. It's maybe a minor point, but I think it is just a little bit of insight into the character and nature of God.

The point is that when we read the Bible, we want to read it from a standpoint of trying to understand how God thinks so that we can learn to think that way, too. We should not read the Bible trying to spiritualize everything away. We should not read the Bible from a modern lawyer's standpoint, sort of looking for loopholes—'Awh, He didn't say you couldn't do this at this time, so I'll do it.'

The point is that God gives us an overview. He gives us principles that relate to the way He thinks, and if we have a converted mind, then we are trying to find the principles. We are trying to understand how He thinks because we want to learn to think that way, too. And He's gracious. He's full of compassion. He's slow to anger. He's of great mercy. Those are the characteristics that should characterize us. If we're not gracious, if we lack any compassion, if we're quick to anger, if we have very little mercy, well, when we read this, we need to realize that here are some areas that we need to work on.

Psalm 145:18-20, "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them. The Lord preserves all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy."

Psalm 147:11, "The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy."

Verses 3-4, "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name." Now that's an incredible thing. God can count all the numbers of the stars, and the number of stars is infinite to man's reckoning. Man can't count how many there are. God knows the number. There is a specific number. I don't know how many, but God does. One of these days you and I can find out. Not only does He know how many there are, He remembers all their names. You talk about memory; now that's memory!

The encouraging point is: I John 3:2, "...it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we

know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

When Christ comes back in glory, we are going to be like Him. Our glorified body is going to be just like His. We are going to be like God. We are going to be a part of His Family. Maybe you and I forget an awful lot of things that we try to learn right now, but the time is going to come, in a few years, when we are going to be like Him. That means we are going to have the kind of mind that's able, not only to count how many stars there are, but also to remember all their names. The things you read and study and try to remember—if you have trouble remembering it all—in a few years, it will come right back and you won't have any trouble. It's a little bit of insight into the greatness of God's mind and God's greatness.

We have already commented on these final "Hallelujah Psalms"—Psalms 146, 147, 148, 149 and 150.

Notice how Psalm 150 climaxes.

Psalm 150:1-6, "Praise the Lord [Hallelujah]! Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty firmament! Praise Him for His mighty acts; praise Him according to His excellent greatness! Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; praise Him with the lute and harp! Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes! Praise Him with loud cymbals; praise Him with high-sounding cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord [Hallelujah]!"

There is a poetic climax that focuses in on the use of music in the worship of God and the fact that it plays a very important role. We should realize that's part of the importance of music. There's nothing that has a greater impact upon the mood and the emotions of human beings than music. Certainly, an atmosphere of awe and majesty can be created through music, just as negative moods and emotions can be created.

Music was something that was used in a very special way in ancient Israel. God considered it important enough that a portion of the Levites were a professional orchestra and a professional choir. That was what they did. They were supported, of course, by the tithes of the people, but they were a professional orchestra and a professional choir. God obviously considered music and its impact on the people as an important part of His worship and an important part of what was important in society.

The whole book of Psalms is a poetic book. It is a book that was set to music and sung. It is a book that is suited for meditation and for

memorization. It is poetic, yet has a tremendous amount of content and “meat” packed into it that all of us can, hopefully, get more out of as we study it, and realize the role and impact that God designed it to have.

We can just sort of feel some of this, here in Psalm 150, as we imagine the Levitical choir performing this number—the sense of awe, majesty and worship that was created in the proper use of music.

There are various proper moods to be created with music. There are, certainly, celebration and festive occasions, as well as for worship and for other things.

We have now concluded the book of Psalms. We are going to continue this series of the Writings by going right on into the book of Proverbs. The next Bible study we will cover the first portion of the book of Proverbs—the first nine chapters.

Bible Study # 80 Questions

SURVEY OF THE WRITINGS SERIES

Book Five—Psalms 107—150

1. What is the theme of Psalm 107? What seems to be the time setting of the description that is given?
2. Who does Psalm 109:8 refer to? Where is this verse quoted in the New Testament?
3. Comment on the significance of Psalm 110:1.
4. What is the key to understanding?
5. What verse in Psalm 115 shows that this is not the time when man should be attempting to conquer outer space?
6. Which Psalm is the longest chapter in the Bible? What is its theme and what is the significance of the way that it is written?
7. Prove from Psalm 119 that God's law was never to be done away.
8. What do Psalms 120—134 have in common? What is significant about this collection of fifteen Psalms?
9. What is the theme of Psalm 122?
10. What does Psalm 126 describe?
11. Explain Psalm 127:1-2.
12. What important theme does Psalm 133 stress?
13. What theme is developed in Psalm 135?
14. In what context was Psalm 137 written?
15. In Psalm 139, it is explained how we come to understand our own motives and attitudes. What is this key?
16. What does Psalm 141:3-4 refer to?
17. According to Psalm 141, what did sacrificial incense symbolize?
18. In what way is God's character described in Psalm 145?
19. What are we told in Psalm 147 about God's mind-power?
20. What common theme runs through the last five Psalms?

Bible Study # 81
December 24, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Proverbs 1—9

Well, we have finally finished up the Psalms and **are getting into the book of Proverbs this evening**. The English title “Proverbs” is a pretty good translation of the Hebrew word that is the title of this book. The word in Hebrew is derived from the Hebrew word “*mashal*,” which literally means “rule.” The sense of the title in Hebrew is “words to rule or govern your life with.” It’s pretty much the sense of the English word “proverbs.” It is a short statement, or summing up, that is a good rule for life. That is the meaning of the word in Hebrew.

The book of Proverbs was written over quite a lengthy period of time. King Solomon compiled the majority of the Proverbs. But there is a record in the book of Proverbs that certain other portions were compiled by the men of King Hezekiah and by various other unnamed wise men.

The book of Proverbs can be divided into **seven sections**. If we look briefly, I think we will see that these seven sections are fairly clear.

The **first section** of Proverbs is a very short section. It is simply the first six verses, which is the introduction. It gives the title and the purpose of the book.

Proverbs 1:1-6, “The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion—a wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel, to understand a proverb and an enigma, the words of the wise and their riddles [KJV, “dark sayings”].” This is sort of a summary of the purpose of the book. The first section gives the introduction, the title and the purpose of the book.

The **second section** begins with Proverbs 1:7 and continues through Proverbs 9:18 (the last verse of chapter 9). Beginning in Proverbs 1:7, we begin to get into the Proverbs themselves.

Proverbs 1:7, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” This section, the second section of Proverbs, is basically a discourse on understanding and wisdom. If you

read through, you will notice the first nine chapters are more of a lengthy discourse and there is some story flow to it.

The **third section** begins in Proverbs 10:1.

Proverbs 10:1, we are told, “The proverbs of Solomon....”

When you get into chapter 10, you have, in many cases, these short one-verse statements. It starts out clearly setting out that this is a special section because the first part of Proverbs 10:1 says, “The proverbs of Solomon” and then goes through the third section, which is really the **first body** of Proverbs by King Solomon. We start out in Proverbs 10:1 and go all the way down through chapter 22:16. This is the first body of Proverbs written by Solomon.

The **fourth section** is the **second body** of Proverbs. This is from Proverbs 22:17 down through the end of Proverbs 24:34. This body of Proverbs is labeled as “the words of the wise.” Proverbs 22:17, “Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge.”

Proverbs 10:1, we are told, “The proverbs of Solomon....” When we get down to this second body of Proverbs, these come from a miscellaneous number of sources that were copied out. They were not proverbs that originated with Solomon, though they may very well have been proverbs that he wrote and were included in, but he attributes them as the sayings (NKJV, “words”) of the wise.

The **fifth section** is the **third body** of Proverbs. We find this section begins in Proverbs 25:1 and comes down through the end of chapter 29—chapters 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29.

Proverbs 25:1, “These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied.” So, here is a section of Proverbs that Solomon had written, yet had not been included in the original book of Proverbs as Solomon had left it. They were other proverbs of Solomon that now, at a later period of history, the men of Hezekiah copied out and added in. It is a third body of Proverbs—again, proverbs in the sense of short, succinct statements.

You’ll remember that once we got through the introduction of the first six verses, then nearly the whole first nine chapters were a lengthy discourse, not the little short quick statements that are made throughout the rest of the book. We’ve come through these three bodies of Proverbs.

Now the **sixth section**, Proverbs 30, is what is called the words of Agur.

Proverbs 30:1, “The words of Agur, the son of Jakeh, his utterance. This man declared to Ithiel—to Ithiel and Ucal.” It doesn’t say who Agur was. There have been some who have speculated that it was maybe some sort of a title that could have even applied to Solomon, but it doesn’t say that. It is attributed to Agur in this way.

The **seventh section** is Proverbs 31. It’s labeled, Proverbs 31:1, “The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him.” Here in Proverbs 31 is the account of the virtuous woman. This is basically what a mother taught her son to look for in a wife and what is of real value.

We find that we have these seven sections. As we go through, we find that each has its own area.

Proverbs is written as a combination—on the one hand, a discourse, and on the other, what was called an “aphorism.” An “aphorism” is a concise statement, a “short, pointed sentence making a moral point.” One of the things about proverbs is that so much of it can be summed up in one or two verses. It is a very short, concise statement and then moves on to a totally different subject. Most of Proverbs are written this way. This short, concise statement that is summed up in just a sentence or so is called an aphorism. Most of these employ a parallelism.

Let me give you an example. **There are different kinds of parallels.** There’s what is called **synonymous parallels.**

Proverbs 14:19, for instance, “The evil will bow before the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.” **Now, that’s sort of two different ways of saying exactly the same thing.** That’s what’s called a synonymous parallel.

What is parallelism and what is the purpose? It’s a poetic device used to emphasize the point that’s being made. The Proverbs are written in a poetic way. They are written in a way that sums up a moral point in just a few words. One of the main ways this is made is through parallelism. There’s a parallel that’s drawn that serve to emphasize. Sometimes it’s a synonymous parallel.

Another example of a synonymous parallel is Proverbs 18:7, “A fool’s mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.” This is synonymous. It sort of restates the same thing. It is synonymous in its parallel. It states the same thing in slightly different words.

Now, there is a second example or type of parallelism called **antithetic parallelism.** **That**

means that the second clause presents a contrast to the first clause.

Proverbs 13:25, an example of that is, “The righteous eats to the satisfying of his soul, but the stomach of the wicked shall be in want.” Here’s a contrast that’s made. It’s not saying the same thing. The first part of the verse talks about the righteous; the second part talks about the wicked. The first part talks about the righteous having plenty and the second is about the wicked being without. There is a contrast. The parallelism is of opposites or of contrasts.

Proverbs 17:22, “A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.” There is a contrast here. It serves as a matter of emphasis but through contrast.

A third kind of parallel is what is called **synthetic parallel.** **This means that the second clause continues the thought of the first.**

Proverbs 19:11, “The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and it is to his glory to overlook a transgression.” Here you see that the second clause is not an exact. It’s not saying the same thing as the first. It’s not synonymous and doesn’t make a contrast. It does something else—it continues the development of that thought. “The discretion of a man defers his anger, and it is to his glory to overlook a transgression.” It further develops the thought.

Proverbs 20:13, another example of that would be, “Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty; open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with bread.” It further develops the thought of the first.

A fourth kind of parallel is a **parallel of comparison.**

Proverbs 10:26, for instance, “As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to those who send him.” That’s a comparison. It’s not saying exactly the same thing. It’s not a contrast. It’s not further developing it. It is a comparison. **It is taking two things and compares them.** Now, what does vinegar do? “Vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes.” Well, drink a good mouthful of vinegar and see what it does. It puts your teeth on edge. If you get in an area that’s real smoky, what does it do? The smoke irritates your eyes. “Vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes.” What do they have in common? Well, they put you on edge; they are irritants. “So is the sluggard to those that send him.” You send somebody lazy to do a job and he just “pokes” along. What happens? Notice how your patience just wears down. I know that’s never happened to some, but it’s happened to the rest of us. This type of Proverb makes a

comparison. It uses a description and then it compares it to something. It's a poetic device, but it sort of brings it out. That's what a comparison does.

Proverbs 25:11, another example, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." Here's a comparison. A word fitly spoken is not apples of gold, but it says it is like apples of gold. So, on the one hand, you have something really beautiful, precious and valuable. That's the way a word fitly spoken is—the right word at the right time. It's a beautiful thing. It's valuable. There is a comparison that is brought out.

There are different kinds of parallels that are drawn, but one of the things that is common to virtually all the Proverbs is that they use the device of parallelism. They make a parallel. It may be a synonymous parallel where you just restate the same thing in different words. It may be a contrast in parallel where you state one thing and then state sort of the opposite; you make a contrast between two opposite things. It may be a synthetic, a blending parallel where the second clause just continues and develops the thought of the first. Or it may be a comparison parallel where you compare one thing to something else and you parallel it that way.

This is most, or all, of what are called the three bodies of Proverbs. The first body by King Solomon (chapters 10-22) is sort of the heart and core of the book. The second body of Proverbs is Proverbs 22:17 through 24:34. They are called "the words of the wise." They were miscellaneous proverbs copied out. And then the third body of Proverbs (Proverbs 25 through 29) is proverbs of Solomon copied out by the men of Hezekiah. All of those use that type of development.

A key word in the book of Proverbs is the word wisdom. This is, really, one of the main terms used. It comes from a word in the Hebrew language that relates to sound judgment. It's a combination of knowledge, understanding and action that are all intertwined, all sort of put together.

Knowledge is a matter of knowing facts. Take, for example, somebody who's gone to college. He's just fresh out with a degree and has a lot of facts, a lot of information. He has a brand new job he's just started. He's never had to put those facts to practical application. But boy, he's taken all kinds of tests and he knew the right answers. He has knowledge.

After he's worked on the job for a while, he may begin to develop a little understanding as to how

you apply that knowledge to practical everyday situations. When he comes fresh out of school, he may have a lot of knowledge but doesn't have a whole lot of understanding. In fact, you can have some people out there who never had that level of education and knowledge, but they have understanding because they have dealt in the practical area of it—of how to make some of these things work. Understanding goes beyond knowledge.

Wisdom combines knowledge and understanding. It adds in a little extra ingredient. On the one hand, you can have somebody who comes out of school with a lot of knowledge. He knows a lot of facts. After he's worked for a while, he has some practical experience. He begins to understand how to apply those facts in practical situations. Then over a period of time, he develops wisdom as to how to do it, when to do it and how to put the whole thing together. It's not only knowing what to do and understanding how to apply it, but also when to apply and how to go about putting it into practice. He has the wisdom that comes with putting the whole thing together.

Wisdom is a very important concept in the book of Proverbs. It combines knowledge and understanding and goes beyond the two.

Another key word in the book of Proverbs is the word instruction. The word "instruction" comes from the Hebrew word "*nuwcar*." It could mean "discipline" because instructions have to do with discipline. Instructions are the means by which our life is disciplined and guided. Proverbs emphasizes the importance of instruction and discipline in our lives. It emphasizes the importance of gaining wisdom. This is really strongly emphasized.

As we come back to the beginning of Proverbs, we notice the purpose of Proverbs to begin with. Proverbs 1:2, "To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding." The starting point is: Why is the book of Proverbs in the Bible? It is so that we can come to have wisdom, plus instruction and discipline in our lives.

Verses 2-4, "To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion—"

There are some things that come out with age and experience. One of the purposes of Proverbs is that it was, specifically, written to give help to young people. It's an important book for all of us. I don't think there are any of us who are

so wise that we can't gain something from Proverbs. But it has particular value for young people because they haven't yet had the amount of lessons of life's experience. Just living life will teach you some of the lessons in Proverbs.

The problem is that if you haven't come to understand some of those things until the end of your life, then you have missed out on a lot of years when you could have done them and been better off. You don't want to end up your life full of regrets saying, 'If I'd known this or that.' Some things we are going to learn by experience, but there's a lot that we can have the "edge" on. It's written here that one of its purposes is to give prudence (KJV, "subtlety") to the simple. The Jewish version translates it "shrewdness," a safeguard against being misled. There's a certain naïve quality to someone who is young and lacks experience in life. There's a certain amount of gullibility that comes in. Proverbs has, as its purpose, to help young people to not be quite so gullible and to guide toward knowledge and discretion.

It shows that in v. 5, "A wise man will hear and increase learning..." A wise man is not a know-it-all. Somebody who thinks he knows everything is somebody who doesn't really know a whole lot because somebody who doesn't think that he has anything left to learn just shows how much he has left to learn. It's like he doesn't even know what he doesn't know. A wise person is somebody who goes through life desiring to continue learning. We can all continue to learn as long as we are alive and think, 'All this we can learn.'

It continues and we are told the starting point for true wisdom.

Verse 7, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." The beginning of wisdom—the starting point—starts with the fear of the Lord. This doesn't mean being scared of God. It's talking about a deep reverence for God. It's the only starting point. If you separate God from knowledge, knowledge becomes an instrument of destruction instead of construction. Look at so much of what we've built up. You know our problems in the world today are not because of a lack of knowledge. We have the ability to blast ourselves off the planet several times over.

"The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." We see that we need to start out really reverencing God. Mr. Herbert Armstrong wanted to have it inscribed on the cornerstone of Ambassador Hall (the main classroom building), "The Word

of God is the Foundation of Knowledge." Knowledge that isn't based on God's Word isn't knowledge. That doesn't say that the Bible contains all knowledge, but it is the foundation on which all other knowledge must be able to stand. The Bible is not written to tell us everything we need to know about the subject of geology, archeology, biology or whatever it may be, but it gives us basic principles. If you lay those aside, you can't understand the rest of it. The Bible deals in principles with every issue and everything.

Verse 8, "My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother." *The key advice (sort of a starting point) in Proverbs focuses on the need of young people to heed their parents' teaching and instruction.* That's an important part. Listen to the instruction and discipline of your father; don't forsake the law of your mother.

That's sort of like a sign I saw the other day, this "takeoff" to young people: "You better hurry up and do all this stuff while you still know all the answers because as you get a little older, you are going to realize how much you don't know." Sometimes it's rather hard to tell somebody who is maybe about sixteen years of age that they don't know quite as much as they think they do. Most of us who have been parents and had children about that age realize that there is a point in a young person's life where they are amazed at how much they know and how little you know. As they get a little older, their perspective sort of changes.

Mr. Herbert Armstrong and others have made statements something to that effect. Mr. Armstrong said he left home and was amazed at how much his father learned from the time he was age sixteen and the time he was age twenty-five. It was amazing how his father went from being one of the dumbest men around, to being the smartest man he ever knew. It was a matter of perspective that came in.

A starting point—a focus in something that is important—is, "Young people hear the instruction of your father, forsake not the law of your mother." Realize that there is a level of experience and a level of just life that has been lived. That's really important and something that young people can really profit from in taking advantage of the things that their parents have learned and gone through.

Proverbs 1:9, "For they [wisdom, instruction, law] will be graceful ornaments on your head, and chains about your neck."

It warns in v. 10, “My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.”

There are two things that it focuses on beginning in Proverbs 1:9 coming down through chapter 2. *It focuses on discretion and understanding.* Discretion and understanding, we are told, will protect a young person from the corrupting influence of the wrong kind of people. It will protect them from men who are corrupt and have upside down values—in other words, those who are lawless or criminally inclined—and immoral, loose women.

There are two areas that young men are warned about. One is getting tangled up with the wrong kind of men—people who are dishonest. This could be involving yourself in everything from the wrong kind of business dealings to just a wild bunch of people who are headed for trouble. *There are two things that young men need to be warned about. First, stay away from the wrong kind of men*—the kind of men who are dishonest, corrupt or wild, men who are not honest and law abiding. Keep away from that bunch because they are going to get you into trouble. *Second, young men need to be warned to stay away from immoral, loose women* because they will get you into trouble, too. That is very much brought out as we come down in Proverbs 1 and 2.

Proverbs 2:1-7, “My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright.”

Verse 11, “Discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep [KJV, “preserve”] you.” This expression of being discreet—of knowing when to do what—has to do with a certain careful, cautious approach. Understanding or discernment is being able to distinguish between what is appropriate and what is not. These things will preserve you.

Verse 12, “To deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things.” –In other words, things that are upside down, things that are contrary to what’s true.

Verses 14-15, “Who rejoice in doing evil, and delight in the perversity of the wicked: whose ways are crooked, and who are devious in their paths.” You have men who are dishonest, people

whose ways are upside down. You may get entangled with the wrong crowd, but knowledge, discretion and understanding will deliver you. It will keep you away from men who are dishonest, men who are not honorable in their intent and in their behavior.

Verses 16-17, “To deliver you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words, who forsakes the companion of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God.” This is someone who is not faithful to her marriage vows and who has turned aside from the teachings of morality that she received.

Verses 18-21, “For her house leads down to death, and her paths to the dead; none who go to her return, nor do they regain the paths of life—so you may walk in the way of goodness, and keep to the paths of righteousness. For the upright will dwell in the land, and the blameless will remain in it.” There’s an emphasis here on discretion, understanding, and protecting young people from corrupting influences.

Can we afford to trust in our own feelings? Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” In what can you trust? For some people, their trust and confidence is in the way they feel. The guide for their life is just their feelings, their emotions—I don’t feel like “this” or “that.” I tell you what, there are times I may not feel like getting up in the morning, and many times you don’t feel like getting up in the morning. There are some people who just go through life, and if they don’t feel like it, they don’t do it. But for those people, life doesn’t seem to go too well for them. Life doesn’t always feel good; doing what we should do doesn’t always feel good, but it is what we need to do.

It says, here, in what we are to put our trust. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart.” What is going to guide you? Don’t lean to your own understanding—the way it seems to me. If what God tells me is different from what I have come up with on my own, who am I going to trust? God says, ‘No, don’t do this. It’s going to hurt you.’ And my buddy over here says, ‘Yeah, go ahead and try it. It won’t hurt.’ Now, in whom do I have the most confidence?

Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.” If you really want God to lead and guide you, He will.

Verse 7, “Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil.” That’s a starting point.

The first key to prosperity that the book of Proverbs gives is right here.

Verses 9-10, “Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the first fruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.” A starting point for getting ahead is putting God first. There are many principles in the book of Proverbs about getting ahead and prospering. There are many principles, and we will notice some of them as we go through. *But the starting point is putting God first; honor Him with the first fruits.*

We are told in vv. 11-12, “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction; for whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.” God corrects His children. Many times circumstances and various things are there to instruct and to chasten us.

Verses 13-16, “Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding; for her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her. Length of days is in her right hand, in her left hand riches and honor.”

It is talking about wisdom and the importance of wisdom. Wisdom, we are told, is more precious than rubies. Wisdom has greater value than all sorts of money and material things because there are a lot of people who have money, but they lack the wisdom to properly live and enjoy life.

Verses 17-18, “Her [speaking of wisdom] ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her.” Wisdom is something that leads to a happy and successful life. It is far more than just an accumulation of money. There are a lot of people who have accumulated a lot of money who have been awfully big failures. They have lived miserable, unhappy lives and have seen a lot of tragedy. Some of the people the world would see as being the most successful have been miserable and have committed suicide.

Look at someone like Elvis Presley or Marilyn Monroe. You would think they had the things that everybody thinks would make them happy. They had fame and fortune. Elvis Presley didn’t have to worry about enough money to buy what he wanted. He lived in a fabulous mansion. He

was famous, popular and all kinds of things. How many people thought Marilyn Monroe was pretty and glamorous? She had all sorts of people after her attention.

You can think of different people, different entertainers—people, that on the surface, had what most people think, ‘If I had that, I’d be happy. If I was famous, popular, beautiful, rich and people liked me, oh, that would be wonderful.’ There were people that had some of those things, and yet you read about their lives in their latter years and they were miserable. They were miserable and unhappy. There’s a lot more to happiness. What they lacked, and what so many people lack, is not money and some of these things. It’s the wisdom of how to properly relate to God and to our fellowman and to be able to live a productive, serving life that involves and is based on wisdom.

We see here the value of wisdom that’s laid out. It’s more precious than any price tag you could put on it. It continues to stress the importance of wisdom through chapter 3.

Verses 21-23, “My son, let them not depart from your eyes—keep sound wisdom and discretion; so they will be life to your soul and grace to your neck. Then you will walk safely in your way, and your foot will not stumble.” It describes the way we walk through life directed by wisdom.

Proverbs 4:1-7, “Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, and give attention to know understanding; for I give you good doctrine: do not forsake my law. When I was my father’s son, tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, he also taught me, and said to me; ‘Let your heart retain my words; keep my commands, and live. Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will keep you. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.’”

Again, this emphasizes wisdom and acquiring wisdom. We are told wisdom is the principal thing. In that sense, focus on getting wisdom; pursue it. Wisdom ultimately comes from God. Who is the wisest Being in the entire universe? God is! The source of wisdom is God. We can go to God for wisdom of what to do, how to do it and when to do it. Wisdom involves all of those things—the knowledge of what, the understanding of how, and the wisdom that puts the two of those together with when. What’s appropriate, how it fits in and when it fits in.

Verses 14-16, “Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on. For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; and their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall.” Unless they get into something, they just can’t get a good night’s rest. It says don’t get tangled up in that.

Verse 19, “The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.”

Verse 24, “Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you.” We are told something here about our mouth. We are told to put away the deceitful mouth and the perverse lips—in other words, lies, falsification of the truth and evil slanderous words. Get rid of the things that we say that are hurtful, harmful and false, things that are going to stir up and create trouble.

Proverbs 5:1-6, “My son, pay attention to my wisdom; lend your ear to my understanding, that you may preserve discretion, and that your lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps lay hold of hell. Lest you ponder her path of life—her ways are unstable; you do not know them.”

Verses 8-11, “Remove your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your honor to others, and your years to the cruel one; lest aliens be filled with your wealth, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner; and you mourn at last, when your flesh and your body are consumed.”

As you go through, it gives very practical things and describes, in a poetic way, instructions to a young man to stay away from loose, immoral women. It talks about how they may seem so sweet and pretty and “this” and “that,” but in the end, she is bitter as wormwood and sharp as a two-edged sword. The end of it is bitter, and it’s going to hurt.

Verse 8, “Remove your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house.” Get away. Don’t even get close. Stay away from this kind of person.

What are the consequences if you don’t?

Verse 9, “Lest you give your honor to others [One of the things that will happen is that you’ll harm your reputation; it will hurt your reputation.], and your years to the cruel one.” A lot of people have become entangled in unhappy, miserable marriages. They’ve become entangled

in things, and some of the years that should have been their young and happy years, they have been tangled up with some real hurt and real pain.

Verse 10, “Lest aliens be filled with your wealth, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner.” One of the consequences, when people get tangled up in immorality, is that they may have children out of wedlock which winds up being costly or they wind up marrying and divorcing. Strangers are ultimately filled with their wealth. They are working, and it’s all going out—everything from child support payments to “whatever.”

There are several problems. One is about reputation. It also talks about the years of young adulthood (the twenties and thirties). Instead of years of pleasantness and happiness, it is years that you are in a cruel, unhappy situation. And it talks about the economic problems.

Verse 11, “And you mourn at last, when your flesh and your body are consumed.” Venereal disease is not a new thing. It was around in Solomon’s day. It’s talking about diseases you can get. AIDS, of course, is quite well known at this point in time, but there have been all sorts of different ones around. When some of these things happen, then you will regret it.

Verse 15, the point is, “Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well.” That’s not talking about the fact that you shouldn’t ask somebody for a drink of water if you’re at a neighbor’s house. It is a poetic description of the fact that a husband and wife should enjoy one another and be faithful to one another. That’s what it’s talking about.

Verses 15-17, “Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well. Should your fountains disperse abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be only your own, and not for strangers with you.” This is talking about your children.

Verse 18, “Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth.” This is a very poetic description of the importance of being faithful—one man and one woman loving one another, saving themselves for one another, and being faithful to one another. It’s a very important point.

We see that vv. 3-4 make the contrast—how an immoral woman might appear beautiful and desirable, but the end result is very bitter and very painful.

Verse 15 says a man should find contentment with his lawful wife and not get tangled up pursuing others. This is a very important section.

Have you noticed? When he starts talking about wisdom, what does he start talking about?

If you go through this section of Proverbs, you will find that most of Proverbs 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, when he is focusing on wisdom, he spends an awful lot of time talking about money and sex. Those have been the things that have been the downfall for an awful lot of people. They've become tangled up in dishonest schemes and things that were not honest and honorable.

We have some big "high rollers" who are spending their time in jail right now. I think Charles Keating just got released from jail today. He was the one that was behind some of the big savings and loan crisis. He got several congressmen and senators who had been catching a little heat, too.

On the one hand, people get tangled up in things that they shouldn't, in terms of money. And another thing has to do with morality and the distinction there. These are areas that really tie into wisdom.

In chapters 4 and 5, we saw the emphasis on sex. Now in chapter 6 we get back to money again.

Proverbs 6:1-2, "My son, if you become surety for your friend, if you have shaken hands in pledge for a stranger, you are snared by the words of your own mouth." You better go humble yourself and see if you can get out of it (v. 3). This is talking about people who are quick to obligate themselves for someone else's debt—being surety and co-signing. Boy, you can get yourself into a heap of trouble there.

Verses 6-9, "Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest. How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep?"

Here, we are talking about money and management. Go to the ant. Learn something from the ant. What ways of the ant can you consider to be wise? Well, the ant does what it is supposed to do, when it is supposed to do it. There's not another little ant out there cracking a whip saying, 'Hurry up.' They don't have a guide, an overseer or ruler. There's not one little ant that's making the other little ants do it. Ants, by nature, do what they are supposed to do. They provide their food in the summer and gather their food in the harvest. They take advantage of the opportunity. When are you going to gather your food? After it is all rotted? It's pointing out the ant as an example of diligence.

There were warnings earlier about avoiding the person who is dishonest and corrupt and about

entangling ourselves in things. Now, it says there are some wise things to do. One is to be diligent. Look at the ant. The ant does what it is supposed to do, when it is supposed to do it, and it takes advantage of and uses opportunity. That's an important lesson of managing our affairs. That's what the ant is doing. He is taking advantage of opportunity. When the opportunity presents itself, use it because opportunity is here and then it's gone. Opportunity doesn't just stay.

Verse 9 is talking about the person who is lazy and just kind of lies around. They never get up and do what they are supposed to do.

Verses 10-11, "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep—so shall your poverty come on you like a robber, and your need like an armed man." It says that if you're lazy and just lie around and you don't get up and work and do what you should do, you are going to find yourself caught by surprise with a lot of problems.

Verses 16-19, "These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren."

Here are things that God absolutely hates. It focuses in on an attitude of pride. We can convey outwardly the way we think and feel inwardly. It starts out by talking about a proud look. A proud look is reflective of a proud heart. God hates that. He hates a lying tongue—somebody that's dishonest, corrupt and harms and hurts innocent people. God hates a heart that devises wicked imagination—up to things they shouldn't be. He that sows discord among brethren is something God hates. God does not value and appreciate discord. He values harmony. We should desire to live in peace. We are not to go out and try to stir up trouble and get people mad at one another. We are not to spread rumors and gossip that serve to agitate and stir up people to where we turn people against one another. That's not God's way.

Psalms 133:1, he says, "...how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." One of the things God hates is sowing discord among brethren—stirring people up and spreading things that hurt and separate and cause problems.

Proverbs 6:20-23, "My son, keep your father's command, and do not forsake the law of your mother. Bind them continually upon your heart; tie them around your neck. When you roam, they

will lead you; when you sleep, they will keep you; and when you awake, they will speak with you. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life." It illuminates the way we should travel through life.

Verses 24-29, "To keep you from the evil woman, from the flattering tongue of a seductress. Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, nor let her allure you with her eyelids. For by means of a harlot a man is reduced to a crust of bread; and an adulteress will prey upon his precious life. Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; whoever touches her shall not be innocent."

Verse 32, "Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he who does so destroys his own soul." It's talking about the problems and consequences that result. These are some very important principles that are brought out. It says he who commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding. He's not considering the end result of his conduct, which is the destruction of everything that's really important. That's a lack of understanding because if you really think it through, you realize that it just doesn't make sense. It's just not something that is going to be good.

Proverbs 7:1-7, "My son, keep my words, and treasure my commands within you. Keep my commands and live, and my law as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister,' and call understanding your nearest kin, that they may keep you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words. For at the window of my house I looked through my lattice, and saw among the simple, I perceived among the youths, a young man devoid of understanding."

Here's a young man who is not too bright, walking down the street. It describes this in a poetic fashion.

Verses 8-18, "Passing along the street near her corner; and he took the path to her house in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night. And there a woman met him, with the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart. She was loud and rebellious; her feet would not stay at home. At times she was outside, at times in the open square, lurking at every corner. So she caught him and kissed him; with an impudent face she said to him: 'I have peace offerings with me; today I have paid my vows. So I came out to

meet you, diligently to seek your face, and I have found you. I have spread my bed with tapestry, colored coverings of Egyptian linen. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with love."

Verses 21-22, "With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, with her flattering lips she seduced him. Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks." It's talking about the problems that come. A harlot is pictured, this immoral woman.

Notice several things about her. One, she is described with the attire of a harlot, "And there a woman met him with the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart." She is described as dressing in a seductive way, dressing in a way that does not reflect decency and modesty.

Sometimes you drive down the street in certain areas of town and see somebody standing there. You don't have to give a whole lot of guesses as to what is their trade. It's pretty obvious just by the way they are dressed. Unfortunately, sometimes this sort of appearance gets copied and shouldn't be. We should be conscious of that and teach our young girls to be conscious of that. You don't want to look like a streetwalker. You just don't! That is nothing that is good and nothing that is to be copied.

Yet there's certain ways of looking, ways of dress and appearance that just sort of stands out that way. It describes that she does not reflect decency and modesty in the way that she dresses and grooms herself.

Then it says she is loud and stubborn. She is pictured as dressing in a seductive way and is loud, wild, rebellious and stubborn. She's a "gad-about." She's the very opposite of the picture of a godly woman. In Proverbs 7:9-11, you see this picture.

Now, compare that with I Peter 3:2-6, "when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your beauty be that outward adorning of arranging the hair, of wearing gold, or of putting on fine apparel; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible ornament of a gently and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham...." The very opposite is described here.

Titus 2:3-5, "the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given

to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”

That’s quite a contrast to someone who has on the attire of a harlot, is loud and stubborn, out running the streets and never staying home. It’s sort of like this fiasco—this soap opera—that was played out on television by way of a trial down in Florida several weeks ago. You remember the one involving Senator Kennedy’s nephew and this woman that he picked up at a bar. I don’t have to know all the details, but I can just tell you this—you won’t find the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 hanging out in a bar at two or three o’clock in the morning, picking up some strange man and going home with him. That’s just not where you go to look if you are looking for the virtuous woman. Of course, she wasn’t looking for the virtuous man either. They each sort of found what they were looking for, and then somewhere along the line, a disagreement set in.

There are places that you just don’t go if you are not looking for trouble. And you don’t have to be the smartest fellow to ever “come down the pipe” to figure out the caliber of people that hang around in these places at some sort of “oddball” hour. Nobody is up to any good when they are out hanging around some joint, boozing it up in the wee hours of the morning. There’s just nothing constructive and good going on. Decent people are home in bed. The ones that are hanging around the bars are looking for trouble, and chances are they are going to find it. It may not be the trouble they wanted, but that’s just the way it is. There’s a lot of grief and trouble that comes.

If we are where we need to be, doing what we should do, we can save ourselves a lot of grief. I daresay both of them probably look back on that and have cause to regret what they got into that night. I suspect Kennedy’s nephew and the woman each paid a heavy price in some of those ways. That’s an example that’s gotten a lot of publicity because it involves someone who’s a well-known public figure. But believe me—that kind of thing happens on a regular basis involving people that aren’t famous, so it never really makes the news. That kind of thing happens. And it happens a lot. People’s lives are messed up and unhappy.

That’s one of the things Proverbs says. It’s advice to young people that it’s not a smart thing

to do. That’s not going to make you happy. That’s not going to lead to real satisfaction in life. It’s going to lead to a lot of grief and a lot of pain.

Verse 22, the end result for the young man who goes that path, “Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks.” They don’t know what they are getting into until they are there. An ox isn’t very smart. He goes right into the slaughter pen and doesn’t know what is going on until it’s too late. A cow is just not an animal that has a lot of foresight. That’s what it is comparing here. It’s comparing a lack of foresight. People get into something and don’t realize what they are into until it’s too late to get out. It says here that this kind of young man just sort of gets into something and doesn’t figure out what’s going to happen until it’s too late.

Verse 23, “Till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, he did not know it would take his life.” It’s talking about something going into a trap. It’s making the comparison that when people get into this kind of mess, they didn’t sit down and think it through.

I don’t think that William Kennedy Smith sat down and thought, ‘What I would really like is to find myself in court (dragged out for weeks and months), have all this negative publicity and go through the trauma of all this stuff.’ It was a matter that he didn’t think. And his uncle, who should have had at least a little bit of experience, should have helped him think. He didn’t think either. I’m sure they all have had a chance to do a little more thinking. Now, whether they have learned anything from it or not, I don’t know. But again, they are not unique. We know about them because they are famous. They have a famous name, so their picture is plastered all over the paper. But all kinds of people, who are just common everyday people, have done some of the same dumb things and have wound up with a lot of problems, a lot of pain, heartache and hurt as a result of some of these things. So, it’s a warning.

Proverbs 8:1-3, “Does not wisdom cry out, and understanding lift up her voice? She takes her stand on the top of the high hill, beside the way, where the paths meet. She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city, at the entrance of the doors.”

Verse 13, “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.” What is the fear of God? The fear of God is to hate evil. If you really stand in awe and reverence of God, if you are

really impressed with God, then you hate evil. It's sort of a contrast. If we are impressed with God, we hate evil because evil is the opposite of what God is. If I am impressed with someone, I want to be like him. And the things that are the opposite of them, I hate. The fear of God is to hate evil. To really stand in awe of God, we hate evil.

It mentions specifically pride, arrogance, the evil way and a perverse mouth. A perverse mouth means a mouth that is full of a lot of evil, ugly and dishonest things. We don't like that.

It speaks here of wisdom. In some of these cases, wisdom is personified. Wisdom is described as though it were a person. It goes through and talks about the importance and the beauty of wisdom.

Verses 33-36, "Hear wisdom and be wise, and do not disdain it. Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favor from the Lord; but he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; all those who hate me love death."

It's speaking of wisdom. If you find wisdom, you find life and obtain favor with the Lord. If you sin against wisdom, you are just hurting and wronging yourself and really loving death. When you find wisdom, it's like finding life. It leads to good results here and now and on into the future.

Proverbs 9:1, "Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars."

Verses 4-6, "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here! As for him who lacks understanding, she says to him, 'Come; eat of my bread and drink of the wine which I have mixed. Forsake foolishness and live, and go in the way of understanding.'" It's inviting the young person and says, 'Come in, sit down and eat with me.' This is speaking of wisdom. "Forsake foolishness and live."

Verses 7-9, "He who reproves a scoffer gets shame for himself, and he who rebukes a wicked man gets himself a blemish [KJV, "blot"]. Do not reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you; rebuke a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning."

We see quite a contrast here. If you correct or give instruction to the scorner or the wicked person, they just get mad. They don't like you telling them that they are wrong. So, on the one hand, we have people who get mad over any sort of correction or instruction. Boy, you have a blot in their book. They have it in for you now. If you don't agree with them on everything or if you

point out and show them where they are wrong, they have it in for you.

Now that's quite a contrast because if you rebuke a wise man, he will love you. Why? Because he appreciates the fact that he's now smarter than he was before. If I am a wise man and you tell me something I didn't know, I am going to appreciate that. I am glad you told me because now I know more than I did. The guy who is the "know-it-all," you can't tell them anything. You try to tell them something and they just get mad. That's no way to be. If you give instruction to a wise man, he will be yet wiser. He's going to appreciate it. A wise person appreciates the value of learning. He knows that he doesn't know it all.

God says if you find wisdom, you find life and obtain favor of the Lord (Proverbs 8:35). That's something to desire and have. We have to desire to grow in that. And there's quite a contrast between correcting a wise person and correcting a foolish person.

Verses 13-18, "A foolish woman is clamorous; she is simple, and knows nothing. For she sits at the door of her house, on a seat by the highest places of the city, to call to those who pass by, who go straight on their way: whoever is simple, let him turn in here; and as for him who lacks understanding, she says to him, 'stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.' But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of hell."

So, there's a contrast. There's an allure, attractiveness to the forbidden. "Stolen waters are sweet."—Illicit sex and other things, also. "...to enjoy the passing (temporary) pleasure of sin" (Hebrew 11:25). There's a certain allure, a certain attraction to these things that are forbidden. But the end result of that lifestyle is total destruction. There's nothing good that is going to come from that sort of thing.

It's interesting. The things that Solomon really focuses in on are wisdom, knowledge and understanding. He focuses on the importance of a young person gaining knowledge and wisdom. What are the things that he talks about? He talks about how important it is to listen and be receptive to correction and instruction—starting with your parents. Parents have experience of life, plus there isn't anybody a young person is going to have in his life that loves him and cares about his future more than the parents. So, here's somebody who has experience in life and who has your best interest at heart.

This section emphasizes to listen and be receptive to correction and instruction. It

emphasizes to have a thirst for knowledge, for learning and growing in what you know. There are many warnings and many descriptions about the contrast between moral and immoral behavior and where it leads. This is one of the most important things for young people to be warned about. Then there's a lot of instruction about handling finances and material things, starting off with honoring God with the first fruits—putting God first. Then it goes through and talks about getting tangled up with people who are crooked and dishonest and how they are going to come to no good. We are told to be diligent. Go to the ant. Learn how to think, to be wise by being careful, working hard and doing what you should do, when you should do it.

There are several basic things that have to do with life and the way that we handle life. There is an emphasis on wisdom, how we gain it and—what God has put in this important section in the book of Proverbs (these first nine chapters)—how to apply it in our lives.

Hopefully, in this particular section of Proverbs that we have gone through this evening, you have gotten a little bit of insight into some of the things that are really important. Proverbs is a good section to go over, to study and to talk about with our children. Sometimes it helps to get another translation. Perhaps a simple English translation sort of helps us to really get out of these proverbs what God has packed in because there's an awful lot of life and experience that is packed into this section.

Next time we are going to cover more of Proverbs beginning with chapter 10 through most of chapter 22.

Bible Study # 81 Questions

SURVEY OF THE WRITINGS SERIES

Proverbs 1—9

1. What is the starting point for true wisdom?
2. What key advice is first focused on in the book of Proverbs?
3. What are we told in Proverbs 2 are two things that discretion and understanding will keep young people back from?
4. Is it safe to trust in your own feelings?
5. What is the first key to prosperity that the book of Proverbs gives?
6. What are we told in Proverbs 3 is more precious than rubies?
7. According to Proverbs 3, what will wisdom and discretion do for a young man?
8. What are we warned concerning our mouth in Proverbs 4?
9. Contrast the way a loose woman seems at first with the end results.
10. Explain Proverbs 5:15.
11. What advice are we given in Proverbs 6 about obligating ourselves for someone else's debts?
12. What can we learn from the ant?
13. To what are God's commandments and laws compared?
14. What does God tell us about one who commits adultery in Proverbs 6?
15. How is the harlot described in Proverbs 7?
16. What kind of end result is described for the young man that goes in to the harlot?
17. What is the fear of God?
18. What does a person obtain when he finds wisdom?
19. What is the difference between correcting a wise person and one who is foolish?
20. Explain Proverbs 9:17.

Bible Study # 82
January 28, 1992
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Proverbs 10—22:16

We are going through this series on the Writings and, particularly, here in the book of Proverbs. This evening we **are covering Proverbs 10 through 22:16, the central and main section of the book.**

As we started in the book of Proverbs, we found that the first nine chapters constitute a preface to the central and main section of the book. One of the things we noticed, as we went through the beginning part, is that most of the first nine chapters are in more of a discourse style. It's a little different than what we normally think of as a Proverb. A Proverb is usually a short one-sentence, concise, pithy statement that sort of sums up information. It makes a very concise, pithy statement usually by drawing some sort of contrast or comparison. The proverbs in this section are primarily proverbs as we normally think of them.

It opens in Proverbs 10:1, "The proverbs of Solomon...."

We noted at the beginning that the book of Proverbs divides into seven sections. The introduction, the first few verses, is the first section. The second section is a discourse on wisdom. Then the third section opens in Proverbs 10:1, "The proverbs of Solomon...."

There are three bodies of Proverbs. This third section (Proverbs 10 through 22:16) is the first body of Proverbs.

Proverbs 22:17, "Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise...." That begins the second body of Proverbs and continues down until the end of chapter 24.

We pick up the third body of Proverbs in Proverbs 25:1, "These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied." There were two bodies of Proverbs that were proverbs of Solomon, and there were a collection of sayings of the wise ones (the sophreim), the wise men of Israel. Solomon wrote the bulk of it. Some of them were collections of other wise sayings. Then a couple of centuries later, in the time of Hezekiah, there were proverbs of Solomon that had not been included in the book, that the men of Hezekiah copied out and added to the book of Proverbs. So, you wind up with these three bodies of Proverbs that we would describe as the third, fourth and fifth sections of the book.

The sixth sections would be chapter 30, the prophecy of Agur, and the seventh section, chapter 31, the prophecy of Lemuel, which is what we primarily term the discourse on the virtuous woman.

We are going through what is called the first body of Proverbs this evening. They are concise statements that express wise rules of conduct. There are warnings and lessons drawn from experience, and there is moral reflection. There isn't any particular systematic order or logical sequence that is followed because like the very phases of human life for which they offer guidance, the proverbs are of a miscellaneous character. They are arranged in miscellaneous order, just as we go through life and encounter experiences in miscellaneous order.

The book of Proverbs was not so much directed at the wise that could appreciate the loftier motives of virtuous conduct, but at the simple that needed the lesson that, in that sense, honesty is the best policy. So, many times the practical aspect of life is brought out here.

Proverbs 10:3, "The Lord will not allow the righteous soul to famish, but He casts away the desire of the wicked." We have a contrast between what God doesn't allow and what He does.

Verse 4, "He who deals with a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes one rich."

Verse 5, "He who gathers in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame."

If you look right here, there are three keys to prosperity that are brought out. God does not allow the soul of the righteous to famish. *The first key to prosperity is righteousness.* That's one of the reasons we've got economic problems as a nation. The solution to our economic problems is right here in Proverbs 10:3, 4 and 5. We can sit down and write President Bush a letter and tell him what he didn't include in his state of the union address. We could tell him what would solve all of the economic problems. The first thing is righteousness. We don't have a whole lot of that in this country, do we? That's a problem. Righteousness is the first key to prosperity.

Verse 4, "He becomes poor that deals with a slack hand, but the hand of the diligent makes rich." *The second key to prosperity is diligence, not being careless, not being lazy, but diligent.* Diligence carries the connotation of not only of hard work but also of being careful. Being slack, in a sense, means carelessness. It goes beyond

somebody who is lazy. It's somebody who is just careless with what they do. They are sloppy in their workmanship. So, you have righteousness and diligence.

Verse 5 brings out the third key and that is taking advantage of opportunity. "He that gathers in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame." If you gather in the summer, you are a wise son. Why? –Because that is when the crops are coming in. If you are sleeping through the harvest, if you don't take advantage of the opportunity when it presents itself, it will pass.

Any farmer knows that you harvest when the crop's coming in. We can't say we don't feel like it this week; we'll wait till next week. You're not going to eat—plainly and simply. The crop passes its peak. It begins to decay and deteriorate and the opportunity is no longer there. Any farmer knows you pick it when it's there. You have to go get it when it's ready.

That's a lesson of life and it applies to everyone. You don't have to be a farmer for that to work for you. You have to take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves because they don't continue forever. Here you have three keys. If you look at it, would you say that this would explain a lot of problems in terms of the American economics: 1) a lack of righteousness, 2) a lack of diligent workmanship and 3) not taking advantage of opportunity, not having an entrepreneurial spirit, not stepping out and seizing the moment.

It's amazing and very simple. It's buried right here. Really, what you have is important keys to life. It certainly would make a vast difference in this country if just these three keys were applied. There's an awful lot that is packed in here, an awful lot of wisdom. Solomon wrote it three thousand years ago; here we are three thousand years later and still haven't figured out things that we have access to right here.

Verse 8, "The wise in heart will receive commands, but a prating fool [a fool of lips] will fall." One characteristic of someone who is wise is that they will listen. A fool is just mouthing off. He's sounding off and is going to fall flat on his face. Nobody can tell him anything. He never stops talking long enough to listen. "The wise in heart will receive commands."

They will listen. You can give them instruction. Someone who is wise is not a "know-it-all." When you run into someone who thinks he knows everything, the one thing you can be sure of is he doesn't. One of the things he doesn't know is that he doesn't know everything.

Someone like that is headed for trouble. We can all save ourselves a lot of trouble if we listen to what somebody else has to say.

Let's notice some admonitions about the tongue. Verse 11, "The mouth of the righteous is a well of life, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked." We see some things right here about the use of the tongue, things that we should and shouldn't say.

Verse 12, "Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins."

Verse 13, "Wisdom is found on the lips of him who has understanding, but a rod is for the back of him who is devoid of understanding."

Verse 18, "Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool."

Verse 19, "In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise."

Verse 20, "The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is worth little."

Verse 21, "The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of wisdom."

Verse 31, "The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue will be cut out."

Verse 32, "The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked what is perverse."

There are several basic admonitions about the tongue. There is an awful lot packed in here about the tongue.

Proverbs 11:1, "A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is His delight." God is concerned with fairness and equity in our relationships and dealings, and certainly in our business dealings. God is concerned that we deal with one another in a fair and equitable way.

Verse 4, "Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death."

When the day of God's wrath comes, when the day of the Lord comes, we read in Isaiah (Isaiah 2:18-21) about people casting their gold to the moles and the bats because it is not able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath. "Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death." That's the key. We have to get our priorities straight.

Verse 13, "A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter." There's a time to hold our peace. Some people just go around telling everything they know and a lot they don't know. But someone who is of a faithful spirit, someone who really has some integrity and is a faithful friend, is not going to spread a lot of rumors and gossip.

We have some things about wise counsel.

Verse 14, “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.” It shows the wisdom of a multitude of wise counsel. In Proverbs 12:5, it shows the importance of the source of the counsel. It is not just counsel; it is wise counsel.

Proverbs 12:5, “The thoughts of the righteous are right, but the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.” You don’t want the counsel of the wicked. “...in the multitude of counselors there is safety,” but you want wise counselors and right counselors. When it says, “in the multitude of counselors there is safety,” that is talking about the fact that you get input from several different people, and different ones are going to notice different things. You can gain some insight.

This verse can sometimes be misapplied by people who go from one person to another, sort of telling their side of the story until they get the story right, and then finds someone who will agree with him. That’s not what it means to have a multitude of counselors. Normally, the context of a multitude of counselors, you have several that you are talking to at the same time. They are all aware of the same information and there’s room for an interchange of information. There are insights that different ones have, and they stimulate one another.

Verse 15, “He who is surety for a stranger will suffer for it, but one who hates being surety is secure.” It’s talking about somebody obligating themselves for other’s debts.

Verse 16, “A gracious woman retains honor, but ruthless men retain riches.”

Verse 17, “The merciful man does good for his own soul, but he who is cruel troubles his own flesh.”

Proverbs 12:10, “A righteous man regards the life of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.” Mercy and kindness is an attribute of character. A righteous man regards the life of his animal. He is not going to mistreat even a dumb animal. It reveals something about the character of a person. When you find somebody who has a streak of cruelty in them—if they are cruel and uncaring and mistreat a dog or a horse or something like that—they will turn around and mistreat people, too. They have that lack of any sense of responsibility or have that lack of kindness. “A righteous man regards the life of his animal....” He is going to make sure that it’s taken care of. He will make sure that it is fed and watered and is not going to mistreat it. That is, in one sense, a minor point, but it is sort

of an interesting observation in terms of human character.

There are a number of things that we find concerning the use of the tongue.

Verse 13, “The wicked is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous will come through trouble.”

Verse 15, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.” This is an important point. It would make a good Bible study to go through the book of Proverbs and look up the word “fool” in a concordance. Then go through every place in Proverbs that mentions “fool” to see what one is because that’s a good list of things not to be. One characteristic of a fool is that he is right in his own eyes. You can never tell him anything.

“He who heeds counsel is wise.” Over and over, Proverbs emphasizes the importance of this principle. “Right in his own eyes”—this know-it-all-mentality or this sort of thing where somebody isolates himself and has his own mind made up and won’t listen to anybody else. “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.” –A very important principle.

Verse 17, “He who speaks truth declares righteousness, but a false witness, deceit.”

Verse 18, “There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health.”

Verse 19, “The truthful lip shall be established forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment.” We see a contrast here.

Proverbs 13:3, “He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.” We find that there is a way that the tongue can be used that is of value and leads to life and a wrong use that leads to destruction.

We also see a lot of keys in Proverbs 12 and 13. In fact, let’s notice, and we will find **seven keys to sound financial management** given in Proverbs 12 and 13.

Proverbs 12:11, “He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread, but he who follows frivolity [KJV, “vain persons”] is devoid of understanding.” The first thing we see is working steadily at a job contrasted to following after the “high rollers”—the people who have some sort of get-rich-quick scheme. The first key to prosperity is just **working hard and steadily**. “...he who follows frivolity [vain persons] is devoid of understanding.” You always have somebody coming down, and he has some big get-rich-quick scheme. Well, if he was going to

get rich that quick, why hasn't he already done it? Why isn't he living on easy street?

This reminds me. I believe it was in the parking lot at Wal-Mart. We came back to the car and there were these cards that were up on the windshield. They were trying to interest you to call this telephone number. It said, "Would you like to earn \$10,000 a month?" The way the card was written out, they had the number to fill in. It was a cheaply produced thing to begin with. This sort of disreputable-looking guy was going around the parking lot and was sticking these cards on the windshields. Obviously, he wasn't earning \$10,000 a month or anything close to it. He probably hadn't earned \$10,000 in the last year. He was doing this instead of just sticking with something and being productive.

Proverbs 12:24, "The hand of the diligent will rule, but the slothful will be put to forced labor." A second key is **diligence**; working steadily at a sensible job and being diligent.

Verse 27, "The slothful man does not roast what he took in hunting, but diligence is man's precious possession." It warns us about being wasteful. It shows the importance of **utilizing what you have and not letting it waste**. So, here's the third key.

The fourth key is in Proverbs 13:4, "The soul of a sluggard desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich." Here we have a contrast between a lazy dreamer and a **diligent doer**. Some people always have these big ideas, but they never really get down to it.

The fifth key is v. 11, "Wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished, but he who gathers by labor will increase." It's sort of another way of saying, "**easy come; easy go**." It's the way we go about it.

Verse 18, "Poverty and shame will come to him who disdains correction, but he who regards reproof will be honored." A very important sixth key to success is **taking correction and instruction**.

The seventh key is in v. 23, "Much food is in the fallow ground of the poor, and for lack of justice there is waste [KJV, "is destroyed for want of judgment"]." **-Waste and lack of good management skills**. Lack of judgment is often a major cause of poverty. It's not that there wasn't anything, but it's destroyed for lack of judgment. The analogy would be like a farmer who has a pretty good harvest but doesn't properly store it. He was careless and it rotted and decayed. He didn't get out and pull out the bad ones, so pretty soon the decay spread through the whole pile. The whole bunch of potatoes or apples or

whatever, began to decay because he was not diligent in the way that he did it. It was destroyed for lack of judgment.

We see a number of basic, very commonsense principles: working steadily at an occupation, being diligent, utilizing what you have, not letting it waste, not being a lazy dreamer, being a diligent doer, not having an "easy-come, easy-go" approach, being able to take correction and instruction, being careful and managing well, trying to use good judgment with what we have. Let's notice a couple of verses in Proverbs 13 that make an interesting contrast.

Proverbs 13:12, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life."

Verse 19, "A desire accomplished is sweet to the soul, but it is an abomination to fools to depart from evil."

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick" is quite a contrast with "a desire accomplished." Frustration is perhaps the greatest cause and ultimately the root of a lot of anger, rage and depression, as well. At the root of those, you usually find frustration.

Frustration is the opposite of what is described in v. 19, "The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul." People can waste their energies on things that they don't have control over. People can waste a lot of time, effort and energy on trying to change somebody else. They get their hopes up, and those hopes keep getting dashed down. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." Your hope has to be based on reality; otherwise, you are setting yourself up to stay upset and heartsick all the time.

This is something that often happens. For instance, this is part of the emotional and psychological toll that is taken in an alcoholic family. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." Promises are made over and over. 'I won't do it again; next time will be different,' and there isn't any solid basis for having that hope. Unrealistic hopes are gotten up and they are continually deferred—they are continually put off. Hope is deferred.

The key is: "The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul." We have to set our goals. We have to focus our energy and our attention on the things we can do something about—not dissipate our energy and our effort in things we don't have control over. Because if you don't have any control over it, it doesn't matter how hard you strain and how much effort you put out, you can't do it. There's a great deal of peace that comes from recognizing and accepting our limits

and turning it over to God because in turning loose of the things that we don't have power over and concentrating our energy and our effort on what we do have some power over, then we can have the desire accomplished. We can set a goal and achieve it; that's sweet to the soul.

Verse 20, "He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed." The people we associate with and whom we spend our time with is a matter of importance. But you can carry it down to entertainment—the television shows we watch and the books we read—because, in that sense, it is something we are spending time (sometimes hours) with. Being a constant companion of fools (the things that we spend our time taking into our mind) will affect us in a negative way. "He who walks with wise men will be wise."

There is an important principle on childrearing in v. 24, "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly [KJV, "early"]." This is an important principle.

Proverbs 14:1, "Every wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands." A woman, by her actions, has the ability to contribute very, very much to the strength and stability of the home or to pluck it down and tear it up. There's an awful lot that can be done. This is a big part of the difference between a wise woman and a foolish woman.

Verse 7, "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when you do not perceive in him the lips of knowledge." When you figure out that somebody has nothing of value to contribute, don't hang around with that person because ultimately the company we keep is pretty important. That is a principle that's been recognized for a long time. The company we keep is of a great deal of importance because it rubs off on us and affects us.

What is a fool? One of the definitions is given here in Proverbs 14:9, "Fools mock at sin, but among the upright there is favor." In other words, a fool is someone who takes sin lightly, who considers sin a joke. God says that's a fool—somebody that has an attitude that treats sin as a joke. God says that person is a fool.

Verse 12, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." There are a lot of things that seem right. We can't afford to follow our own feelings. "There is a way which seems right unto a man." A lot of times people get themselves into problems because they follow the way that seems right to them. If you can't follow the way that seems right to you,

then what can you follow? You follow the way that God defines as right.

There's an old country song, "How can something that feels so right be so wrong." Well, the way that it can be wrong is because, "There's a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." That's how something can feel right and be wrong. It's a matter of what we are going to follow.

Everybody follows something. We follow our own feelings and emotions, the opinions of other people around us, the crowd or we follow God's Word. Everybody follows something, and the only sure guide is the Word of God because God knows. If you follow God, He's not going to mess you up. He just won't do that. But we can.

"The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it" (Jeremiah 17:9)? The heart is deceitful. We kid ourselves. That's what it means. The primary ingredient of human nature is self-deceit. We get tangled up in things and it's hard to be honest with ourselves about what we are doing or why we are doing it.

Have you ever noticed that if you really want to do something, you can find a thousand reasons as to why it's a good idea; if you don't want to do something, you can find all kind of excuses as to why you can't, why you shouldn't and why it probably won't work. We start out, but just because of our feelings, we don't want to go.

I was talking with someone on the Sabbath, and they mentioned not having been here the previous week. They said, "Well, every time I started to go outside it was raining." Yes, it was. I noticed that when I left on the way over to services and I noticed it all the way back home. Yes, I noticed the same thing. It surely was. The point is that if you want to do something, you do it. You find a way to do it. You get an umbrella or if you don't have an umbrella, you put a newspaper over your head. If you don't do that, well, just get wet and you'll probably dry off. You are not sugar or salt and you are probably not going to melt right there in the driveway. If there were something that you really wanted to do, would a little bit of rain keep you from doing it?

The point is that we kid ourselves a lot of times about our motives. We kid ourselves about what we are doing and why we are doing it. It's an important principle to realize that, "There's a way that seems right to a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death."

Verse 23, "In all labor there is profit, but idle chatter leads only to poverty." You have been

around people who are always sounding off about what they are going to do. They have these great plans and are going to do this or that, but they never do any of them. “In all labor there is profit.” If you just find a job and stick to it, you can make some headway. But do you spend all your time standing around talking about this big deal, that big deal and this other thing? You have all these big plans, but you never actually do anything. It doesn’t matter what you do, specifically, in terms of a job. “In all labor there’s profit.” If you just get out there and work, you can make a living doing a whole lot of things. But you are not going to make a living just standing around shooting your mouth off about all these big plans and big ideas that never get off the drawing board.

Proverbs 14:26, “In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge.” It’s sort of an interesting tie in—“...a place of refuge [a place of safety]...” and, “In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence....”

Verse 27, “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to avoid the snares of death.”

Verse 29, “He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive [KJV, “of hasty spirit”] exalts folly.” If you go “flying off the handle,” losing your temper, you are just heading for trouble. If you are slow to wrath and just hold your temper, you are showing some understanding.

Verse 30, “A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones.” It can make a big difference.

Verse 31, “He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, but he who honors Him has mercy on the needy.” If we are really conscious of the fact that we are accountable to God, then it’s going to carry through in the way we treat our neighbor. You are not going to take advantage of somebody because you can. If we really have the fear of God, we understand that we are accountable for what we do. It doesn’t matter how much power we have; if we have the fear of God, we realize that we are accountable for what we do and the way we treat everybody and everything. There is a sense of responsibility and accountability; we are not going to take advantage of somebody. We wouldn’t cheat somebody or mistreat somebody because we know that we are ultimately accountable to God.

Verse 34, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” This is a very important concept that this nation needs to understand and doesn’t. Righteousness is what

exalts a nation. Sin is a reproach to any people, and that’s the situation that we find that is so rampant in our society.

Proverbs 15:1, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” That is a very important key to avoiding strife and contention.

Verse 13, “A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.”

Proverbs 16:2, “All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirits.” People think that their ways are clean in their own eyes. People get really defensive about what they are doing and defend that, but God weighs the spirits.

Verse 3, “Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established.”

Verse 6, “In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity [KJV, “By mercy and truth iniquity is purged”]; and by the fear of the Lord one departs from evil.” That’s the way to get rid of sin.

A lot of times, the fear of the Lord is what gets people started. I remember back when I came into the Church—and I think a lot of you do, too, (particularly, years ago)—sometimes the thing that got us motivated to start keeping the Sabbath or to start doing some of these things was we read some of those booklets on prophecy. We saw some of those graphic drawings that Basil Wolverton had in some of those things. It scared us to death, and we thought we had better hurry up and do something. Well, by the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil. What usually gets us started is that we are scared not to get started. Now, that doesn’t mean that it totally remains your motive. But many times, if there wasn’t a little bit of a healthy fear, we never would have actually gotten around to doing it because it’s often inconvenient.

Verse 24, “Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.” Honey tastes good and it’s good for you. So, it’s not only a little bit of advice about diet, but it’s compared to what we say—“Pleasant words.” When we say something nice to somebody, it’s pleasant to them to receive it, and it does them good. It’s helpful.

Verse 25, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” God thought this was so important that He put it twice in the book of Proverbs. That’s important! We just got through reading it in Proverbs 14:12. If God thinks something is very important, He repeats it. It wasn’t because He stutters, and it wasn’t because He was absentminded and forgot

He had just inspired it a couple of pages ago. If He repeats it (I figure God doesn't repeat a whole lot of things), it must be because He wants to emphasize it.

Verse 31, "The silver-haired [KJV, "hoary head"] is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness." The term "hoary" is derived from an old English word that means "white." That's where we get the term "hoarfrost." White hair, in other words, is a sign of age. "White hair is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness." –Somebody who has the white hair of age and experience and is doing what he should do.

If it is found in the way of righteousness, if they are living and setting an example of a godly way of life, it is a crown of glory, and that's something that should be honored. It points them out as an individual who's lived life and has experience; that's something to honor. Now, when somebody has lived a full life and they still haven't gotten their act together, then that's not much of a crown of glory. If somebody has the mark of age and experience and still hasn't learned anything, that's not a crown of glory. It's important that as we get older, we should learn and grow in wisdom.

Verse 32, "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city." Self-control is pointed out as being something that is of vital importance. To really control oneself is one of the hardest things. Strong self-control is brought out here. If you can rule your own spirit, you're better than he that takes a city. If you can control yourself, that is a harder job and it takes greater effort.

Proverbs 17:10, "Reproof is more effective for a wise man than a hundred blows on a fool." Part of the difference between a wise man and a fool is a wise man is not a know-it-all. He's someone to whom you can tell something. One word of correction, one admonition is going to enter into his heart. He's going to take it and think about it more than if you took out a fool, tied him to a post and gave him a hundred lashes. He wouldn't get the point as much as just giving a wise man an admonition. One thing that we can use to help us determine how wise we are, as opposed to how foolish we are, is how easily will we learn a lesson? How stubborn are we about correction? To what extent do we get the point? And are we tuned in to it?

Verse 12, "Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs, rather than a fool in his folly." If you meet a bear robbed of her whelps, at least you can predict what she's going to do. It's not going to

be good, but it's predictable. There's no telling what a fool is going to do. At least with a bear, she's mad and you had better try and get out of her way. So, you're better off meeting the bear that's all riled up, rather than a fool in his folly because there's just an element of unpredictability there.

In Proverbs 17:17, we are told about a friend, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." "A friend loves at all times." That's really the definition of a real friend. It's not hard to have friends during the good times. The prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) got the money and left home. He showed up there, and it was sort of like, "All the drinks are on me." He had a lot of friends. Everybody in the bar was his buddy. But when he ran out of money and was "hard up" and "down-and-out," where were those friends? Where were his old drinking buddies? They weren't anywhere around.

It's interesting. He found out, when it was all said and done, the one friend he had was his father. His father was the one who loved him at all times. He was the one he didn't think understood him. He left home and thought he knew it all. And if there was one person who didn't understand him, he knew it was his dad.

Probably, in his estimation at that time, he thought his dad was one of the dumbest people that he had ever met. "This old guy is so out of it, and I just can't even stand to stay around here any longer. I am going to go into town, and boy, I have all these friends and buddies." He thought he knew all about friendship. And he thought he didn't have anything in common with his dad. He never thought of his dad as being his friend. But you know, a friend loves at all times. When he was down-and-out and nobody else wanted him, who was it that received him back with open arms? Who was the friend that loved him at all times? This is an important lesson!

When things are going well for you, you'll find there are a lot of people who want to be your buddy. They want to be your friend. If you are "on the way up," you'll find people want to hang onto your coattails; they like that. But your real friends are the ones who are your friends regardless. They are not your friends because you are in power, because you have money or because you are in a position to do something for them. It's a vast difference.

Proverbs 17:17, "A friend loves at all times...."

How do you have friends like that? Well, Proverbs 18:24 says, "A man that has friends must show himself friendly, but there's a friend who sticks closer than a brother." So, a friend

loves at all times, and a man that has friends must show himself friendly. If we want to have that sort of relationship with others, if we want others to be a true friend to us, we have to be a true friend.

Proverbs 17:28, “Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.” He’s better off if he will just keep his mouth shut. Then nobody will know he’s a fool, and that will at least have its advantages.

Proverbs 18:2, “A fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart.” Verse 4 (an interesting statement), “The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters; the wellspring of wisdom is a flowing brook.”

Verse 6, “A fool’s lips enter into contention, and his mouth calls for blows.”

Verse 7, “A fool’s mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.” One of the things we are told about a fool is that he desires to do all the talking. He would much rather talk than listen. He’s always arguing and disputing; his mouth is what brings about his destruction. That’s one of the things there. He has no delight in understanding but in expressing his own heart.

Ever notice that you tend to learn more when you listen than when you talk? That’s an amazing thing, but I guess if we think about it, we will realize it may be one of the reasons God gave us two ears and one mouth. He didn’t give us two mouths and one ear. Maybe we should do more listening than talking. But a fool has no delight in understanding. He’s not interested in learning something new. He only wants to just “blat” out whatever he’s thinking, expressing his own heart. That’s an important key.

Verse 13, “He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him.” Boy, you have an opinion and haven’t even heard all of the facts.

Verse 17, “The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him.” We shouldn’t jump to conclusions. We need to hear both sides of something before we arrive at a conclusion. Have you ever noticed how someone comes and tells you his side of the story, and you think, ‘How in the world could somebody have so mistreated him? Boy, that’s terrible!’ Then, somehow, when you hear the other person’s story you realize, maybe it wasn’t quite as one-sided as it sounded.

Kids are great at that. One of them comes running into the house and oh, he’s mad and upset at what his brother did. He tells you his

side of the story and it sounds terrible. But when you hear the other side of the story, you realize that there was more to it. The first one didn’t tell you everything. He told you the part that made him look good. That’s human nature. It’s not just three and four-year-old kids who do that; thirty, forty, fifty and sixty-year-old adults do it, too. We tend to emphasize the facts that favor us and de-emphasize the facts that don’t.

It reminds me of this comedy routine I heard a number of years ago. These two men had a dispute between them and had gone to an arbitrator. One had cut a deal with the arbitrator. He came in there and told his side of the story; the arbitrator (a lawyer) was sitting there listening to it. The first fellow came and told his story. When he had finished, the arbitrator started to hammer down the gavel and give the verdict. The second one said, ‘Wait a minute, you haven’t heard my side yet.’ The arbitrator said, ‘No, look, I have been an arbitrator for a long time, and one thing I have learned is it’s too confusing if you hear both sides of the story. I never have trouble making up my mind if I just hear one side, but I always find it’s confusing to hear both sides of the story. It’s a lot easier to make the decision when you just hear one side.’

That sort of exaggerates a point, but it’s a point we can all find ourselves in sometimes—siding on something when we don’t know all the facts. We don’t have to have an opinion on everything. A lot of times you hear about something and you think, ‘Why in the world would they do that?’ Did you ever hear decisions, perhaps some administrative decision that was done at headquarters—they did this or that. You think, ‘Why in the world would they have done a thing like that?’ It’s possible, and I understand it is remote, that they have known something that you and I didn’t know. It’s possible they might have had a little more information that we didn’t have. What we have to realize is that we don’t have to have an opinion on every single thing because we don’t have all the facts. It’s just an important concept.

Over and over, the importance of the tongue is emphasized.

We are told in v. 21, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.” The tongue is a matter of vast importance.

Proverbs 19:17, “He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given.” If you have an attitude of mercy and

compassion and you are willing to help people, God takes note of that and blesses you for that.

The book of Proverbs contains warnings on both sides. It warns us not to be foolish. It talks about the foolishness of co-signing a note with someone or doing things like that. It warns us not to be foolish with our resources and obligate ourselves for something that can really impair our ability to provide and function. But on the other hand, it warns us not to go to the other extreme and have this attitude of selfishness. We need to have an attitude of kindness and willingness to share.

But when it comes to loaning something, if you can't afford to make a gift of it, you had better not make a loan of it. In my experience, it has been that an awful lot of the time. I made it a loan and wound up having to make it a gift because they never paid it back. That's an important principle to understand. If you can afford to write it off, then go ahead and loan it. But if you can't afford to lose it, you'd better not loan it because the odds are, more times than not, you are not going to get it back. So, if you can afford to write it off, if you are in a position to do that, well great. Then if you get it back, it's sort of lagniappe. But you are not crippled if you don't.

God wants you to be kind. He wants you to be merciful and generous, but He wants you to use some wisdom with it and not impair the ability to provide for yourself or your family. So, there's a balance.

Verse 18, "Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction [KJV, "let not your soul spare for his crying"]." The point he is making, in terms of childrearing, is that the chastisement needs to start early. "Chasten you son while there is hope..." You don't wait until the child is almost grown before you begin to tighten down. The earlier you start, the better it is. You start chastening them while there's hope. "...let not your soul spare for his crying." It's not talking about doing some sort of long-term damage to somebody.

I have seen people who thought they were spanking their kids. They would just sort of touch them and the kid would start screaming and crying—so, you'd better not touch him again. You haven't done anything with that except make a bad situation worse. All you did was make him mad. That's not effective childrearing. There are many principles here.

Proverbs 20:1, "Wine is a mocker, intoxicating drink arouses brawling and whoever is led astray by it is not wise." It tells us not to allow

ourselves to be deceived about the misuse of alcohol because it will make a fool out of us if we do. Other scriptures certainly show that there is a right use of alcohol.

Alcohol can be used in a variety of ways. It can be used and misused. The scriptures show several uses of alcohol. It shows it is used in a religious sense. It is used in the context of the offerings in ancient Israel and in the context of the Passover in the New Testament time. It is used in a religious sense and for medical purposes.

Paul told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake (I Timothy 5:23). It is used internally for medical purposes to aid digestion; it is used externally as an antiseptic. It's what the Good Samaritan poured on the wounds (Luke 10:34). It is an extremely effective disinfectant of external wounds. Frankly, there is probably nothing any better. The natural wine has just about the right amount of alcohol content in it to disinfect the germs and won't prickle the skin. And it won't leave a scar either. So, it has uses that way. It's used as a food or as a beverage in the context of a meal, particularly at a banquet or something of that sort. It aids in the digestion of rich food. It can contribute to a festive atmosphere and it is used in the context of an occasion like that.

But when it is misused as a mind-altering chemical, when somebody is just going off, pouring down the booze and tarrying long at it, they are not simply using it as it's appropriate. They are misusing it. They are using it to try to change the way they feel—to alter their consciousness. It will make a fool out of you. If they are deceived by what it can and will do to them, they are going to have trouble.

Verse 3, "It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel [KJV, "but every fool will be meddling"]. It's an honor to cease from strife and try to settle something peacefully. But every fool will be meddling. That's one thing you can count on from a fool. He is going to meddle in all kinds of things and sure enough he is going to have trouble.

Verse 4, "The sluggard will not plow because of winter; therefore he will beg during the harvest and have nothing." It's talking about getting the field ready for planting in the early spring. He will say it's too cold! The weather is bad and he doesn't want to get out into it. He doesn't get his field prepared and doesn't get his crop planted early enough. Come harvest, his crop didn't make, and then he is hard up and begging. He doesn't have anything. A characteristic of a lazy

person is that he looks for excuses not to do what he should do. Sometimes you have to get out and plow when it's cold. You have to do what you have to do, and sometimes it's not pleasant. That, again, is an important concept.

Verse 5, "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out." In counsel, real intentions are like deep water. The analogy is like an old well. When you talk about deep water, we sort of miss the analogy today. I think a lot of us remember the kind of wells where you unwind the pulley and the rope goes down deep into the well. Then you have to pull it up. It takes some effort and patience to draw water out of a deep well. That's what it says here.

In counsel, the real intentions and what a person is really thinking—the deep and real thoughts and the real intents in the heart—is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out. It's going to take time and patience. If you really want to know what a person is thinking, you have to spend some time with them. It takes patience and effort to draw out what's really deep down inside, rather than just superficially.

Verse 11, "Even a child is known by his deeds, by whether what he does is pure and right."

Verse 18, "Every purpose is established by counsel; by wise counsel wage war." (KJV, "...with good advice make war.") In other words, if you are going to go out for a project, you better get some good advice and good opinions. There are people who have expertise in a variety of areas. Desire that input.

Proverbs 21:2, "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts." People go charging off and their ways are right in their own eyes, but God looks down deep inside.

Verse 5, "The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty." —Being careful, diligent, consistent and persistent leads to plenty. Sometimes somebody gets in a hurry and goes off at half cock. That can create a problem. The principle is that if you don't have time to do it right, how are you going to find time to do it over again?

Verse 17, "He who loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich." If you are out partying and doing all sorts of things like that, spending it all as fast as you get it, you will never get ahead. Some people just waste away everything they make on all sorts of luxuries and pleasures and "poof"—it's gone.

They can't pass by something and not try to buy it. They will never get ahead.

Verse 23, "Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles."

Controlling what we say will keep us out of trouble more than virtually anything else. That's an important thing. Guard your mouth and tongue and you'll keep yourself out of an awful lot of trouble.

Verse 31, "The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is of the Lord." That simply means that you can make all the preparations you want, but God's help and God's blessing is what is ultimately necessary to establish it. The horse is prepared against the day of battle. You can prepare the horse all you want, but real safety is going to come from God. That's something we have to realize. It's not a matter that we shouldn't make preparations, but we need to understand that there are limits to what we can do.

Proverbs 22:1, "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold." A good name is of value. Our reputation is something that's more precious than anything money can buy. We should give thought and consideration to our reputation—to the way we conduct ourselves.

Verse 6, an important principle of childrearing, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Early training is a great key to future character.

Verse 7, "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender." That's a truism. It's what some have sort of used as the term "the golden rule"—he who has the gold makes the rules.

"The borrower is servant to the lender." We are finding that and we are going to find it far more in this nation. Who's been financing our spending spree? Who's been financing our massive debt for the last few years? Primarily, it's been the Japanese. Japanese banks have been buying up American bonds. They have been paying for our spending spree. "The borrower is servant to the lender." We have a major deficit from year to year. We are in a situation where the only way we can keep going is if we're selling bonds. We are going deeper and deeper into debt. We are going to find that, eventually, some of the lenders are going to come in and are going to call the shots because they have control. We haven't begun to really realize some of what's going to happen when the Japanese and the Europeans begin to do some of these things.

Verse 8, “He who sows iniquity will reap sorrow [KJV, “vanity”], and the rod of his anger will fail.” This is a very important principle. We are going to ultimately reap what we sow.

Verse 10, “Cast out the scoffer [KJV, “scorner”], and contention will leave; yes, strife and reproach will cease.” Here’s an important principle of dealing with problems. If you have a troublemaker, he needs to be gotten rid of. Things will settle down when you do.

A lot of times, even in groups, we’ve had situations and circumstances where somebody was a scorner. A scorner is not somebody who makes a mistake. A scorner is somebody who has contempt for the rules and lacks respect for the institution and for what it stands. When you tolerate somebody like that and you let them stay around, it’s just going to be strife and contention. If you have somebody who has that sort of an attitude, the best thing to do is to get rid of him. Isolate him. Get rid of him and then everything settles down. Everybody will make a mistake from time to time, but if you have respect for the institution and respect for the rules, then all it takes is a little bit of correction and it’s all back on track.

Verse 13, “The slothful man says, ‘There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!’” Boy, you talk about looking for excuses.

Verse 15, “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it far from him.” –This sort of immaturity that is there. Foolishness is just bound up, and it takes some discipline and correction because, otherwise, there are just problems.

Verse 16, “He who oppresses the poor to increase his riches, and he who gives to the rich, will surely come to poverty.” God says that if you take advantage of people to get ahead, it’s going to come back to haunt you. God will see to that.

We come to the end of this first body of Proverbs. Proverbs 22:17 begins what is termed “the words of the wise ones.” Proverbs 22:17 down to the end of chapter 24, we have about two and one-half chapters of Proverbs that were collected as “the words of the sopherim.”

We will conclude here this evening. There’s an awful lot packed into the book of Proverbs. We could only hit the high spots this evening. Hopefully, you have gained some insight into some of these things. We have hit a number of proverbs. We will conclude the book of Proverbs next Bible study.

Bible Study # 82 Questions

SURVEY OF THE WRITINGS SERIES

Proverbs 10—22:16

1. What are three keys to prosperity that are given in Proverbs 10?
2. What instructions are we given about the use of the tongue in Proverbs 10?
3. What important instruction do we receive concerning counsel in Proverbs 11 and 12?
4. In what way does treatment of animals reflect character?
5. What contrast does God draw concerning the use of the tongue in Proverbs 12 and 13?
6. Give seven keys to sound financial management found in Proverbs 12 and 13.
7. What verses in Proverbs 13 draw a contrast between that which produces frustration and that which produces satisfaction?
8. How is a fool defined in Proverbs 14?
9. What key to avoiding contention and strife is given in Proverbs 15?
10. What does Proverbs 16 tell us concerning the ways of a man? Can we safely rely on our own feelings?
11. What does Proverbs 16 tell us about self-control?
12. How is a friend defined in Proverbs 17? What key to having friends is given in Proverbs 18?
13. What things are we told about the fool's use of the tongue in Proverbs 18?
14. What two verses in Proverbs 18 warn us about jumping to conclusions?
15. What instructions are we given about childrearing in Proverbs 19?
16. What warning are we given in Proverbs 20 about alcohol consumption?
17. What are we told in Proverbs 20 about minding our own business?
18. What admonition about the tongue are we given in Proverbs 21?
19. How important is it to establish a good name (reputation)?
20. What instructions are we given about childrearing in Proverbs 22?

Bible Study # 83
February 4, 1992
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Proverbs 22:17—31:31

This evening we **are going to conclude the book of Proverbs. We are going to survey the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh sections of Proverbs.** We've been going through this series of Proverbs. One of the things that we noted early in the book of Proverbs was the fact that the book divides itself into seven sections.

The first section is just the first few verses—vv. 1-6. That's the introduction. Verse 7 through the first nine chapters makes up the second section, which is basically a discourse on wisdom. In chapter 10, we get into the third section of Proverbs and into the part that are proverbs as we normally think of them.

When we think of a proverb, we usually think of a short, pithy, concise statement that sums up a point of truth that uses comparison or contrast. It's sort of a one-sentence summation. Beginning in chapter 10 we get into that sort of proverb. Most of the first nine chapters were a discourse on wisdom. It dealt with the subject of wisdom. It developed the subject in a little different way. Then you notice an abrupt change once you get into Proverbs 10. The subject matter seems to change, in many cases, from verse to verse. It is sort of a random sampling of principles that are given and tailor-made to be thought about and considered. We have that beginning in chapter 10 down through chapter 22:16, which is really the first body of Proverbs—the proverbs of Solomon that were included.

Beginning in chapter 22:17, which we are going to begin this evening, is the fourth section of Proverbs and the second body of actual Proverbs. There are three bodies of Proverbs. Beginning in chapter 10:1 down through chapter 22:16 is the first body of Proverbs. It is a collection of proverbs of Solomon. The second body begins in chapter 22:17 and runs through the end of chapter 24.

Proverbs 22:17, it starts out, "Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge." Or, "...hear the words of the wise ones and apply your heart to my knowledge." This fourth section consists of what is termed "the words of the wise ones." That runs for several chapters.

Then, chapter 25 is a third body or collection of Proverbs.

Proverbs 25:1, we are told, "These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied." So, here's a third component or third body of Proverbs that were added considerably later. They were added at the time of King Hezekiah in the end of the eighth century B.C. (Solomon had made his compilation toward the close of the tenth century B.C.) So, it was about two hundred years later when these proverbs were copied out by the men of Hezekiah and added. They, again, are proverbs pretty much in the manner of the others. We would make each of these a section. This would be our fifth section.

The sixth and seventh sections of the book are the final two chapters.

Proverbs 30:1 tells us, "The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, his utterance [KJV, "the prophecy"]...."

Proverbs 31:1, "The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him." It contains the account of the virtuous woman. Each of those would be other components. So, we have seven sections.

We are going to begin our study this evening with chapter 22:17, with this second body of Proverbs and the fourth section of the book—the section that is "the words of the wise ones."

Proverbs 22:17-21, as we pick up the story, we are told, "Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge; for it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you; let them all be fixed upon your lips, so that your trust may be in the Lord; I have instructed you today, even you. Have I not written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge. That they may make you know the certainty of the words of truth, that you may answer words of truth to those who send to you?" These things are to provide us the words of truth.

Verses 22-23, "Do not rob the poor because he is poor, nor oppress the afflicted at the gate; for the Lord will plead their cause, and plunder the soul of those who plunder them." As we begin to focus in on God's law, here's a point about the fact that you don't take advantage of those who are unable to defend themselves because God will take note of it.

Verses 24-25, "Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul." We are admonished that if we hang around and make associations with those who are quick-tempered, it is going to lead us into trouble. If you get entangled with somebody who is very hotheaded and quick to lose his temper, you are

going to wind up in trouble. If you keep company with somebody like that, they are going to get into some bad situations, and if you are there with them, that's where you'll be, too.

We will note some of the specific proverbs that stand out. There is a warning about becoming surety for someone else's debts. This is a warning that is given throughout the book of Proverbs.

Verses 26-27, "Do not be one of those who shakes hands in a pledge, one of those who is surety for debts; if you have nothing with which to pay, why should he take away your bed from under you?"

There's an interesting contrast that is given. Over and over Proverbs admonishes in two areas, and there is a balance. It's hard for human beings to get the balance. Proverbs admonishes us to be kind, generous and not to take advantage of someone who is poor. But on the other hand, it admonishes us to be wise in our business dealings and not to set ourselves up for a lot of trouble by co-signing notes and "going out on a limb" financially, obligating ourselves in this way. The admonition, on the one hand, is to help those who are needy, and on the other hand, to be wise in your own affairs and to not make foolish decisions.

Specifically, the example it uses several times has to do with co-signing notes for someone. We get a balance out of it. We need to see that there is a balance. God wants us to be kind and considerate. He certainly doesn't want us to take advantage of someone and He wants us to have an attitude of giving, sharing and trying to help those who are needy. But He, along with that, wants us to use wisdom and not to be foolish. Sometimes people have meant well, but they have done things that were not wise business decisions. Sometimes they have obligated themselves for things that wound up really costing them money they couldn't afford. So, there's a balance, and Proverbs brings out the balance. That's why it deals with both of these subjects.

Proverbs 23 has a warning in the first few verses. Proverbs 23:1-3, "When you sit down to eat with a ruler, consider carefully what is before you; and put a knife to your throat if you are a man given to appetite. Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food." In other words, be careful of the favors of the ruler, knowing there may be more to it than meets the eye.

Verses 4-5, "Do not overwork to be rich; because of your own understanding, cease! Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches

certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle toward heaven."

The point is that if you set your eyes on getting rich, it will lead you into entanglements that are a source of trouble. It describes this in these first five verses. If you are with someone who is a ruler, someone who is powerful and influential, "put a knife to your throat." Don't get greedy. If you are in someone's company who is like that, if you are there with someone who is powerful and rich, don't get greedy and start thinking about what you are going to be able to get out of this situation. Don't start out being anxious of what he has and "butter him up" to get some of it. You might end up getting entangled in things that you don't have any intention of doing. So, the warning is that if you set your eyes on being rich, riches sometimes have ways of making themselves wings and flying away.

There are principles in Proverbs that deal with prosperity. God is not against prosperity. He wants people to prosper and tells us how to do it in a right and balanced way—in a way that focuses on righteousness and a spirit of kindness, generosity, justice and mercy. The spiritual principles are emphasized. Honor God with the first fruits of our substance; those things are emphasized in Proverbs. Also emphasized is the importance of diligence, working hard, being productive, not being lazy, not having to have somebody constantly stand over us and supervise, but to be a self starter, to seize the initiative and opportunity. There are many principles. There are principles of being a careful manager and not wasting.

There are many principles that deal with how to get ahead financially. God is not against that. He doesn't desire to see us in terrible straits. He gives us many practical admonitions. But He warns us not to set that as our priorities to where our life revolves around the acquisition of material things. Those warnings are particularly needed in Proverbs because there are so many admonitions in Proverbs on practical ways to get ahead. Proverbs is filled with principles and terms of handling day-to-day practical life situations. But it also contains many admonitions about having our priorities straight because that's a big part of it. When our priorities get mixed up, then everything else has ways of going down the drain. If you keep your priorities straight and you follow what it says in Proverbs, there are some very, very positive things we can have.

Verses 6-7, "Do not eat the bread of a miser [KJV, "him that has an evil eye"], nor desire his delicacies; for as he thinks in his heart, so is he.

‘Eat and drink!’ he says to you, but his heart is not with you.” It’s a warning about somebody who is out to entangle you. He is putting forward a “front,” but he is entangling you in things that are going to really mess you up. He has bad intentions. ‘As a person thinks in his heart, so is he.’ That’s the thing to realize.

Verse 9, “Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of your words.” One of the characteristics of a fool is he is not open to correction. You can’t tell him anything. He has a “know-it-all” attitude.

A really good source of study in Proverbs is to go through the book and just look up the word “fool.” Go through and find everything it says about a fool; find all the characteristics of a fool. Or look up “wise man” and go through and find all the characteristics of a wise man. It would make an excellent Bible study because it gives us quite a contrast—some things to sort of lay out and see what kind of contrast it is.

Verses 13-14, “Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell.” What is this talking about? Obviously, it is talking about punishment or correction. The term “rod” is something that needs to be understood. It is not talking about some kind of big stick that is capable of giving some sort of permanent damage. The very term means “something that is flexible,” like a switch. The rod is like a small switch or something of that sort. Something that, by definition, is flexible. We are not talking about a club. “Do not withhold correction....”

The point of it is you don’t just put off and drag your feet in giving correction to your child. Spanking is not going to kill him. If you use a switch on him, that’s not going to kill him, but it can deliver him from destruction. In other words, if you give a child the correction, teaching and the upbringing that he needs when he is young, then you can save him from a lot of trouble and destruction by doing that.

Verse 17, “Do not let your heart envy sinners, but in the fear of the Lord continue all day long.” Sometimes there is a tendency to look at people who are “getting by with it.” If we are not careful, we can sort of think that it seems like they get by with all this stuff. We can think, ‘If we weren’t in the Church, look at all the money we could make over here. Look at all the things that we could do.’

God says don’t let your heart envy sinners. Don’t look at that sort of thing, but stand in awe of God all day long. We can get into a delusion that

there would be advantages if we were not a part of the household of faith—that somehow there’s an advantage to that. God says, ‘Get your priorities straight. Really stand in awe of God.’ “The fear of the Lord” means “being in deep awe of and reverence for God.”

Proverbs 23:18, “For surely there is a hereafter [latter end] [KJV, “an end”], and your hope [expectation] will not be cut off.”

Verses 20-21, he continues and says, “Do not mix with winebibbers, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags.” Don’t run with the people that are out really boozing it up, the real “party animals.” Don’t run with that crowd because they are headed for trouble. If you run with that crowd, you’re going to do that, too.

Verse 23, there’s an interesting point, “Buy the truth, and do not sell it....”

This is the explanation as to why the magazine goes out free of charge. Mr. Herbert Armstrong read that Proverb back in 1927 and came to that conclusion as he was aspiring to publish a magazine on the basis of this verse. Whenever he started publishing a magazine (which he wanted to do), it must be given free. That’s why the magazine has never been sold. That was a conclusion that Mr. Herbert Armstrong came to based on Proverbs 23:23. This is for your information as to why that is the case. Many groups, then and now, have traditionally sold various religious literatures, but he felt, based on that verse, that the truth was not something that should be sold.

There are warnings about immorality.

Verses 27-28, “For a harlot is a deep pit, and a seductress is a narrow well. She also lies in wait as for a victim, and increases the unfaithful among men.” This is a warning of immorality. If you get tangled up in immorality, it’s like getting caught in something that is hard to get out of.

Verses 29-35, “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things. Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: ‘They have struck me, but I was not hurt; they have beaten me, but I did not

feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?”

If you want a poetic description of alcoholism, I don't know of any better one than this one. Who has trouble? What are the consequences? He has woe, sorrow, contentions and complaints. He has trouble. He has strife, problems and grief. He has things wrong with him that he doesn't even know where it came from. Those who tarry long at the wine have wounds without cause, and they have redness of eyes.

Some prohibitionist groups quote this section and say alcohol is a terrible sin. The misuse of alcohol is being dealt with here—those who tarry long at the wine. The scriptures show various proper uses of alcohol. There are legitimate uses. But what it's talking about here is tarrying long. In other words, it is talking about over indulgence. It's talking about misuse—they start early and go late. They are looking for it.

Verse 31 describes longingly looking at and desiring this. It's describing someone who is preoccupied with alcohol. The warning is that if you are obsessed and preoccupied with alcohol, you are dealing with something that will turn around and bite you like a snake. It will lead you into all kinds of things. It will get you tangled up in all sorts of situations.

“Your heart will utter perverse things.” Anybody who has ever been around an alcoholic knows, “Your heart will utter perverse things.” All kinds of things come out. They say just horrible things. It describes a hangover, “You'll be as he that lies down in the midst of the sea.”

Now some of you went on the fishing trip a little while back, and this is what it's talking about. What they felt out there is what you are going to feel like the morning after. You might as well be seasick. It's like you were trying to take a nap on top of the mast of the boat because you are going to be dizzy.

It's describing a hangover. You'll wake up and you'll realize they have beaten you and felt it not. You wake up, look at yourself and say, ‘Someone must have beaten me with a stick,’ but you don't remember a thing.

Then the final thing and that proves the insanity of alcoholism. What's the conclusion that he comes to at the end of it?

Verse 35, “...When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?” He says, ‘I think I need another drink. I may seek it yet again (KJV).’ That's the insanity aspect of the obsession and the addiction. Here is something you go through. It does all these things to you, and the conclusion you come to is, ‘I think I better go get a drink.’

And here it goes again. I think it is one of the most succinct summaries of the consequences of alcoholism. It focuses in on the insanity of the addiction part. After all of these things, a person is drawn back to get some more. That tells you that something is wrong because that is not a logical thing to do if you go through something like this. I have known people who have gone on some of these fishing trips, and they have come off of them saying they are never going to get on a boat again. Here it describes this, and I think it is a very interesting description.

Proverbs 24:1-2, “Do not be envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them; for their heart devises violence, and their lips talk of troublemaking.”

Verse 10, “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.”

Let's look at this. It's a way of saying the statement, “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” This is the general thought that's coming through. I think the admonition here can certainly be applied to people in any time of extremity and any time of difficulty. That is when it really comes to what we are made out of and what our intentions are. This is certainly an important focus for God's Church and God's work in this end time.

It increasingly seems that just as Satan has attempted to fracture the world around us (we have seen in Eastern Europe and around the world the fracturing and the sub-dividing that is going on), we have encountered some of that even in the Church in recent years. There are various ones who have become discouraged about various things; they get preoccupied and sort of pull off to themselves. It says here, “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.”

Verses 11-12, “Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, ‘Surely we did not know this,’ does not He who weighs the heart consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?”

You know, we have a job to do. “Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter.” If we divert our energies and our efforts from doing the work that God has set before us and get entangled in strife among and between ourselves, God is going to hold us responsible. We have a job to do. We have the job of carrying God's message to the world. If we let ourselves get sidetracked, it dissipates our energies on internal strife and arguments, as some have, making mountains out

of molehills. They have allowed their energies to be dissipated into areas of internal strife instead of focusing in on the work that we have to do. You know, God is going to take note of that.

“If you say, ‘Surely we did not know this,’ does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? [Isn’t God, who’s taking note, going to notice that?] He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render each man according to his deeds?” It’s very important to keep our focus like it should be. It’s very sad; many of us know people who have sort of gotten sidetracked and off track—some of these various ones or self-appointed leaders.

I think this is a section of Scripture that should have particular meaning for us. God does not want us to lose sight of the big picture and to dissipate our energy into all sorts of internal bickering and strife. We have to keep our focus on the things that are important and on the work God has called us to do.

Realize, that whatever problems may be, that’s where our faith that Jesus Christ is the living head of the Church comes in. We either believe that Christ is in charge or we don’t. If we don’t, then why are we here? And if we do, why are we worried? I think that’s sort of the way we go through it. We don’t want to allow our energies to be dissipated and lost in various internal strife and struggles and miss the point. This is an important area.

Verse 16, “For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again, but the wicked shall fall by calamity.” If at first you don’t succeed, try and try again. God didn’t say that if you’re righteous, everything you try will succeed the first time off. “A righteous man falls seven times....” You just have to keep trying.

There is an interesting story in Scottish and English history. It’s almost an exact parallel of this. There is the story of King Robert the Bruce of Scotland who was leading a war of Scottish independence back in the early Middle Ages. The English armies had defeated him on six different occasions. He really came to the “end of his rope.”

He was in hiding in a little abandoned cottage that he had in the remote area of Scotland. Much of his army was scattered. He was discouraged and considered giving up and going into exile. As he was lying there feeling like “throwing in the towel,” he looked up and there was a spider building its web. The spider was trying to jump across to catch a beam to affix her web. He noticed the spider jump and miss the beam. It worked its way back up and then tried it again.

He noticed that. It really began to get his attention because the spider kept trying. Finally, it got all the way up to six times, which kind of struck him because the spider had tried and struck out six times, and he had, too.

He was watching and wondering when the spider was going to quit. The spider kept trying and the seventh time the spider made it. He took heart from that and considered that might be some sort of sign. Anyway, he figured that he should at least put forth as much effort as a spider. He went out and re-gathered his troops. In that final time, he was successful in his endeavor. The point is that many times we don’t always succeed when we first try, but you just have to keep going and keep at it.

Verses 17-18, “Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles. Lest the Lord see it, and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him.” You’re standing there gloating because somebody else is “getting it.” God may look down at you and figure that maybe that isn’t what He wants to do after all. You let God deal with him. We shouldn’t have this sort of gloating.

Verse 19, “Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the wicked.” It’s a matter of putting some of these things in God’s hands and trusting Him.

Verse 27, “Prepare your outside work, make it fit for yourself in the field; and afterward build your house.” This simply stresses the importance of being economically sound before marriage—the need of getting things ready and being ready to provide before you build your house and before you establish yourself that way.

Verses 30-34 are a description of the lazy person who doesn’t take care of what they have and allows it to get all overgrown and falling apart. It’s a consequence of this lazy, slothful attitude.

In Proverbs 25, we go into the third body of Proverbs.

Proverbs 25:1-2, “These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied. It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.”

God reveals in the Bible a foundation of knowledge, but there are many things that God doesn’t reveal. There are many things that God has hidden in the creation. It’s the glory of God to conceal a matter and the glory of kings to search out a matter. It’s an honor to seek out the secrets of creation—the laws of physics, things of astronomy and all of the things that God has

designed. God doesn't reveal all of that information. God reveals essential knowledge in the Bible and gives man a mind and the ability to pursue, discover and to gain insight into the way He works and the way He designed and put things together.

Verse 3, "As the heavens for height and the earth for depth, so the heart of kings is unsearchable." Whether we're talking about the depths of the earth and oceans (the studies of geology), all the way up to the heavens for heights (astronomy) or the hearts of kings (the studying into people, human nature and psychology, what makes people tick, why are people the way they are), there's an awful lot that is waiting to be discovered. It's the honor of kings to search out a matter (v. 2).

Verses 9-10, "Debate your case with your neighbor himself, and do not disclose the secret to another; lest he who hears it expose your shame, and your reputation be ruined." If you have a problem with somebody or an issue comes up, deal with it with the person who is involved.

Verse 11, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." A word fitly spoken is a very beautiful and precious thing—the right word at the right time.

Verse 17, "Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house, lest he become weary of you and hate you." It's just a matter of practical common sense. Don't wear out your welcome. You need moderation in all things. You can wear out your welcome by just always being somewhere until you become a pest with it. It's a matter that we want to be careful and not overdo a good thing.

Sometimes people begin to be a nuisance. Some contact is good, but even with friends or with neighbors you can get to where you monopolize someone's time. After a while, they begin to resent it, even though originally they enjoyed your company and friendship. But if you're calling them up every day and talking for three or four hours a day, it's not going to be long before that begins to get old. If you do that on a regular basis, you begin to wear out your welcome.

Verse 28, "Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls." It is simply saying that a lack of self-control in an individual is compared to a city that's broken into. The walls are breached. You're opening yourself up to serious trouble. A wall is there as a protection. It's saying that someone who has lost his self-control is defenseless. He's just wide open to attack and to trouble.

Proverbs 26:1, "As snow in summer and rain in harvest, so honor is not fitting for a fool." It's not appropriate. It is sort of out of place.

Verse 2, "Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow, so a curse without cause shall not alight." This is simply saying that things are a matter of cause and effect. There are, generally, reasons if there are problems.

I think this is one area that is an important principle in our childrearing. It is an important principle in teaching children because the immature mind does not really connect cause and effect. They see effects and they see causes. But they lack the life experiences to always see how the two connect. In working with our children, point out certain things that they see and that they, obviously, don't want in their future. Point out how this came about.

Some people go through life feeling like everything that happened to them is just some sort of big cosmic accident or as though there is a roll of the dice. Some people are happy and successful and other people are miserable and go through eight marriages like Liz Taylor.

"Like a flitting sparrow...." There is a reason for it. If you see a bird, how did it get there? Well, it flew. It followed a certain path and it brought it here. If there are problems or consequences in life, there are reasons. There are things that brought them here. If we don't understand what they are, then we are doomed to keep repeating certain things because we never recognize them for what they are. It's something for all of us to learn, and I think it is also an important principle to stress to our children to help them to understand.

Verse 4, "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him."

Verse 5, "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes." That is making a contrast. It shows that there are times to speak and there are times to keep silent. You don't answer and get into an argument with someone and wind up looking just like him because you're sounding like him. But on the other hand, there is a time to speak. You feel like somebody has made the ultimate comment. There are times that you need to say something, but you want the wisdom to distinguish when it is inappropriate and when it is appropriate.

In the Gospels, we find the way that Christ dealt with situations. There were things He simply didn't address and other times when things were brought out. It shows the way He dealt with the Pharisees and those who came to him; many were not asking their questions sincerely.

Verse 8, “Like one who binds a stone in a sling is he who gives honor to a fool.” Now what do you think is going to happen if you tie the stone in a sling shot, pull it back and shoot it? What do you think happens? It shoots forward; then it comes back. And guess whom it hits? Now the slings they used were generally slung around. But if you tie it in and sling it around, then when you turn it loose, instead of the rock flying out, the weight of the rock brings it back around and hits you in the head.

“...he who gives honor to a fool.” If you’re dealing with somebody who is really a fool and you are trying to exalt this person, it is going to backfire on you. It’s going to come back and hit you in the face. That’s just the way it is.

Verse 9, “Like a thorn that goes into the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of fools.” I guess you could say he just doesn’t get the point. This is talking about someone who is so out of it that he doesn’t ever notice the thorn until after he sobers up. This is sort of the principle; he just doesn’t get the point.

Verse 11, another characteristic of a fool is, “As a dog returns to his own vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.” He keeps making the same mistakes over and over again. He doesn’t learn from experience.

Verse 12, “Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” There is not a whole lot of hope for a fool. Here is a guy who is wise in his own eyes—a “know-it-all,” the kind of person that you can’t tell him anything. He knows it all. God says a fool is going to learn quicker than this fellow. When you see all the things it says about a fool, the odds are the fool is not going to learn very quickly.

We are looking at a poetic description of another set of characteristics that we don’t want to have.

Verse 13, “The slothful man says ‘There is a lion in the road! A fierce lion is in the streets!’” We are looking at excuses. If someone is lazy and doesn’t want to do something, he will find a thousand excuses.

Verse 14, “As a door turns on its hinges, so does the slothful turn on his bed.” You can just see this old creaky door going back and forth, back and forth. You can just sort of imagine this old lazy fellow lying over there in bed and can just hear the bed creak. All he’s doing is pulling the cover up over his head when the daylight comes. He’s just turning back and forth.

Verse 15, “The slothful man buries his hand in the bowl; it wearies him to bring it back to his mouth.” He’s just so lazy he hardly wants to go

to the trouble to lift his food from his plate—a poetic, humorous description to make a point. Humor serves to exaggerate certain points. It’s for the purpose of illustrating some foible. This is what it is describing. Have you ever known someone who was so lazy and trifling, it was like he almost begrudged the work that it took him to have to lift the food all the way from the plate to his mouth? He really didn’t want to do anything.

Verse 16, “The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly.” He has more excuses as to why he can’t do something than seven people who can come up with good solid reasons. I mean, whatever you have, he has excuses you have never thought about as to why he can’t do this and why he can’t do that. Some people go through life looking for excuses as to why they can’t do something. I have always found that if you really want to do something, you usually find a way to do it; if you don’t want to do it, you can find a thousand reasons as to why you can’t. It’s too hard. I can’t go. It’s too difficult. It’s amazing how that works.

Verses 18-19, “Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, ‘I was only joking.’” It’s a joke! It’s a joke! What happens when somebody casts firebrands? Well, they start a fire don’t they? They can catch the house on fire or the city on fire. It says, ‘So is the man that deceives his neighbor and then says, “Oh, it is a joke. I’m just kidding. Can’t you take a joke?”’

A lot of times people use that as a cover-up when they have said or done things that they didn’t have any business saying or doing. They get something started and then they try to get out of it by saying, ‘I was just kidding.’ It’s sort of like the fellow who casts a firebrand. He started a fire and now there’s trouble going. We have to think those things through.

There are several things here about what gossip will do and how it keeps trouble stirred up.

Verse 20, “Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases.” It’s amazing how the gossip quits and trouble settles down. It says, “Where there is no wood the fire goes out.” One way to get the fire to stop is to quit feeding it. The fire goes out; it burns itself out. The way strife and trouble is stopped in a community or group of people is when gossip quits. But as long as people are gossiping and saying things, you have trouble.

Verse 21, “As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife.” It feeds the flames.

Proverbs 27:1, “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.”

Verse 2, “Let another man praise you and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.”

Verse 5, “Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed.”

Verse 6, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” This is saying that it is not a mark of true friendship to withhold the truth. Sometimes a real friend is someone who will tell you the truth.

Moffat translates it as, “Better a frank word of reproof than the love that will not speak.” It’s not a mark of true friendship to withhold reproof. It doesn’t mean we go around trying to fix everybody, straighten out all our friends and give them a long list of what’s wrong with them. It just means that there is a time to speak. There’s a time when it is appropriate to say something. What a real friend tells you is faithful. He tells you because he cares. He tells you the truth.

“...but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”

Someone who does not have your best interest at heart will tell you all kinds of nice things. He’s just up to something. Someone who’s really your friend may tell you something and it may hurt a little bit, but he has your best interest at heart. It’s a lot more valuable than somebody who really doesn’t care about you and is just saying what they think you want to hear.

Verse 12, “A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself; the simple pass on and are punished.” This is simply saying that a prudent man—somebody who is wise—is going to look and think ahead. We don’t just rush on through life. Some people, in handling their affairs, don’t think ahead.

Look at some of the economic problems we’ve had. One of the difficulties that hit this area of the country, the areas (Louisiana and Texas) that were very heavily tied in with the oil and gas industry, was that they overextended themselves. Back when the oil and gas prices were going up, up, up, there were a lot of companies and individuals that dangerously overextended themselves. They operated on the premise that it’s going to get bigger and better forever. There were a lot of companies that went bankrupt when the price came down because they operated on a very foolish assumption that what goes up, will just keep going up forever. I have always noticed

that if I throw something up in the air, sooner or later it comes back down.

“A prudent man foresees the evil and he hides himself....” He looks ahead to problems. He doesn’t just leave himself wide open. “The simple pass on and they are punished.” They are oblivious to the fact of difficulties coming around the corner, and they get hit square in the face with it. A prudent man thinks ahead and realizes difficulties and adversities that are, potentially, coming and makes provision. He looks ahead and he’s not going to overextend himself. He’s not going to get way out on the end of the limb. It’s an important principle.

Verse 17, “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.” It’s talking about the fact that we can learn from one another. There is a sharpening quality that can take place in a good friendly discussion. We can learn from one another.

Verse 20, “Hell and Destruction are never full; [The grave and destruction are never full; there are always continuing cycles.] So the eyes of man are never satisfied.” Aspirations continue to rise. If someone was out on a cold rainy night and didn’t have a place to live or stay, he’d be sitting out there wishing he had some place that was warm and dry—some place out of the way. He’d just give anything for a place out of the way. If he got a place, how long would it be before he started looking around, noticing what a dump it was and thinking he wished he had a little nicer place? A guy who’s been hungry and hasn’t had anything to eat for two days is thinking he wished he could get some food. After he’s been eating for a while, he begins to notice the soup surely is bland. There’s no salt or pepper in it, and they’ve watered it down. He wished he had a decent meal. Perspectives change. When we meet one level of need, we begin to look around and notice what we don’t have. “The eyes of man are never satisfied.” People are always looking for more.

Proverbs 28:1, “The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion.” The real key to freedom from fear is obedience to God.

Proverbs 14:26, we are told, “In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence....” So, the real key to freedom from fear is obedience to God.

Proverbs 28:13, “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.” That’s certainly the case in our dealings with God. And frankly, that usually works much better with people, too. If you try to cover it up, sooner or later it’s going to

come out, and then you are really going to be in trouble. If you face up to it, admit it and you've turned around and gone the other way, you will far more likely have mercy than to just lie, cover it up, and let it come out later.

Verse 19, "He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows frivolity [KJV, "vain persons"] [or, "vain pursuits"] will not go unpunished." If you have a worthwhile occupation and stick to it, persevere and be diligent with it, you can gradually get ahead. If you are always chasing the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, you are just going to have poverty.

Verse 20, "A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished." Someone who is in a hurry to get rich quick is going to cut corners and do things that are not going to leave them unpunished.

Verse 21, "To show partiality is not good, because for a piece of bread a man will transgress."—To treat people unfairly or mistreat someone. Someone who is unfair and unscrupulous in his dealings with people will take advantage of people for just a little bit. He will transgress; he will cheat anybody when it is to his advantage. It's a character flaw. When you see someone who deals with other people that way in business, just realize he will do it to you, too, if it is ever to his advantage and he gets the chance. It is an important principle.

Verse 22, "A man with an evil eye hastens after riches, and does not consider that poverty will come upon him." In other words, honest labor and hard work is the way to success—not some get-rich-quick scheme.

There are many admonitions in Proverbs about working hard and being diligent.

Proverbs 12:24, "The hand of the diligent will rule..." But there are also warnings about becoming materialistic. God wants us to get ahead, but He doesn't want us to become so materialistic that our life sort of revolves around material things; it leads to trouble.

Verse 26, "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but whoever walks wisely will be delivered." "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool..."

What does God tell us in Jeremiah 17:9? "The heart is deceitful above all things." We kid ourselves. We are told it's not in man who walks to direct his own steps (Jeremiah 10:23). To whom should we look? We look to God. People just follow their own feelings and whims, rather than looking to God and what He says.

Verse 27, "He who gives to the poor will not lack, but he who hides his eyes will have many curses." Someone who has kindness, a willingness to share and is generous will be provided for. God will take care of them. God takes note of that.

Proverbs 29:1, "He who is often reproofed, and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."—An important principle. If we continually resent and resist correction, one of these days destruction is going to come like a "bolt out of the blue" and there won't be any more opportunities. It's a very important principle if we won't learn our lesson the easy way.

Another Proverb talks about how a word of reproof enters more into the heart of a wise man than a hundred stripes into the back of a fool (Proverbs 17:10). A wise person is going to learn more from a few words than a fool is going to learn from a beating. This is one of the real keys to learning lessons—whether or not we learn from life's experiences. If someone won't learn the easy way, sooner or later it's going to come on him, and then there won't be any way out. That's sad, but there comes a time where you can get into some things you can't get out of. Life can come crashing down around you. There are people who have lost businesses, fortunes, marriages, families and children. There are people who have lost all sorts of things.

Basically, in Proverbs 29:1, they are told and they are warned. Various things came up and all the signs were there. People told them you had better do this or that. They wouldn't listen. One day it all came down on top of them, and there wasn't any getting out of it.

Proverbs 29:2, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man rules the people groan." The way of God produces positive results.

Verse 15, "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother."

Verse 18, "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but happy is he who keeps the law." KJV, "Where there is no vision the people perish..."

Verse 25, "The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe."

Proverbs 30, the sixth section of the book, is the prophecy of Agur. Agur goes through all of these comparisons, these categories of four.

Proverbs 30:11, for instance, "There is a generation [there is a kind of person] that curses its father, and does not bless its mother." There

are people who are negative, critical and faultfinding.

Verse 12, there are others, “There is a generation [there is a kind of people] that is pure in its own eyes, yet is not washed from its filthiness.” They have this attitude of a self-righteous approach. Here they are going along and they don’t see where they are doing anything wrong. They don’t get the point.

Verse 13, there are others, “There is a generation [there is a kind of people]—oh, how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up.” There’s a kind of person that is just very self-centered and sort of arrogant. They always have to be the center of attention. Sometimes someone like that is entertaining for a while, but there’s shallowness there because they always have to be the center of things.

Verse 14, there’s another kind of person, “There is a generation whose teeth are like swords, and whose fangs are like knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.” Boy, they just go plowing through like a bulldozer, totally oblivious of the feelings of others. They may get things done, but man, the human debris they leave in their wake.

So, there are all kinds of people. It’s sort of an interesting one-sentence summation of some of these. It goes through many different things.

Verses 24-28, “There are four things which are little on the earth, but they are exceedingly wise. The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their food in the summer, the rock badger [KJV, “conies”] are a feeble folk, yet they make their homes in the crags. The locusts have no king, yet they all advance in ranks; the spider skillfully grasps with its hands, and it is in kings’ palaces.”

Take note of four things that are very insignificant, and yet they epitomize some of the greatest qualities of wisdom.

The ants are pretty insignificant little creatures. They are not all that strong and mighty. What can you learn from the ant? The ants prepare ahead. They practice the principle of being prepared. They take advantage of opportunities when they have them; they are prepared. They are pretty insignificant little insects, but that is a tremendous principle of wisdom—taking advantage of the opportunities you have, seizing the day, seizing the opportunity and being prepared.

“The rock badgers are but feeble folk.” They are little tiny animals that make their houses in the rocks—a strong foundation. What they build on has a rock-solid foundation. They are pretty

insignificant little animals, but they dwell in a secure place.

Locusts are pretty insignificant little insects, but they are organized. They all go forth by bands. They exemplify organization and structure. It’s not confusion and strife.

The spider works hard and is diligent. Again, it’s a little insignificant creature, but you’ll find it up in the corner in the kings’ palace. There isn’t any place you’ll look that you won’t find a spider somewhere. It singles out these little things and there’s a lot of food for meditation here. All these little groups of four are enumerated—food for thought.

Proverbs 31 is the seventh section—the words of Lemuel. This is what his mother taught him (v. 1). Most of it focuses in on the subject of what is called “the virtuous woman.”

Proverbs 31:10, “Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies.” We live in a society that measures worth and value by the wrong things. If you want to find out what we value in society, look at the pay scale. It wouldn’t take you too long to look at the pay scale and figure that we value being entertained far more than being taught. Compare what we pay our entertainers to what we pay our teachers and the status that’s given to each. We have certain values that we attach to things in our society, and a lot of these values are distorted.

A lot of women have been made to feel that their value depends on the size of a paycheck they bring home. You can find that Madonna had the highest income of any other woman in the United States last year. Well, does that make her of greater worth and value? God says, “Who can find a virtuous woman? Her worth is far above rubies.” God says virtue is what has value. That’s what God attaches value to. It’s not the size of the paycheck you bring in. It’s not external experience. It’s not all the things that the world attaches value to. God tells us what really has value; a virtuous woman has value that far exceeds rubies.

Verse 11, “The heart of her husband safely trusts her, so he will have no lack of gain.” One of the primary points that is made, one of the things about her, is that her husband safely trusts in her. The physical work that she does has a price, but the character and the attitude she exemplifies is the real contribution that she makes to the family—that’s the one that’s above any price. The work she does of cooking, cleaning and all these things is not what’s above the price of rubies. You can go out and hire that to be done. That’s not the most valuable contribution. The

contribution beyond assigning a price tag to is character and the virtuous attitude that is exemplified. That is of far greater value to a family than any price tag that can be given. A virtuous woman makes a great contribution to the family.

Realize that the family is the foundation, the building block of the society. If you want to understand what's happening to our society, you have to look at what's happening to our families. I don't think that the value of a woman's contribution can be over-estimated. God says it can't. It's priceless. It's above rubies. There's a tremendous thing that it goes into here.

"The heart of her husband does safely trust in her." He doesn't have to worry because there's confidence, respect and trust. She's productive and does all these things. She is concerned about taking care of her responsibilities with her family.

Verse 26, "She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness."

Verse 27, "She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness."

Verse 28, "Her children rise up and call her blessed [or it could be rendered, "will make her happy"]; her husband also, and he praises her." There is going to come an appreciation. Her children rise up and make her happy. Part of the problem with what a woman does is that during so many of the years she's doing it, as her kids are growing up, it's gets discouraging. A lot of the appreciation and feedback doesn't come until years later.

That gets discouraging sometimes because who appreciates it? Oh, sometimes a "fit" may come upon a kid, and they may say thank you. But generally you have to get older in life before you look back and really appreciate what was done. Most of us can see that. This is what it's talking about. Her children will rise up and call her blessed. It's talking about a later time of life.

I think it's important to realize that some things you reap later. It's like seeds that you plant. You won't reap the harvest for a long time, but you will reap it. "Her children will arise up and call her blessed." They will make her happy. They will respond in that way.

Verses 29-31, "Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all. Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates."

Let her have credit for what she does. There is ultimately a public recognition of private virtue that is brought out here.

We have obviously just been able to skim the surface on some of these things. I hope this has whet your appetite for Proverbs and for the things that we can go to and study in greater depth and detail at a later time.

We are going to cover the book of Job next Bible study. We will go through a summary of the book of Job at the next Bible study. Obviously, in this series of studies, it is a survey and we are only hitting the high spots. But I hope that we do so in a way that would sort of whet your appetite to go back and really delve into some of the things that we lack the time and the opportunity in this setting to really dwell on in detail.

Bible Study # 83 Questions

SURVEY OF THE WRITINGS SERIES

Proverbs 22:17—31:31

1. What are we admonished about associations with those who are quick tempered?
2. What point is being made in Proverbs 23:1-5?
3. Should you always seek to postpone spanking a child as long as possible?
4. What are we told about alcohol abuse in Proverbs 23?
5. What is the point being made by Proverbs 24:27?
6. What do we learn in Proverbs 25 about scientific research?
7. What is the point of Proverbs 25:17?
8. What are we told about self-control in Proverbs 25:28?
9. What is meant by Proverbs 26:2?
10. Explain Proverbs 26:8.
11. What characteristics are we given of lazy, ne'er-do-wells in Proverbs 26?
12. What does Proverbs 26:20-21 refer to?
13. Explain Proverbs 27:5-6.
14. Should we seek to plan ahead and make preparation for hard times?
15. What key is revealed in Proverbs 28 to freedom from fear?
16. What key to success is given in Proverbs 28?
17. What warning are we given in Proverbs 29 about taking correction?
18. Why are four "little" things singled out in Proverbs 30 as examples of great wisdom?
19. What are we told in Proverbs 31 that makes the value of a virtuous woman priceless?
20. What reward does the virtuous woman receive for having applied herself to her home and family?

Bible Study # 84
February 11, 1992
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Job

We are getting into the book of Job this evening. Job is a very interesting book. There are an awful lot of things that are in there, a lot of insight that is given.

Before we get into the details of the book, we might look briefly at the setting of the book of Job. There isn't a specific date that is assigned to Job. Clearly, Job was written during the patriarchal period. We would date it after the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and prior to the time of Moses. How do we get a date like that? Let me show you a couple of ways that we do that. The clearest way is the identity of Job's friends.

Job 2:11, we find Job's friends mentioned, "Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite...."

Eliphaz the Temanite is fairly easily identified. If you go back to Genesis 36:10, it gives you the names of Esau's sons, and one of his sons was Eliphaz. We find that the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam and Kenaz. Teman was the grandson of Esau and the son of Eliphaz. So this would tie in here.

Bildad the Shuhite—by the way, that does not mean that he was the shortest man in the Bible, as is the joke. The Shuhites were descendants of Shuah who was a son of Abraham by the way of Keturah. Keturah was the wife that Abraham married after Sarah's death. In Genesis 25:1, it talks about Abraham marrying Keturah.

Genesis 25:2, the sons of Abraham by Keturah were mentioned, "...Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah."

You've heard that Job was the greatest man in the land of Uz (Job 1:1). Abraham had two nephews. They were the sons of his brother, Nahor. Two of his nephews were Huz (Uz) and Buz.

Genesis 22:20-21, "...'Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: Huz [Uz] his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram.'" So, who was Uz? He was the brother of Buz. If you ever have twins, here are a couple of good names. They would be sort of original. There are not a whole lot of Uz's and Buz's running around.

The point is that while we can't identify right down to the exact one, it's pretty clear whom we are talking about. When we look at Job and his friends, we are talking about the extended family of Abraham. We're talking about either descendants through Abraham's grandson, Esau, or we are looking at descendants through Abraham's second wife, Keturah, or some nephews of Abraham and their families.

We are looking at the extended family of Abraham who dwelt in that general area of the old land of Edom and down in what would be the border area between modern Israel-Jordan-Saudi Arabia. If you look at a map and look where those areas begin to converge, that is the general area where these events took place—the old area of Edomia. We can pretty well deduce these things directly from the book. There are some Jewish translations that also confirm this.

The Septuagint translation was a Greek translation of the Old Testament made a couple of hundred years prior to Christ. As an overall translation, it's not very accurate or reliable; some of it is a little better than others. But there are two things that it does. One, it gives us a record of some traditions. It gives us some traditional understandings or interpretations that were available prior to the time of Christ in the Jewish community because some parts of the Septuagint are almost a parallel rather than direct translation. It gives you a way that they understood it or a way that some segments of the Jewish community understood it.

The other thing is, in some cases, there are scribal additions and things like that added to it. The book of Job actually has a couple of extra verses added in the original inspired text. They give you the idea of what, at least a section of the Jewish community a couple of hundred years prior to Christ, was believed about it. Those two additional verses make reference to the fact of Job being connected with the family of Esau.

Moses, according to Jewish tradition, is responsible for the book of Job, in the sense that it became a part of the Hebrew canon. Where did Moses come across the book? The events that transpired, undoubtedly, took place during the time of Israel's captivity in Egypt or perhaps during the early part of the period Israel was in Egypt.

How did Moses come to have it, and how did it come to be a part of the Bible? Well, I think the logical explanation would be that he received a copy of the book from his father-in-law. You remember Jethro (Reuel), his father-in-law, was the priest of Midian. The Midianites were

descendants of Abraham through Keturah, so they were of the same general people as the Israelites. They also preserved the knowledge, at least for a time, of the true God. The title “Reuel” literally means “the friend of God.” The “el” ending, of course, is the name that is used to refer to God in the Hebrew language. It would certainly indicate that he continued the worship that was practiced in the family of Abraham.

We find a little mention of Jethro in the book of Exodus. There aren’t any indications whatsoever that he was an idolater or, in any way, not in harmony with what God was doing through Moses.

The individuals involved in the book of Job would probably have been a part of that extended family of Abraham. Job was, undoubtedly, dead by the time Moses was there in the desert. The book that he wrote of his experiences in this account was something that was known and preserved in that portion of the family of Abraham. I think both the logic and what we can deduce directly from Scripture, together with the tradition that the Jews have preserved, would lead us to see or to understand that explanation of it.

There was a direct succession to the birthright. God worked only peripherally through some of the other families descended from Abraham. It shows us that even though some were not in the direct line of promise, in the sense of what God was doing directly through the lineal descendants of Abraham, nevertheless, there were individuals in the family who availed themselves of the knowledge of God and sought God. God was very much involved with them in that context.

Job 1:1, “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright and one who feared God and shunned evil.” Job was in the land of Uz. Now, we have already seen who Uz was. He was the brother of Buz. Job was in this area that bordered the Sinai portion of the old area of Edomia, the land of Edom.

Verses 2-3, “And seven sons and three daughters were born to him. Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East.”

We’re told that he was a man of great wealth and influence, a man of note in this area. He was the most noted and remarkable man in this entire area. He was a man who feared God. He stood in absolute reverence and awe of God. He was a

person who hated evil and sought to avoid it. He had a sizable family of seven sons and three daughters. He was wealthy and possessed quite a number of sheep, camels, oxen and donkeys. He was the greatest of all the men of the East. The term “people [or the sons] of the East” refers to the area from east of Jerusalem over toward the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. Job was one of the wealthiest and most noted men in this whole area.

Verse 6, “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.”

We find that Satan came before God. We are given little bits of insight into certain things including a little bit of insight into the workings of God in heaven. There was a time when the angels were to appear before God, and Satan came among them.

The angels are referred to as the “sons of God.” The term “sons of God” is used in several contexts: (1) it is used to refer to angels, (2) in Genesis 4:26 it is a title that the descendants of Cain applied to themselves, (3) it is a title that is applied in a spiritual sense to Christians and (4) it is a term that is applied in a physical sense to Adam in the genealogy given in Luke.

Luke 3:38, “...Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.” –In the sense, the only parent Adam had was God. There are various uses of the term, and we have to discern the use of it from the context. This is one of the contexts, and it uses the term to refer to angels in the sense that angels, by creation, are sons of God—though not in the spiritual sense that Christians are, either now or at the time when we are changed into spirit in the resurrection.

Verse 6, “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.” Satan came among them.

Verse 7, “And the Lord said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ So Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.’”

God, at this point, called his attention to something. Note that God is the one who called the devil’s attention to Job. Satan didn’t bring up the topic of Job; God did.

Verse 8, “Then the Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?’” God said, ‘Have you noticed what a remarkable individual he is? There is no one like him.’ Satan was quick to have a comeback.

Verse 9, “So Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing?’” Satan said, ‘Does he fear you for nothing? Well, I guess he does. You pay him well enough. Yeah, sure he fears you. You pay him well enough. You’ve made a hedge about him, about his house and everything that he has. Of course it’s in his best interest’ (vv. 9-10).

Satan operated under the theory that the only reason a person does something is because of what they stand to gain out of it. The fact that you could do something on the basis of love and loyalty or that you can have a commitment on the basis of love and loyalty never entered into the mind of Satan. The only reason he could see that you would be loyal and give allegiance to someone or something was because you stood to gain something out of it.

Satan said, ‘Well, yeah, you protect him. Of course he fears You. You have him on the payroll. You have everything hedged about; nothing happens to him. Of course he does. It is in his economic self-interest to fear You. He has all the motives in the world to do it. That’s why he does it.’

The devil’s attitude is that the only reason people do something is because of what they are going to get out of it. The idea that you would do something out of a sense of loyalty, allegiance and love—no, he couldn’t relate to those motives. It had to be a selfish motive. It had to be a motive of self-interest—not the fact that your interests could rise above yourself and you could do something not because of what you were getting out of it. This is one aspect that we often have not focused on in the book of Job.

There were lessons that Job had to learn, but there are also lessons for us to learn in the book of Job. That was something for the devil to learn. There was a point that God was proving to the devil. The devil was convinced that nobody, no being, would ever have complete loyalty and allegiance to God based on love.

God told him, ‘You think the only reason Job does what he does is because I protect him because he’s blessed and all his property is protected. I don’t believe that, Satan. I don’t think that’s why Job serves me. You think it is? I’ll tell you what; I will remove the hedge. You’re right; I have protected Job. I’ve watched over him. But that’s not why Job is serving me, and I will prove it to you. I’ll just remove the hedge, and you do what you will to him. I will not restrain your power except that you can’t touch him (vv. 11-12).’

We are told that Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord (v. 12). We get the impression that when the devil has something bad to do, he doesn’t waste time doing it.

You read the story and Job is out here.

Verses 14-15, “and a messenger came to Job and said, ‘The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, when the Sabeans raided them and took them away—indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’”

Verse 16, “While he was still speaking....” You get the time flow here? We are not talking about something that drags out over weeks, but we are talking about a matter of about fifteen minutes time. He gets the news from several different messengers that everything he has is gone, including his family.

And in each case you find, “While he was still speaking,” another one showed up. You’d have to say that the devil did not waste time. When he had something bad to do, he was so happy to do it that he just didn’t lose a moment.

Verse 16, “While he was still speaking....”

Verse 17, “While he was still speaking....”

Verse 18, “While he was still speaking....”

Verses 20-22, when this was finished, “Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.’ In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.” The KJV margin renders it, “nor attributed folly to God.” He did not blame God foolishly or charge God foolishly. His loyalty or allegiance to God didn’t waver.

Job 2:1, “Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord.”

We are not told how often the angels come to present themselves before God. Some commentators have speculated that this may have been once a year. In this case, this situation of Job having lost his property and everything may have dragged on for a year before the events of chapter 2 happened. Maybe it wasn’t that long. I don’t know. There isn’t any particular evidence.

To my knowledge this is the only area of Scripture that clearly shows that there are designated times when all the angels are summoned to appear before God. Evidently, there is a regular basis on which all the angels come before God and Satan is compelled to

appear. One of the things we understand here is that the devil's power is limited. He can only do as God allows. God places limits and Satan cannot go beyond those limits.

God, again, called his attention to Job.

Verse 3, "Then the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause.'" –'There wasn't any reason for it. But you wanted to do it, so I allowed you to do it. It's been done and have you noticed? Go ahead and admit it Satan; you were wrong. You said that if I took away what he had, he would curse Me to My face. That's not right; it didn't happen, did it?'

Now the devil, never being one to admit an error, didn't say, 'You're right and I was wrong.' No, that's not what he said.

Verse 4, he said, "So Satan answered the Lord and said, 'Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life.'" –'No, I'll tell you what; you didn't let me touch him.'

Verse 5, "'But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!'" There was no admission that maybe he had miscalculated Job. No, he was convinced. He felt that the only reason someone does something is because of his own self-interest or because of what he is getting out of it.

Verse 6, "So the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life.'" –'You can do anything you want except kill him.'

Verse 7, "Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head." You get the idea? Again, when Satan has a chance to do something bad to somebody, it isn't a halfway measure. He didn't cause a few of Job's oxen or donkeys to run off or get killed; he didn't cause one of his children to die. When he had a chance to do it, he did it all the way. And when he was given permission to smite Job, he went quickly. Job didn't get just a boil; he was covered with boils from the bottom of his feet to the top of his head. So, again, the devil likes to deal out trouble.

Well, Job was pretty miserable with something like that. He wound up sitting in an ash heap. How do you get relief when you are covered with boils all over? Where are you going to sit down and be comfortable? Job wound up sitting in an ash heap and scraping himself with a piece

of broken pottery (v. 8). It was a pretty miserable sort of existence.

Verse 9, "Then his wife said to him..." You know, it's interesting. Satan killed everybody else connected with Job, but he didn't do anything to Mrs. Job. Verse 9 may explain the reason.

Continuing in v. 9, the only contribution we read from her is, "...'Do you still hold to your integrity? Curse God and die!'" 'Why don't you just go ahead, curse God and get it over with?' Hopefully, she learned her lesson. We aren't given any indication that when Job had his family renewed at the end of the book, he was given a new wife. So, perhaps, she learned some lessons out of all this, too. She was not contributing to Job's benefit at this point. She was frustrated and said to just get it over with.

Verse 10, "But he said to her, 'You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?' In all this Job did not sin with his lips." "Job did not sin with his lips" is worded a little differently than Job 1:22.

Job 1:22, he says, "In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong."

Job 2:10, Job may have thought some things. He may have had to wrestle with some thoughts, but he didn't say anything he shouldn't have said. He did not do what the devil said he would do.

The devil, by this point, has already been proven wrong twice. It reiterates at the end of each of these incidents that Job did not sin with his lips. He did not charge God with wrong, which was exactly what the devil said he would do. So, God makes it plain that the devil was wrong—that he totally misread Job.

Now, Job had three friends that heard of this, and it mentions them (v. 11). I've mentioned already that we can identify them with the extended family of Abraham. Bildad is probably a descendant of Abraham through Keturah; Eliphaz the Temanite is probably the great grandson of Esau. Some of the generations of Esau's family were fairly close. It is even perhaps the son of Esau who's mentioned there. We don't know where this term "Temanite" comes from, although it became a reference to an area of the country and to some of the descendants of Eliphaz, the son of Esau.

These three friends came down. They made an appointment to meet together to comfort Job. They were just overwhelmed when they saw Job and the condition he was in. Job was so filled with his grief and discouragement that he just

didn't feel like saying anything. They sat there with him. They sat there a week (vv. 11-13).

Job 3:1, "After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth." He didn't curse God. What he said was he wished he had never been born. If this was where he was going to end up, he wished that the day he was born would perish from the calendar—that the day didn't exist.

Of course, the book of Job is one of the poetic books, along with Psalms and Proverbs. It is written in poetry. It is not just straight prose. Poetry is written differently than prose. In poetry, there is a repetition for the sake of emphasis. The use of language is different. You can't read the book of Job, just strictly, as you would an account in I Samuel because it is written in an expressive and a poetic fashion. Job describes his frustration and discouragement and wishes he were dead. If that was the state in which he had to come, he was wishing he had never been born.

Verses 25-26, "For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me. I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, for trouble comes." One little bit of insight we gain from v. 25 is that Job evidently had been worried; he had been concerned somewhat about the loss of physical things. This was something that had been on his mind; he evidently had spent some time wondering about that and was a little bit worried about something happening. And then, sure enough, it did.

Now the friends begin to speak. Each of these friends has two discourses. Eliphaz the Temanite is the first one who begins to speak. We are told in the book of Jeremiah that the Temanites were noted for their wisdom (Jeremiah 49:7). They were noted in this way. He came to some conclusions. Notice what he said.

Job 4:7, "Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off?"

Verse 8, "Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same." Eliphaz certainly had an "encouraging" way of getting his point across. He said, 'One thing I've seen in life is people always get what they have coming. One thing you can mark down is people get what they have coming to them. They plow iniquity and sow wickedness; they are going to reap the same.' Eliphaz goes through and makes his point.

There are some interesting things that Eliphaz says.

Job 5:17, "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore do not despise the chastening

of the Almighty." This part is true because it's quoted later in the book of Proverbs and re-quoted in the book of Hebrews. So, there are some points that Eliphaz made that were valid, but the fundamental point that Eliphaz made was, 'Look, you have all these problems and there has to be a reason for it.'

I'll tell you what; I've seen situations where sometimes I wondered if some people in the Church had ever read the book of Job. I've seen people have problems, be in long-term sickness or go through some other really serious trial. Some of their friends showed up and almost quoted Eliphaz verbatim. They would say, 'You know you must have really done something for God to punish you that way.' I just sort of marveled when I heard that. They must have never read the book of Job because God wasn't really happy with Eliphaz and with Eliphaz's conclusion.

God wasn't really happy with that. In fact, when you read the end of the book, you read that God was definitely less than happy with what Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar had to say. They took it upon themselves to speak for God. God hadn't appointed them to do the speaking. They were putting words in God's mouth; that's a serious business.

James 3:1, "...let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment." It's just been incredible to me through the years, how quickly some people in the Church were to come up with some great pronouncement, 'Well, I think you should just leave him. You should just divorce. You should do so-and-so.' Or, 'You must have really done something terrible for that to happen to you.' Off the top of their heads, they came up with some great pronouncement.

It evidently never dawned on them that they were putting themselves in the position of being a teacher of the will of God. Unless God had directly revealed His will to them, that's something they really should be very careful of, realizing that God is going to scrutinize what they say. If we start advising someone, we had better be sure that what we are saying is really what God would say and not something that pops off the top of our heads because that is serious business. That's what Eliphaz was doing.

Well, Job was upset by what Eliphaz had to say because Job knew that there wasn't any great specific sin. Eliphaz sort of took the idea that Job was at the center of the cause. 'You look good on the outside, but there has to be something you're doing that we don't know about. You

wouldn't have all these problems if there wasn't something. God is trying to tell you something. Tell us what you have been doing. You've been running around on your wife, right? Been cheating people, right? Whatever it is, tell me.' This was his concept and this was a false concept.

Job is really depressed and frustrated. Here is a situation that has probably hung on for over a year—maybe not the illness part of it, but his total losses of everything of value to him including his family and now the loss of his health. We're looking at events that have dragged on for, probably, over a year since these things started happening. Job is discouraged, in pain and is miserable. He just doesn't understand why. Here, his friend, who came to comfort him, ends up accusing him of having done some terrible thing. So, Job really gets pretty defensive. He goes through some of that in Job 6.

Job 7:1, “Is there not a time of hard service for man on earth? Are not his days also like the days of a hired man?” In other words, a hired day laborer's days are long and hard. Normally, it was for farm work. You hired a day laborer during times of harvest and threshing—in times when there was a lot of hard work and long hours and you needed some extra hands. He sort of got paid the minimum wage of the day. He was just a day laborer, so his days were long and hard. When Job refers to “the days of a hired man,” that is what he means. We have a limited time on earth and our days can, sometimes, also be long and hard.

Verse 2, “Like a servant who earnestly desires the shade, and like a hired man who eagerly looks for his wages.” In other words, the servant earnestly desires the shade. He is looking forward to seeing quitting time. He's anxious to see the time when the sun sets and it is time to quit working. The hired man is anxious to get what he was working for.

Verse 3, “So I have been allotted months of futility, and wearisome nights have been appointed to me.” It just goes on and on and on. Job is depressed. He just wishes it were over.

Verse 17, “What is man, that You should magnify him, that You should set Your heart on him?”

Bildad begins to answer.

Job 8:6, “If you were pure and upright, surely now He would awake for you, and prosper your rightful habitation.”

Verse 20, “Behold, God will not cast away the blameless, nor will He uphold the evildoers.”

Bildad sort of takes the same “tact” Eliphaz did. He said, ‘If you were really as good as what you seem to think, God would be stepping in to take care of things. He's not going to cast away someone who's pleasing Him. He's not going to help evildoers and He's not going to cast away someone with whom he's pleased.’ Again, a very distorted perspective.

Job's response, like in Job 6:24-25, where he says, “Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; cause me to understand wherein I have erred. How forceful are right words! But what does your arguing prove?” Job is saying, ‘You are just going around and around and arguing. If I have a problem, show me what it is. Show me where I am wrong.’ Now Eliphaz couldn't do that, and neither could Bildad. They didn't see the problem, but they assumed that there had to be something.

Job continues to speak. He just doesn't know what to do. Again, he is frustrated.

Job 10:1-2, “My soul loathes my life; I will give free course to my complaint, I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God, “Do not condemn me; show me why You contend with me.””

Job wonders why God is doing this to him. Sometimes things happen and we know that it is a matter of cause and effect. Someone is “ripping” down the road, and a policeman comes up behind him with red lights flashing on his car. He doesn't need to ask why God is doing this to him. That's not a matter of God doing something to him. He did it to himself and, generally, he knows that. But there are times things happen that aren't that way. We come through some great trial or situations that just come out of the blue. It can be financial reverses; it can be sickness. It can be death; it can be some very traumatic situation—and you don't know why it happened. Of course, our desire is to know why. Why? We don't always know why.

Zophar answered. Zophar had a really “encouraging” thought.

Job 11:6 (last part), “...Know therefore that God exacts from you less than your iniquity deserves.” Zophar is really an “encouraging” sort. He says, ‘You're getting off light. I don't know what you did, but it must have really been bad. God is not hitting you nearly as hard as what you probably deserve.’

Job 13:13-16, “Hold your peace with me, and let me speak, then let come on me what may! Why do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my hands? Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways

before Him. He also shall be my salvation, for a hypocrite could not come before Him.”

Job, in the midst of his grief, trouble, frustration and sorrow, still said, “though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.” He didn’t understand why. He couldn’t fathom what was going on. He wished he could talk to God face to face and see what this was all about. But he knew that God was right, and he would trust Him, although He slay him.

It’s easy to go through, sometimes, and say Job didn’t seem in a really good attitude when he said this or that. Well, I tell you what; I think Job set a remarkable example in terms of endurance and faith. Job never did what the devil thought he would do. He never became bitter against God. He was depressed and in the depths of despair some of the times. There were times that he wished he had never been born. But he inevitably kept coming back to the message of faith.

Job 14:1, “Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.” Job said this.

Verse 2, “He comes forth like a flower and fades away; He flees like a shadow and does not continue.” That’s a poetic description, but it’s a very beautiful description of human life. Job understood this. What we have to understand is that this human life is not the ultimate.

The emphasis in recent decades (I think we could certainly trace back for twenty years or slightly over that and, increasingly, in the 70s) was sort of dubbed the “me” decade. That was the emphasis then, and it continued on. As we sort of look back at some of the periods, the 80s was the decade of “greed.” There has been this increasing emphasis of what’s called “self-fulfillment.” It’s based on the idea that everyone is entitled to be happy here and now, and we have a right to that.

Happiness is a blessing and it’s a benefit. But Job understood that, vv. 1-2, “Man who is born of woman is of a few days and full of trouble. [We are temporary, and there are a lot of problems.] He comes forth like a flower and fades away; he flees like a shadow and does not continue.”

Verses 3-9, “And do You open Your eyes on such a one, and bring me to judgment with Yourself? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one! Since his days are determined, the number of his months is with You; You have appointed his limits, so that he cannot pass. Look away from him that he may rest, till like a hired man he finishes his day. For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again,

and that its tender shoots will not cease. Though its root may grow old in the earth, and its stump may die in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bud and bring forth branches like a plant.”

You’ve seen that. You cut down a tree and little sprouts begin to come back up.

Verse 10, “But man dies and is laid away; indeed he breathes his last and where is he?” It doesn’t happen when a person dies. There’s a physical part of the continuing cycle of life. A tree dies, and you can still have a little life left in the old root and a new sprout comes up. But that doesn’t happen with a human being. Man dies and he wastes away. He breathes his last and where is he?

Verse 12, “So man lies down and does not rise. Till the heavens are no more, they will not awake nor be roused from their sleep.”

Verses 13-15, “Oh, that You would hide me in the grave, that You would conceal me until Your wrath is past, that You would appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my change comes. You shall call, and I will answer You; You shall desire the work of Your hands.”

Job understood that there was to be a resurrection. Job looked beyond this life.

I Corinthians 15:19, Paul says, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.” That’s what he says in the resurrection chapter. If your only hope for justice and happiness is here and now, you are in trouble because we live in an unjust world. Oh, there may be certain things—we can certainly have certain benefits and sometimes things work out well—but basically we live in an unjust world.

We live in a world that is the devil’s world. There are inequities that are going to be until the Kingdom of God is established and the will of God is carried out on earth with the same alacrity that the angels carry it out in heaven. God’s will isn’t carried out that way on the earth. God can accomplish His will by intervening. Human beings aren’t anxious to carry out God’s will as the angels are. We live in an unjust world. We live in a world that is filled with pain, sorrow, trouble and difficulty. That’s the world we live in, and we are surrounded by it.

Because of the blessings of Abraham, we live in the area of the world that has had the greatest benefits and blessings. But we tend to take that for granted. We just do. Some of you can remember back. The things that we have, even on a physical level, there’s no comparison. Some of you sitting here remember when you got

indoor plumbing, electric lights and some of these things. We are not that far removed. That's not ancient history. Even those among us who don't consider ourselves at all wealthy, live with a level of comfort that some of the wealthiest people didn't have too many years ago.

You know, a hundred years ago, I don't care how much money you had, if you lived in Baton Rouge in the summertime, you just sweated. You didn't have any air conditioning. I don't care if you owned the biggest plantation on the Mississippi River; you just sat there and were hot. You could fan yourself or get somebody else to fan you, but you couldn't turn on the air conditioning.

Now, that's a really simple little thing, and there are so many things. We live in an age where we have so much. We have so much more than the vast majority of human beings on the face of this earth. But as a nation we haven't appreciated it. We're not grateful for it, and as a nation we are in the process of losing it. Anybody who thinks God is not breaking the pride of our power and removing the blessings of the birthright from us hasn't read Leviticus and hasn't looked at the news lately because that's reality. I think we understand that.

Job had the message of faith and the message of the resurrection.

Job 19:25-27, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"

Now, you'd have to say that Job evidenced faith. In the midst of his despair, despondency and grief, he kept coming back to the fact that he knew there's something beyond this. And his hope and confidence rested in his Redeemer. He knew that his Redeemer lived, and in the later days, His feet shall stand upon the earth.

Now, I would also point out to you that the clearest teaching of the resurrection in the Old Testament is in the book of Job and the book of Daniel. The Old Testament really doesn't talk very much about the resurrection and very, very little about the promise of eternal life. You could go through and you'd have to really do a little searching and extrapolating to try to find really clear proof scriptures. Yes, I understand the principle is there in certain things, but when you start looking for a really clear proof scripture, you are going to find that you are going to be pretty well confined to the book of Job or the

book of Daniel. There wouldn't be a whole lot elsewhere.

Job understood that the time of the resurrection was the time when he would stand.

The statement, "in my flesh shall I see God" is really not the literal translation. I will read it out of the Jewish translation. Job says, "As for me I know that my Redeemer lives and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth and when, after my skin this is destroyed, then without my flesh shall I see God." In other words, he is not going to see God in the flesh. He is going to see God as a spirit-born Son of God in the resurrection. Job, clearly, understood some things about the resurrection. Some things that are here, we don't find clearly stated elsewhere.

Job expressed how everybody has turned against him.

Verses 16-20, "I call my servant, but he gives no answer; I beg him with my mouth. My breath is offensive to my wife, and I am repulsive to the children of my own body. Even young children despise me; I arise, and they speak against me. All my close friends abhor me, and those whom I love have turned against me. My bone clings to my skin and to my flesh, and I have escaped by the skin of my teeth."

Have you ever wondered where that expression came from? Have you heard about someone escaping by "the skin of his teeth"? The skin of your teeth is pretty thin. You don't have a whole lot of skin on your teeth. That's where that expression comes from. It comes out of the Bible. It's a poetic expression from the book of Job. Job describes that not only had he lost everything, he had lost everybody. "And those whom I love have turned against me."

He says in vv. 21-23, "Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has struck me! Why do you persecute me as God does, and are not satisfied with my flesh? Oh, that my words were written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book!" That wish got fulfilled. We are reading that.

Job was really feeling pretty miserable. He wanted a little pity and a little sympathy, but all he was getting was his friends "ganging up" on him. Job not only understood about the resurrection to eternal life, but Job 21:30 shows that he understood about the third resurrection to the lake of fire.

Job 21:30, "For the wicked are reserved for the day of doom; they shall be brought out on the day of wrath." Job understood some things about the resurrection.

As we continue on down, Eliphaz seeks to retort. In Job 22, Job answers.

Job 23:2, “Even today my complaint is bitter...”

Verses 11-12, “My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside. I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.”

Job says, ‘It’s not because I have departed from the truth. It’s not because I have departed from God’s ways. That’s not why these things are happening to me.’

Job 25:4, well, Bildad answers briefly, “How then can man be righteous before God? Or how can he be pure who is born of a woman?”

Job answers again in Job 26. He describes a little bit about God—about God’s power and God’s creation.

Job 26:6, “Sheol is naked before Him, and Destruction has no covering.” Nothing is hidden from God.

Verse 7, “He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing.” This statement and others like it are among those that demonstrate the authority of the Bible and the scientific accuracy of the Bible. The Bible was a book way ahead of its time.

The Greeks, who were supposed to be the founders of so much of western civilization and noted for their insight and their scientific knowledge—a good four or five hundred or maybe even seven hundred years after the time Job wrote these words—the Greeks’ poets Homer and Hesiod were writing that the earth was held up on the shoulders of Atlas. That was the greatest Greek scientific theory of the day, a good six or seven hundred years after Job had written these words, “...God hangs the earth on nothing.” That’s a pretty good description.

The Chinese figured out that it was on the back of a giant turtle. I don’t know what they thought the turtle was standing on. I’ve always wondered. The Greeks thought Atlas was holding the earth on his shoulders. Job, writing hundreds of years earlier said, “God hangs the earth on nothing.”

Isaiah, in Isaiah 40:22, talked about the “circle” or the “sphere” of the earth more than two thousand years before Columbus proved to the Europeans that the earth was round rather than flat.

The point is that the Bible is a book way ahead of its time. The Bible doesn’t give us all scientific information, but when the Bible speaks about matters of science, it gives us insight and

information that was way, way ahead of any of the theories of any of the cultures of other people around. The Bible is the inspired word of God.

Job did not see his problem.

Job 27:6, “My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me as long as I live.” He said he didn’t see where he had done anything wrong. Now, Job did have a certain problem that we are going to see a little later. Job did have some problems with self-righteousness. There were some things that he did not see.

But we sometimes focus on that to the exclusion of the fact that Job was a man who was devoted to God. His loyalty, his allegiance, his devotion to God was constant. Job loved God. He was devoted to God. He was prepared to trust God and to trust what God was doing, all the way to the grave. Job looked for fulfillment beyond this life. That didn’t mean that he enjoyed suffering in this life, but Job understood the real answer and the real solution. He understood this life—we’re here and we are gone.

This life can be very difficult, but Job looked on beyond. He had a loyalty, devotion and allegiance to God that the devil never comprehended. Job was not simply motivated by what he stood to get. Job loved God. He was devoted to God and desired to serve God. But Job did not really see himself properly in relationship to God—in terms of how great God was by comparison to Job.

One of the things, in terms of scientific information, that’s sort of interesting—he talks about God and what God does.

Job 28:24-25, “For He looks to the ends of the earth, and sees under the whole heavens, to establish a weight for the wind, and mete out the waters by measure.” The Amplified Bible renders this as, “He gave to the wind the weights [or pressure].” You know, air pressure was not even understood or discovered until the modern era. People didn’t think air had any weight. But, of course, we know that it does. It’s what we call air pressure. Job understood that. God gave him insight and God makes reference here that this was the case.

Verse 26, “When He made a law for the rain, and a path for the thunderbolt.” Job understood that these were connected.

You can go through chapter 29. We get a little bit of insight into some of the power and prestige that Job had. He talks about the contrast between all that he had in chapter 29 and all that he had lost in chapter 30.

In Job 31, he describes how good he had been. Job 31:1, “I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?” He said he just decided that he was not going to look and lust.

Verses 2-11, “For what is the allotment of God from above, and the inheritance of the Almighty from on high? Is it not destruction for the wicked, and disaster for the workers of iniquity? Does He not see my ways, and count all my steps? If I have walked with falsehood, or if my foot has hastened to deceit, let me be weighted in a just balance, that God may know my integrity. If my step has turned from the way, or my heart walked after my eyes, or if any spot adheres to my hands, then let me sow, and another eat; yes, let my harvest be rooted out. If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or if I have lurked at my neighbor’s door, then let my wife grind for another, and let others bow down over her. For that would be wickedness; yes, it would be iniquity worthy of judgment.”

He said this was a heinous crime; it was an iniquity. Job understood the law of God. He said he had not done anything.

Verse 33, “If I have covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom.” Job said, ‘I haven’t covered up my transgressions as Adam had.’

Verse 40, “...The words of Job are ended.” Finally, the words of Job are ended.

Job 32:1, “So these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.” See! This was the problem. Job was righteous in his own eyes.

Verse 2, “Then the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram...” Now, you can go back and find out who Ram was. We already know who Uz was. He was the brother of Buz. So, this was who Elihu was. Elihu hadn’t said anything. He evidently showed up later after the other fellows. He was a little younger than the rest of them and had just been sitting there listening.

Continuing in v. 2, he listened to all of this and, “...his wrath was aroused because he [Job] justified himself rather than God.”

Verse 3, “Also against his three friends his wrath was aroused, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job.” He was upset at the three friends because they hadn’t found any answer and yet had condemned Job. They didn’t know why, but they were sure that it was all Job’s fault. Elihu had a “bone to pick” with both of them. He told them, ‘You don’t know what you are talking about. And as for you, Job,

you’ve put a focus on how good you are and you really haven’t taken note of God. You don’t see yourself in proper relationship with God.’

Verse 8, he talks about the spirit in man.

Job 33:12-13, he goes through and says, “Look, in this you are not righteous. I will answer you, for God is greater than man. Why do you contend with Him? For He does not give an accounting of any of His words.” He said, ‘God doesn’t have to explain to us why He does what He does.’ God doesn’t always have to give us an explanation. There are “whys” we will never know until the resurrection. That’s just the way it is. That’s where a certain amount of trust and faith has to come in. Sometimes, we understand; sometimes, we don’t.

Job 34:12, he continues, “Surely God will never do wickedly, nor will the Almighty pervert justice.”

Job 35:1-6, Elihu said, “Moreover Elihu answered and said: ‘Do you think this is right? Do you say, “My righteousness is more than God’s?” For you say, “What advantage will it be to You? What profit shall I have, more than if I had sinned?” I will answer you, and your companions with you. Look to the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds which are higher than you. If you sin, what do you accomplish against Him? Or, if your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to Him?’”

He said to look up there. God is up in heaven. All the things you do, you’re not going to harm God by it. You can’t get up there and cause Him a problem.

Verses 7-8, “If you are righteous, what do you give Him? Or what does He receive from your hand? Your wickedness affects a man such as you, and your righteousness a son of man.” You’re not doing damage to God. You’re not helping God and you’re not hurting God. Elihu tells them God is not moved by the kind of motives that all of them are assigning to Him. God is neither hurt nor helped by what you are doing.

Job 36:3, he continues, “I will fetch my knowledge from afar; I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.”

Job 38:1-4, when Elihu finished, God said, “Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: ‘Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding.’”

Verses 6-7, “To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

God begins to talk to Job. He wanted Job to see the perspective of God’s greatness and man’s insignificance because the cure for self-righteousness is when we ultimately see ourselves in proper relationship with God. We see how great God is and our own comparative insignificance.

There’s an interesting poetic description given in Job 38. It’s written in a poetic fashion, but if you note what’s actually being said, the analogy being drawn is a very interesting one.

Verses 12-14, “Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place, that it might take hold of the ends of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it? It takes on form like clay under a seal, and stands out like a garment.” It’s talking about the morning dawning, the day coming forth and how, as the day spreads across the earth, the wicked are shaken out.

John 3:19, John tells us, “...Men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.” Most wickedness is going on at night.

You read in the paper about Baton Rouge being the murder capital. When you read the time of day that most of these things happen, more of them happen late at night or in the wee hours of the morning than happen in broad daylight. That’s just part of human nature. People like to do their wickedness late at night.

He says, “Have you commanded the morning since your days began?” Where does the morning come from? Then He talks of how the wicked are shaken out of the earth as the daylight spreads across it.

Verse 14 describes the earth as taking on form like clay under a seal when the daylight comes. The analogy is that they had a cylinder seal—a carved stone or engraved metal seal. Generally, an engraved stone seal—a cylinder—is round. What happened is the seal was rolled across the clay and the seal spread from one end to the other as the seal rolled across. It is a poetic description of how the daylight came. The sun is like the seal, and in a sense, the earth is like the clay. It rolls around the seal, and as it rolls around the seal, the inscription spreads from one end of the clay to the other. It comes gradually because we are on a round earth rotating around the sun. The daylight starts in one part and it spreads all the way around. You have to think about it a little bit to picture what’s being said.

Again, this is just a little insight in terms of an accurate description.

God talks about all that He had done and the greatness that He had accomplished. Job began to really see himself and to realize his self righteousness. All that he had done, by comparison to God and God’s power and God’s greatness, Job was a lot further down the line than Job had ever seen himself. Job had always felt there wasn’t quite as much difference between God’s righteousness and his own righteousness. Now he begins to see.

Job 42:1-6, “Then Job answered the Lord and said: ‘I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. You asked, “Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?” Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Listen, please, and let me speak; you said, “I will question you, and you shall answer Me.” I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.’” Job really came to see himself.

Job’s problem was not what the devil thought. The devil ascribed wrong motives to Job. The devil ascribed to Job selfish, self-centered motives. He said Job was just simply in it for what he could get, the same as everybody else. God said, ‘That was not why Job is here. Job doesn’t serve Me because of what he’s getting; Job serves Me because his loyalty, allegiance, devotion and love is centered on Me.’ The devil didn’t believe that. But that was right; Job was devoted to God.

But Job also had some lessons to learn. His problems weren’t what his friends thought. There wasn’t any great obvious sin. Job was not some “closet” sinner who was doing all sorts of wicked things that were being covered up. But Job did have a problem. God wanted Job to see himself and his own righteousness and to see that it was God’s righteousness that he needed. Job didn’t really see himself, but now he did see himself.

Verses 7-10, “And so it was, after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, that the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, ‘My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has. Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly; because you have not spoken of Me

what is right, as My servant Job has.’ So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the Lord commanded them; for the Lord had accepted Job. And the Lord restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.”

Now, I think a lot of times we read over that and we don’t consider the significance. God dealt with Job, but these events didn’t happen just as quickly as we are reading it. God dealt with Job, and Job really came to a deep personal realization of God and the realization of God’s power and his own powerlessness. But he didn’t instantly get all his camels and sheep back. He continued in the state that he was. Spiritually, he was much better. Physically, he was still in a mess.

A period of time went by. The friends had evidently left. God revealed to them that they had better go down where Job was. They thought Job had had it rough, but when He was through with them, they were going to be in worse shape than Job, so they had better get down there and get right with God.

I suspect they got in a pretty big hurry to get down there. They had to gather up the bullocks and sheep and come down to where Job was. They performed these sacrifices. God said for them to do this, and when Job prayed for them, He would remove their iniquity. Job prayed for his friends. Job had to be willing to forgive. He couldn’t nurse a grudge against these guys, ‘When I was down, you guys kicked me. You just added to my misery.’ Job could not hold resentment.

It’s interesting. When Job prayed for his friends, that’s when God lifted the cloud. I think there is a very important lesson of how important it is that we forgive. Resentment and bitterness are things to which we can’t hold on. Job could not afford to hold a grudge against his friends, and he didn’t. That was the final test.

We read it and it’s easy. But I tell you what. If you’re in a situation where you’re down and going through a real trial that drags on a year or two, and the people you thought were your best friends—all they are doing is adding to your misery—then one of the things you’d probably not instantly feel like doing is praying for God to be merciful to them and really meaning it. It’s easy, we can read through this in an hour and a half Bible study, but Job lived through it for a period of time. I don’t know exactly how long the book of Job covers, perhaps eighteen months or so—but I tell you, it’s a long time.

At this point everything turned around for him. God blessed him.

Job 42:12, “Now the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning....” God doubled the things that He had given him (v. 10) and blessed him with more children (v. 13).

Verses 16-17, “After this Job lived one hundred forty years...So Job died, old and full of years.” He lived a long time after that period. God doubled everything, in terms of Job. This is speculation, but Job may have been seventy at the time this happened. We know God added one hundred forty more years. In terms of wealth, God doubled and gave him twice as much as he had before. He replaced the children. It’s just a matter of speculation, but I think it’s very possible that he may have given him twice as many years ahead as he had behind. Regardless of that comparison, he certainly was old and full of years because he lived for another one hundred forty years. If he had been just one year old, he’d still have been old and full of years. So, he was well on up in years.

Again, we would date it to the patriarchal period—perhaps contemporary with the end of Jacob’s life and the sons of Jacob. There is a lot of insight that we are given here in the book of Job. The book of Job has a lot of insight into God’s nature and character. It has insights with God’s dealings with man and our relationship with God. There are lessons that we should learn, even in our dealings with one another. There are lessons in our relationship with God. There is recognition of the importance of loyalty and devotion that Job expressed. There are a lot of expressions of faith.

Job 13:15, ““Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him....””

Job 19:25, ““For I know that my Redeemer lives.””

Job 14:14, ““If a man dies shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change comes.””

There are many very important expressions here in the book of Job. It is a very powerful and very important book. We have just had a chance to skim through it this evening. Hopefully, this can be a steppingstone to further deeper personal study.

Next Bible study we will start into the five Festival Scrolls—the first of which is the Song of Solomon.

Bible Study # 84 Questions

SURVEY OF THE WRITINGS SERIES

Job

1. How is Job described?
2. Does Satan ever appear before God and give a report?
3. Was Satan free to do anything he desired to do to Job? What did he do and what resulted? Was it what Satan expected?
4. According to Job 3, had Job been worried that somehow he might lose everything?
5. What attitude did Eliphaz take toward Job's problems?
6. How did Job respond to Eliphaz?
7. What type of attitude did Job have toward his three "friends" and the admonishment they had sought to give him (Job 13)?
8. Prove the truth of the resurrection from the book of Job.
9. How did Job refer to his "friends" in Job 16? Why?
10. In Job 19, what attitude did Job want his "friends" to display toward him?
11. What details are given about the resurrection in Job 19? What is the end result of the wicked (Job 21)?
12. What scientific information about the earth is given in Job 26?
13. What attitude did Job have concerning his own conduct in Job 27?
14. Why did Job's three "friends" cease to answer him?
15. What type of response did Elihu make toward Job and toward the three "friends"?
16. What happened after Elihu finished? How did God help Job begin to see things in perspective?
17. Prove from Job 38 that the earth rotates and that the changes from light to darkness come from this rotation of the earth on its axis.
18. What was Job's attitude when God finished speaking to him?
19. What was God's attitude toward the three "friends" and what happened to them?
20. What was the ultimate result of God's dealings with Job?

Bible Study # 85
February 25, 1992
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Song of Solomon

This evening we **are continuing this series on the Writings, but we are getting into another part of the Writings—the Festival Scrolls.** Again, these are books that we don't tend to go through very frequently. I don't think the Song of Solomon tends to be one of the books that is most frequently heard or quoted from in sermons and Bible studies. Yet it is a very important part of the Bible and there is a very important lesson that is to be learned from it.

We have covered the Psalms, Proverbs and Job in the traditional Jewish order. The next five books (the part of the Writings we are in now) are the books that are called the Megillot or the Festival Scrolls. This is because these five books were traditionally read at certain festival occasions.

The Song of Solomon was the first of these five: Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther. We will be going through each of those books in the next five Bible studies (counting this evening).

These books were traditionally read in the temple, and later in the synagogues, during the various festival seasons. Song of Solomon was traditionally read during the Days of Unleavened Bread—normally on the Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Ruth was traditionally read at Pentecost. Lamentations was read at a festival that was held in the summer in the fifth month of the sacred year—the month of Ab. It is a month that would normally correspond with our July/August (last of July/first of August). The ninth of Ab was the date. It was the commemoration of Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the temple. After the destruction of the temple, it became a national day of fasting that the Jews took upon themselves. It is sort of like Thanksgiving in reverse. It was a day of lament.

The ironic thing is that six hundred plus years later, when Titus and the Romans destroyed the temple, they destroyed it on the anniversary of Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the temple. The two times the temple was destroyed, it was destroyed on the same day—the ninth of Ab. So, they had an additional reason to fast.

Even later history in 1492, the decree that expelled all of the Jews from Spain (which was a major center of Jewish settlement) was issued on

the ninth of Ab. It was just a matter of weeks before Columbus sailed to discover America. All their property was confiscated and they were expelled. So, this date has played a significant role in Jewish history. The book of Lamentations was read on that date.

Ecclesiastes was normally read on the Sabbath during the Feast of Tabernacles. And then Esther was read at Purim, which is a national holiday that commemorates the deliverance of the Jews from Persia. It is normally read in the twelfth month of the sacred year, which would correspond with February/March. We're approaching Purim. It should be right around this time. I would have to check the calendar and do a little calculation to figure out exactly when.

The point is that these books were traditionally read on these occasions. When properly understood, each of these books explains significance to these occasions—significance that has very direct implication for us today. We are going to see that as we go through. I am not going to comment on the others any further this evening.

This evening we **are focusing on the Song of Solomon, which was traditionally read at the Days of Unleavened Bread.** At first thought, that may seem an odd book to read during the Days of Unleavened Bread. In fact, a lot of times people have had trouble understanding the significance of the Song of Solomon. Some of the Rabbis around the time of Christ and after, who were somewhat embarrassed by the plain language of Song of Solomon, decided it was an allegory—that it was the story of God and Israel.

Many of the early Catholic fathers were similarly embarrassed by the plainness of the book and finally decided it was an allegory about Christ and the Church. But the one thing they were all convinced of was that it certainly didn't mean what it said—they found this rather embarrassing and didn't see why something like that should be in the Bible.

If you understood it from the standpoint of the Days of Unleavened Bread, what is the purpose? What do the Days of Unleavened Bread teach us? We are reminded of the importance of putting sin out of our lives. The message of the Days of Unleavened Bread is not a totally negative message. It is not just a matter of getting rid of the leavening. It is not the seven days of not having bread at all; it is the seven days of unleavened bread. We make a replacement. We get rid of the leavening and we eat unleavened bread. So many times the

emphasis on putting away sin can come across as a negative matter. I think, particularly for the young people, sometimes it is a negative matter, and they feel that somehow they are missing out by putting away sin.

The story of the Song of Solomon provides the other part of the story. The reality is there is nothing that is worth having—nothing that is good or beneficial to us—that God commands us to put away.

This particular book describes and shows the joy that is available to a young couple that have remained chaste and saved themselves for one another for marriage. The joy that they are able to have is something that even Solomon, with all of his wealth and women, can't have. It is simply not available in the harem, and that's made plain in this book.

It is a beautiful story. It describes the trials of a beautiful peasant maid from Shulam. One day as she was tending the family vineyard, she was seen by the servants of Solomon as they passed by; she was drafted to be a part of Solomon's harem. When the king beholds her, he falls violently in love with her and tries to woo her with blandishments and enticements. During all of this, she remains faithful to her shepherd lover and pines away for her absent fiancé.

Now, when the king is finally convinced of the constancy of her love for the shepherd, he dismisses her from his presence and allows her to return home with the shepherd. The story ends on a triumphant note, with her and the shepherd returning to her mother's house. She has proved that love is capable of heroic endurance.

Let me read a quote from the [Soncino Jewish Commentary](#)—a quote from the introduction to the Song of Solomon. “The tale she tells to their assembled friends makes a strong protest against the luxury and vice of the court and pays testimony to the beauty and dignity of pure love and fidelity.”

I will be going through the Song of Solomon in the Jewish Publications Society translation (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/jps/>), and utilizing the [Soncino Jewish Commentary](#). There are many different ways that I have seen of presenting this book. Of all the ones that I have seen, the one that seems to respect the clear and plain meaning of the text the best is the one that is laid out here in the [Soncino](#).

There are all sorts of allegorical interpretations and all sorts of things that come in, but this is ultimately a beautiful love story. There are lessons that we can learn. But I think one of the greatest and most important things is, as this

book was read every year during the Days of Unleavened Bread, people in general and young people in particular were reminded of the fact that there are benefits and blessings that are in store when you do it God's way.

Putting away sin doesn't mean missing out on all the fun. Putting away sin doesn't mean having this sort of miserable life where you never have any fun or never get to do anything. That's not where God's way leads. There are benefits and depths of happiness and joy that come from doing it God's way that can never be duplicated any other way—and that's an important lesson to learn for the Days of Unleavened Bread. Putting away sin is not God's punishment for us.

We open in [Song of Solomon 1:1](#), “The song of songs, which is Solomon's.” The term of the title “song of songs” is a superlative. It means the best or the choicest of Solomon's songs. We are told in I Kings 4:32 that Solomon wrote one thousand and five songs, and this is the best that he wrote. This is the choicest of the songs. It is the epitome of the songs that Solomon wrote.

Many of the rabbis and early Catholic fathers were really perplexed in how this wound up in the Bible. They couldn't figure out why this should be a part of the Bible. Solomon wrote one thousand five songs, and this song is the only one that God picked out to be put into the Bible. So, it should tell us that there is something that is important here.

It starts out with the words of the young lady who is referred to as the Shulamite. What we have here are words that she is speaking to her absent shepherd lover.

You have to realize that different parts of the Bible are written in different ways. The way you read the book of Acts or the book of I Samuel is totally different than something such as the Song of Solomon, which was written in a poetic verse. In many ways, it was written to be performed with a chorus and with characters. It is not written as a prose account. It's not written in the detailed historical way as the book of Acts, for instance, or the books of Kings, Chronicles or Judges. It is written as a poem or as a song. It is written almost like a little play—a musical production that involves different ones singing their part. You have to sort of put yourself in that opening. It's as though the curtain opens and the Shulamite is standing there and she is singing.

Verses 2-4, “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—for your love is better than wine. Your ointments have a goodly fragrance; your name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the maidens love you. Draw me, and we'll run

after you; the king has brought me into his chambers; we will be glad and rejoice in you; we will find your love more fragrant than wine! Sincerely do they love you.”

As we go on through, this tells the story of what happened to her. The story that is set out is that she was tending the vineyard and had been conscripted by Solomon’s retinue. Solomon had various palaces and at certain times of the year, he moved from area to area. That was not uncommon in that area.

If you wanted to be cool in the summer, you didn’t turn on the air-conditioning. They didn’t have any. They had a summer palace, which was normally located up in the mountains at a higher elevation where the temperature was cooler. It was not uncommon that the court would move several times in a year. There would be this great panoply and parade and you could see the dust off in the distance. The horsemen and the chariots would come and Solomon would finally come in this big contraption in which he moved. And then would come this gigantic retinue that moved when the court was transferred from palace to palace. So, this is sort of the story.

She is standing here musing this and she is expressing this. This is after she has been taken. The king has brought her into his chambers. Perhaps this is being spoken as a soliloquy as she is sort of musing or speaking to herself. Most likely the ladies of the harem would be close by and hear this.

Verses 5-6, she makes the statement, “I am black, but comely, [The word that is rendered “black” is a word that literally means “ruddy” or “sunburned.”] O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am swarthy, because the sun has tanned me; my mother’s sons were incensed against me; they made me keeper of the vineyard; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.”

In other words, she hasn’t pampered herself. She is comparing herself to the pampered ladies of Solomon’s court. She has been outdoors and is tanned. For some of them, all they did all day long was sit around and pamper themselves. They rubbed on various ointments, oils and all sorts of things. She, from an early age, had been helping on the farm by working out of doors. She is tan and ruddy from the sun. She is, in a sense, comparing herself to these pampered ladies of Solomon’s court.

Verse 7, “Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, where you feed, where you make your flocks to

rest at noon; for why should I be as one that veils herself beside the flocks of your companions.”

Note here that she is addressing her absent shepherd lover. She asks the question, ‘Where are you feeding your flock? Where do you make your flock to rest at noon?’ When she thinks in terms of meeting her fiancé, it is not sneaking off in the dark of night.

Even the commentary brings that out. It says: “Being modest, she says at noon. Not like the wanton ladies of the court who seek their lovers at night because they are up to things they shouldn’t be.”

At this point in v. 8, there is a chorus from the women there in the court—the harem. They respond, “If you know not, O you fairest among women, go your way forth by the footsteps of the flock and feed your kids beside the shepherds’ tents.”

At this point, Solomon comes in and begins to speak to her.

Verses 9-10, “I have compared you, O my love, to a steed in Pharaoh’s chariots. Your cheeks are comely as circlets, your neck with beads.”

You have to understand that some of the comparisons don’t always come down; some of it is cultural. If you were trying to woo some girl and you told her she looked like a horse, she probably wouldn’t take it as a compliment. ‘When I look at you I think of a horse,’ wouldn’t be something that you would necessarily want to tell your wife or your fiancé. She probably wouldn’t appreciate that. But this was a culture where, when they thought of horses, they thought of beauty and the graceful movements. It was not an insult or a put-down.

Verses 12-13, she responds, “While the king sat at his table, my spikenard sent forth its fragrance. My beloved is unto me as a bag of myrrh, that lies betwixt my breasts.”

Solomon is sitting there, and even while the king is sitting there and speaking, her thoughts wander to her shepherd lover, her fiancé. He’s described like a perfume bag that sends forth a smell that wafts out and you can follow it. She is not being attracted to, or won over, by Solomon in the same way. She is being drawn to the one to whom she pledged herself and desires to marry.

Solomon continues and tries to flatter her.

Verse 15, “Behold, you are fair my love. Behold you are fair. Your eyes are as doves.”

Ignoring Solomon’s flattery, she responds. She mentally addresses her absent lover.

Verses 16-17, she describes, “Behold, you are fair, my love; behold, you are fair, your eyes are

as doves. Behold, you are fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant; also our couch is leafy. The beams of our houses are cedars, and our panels are cypresses.”

Her allusion, here in vv. 16 and 17, is to the out-of-doors. Her mind hearkens back to the shepherd lover, the fiancé from whom she has been taken away. She thinks about the out-of-doors. Solomon has all these things to impress her and she says, “the beams of our houses are cedars and our panels are cypresses.” She’s thinking of the cedar trees under which they rest and shelter during the heat of the day. The word “houses” is plural and has certain significance. In other words, we have not one place but many in the forest glades.

Song of Solomon 2:1, “I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.” A rose of Sharon or a lily of the valley is a common wildflower. She is not comparing herself to one of the pampered hothouse plants of Solomon’s harem but to a common wildflower. She says, ‘I am just like a common wildflower.’

Verse 2, Solomon responds, “As a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.”

Verses 3-6, she continues, “As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. Under its shadow I delighted to sit, and its fruit was sweet to my taste. He has brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me is love. Stay me with dainties; refresh me with apples; for I am lovesick. Let his left hand be under my head, and his right hand embrace me.”

We come to this refrain, which marks the end of the section.

Verse 7, “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles, and by the hinds of the field, that you waken not, nor stir up love, until it please.” This is repeated as a chorus several times in the book. We will see that this ends a section.

We opened with this scene. She is here and begins to speak. The chorus answers her. Then Solomon, in his attempt to flatter, answers her. But her heart, her mind and her thoughts are going back to this absent shepherd lover, to the fiancé whom she loves. The first section concludes with the failure of the king and his court ladies to persuade the peasant girl to be disloyal to her lover.

Verse 8 begins a new section. The scene is no longer Jerusalem but a royal residence in the country. It is probably in the north of Palestine from which the lovers hail. Again, the speakers are the Shulamite and the daughters of Jerusalem.

This section is devoted to an account of how one spring morning her shepherd came and invited her to join him in the field. To prevent this meeting, her brothers transferred her to work in the vineyard, from which she has then been taken by force to the royal court. She finds consolation in the certainty that her lover would seek her. His approach is traced until he reaches the wall of the building in which she is confined. Peering through the lattice window, he fails to see her and pleads for the sound of her voice. To reply, she sings to him selections of the vineyard song. In the next verse, she addresses him in rapturous language. Then fearing for his safety, she exhorts him to depart until the shadows flee away and they can meet again.

It opens up in v. 8 as she is anticipating the fact that he is coming to rescue her.

Verses 8-12, “Hark! My beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young hart; behold, he stands behind our wall, he looks in through the windows, he peers through the lattice. My beloved spoke, and said unto me: ‘Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear upon the earth; the time of singing is come, the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.’”

That would more properly be, “the voice of the turtledove.” You don’t normally hear the voice of a turtle. “The time of singing is come, the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.”

Verses 13-14, “The fig-tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines in blossoms give forth their fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, come away. O my dove, that are in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff, let me see your countenance, let me hear your voice; for sweet is your voice, and your countenance is comely.”

The scene opens up as she anticipates his coming.

Verse 10, “My beloved spoke, and said unto me....” Then it quotes what he said as he has finally come here and has found where she is. He has come and approached the section of the palace where the harem is located.

Verses 15-17, then she responds, “Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vineyard; for our vineyards are in blossom. My beloved is mine, and I am his, that feeds among the lilies, until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn my beloved, and be you like a gazelle or a young hart upon the mountain of spices.”

In other words, ‘flee away until evening, until the day breaks and the shadows flee away. Go

until sunset, until it gets dark.’ She is afraid he is going to get caught and get into trouble there.

Song of Solomon 3:1, “By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but I found him not.” Disappointed at the non-appearance of her lover with the coming of night, her sleep is troubled. She has feverish dreams and finally decides to go in search for him.

Verses 2-4, “I will rise now, and go about the city, in the streets and in the broad ways, I will seek him whom my soul loves.’ I sought him, but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: ‘Saw you him whom my soul loves?’ Scarce had I passed from them, when I found him whom my soul loves: I held him, and would not let him go, until I brought him into my mother’s house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.”

Verse 5, we then, again, conclude this section with, “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles, and by the hinds of the fields, that you waken not, nor stir up love, until it please.” This refrain marks the end of the second section. She describes her dream.

In chapter 3:1, her fiancé had not reappeared that evening and in her dreams, she was fitful and seeking to find him. Notice what she wanted to do when she found him. What she anticipated doing was bringing him into her mother’s house, bringing him home to her family. This was not something that involved her sneaking around away from her family. The evidence was that he was her acknowledged lover of whom her mother approved. The section ends with v. 5.

The third section begins in v. 6. This is Solomon’s appearance at Shulam. It is a graphic description of the arrival of the king and all the pomp and ceremony.

Verses 6-7, “Who is this that comes up out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfume with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchants? Behold, it is the litter of Solomon; threescore mighty men are about it, of the mighty men of Israel.”

Solomon had this giant litter that he traveled with that was carried. It took sixty men that were all around it to carry it. It was like a coach that was carried on poles that you’ve perhaps seen pictures of. There were four poles coming out, two in front and two in the back, and fifteen big, strong men on each pole carrying it. You can imagine what this thing was like. The litter of Solomon, sixty mighty men of the mighty men of Israel, is about it.

Verses 8-9, “They all handle the sword, and are expert in war; every man has his sword upon his

thigh, because of dread in the night. King Solomon made himself a palanquin of the wood of Lebanon.” This is a covered litter. It’s like a couch long enough for the rider to recline. It’s covered with a canopy and resting on pillars at four corners. It has curtains hung around to exclude the sun. It has a door, sometimes of latticework, on each side. He had this thing made of the wood of Lebanon.

Verse 10, “He made the pillars there of silver, and the top thereof of gold, the seat of it of purple, the inside being inlaid with love, from the daughters of Jerusalem.” It was sort of like a portable bedroom on which Solomon was transported around. And here comes this procession—Solomon is coming up from Jerusalem to Shulam.

Verse 11, “Go forth, O you daughters of Zion, gaze upon King Solomon, and even upon the crown wherewith his mother had crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of gladness of his heart.”

We have this descriptive inset in vv. 6-11 of Solomon’s appearance at Shulam.

Song of Solomon 4 begins the statement of the shepherd, who is addressing his beloved after the arrival of this retinue.

Song of Solomon 4:1, “Behold, you are fair my love, behold you are fair; your eyes are as doves behind the veil; your hair is like a flock of goats, that trail down upon Mount Gilead.”

Again, you get the description of all the comparisons. We’re talking about rural, agricultural society and some of the comparisons don’t come down. They lose a little something in transitions to our urban society. If you tell your wife or your fiancé that she has hair like a goat, she may not necessarily know that it’s a complement. The description is like a flock of goats that are coming down the mountain and their hair is glossy and sleek and the sun reflects from it. He describes all these various things.

Verses 2-12, “Your teeth are like a flock of ewes all shaped alike, which come up from the washing; whereof all are paired, and none fails among them. Your lips are like a thread of scarlet, and your mouth is comely; your temples are like a pomegranate split open behind your veil. Your neck like the tower of David built with turrets, whereon there hang a thousand shields, all the armour of the mighty men. Your two breasts are like two fawns that are twins of a gazelle, which feed among the lilies. Until the day breaks, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense. You are all fair, my love; there is

no spot in you. Come with me from Lebanon, my bride, with me from Lebanon; look from the top of Amana, from the top of Senir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards. You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride. You have ravished my heart with one of your eyes, with one bead of your necklace. How fair is my love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine! And the smell of your ointments than all manner of spices! Your lips, O my bride, drop honey—honey and milk are under your tongue; and the smell of your garments is like the smell of Lebanon. A garden shut up is my sister, my bride; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.”

This is an allusion to something. The beauty of his beloved conjures up in his ardor a garden splendid in color and fertility, but it is a garden secluded to all, except its lawful possessor. She's chaste and modest. Just as gardens are walled in to prevent the intrusion of strangers, he describes her as a garden shut up, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. She's not wide open to strangers, but she is chaste and modest.

Verse 15, “You are a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and flowing streams from Lebanon.”

Verse 16, she responds, “Awake, O north wind; and come, you south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his precious fruits.”

Song of Solomon 5:1, the shepherd responds, “I am come into my garden, my sister, my bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice, I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.” –An invitation to a wedding feast.

Verse 2 is a description of her dream. A day of excitement is followed by troubled dreams.

Verse 2, “I sleep, but my heart wakes; [In other words, she's dreaming, and this is what she dreams.] Hark! my beloved knocks: ‘Open to me my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.’”

Verses 3-6, she responds, “I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them? My beloved put his hand by the hole of the door, and my heart was moved for him. I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dripped with myrrh, and my fingers with flowing myrrh, upon the handles of the bar. I opened my beloved; but my beloved had turned away, and was gone....”

She goes to sleep and in her dream she sees the action that has passed. Solomon and his retinue have arrived with all of the pomp and ceremony and all the commotion that has been caused.

In the meantime, the shepherd has come and has found her. They have some time there, and he goes into this ardent reiteration of his love for her and of his desire to take her away as his wife. She desires that; she desires to come away with him. She calls upon the wind to blow them away together. But then he has to leave, and she goes to bed. She wakes up and addresses him. She takes her time coming and opening the door. And when she opens the door he is gone.

Verses 6-7, in her dream, “I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had turned away, and was gone. My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave no answer. The watchmen that go about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keeper of the walls took away my mantle from me.”

Verse 8, then she speaks, “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, what will you tell him? That I am lovesick.”

The daughters of Jerusalem, which is the chorus, respond.

Verse 9, “What is your beloved more than another beloved, O you fairest among women? What is your beloved more than another beloved, that you adjure us so?” They say, ‘What's so special about him?’

She responds in song to the daughters of Jerusalem as to what's so special.

Verses 10-16, she says, “My beloved is white and ruddy, pre-eminent above ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are curled, and black as a raven. His eyes are like doves beside the water-brooks; washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as banks of sweet herbs; his lips are as lilies, dripping with flowing myrrh. His hands are as rods of gold set with beryl; his body is as polished ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold; his aspect is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet; Yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved; and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.”

Song of Solomon 6:1, the daughters of Jerusalem respond, “Where is your beloved gone, O you fairest among women? Where is your beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with you?”

She then responds. She is perhaps jealous of the interest that has been aroused in her beloved. She offers an evasive reply.

Verses 2-3, “My beloved is gone down to his garden, to the bed of spices, to feed in the garden, and to gather lilies. I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine, that feeds among the lilies.”

The rest of the chapter seems to recount another futile attempt on the part of the infatuated Solomon to win her love for him. Of course, unfortunately for him, the wrong moment is chosen because she has just made another passionate declaration of her love to the shepherd—a love that is stronger than death. The king extols her physical beauty and endorses the words of the court ladies who had sung her charms.

Verses 4-6, Solomon opens up, “You are beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners. Turn away your eyes from me, for they have overcome me. Your hair is as a flock of goats that trail down from Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of ewes, which are come up from the washing; whereof all are paired, and none fail among them.”

Verses 9-10, “My dove, my undefiled, is but one; she is the only one of her mother; she is the choice one of her that bore her. The daughters saw her, and called her happy; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her. Who is she that looks forth as the dawn, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners?”

She recalls what she was doing on the faithful day when she was so praised, and made her attempt to run away. She begins to describe what had happened. She reminisces here.

She interrupts her royal suitor.

Verses 11-12, she says, “I went down into the garden of nuts, to look at the green plant of the valley, to see whether the vine budded, and the pomegranates were in flower. Before I was aware, my soul set me upon the chariots of my princely people.”

In effect saying, ‘Have I been going out to meet the king and to lure him to myself? When I was tending the vines and seeing what nuts and fruits were ripe in my garden, I was taken and brought to the court. Let him release me now that I may return home.’

Nuts grow very plentifully in the northern part of Palestine, which was where Solomon had his summer palace. She said, ‘I was engaged in this task and before I was aware, the servants of the king carried me away. Before I realized it, I found myself here at the court.’

Verse 13, “Return, return, O Shulamite; Return, return, that we may look upon you. What will you see in the Shulamite? As it were, the dance of two companies.”

In Song of Solomon 7, Solomon responds. Realizing that his attempts have failed, he implores her not to flee from his presence but to allow his eyes to feast upon her beauty.

Song of Solomon 7:1, “How beautiful are your steps in sandals, O prince’s daughter! ...” He goes on and describes her beauty.

Verse 5, he concludes, “...the king is held captive in the tresses thereof...” –Speaking of her hair.

Verse 6, “How fair and how pleasant are you, O love, for delights!” He finishes this statement.

Verses 10-13, she responds, “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me. Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyard; let us see whether the vine has budded, whether the vine blossom be open, and the pomegranates be in flower; there will I give you my love. The mandrakes give forth fragrance, and at our doors are all manner of precious fruits, new and old, which I have laid up before you, O my beloved.”

Song of Solomon 8:1, it continues, “O that you were my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! When I should find you without, I would kiss you; yea, and none would despise me. I would lead you, and bring you into my mother’s house, that you might instruct me; I would cause you to drink of spiced wine, and of the juice of my pomegranate. His left hand would be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me.”

Verse 4, then the section ends, “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem: Why should you waken or stir up love, until it please?” Again, there is this refrain that ends in chapter 8:4 that marks the end of another section.

What we have here is Solomon’s final attempt to entice her and to keep her there.

But in chapter 7:11, the Shulamite begins to speak.

Song of Solomon 7:11, “I am my beloved’s and his desire is toward me.” She openly rejects the kings’ wooing. None can separate her from her only beloved.

At this point she addresses the shepherd who now reappears.

Verse 12, “Come my beloved, let us go away....” She addresses him and urges their departure from the palace to their former meeting places in the fields. Thrilled at the thought of her

impending homecoming, she envisages the familiar scene. She is eager to be home again. She implores him, 'Let's hurry away.'

The section ends here with v. 4.

In Song of Solomon 8:5, we have the concluding part. We now see her return. The villagers see the lovers approaching and their curiosity is whetted. Every familiar scene they pass brings back sweet memories of former meeting places.

Song of Solomon 8:5-7, "Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? Under the apple-tree I awaken you; there your mother was in travail with you; there was she in travail and brought you forth. Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave; the flashes thereof are as flashes of fire, a very flame of the Lord. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, he would be utterly contemned."

Now her brothers speak.

Verses 8-9, "We have a little sister, and she has no breasts; what shall we do for our sister in the day that she shall be spoken for? If she be a wall, we will build upon her a turret of silver; and if she be a door, we'll enclose her with boards of cedar."

This is the statement her brothers made. The last seven verses record her reminisces and triumphs. She reminds her brothers how unnecessary their fear had been for her chastity when beset by temptation.

At an early age, when she was young and not mature, they made the statement, "What shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?"—At the time of her marriage.

Verse 9, "If she be a wall..." A wall is there to protect from intrusion or intruders and to keep out strangers. So, if she is figuratively a wall—if she remains a virgin, "...we will build upon her a turret of silver..." They say, 'We will give her many gifts. We will be very generous at the time of her wedding.'

Continuing, "...and if she be a door..." You know, a door revolves on its hinges. Somebody knocks and it's opened. So, it's a poetic contrast between one who remains chaste, as opposed to someone who was just wide open. The brothers' statement had contrasted—if she is chaste we will provide well for her, but if she is a door (figuratively speaking, a loose woman), "...we will enclose her with boards of cedar." It is barricaded to prevent a door from being broken into.

She responds, reminding her brothers about their concern for her years earlier.

Verse 10, "I am a wall, [She say, 'I have retained my chastity and now I am grown and am mature.'] and my breasts are like the towers thereof; then was I in his eyes as one that found peace."

Verses 11-13, the shepherd is speaking, "Solomon had a vineyard at Baal Hamon; he gave over the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof brought in a thousand pieces of silver. My vineyard, which is mine, is before me; you, O Solomon, shall have the thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof, two hundred. You that dwell in the gardens, the companions hearken for your voice: 'Cause me to hear it.'"

The shepherd makes a contrast between what Solomon has and what he has. He says, "Solomon had a vineyard in Baal Hamon." Baal Hamon is a site near Jerusalem. It literally means "owner of a multitude." It's a description of Solomon's harem. He is described as owner of a multitude. "You O Solomon shall have the thousand." He says, 'You keep your thousand because, "My vineyard which is mine is before me."' He is speaking of his bride. He says, 'You, Solomon, you keep your thousand.'

Verse 14, then she says, "Make haste, my beloved, and be you like a gazelle or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices."—The conclusion of the story.

As we go through we see a contrast. Solomon saw in this Shulamite girl something that he didn't find in his harem. There was something special about her. And, yes, there was. What he found was virtue and constancy. That's so totally different than the flattering, flaunting attitude of the harem and all of the things that Solomon had gathered around him.

Solomon spent his life in a quest for happiness and fulfillment. For all that he gathered to himself, he really missed out on an awful lot. The only woman that he ever found, that came close to the ideal that his mother had taught him about in Proverbs 31, wouldn't have him on a "bet." She was faithful to someone else. She was looking to someone who really loved her and not someone who was simply infatuated for the moment.

We will go back through and hit the high points with some of the questions and bring out a few things. We noted that the title is a superlative. It describes her in 1:5-7 as being ruddy or sunburned because of the outdoor work of

keeping the vineyard that her brothers had insisted she perform.

Her response to Solomon's blandishments is recorded in 1:12-13. Even while the king sat at his table speaking, her thoughts were wandering to her shepherd fiancé. She compares herself in 2:1 to a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valley—a common wildflower. The seasonal setting of the book, according to vv. 12-13, is springtime. It is the seasonal setting of the Days of Unleavened Bread. It describes it as a time when the flowers appear on the earth and the time of singing is come. The trees are budding out. It is the time that our attention is turned to new life, to new beginnings, to a fresh start. It is certainly the time that is the romantic time—the beauty and everything all around—springtime.

We saw the refrain—used in 2:7, 3:5 and 8:4—that marks the end of a section. It is used three different times in the book. It is like Act 1 and Act 2 is over; it represents a scene change.

In Song of Solomon 3:4, where did she desire to take her fiancé once the two of them were reunited? Well, she desired to take him back to her mother's house. It didn't involve some sort of clandestine thing, away from parental approval.

The last half of chapter 3 (beginning in v. 6) describes the coming of Solomon with his retinue to the royal residence in North Israel. It describes all the glory and grandeur of which Solomon makes his entrances and exits.

In chapter 4:8, the shepherd desires his bride to flee from Lebanon with him and to escape the clutches of Solomon and the royal harem.

We have already commented on v. 12. She describes herself as a shut-up garden, a spring sealed up. This was the reference that we find back at the end of the book. Her brothers made the comment of the allusion to a wall, a garden sealed up, referring to her. She was chaste. She had retained her chastity.

In chapter 5, we have the dream that she had as she wandered the streets looking for her fiancé and was unable to find him.

Notice the KJV where he says, "I am my beloved's and his desire is towards me" (7:10). (You may have trouble following it because the numbering of the verses in the Jewish translation is one verse off from the KJV. The translation I am reading from is v. 11, but in the KJV, it is v. 10 of chapter 7.) This is a reference to the relationship that is described and their faithfulness toward one another.

The story ends in chapter 8. We have already noted that her brothers had promised when she

was a young girl that if she remained chaste and a virgin, they would help her and provide a large dowry. If she proved loose (in other words a door opening to every passerby), they would deal with her sternly. She reminds them of their promise, the dowry that they had promised and the fact that she had remained a virgin.

The comparison that we have drawn in 8:11-12 is that Solomon had his vineyard (his harem), which he shared with others.

The shepherd ends on the note of stating that his wife is his alone, and he has something that even Solomon doesn't have.

Verses 12-13, "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me; thou, O Solomon, shall have the thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred. You that dwell in the garden, the companions hearken for your voice: 'Cause me to hear it.'"

He is asking for her response. He declares his love, faithfulness and commitment to her.

Verse 14, her response—her "I do"—is to call him and to say, "Make haste, my beloved, and be you like to a gazelle or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices." The barriers are no longer there.

It ends up as a very beautiful story—a story of the joy that a young couple can have when they have saved themselves for marriage to one another. It is far, far superior to the pleasures of a dissolute Solomon. There was something that Solomon could never have or could never take part in because Solomon, by the choices he made, certainly cut himself off from the simple pleasures. Solomon had his harem, his thousand women. He had his wealth, greatness and his grandeur. But what he didn't have was one woman who loved him with all her heart and who was really faithful to him. Solomon never had a happy marriage. He had all the women that he could ever imagine. But the only one that he finally found was loved and committed to her fiancé.

In fact, there's an interesting allusion in the book of Ecclesiastes where Solomon makes reference, in Ecclesiastes 7:28, to not being able to find the woman that he was looking for among a thousand. The problem was that he was looking in the wrong places because the women that Solomon surrounded himself with—the women who were a part of his court and harem—were not the people that reflected the kind of virtue, constancy, love and depth of commitment that we find in the Shulamite girl in the Song of Solomon.

We have a story that is a story of love. It is a story of commitment and a story of heroic endurance during very trying circumstances. It is the story of an attempt to attract and to draw away someone. Yet it was unsuccessful because there was a depth of commitment that is described in very beautiful and poetic language.

The Song of Solomon is a song that celebrates the commitment and constancy of young love that is based on a moral foundation, on a foundation of God's law. God is not against young people. God is not against love. God designed love. God designed marriage. God designed our first parents. God created and established the institution of marriage. God designed the attraction that men and women should have and feel for one another. That's not something that sort of sneaked in or evolved. God designed that. I think one of the greatest of all physical blessings is the blessing of a happy marriage. Yet sin so often mars the situation.

We have a beautiful story, a story that young people were to be reminded of every year. Every spring there was a reminder of the importance of constancy, commitment, of doing it God's way: waiting and saving themselves for the right time, resisting the blandishments, the allurements, and the enticements of the world, resisting all the glitter and glamour that was out there to attract and entice them. They say, "There's something worth waiting for." There **is** something worth waiting for.

It is a book, when put in the context of the Days of Unleavened Bread, which paints a very beautiful story—a very beautiful story that Solomon could only write and sing about. He could never experience it because of the situation in which he found himself. Solomon didn't follow his own advice. He gave terrific advice to his son in the book of Proverbs. Solomon was not one who really followed all of his own advice. The book of Ecclesiastes bears that out.

I think Song of Solomon is a very beautiful story, a beautiful poetic story that is brought out. It clearly shows that God is not against young people. He's not against love. God is very much for that.

There is a way of doing it that leads to happiness, and there is a way that leads to sorrow. Even in the context of the Days of Unleavened Bread and the messages that are related to removing and getting rid of sin, we should be reminded of the fact that what God has in mind to replace sin with is the joy of doing it His way. That is certainly something worth waiting for and worth desiring.

The next Bible study, we will be going through the book of Ruth. Each of these five Festival Scrolls is a book that is relatively short. They are poetic and very descriptive of some things that can be very helpful and very important for us to learn and to understand.

Bible Study # 85 Questions

SURVEY OF THE WRITINGS SERIES

Song of Solomon

1. To what does the title “song of songs” refer?
2. What does Song of Solomon 1:5-6 refer to?
3. What was the heroine’s reaction to Solomon’s blandishments (cf. 1:12)?
4. How does she describe herself (cf. 2:1)? What does it mean?
5. According to chapter two, what is the seasonal setting of the book?
6. What is the significance of Songs 2:7 (cf. 3:5; 8:4)?
7. According to chapter 3, where did the heroine desire to take her fiancé once the two of them were reunited?
8. What is described in the last half of chapter 3?
9. What is the shepherd trying to get the heroine to do (cf. 4:8)?
10. What is meant by Songs 4:12?
11. What is described in chapter 5 (cf. v. 2)?
12. What relationship is described between the two young lovers in chapter 7 (cf. v. 10)?
13. Explain the significance of Songs 8:8-10.
14. What comparison is being drawn in Songs 8:11-12? Would the shepherd have desired to trade places with Solomon?
15. What is the theme of Song of Solomon?

Bible Study # 86
March 10, 1992
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Ruth

This evening we **are getting into the second of the five Festival Scrolls—the books we commented upon last time.** Having gone through the Song of Solomon, this evening we **are getting into the book of Ruth.**

The book of Ruth is a part of what is called the Megillot or Festival Scrolls. Traditionally, the Jews read it at Pentecost. To briefly summarize, it is the story of a Gentile maiden that voluntarily forsook her own nation and her own gods and became a part of the commonwealth of Israel.

We will note, a little later, the way in which Ephesians 2 is very helpful as a New Testament parallel, explaining some of the spiritual implications of this book—its significance for Pentecost and for the Church. Through her marriage with Boaz, Ruth became an heir of the promises to Abraham. She was the ancestor of King David and, therefore, of the Messiah. The story of Ruth typifies the story of a Christian coming out of the world and offers parallels to the marriage of Christ to the Church.

In the actual account, it is a very beautiful touching love story. According to tradition, Boaz was well advanced in years. In fact, some traditions say that he may have been upwards of about eighty years old. We will notice Ruth 3:10 as an indication of that. Boaz made reference to this.

Ruth 3:10, “Then he [Boaz] said, ‘Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich.’” The reference was that he was not young and evidently was well up in years. Undoubtedly, he was a widower by this time in his life. It’s interesting because there is a direct relationship in the life of Boaz with the period that covers a great deal of the period of Judges.

According to Matthew 1:5, Boaz’s mother was Rahab. Boaz’s life paralleled or covered many of the early periods of the book of Judges. Undoubtedly, he saw qualities in Ruth that must have reminded him of his mother Rahab and her example. You may note in Hebrew 11:31 that Rahab is listed in the men and women of faith.

Boaz fulfills, in this account in the book of Ruth, the role of a kinsman redeemer, which is certainly a type of the role of Jesus Christ.

Let me give you a bit of background. I am going to read portions of the Soncino Jewish Commentary on the book of Ruth. It gives some background that can be helpful and beneficial.

They make reference, “The book of Ruth is prescribed for reading as part of the liturgy on Pentecost, the festival commemorating the revelation on Mount Sinai. The connection between the book and the festival is two-fold. The festival, as its name Feast of Firstfruits indicates, is primarily a harvest festival, and the harvest figures prominently in the area. The revelation [that is, God’s revelation on Sinai] marked, as it were, the formal acceptance by Israel of that religion and law of life, which were later to prove so irresistibly attractive to the heathen damsel from Moab. The bearing of the story on the festival is the moral one, which teaches that the Torah, the Law of God, can only be acquired by those who tread the road of hardship.”

It’s sort of an interesting point that even the Jews get out of this.

They go on to make the comment, “Unbiased scholars are almost unanimous in agreeing upon the historical accuracy of the facts presented in the book. Who can doubt them or why would they have been invented? There would surely be little point in inventing a foreign ancestry for the greatest and most dearly loved king of Israel.”

The time setting in the book is during the period of the Judges. As I mentioned, Boaz was the son of Rahab. That is mentioned specifically in Matthew where we have the genealogy.

Matthew 1:5-6, we are told, “Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king.”

We take note here that we have several very long generations in this family that come down in much of the period of the Judges. We find that the period of the Judges was a very turbulent time—a time when, as you go through the book of Judges, it’s the bloodiest book in the entire Bible. The reason is summarized in the last verse of the book.

Judges 21:25, “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” In other words, people simply pursued their own selfish will, and the result was anarchy, confusion and every sort of problem and difficulty. It was a turbulent time, and God dealt with the people. There were punishments that were sent. This provides the setting, the background, of the book of Ruth.

Jewish tradition credits the authorship of the book of Ruth to Samuel. Samuel’s literary works

also include the books bearing his own name, as well as the book of Judges. It's not something that can be absolutely proven, but there isn't any reason to doubt it. That is the historic tradition that the Jews have maintained.

The commentary continues, and I think it's sort of an interesting summary in terms of their understanding. The commentary says, "What was the writer's aim and purpose in giving the book to the world? Jewish opinion declined to believe that his motive was that of mere entertainment. That's not why it was written. The books of the Torah are not in the habit of telling stories devoid of inner value. Yet the book contains no legal enactment, no decision on the questions of ritual or prohibition. What purpose then does it serve? Well, there are several things that they have gotten out of it. One is to teach us how great is the reward of those who perform deeds of kindness. The hallowing of the family is another distinct purpose in the Bible. The beautiful example, which this narrative provides of the elevating influence of domestic affection, entitled it, if nothing else did, to a place in the canon. Who can lay down the book after reading and not feel that still another of its objects is to set us upon the straight road from which we must not turn either to the right or to the left, lest we meet the fate that befell Elimelech...There's yet another purpose, a genealogical one, and on this point there's a general consensus of opinion, namely to trace the pedigree of David."

Another interesting comment that is brought out says, "It bears remarkable testimony to the meaning of the phrase 'religion and life.' It is in the words of a Gentile admirer, a monument to that ethical code, which could bring to perfection in the true Israelite, such heartfelt piety and self-sacrificing disposition as in a sense to attract and to be an example to others around."

Ruth 1:1-2, we find as we open, "Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion—Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there." Bethlehem is the ancestral home of King David and the birthplace of the Messiah.

"Ephrathites" is sometimes confused with "Ephraimites," and that is not the situation. The Ephrathites traced their descent from Ephrath,

the wife of Caleb, who is mentioned in I Chronicles 2:19. This is to sort of clarify. It was a sub-group of the Jewish nation.

The period of the Judges was a turbulent time. There were various plagues, difficulties and problems that were sent by God upon the nation as a form of correction.

Here we come to a situation where the response of Elimelech and his family was to simply leave and go to Moab. They continued there.

Verses 3-5, "Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years. Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the women survived her two sons and her husband."

Naomi was left with only her daughters-in-law. She decided that she would return from Moab back to the land of Judah. Word had gotten back that the famine had broken in Judah and the situation had improved (v. 6).

She did not wish to remain there in Moab. Consider the difficulty of being the only person trying to worship God in a completely pagan setting as the Moabites were. It was one thing as long as her husband and her two grown sons were alive, but now she was left with these two Moabite daughters-in-law. Naomi wanted to go back to her own people.

The daughters-in-law had outwardly conformed to the practiced religion of the household. When they married into the family, they took upon themselves to practice the religion of Judah. But now their husbands were dead, and Naomi felt that she wanted to be back with her own people. That was where she needed to be. She was going to go back and the daughters-in-law were going to go with her.

Verse 7, "...they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah."

Verses 8-9, "And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, 'Go, return each to her mother's house. The Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband.' Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept."

She did not want to encourage them to leave Moab and come to Judah. She felt that they would be doing it sort of in the emotion of the moment after the recent death of their husbands and that a little while later they would regret it. By leaving Moab and going back to Bethlehem, they would sever the connection and the ties to

their own family. Because she recognized that this could create long-term problems, she encouraged them to go back, to return.

Verse 10, they both responded, "...Surely, we will return with you to your people."

Verses 11-13, "But Naomi said, 'Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons, would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me!'"

Naomi was telling them, 'Look, there isn't any way I can be of any benefit to you. I'm too old to remarry, and if I weren't and had a husband right now, it would be looking at years in the future before I could even possibly have grown sons. I don't have anything to give you. I can't provide for you. You need a husband to take care of you and to provide for you. So, you need to go back to your family, to your people.'

Verses 14-15, "Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. And she said, 'Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods....'" That is a very significant part of it. Orpah, at this point, went back to her people. When she went back to her people, she went back to her old culture. She went back to the old way of living. She went back into the world.

Verse 16, "But Ruth said: 'Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.'" There certainly is a lot of parallel here to the calling of the individual Christian.

Most of the world's churches do everything they can to entice you to come down and join. They tell you how easy it's going to be and all you have to do is give your hand to the preacher and you are going to be saved. It's so simple, and you have to do it right now. They will use various techniques. Any of you who have had a background in the Baptist Church, like I did, can remember some of the altar calls. They would play "Just as I Am" and would keep playing and replaying it, trying to get somebody to come down.

Notice the total contrast here. Naomi was not trying to entice them. Rather, she said, 'There are going to be difficulties and adversities. You'd better count the cost. You're looking at a very serious matter.'

With Orpah, it was simply the emotion of the moment. She had an emotional attachment to her mother-in-law and was devastated by the recent death of her husband. Her first inclination was to go, but there wasn't any depth to her commitment. With a little bit of encouragement to return, she did. In reality, she was not prepared to forsake her old way of life. It held out something of an attraction to her.

Ruth, on the other hand, wanted to go with Naomi, not because she expected Naomi to get her a husband, but because she desired to follow the way of life she had seen in the household of Naomi. She was attracted to God's ways, to God's law. She could see that there was something of substance there that she had never had. There was depth to her commitment.

The Soncino Commentary makes an interesting comment, "She [Orpah] is one, in a sad series, of those not far from the Kingdom of God who needed but a little more resolution at the critical moment, and for want of it, shut themselves out from the covenant and sank back to a world which they had half-renounced."

There is a lot of parallel, if you think in terms of this book being read at Pentecost, and in terms of what Pentecost symbolizes. There are many spiritual lessons that can be gleaned from this story. It is a story of events that transpired, but the events that transpired served to illustrate through the lives of different people different approaches, different attitudes and different results that people experience in their life as a result of what they did.

Verse 17, Ruth went on to say, "Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me."

Interestingly enough, Ruth's name in the Hebrew language is derived from a root word that means "friendship." Ruth certainly typifies, in her life and in her example, this matter of friendship.

Verse 18, "When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her." Once she realized her commitment was serious and there was depth to it, she didn't try to discourage her. It was not that she didn't want her to go. She didn't want her to make that trip, get down there, be dissatisfied and wind up as a misfit in Judah. There certainly could be difficulties in the circumstance.

Verse 19, “Now the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem. And it happened, when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was excited because of them; and the women said, ‘Is this Naomi?’”

Even though she had only been gone a little over ten years, those ten years had greatly aged her. She was hardly recognized by people when she came back.

Verse 20, “So she said to them, ‘Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara [Naomi means “sweetness” in Hebrew; Mara means “bitterness.”] for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.’”

Verse 21, “‘I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?’” Having left at an earlier time with her husband and her two sons, now she has returned alone, other than her daughter-in-law.

Verse 22, “So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. Now they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.”

The barley harvest began during the Days of Unleavened Bread. It began with the wave sheaf being cut during the Days of Unleavened Bread. The barley harvest continued for a period of fifty days—from the time of the wave sheaf offering being cut, up until what we call the Day of Pentecost, more commonly called the Feast of Firstfruits or the Feast of Weeks in the Old Testament.

Another connection that this book has to the Feast of Pentecost is that the events in it all occurred during the time of the firstfruit harvest.

We understand and have focused before on the fact that God used the physical harvest in the land of Israel as a type of the spiritual harvest. God is engaged in a great spiritual harvest. He uses various examples and illustrations that draw comparisons to that. The physical harvest season of ancient Israel served to illustrate God’s plan. God’s Holy Days are organized around that plan. Pentecost, originally, was the day on which the covenant was made with Israel at Mount Sinai. It was the time that marked the conclusion of the barley harvest. It was an occasion that celebrated the harvest of the firstfruits.

God is in the process of calling firstfruits out of the world. There were two harvests in ancient Israel. One was the early harvest, the firstfruits harvest. The other was the great harvest in the fall, the primary harvest. God uses that as an illustration of His plan of salvation. There is an

early harvest, a calling of spiritual firstfruits, to be followed by the great spiritual ingathering ultimately typified by the Feast of Tabernacles, the festival that celebrated the great gathering in of the physical harvest.

Pentecost celebrates the calling of the spiritual firstfruits and also is the commemoration of the covenant that God made with Israel. Later, of course, it was on the Day of Pentecost in 31 A.D. that is recorded in Acts 2 that God began to make the New Covenant and the pouring out of His Spirit.

The most significant difference between the Old and the New Covenant is that under the Old Covenant, the law of God was written with the finger of God on tables of stone. We are told that the Spirit of God wrote the New Covenant on the tables of our hearts and minds (Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrew 8:10). It is internalized. There is a great deal of illustration in this book that we can tie in with God’s calling of His people—the calling of a spiritual firstfruits, the calling of a Church.

Ruth had returned with Naomi. They were here in Bethlehem; it was the beginning of the barley harvest during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Interestingly, they came out of sin at the Days of Unleavened Bread. That was the timing. They left Moab and returned into the land of Israel. It’s sort of an interesting parallel. It is not a parallel that’s dwelt on here, but it’s an interesting parallel that they left that area behind and returned during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

I think there is another thing to note, as we go through this. When you read the book of Judges, you read of all the turmoil, strife, warfare, bloodshed and all of the horrible sins that were being committed. It is important to realize that there were individuals who were quietly obeying God. Even in the midst of the worst turmoil, they were quietly going about their business. Naomi was, Ruth was, and Boaz clearly was a godly man. Even in the midst of problems, there are those with whom God is dealing. There are times when things are going better and times when things are going worse, but there are individuals who keep their eyes on God and continue to serve God. There are individuals who keep their eyes on man and their life has this sort of up and down to it because they are following people rather than following God.

That’s an important factor. If you were following people and were looking at some of the strife and problems going on (even the corruption in some of the judgeships that was going on as you read in the book of Judges), there

wouldn't be a whole lot to inspire confidence. But the individuals who were really spiritually successful looked beyond human beings; they saw God. That's an important lesson for all of God's people.

Ruth 2:1-3, "And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech; his name was Boaz. So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, 'Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor.' And she said to her, 'Go, my daughter.' Then she left, and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech." She didn't go out and intentionally try to do that.

Verses 4-5, "Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, 'The Lord be with you!' And they answered him, 'The Lord bless you!' Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, 'Whose young woman is this?'" He saw this young woman out there with whom he was not acquainted. Evidently there was something about her bearing and the way that she conducted herself that impressed him, and he wanted to know who she was.

Verses 6-9, "So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, 'It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.'" So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house.' Then Boaz said to Ruth, 'You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn.'"

Boaz was very impressed. He had undoubtedly heard of the situation of Naomi's return and this young lady who had returned from Moab with her—her young daughter-in-law who had been recently widowed. He had heard she had come back and had a commitment to serving the God of Israel.

Now again, knowing Boaz's background, it must have had special significance to him. He must have thought back to his own mother and how she had forsaken her background, how she had stepped out in faith to believe and trust the God

of Israel and to cast her lot with the people of God and not with the people of Jericho. I am sure that the story had special significance to him when he heard it in terms of what it reminded him.

So, he wants to take special note of her and to look after her. He wants to make sure that she is provided for, and he gives strict instructions. You notice that human nature is not a whole lot different now than it was then. He said, "...Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you."

Some think that sexual harassment has only been invented in the last few years. There have been problems with people saying and doing things out of line and inappropriate as long as there have been human beings on the earth. Boaz took note of that and figured, particularly as she was a foreigner, that some of the young men might be tempted to get "fresh" with her or to say things and display inappropriate conduct. He called them over and gave them a stern warning that they had better leave her alone and had better not do anything out of line. He told her that she would be safe there—no one would bother her.

We find that there were a number of qualities that Ruth evidenced in a remarkable way. She was a young woman of great loyalty and determination. She was a person of great humility and evidenced great respect. She evidences that in many ways. She evidences characteristics that we, as the firstfruit harvest of God, certainly need to evidence.

Verses 10-12, "Then she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said to him, 'Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?' And Boaz answered and said to her, 'It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.'"

When we leave the world, when we turn our backs on the old way, when we turn our backs on the society that has molded and shaped us, when we turn our backs on the world and come into the Church, we are coming to take refuge under the wings of the God of Israel. The symbolism is that if you've ever seen chickens in a barnyard, you have seen how a mother hen will gather her little chicks under her wings as a means of protection. If a chicken hawk is circling up in the

sky, she will run around fluffing, trying to get the little chickens to come and gather up under her wings. She is protective and that's the means of extending protection. That's the picture that is given here.

As a man of God, Boaz took his responsibility seriously. Boaz was also a man of substance and property. He took seriously his responsibility to show kindness and to do good as the opportunity presented itself. Clearly, he was a man who lived his religion. There are people who claim a religion, but there's a difference between those who claim a religion and those who live their religion. There's a lot of difference between the two.

One of the things that I think also comes out in the book of Ruth is the fact that Ruth was attracted to the example that she saw. Ruth's exposure to the truth had been in the lives of individuals who were practicing it. That's an important part. We are to be lights to the world (Matthew 5:14-16) and to seek to set an example of someone who is putting into practice the things that we claim to believe.

Verses 13-16, "Then she said, 'Let me find favor in your sight, my lord; for you have comforted me, and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants.' Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, 'Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.' So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched grain to her, and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back. And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, 'Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. Also let some grain from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her.'"

Boaz had seen her working hard. The crews were diligent and they were trying to gather up everything. Boaz saw her working hard and, evidently, it appeared to him that she had to work awfully hard and was getting awfully little. You sort of get the idea that he was already beginning to "tumble." He was really deeply impressed with this young woman and desired to make things easier for her.

It's interesting, even in the context of gleaning—God's system of helping people. God's system is a matter of helping people, but it is a system of helping people to help themselves. God lays great emphasis on the fact that kindness and charity were to be shown by His people, but He did not produce a situation that would simply create a welfare mentality in ancient Israel. The

system that was established by God was a system that allowed people to be productive and to maintain their self-respect. It was to help others help themselves. It was available at the harvest. Those who were poor, widowed or fatherless were allowed to come in after the reapers and to pick up what was dropped. In fact, there were even specific instructions in the law that they were not to harvest the corners of their fields. In other words, they sort of made a circle on it. When the reapers went through they didn't harvest the corners. They left that out. They put themselves in a position to do that.

To show how the mentality of people has changed—I remember a number of years ago when I was a pastor in south Texas. Down in the Rio Grande Valley is an area that produces a great deal of the nation's fresh fruits, vegetables and citrus. A lot of your winter vegetable crop comes from the Rio Grande Valley. There were some farmers down there who switched over to mechanical harvesters. One of the characteristics of the mechanical harvester was there were things that were left behind because they tended to pick up what was uniform as they went through the fields.

Whether the individuals had read it in the Bible or not, I don't know—perhaps they had. There were a couple of the big farmers down there who let the word out that after the mechanical pickers had gone through, the local residents would be free to come in and get anything that remained. They allowed a certain amount of time—I forget what time they allowed—then they would come back in and plow up the field. But there was a certain time period that they opened up the field. They announced that anybody was welcomed who wanted to come in and pick what was left after the harvest was completed. They got very, very few takers, and that is one of the most poverty-stricken areas of the country. It's sort of a sad commentary on human nature in a situation like that. Very, very few people actually availed themselves of going in and doing that.

That's unfortunate because God's way is to help the needy. God wants us to show kindness and mercy. That's an important part of God's character and nature. To be selfish, self-centered and greedy is certainly not characteristic of God. God's system of helping people was a system that allowed them to maintain some dignity. It was a system that allowed them to be productive, to maintain a healthy self-respect and to do something in a constructive manner. It's an unfortunate situation that these principles haven't been utilized.

Verse 19, “And her mother-in-law said to her, ‘Where have you gleaned today? And where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you.’ So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, ‘The man’s name with whom I worked today is Boaz.’”

When she saw the quantity of grain brought back, Naomi realized that somebody had given some special favor to Ruth because there wasn’t any way that she would have normally, in just one day’s gleaning, brought back this amount of barley. That wouldn’t have been very likely, so Naomi was impressed with that and wanted to know where she had gleaned. She told her it was Boaz.

Verses 20-23, “Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, ‘Blessed be he of the Lord, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!’ And Naomi said to her, ‘The man is a relative of ours, one of our near kinsmen.’ Then Ruth the Moabitess said, ‘He also said to me, “You shall stay close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.”’ And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, ‘It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, and that people do not meet you in any other field.’ So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz, to glean until the end of barley harvest and wheat harvest; and she dwelt with her mother-in-law.”

The barley harvest started first. That began during the Days of Unleavened Bread and continued on along. The wheat harvest came in during that seven-week period. The barley harvest took several weeks and then the wheat harvest began. Wheat comes in a little later than barley, so it was a very short difference. We are looking at a seven-week period, the period between the wave sheaf and Pentecost.

Naomi took note of the fact that God had smiled on her. She had come back very discouraged. She was feeling like God had somehow deserted her because she has had all these problems. This can be a typical human reaction when we encounter a number of problems or things go wrong for us, as it had for Naomi. She had lost her husband and her two children. She had started out at an earlier time as the wife of a relatively prosperous man and wound up pretty well destitute, returning back to family property. She was on up in years and her health was such that she was really concerned as to how she would even be able to provide for herself.

One of the things that we see is that first appearances aren’t always the reality. Sometimes we look at things and we think, ‘Well, where’s

God? Has God forgotten?’ God hasn’t forgotten. God was working out a great plan and a great purpose. How many times must Naomi have asked the question, ‘Why? Why Lord?’ Well, she began to sort of look up about this time.

Ruth 3:1-3, “Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, ‘My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, is he not our kinsman? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Therefore wash yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.’”

Naomi was playing a little bit of the matchmaker here. She had observed the way things had gone along and evidently knew that Boaz had taken more than just a casual interest in Ruth. She knew that Ruth certainly had a great affection, fondness and deep respect for Boaz. She decided that maybe she was going to have to step in on the matter.

We will note a little later the responsibilities of the kinsman redeemer. In Scripture, the kinsman redeemer had several responsibilities. One was that he was responsible for taking care of the widow and orphan children of his kinsman. If he was single, he would marry the widow and the child would inherit the father’s land and property. If a relative fell on hard times and had to sell the family property or was sold into slavery for debt, the kinsman redeemer was responsible to redeem that individual—to buy him back. He was responsible to prosecute crimes that involved his near kinsman. It was a responsibility that in many ways typified the role of Jesus Christ.

Naomi had already figured out that Ruth was attracted to Boaz and that Boaz was very much impressed with and attracted to Ruth. But she decided he was never going to propose because there was too much age difference. He was going to be self-conscious about that and figure that she’s better off with somebody young, so he wasn’t going to do it. Since her line of thought was that she didn’t think Ruth could find a better husband than Boaz, she needed to play matchmaker.

They were winnowing barley that evening at the threshing floor. Winnowing was separating the grain from the chaff. Normally, a threshing floor would be up on a hilltop where there would normally be a good breeze. They also used winnowing fans. After the grains had been threshed it was beaten to separate it, but the chaff

and the grain were all intermingled. They would throw it up in the air and the breeze would blow from the winnowing fan. The chaff was light and it would blow away; the grain would settle back down. We do that in a much more sophisticated mechanized way today with some of the big harvesting equipment. It was much more of a slow tedious operation at this particular time.

So, she told Ruth to clean up and to go down to the threshing floor.

Verse 4, “Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do.” Ruth trusted Naomi. She knew that Naomi would not get her into trouble.

Verse 5, “And she said to her, ‘All that you say to me I will do.’” So, she told her that she would do that.

Verses 6-8, “So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her. And after Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down. Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet.”

You can imagine! This must have been quite a shock. All of a sudden he wakes up in the middle of the night, he looks, and here’s a woman down at his feet. Now that would be a rather startling thing.

Verse 9, “And he said, ‘Who are you?’ So she answered, ‘I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing [KJV, “skirt”], for you are a near kinsman.” To spread the skirt or the garment was an outward symbol of taking her under his protection. In effect, Ruth proposed to him; that is what it amounts to. It doesn’t say it was leap year, but she nevertheless proposed to him. Naomi had told her to do that.

Verse 10, Boaz’s response was, “Then he said, ‘Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich.’”

He was impressed with her. After getting to know her, he felt that she certainly wouldn’t have any trouble attracting a husband. He was deeply impressed with the kind of young woman that she was. He was deeply touched by the fact that she would desire to marry him. He had felt that was something that was not, let’s say, practical. It was not an issue that he would have pushed because he felt like, perhaps, it would

have been unfair to put her on the spot. One of the things we see, just in that example, is that real love is self-sacrificing. It is not selfish. If Boaz had been a selfish individual—if his relationship and attachment to Ruth had been on of selfishness and lust—then he would certainly have taken the initiative. But rather, though he did love her, he was not selfish. He was selfless and did not try to push the claim.

Verses 11-13, he told her, “‘And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you a virtuous woman. Now it is true that I am your near kinsman; however, there is a kinsman nearer than I. Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be that if he will perform the duty of a near kinsman for you—good; let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you, as the Lord lives! Lie down until morning.’”

He was prepared to put it in God’s hands. He knew that this other individual had first right to the property and to exercise the responsibilities of a near kinsman.

Verse 14, “So she lay at his feet until morning, and she arose before one could recognize another. Then he said, ‘Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.’” He didn’t want anything that would cast any shadow on her reputation. Again, that is indicative of someone who really loves, cares and respects someone and would not wish anything to tarnish that person’s reputation. Boaz was certainly concerned about Ruth in that way.

Verses 15-18, “Also he said, ‘Bring the shawl that is on you and hold it.’ And when she held it, he measured six ephahs of barley, and laid it on her. Then she went into the city. So when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, ‘Is that you, my daughter?’ Then she told her all that the man had done for her. And she said, ‘These six ephahs of barley her gave me; for he said to me, ‘Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.’” Then she said, ‘Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day.’”

Naomi knew that Boaz was not going to procrastinate on this. She knew he was going to go immediately because he had already figured the attachment that was there.

Ruth 4:1, “Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the near kinsman of whom Boaz had spoken came by. So Boaz said, ‘Come aside, friend, sit down here.’ So he came aside and sat down.” You might note that this

other near kinsman is not named. His name was actually blotted out of the genealogy. So, he goes down in history as old “what’s-his-name,” KJV, “such a one,” NKJV margin, “so and so.” His name was blotted out because of his selfishness. Boaz probably knew the character of the man. There would be legal requirements to be fulfilled and there was going to be property obtained in this process as well.

Verses 2-4, “And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, ‘Sit down here.’ So they sat down. Then he said to the near kinsman, ‘Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, sold the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. And I thought to inform you, saying, “Buy it back in the presence of the inhabitance and the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am next after you. [Boy his eyes lit up at that. He figured he was going to get a nice piece of land really cheap.] And he said, ‘I will redeem it.’”

Verse 5, “Then Boaz said, ‘On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy it from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead on his inheritance.’” Now that kind of cast a different light on it. On learning that the transaction would include marriage with Ruth and its attendant responsibilities, he withdrew. The property would not be in the kinsman’s name. It would be in the name of the widow whom he was to marry. And if that was going to entangle the property, well, that was a little different story. He wasn’t sure he wanted to do that.

The kinsman says, on second thought, that he can’t redeem it for himself lest he ruin his own inheritance. ‘You go ahead; I can’t redeem it’ (v. 6).

Verse 7, “Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging, to confirm anything: one man took off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was an attestation in Israel.” That was the legal insignia of a formal indication of contract.

Verses 8-13, “Therefore the near kinsman said to Boaz, ‘Buy it for yourself.’ So he took off his sandal. And Boaz said to the elders and to all the people, ‘You are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech’s and all that was Chilion’s and Mahlon’s, from the hand of Naomi. Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to raise up the name of the dead on his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from

among his brethren and from the gate of his place. You are witnesses this day.’ And all the people who were at the gate, and the elders, said, ‘We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the Lord will give you from this young woman.’ So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son.”

One other factor: Ruth had been married for ten years and had not had any children. The indication is that God performed a miracle in allowing her to conceive and bear a child. God stepped in and gave her a child.

Verses 14-17, “Then the women said to Naomi, ‘Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a near kinsman; and may his name be famous in Israel! And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him.’ Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him. Also the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, ‘There is a son born to Naomi.’ And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.”

Then it goes into the genealogy of Pharez, one of the sons of Judah.

Verses 18-22, “Now this is the genealogy of Perez: Perez begot Hezron; Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab; Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon; Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed; Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.” The book culminates with the birth of King David, the royal line through whom the Messiah would ultimately come.

Let me go back to Ephesians because I would like to call your attention to it.

Ephesians 2:1, “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” That’s all of us.

Verses 2-5, “in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great

love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ....”

Verses 11-12, “Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”

Now, this is certainly a description of Ruth. Though the Moabites were descendants of Lot (who was Abraham’s nephew) and they were a kindred people, they were outside God’s covenant relationship. They were Gentiles. A Gentile includes all ethnic groups except the descendants of Jacob. Every other ethnic group is lumped together as Gentiles. It just means those who are not descendants of Jacob. And this was Ruth’s situation.

Here is the parallel that is brought out. It certainly applies to us, in terms of our calling into God’s Church, whether or not we are of the physical descendants of Israel. The New Covenant is with spiritual Israel. So, regardless of whether we are physically Gentile or Israelite, unless we become a part of spiritual Israel, we don’t have any inheritance in the Kingdom of God. The new birth that Jesus Christ spoke of in John 3 is one that does not have its origin in the flesh. It’s not those who are born of the flesh or of the will of the flesh. It’s not those whose birth is from below that are entitled to inherit the Kingdom of God. If the only claim we have is our earthly physical birth (our birth from below), it won’t do us any good because the only birth that will enable us to inherit the Kingdom of God is a birth from above—a birth that is not generated by the will of flesh and blood but is generated by God Himself.

Verses 12-14, “that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us.”

Verses 19-20, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.”

In Ephesians, it’s talking about the Church, the relationship that we have and the opportunity that we have as God’s people.

The book of Ruth is an account of a physical story that certainly illustrates a number of spiritual principles. We can, in that way, compare Ruth to the individual Christian who forsakes the world and follows after the way of God. Ultimately, of course, the Church is to marry Christ. Ruth married Boaz who was a prince of Israel of the line through which the Messiah would come. He was of that royal line of Judah through whom the Messiah would come. Ruth received an inheritance through marriage. In that sense, we are told that the Church will marry Jesus Christ. Our relationship is a relationship through marriage, if you will. So, there’s a very distinct spiritual parallel to the book.

It is certainly a very beautiful love story and is a story of true love. It is a story that illustrates their loyalty and commitment. It is a story of the selflessness and the willingness to put the other person and the interest of the other person first.

There are many lessons that can be gleaned out of the book of Ruth. It is, on the surface, a very beautiful love story and that certainly is an important thing. God is the Author of the relationship between a man and a woman. God is the Author of the family. God is the Author of the love relationship. That’s something that animals don’t have. Animals reproduce—they mate—but there is not a commitment and a loving relationship. You don’t see that with cattle, horses, dogs or cats. God designed that for human beings, and certain books of the Bible illustrate what a beautiful thing it is when it is done right.

This is a book that certainly illustrates the loyalty, commitment and selflessness that is a part of true love. It certainly illustrates the importance of taking care of our responsibilities—of being kind, considerate and willing to help, give and share.

It also teaches spiritual lessons and parallels with the relationship of the Church and Christ that can be applied to the spiritual meaning of Pentecost. There’s an awful lot in the little short book of Ruth, which is a book that is not all that frequently quoted and gone to. But there is a tremendous amount that is packed in there.

The next Bible study, we will be covering the book of Lamentations. Again, it is one of those smaller books that we tend not to go to very often. Yet again I think we will see that there is an awful lot that God has inspired to be packed

in there for our benefit—that can be there for our growth and our edification.

Bible Study # 86 Questions

SURVEY OF THE WRITINGS SERIES

Ruth

1. What was the time setting of the book of Ruth?
2. Why did the family of Elimelech leave the land of Judah?
3. What transpired during the several years that the family dwelt in Moab?
4. When Naomi prepared to return to Judah, did she seek to persuade her daughters-in-law to return with her?
5. What verses most perfectly sum up Ruth's devotion to her mother-in-law?
6. At what time of year did the story in the book of Ruth take place?
7. How did Ruth propose to provide food for herself and her widowed mother-in-law?
8. What instructions did Boaz give concerning Ruth and her gleaning?
9. What do we learn in chapter 2 that explains why Boaz was so greatly impressed with Ruth?
10. What was the significance of Boaz's kinship with the family of Elimelech? What duties did this impose?
11. What did Naomi instruct Ruth to do in chapter 3? What was the significance of this action?
12. Why is the kinsman closer than Boaz not mentioned by name?
13. What did Boaz do to bring the entire matter of Ruth and Naomi's need for a kinsman redeemer to a head?
14. In what way was it publicly established that Boaz had the right to buy Naomi's property and to marry Ruth?
15. What famous line sprang from Ruth and Boaz?

Bible Study # 87
March 24, 1992
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Lamentations

This evening we **are covering Lamentations, the third of the five books of the Megillot or the Festival Scrolls.** Again, it seems that it is not frequently gone through. Yet there is quite a bit of information in it, as I think we will take note of this evening.

The book of Lamentations is traditionally read by the Jews on the Fast of Ab. Ab is the fifth month of the sacred calendar. It comes in the summer and corresponds with our latter July/early August. The Jews have observed the ninth day of the fifth month for over twenty-five hundred years as a national day of fasting.

According to Jewish tradition, there are five calamitous events corresponding to the five chapters of the book of Lamentations, which happened on the ninth day of the fifth month. According to tradition, there are five things that occurred.

One was the return of the twelve spies and the decree of forty years of wandering in consequence of the rebellion of the people. That event is not dated specifically in the book of Numbers, but Jewish tradition hold that it was on the ninth day of the fifth month.

It is clearly dated from Scripture that the destruction of the first temple by Nebuchadnezzar took place on the ninth day of the fifth month. That is the second of the five calamitous events.

The third is the destruction of the second temple by the Romans in 70 A.D. Incredibly enough, both Herod's temple and Solomon's temple were destroyed on the same day, the ninth day of the fifth month, over six hundred years apart in time. The Romans destroyed Herod's temple on the anniversary of the destruction of Solomon's temple.

The fourth event that the Jews take note of was the taking of Bether (a Jewish holdout, a community) by the Romans under Hadrian when five hundred eighty thousand were slain. This is a Roman destruction a number of years after the destruction of the temple.

Then what is called the fifth event is the plowing of Zion like a plowed field in fulfillment of Jeremiah 26:18 and Micah 3:12. Again, the Romans did this at a later time, trying to ensure that no vestige of Jewish settlement in the Jewish

community remained. There is a prophecy in Jeremiah 26.

Jeremiah 26:18, “Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spoke to all the people of Judah, saying, “Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest.’”” This is also mentioned in the book of Micah. Micah is quoted here in Jeremiah.

Micah 3:12, the original statement was, “‘Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest.’” This is a destruction of Jerusalem that the Romans brought about at a later time.

Jewish tradition focuses in on those five calamitous events that certainly focus in on problems that they were having. They read significance into the fact of the five chapters of the book of Lamentations.

The five chapters of Lamentations form what would be called a “modified acrostic.” If you remember, an acrostic is a type of poetry in the Hebrew language where each verse, or set of verses, begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet in alphabetical order. The best example of that and the easiest to follow is Psalm 119.

If you look at Psalm 119 in your Bible, you will notice that before the first set of verses there is a funny little mark; beside the mark it says “Aleph.” Then you come down and you have “Beth,” “Gimel,” “Daleth,” “He,” “Waw,” “Zayin,” “Heth.” It comes down through the Hebrew alphabet with eight verses that are assigned to each of the alphabets in the Hebrew language. The first eight verses begin with “A”; the second eight verses begin with “B,” coming down through Psalm 119. It's easy to follow because, normally, even our English Bibles have it broken with the insignias of the Hebrew alphabet. That's what is called a perfect acrostic because every letter of the alphabet is used. All twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet are used in order and nothing is out of place.

The book of Lamentations is what is called a modified acrostic because it uses that general format, but it is not perfectly developed as in Psalm 119. The first couple of chapters of Lamentations consist of twenty-two verses and each of those verses is arranged in acrostic fashion. Chapter 3 consists of sixty-six verses (3 x 22), which are arranged in a triad of verses for

each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In chapter 3, the first three verses begin with “A”; the second three verses begin with “B,” and it comes down that way. Chapter 4 goes back to the twenty-two verses—again, in an acrostic. Chapter 5 of Lamentations consists of twenty-two verses, but each verse does not begin with a different letter of the alphabet. It has the same number of verses but does not follow that same alphabetical arrangement. The book of Lamentations is what we could term a modified acrostic. Anything of that sort has a certain mark of completion or perfection. The book of Lamentations, while on the one hand, shows the evidence of complete and total destruction, yet because the focus is on destruction, there is not the complete perfection that we find in Psalm 119, which is in praise of God’s perfect law.

Now we know about the book of Lamentations and we know who wrote it. We are told very specifically in II Chronicles 35.

II Chronicles 35:1, “Now Josiah kept a Passover to the Lord in Jerusalem....”

Verses 18-19, “There had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of Samuel the prophet; and none of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as Josiah kept, with the priests and the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah this Passover was kept.”

Then we are told in v. 20, “After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by the Euphrates; and Josiah went out against him.”

Verse 23, “And the archers shot King Josiah; and the king said to his servants, ‘Take me away for I am severely wounded.’”

We are told in vv. 24-25, “...So he died, and was buried in one of the tombs of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. Jeremiah also lamented for Josiah. And to this day all the singing men and the singing women speak of Josiah in their lamentations. They made it a custom [KJV, “ordinance”] in Israel; and indeed they are written in the Laments [KJV, “Lamentations”].”

We are told that Jeremiah lamented for Josiah, and this was something that was sung all the way down to the time when Chronicles was written—to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. It had been made an ordinance, or a law, in Israel and was written in the Lamentations.

Where do we find the Lamentations? Well, when you turn to the book of Lamentations, the full

title of it is, “The Lamentations of Jeremiah.” We have the setting here in the book of Chronicles.

II Chronicles 34:1-3, you remember the story, “Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images.”

Verse 14, “Now when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the Lord, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the Lord given by Moses.”

Verse 16, “So Shaphan carried the book to the king....”

Verse 19, “Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Law, that he tore his clothes.”

Verse 24, God’s response to Josiah is, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah.’”

Verses 27-28, ““because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you,’ says the Lord. ‘Surely I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place and its inhabitants.’”....”

At the time of Josiah, there was a great reform movement in Judah. It was the last of the great reforms. Josiah grew up under the tutelage of Hilkiah the priest.

Jeremiah 1:1, you read, “The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests....” Jeremiah’s father was Hilkiah, the same Hilkiah the priest that brought up Josiah (II Chronicles 34:9; II Kings 22:4-8). There was a close personal connection. Jeremiah and Josiah basically grew up together. They were very close in age. Josiah was perhaps two or three years older than Jeremiah. They grew up together under the tutelage and the guidance of Jeremiah’s father who was God’s priest in those days. When Josiah came of age (at age twenty), he began to

assume full authority of his kingship. There had been a council of regency prior to that time. Josiah began a reform movement that was the most zealous reform period that Judah had ever experienced.

The temple had fallen into disrepair to the point that the Book of the Law had been lost. It had been years and years since anybody had read the Bible. As the temple was cleaned, the Book of the Law was found where it had been hidden. It had been hidden away to protect it at an earlier time during the period of idolatrous kings; it had been lost. When they came in and thoroughly cleansed the temple, the Book of the Law was re-discovered and it was read to Josiah. It was read, and this would specifically refer to the blessings and curses found in the book of Deuteronomy. Josiah knew that they were “off track,” but he hadn’t realized how badly. When all the curses of the books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus were read, then they realized the dire straits they were in. God had mercy and He said, ‘As long as Josiah lives I will not bring these curses on the nation. But once he is dead all these things are going to happen because the nation has forsaken Me.’

Well, when Josiah died, it was more than just the lament for a righteous king. There was the realization that the only thing that stood between the nation and total destruction and calamity was King Josiah. The prophecy had been made years before that once Josiah was dead, all of these things would come about.

So in the aftermath of the death of Josiah, Jeremiah wrote this lament. It was written in poetic fashion. It was written to be sung and is chanted in the synagogues, sort of like a funeral dirge. It was a prophecy of the destruction that was going to come upon the nation.

The destruction that came upon Jerusalem in the time of Nebuchadnezzar is the original fulfillment of this book. The destruction that came upon Jerusalem at the time of Nebuchadnezzar was a type of the even more total destruction that came upon Jerusalem in 70 A.D. at the hands of the Romans. Jesus spoke of that destruction in Matthew 24, Luke 21 and Mark 13. Jesus spoke of that destruction and prophesied of it, but He made it very clear, in Matthew 24 and the other accounts, that the destruction that was going to come upon Jerusalem was, in itself, merely a type of the Great Tribulation that was going to come upon Israel. The Great Tribulation that was going to come is the time of Jacob’s trouble (Jeremiah

30:7). It was going to come at the end of the age, setting the stage for His return.

It has implications for us. The events that are described in the book of Lamentations have had literal fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and the Romans. But when you put it together with Matthew 24, the book of Lamentations looks way down to the time yet future. It is, in reality, a prophecy of the Great Tribulation. It is a prophecy of the events that are going to occur to this nation in just a matter of a few years. The destruction that came upon Jerusalem was a type. Jerusalem is used over and over as a type to prophetically represent the entire nation of Israel. Jerusalem was the only capital that all the twelve tribes had and acknowledged. And Jerusalem will ultimately be the capital of all twelve tribes in the Tomorrow’s World. The things that happened to Jerusalem were a type.

Matthew 24 makes it plain if you look at what Jesus responded to.

Matthew 24:3, “...the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?’”

The question that the disciples specifically asked in Matthew 24 was, ‘What is going to herald the coming of the Messiah in power and glory? What is going to herald the end of this age?’ Jesus then began to answer and to speak the words of Matthew 24 predicated on that question—the question of what events would herald His return. What events would herald the end of this age? Of course, the events that occurred to Jerusalem at the hand of the Romans were merely a type and were representative of the kinds of things that will come about.

Josephus in his Antiquities of the Jews, Book X, Chapter 5, v. 1 tells us, specifically, that Jeremiah composed the book of Lamentations upon the death of the last righteous king of Judah, Josiah. When the premature death of Josiah came, it was not only for this beloved king that lamentation was made but also for the calamities that had been prophesied to befall the nation after his death.

The prophecies of Lamentations look forward to the Great Tribulation, of which earlier calamities on the Jews were merely a type of what will ultimately happen to all of Israel. All of Israel will ultimately lament their sins and will be able to reap God’s mercy, His forgiveness and His restoration. The book of Lamentations in the Hebrew Bible is entitled “Qiyah,” which

literally means, “How?” And that is the first word of the book.

Lamentations 1:1 (KJV), “How does the city sit solitary, that was full of people! How is she become as a widow! She that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary [a slave]!”

The book of Lamentations opens with the question, “How?” And that is the name by which the Jews have customarily called it.

As we open, it clearly sets the stage that is descriptive of what happened to Jerusalem. But it is also descriptive of what is going to be the state of our nation in just a matter of years. It’s hard for us to realize as we look around at the seeming peace and security. We look around at the level of material prosperity we have, and it’s hard for the reality to really “come home” to us, that we are living on borrowed time in this country. The events that are described in the pages of this Book (the Bible) are going to occur. And then it’s going to be, ‘How? How has all this happened?’

Verse 1, “...who was great among the nations! The princess among the provinces has become a slave.” The nation that was at the top—how has it become the bottom? Of course, the answer to that “How?” is exactly what’s described here.

We have lost sight of the fact that the blessings that we have and experience are the results of God’s blessing and benefit. The blessings that God has given our people are because of the obedience of Abraham and the promises that God made to him.

When you go back and read the prophecies of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, it is very apparent that we are living in those days and some of those very things are coming about. It was brought out that we would go from being the lender to becoming the borrower (Deuteronomy 28:44). We have experienced, in just a few years, being the world’s greatest creditor nation to now becoming the world’s greatest debtor nation. We find ourselves increasingly in trouble and increasingly sick. The prophecies bring out that we are sick from the head to the foot (Isaiah 1:5-6). We are sick from the top to the bottom. And it’s not something that just getting a new congress or a new president is going to solve because our problems are ultimately spiritual problems. They are problems of a lack of morality and a lack of the things that are necessary.

So, how has she become a slave?

Verse 2, “She weeps bitterly in the night, her tears are on her cheeks; among all her lovers she

has none to comfort her. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they have become her enemies.” And that is what we are going to find. Those nations that we think we have bought—our friends, our great allies, Germany and Japan, the nations of Europe, Russia—“All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they have become her enemies.”

Verses 3-6, “Judah has gone into captivity, under affliction and hard servitude; she dwells among the nations, she finds no rest; all her persecutors overtake her in dire straits. The roads to Zion mourn because no one comes to the set feasts. All her gates are desolate; her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness. Her adversaries have become the master; her enemies prosper; for the Lord has afflicted her because of the multitude of her transgressions. Her children have gone into captivity before the enemy. And from the daughter of Zion all her splendor has departed. Her princes have become like deer that find no pasture, that flee without strength before the pursuer.”

Verse 8, “Jerusalem has sinned grievously, therefore she has become vile....”

God describes the events that are going to come about. He describes the calamities that are going to occur.

Verse 5, we are told, “...the Lord has afflicted her because of the multitude of her transgressions....” There’s a reason why these things are going to occur.

Galatians 6:7, it says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”

Proverbs 14:34, we are told, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” This is what we find in our nation and in our people.

Lamentations 1:8-11, “Jerusalem has sinned grievously, therefore she has become vile. All who honored her despise her because they have seen her nakedness; yes, she sighs and turns away. Her uncleanness is in her skirts; she did not consider her destiny; therefore her collapse was awesome; she had no comforter, ‘O Lord, behold my affliction, for the enemy has magnified himself.’ The adversary has spread his hand over all her pleasant things; for she has seen the nations enter her sanctuary...All her people sigh, they seek bread; they have given their valuables for food to restore life. ‘See, O Lord, and consider, for I am scorned.’”

It seems very farfetched in this land to believe the time is going to come when we are going to experience food shortages or when we are going

to experience the things it describes here in v. 11, “All her people sigh, they seek bread; they have given their valuables for food...” We are going to experience that. We are going to see the time when people are going to be desperate for food in this land. Hopefully, we won’t see a whole lot of that because if we are faithful to God, God does promise that He will take the Philadelphia Church to a place that we term “a place of safety,” a place of protection.

Revelation 12:14, “But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.” –A place to be nourished and shielded from the onslaught of the Great Tribulation.

Let’s notice a little bit about how we refer the events of this book to the tribulation. This book clearly deals with events of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C. and later the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D. But there are real implications for the future tribulation; this is made plain in several places.

To begin with, let’s look in Jeremiah 30:7-8 and see why we would attach some of these prophecies.

Jeremiah 30:7-8, ““Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in the day,” says the Lord of hosts, “that I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them.”” Notice: “That day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s trouble.” So, here is a time of incomparable trouble, a time called “the time of Jacob’s trouble.”

Matthew 24:21, let’s notice, ““For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.””

Now, Jeremiah 30:7 talked about the fact that it was a time of incomparable trouble. You can’t have two times of worst trouble than ever, and yet Jeremiah 30:7, “...this day is great so that none is like it...”

Matthew 24:21 says it is a time of, “...great tribulation such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall.” If you have a day that is so terrible that there’s none like it, and you have a day that’s spoken of as being a terrible time such as has never been since the beginning of the world, then you are obviously speaking of the same

period. You can’t have two times that are both worse than anything else. Luke 21 deals with the same matter.

Luke 21:20-23, ““But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people.””

So, we again have reference to the same time period. When you go through the book of Lamentations, it is clear that the description describes the same thing—this time of complete destruction. It describes this time of incomparable difficulty and adversity.

We continue in Lamentations.

Lamentations 1:14-22, ““The yoke of my transgressions was bound; they were woven together by His hands, and thrust upon my neck. He made my strength fail; the Lord delivered me into the hands of those whom I am not able to withstand. The Lord has trampled underfoot all my mighty men in my midst; He has called an assembly against me to crush my young men; the Lord trampled as in a winepress the virgin daughter of Judah. For these things I weep; my eye, my eye overflows with water; because the comforter, who should restore my life, is far from me. My children are desolate because the enemy prevailed. Zion spreads out her hands, but there is no one to comfort her; the Lord has commanded concerning Jacob that those around him become his adversaries; Jerusalem has become an unclean thing among them. The Lord is righteous, for I rebelled against His commandment. Hear now, all peoples, and behold my sorrow; my virgins and my young men have gone into captivity. I called for my lovers [I called my allies], but they deceived me; my priests and my elders breathed their last in the city, while they sought food to restore their life. See, O Lord, that I am in distress; my soul is troubled; my heart is overturned within me, for I have been very rebellious. Outside the sword bereaves, at home it is like death. They have heard that I sigh, with no one to comfort me. All my enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that You have done it. Bring on the day that You have announced [proclaimed], that they may become like me. Let all their wickedness come before You. And do to them as You have done to

me for all my transgressions; for my sighs are many, and my heart is faint.”

It describes the destruction and calamity. Clearly, Jerusalem represents all of Israel. It faces captivity because of serious sins and rebellion against God’s law.

Lamentations 1:5, “...the Lord has afflicted her because of the multitude of her transgression...”

Verse 8, “Jerusalem has sinned grievously...”

Verse 18, “The Lord is righteous, for I rebelled against His commandment...” The calamities and the captivity are because of the serious sins and rebellion against God’s law.

As we look at Lamentations 1:20, we find that there are not only going to be those who die as victims in warfare, but those not involved in the warfare will face starvation and disease epidemics.

Lamentations 1:20, “See, O Lord, that I am in distress; my soul is troubled [KJV, “inwards burn”]; my heart is overturned within me, for I have been very rebellious. Outside the sword bereaves, at home it is like death.” There is warfare abroad and death, famine and disease at home. There are many afflictions and many difficulties. Clearly, the prophecies reach beyond simply Jerusalem.

Lamentations 2:3, “He has cut off in fierce anger every horn of Israel; He has drawn back His right hand from before the enemy. He has blazed against Jacob like a flaming fire which devours all around.” It says, “He has cut off in fierce anger all the horn of Israel.” “Horn” is used as symbolic of a king, a nation or a kingdom. So here, we find not merely the horn of Judah but the horn of Israel.

Again, chapter 2 opens with “How?”

Lamentations 2:1-3, “How the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in His anger! He cast down from heaven to the earth the beauty of Israel, and did not remember His footstool in the day of His anger. The Lord has swallowed up and has not pitied all the inhabitants of Jacob. He has thrown down in His wrath the strongholds of the daughters of Judah; He has brought them down to the ground; He has profaned the kingdom and its princes. He has cut off in fierce anger every horn of Israel; He has drawn back His right hand from before the enemy. He has blazed against Jacob like a flaming fire which devours all around.”

This perhaps describes the destruction of even nuclear and atomic weapons that burn like a flaming fire.

Verses 5-6, “The Lord was like an enemy. He has swallowed up Israel, He has swallowed

up all her palaces; He has destroyed her strongholds, and has increased mourning and lamentation in the daughter of Judah. He has done violence to His tabernacle, as if it were a garden. He has destroyed His assembly; The Lord has caused the appointed feast and Sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion. In His burning indignation He has spurned the king and the priest.”

It describes the calamity and affliction that is going to come and how God has caused Israel to be swallowed up.

Verse 6 (KJV), “...He has violently taken away His tabernacle, as if it were of a garden...” The marginal rendering for “tabernacle” is “hedge.” “He has violently taken away His hedge as if it were of a garden.”

In ancient times, hedges were often used as walls to enclose gardens. Thorn hedges were planted and trimmed. They grew and made a very formidable wall because they were difficult to penetrate and kept out creatures that would come in to destroy the garden. In effect, what God is saying is that He is going to remove the hedge that He’s set about our nation. We have been hedged about like a choice garden. I don’t think we realize the extent to which that has been the case.

We have never experienced full-scale warfare in terms of foreign nations on our soil. When you look around the world and see the extent to which warfare has been fought on the territory of various nations—when you look throughout Europe, Africa and the world—you realize we have been protected from that here in this country. It’s been as though there were a hedge about us and Britain in the same way.

There’s not been a successful landing on the British Isles in almost a thousand years—since William the Conqueror in 1066, which was actually a migration of Israelites. Since that time, there has never been an enemy landing that had any success there in the British Isles. They’ve not experienced that sort of invasion. The Spanish tried it with the Spanish Armada and was destroyed off the coast. Napoleon tried it, and he couldn’t do it. The Kaiser tried it in World War I; Hitler tried it in World War II.

God has set a hedge about our people. We have not experienced the kind of things that other nations have. But God says He is going to remove the hedge. He is going to remove the protection that has been set about us. He is going to remove that protective wall. The events that are going to occur are going to make the ears tingle of whoever hears it (Jeremiah 19:3).

It continues in chapter 2 speaking of “How?” Lamentations 2:8, “The Lord has purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion...”

Verse 10, “The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground and keep silence; they throw dust on their heads...”

Verse 12, “They say to their mothers, ‘Where is grain and wine?’ As they swoon like the wounded in the streets of the city, as their life is poured out in their mother’s bosom.” It describes the famine and calamities that are going to come. It talks of little children wasting away.

Verses 13-14, “How shall I console [Margin, “bear witness to”] you? To what shall I liken you, O daughter of Jerusalem? What shall I compare with you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For your ruin is spread wide as the sea; who can heal you? Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not uncovered your iniquity, to bring back your captives, but have envisioned for you false prophecies and delusions.”

The false prophets haven’t told the truth. They haven’t uncovered the iniquity. Our land is filled with false prophets—individuals who appoint themselves to proclaim and to announce to the nation—but they haven’t uncovered the iniquity, the lawlessness and the sin. They haven’t focused on the real problems.

Verse 19, “...Lift your hands toward Him for the life of your young children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street.”

Verse 22, “You have invited as to a feast day the terrors that surround me. In the day of the Lord’s anger there was no refugee or survivor. Those whom I have borne and brought up My enemies have destroyed.”

We find the prophets of Israel have not correctly analyzed the cause of the nation’s problems. They haven’t given solutions. They have held out false hopes and answers. We again see the destruction that is talked about, “the day of God’s anger.” God is going to allow this nation to suffer the consequences. He’s going to allow us to reap what we’ve sown.

Galatians 6:7, the scripture says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” And that is very much the case.

Lamentations 3:1-2, “I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. He has led me and made me walk in darkness and not in light.”

Verses 6-8, “He has set me in dark places like the dead of long ago. He has hedged me in so that I cannot get out; He has made my chain heavy. Even when I cry and shout, He shuts out

my prayer.” He is speaking of the state the nation gets into.

Verse 17, “You have moved my soul far from peace; I have forgotten prosperity.” The nation is going to experience some of those things. God’s mercy is what will protect us from even further total destruction.

It describes in v. 22, “Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.”

Verse 26, “It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.” It is because of God’s mercy that we aren’t consumed. God’s mercy is all that’s going to stand between our nation and total, complete destruction. He is going to allow that destruction but is going to save a remnant. It describes, in poetic fashion, the calamities that are going to come.

Verses 14-15, “I have become the ridicule of all my people, and their taunting song all the day. He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drink wormwood.”

Verses 17-20, “You have moved my soul far from peace; I have forgotten prosperity. And I said, ‘My strength and my hope have perished from the Lord.’ Remember my affliction and roaming, the wormwood and the gall. My soul still remembers and sinks within me.”

Verses 23-27, “They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I hope in Him!’ The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth.”

It is speaking of the fact that there are lessons that are going to be learned; there is discipline that is going to have to be brought on this nation. God is ultimately our portion. He’s the One who is going to be there to deliver us. All these destructions that are described are things that are just almost beyond the limit of what we can imagine.

Lamentations 2:20 even makes reference to cannibalism. That sounds horrible, but if you read Josephus’ account, “The Siege of Jerusalem,” you find that there were things like that happening in the final days of the siege of Jerusalem. There were people who were reduced to that level of depravity. Jesus made it very plain in Matthew 24 and Luke 21 that the events that are going to occur at the very time of the end are going to far supersede even the events that occurred in Josephus’ day and time. When God

corrects, God corrects in love and in mercy. Even when God removes His hedge and allows Satan's wrath to be poured out in the Great Tribulation and God Himself pours out His wrath in the Day of the Lord, God's punishment and chastening is motivated by God's love. If God didn't love our people, if God didn't love and care for us, He would not deal in the way that He does to bring our people to repentance. It makes it very plain here in Lamentations 3.

Beginning in v. 30, we notice one or two verses that even could have a reference to Christ and His crucifixion.

Verses 30-36, "Let him give his cheek to the one who strikes him, and be full of reproach. For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. To crush under His feet all the prisoners of the earth, to turn aside the justice due a man before the face of the Most High, or subvert a man in his cause—the Lord does not approve."

God does not desire to see calamity, affliction and terrible things. God desires our good.

Verse 40, "Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the Lord." This is what we have to do.

Verses 41-43, "Let us lift our hearts and hands to God in heaven. We have transgressed and rebelled; You have not pardoned. You have covered Yourself with anger and pursued us; You have slain and not pitied."

Verses 45-47, "You have made us an offscouring and refuse in the midst of the peoples. All our enemies have opened their mouths against us. Fear and a snare have come upon us, desolation and destruction."

Verses 55-59, "I called on Your name, O Lord, from the lowest pit. You have heard my voice: 'Do not hide Your ear from my sighing, from my cry for help.' You drew near on the day I called on You, and said, 'Do not fear!' O Lord, You have pleaded the case for my soul; You have redeemed my life. O Lord, You have seen how I am wronged; judge my case."

Verse 64, "Repay them, O Lord, according to the work of their hands." God is going to deal with the events that are going to occur. There are going to be punishments that are going to come because of disobedience. But God is ultimately going to deal with the nations that have punished and mistreated Israel.

Lamentations 4 opens with this lament:

Lamentations 4:1-2, "How the gold has become dim! How changed the fine gold! The stones of

the sanctuary are scattered at the head of every street. The precious sons of Zion, valuable as fine gold, how they are regarded as clay pots, the work of the hands of the potter!"

It describes a time when physical wealth will be regarded as worthless because of its inability to deliver from the Great Tribulation. Read some of the prophecies where it talks about how people will lament and mourn and how the gold and the silver will be cast to the moles and the bats and go into the caves (Isaiah 2:18-21). People put their trust and confidence in so many of these things. People put their trust and their confidence in physical things to deliver them. They are going to find that those physical things are not the answer. Unless we are looking to God, unless God is our Deliverer and the One whom we are counting on, we are going to find ourselves in a situation where we can't deliver ourselves. We are not going to be able to buy our way out.

James 5:1-3, "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days."

Until the time of modern nuclear warfare and radioactivity, it was hard to understand James 5:3. Gold doesn't rust as we normally think of it. James 5:3, but it says (KJV), "Your gold and your silver is cankered; the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire." This is talking about becoming contaminated by radioactivity and then describes the consequences. It will burn like fire. There are going to be people who have heaped up gold and think they have really prepared. They are going to find that their pile of gold becomes radioactive and will burn right through them. "Your riches are corrupted." These things are not going to deliver in the day of God's wrath.

It's important to understand that there's only one way that is going to bring us through the events and the calamities of the years ahead, and that involves being close to God.

Lamentations 4:4-6, continuing, "The tongue of the infant clings to the roof of its mouth for thirst; the young children ask for bread, but no one breaks it for them. Those who ate delicacies are desolate in the streets; those who were brought up in scarlet embrace ash heaps. The punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin

of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment, with no hand to help her!”

God says, “the iniquity of the daughter of My people,” speaking of the remnant. “The daughter of My people” is a reference to the last generation. “The punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of My people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom.” Are we concerned about some of these things?

Why, just a matter of a couple of weeks ago, our “esteemed” governor issued an executive order making sure that all the sodomites have full protection here in the state of Louisiana, saying that’s not grounds for any sort of termination of employment or anything of that sort. It was very quietly put into operation through an executive order. Increasingly, as a nation, we view that and say, ‘One lifestyle is just as good as another. Who is to say that this is wrong?’ Well, we are going to find out.

God says Sodom was overthrown as in a moment. We have a lot less excuse than Sodom and Gomorrah. There’s scarcely a home in this nation that doesn’t have a Bible somewhere in it. We have gone so far from any Biblical standard of morality that it’s as though we’ve lost sight that there’s such a thing as right or wrong. God makes plain, these events are going to come and the calamities are going to come. The punishment that God is going to visit on Israel is going to be greater than the punishment on Sodom, and what He rendered on Sodom was pretty great.

Verse 10, it describes the destruction, “The hands of the compassionate women have cooked their own children; they became food for them in the destruction of the daughter of my people.” Horrible things!

Verses 11-12, “The Lord has fulfilled His fury, He has poured out His fierce anger. He kindled a fire in Zion, and it has devoured its foundations. The kings of the earth, and all inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem—” It’s going to be just amazing to people that we are going to be conquered and overthrown.

Verses 13-16, “Because of the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed in her midst the blood of the just. They wandered blind in the streets; they have defiled themselves with blood, so that no one would touch their garments. They cried out to them, ‘Go away, unclean! Go away, go away, do not touch us!’ When they fled and wandered, those among the nations said, ‘They shall no longer

dwell here.’ The face of the Lord scattered them; He no longer regards them. The people do not respect the priests nor show favor to the elders.”

Verses 19-20, “Our pursuers were swifter than the eagles of the heavens. They pursued us on the mountains and lay in wait for us in the wilderness. The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was caught in their pits, of whom we said, ‘Under his shadow we shall live among the nations.’”

Verse 22, “The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; He will no longer send you into captivity. He will punish your iniquity, O daughter of Edom; He will uncover your sins!” Again, there is a focus on what God is going to do. God doesn’t get pleasure out of punishing people.

Lamentations 3:33 says, “For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.” God doesn’t enjoy it. God does not delight in those things at all.

In some ways, Lamentations 5 is sort of a prayer that ends the book.

Lamentations 5:1-2, “Remember, O Lord, what has come upon us; look, and behold our reproach! Our inheritance has been turned over to aliens, and our houses to foreigners.”

It talks about the fact of our people Israel becoming dispossessed in their own land. “Our inheritance is turned over to aliens [strangers].” Increasingly we are seeing this as we see the influx of peoples pouring in. We see the fact that much of our national wealth is bought up by various peoples—the Japanese, the Arabs and various ones.

Verses 2-4, “Our inheritance [that we received from God] has been turned over to aliens, and our houses to foreigners. We have become orphans and waifs, our mothers are like widows. We pay for the water we drink, and our wood comes at a price.” We are going to find that we are going to undergo rationing—everything from fuel to water. We are going to find that these things become increasingly dear and things become increasingly difficult.

Chapter 5 describes the famine and captivity that are characteristic at the time of the Great Tribulation. We will see it as we go through more of chapter 5.

Lamentations 5:5-8, “They pursue at our heels; we labor and have no rest. We have given our hand to the Egyptians and the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread. Our fathers have sinned and are no more, but we bear their iniquities. Servants rule over us; there is none to deliver us from their hand.”

It talks about the whole social structure turned upside down, the fact that our forefathers have sinned and we are reaping the consequences. There are consequences that come, and we are reaping the consequences for the sins of those who have gone before—those who have not properly looked to God and put to practice His laws in their lives. The nation is experiencing the consequence.

Verses 9-12, “We get our bread at the risk of our lives, because of the sword in the wilderness. Our skin is hot as an oven, because of the fever of famine. They ravished the women in Zion, the maidens in the cities of Judah. Princes were hung up by their hands, and elders were not respected.”

It describes the rape, the pillage and the destruction that is going to come.

Verses 13-16, “Young men ground at the millstones; boys staggered under loads of wood. The elders have ceased gathering at the gate, and the young men from their music. The joy of our heart has ceased; our dance has turned into mourning. The crown has fallen from our head. Woe to us, for we have sinned!” These things are going to come to pass.

Verses 19-22, “You, O Lord, remain forever; Your throne from generation to generation. Why do You forget us forever, and forsake us for so long a time? Turn us back to You, O Lord, and we will be restored; renew our days as of old, unless You have utterly rejected us, and are very angry with us!”

Note here at the end, it focuses on God’s power and mercy and our need to be protected, to be brought back and brought to repentance.

Verse 19, it says, “You, O Lord, remain forever; Your throne from generation to generation.” God is there. And when our people find themselves at the very bottom, when they find themselves cut off from God, when they find themselves languishing in the concentration camps of the future, they are going to begin to take up this lament. They are going to begin to look to God and to seek God.

Isaiah 27:13, we read, “So it shall be in that day that the great trumpet will be blown; they will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, and they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.”

God is ultimately going to deliver our people. But there is going to be a tremendous lament. There are going to be tremendous and terrible problems and calamities that come upon our nation and upon our people.

The book of Lamentations sets the stage. Jeremiah wrote this lament at the time of Josiah’s death. It was a direct prophecy of the events that were going to transpire over the next few years in Judah and in Jerusalem. It was a book that set the stage and a prophecy of the events of 70 A.D.—the destruction of Jerusalem. And yet when you go through Matthew 24, it’s very, very evident that the events of 70 A.D. are merely a type of a far greater destruction. It is far greater because it will occur on a far greater scale. These things are going to come to pass. We have lived in a land that has been so blessed. We have really had an artificial isolation and prosperity. We have not had to experience so many of the things that other nations and other peoples have experienced.

The book of Lamentations is a poetic book. It puts the events in poetic fashion. It focuses on and looks forward to the terrible calamities that are going to occur. These things aren’t pleasant to think about. People like to put it out of their minds and forget about that. We have to understand that one-third of the Bible is prophecy and many of these prophecies focus in on the events of our time and on out ahead. God gives us these warnings. Some of these warnings are ultimately going to be focused on by the entire nation. People don’t want to hear this message. They don’t want to hear these things, but God is going to bring it to pass.

There’s a tremendous amount that is packed in here. God inspired Jeremiah to write these things and inspired it to be preserved for us. God is ultimately the source of mercy. There are going to be calamities that are going to occur. It is not because God is cruel. The tribulation really represents Satan’s wrath. The tribulation is made possible because God removes the hedge from around our people. What happens, in effect, is that God says, ‘You don’t appreciate the protection that I have given you. You don’t want Me. You don’t want My ways. You don’t want My protection. Fine! I will remove those things and you will be on your own.’ This means, of course, that just as when God removed the hedge around Job, he was wide open to the attack of Satan. So, when God removes the hedge around our nation and our people, we will be wide open to the attack that Satan will stir up.

The Beast power is arising right now; even as we speak this evening, there are events that are going on in Europe. Incredible events! Events that just a matter of a few years ago, seemed so far off and so remote. We are sitting on the

threshold of the culminations of so many of these events that the Bible focuses upon.

Hopefully, as we had a chance to go through and to look a little bit at the book of Lamentations, we can realize that there really is a tremendous amount that God has packed in there. There are events that have a great deal of significance for us today and represents things upon which we need to focus. Some of these things are unpleasant. We don't like to focus on things that are unpleasant. But these things are there for a warning. They are there for an admonition.

Acts 10:34, "...'God shows no partiality.'" (KJV, "...God is no respecter of persons.") If we don't learn the lesson of the things that God has inspired to be recorded, we will ultimately reap the consequences that come.

Next Bible study we will go through the book of Ecclesiastes, the fourth of the five Festival Scrolls.

Bible Study # 87 Questions

SURVEY OF THE WRITINGS SERIES

Lamentations

1. For what event was the book of Lamentations written?
2. How will our allies deal with us in the future?
3. What future time period is the primary theme of the book of Lamentations?
4. Why is Jerusalem (typifying all of Israel) to be removed into captivity?
5. What does Lamentations 1:20 refer to?
6. Show from chapter 2 that all of Israel and not just Judah is the subject of these warnings.
7. What is a better rendering of the word “tabernacle” in Lamentations 2:6 and to what does this verse refer?
8. According to chapter 2, what has been the contribution of the prophets of Israel?
9. What verses in chapter 2 show the utter horror and depravity to which the nation will be reduced?
10. According to chapter 3, why is Israel not entirely destroyed?
11. What encouraging things are we told concerning God’s correction in chapter 3?
12. How will the material wealth of the nation be regarded in a few years? (Chapter 4)
13. How does the punishment to be visited upon Israel compare with that of Sodom?
14. In what condition does the nation of Israel find itself according to chapter 5? What is the time setting of the chapter?
15. What positive thing is stressed at the very end of the book?

Bible Study # 88
May 12, 1992
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Ecclesiastes

We are progressing through our series this evening. We have most recently been going through that section of the Old Testament known as the Writings, which is the third division of the Old Testament Scriptures. That section is primarily poetic. The book of Psalms is the longest and the primary book in that section. The section also includes Proverbs and Job as other books that have a poetic cast to them. Then there is this particular group of five books called by the Jews the Megillot or the Festival Scrolls. These five little books (Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentation, Ecclesiastes and Esther) were traditionally read at various festival occasions in ancient Israel.

This is the section of the Writings we have been going through most recently. We have gone through Song of Solomon, Ruth and Lamentations. Now we **are up to the fourth of the five Festival Scrolls, the book of Ecclesiastes**. There's only a little bit remaining in this section. Once we finish Ecclesiastes and Esther, then the only portion of the Writings left is the book of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and I and II Chronicles. We have already covered Ezra, Nehemiah, and I and II Chronicles when we went through the historical books of the Old Testament. So, we will take a very brief look in those four books from a little different standpoint than we went into before. We will take a brief look at them in one Bible study because we have already gone through them in depth a number of months ago.

Once we finish up Ecclesiastes and Esther, we will have finished the five Festival Scrolls. We will then go through the book of Daniel. After Daniel we will take one Bible study to look at Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles, just to sort of round off, since we have been going through this as a specific section. That will conclude our study of every book in the Bible except the book of Revelation, which we will go into afterward. We are going to spend seven Bible studies on the book of Revelation. We will go into some depth into that.

Some books we have covered a little more quickly; some we have gone into more detail. The books of the Bible are written in different ways, and we have to understand that when we study them. Some books are written in a poetic

fashion, and as a result, there is a great deal of repetition. They deal with topics in a little different way. Others are written as a straightforward narrative account, as in the case of many of the historical books. Some are written where there is a great deal of exposition of particular theological subjects. In Paul's epistles, for instance, there is a great deal of exposition of topics—as distinct from the Gospel accounts where we have the story of what Christ did and, yes, the story of what He said. And there's exposition there, too. In some of the prophetic books, we get into more symbolism that is directed.

We are going to cover Daniel in two Bible studies. We will get an overview of Daniel, but when we go through Revelation in much detail, we will have to go back to the prophetic sections of Daniel. So to avoid being repetitious, when we cover Daniel, we will concentrate on the areas that are not repeated so heavily in Revelation. Then when we cover Revelation, we will go back in more detail to earlier chapters of Daniel. We will find, as we go through it, several chapters of Daniel form the backdrop to understanding the book of Revelation. It gives you a little bit of an idea as to what will have occurred.

We will have covered every single book of the Bible. Since some of you have been here all through that time, you will have had the opportunity to go through in a detailed, systematic way, every single book of the Bible. But since none of us will have learned everything there is to know about the Bible, we will still need to go back to the Bible. We will find there is plenty more to study in the Bible, but at least we will have had an overview of all of the books.

This evening we are getting into the book of Ecclesiastes. As I have mentioned, it is the fourth of the five Festival Scrolls. It was and is traditionally read to this day in Orthodox synagogues at the Feast of Tabernacles. Normally it would be read on the weekly Sabbath that comes during the Feast of Tabernacles. At first glance, it may strike us as a rather odd book to read during that particular period because the Feast of Tabernacles is a festive time. It is a time that looks forward to and pictures the time of the millennial reign of Jesus Christ on the earth—the time when the Kingdom of God will hold sway over all the earth. We might think of certain prophetic passages that would tie in to that meaning.

The book of Ecclesiastes is a book that, at first glance, strikes many people as being sort of negative and pessimistic. Even some commentators have wondered over the years how a book like this got into the Bible. Well, it got into the Bible because God wanted it there, and it stayed in the Bible because God wanted it there. Perhaps as we go through this evening, we will understand a little more clearly the message that God wants us to have. This book describes living life to the full from a physical standpoint. There weren't any desires that were not met. Yet after all of that, there is a certain feeling of emptiness and futility when all is said and done. Solomon's reign was, in many ways, a type of the Millennium.

We refer to certain things as being a type of something else. We refer to that in prophecy. To be a type of something means to be a forerunner and in certain ways picture a later, greater event or a later, greater person. For instance, in certain passages made in the Psalms, we find that in certain ways David was a type of Christ, a type of the Messiah. That simply means that there were certain things about him that were typical of or referred to the Messiah. That's why so many passages of the Psalms that David wrote, which reflects experiences and feelings that he had, are actually quoted in the New Testament by Jesus Christ Himself to apply to and to be descriptive of the Messiah. Many events that occurred in history are used in the Bible as a type of some future event. In other words, it illustrates on a small scale, some later, greater event. We say that Solomon's reign was a type of the Millennium. Let's understand what that means.

I Kings 4:20-21, "Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and rejoicing. So Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life."

Verses 24-25, "For he had dominion over all the region on this side of the River [referring to the Euphrates River] from Tiphshah even to Gaza, namely over all the kings on this side of the River, and he had peace on every side all around him. And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as Beersheba, all the days of Solomon."

We are told that the nation dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree.

Now let's turn back to the prophets.

Micah 4:1, "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house

shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it." It is talking about the government of God. "Mountain" is used symbolically in the Scripture to refer to a government. "The mountain [government] of the house of the Lord will be established."

Verses 2-4, "Many nations shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken."

The phrase, "But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree and none shall make them afraid," is used three times in the Bible: I Kings 4:25, Micah 4:4 and in Zechariah 3:10.

Zechariah 3:10, "'In that day,' says the Lord of hosts, 'Everyone will invite his neighbor under his vine and under his fig tree.'"

The statement in Micah 4:4 is almost an exact repetition of the statement in I Kings 4:25. That is descriptive of a time of peace, safety, security and prosperity.

Right now if we look around the world, we see great unrest. We see tremendous amounts of ethnic strife and conflict all over the world, whether it is internal problems in this nation or whether it's the world's problems. Right now, the nation of Yugoslavia has really ceased to be a nation. It is split into four small sub-groups. I may be mistaken, but I doubt if there are any of us in this room that could actually tell the difference between a Slovene, a Croat, a Serb or a Bosnian. Maybe you could, but I don't really think that I could at first glance or anything. They existed together as the nation of Yugoslavia for much of the mid-portion of this century. Now they have split into various warring factions. That is just one tiny example. You find it all over the world. We've seen the breakup of the Soviet Union into fifteen constituent republics, and some of these constituent republics are in the process of further dividing. You can go to Africa, Asia or anywhere you want on the face of the earth, and we see this ethnic strife and warring. Of course,

there have always been conflicts that have existed.

What is it that everyone wants? What's all the strife about? Well, basically, what it comes down to is what everybody wants is to be able to dwell safely, every man under his own vine and under his own fig tree. Everybody wants his little spot where nobody can come in and intimidate him and threaten to take it away from him. Everybody has a yearning. That is the basis of all these nationalistic yearnings. People desire their own spot where they are not going to have to worry about some larger, stronger neighbor coming in and deciding to annex their spot and take it away from them, chop down their fig tree, steal all the grapes off their vines and leave them there beaten to a pulp. That has so often been descriptive of our history.

God uses that symbolism to describe Tomorrow's World, a time when every nation will have its spot. It will have its place under the sun. It is a time when all people will be able to sit under their own vine and their own fig tree—which by the way, shows that the millennial period is not going to be a time of communism or socialism. It doesn't say that every man will sit under the communal vine and the communal fig tree. It says, "Every man will sit under his own vine and his own fig tree."

The eighth commandment that enjoins us not to steal, presupposes private property. There's nothing wrong with private property. And again there is a yearning that people have to have their own stuff. There's nothing wrong with that, as long as greed doesn't motivate them to try to steal their neighbor's spot and annex it to theirs. God is the One who divides to the nations their inheritance.

Deuteronomy 32:8-9, we are told, "When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance." And He will do so once again.

What we have is a description of a time in the history of Israel when the nation, for a brief period, existed in peace and in harmony. The phrase that is used is a phrase that is typical of the way the whole world will be under the reign of Jesus Christ.

Solomon's name is derived from the Hebrew word "Shalom," which means "peace." In that sense, Solomon's reign was a type of the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. It was a time of

abundance, peace and prosperity—at least, during a brief period of that reign when people were able to dwell in the land in safety, free from incursions and threats of invasion and things of this sort. We have a reign that was a type of the Millennium.

In many ways, the book of Ecclesiastes explains the difference between the Millennium and the Kingdom of God. There is a difference. "Millennium" is a word that simply means "a thousand years." It comes from the Latin. By definition, a thousand years is a limited, finite period of time. It has a beginning and it has an end. But the Kingdom of God is eternal. It will go on and stretch out into eternity. We are told of the Messiah's reign.

Luke 1:33, "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His reign there will be no end."

Isaiah 9:7, "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end..."

So, we are looking out into eternity and to infinity. The Millennium has a limitation. The Millennium is that time when the Kingdom of God rules over physical human beings and over the earth for the period of one thousand years. It has its beginning at the return of Jesus Christ and its conclusion at the time when Satan is released and allowed to go forth to deceive the nations for a very short duration, just prior to the White Throne Judgment period (Revelation 20:7-8).

The Feast of Tabernacles looks forward to and pictures the Millennium. It reminds us of that period in God's plan, and it is a time when we are enjoying the fruits of our labor. God commands us to set back a portion of our income to utilize at the Feast. It is a time when the ancient Israelites were enjoying the fruits of their labor in great abundance. They were being reminded that there was a greater, ultimate reality because when you are enjoying everything physical to the full, there is still something on beyond that. Everything physical, by its very nature, is temporary.

I don't care how great a meal you eat, how big the steak is or how delicious the food was, it's just a matter of a few hours until you are hungry again. It's temporary. You may be full and may think you won't be able to eat again. Well, in a few hours you'll be hungry and you will want to eat again. No matter what it is, it may be great, but no matter how thrilling or exciting, it's temporary. There is nothing wrong with enjoying something physical, as long as it's done in the right way. But the point is that by its nature, it is temporary.

The book of Ecclesiastes is written from the perspective of a lifetime of experience and experiment. After trying every possible way to achieve self-fulfillment, Solomon came to the conclusion that no humanly devised scheme will produce lasting results. The modern “self-actualizers,” the “me-generation” and all the theorists who advocate these various things could save themselves a lot of pain by simply reading and heeding the message of Ecclesiastes because the ultimate conclusion is that only God’s way works. That’s the conclusion of the whole matter that Solomon arrives at by the end of the book.

God inspired that he record his experience in poetic fashion as an example for us. Let’s look through this particular book and note the various things that we find here.

Ecclesiastes 1:1 (Jewish Publication Society Bible—JPS), “The words of the Koheleth, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.” The Hebrew term “Koheleth” is translated “preacher” in the KJV and NKJV. Various translations may render it a little differently. The Hebrew term “Koheleth” is the way the Jewish translation transliterates it into an English spelling. It simply means “a speaker in an assembly.” The word “preacher” would be one rendering of it. This is a reference to Solomon.

This speaker is described as the son of David, the king of Jerusalem. Which king in Jerusalem was the son of David? Well, Solomon. Was Solomon a teacher in an assembly? Well, he certainly was a wise man. We are told that people came from all over the known world to hear Solomon’s wisdom. He was celebrated for his collection of Proverbs, for his teaching and for all the knowledge and wisdom that came from him (I Kings 4:29-34). Here, he is writing in that context.

Verse 2, “‘Vanity of vanities,’ says Koheleth; ‘vanity of vanities, all is vanity.’” What is that reference to? The word that is translated “vanity” is a word that in the Hebrew language literally means “breath.” In other words, it is something that lacks substance. The term “vanity of vanities” is a superlative in Hebrew, like “holy of holies” or “song of songs.” It is the superlative in Hebrew, the ultimate. So when he says, “vanity of vanities, all is vanity,” the statement is being made right off that there is a pervasive emptiness and a pervasive sense of futility that comes when “things” are pursued.

Verses 3-4, “What profit has a man of all his labor wherein he labors under the sun? One generation passes away, and another generation

comes; and the earth abides forever.” The earth goes on and on, but there is a temporary finite nature to man. No matter what you do, one generation passes and another generation comes along. There is a transitory character to human life.

He says, “What profit has man of all his labor?” The word “profit” in Hebrew means basically what our word “profit” means in English. It is used ten times in the book of Ecclesiastes and not anywhere else in the Bible. This is the only place that this particular word is used. The literal meaning of the word is “a surplus” and “a balance sheet.” It’s basically the same as what our English word “profit” means. The point is: What is the profit? When you figure up the accounts at the end and tally it all up, what is the profit? What is the surplus that a man has of all his labor? What does he have left over? Well, he’s not going to be here. He perishes. He passes away. “One generation passes away and another generation comes.” There is a transitory character to human life.

Verse 5, “The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to his place where he arose.” You look back and surely enough, it comes up the same place the next day.

Verses 6-7, “The wind goes toward the south, and turns about unto the north; it turns about continually in its circuit, and the wind returns again to its circuit. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place from where the rivers go, there they go again.”

It just goes on that way. The Mississippi has been running down into the Gulf for centuries and millennia, but it doesn’t empty out and the Gulf doesn’t fill up. It’s amazing how that works. The river just keeps flowing on. Thousands of years go by and the river just keeps coming.

Verses 9-10, “That which has been is that which shall be, and that which has been done is that which shall be done; and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, ‘See, this is new’? –It has been already, in the ages which were before us.”

This simply shows that there is a repetitive effect to life. There is a cyclical effect to life in the physical realm. There are cycles that nature follows—the rain cycles, the wind cycles, the patterns of the weather, the seasons, the rotation of the earth on its axis and its revolution around the sun. There are patterns and there are cycles. We also find it in terms of human conduct.

Now he doesn’t mean that every technology that could ever be invented had been invented. When

he says there's nothing new under the sun, the reference is not to the fact that automobiles existed before the flood or something like that. That's not what it's talking about. It is simply the fact that there is really no particular change to what people do. The motivating force behind virtually every technological revolution man has come up with has been inspired by the military. This has always been the driving force. There have been peaceful spin-offs, but whether it was the development of the bow and arrow, the advancement in bow and arrow technology in development of the long bow, the crossbow and various things that were developed through the Middle Ages, it was to give armies one "step up" on the opposing army. There were various developments in the technology of the bow and arrow, which can be great if you are a bow hunter, but it was developed to give armies a "step up" on the opposing army.

It's the same thing with aviation. Aviation was sort of a novelty prior to World War I. The greatest boost to aviation was when government money was put into it in World War I. If we could figure out a way to do this a little better, well, we would be able to drop bombs down on top of our enemies. So, a lot of money was put into aviation during World War I. It went from a novelty to being something that served an important use. The same thing happened. There was another big jump during World War II with advancement of various other kinds of technology.

In other words, human nature has remained the same. It's what man does with the opportunities that he has. There is predictability to human nature. That's part of the basis of prophecy. You put the same people in the same situation, and they basically do the same thing over and over and over again.

We see that there are historical cycles. We see it in economics. What it amounts to is one generation forgets the lessons learned by the previous generation. We find ourselves in economic problems today, just a generation down the road from the depression. The generation that grew up during the depression, that learned the economic lessons of the depression have to a great extent been replaced by the generation that "cut his teeth" on post-World War II prosperity. So, we go back and do the same thing. You see over and over and over certain repetitive cycles. We see that and Solomon brings that out here. There is nothing really new or novel when it comes to human nature and the way that people respond.

Ecclesiastes 1:12-15, "I Koheleth have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven; it is a sore task that God has given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind. That which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting [lacking] cannot be numbered." He applied himself to know wisdom.

Verses 16-18, "I spoke with my own heart, saying, 'Lo, I have gotten great wisdom, more also than all that were before me over Jerusalem; yea, my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.' And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly—I perceived that this also is striving after wind. For in much wisdom is much vexation; and he who increases knowledge, increases sorrow."

The possession of wisdom, of and by itself, merely serves to reveal more realistically the imperfections of the current world order and increases one's weariness and unhappiness. If you clearly saw and understood everything that's going on in the world scene today, apart from an understanding of God and His revelation, there would be an awful lot of despair. In that sense, "ignorance is bliss" to a lot of people. The reason they get along as well as they do is because they really don't understand how bad things are.

The point is that there is something on beyond that represents God's revelation of the fact that He is going to step into history. There is a hope that we have, but that hope is not anchored onto the fact that man is going to fix it all for himself. What we find with human history is a repetition of the cycles. But we find that as man's technology increases, those cycles can be even more destructive. The wars that are fought are increasingly destructive. The American War Between the States is often referred to as the first modern war, and the casualties dwarfed all other wars that had been fought by American soldiers. In fact, if you combine the casualties (North and South), the number of casualties equals more than the sum total of all American military casualties in all of the other wars from the Revolution through Viet Nam.

It was called the first modern war because it involved destruction and carnage on a scale that had never been possible before then. Technology had increased. With the old muzzle-loading guns, you fired one and you had to stop and reload. That slowed down killing. When the

repeating rifle came on the scene, it made it more efficient. You could kill your neighbor more quickly and could kill more of your neighbors. There were various other things that were invented during that time.

Well, just a matter of a generation later, World War I was fought. It was just about fifty-some-odd years later when World War I broke out. The technology changes that had taken place meant that World War I, in terms of the European Continent, far dwarfed what had happened on the American Continent fifty years before. American casualties weren't as much, but it devastated Europe with casualties running into the multiple millions. It was called the Great War, the war to end all wars. And just a matter of twenty-one years later (1918 to 1939), World War II broke out. World War II far dwarfed World War I, and the casualties were far, far higher. It ran into the multiple tens of millions by the time you take in all the casualties that took place there. We have found that the cycles of human nature are the same, but man's technology has allowed it to be far more destructive. A World War III would be far, far more destructive than any of the previous wars of this century.

The nature of man has remained unchanged and that's why, "That which is done is what will be done." The nature of man remains the same as when Cain picked up a stick and killed Abel. What's changed? The only thing that's changed is that now the modern-day Cain has learned how to project the "stick" from thousands of miles away. He has improved his technology, but it's the same attitude and the same spirit. It was a little more primitive. He had to reach down and pick up the club and knock his brother in the head. Now he can be ten thousand miles away, push a button and our modern-day "stick" (we call it a missile) shoots up, goes across and lands and blows up.

So what's changed? He says that the possession of more wisdom—just seeing clearly how bad things are—doesn't fix everything. That doesn't make you happy. You recognize how difficult it is to actually bring about any sort of real permanent change. That was emptiness. He says maybe pursuing knowledge and an education is the ultimate. Maybe that's the way to happiness and fulfillment. So, he pursued those things and he said all he got was frustrated. He saw these things and realized how puny man really is and how little he can really effect and change things on the earth. "What is crooked cannot be made straight" (v. 15). Things go on and there are cycles that are to be followed. Just pursuing an

education wasn't the ultimate. Solomon tried everything.

Ecclesiastes 2:1, "I said in my heart 'Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure'; but surely this also was vanity." He thought, 'What about having a good time?' He became a party animal. So, he pursued some of that and what did this accomplish?

Verses 3-14, "I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under the heaven all the days of their lives. I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made myself waterpools from which to water the growing trees of the grove. I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks, than all who were in Jerusalem before me. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all kinds. So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained in me. Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my reward from all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun. Then I turned myself to consider wisdom, and madness and folly; for what can the man do who succeeds the king?—only what he has already done. Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I myself perceived that the same event happens to them all."

He said he finally figured out that what happens to the fool is going to happen to him. He said, 'We are both going to die. So, am I really that much better off?'

Solomon pursued everything. Where does satisfaction and fulfillment come from? Does it come in the pursuit of knowledge? He did that. Does it come in just partying and having a good time? He did that. Does it come in setting great goals, achieving, accomplishing, and building things, construction projects or all sorts of

pursuits? He said he pursued those things. He practiced those things, and he was making money. He put his heart into various things, and it all turned out empty. Oh, there was excitement and thrill at the time. But when it was over, when he had achieved, when he had accomplished whatever it was he had done, he finally “had it.” He looked around and said, ‘Is this all there is to it?’ There was still an empty spot.

Solomon set out to perform an experiment, to arrive at the purpose of life, to learn what produced real satisfaction. We find the consequence.

Verse 17, “Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was grievous unto me, for all is vanity and a grasping for the wind.” He became depressed. He said, ‘What’s the point of it all? I am going to die and I’ll be gone. Whatever I’ve done will be left for somebody else to tear up or to enjoy or do whatever they are going to do with it. I’m just here for a short time and I’ve knocked myself out doing all this and I’m gone.’

There’s still something more. There was this sense of futility.

Verses 18-19, “Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I have toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity.” He began to look at that.

Verse 22, “For what has man for all his labor, and for the striving of his heart, with which he has toiled under the sun?” What do you get for it all?

Verse 23, “For all his days are sorrowful, and his work grievous; even in the night his heart takes not rest. This also is vanity.” He thinks about it and he worries about it.

Verse 24, “There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God.”

We see here, in v. 24, that to derive pleasure from your work and to enjoy the material rewards produced from it is the peak of human satisfaction. That is from the hand of God. There is nothing better, humanly, than to enjoy the reward and the benefits of what you’ve done and accomplished, to derive pleasure from your work and your labor.

That’s fine. But is there anything beyond that? Ecclesiastes 3:1-3, “To everything there is a season, a time to every purpose under the

heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up.”

So, there is a time. There is the sense of the cycle of life—the ups, the downs, joys, sorrows, birth and death. There are cycles that are descriptive of life on this planet under the sun. To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heavens. There is a time and place.

Verses 9-13, “What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts (KJV, “set the world in their heart”), except that no one can find out the work that God does from the beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God.”

Let’s note v. 11 in the King James Bible. There is sort of an interesting term. “...He has made everything beautiful in its time; also He has set the world in their heart....” Now, what does that mean? The Hebrew word that is translated “the world” is the Hebrew word “*olam*.” It is not a word that refers to the physical earth. It doesn’t really refer to society as such. It is the word that is used in Hebrew to refer to the future, to forever or to eternity.

For instance, it is the word that is used back in Ecclesiastes 1:4 when it says, “...one generation passes away, another generation comes, but the earth abides forever.” The literal translation of the Hebrew “...and the earth abides forever” is the word “*olam*.”

Back in Ecclesiastes 3:11, I will read the comment out of the Soncino Jewish Commentary, “The Hebrew word “*olam*” is interpreted as “eternity.” This is the signification that it has in the Bible. God has endowed man with a sense of the future. He knows that he is more than a creature of the day, and this consciousness is the cause of his dissatisfaction with the transitory experiences which take place within the span of his lifetime.”

Man has set within him a sense of the future, a sense of eternity. This is something that animals do not possess. Animals don’t have that. They are purely creatures of the moment. They are experiencing their excitement, anticipation, joy, sorrow; whatever they are experiencing, they are experiencing the moment. They don’t have

any sense of the future. They don't have any sense of a time that existed before they were or a time that will be beyond their life. They don't have any concept of time. They don't have any concept of the future, of eternity. That is one of the things that is characteristically human; that is not shared by any other physical creatures. "God has set eternity in our hearts." He has set within us a sense of the future, a sense of that which stretches out beyond us, both into the past and into the future. That makes us, all the more, desire to have something that stretches beyond the "right here" and "right now."

He looks and he says, 'There is a time for everything. What is the profit? What is the surplus? What is gained with all the things that are done?' He looked at what God has given to man to be exercised therewith. Everything has its own beauty. We have a sense of the future, a sense of eternity in our heart, and yet we can't find out everything that God has done from the beginning to the end.

Ecclesiastes 3:12-13, "I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God." Derive benefit from it.

Verse 14, "I know that whatsoever God does, it shall be forever...." What God does is forever; what man does is temporary.

Verse 16, "And moreover I saw under the sun, in the place of judgment, wickedness was there; and in the place of righteousness, iniquity was there." Justice is very inequitably carried out—again characteristic of human society.

Isaiah 32:1, the prophet Isaiah tells us, "Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice." That is the time of Christ's millennial reign. Right now in the world, we find that often other factors are considered. It's not just a matter of right or wrong, guilt or innocence. Justice hinges on so many technicalities, political factors and various things. There is an adversarial relationship that exists. Each side is not trying to simply discover the truth. They are trying to accentuate the things that make them look good and to obscure, hide and dispute the facts that make the other side look good. We find that there are many things that are not as they should be.

Ecclesiastes 3:17, Solomon said, "I said in my heart, 'God shall judge the righteous and the wicked....'" What is the answer to injustice and iniquity? —The realization that there is a time of reckoning coming. There are a lot of judges that

you might be able to pay off, but I'll tell you one you can't —that's God Almighty. A lot of judges can be corrupted, a lot of bribes can be passed, but there is a Judgment Day that nobody is going to buy his way out of. They are not going to be able to come up with some slick lawyer and get pass that One. It won't work. 'The righteous and the wicked God will judge; for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.' There is an accountability that is coming.

Verse 18, "I said in my heart, 'Concerning the estate of the sons of men, God tests them, that they may see that they themselves are like beasts.'" We are temporary.

Verses 19-22, "For what happens to the sons of men also happens to beasts; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over beast, for all is vanity. All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust. Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the beast, which goes down to the earth? So I perceived that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his heritage. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?"

We are told right here that there's a cessation of consciousness after death. "As one dies, so does the other," and they all go to one place. In other words, we will return to the dust; we return to the ground.

Ecclesiastes 4:1, "Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun: And look! The tears of the oppressed, but they have no comforter—on the side of their oppressors there was power, but they had no comforter." He looked at the injustice, inequity and the people that were cheated and taken advantage of. As he looked at so many of these things, he just despaired.

Verse 2, "Therefore I praised the dead who are already dead, more than the living that are still alive." This is terrible! You look and see these things.

Verse 4, "Again, I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is envied by his neighbor. This also is vanity and a grasping for the wind." The basic motivation for success is often envy and jealousy—somebody trying to get "one up" on his neighbor. He said, 'I considered this labor, this excelling in works.' So often, it's just a man's rivalry with his neighbor, and this is empty. Where does that lead? You're just in a rat race where you're just racing. The problem is, in a rat race, the rats win. This is the sort of thing we find in a society that has gotten its priorities

distorted. One extreme is people who are just pursuing rivalry with their neighbor and always trying to get “one up” on their neighbor. This is vanity and striving after wind.

Now, there is another extreme.

Verse 5, “The fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh.” He just sits there and doesn’t do anything. He just wastes away. That’s not a solution. That’s not a wise approach either. To be out pursuing success to the point that our whole life is consumed with trying to beat somebody else and being number one—that is vanity. And it’s foolish to sit on the sidelines and do nothing.

Verse 6, “Better is a handful with quietness than both the hands full, together with toil and grasping for the wind.” The balance is neither both hands full nor both hands empty. It is a balanced approach, “a handful with quietness.” You’re working and you’re productive, but you’re able to enjoy the fruits of your labor.

There are some people who pursue success and they never have a chance to enjoy the fruits of their labor. They keel over with a heart attack at age fifty or whatever it is. Somebody else has the fruits of their labor because they worked sixteen hours a day and never stopped to enjoy life. There is a balance. Yes, “whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.” We will find that emphasized a little bit later. Yeah, sure, be productive, but don’t be in some race trying to beat everybody else, motivated by jealousy and envy. Nor sit on the sidelines and be lazy and do nothing. There is a balance.

Verses 7-8, “Then I returned, and saw vanity under the sun: There is one alone, without companion: he has neither son nor brother. Yet there is no end to all his labors, nor is his eye satisfied with riches. But he never asks, ‘For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good?’ This also is vanity and a grave misfortune.”

On the one hand, somebody is isolated. He labors by himself and pursues all these things but has no one to share it with.

Verses 9-11, “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to lift him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone?” There is the fact that two together are much better. If one falls, the other can help him up. That’s a beautiful description of the way a relationship should be between a husband and a wife. You find this description here and you might contrast it with one back in

the book of Galatians, which I think gives a contrast in terms of what God intended a family relationship to be and what all too often it is.

Galatians 5:15, “But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” If you fight and devour one another, you will be consumed one of another. That is descriptive of situations that so often exist in families. People tear one another down; in tearing one another down, they are really tearing themselves down. In biting and devouring their mate, they are consuming themselves as well. That’s a very sad and tragic description that we find so often. It says, “Two are better than one. If they fall the one will lift up his fellow.” That’s the way it should be. When one is down, the other is there to help him up. We all have our times when we are down. That’s what is intended. Here is a description of two who are helping, encouraging and lifting up one another. It makes quite a contrast.

Ecclesiastes 4:12, “Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” This is a poetic description of the family. It describes the benefits of a united family. A threefold cord is not soon broken. This is a poetic description of not only the husband and wife but also the child that is the issue of the union.

Ecclesiastes 5:1, “Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil.” Guard your foot when you go to the house of God. Be more ready to listen, to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools.

Verse 2, “Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few.”

Verses 4-6, “When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools; pay what you have vowed. It is better not to vow than to vow and not pay. Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands?”

The point is that the sacrifice of fools has to do with rash promises made to God. The point is to not be rash with your mouth. It’s better to listen. When you come into the house of God, you come before God. It’s better to listen to what God has to say than it is to make all sorts of rash promises that you don’t keep. It is important. God takes seriously broken promises. The

“sacrifice of fools” is a hasty promise or vow to God.

In Hebrew 13:15, there is a reference where it says, “Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.” Our words, the sacrifice of praise, are likened to the sacrifices. Here there is a reference to hasty vows and promises to God that wind up not being fulfilled. God takes that seriously. When we make a vow, God expects us to keep our vows, to pay our vows. That’s one of the reasons marriage is so important and to be taken so seriously because marriage ultimately involves a vow before God. We speak of marriage vows. That’s not something to be taken lightly. The commitment we make at baptism is a vow and, again, should not be taken lightly. God takes these things seriously.

Verse 12, “The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep.” That’s simply saying that when someone gets out and works hard, he is able to get a good night’s sleep. But someone whose whole intent is on trying to accumulate more, he is probably so worried about it that he can’t sleep. So again, Solomon focuses on these things.

Ecclesiastes 6:1, “There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men.” Here, he focuses on an individual working hard and accumulating wealth, yet he is never able to enjoy the fruits of his labor. That, again, is an evil and a tragedy that he focuses on.

We better pick up speed a little bit.

Ecclesiastes 7:1, “A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one’s birth.” Why is the day of one’s death better than the day of one’s birth? Perhaps the best way to express it or to give a parallel verse is what Paul said in II Timothy.

II Timothy 4:7-8, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

In other words, Paul wrote at the end of his life and he says, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race and I know that there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness.” When a child is born, you don’t know what the future holds for them. You don’t know whether they will be wise or foolish, righteous or wicked, rich or poor or anything that will be about them. You

know what you hope, desire and pray for, but there is a completion here.

In Ecclesiastes 7:2, Solomon talks about going to the house of mourning. In other words, it is good to contemplate on the temporary nature of life. There is a sobering aspect to realize that human life doesn’t go on forever. We had better order our lives in a way that takes into account that our lives are temporary and are going to end. We better live them in such a way that we are prepared.

We come down a little further.

Verses 16-17, “Do not be overly righteous, nor be overly wise; why should you destroy yourself? Do not be overly wicked; nor be foolish; why should you die before your time?” These are verses that some find difficult to understand. When he says, “Do not be overly righteous,” he is referring to an attitude of self-righteousness. The description is of an attitude, not a fact. There is no way you can be too righteous in the literal sense. Jesus Christ was perfect, but He was not righteous over much. The Pharisees were righteous over much. They were perfect in their own eyes. They were self-righteous. Jesus Christ was righteous. He was the law of God personified.

Psalm 119:172, “All Your commandments are righteousness.” Jesus Christ personified that. But He didn’t have the self-righteous attitude of the Pharisees. They had this attitude of looking down on others.

Ecclesiastes 8:6-8, “Because for every matter there is a time and judgment, though the misery of man increases greatly. For he does not know what will happen; so who can tell him when it will occur. No one has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, and no one has power in the day of death. There is no discharge in that war, and wickedness will not deliver those who are given to it.”

In ancient times, it was very possible for a person to buy himself out of serving in a war. Even up through the time of the American Civil War or War Between the States, it was possible in the North, when the draft was instituted, to hire someone to take your place. Many wealthy individuals hired someone to take their place in the war, and that was perfectly legal. There was a legal means of dodging the draft. If you were drafted, you just paid someone to take your place. That was eliminated after the Civil War, but that has been practiced in a lot of societies and still is in a lot of ways. We have just been subtler with it. You don’t just come out and ask, “What do you charge if I hire you to take my

place?’ We are a little subtler with it now. That’s what is being “played on” here. When he says, “There is no discharge in that war,” he is speaking of death. No man has power over the spirit to retain his spirit in the day of death. You don’t buy your way out of that one. When the time comes for you to die, it doesn’t matter how rich you are, how poor you are, how righteous you are or how wicked you are. It doesn’t matter anything. You are going to die when the time comes for you to die. You can’t buy your way out of it. You can’t get out of it.

Verse 11, “Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” If you want an explanation as to why we have so much of an upsurge in crime, you might just study Ecclesiastes 8:11. It says, “Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily....”

What was it? –A day or two ago, they executed some guy in Florida who had raped and murdered a teenager fifteen years earlier. I mean, it’s almost like rolling the dice when you commit a crime. Oh, sure, there are a handful of people who are executed, but none of them are executed speedily. Punishment is not executed speedily. Things drag on for years and it sort of loses its deterrent effect. It’s like shooting dice. Maybe you’ll get in trouble, but then maybe you’ll get out of it. It says, “Because sentence...is not speedily executed, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” People figure they can get by with it. The carnal human nature sort of weighs the odds, and if they think they have a pretty good chance and can get by with it, if they think they can “beat it,” they do it.

Verses 12-13, “Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he does not fear before God.” He says you can look at it and think there are people who are getting by with it, but sooner or later there is a day of reckoning coming. There is a Day of Judgment.

Ecclesiastes 9:2, “Everything come alike to all....” This is referring to death.

Verse 5, “For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten.” Death is a cessation of consciousness.

Verse 10, “Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, or device, or knowledge, or wisdom in the grave

where you are going.” We should be wholehearted. We should do what we can and do it all the way. This is brought out here in this verse.

Verses 11-12, “I returned and saw under the sun that—The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all. For man also does not know his time: like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men are snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them.”

The point here is the fact that no matter what you do by way of preparation, you cannot totally guarantee the results. Things happen. Sometimes time and chance happen. It’s sort of like a bird being caught in a snare or fishes snared in a net. Sometimes things happen and you are in the wrong place at the wrong time.

I don’t think the truck driver in Los Angeles was beaten up because he was the most wicked truck driver in all of Los Angeles. God didn’t look down and say He was going to teach this guy a lesson because he was the wickedest person in Los Angeles. I don’t know anything about him, but I don’t think he was singled out for some special divine wrath. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time. He had probably driven through there any number of times before. I don’t know whether he will again or not, but other truck drivers will. The point is that time and chance happen to all men. Sometimes a person may just simply be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Things happen, like a bird caught in a snare.

That’s not saying you shouldn’t do or prepare for anything. It says, “The race is not to the swift.” That doesn’t mean to sit down and you’ll be the guy who wins. It just means that no matter what you do, there are factors that are beyond our control. Man is limited. You can do all that you can do, but there are still factors that are beyond our control. We have to understand that. We prepare and try to use wisdom. We try to be careful and be safe. We try to do the things that we should do and be responsible persons. But we realize that those things cannot guarantee success. There is something on beyond that, and that’s God’s blessing and protection. Sometimes time and chance can happen to anyone. You’re just in the wrong place at the wrong time. He brings that out here.

Ecclesiastes 10:1, “Dead flies putrefy the perfumer’s ointment, and cause it to give off a foul odor; so does a little folly to one respected

for wisdom and honor.” Something dies and decays; it can spoil some beautiful oil or perfume. Something crawls up in there and dies and sort of spoils it. The same thing is true—a little bit of folly can ruin a reputation for someone who has a good reputation. One dumb stunt and it can really mess them up.

Verses 5-6, “There is an evil I have seen under the sun, as an error proceeding from a ruler: Folly is set in great dignity [exalted positions], while the rich sit in lowly place.” This goes back to the rulers—individuals who are incompetent and untrustworthy are being put in positions of responsibility. This is a tragic thing. Things get turned upside down. People that should be at the bottom, wind up at the top; some that should be at the top, wind up at the bottom. This is an evil that I see. One of the problems of human government is that human beings get “taken in” by other human beings. They get flattered and appealed to in various ways and are impressed by the wrong things.

If God had allowed Samuel to pick the king, he would have picked Jesse’s oldest son. You remember when God sent Samuel to anoint one of Jesse’s sons king over Israel (I Samuel 16)? He brought in the oldest son. When Samuel saw him, immediately he knew this must be the one. ‘He’s the one. I’ll make him king right now.’ He was impressed with him. They ran through the list of sons and then, finally, they brought in David who was sort of the runt of the litter. His father hadn’t even bothered to bring him in from the field. That was the one God chose.

I Samuel 16:7, “But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature... For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’” Things that impress people are not the things that impress God. That’s one of the reasons we find folly set in exalted positions. Too many times people are impressed with the wrong things. In the Kingdom of God, that will not be the problem. The right people will be in the right places. Nobody’s going to “pull one over” on God.

Ecclesiastes 11:1, “Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days.” In other words, this is simply another way of saying that eventually you are going to reap what you sow. What you send out is eventually what you are going to get back. It’s a matter of life that things have a way of coming back at us.

Verse 4, “He who observes the wind shall not sow, and he who regards the clouds shall not reap.” There is such a thing as being overly

cautious. You can be so worried about something going wrong that it holds you back. ‘No, better not plant today. I think it is a little too windy to scatter the seed.’ The time to plant will pass you by. Or you look and say, ‘There are clouds up there. It might rain. I better not get to harvesting.’ Yes, we need to use wisdom. If it’s about ready to pour down raining, that’s not the time that you want to get out and cut your hay. But there is such a thing as being overly cautious. That’s an extreme that is warned about. Verses 9-10, “Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow [vexation] from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh, for childhood and youth are vanity.” They are temporary. They are passing. They are transitory. They are like a breath.

When you are young, it’s hard to believe that your young years pass that quickly. But it does. Just ask someone who is even a few years older than you how quickly those high school years go by—how quickly some of those times go by. That’s what it is saying here. Rejoice in youth. Have a good time but understand that you are accountable for what you know. You are responsible for what you know, whether you are young or old.

“...remove sorrow from your heart and put away evil from your flesh.” Childhood and youth are temporary. They are going to pass. Don’t get into something that is going to foul up your life. That’s what it is saying. Don’t do something dumb that you are going to have to live with the consequences for the rest of your life. Those young years are here today and gone so, so quickly. They are gone. There are some things you can do that you have to live with the consequences. It says rejoice in your youth.

Ecclesiastes 12:1, “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth...” The time to think about God is not when you are old. The time to start thinking about God is when you are young, when you have your life before you. You see, there’s nothing God tells you to do that’s going to hurt you and mess you up. There’s nothing God tells you to do that’s going to be to your detriment. There’s nothing God tells you not to do that you are going to be better off having done. So, think about God when you are young. That’s the time to start being mindful of God and His ways.

Verses 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are a very poetic description of old age. You might look it up in various translations. It is a very poetic description of old age. It is, of course, a poetic book and describes it that way.

Verses 7-12, “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it. ‘Vanity of vanities,’ says the Preacher [JPS, “Kohleth”]; ‘all is vanity.’ And moreover, because the Preacher [Kohleth] was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs. The Preacher [Kohleth] sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright—words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd. And furthermore, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness to the flesh.”

You can pursue all sorts of learning and books. There are thousands and millions of books, books that deal with all sorts of things as to the key to getting ahead in life.

But the real conclusion of the whole matter is in v. 13, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” The word “duty” is in italics (KJV), which means the translators put it in thinking it clarified it. But really, just as it is written is the simplest thing. “...fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole man.” This is what life is all about.

Verse 14, “For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it be evil.” The best way is ultimately God’s way. This is the only way that leads to real fulfillment. As you look at life and you pursue any of the things that physical life holds out, if that’s all there is, there’s a sense of emptiness and futility. There are injustices, inequities and all sorts of things that lead to frustration. The answer is that there is something that lies beyond the right here and right now, the purely human and purely physical.

God’s way is the way that leads to the ultimate and greatest sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. That is the only way that any of us can really be satisfied, happy and productive in life in the long run.

The book of Ecclesiastes has an awful lot that is a source of wisdom. It is a source of a perspective on life and one that can be of aid and benefit to all of us. And certainly it ties

in with the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles is the Feast of Temporary Dwellings—the realization that there is something beyond the physical, something beyond even the physical things and blessings that will be poured out during the reign of Jesus Christ on the earth.

The book of Ecclesiastes is the fourth of the five Festival Scrolls.

Next Bible study we will go through the book of Esther, which is the fifth and final of the five Festival Scrolls.

Bible Study # 88 Questions

SURVEY OF THE WRITINGS SERIES

Ecclesiastes

1. What is the meaning of the word “vanity” as used in the book of Ecclesiastes?
2. Does history repeat itself?
3. What was the great experiment that Solomon performed? What conclusion did he finally come to?
4. What are the best things that a person can do, just from a physical standpoint?
5. Explain the meaning of Ecclesiastes 3:11.
6. What are we told in Ecclesiastes 3 about death?
7. What are we told in chapter 4 about the family relationship?
8. What is the sacrifice of fools spoken of in chapter 5? How seriously does God take broken promises?
9. What is the “evil” to which Solomon had reference in chapter 6?
10. Explain Ecclesiastes 7:16-17.
11. According to Ecclesiastes 8, what is one of the main reasons behind the crime explosion in our permissive Western world?
12. What is the one event that happens to all? Is there consciousness after death?
13. What attitude does Solomon say we are to live our lives with in Ecclesiastes 9?
14. Are we able, through superior preparation or ability, to determine the outcome of life’s events?
15. What “evil” did Solomon declare to have seen perpetrated by rulers?
16. Explain Ecclesiastes 11:1.
17. Explain Ecclesiastes 11:9-10.
18. When is the best time of life to begin to be mindful of God’s ways?
19. What final conclusion did Solomon come to after a life of experience and experiment?

Bible Study # 89
May 26, 1992
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Esther

This evening we **are here at Esther, the fifth and final book of this five-book section called the Megillot.** The Megillot is that five-book section called the Festival Scrolls by the Jews. Of course, it was a portion of the Writings section. Traditionally, the Old Testament was divided as The Law, The Prophets, and The Psalms (Writings)—the three traditional divisions of the Old Testament as preserved by the Jews.

Jesus Himself referred to that in the book of Luke where He made reference to what constituted the Old Testament.

Luke 24:44-45, “Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scripture.”

Jesus clearly defined the Scriptures of the Old Testament as consisting of the Law, the Prophets and the Writings, or Psalms as it is sometimes termed. This means there isn’t any room for the apocryphal books. Jesus Christ defined the Scriptures for us here. We know they consist of the three traditional divisions preserved by the Jews since antiquity.

The first five books of the Bible are called the Book of the Law. The final of these three sections—the section of Psalms or the Writings—consisted of the book of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, then the five Festival Scrolls which we have been going through—Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and now this evening, Esther. The remaining portion of the Writings (the Psalms division), were the book of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles.

We covered Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles in a little greater depth when we went through the historical books of the Old Testament. Since we are taking this section (the Writings) as the Jews preserved it, we will have one Bible study to include those so we can wrap it up. We will cover Esther this evening. Esther is the final of the five Festival Scrolls. Then we will cover the book of Daniel next couple of Bible studies.

The book of Esther is the fifth of the five Festival Scrolls. They are called Festival Scrolls because traditionally they were read at festival

periods. Song of Solomon was read on the Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread; Ruth was read on Pentecost. Lamentations was read on a national day of fasting called the Fast of Ab on the ninth day of the fifth month. It commemorates the destruction of the temple. Ecclesiastes was read on the Sabbath during the Feast of Tabernacles. Esther was read on another national day called Purim. We will understand about Purim this evening because we will notice it as we read through this book.

The setting of the book of Esther is during the captivity of the Jews during the Persian period. If you remember, the kingdom was united. They had their first king with King Saul. He was replaced with David, a man after God’s own heart (I Samuel 13:14). Under David and his son Solomon, the kingdom of Israel and Judah was united. At Solomon’s death the kingdom split. The northern ten tribes elected their own king, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, while the southern kingdom of Judah (with its capital at Jerusalem) clung to its loyalty to the house of David in the person of Solomon’s son, Rehoboam. These two nations (the two kingdoms) continued down over the course of the next two hundred years.

About two hundred years later (around 721-718 B.C.), the Assyrians invaded and carried the northern kingdom captive. The southern kingdom continued on for over a hundred years. It was later on, beginning in 604 B.C., almost one hundred twenty years later that Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (another king/another kingdom) invaded the southern kingdom of Judah and began the process of captivity that culminated in 587 B.C. with the destruction of the temple. The Jews were forcibly removed from Jerusalem and Judea to Babylon, and the area of Judea laid waste.

Almost fifty years later, as we will read the story in Daniel, the Medes and the Persians entered into Babylon and overthrew the Babylonians; they possessed the kingdom. The Jews continued in captivity, first under the rule of the Babylonians and now under the rule of the Persians. Several years later, beginning about 535 B.C., the Persian king issued a decree that allowed the Jews to begin to return to Jerusalem under Zerrubabel.

We have the story of Ezra and Nehemiah and the return of some of the Jews back to Judea and Jerusalem to rebuild the city and the temple. A very sizable percentage of the Jews remained in the areas where the Babylonians transported them. They remained in the area of Babylon, but they were now under the rule of the Persians.

The book of Esther is set during this Persian period. It is set during the reign of the king that is known in classical history as Xerxes. He is called Ahasuerus in the book of Esther. That is the term by which he is called here.

This is in the latter part of the fifth century B.C. This would be approximately contemporary with the story of Ezra and Nehemiah. The story of Ezra and Nehemiah tells what was happening to the Jewish community in Judea. The book of Esther tells what was happening around the same time to the Jewish community in Babylon and in the areas of Persia where, actually, more Jews lived than in Judea. This provides the setting.

It tells the story of the attempted destruction of the nation of the Jews by their traditional enemies. We find that the one who was the instigator of this destruction was a man known as Haman the Agagite. If you will look it up, you will find that Agag was an ancient king of the Amalekites. In fact, there is sort of an interesting point about it that we will notice as we go through. Haman was responsible for stirring up an attempt to destroy the Jews.

This book is, as I mentioned, traditionally read on the Feast of Purim, which is a national holiday authorized in the book of Esther. It is similar to our Thanksgiving Day.

Esther is unique in the Bible in that it is the only book in the Bible that does not mention the name of God. God's name does not appear in this particular book. It is the only book that way. Now, certainly, in the story of the book, the intervention of God to deliver His people is very evident. The divine name is omitted for a very important reason. It is omitted so there is no confusion over the fact that Purim, which is established as a holiday in the conclusion of the book, is not a Holy Day proclaimed by God. It is a national holiday authorized by the Jewish community, but not in any way is it to be confused with a Holy Day given sanctity by God.

The king, as I mentioned, is identified as King Xerxes who reigned from 485-464 B.C. The story in the book, beginning with Esther 2:16, tells the story of what happened after the disastrous Greek campaign that Xerxes carried out from 480-479 B.C. Xerxes took an army of one million men, which was the largest army assembled in ancient times, and he set out to conquer Greece.

He was going to cross the area called the Hellespont, that area that divides Asia from Europe. If you look at a map, you'll see how Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) comes out and

is divided from the Greek peninsula. The Black Sea is up above; the Mediterranean is down below. The area called the Dardanelle (that strait of water that connects the Black Sea to the Mediterranean) divides the Turkish peninsula (the Asia Minor peninsula) from Greece and the European mainland. Xerxes took this gigantic army and came to the area called the Hellespont, which was the area that was the closest distance across. He was going to march this gigantic army across into Greece and was going to teach the Greeks a lesson. It turned out to be one of the greatest debacles that occurred.

Xerxes was the kind of fellow that you could never tell him anything. Maybe you've known one or two people like that in your lifetime. You can't tell them anything. Xerxes was sort of that way. He had the idea that what he was going to do was take boats and latch these boats together to make one giant pontoon bridge over which he was going to march his army. Well, that seemed like a good idea, except that when he put the things together, a storm came up. The boats crashed against each other and a number of them sunk. They had a big fiasco and couldn't get the troops across. It was not nearly as he had anticipated.

It gives you an idea as to what a perfectly sane and balanced individual he was. His response was that he was going to punish the sea by giving it a hundred lashes. He lined up soldiers with whips to whip the sea. That would really inspire confidence. You see a "crackpot" like this and realize he is in charge. It really inspires confidence. Needless to say, he never successfully got very far into Greece.

He was the father of the King Artaxerxes who is mentioned in Ezra 7:1; he is the one who issued the decree that allowed for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the walls of Jerusalem. Xerxes is shown in secular history by the Greek historian Herodotus, as well as the Biblical account in the book of Esther. He is shown as a very vain and capricious monarch, and he was anything but an ideal husband.

In this book, we are going to take note that God sometimes allows His servants to find themselves in very disagreeable circumstances. If He chooses not to deliver them out of it, He will give them the help to endure it. Many times He uses those circumstances to accomplish His own purpose.

We pick up the story in Esther. According to tradition, Esther was written by Mordecai, the older cousin of Esther.

Esther 1:1, “Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus [referring to Xerxes] (this was the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia, over one hundred twenty seven provinces).” He reigned over a tremendous empire.

Verses 2-3, “in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the citadel, that in the third year of his reign he made a feast for all his officials and servants—the powers of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the princes of the provinces being before him—” Everybody was there.

Verse 4, “when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty for many days, one hundred and eighty days in all.”

They had this big “blowout.” It lasted one hundred and eighty days. Now, if you think you’ve been to a party, Xerxes really knew how to throw a party.

Verse 5, “And when these days were completed, the king made a feast lasting seven days for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to small, in the court of the garden of the king’s palace.” This was the finale.

Verse 6, “There were white and blue linen curtains fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on silver rods and marble pillars; and the couches were of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble.” It was really decked out.

Verse 7, “And they served drinks in golden vessels, each vessel being different from the other with royal wine in abundance, according to the generosity of the king.” To give you an idea, I would like to call your attention to one thing.

Verse 3 says, “...in the third year of his reign he made a feast to all his officials and servants...” The Jewish commentary brings out that the literal translation of the Hebrew word “feast” would be “a drinking.” The accent was more on the drinking than on the eating. I’m sure they had plenty of food, but what they really had was plenty of booze. So, they had “a drinking.” He knew how to have a real party. It doesn’t say if he had any crawfish or not, but he very well might have. He had plenty of other stuff.

Verse 8, “In accordance with the law, the drinking was not compulsory; for so the king had ordered all the officers of his household, that they should do according to each man’s pleasure.” They weren’t drinking toasts. They were just quaffing it down as quickly as they could. It was sort of “name your poison.” You could have whatever you wanted, and they kept giving it to you.

Verses 10-11, “On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine...” You can believe it. Here, this is a seven-day drunk. His heart is merry with wine. He’s really loaded, and so are all his buddies. They have really been “tying one on” for a while.

Continuing, “...he commanded...seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus, to bring Vashti the Queen before the king wearing her royal crown, in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials, for she was beautiful to behold.”

Verse 12, “But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s command...therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned within him.” Some commentators say that the sense of the words “to bring Vashti the Queen before the king wearing her crown royal” meant that was all she was going to have on. He was going to make a great display out of her. I don’t know whether that was the case or not. The point was that he wanted her to come and she didn’t want to come. Evidently, they both had enough to drink that the results were not good. She wouldn’t come and he was mad.

Verse 13, “Then the king said to the wise men...”

Verse 14, it lists all of them.

Verse 15, “What shall we do to Queen Vashti, according to law, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus...?” He said, ‘She has not done what I told her to do.’

You have to get the picture. He and his buddies have been “boozing it up” for the last week. You can imagine the state they are in. He calls for the queen; she will not come because she is in the other court with all the women and they have been “boozing it up,” too (v. 9). She will not come. They have a real setto here. He wants her to come and she will not. So, he gets his buddies around and he asks them, ‘What do you think we should do?’

They say, v. 16, “...‘Queen Vashti has not only wronged the king, but also all the princes, and all the people who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus.’” They say, ‘She’s done wrong, not only to you King, but to all the rest of us.’ You can just see them all nodding their heads, “Yes.” They are agreeing to that. They’ll drink to that.

Verse 17, “For the queen’s behavior will become known to all women, so that they will despise their husbands in their eyes, when they report, “King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in before him, but she did not come.”” They say that if word of this becomes known, all women are going to start

ignoring what their husbands tell them to do. They are going to say, ‘The king commanded the queen to come and she wouldn’t do it; so, we don’t have to do what you say either.’

They say, ‘What you need to do is to put forth a royal commandment.’

Verses 19-21, “‘If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go out from him, and let it be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it will not be altered, that Vashti shall come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she. When the king’s decree which he shall make is proclaimed throughout all his empire (for it is great), all wives will honor their husbands, both great and small.’ And the reply pleased the king....” He thought that sounded like a good idea; that would show her.

Verse 22, “Then he sent letters to all the king’s provinces—that each man should be master in his own house....” They were really going to tell it like it is.

You have to sort of get the picture in your mind. This guy is all “booazed up.” He’s sitting in the bar complaining about the way his wife treated him. He asks his buddies (who have been drinking along with him) what he should do about it. That’s sort of the picture of it. You can imagine the way this thing comes out. The only thing is that this is the king.

Now the Medes and the Persians had a particular law because they worshipped the king as god incarnate. Since one of the things about God is that God doesn’t make mistakes, the law of the Medes and the Persians could never be reversed. You could never change the law. It was permanent. If you changed or repealed the law, you were admitting that the previous law had been a mistake. Now if the king doesn’t make mistakes, how can you change, repeal or replace the law with something else. You couldn’t do that because then you are saying that the king made a mistake. And since the king never makes a mistake, the law of the Medes and the Persians meant that something was never changed.

You get the idea? If you have ever met somebody that was never wrong and you never could tell him anything—meet Xerxes. We are introduced to him, and the first thing we see is that the guy clearly has some problems. He, evidently, has a drinking problem and that seems to have played a big role here. Another thing that we find is that he is an individual who wants what he wants. When he has been drinking for a while, well, that is going to make that situation even worse.

Esther 2:1, “After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus subsided, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what had been decreed against her.” Now he’s feeling badly about it, as so often happens. A guy gets drunk; he really sounds off and does all this stuff. Afterwards he starts feeling remorse. Here, he is missing Vashti. He liked Vashti and he was missing her. Well, you can imagine; the guys that had advised him to get rid of her began to get a little nervous about this time. They are thinking that he is going to lie around here and mope around. He will start missing her. He is going to look for somebody to blame, and they are the guys who are going to be in trouble. He is going to say that they talked him into it. It’s their fault—“Off with your heads!” They could see “the handwriting on the wall.” So, they said they had a good idea.

Verse 2, “Then the king’s servants who attended him said: ‘Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king.’” They said, ‘Let’s have a beauty contest. Let’s pick out the prettiest girl in the whole empire and give her to you for a new queen.’ Well, the king could see some merit to that idea. He thought maybe that wasn’t too bad an idea.

Verses 3-4, “‘and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather all the beautiful young virgins to Shushan the citadel, into the women’s quarters... Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti.’ This thing pleased the king, and he did so.” He said, ‘That’s a good idea.’ They were trying to come up with a good idea to keep the king’s mind off of something else.

We are introduced to a little bit of background. As we go on, we are introduced to something else that is going on in Shushan, which was the capital of the Persian Empire.

Verses 5-7, “Now in Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimel, the son of Kish, a Benjamite. Now Kish had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. And Mordecai had brought up Hadassah, that is Esther, his uncle’s daughter [his first cousin], for she had neither father nor mother. [She was evidently considerably younger than he, so he had brought her up. She was an orphan and he had brought her up, taking care of her.] The young woman was lovely and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.”

Verse 8, "So it was, when the king's command and decree were heard, and when many young women were gathered at Shushan...Esther also was taken to the king's palace...."

Now, let's look at something here for a moment. Can you imagine what Esther must have felt like? The soldiers showed up, knocked at the door and said, 'You are coming with us.' Can you imagine what Mordecai must have felt like? Obviously, this was not the kind of marriage that Mordecai had ever had in mind for Esther when she was growing up. Certainly, it was not the kind of marriage that Esther had ever had in mind for herself. This must have seemed like a horrible, terrible calamity. How could God allow something like this to happen? That's the question that goes through our minds when things happen that just don't seem like it should be that way.

There are a couple lessons that are important that we learn from this book. Sometimes God allows things to happen to His people. He allows circumstances to occur that you and I would say, 'Well, that's not good. Why would this happen?' God doesn't guarantee that we go through life with no bumps, hurts, cuts and scrapes. There isn't any guarantee that sometimes we won't find ourselves in difficult and adverse circumstances. This certainly happened to Esther.

The other thing is that God can work in circumstances that look horrible and impossible, where it looks as though, 'What good can come of this?' God can work in circumstances and accomplish His own purpose in ways that you and I could never imagine. We can't second-guess God.

God worked in the circumstance. God used circumstances.

Verse 8, continuing, "...Esther also was taken to the king's palace, into the care of Hegai [the eunuch] the custodian of the women."

Verse 9, "Now the young woman pleased him [he was very impressed with her], and she obtained his favor; so he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance. The seven choice maidservants were provided for her from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maidservants to the best place in the house of the women."

I'll read the commentary on v. 9. "He speedily gave her portions as a mark of favor. He lost no time in beginning the necessary preparations. 'Portions' were not cosmetics but rather special foods that were part of the preparation. The Hebrew word is the same as that for 'portions' of food in chapter 9:19-22. Each candidate had the

right to be given seven women attendants. Esther was given maidens suitable to her exceptional charm."

Verse 9, "...he moved her and her maidservants to the best place in the house of the women."

Verse 10, "Esther had not revealed her people or kindred, for Mordecai had charged her not to reveal it." He was concerned about her. He knew that there was a lot of animosity directed at the Jews and he had counseled her that she should not let it be known ahead of time as to whom she was.

Verse 11, "And every day Mordecai paced in front of the court of the women's quarters, to learn of Esther's welfare and what was happening to her." He was worried. He was concerned. Every day he would come and try to get news.

Verses 12-13, "Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautiful women. Thus prepared, each young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace."

She could pick out whatever she wanted to wear.

Verse 14, "In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who kept the concubines. She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name."

They were waiting their turn.

Verse 15, "Now when the turn of Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai who had taken her as his daughter [Mordecai had raised her.] to go in to the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised. And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her."

Instead of relying on her own judgment to pick out what to wear, she asked the king's eunuch who was in charge, what he thought would be the most appropriate. He picked out for her what was appropriate.

Verse 16, "So Esther was taken to king Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign." This was right after the great debacle in Greece. After he had the original fiasco with Vashti, he went on a great military

campaign, and that was a fiasco. So, it was decided the best thing to do was to keep the king out of the battlefield. They didn't need his strategy on the battlefield. What they needed to do was occupy him in the harem—keep him busy there and let the rest of them run the country. This was sort of the solution. He consoled himself with Esther. He was attracted to Esther.

Verses 17-18, "The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. Then the king made a great feast, the Feast of Esther, for all his officials and servants; and he proclaimed a holiday in the provinces and gave gifts according to the generosity of a king."

Verse 20, "Now Esther had not yet revealed her kindred and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her, for Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up by him." She listened to his advice.

Verse 21, "In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king's gate..." He was sitting there by the palace. Mordecai spent time every day at the gate of the king's palace waiting for word of Esther. He just very much desired to find out what was going on and what was happening to her.

Continuing, "...two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus." He overheard two of the king's chamberlains who were mad and were plotting to murder the king.

Verse 22, "So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name." When he knew it, he got word to Esther, and Esther got word to the king in Mordecai's name.

Verse 23, "And when an inquiry [investigation] was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king."

Esther 3:1-2, "After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above the princes who were with him. And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed down, and prostrated themselves before Haman; for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not down, nor prostrated himself before him."

Agag was the king of the Amalekites. If you read the story back in I Samuel 15:3-9, Saul was supposed to destroy the Amalekites, and if you remember, he spared Agag and his family. You know, "Old sins cast long shadows." If you don't do what God says, things can come back to haunt you. Saul didn't see what difference it made. He was going to do some of what God said and also some other things. There wouldn't have been any Agagites if Saul had done what God had told him to way back in the time of the prophet Samuel. But as so many times, people want to improve on God's instructions. God says something; since they don't see what difference it makes, they want to do it some other way.

Well, here was Haman the Agagite. He was parading by and everybody was bowing down, "licking the dust." Mordecai didn't do that. He didn't bow down or prostrate himself. Evidently, Haman claimed divine honors for himself. He was a religious as well as a political leader. He was the great Pontifex Maximus of the Babylonian mystery religion, and everyone was doing him obeisance. Mordecai wouldn't bow down.

Verse 3, "Then the king's servants who were within the king's gate said to Mordecai, 'Why do you transgress the king's command?'" 'Why don't you do this?'

Verse 4, "Now it happened, when they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them, that they told it to Haman, to see whether Mordecai's words would stand; for Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew." They kept telling him, 'You better bow down.' He wouldn't listen. So, one of them eventually decided to point out to Haman that Mordecai the Jew wasn't bowing down.

Verse 5, "When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath." Oh, it just ruined his whole day—the fact that this guy wouldn't bow down in the dust. It made him so mad.

Verse 6, "But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai." He figured Mordecai, by himself, wasn't worth the trouble it would take. So, he decided what he was going to do. He would destroy all the Jews. He didn't like Jews anyway. It would be a good excuse. He would just destroy all the Jews.

Verse 7, "In the first month, which is the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, the lot), before Haman to

determine the day and the month, until it fell on the twelfth month, which is the month Adar.”

In Hebrew, the “im” ending in Purim is plural. “Pur” is the singular. They didn’t shoot dice; they rolled a dice—one. Basically, they rolled this lot before Haman from day to day, from month to month, to pick out the lucky day and the lucky month. They came up with a month (the twelfth month); then they came up with a day that was going to be the good time or the auspicious time.

Verses 8-10, “Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, ‘There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people’s, and they do not keep the king’s laws. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain. If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring it into the king’s treasuries.’ So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, enemy of the Jews.”

The king said, ‘You keep your silver. You want to do this, just go ahead.’

The ring contained the signet seal. This was the mark of authenticity. Even today, if you get ready to promulgate an official document, it often has to be notarized. The notary seals it. He puts that stamp on there. The notary seal is that mark of genuineness or authenticity. The king had a special signet ring, and there was only one like it. It was the means by which authenticity of a decree was established. A decree was written, hot wax was put on it, and the king’s ring was pressed into it. This was the seal of genuineness. Here, the king took off the ring and gave it to Haman and said, ‘Write a decree and do it.’ You get the idea the king was a very capricious sort of fellow. If he liked you, he pretty well gave you carte blanche to do what you wanted. If he didn’t like you, he would cut off your head. We will see that a little later, too.

Verse 12, “Then the king’s scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and a decree was written according to all that Haman commanded...In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written, [They wrote a letter.] and sealed with the king’s signet ring.”

Verse 13, “And letters were sent by couriers into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women [that should pretty well take in everything], in one day, on the thirteenth day

of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to plunder their possessions.”

Verse 14, “The copy of the document was to be issued as law in every province, being published for all people, that they should be ready for that day.”

We are told in the end of v. 15, “...So the king and Haman sat down to drink, [This was one of the king’s favorite pastimes. He figured this was something that deserved a good drink.] but the city of Shushan was perplexed.” It was a mystery to them how some crazy thing like this comes out.

Esther 4:1, “When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth...” He was ready to fast, pray and mourn.

Verses 2-5, “He went as far as the square in front of the king’s gate, for no one might enter the king’s gate clothed with sackcloth. And in every province where the king’s command and decree arrived, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. So Esther’s maids and eunuchs came and told her, and the queen was deeply distressed. Then she sent garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him, but he would not accept them. Then Esther called Hathach, one of the king’s eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai, to learn what and why this was.”

She wanted to find out what was going on. She didn’t know.

Verses 6-8, “So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square that was in front of the king’s gate. And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king’s treasuries to destroy the Jews. He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at Shushan, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and that he might command her to go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people.”

Word was brought back to Esther and she then sent a message to Mordecai.

Verses 10-11, “Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai: ‘All the king’s servants and the people of the king’s provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, he has but one law: put all to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the

golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days.” It’s been a month since she had seen him.

Now imagine living with a man given to such fits of temper and rage. You never know what mood you are going to find him in. If you walk in unbidden, he’ll chop your head off. Sometimes we make the statement of someone, ‘Boy, he really bit my head off.’ Well, we don’t mean it literally; we mean it figuratively. Esther meant it literally. She said, ‘He has a guard posted, and if I walk in there, the guard’s job is to cut off the head of anybody that walks in unless the king specifically says not to. I don’t know what kind of mood this guy’s in. I haven’t seen him for a month.’

You kind of get the idea that we don’t have the ideal marriage described here. That’s a little bit of an understatement. Esther was not in a really enviable situation. Yes, she was the queen and yes, she had great comfort, money and luxury available to her. But what she never experienced in this life was a close, happy marriage with a husband that she could completely trust and with whom she could really share her life—though he, evidently, had a regard for Esther. That was remarkable, but he was not the kind of individual who was ever going to make a very outstanding husband.

She was concerned. She didn’t want to go to the king. She sent word back to Mordecai and said she couldn’t do that. Mordecai then sent an answer back to her.

Verse 13, “Then Mordecai told them to answer Esther: ‘Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews.’” He said, ‘You don’t think that you are going to escape, do you? Do you think you are going to be the only Jew that’s going to escape this thing? Even though he doesn’t know that you are a Jew, don’t think that you can stand idly by in a time of crisis like this and escape it.’

Verse 14, “‘For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place [God will work out something else], but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?’”

Mordecai said to her, ‘You and I have wondered many times why God allowed you to be taken and brought to the king’s harem. Maybe this is why you are there. You are in the right place at the right time. Maybe that’s why God allowed that. You have a responsibility. You can’t just think of yourself. If you don’t take advantage of

the opportunity God has given you, God will do something. He will work out something else, but you will not escape.’

Verse 15, Esther then sent an answer back to Mordecai. She said, ‘Okay.’

Verse 16, “‘Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink three days, night or day. My maid and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish.’”

She had to fast for three days and get all her friends to fast with her—three days of fasting and prayer—to get up the courage to walk into the room where he was. You have to realize that’s sort of an extreme situation—this terrorized kind of outbursts.

Esther 5:1-3, “Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king’s palace, across from the king’s house, while the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance of the house. So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, that she found favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. [Of course, God worked that out. God put him in a good mood.] Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter. And the king said to her, ‘What do you wish Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you—up to half of the kingdom!’”

Now get the idea. Here’s this fellow. I mean he may chop off your head; he may give you half his kingdom! It just sort of depends on the mood he’s in. Now, how’s that for a mood swing? If he’s happy, he’s very happy; if he’s mad, he is very mad. How would you like to live with a character like that? It’s not a good situation.

What we have to realize is that many of God’s people—I guess most of God’s people—have certainly lived in far less than ideal circumstances. We all have less than ideal circumstances in some facets of our lives. Certainly, many of God’s servants through the centuries have had blessings in certain areas and others have had blessings in other areas.

Well, Esther obtained favor and the king said, ‘What do you want? I will give you anything you want.’ Esther said, ‘I do have a request.’

Verse 4-6, “So Esther answered, ‘If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him.’ Then the king said, ‘Bring Haman quickly, that he may do as Esther has said.’ So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared. At the

banquet of wine [she knew what he liked and what to give him to get him in a good mood] the king said to Esther, 'What is your petition? It shall be granted you. What is your request, up to half my kingdom? It shall be done.'"

He knew that she didn't just walk in there and risk her life to invite him to dinner, but that was the only request she made. 'I've prepared a special meal and I wish you and Haman would come and enjoy this meal with me.' He wasn't just loaded with brains, but he was able to figure out that she didn't walk in there just to invite him to eat. So he, again, said this to her.

Verses 7-8, she says, "...My petition and request is this: If I have found favor in the sight of the king to grant my petition, and to fulfill my request, then let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said.'"

She said, 'You know what I would really like is for you and Haman to come back to dinner again tomorrow.' So, again, he knew there had to be a little more to it than this, but he agreed.

Verses 9-10, "So Haman went out that day joyful and with a glad heart; but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, and that he did not stand or tremble before him, he was filled with indignation against Mordecai. Nevertheless Haman restrained himself and went home and he sent and called for his friends and his wife Zeresh. Then Haman told them of his great riches, and the multitude of his children, all the ways in which the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and servants of the king. Moreover Haman said, 'Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am again invited by her, along with the king. Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.'"

Haman said, 'The Queen didn't let anybody come into the banquet except the king and me. And I'm invited back again tomorrow. None of this makes any difference as long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting there in the king's gate. Boy, it makes me mad. It just ruins my whole day. It "rains on my parade" when I see this guy sitting there.'

Verse 14, "Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, 'Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high....'" That's about seventy-five feet tall. We are not talking about a little gallows; we're talking about a seven-story office building. Build a gallows that is really a gallows. When he

gets hung on this thing, he's going to know he's been hung.

Continuing, "...and in the morning suggest to the king that Mordecai be hanged on it; then go merrily with the king to the banquet.' And the thing pleased Haman; so he had the gallows made." He thought that was a wonderful idea. That just made his whole day, to go out and hang someone.

God does have a sense of humor. Notice the timing on this.

Esther 6:1, "That night the king could not sleep. So one was commanded to bring the book of the record of the chronicles; and they were read before the king." It just so happened that night the king couldn't sleep. He tossed and he turned. He figured anything that dry and dull was bound to put him to sleep. He ordered them to bring in the book of the Chronicles and read it to him. So, they open it up and start reading.

Verse 2, "And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, the doorkeepers who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus." The part they read just happened to be the story of Mordecai telling him of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, and how they were going to assassinate the king. That just happened to be the spot where the Chronicles fell open. They were reading that story to him, and the king pipes up and says, 'By the way, what did we ever do for Mordecai? He saved my life. What did I ever do for him?' They said, 'Nothing. You never got around to doing anything, king. Nothing has been done' (v. 3).

Verse 4, "And the king said: 'Who is in the court?' Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace to suggest that the king hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him." It just so happened that Haman had come to request the king's permission to hang Mordecai on the gallows. This was not a good time to bring up the subject of hanging Mordecai. Can you just see why the king couldn't sleep that night? God could have worked it out in other ways, but God has a sense of humor and He allowed this. It just so happened that very night they were reading about Mordecai and the king got stirred up to do something. Haman was there and was coming in to request to hang Mordecai.

Verse 5, "The king's servants said unto him, 'Haman is there, standing in the court.' And the king said, 'Let him come in.'" 'That's just the fellow I want to see. Bring him in here.'

Verse 6, “So Haman came in, and the king asked him, ‘What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?’ [‘Got any good ideas?’] Now Haman thought in his heart, ‘Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?’” Haman thought, ‘It must be me that he has in mind.’ Haman said, ‘I have some good ideas if you want to honor somebody.’

Verses 7-9, “And Haman answered the king, ‘For the man whom the king delights to honor, let the royal robe which the king has worn, and a horse on which the king has ridden, which has a royal crest placed on its head. And let this robe and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king’s most noble princes, that he may array the man whom the king delights to honor. Then parade him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him: “Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.””

Haman was really laying it on thick. Boy, he was thinking of all the things he would enjoy doing. He was a really vain sort of a fellow, pretty arrogant and impressed with his own importance. He said everything he could think of.

Verse 10, “Then the king said to Haman, ‘Hasten, take the robe and the horse, as you have suggested, and do so for Mordecai the Jew who sits within the king’s gate. Leave nothing undone of all that you have spoken.’” The king said to Haman, ‘Those are good ideas. I want you to take the apparel and the horse and everything you’ve said. I want you to do it for Mordecai the Jew. You know the guy. He’s the one that sits in my gate every day. And make sure you follow these instructions to the “T.”’

Can you imagine Haman’s face? This was not a good time to bring up the subject of hanging Mordecai. Haman was not the brightest guy in the world, but he did figure out that “discretion was the better part of valor.” It was not going to be to his advantage to mention to the king why he had come.

Verse 11, “So Haman took the robe and the horse, arrayed Mordecai and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, [Haman was the guy that had to go before him.] ‘Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.’”

Verse 12, “Afterward Mordecai went back to the king’s gate. But Haman hastened to his house, mourning and with his head covered.” Oh, it just ruined his whole day. He told his wife and all his friends the things that had happened.

Verse 13, some of his buddies said, “...‘If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall,

is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him, but will surely fall before him.’”

Verse 14, “While they were still talking with him, the king’s eunuchs came, and hastened to bring Haman to the banquet that Esther had prepared.”

Esther 7:1-2, “So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther. And on the second day, at the banquet of wine, the king again said to Esther, ‘What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request, up to half my kingdom? It shall be granted.’” By this time he was sort of mellowed out. Let’s put it that way.

Verse 3, “Then Esther the queen answered and said, ‘If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request.’” She said, ‘Please don’t kill me.’

Verse 4, “For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king’s loss.”

Boy, this really stirred up the king. What she did was sort of fall down before him and say, ‘Please spare my life. Please spare my life and that of my family.’ Well, he didn’t realize she was a Jew. None of this had ever dawned on him. By this time he was really feeling warm and sort of “glowy.” He had a little “buzz” on and was feeling really happy with Esther and visions of sugarplums dancing in his head. He was ready to do anything but kill her. So when she falls down, and says, ‘Please don’t kill me,’ he gets pretty stirred up.

Verse 5, “Then King Ahasuerus answered and said to Queen Esther, ‘Who is he, and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing?’” He said, ‘Where is he that dares presume in his heart to kill my wife?’

Verse 6, “And Esther said, ‘The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!’ So Haman was terrified before the king and queen.” You can imagine; all of a sudden he went from having a big smirk on his face, to his knees knocking. Well, the king jumped up.

Verse 7, “Then the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine and went into the palace garden; but Haman stood before Queen Esther, pleading for his life, for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king.” He was being a little bit perceptive. He began to pick up on the fact that, ‘You know, I think my days are numbered.’

Verse 8, “When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine, [The king had stormed out of the room, out into the garden. This had really taken him by shock and surprise. He was trying to collect his wits. He walked around for a few minutes and came back in.] Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, ‘Will he also assault the queen while I am in the house?’ ...” Esther was reclining on a couch and Haman had fallen down there on the couch, where he was begging. When the king came in, he asked if he was going to force the queen right before him in the house. Boy, he was really stirred up. ‘What are you trying to do?’

Continuing, it says, “...As the word left the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face.” You can just see these old guards standing by there. They didn’t need any further instructions. They knew Haman’s “goose was cooked.” About that time, they just pulled the sack down on his head and started taking him away. They didn’t need detailed instructions.

Then, v. 9, one of the eunuchs (these guys were always trying to ingratiate themselves) “piped up,” “Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, ‘Look! The gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king’s behalf, is standing at the house of Haman.’ Then the king said, ‘Hang him on it!’” The eunuch said, ‘That new gallows was built out there—that big seventy-five-foot gallows—you can see it from the palace. Did you know that Haman built that to hang Mordecai? You remember Mordecai. He’s the fellow who saved your life.’

This shows you a little something about politics. And it hasn’t changed. When somebody is on the way up, everybody is his friend. When somebody is on the way down, they all gang up to kick him under another rung further down the ladder. When Haman was riding high, none of these eunuchs went to the king and asked if he thought it was right that Haman was building the gallows out there to hang Mordecai. ‘Mordecai hasn’t done anything.’ You think anybody spoke up for Mordecai? No, they didn’t care what happened to Mordecai. They were “battering up” to Haman because they figured Haman was the “number one” man. They wanted to be on Haman’s good side. Now they saw (they could put two and two together) these guys dragging Haman out and knew what was going to happen to him. They wanted to make themselves look good. Immediately, they jumped in and said, ‘Let me tell you something else about him. He built

that gallows out there to hang Mordecai. Mordecai’s the guy that saved your life from that assassination coup.’ The king said to hang Haman on it.

Verse 10, “So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai....” There are some lessons here in human nature. It hasn’t changed. Politics is still the same. People will seek to ingratiate themselves to the individual who is in power. And, so often, as soon as somebody falls out of favor and somebody else comes into favor, they immediately switch positions. We have a lot of politicians who have to read the opinion polls in the morning to find out what they are for and against. They don’t know. They have to find out which way everybody is going—‘I’m their leader. I need to run around and get in front of them, but I have to find out which way they are going.’ There isn’t any leadership there and very little courage. It’s the same thing—human nature!

Esther 8:1, “On that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her.” Esther told the king that Mordecai was her cousin who had raised her.

Verse 2, “So the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai; and Esther appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman.” Boy, can things ever turn around! There’s a lesson of faith here. Don’t look at things and judge them by physical circumstances. Just a matter of a few days earlier, you would have looked at the situation and said, ‘There isn’t any way. Haman is firmly entrenched. He is an avowed enemy of the Jews, and there isn’t any way. How in the world can things turn around?’ In a day’s time, the situation had totally reversed.

One point we need to understand: As we look at adversities and difficulties, we sometimes see things heading the wrong direction. We look at it and ask, ‘How can this be? Why would God allow that? It’s going this way and I don’t see how anything can change it.’ Well, when we say there isn’t anything that can change it, we are leaving God out of the picture. *God can change it*. When God gets ready, He can act, oh, so swiftly and work out a scenario that you and I would never in a thousand years dream up. God has ways of doing it. He can work in circumstances. It’s a very important lesson of faith. Just because I don’t see how God’s going to do it, how does that limit God? The fact that I

can't figure it out—what does that prove? That just proves that I can't figure it out. It doesn't prove God can't figure it out. God has already figured it out. The fact that I can't figure it out just proves, 'His ways are higher than my ways and that the heavens are above the seas' (Isaiah 55:9).

Verses 3-8, "Now Esther spoke again to the king, and fell down at his feet, and implored him with tears to counteract the evil plot of Haman the Agagite, and the scheme which he had devised against the Jews. And the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king, and said, 'If it pleases the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, and the thing seem right to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman... which he wrote to annihilate the Jews who are in all the king's provinces. For how can I endure to see the evil that will come to my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?' Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, 'Indeed, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows because he tried to lay his hand on the Jews. You yourselves write a decree for the Jews, as you please, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's signet ring; for a letter which is written in the king's name and sealed with the king's signet ring, no one can revoke.'"

Verse 9, "So the king's scribes called at that time, in the third month, which is the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third day...." They had to get together to figure this out. They had to reverse the decree without reversing the decree. They couldn't just ride out and say, 'This was a crackpot idea from start to finish. The king must have really been "bombed" out of his mind when he allowed something like that to go through, so we reverse it.' Well, they couldn't say something like that. That would make the king look bad. It would make him look like he was wrong, and if there was one thing the king could never be, that was wrong. So, they had to get together and figure out how to reverse the decree without reversing the decree.

Continuing in v. 9, what they did, "...and it was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded, to the Jews, the satraps, the governors, and the princes of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred and twenty-seven provinces in all, to every province in their own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language." They wrote out commands

concerning the Jews, and this was sent out to the governors and the princes of the provinces, which stretched from India to Ethiopia. You realize the Persian Empire was a vast empire that stretched all the way from India to Ethiopia, one hundred twenty-seven provinces. Everyone got the decree in his own language. This was written in the king's name (v. 10).

Verses 11-14, "By these letters the king permitted the Jews who were in every city to gather together and protect their lives—to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the forces of any people or province that would assault them, both little children and women, and to plunder their possessions, on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar. A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province and published to all people, so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. Then the couriers who rode on royal horses went out, hastened and pressed on by the king's command. And the decree was issued...."

They couldn't reverse the decree that said, 'On this day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month the Jews are fair game.' But they issued another decree and said, 'On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month the Jews can get together and defend themselves. We told you earlier that you could kill a Jew on that day. Well, that's fine, but the Jews have permission to band together and defend themselves against the attackers on that day.'

We are told in vv. 16-17, "The Jews had light and gladness, joy and honor. And in every province, and city, wherever the king's command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday. Then many of the peoples of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them."

Again, what happened? They realized the Jews could defend themselves, and the king's soldiers were going to be standing there to make sure that they were well defended. You didn't want to be perceived as being against the Jews. The Jews were in good favor now because it was realized that the queen and the prime minister were Jews. So, all of a sudden, these people that the day before were ready to go out and steal the Jews' property, now they were trying to "buddy up" to them and say that they have always liked Jews. 'Yeah, I really like you people. I wish you would kind of tell me a little bit about things. I'd like to find out a little bit about your religion. I've really been giving a little thought to that.'

It's human nature. People look to see which way the wind's blowing. They want to find out and get on the winning side. This was the case. Well, the Jews realized when this second decree was issued that things were looking very positive.

Esther 9:1-3, "Now in the twelfth month, that is the month Adar, on the thirteenth day, the time came for the king's command and his decree to be executed. On the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, the opposite occurred, in that the Jews themselves overpowered those who hated them. The Jews gathered together in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm. And no one could withstand them, because fear of them fell upon all people. And all the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and all those doing the king's work, helped the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them."

They knew which side their "bread was buttered" on. All of a sudden, the same politicians who were ready to kill all the Jews and confiscate their property, now that Mordecai was the Prime Minister, they said, 'We really like Jews. I tell you what—we surely are going to help these Jews. We are not going to let anything happen to them.'

Verses 4-6, "For Mordecai was great in the king's palace, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces; for this man Mordecai became increasingly prominent. Thus the Jews defeated all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, with slaughter and destruction, and did what they pleased with those who hated them. And in Shushan the citadel the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men."

In vv. 7-10, it goes through and mentions the various ones.

Verse 10, "...but they did not lay a hand on the plunder."

Verse 11, "On that day the number of those who were killed in Shushan the citadel was brought to the king." Word was brought to the king.

Verse 12, "And the king said to Queen Esther, 'The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the citadel, and the ten sons of Haman. What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Now what is your petition? It shall be granted to you. Or what is your further request? It shall be done.'"

They said, 'Let us have tomorrow to finish this up.' The sons of Haman who had been in collaboration on the whole thing were hanged on the gallows (v. 13).

Verses 14-32, "So the king commanded this to be done; the decree was issued...And the Jews who were in Shushan gathered together again on the fourteenth day of the month Adar and killed three hundred men at Shushan; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder. The remainder of the Jews in the king's provinces gathered together and protected their lives, had rest from their enemies, and killed seventy-five thousand of their enemies; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder. This was on the thirteenth day of the month Adar. And on the fourteenth day of the month they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness. But the Jews who were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day, as well as on the fourteenth; and on the fifteenth day of the month they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. Therefore the Jews of the villages who dwelt in the unwalled towns, celebrated the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a day of gladness and feasting, as a holiday, and for sending presents to one another. And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar, as the days on which the Jews had rest from their enemies, as the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them, and from mourning to a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor. So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun, as Mordecai had written to them, because Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to annihilate them, and had cast Pur (that is, the lot), to consume them, and destroy them; but when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters that this wicked plot which Haman had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. So they called these days Purim, after the name Pur. Therefore, because of all the words of this letter, and what they had seen concerning this matter, and what had happened to them, the Jews established and imposed it upon themselves and their descendants and all who should join them, that without fail they should celebrate these two days every year, according to the written instructions and according to the prescribed time, that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city, that these days of

Purim should not fail to be observed among the Jews, and that the memory of them should not perish among their descendants. Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim. And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews, to the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, with words of peace and truth, to confirm these days of Purim in their appointed time, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had prescribed for them, and as they had decreed for themselves and their descendants concerning matters of their fasting and lamenting. So the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book.”

An official proclamation was made proclaiming a day of festivity and rejoicing, a national day of thanksgiving to God.

Very carefully, the name of God is omitted in this section because, while the decree was issued, it was something that applied to the Jews. It was a national day of festivity. It was a national day of deliverance. It was not something that was to be confused with a Holy Day ordained by God. So, very carefully, there isn't any mention that God decreed or commanded it. But, rather, it originated with Esther and Mordecai.

Esther 10:2-3, we are told, “Now all the acts of his power and his might, and the account of the greatness of Mordecai, to which the king had advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? For Mordecai the Jew was second to King Ahasuerus, and was great among the Jews and well received by the multitude of his brethren, seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his kindred.” We have a conclusion here.

As we go through, there are several things that are brought out that we might look at. Haman had cast lots to pick out the lucky day—what he thought was going to be his lucky day and the Jews unlucky day—the thirteenth of the twelfth month. You know, in various pagan superstitions, the number thirteen always equated with being unlucky. Haman thought that thirteen was going to be unlucky for the Jews. Friday the thirteenth didn't turn out as unlucky for God's people as it turned out unlucky for Haman. Of course, there is a lesson there. When you are up to “no good,” things have a way of coming back on you. Haman chose the day by casting of lots. God is our deliverer. He chooses to effect deliverance in a way that we would never anticipate. He sometimes allows His people to

go through difficult situations in order to accomplish His purpose.

The book of Esther is, in many ways, a book of faith and deliverance. It anticipates the time when all people everywhere are ultimately going to want to join themselves to God's people. It anticipates and celebrates God's deliverance of His people. And it is a story that certainly ends up with great festivity and rejoicing.

The book of Ecclesiastes was read at the Feast of Tabernacles. What comes afterwards? –The Last Great Day. Then we have the part of God's plan that represents the new heavens and the new earth. A time when the wicked are destroyed in the Lake of Fire and all of God's people are delivered into the glories of the Kingdom of God.

The final Psalm is a song of praise to God. The book of Esther ends that way. It ends with the destruction of the wicked and the deliverance and final salvation of the people of God. It ends with rejoicing and festivities, a celebration of their deliverance.

We commented earlier that the five books of the Psalms correlate and parallel the five books of the Megillot and these five festival occasions.

The final Psalm, Psalm 150:1-6, “Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty firmament! Praise Him for His mighty acts; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness! Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; Praise Him with the lute and harp! Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes! Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with high-sounding cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!”

It ends on a very festive note of celebration and deliverance.

The book of Esther ends on a festive note of celebration and deliverance. It concludes with the destruction of the wicked and the celebration that God's people have on their deliverance. That is ultimately the way God's whole plan ends, isn't it? So, there is a parallel, even of the two national days. Lamentations is prophetic of the Great Tribulation, and Esther celebrates God's deliverance of His people. It focuses in on what will be the ultimate destruction of the wicked and the deliverance of His people. That's the message of the book of Esther. The message that God will ultimately intervene, destroy the wicked and save and deliver His people. That is the ultimate conclusion of the matter. God is going to see that occurs. The book of Esther is a reminder of that and celebrates that. The

celebration of Purim normally occurs about a month prior to the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread.

I think with that we are pretty well to the conclusion of the book of Esther.

As I mentioned, we will go into the book of Daniel next time. This is the next book in this section of the Writings. We will spend two Bible studies on Daniel. Then, when we get into the book of Revelation, we will come back to certain of the prophetic portions of Daniel. We will take a couple of Bible studies on the book of Daniel and then we will have a concluding Bible study on Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles to wrap up this section. So, three more Bible studies and we will have concluded this portion. The book of Revelation will be all that's left.

We will have spent time going through, step by step, every book of the Bible. There's plenty in the Bible to go back to, so we are not at the end of everything there is to study. But, hopefully, you will have a little bit of an overview and will have had the opportunity to have gone through and heard commented upon every section in God's Word.

Bible Study # 89 Questions

SURVEY OF THE WRITINGS SERIES

Esther

1. What was the condition of the king when he ordered Vashti brought before him?
2. How did Vashti respond to the king's summons? What did his advisors advise him to do about it and why?
3. What suggestion did the king's advisors offer when they saw him beginning to miss Vashti and to regret his previous decision?
4. How did Mordecai save the king's life?
5. What was Haman's attitude toward Jews in general and Mordecai in particular? What provoked his wrath to such an extent?
6. What scheme did Haman follow to achieve his vengeance on the Jews?
7. What was the response of Mordecai and the Jews of Shushan when they heard the king's decree?
8. For what reason, according to Mordecai, had God probably allowed Esther to become the wife of the king of Persia?
9. What did Esther do before going in to talk to the king? Why?
10. What request did Esther make of the king when she was received into his presence?
11. What event spoiled Haman's day and how did he propose to rectify the situation?
12. What circumstances worked out to humiliate Haman at a time when he was anticipating his greatest triumph?
13. What request did Esther make of the king? How did he respond?
14. What did the king do in order to try to undo the damage that Haman sought to work on the Jews? Why did he not simply withdraw his previous decree?
15. What day had Haman picked to be an "unlucky" day for the Jews and yet proved to be the day of God's deliverance of His people?
16. What is "Purim" and what is the significance of the name?
17. How frequently is the name of God invoked in the book of Esther? Comment.
18. What are some lessons to be derived from the book of Esther?

Bible Study # 90
June 9, 1992
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Daniel—Part 1

We are getting into the book of Daniel this evening. Daniel is one of the books of what is called the post-exilic books. That is, it was written after the exile of the Jews from Jerusalem.

Daniel's name literally translated means "God has judged" or "God is Judge." That meaning certainly accords quite well with the message of the book. The book has to do with God's judgment on the Gentile kingdoms.

In common with the other books in this Writings section, it was written both by royalty and about royalty. That's one comment I think I have not made about the Writings series. The book of Psalms was written mostly by King David. King Solomon wrote Proverbs. Job, who was called the greatest man in the East, in terms of power and possessions, would certainly be of the rank of a king or a prince. When you look at the Megillot, Song of Solomon was written by King Solomon and Ruth was written about the royal lineage and climaxed with the birth of King David. The book of Lamentations is the lament for King Josiah. King Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes. The book of Esther was written about Queen Esther. There is a connection of royalty that goes through.

Daniel was written by a man who rose to prominence in the Babylonian Empire and became the number two man of the empire directly under the king. It was certainly written about royalty, and it was written in an entirely different style than the prophetic books.

Generally, we would tend to think of Daniel as being part of the Prophets. But Daniel was not included in the Major and Minor Prophets in the traditional Jewish order. There are several reasons for that. Daniel has the distinction of being one of those books that was written outside of the Holy Land. It was not primarily concerned with Israel in terms of its content. The style of it is different.

If you go through the Prophets, over and over the style there is 'that the word of the Lord came unto "so-and-so" the prophet in this year or that year.' That is the method or style used as you go through all of the three Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel) and the twelve Minor Prophets.

But that is not what you see in the book of Daniel. There is a totally different style. In its prophetic sense, the prophetic material is almost all involved in the interpretation of dreams. And we find that it is of a different style.

Daniel is the book of the Old Testament that most directly corresponds with the book of Revelation of the New Testament. The book of Daniel and the book of Revelation correspond. In the Jewish order, the Writings are the third and final division. If Daniel were the end of the Old Testament (if that's where it stopped), it would certainly correspond with Revelation in the New Testament.

The books that had to come after Daniel had to close out the story of the exile. When you read the book of Daniel, you have the background of the story of what happened in Babylon during the time of the captivity. You have the story from the time the Jews were taken from Jerusalem and throughout the whole seventy-year period of captivity. That story is told in the book of Daniel. It was a first-person account. Daniel was there. He was on the scene.

In the book of Esther, we have the story of what transpired even later after many of the Jews had returned to Judea. It was the story of what transpired in the Jewish community that had remained behind and what was by that time the Persian Empire. Daniel and Esther both told the story of the Jews in exile.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah pick up the story with the Jewish community that returned from exile. After the captivity the Jewish community was split. There were those who remained in exile and those who returned to the Promised Land. Ezra and Nehemiah tell the story of the return. When you put those together with Daniel and with Esther, you have the story of the post-exilic period.

Chronicles, as we will see, comes back and sums up the whole story from beginning to end—from the beginning of the Old Testament period with Adam right on down to the Jews being allowed to return. It ends on that note. We will notice that in the Bible study on Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles a little later.

The book of Daniel is a very important book because it sets the stage. You cannot understand the book of Revelation without the book of Daniel. We will see, as we go through Revelation, how much of what John states in Revelation is a quotation and an expansion of material given in Daniel.

The authenticity of Daniel has been greatly disputed by the critics. There's a reason why

they want to dispute the book of Daniel. They want to dispute the book specifically because of the detailed prophecies contained in the book of Daniel. The longest, most detailed prophecy in the entirety of the Bible is Daniel 11. (I will give you a two-page handout that will take you verse by verse through Daniel 11 that you can use for your own Bible study.)

Do you see the problem with that? If Daniel was written when Daniel says it was written, which is in the period of the sixth century B.C., then you have detailed prophecies that run right on down to who married whom, who got mad at whom and all this going back and forth between the king of the North and the king of the South (the Ptolemys down in Egypt and the Seleucids up in Syria). You have a detailed account of all this strife and all these things that cover a period of about four hundred years or so. How could a human being have known every “in” and “out” on down?

Clearly, you can follow prophecies in Daniel 11 in great detail down to about 165 or 164 B.C. This is why many of the critics try to assign the book of Daniel to the period of the Maccabees after all of the events of Daniel 11 had happened. To recognize that it was written when it says it was written, you have to acknowledge God’s hand in it being written.

The critics run into some problems on that because the book of Daniel stands proven by the very details that the critics in past years sought to use to disapprove it. Daniel mentions people such as Belshazzar and Darius the Mede. Those individuals were not mentioned in secular sources. The only accounts that came down in terms of book form were those written by the Greek historians—primarily Herodotus and a few other Greek historians. There were details that they didn’t mention. Of course, they were Greeks and were writing the history of Babylon and Persia from a Greek standpoint. They had records available to them that we don’t have today. They told the story and there were details they left out. The histories that were written in Babylon and Persia had not survived.

In the last couple of decades, archaeology has made great strides. They uncovered some of the histories that were written by the Babylonians and the Persians and some of the monuments that they erected. And guess what? The very details that the critics had said proved the book of Daniel was a “pious fraud” confirmed the book. That is a contradiction in terms. How can you be pious and perpetuate a fraud? But that was what the critics called Daniel. The very details that

they used to “prove their point” that it was not authentic are the very things that have confirmed the book. Here were people that had long since been lost to history. When they dug up some of the material in Babylon and Persia, what did they find but records of Belshazzar and of Darius the Mede!

We will go into the story in the book of Daniel. Remember Belshazzar promised Daniel that if he would interpret the handwriting on the wall, he would make him the third man in the kingdom (Daniel 5:7). That was his promise of reward. ‘If you can tell me what this means, I’ll make you the third man in the kingdom.’ Why did he say the third man in the kingdom? –Because he, himself, was the second man in the kingdom. He was reigning as king in Babylon but was associated on the throne with his father, Nabonitus, who was elsewhere. He was the one who was actually holding court in Babylon. He was like a co-king with his father and had actually sort of worn the crown. This was a detail of history that the Greeks had not recorded. It wasn’t understood or confirmed by secular history until, let’s say, in the last fifteen years. But Daniel records that. The very details that the critics said proved that Daniel is a fraud, in reality, confirmed it. You had details at the time the critics thought Daniel was written four hundred years after the fact, which had long since been lost to history.

Think about it; let’s use a little common sense. Four hundred years would be 1592. How easily do you think you could forge a document that you claim had been written in 1592? You include in all kinds of details and you’re writing a firsthand account as though you were there at the court of the king of France. You are recording details of all the “ins” and “outs” of things that were going on. How accurate a history do you think you could concoct from something like that? It wouldn’t be very much. And realize that we have a lot greater access to written records and the preservation of historical material from four hundred years ago to today than they had from four hundred years back then.

With the printing press and things like that, you have multiple copies of books. Back then, when you had books, you had maybe one or two copies. In some cases, that was all there ever was because they had to be hand copied. So, there were not many copies of a lot of the records. If it got lost, the whole thing got lost. Even today, for books that were printed hundreds of years ago, there were at least a few thousand copies that

were printed. So, an awful lot can be destroyed and you still have bits and pieces that remain.

The point is that the idea of being able to forge a document is ridiculous. To put it in our terms, can you come along and forge a document that you claim was written by somebody on the spot four hundred years ago? How are you going to have it accepted by the whole nation and give it great religious authority? Well, it would be like trying to come up with an extra paragraph of the constitution—slipping it in and fooling everybody that it was a part of the original thing all along. It's ridiculous! Some of the crazy theories these critics come up with. You wonder how in the world they can do it.

The whole point is that they have an innate prejudice against the fact of a real God—a God who steps into history and intervenes. Sometimes they come up with something that contains incontrovertible proof of that; then boy, they have to try and explain that away. There are many other things. There are details—names of people, specific information of the Babylonian court, all kinds of information and internal details—that prove that Daniel was written as stated in the book.

Another proof that Daniel was written as stated in the book is the proof of language. The book of Daniel is written partially in Hebrew and partially in Aramaic. Aramaic is a similar language to Hebrew in that it is a kindred language—perhaps in the way that French and Spanish are kindred languages. There is a certain similarity. If you read one well, there's a lot you can figure out in reading the other.

There were two different Aramaic dialects. The Aramaic used in the book of Daniel is what's called the Imperial Aramaic dialect. It was the Aramaic dialect of the Persian court in the fifth and sixth centuries—not the so-called Western Aramaic dialect, which was extant in Palestine centuries later. Western Aramaic was the common language extant in the time of Christ and for two or three centuries prior to that in Palestine.

The Aramaic used in the book of Daniel is not the common Aramaic of Palestine. It is what's called the Imperial Aramaic dialect. There are Persian technical terms that are used in the book that have fallen out of use in the language in the later periods. Persian names for things changed over the years. You may think back of old expressions that perhaps your grandmother or grandfather used that you never hear anymore. You will occasionally run across it and it will remind you, 'I haven't heard that expression for

years and years.' Expressions and names go out of fashion. If one or two hundred years go by, nobody even recognizes them anymore. They just simply cease to be used, and that occurs over a period of time.

When the Jews were living in Persia, they picked up names for things that they would use even in their own language. In the case where two languages exist together, you sometimes pick up names of items from the people of the other language. It's just like certain terms or expressions that have come into the French language that's used in South Louisiana. Over the years they picked up or borrowed terminology, and this sort of trading goes on. Again, this is another proof that Daniel was written at the Persian period because it used terminology that several hundred years later was not in use at all any longer. There are many things that certainly authenticate the book of Daniel.

There is a tremendous amount that's packed into the book of Daniel. Let's get directly into Daniel. We pick up the story.

Daniel 1:1-2, "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar..." –The land of Babylon. This was in 604 B.C. This was the original Babylonian invasion.

Verse 3, "Then the king [King Nebuchadnezzar] instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children [teenagers] of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles." These could have been young people from perhaps ten to twelve years of age up to perhaps fourteen or fifteen. They were young enough that it was felt that they still had several years of education left and could be utilized by the Babylonians.

They brought those who were healthy and seemed to be well educated and had good abilities. They brought the ones that they felt had potential in terms of the Babylonian Empire (v. 4). It was appointed that they should live in an area annexed to the palace.

They would live in the general palace compound and eat of the food from the king's table. Eventually after several years of education, they would be brought and examined before the king and be utilized (v. 5). The Babylonians were on the lookout for talent.

Verse 6, “Now from those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.” There were four specific ones who were singled out. Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are better known to us by their Babylonian names Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. Those are the names that we are most familiar with. Those are the Hebrew and the Babylonian names. It goes through and gives the Babylonian names that each of them was given (v. 7).

Verse 8, “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine, which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.”

Why did Daniel want to avoid these things? Well, undoubtedly, part of the reason was because a lot of the food the king ate was unclean. Even what wasn’t unclean had been, in most cases, sacrificed to idols. And this was the case with the wine. Daniel could see that this was not right.

Think about it. We are not told exactly how old he was, but he was a teenager. He had been brought up in Jerusalem. He had been brought up learning God’s law. He knew right from wrong. He and his friends were brought to Babylon. This enemy army came in, besieged and captured the city. They took the king and they took many of the young people, the children of the leading people in Jerusalem. They are brought back to Babylon. It’s a very intimidating situation. Now they are confronted with all these things. What are they going to do?

“Daniel purposed in his heart...” He had to make a decision at that point in his life whether or not he was going to do what he knew was right. You know, Dad and Mom weren’t there looking now. In fact, Dad and Mom may have been dead. We are not told exactly who his parents are, other than that he would have been of the general royal seed of the nobility or the princes of Judah. Very possibly they may have been dead. If they weren’t, they certainly weren’t there in Babylon to know what he was doing. So, here he was, removed away from all of this. Now he was on the spot. What was he going to do? He made up his mind that he was going to do what he knew was right. He talked with these three friends of his and they decided that they were going to obey God.

In v. 9, we are told, “Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and good will of the chief of the eunuchs.” Obviously, Daniel had conducted himself in such a way that won the affection and respect of this man who was in

charge. He had behaved himself in an appropriate way and this person wanted to do him a favor. But he was scared. He wouldn’t mind doing him a favor, but he didn’t want to get in trouble. And the king was sending in his good food. He labeled it “delicacies.” It was the richest, junkiest food of the day. He thought, ‘This is good stuff. You’re going to pass up all this, and when the king sees you, you’re not going to look healthy. You’re going to look weak and sickly, and then he’s going to find out I haven’t been giving you all this good stuff he’s sending over here. Then I’m going to get in trouble’ (v. 10).

Then Daniel said, ‘Look, let’s make a deal. The king’s not going to call us in anytime soon. Just give us ten days; give us fruit and vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then examine us and see who looks the healthiest’ (vv. 11-13).

Well, you can guess what happened. After the siege of Jerusalem and all these things, most of them came there, and what did they start doing? They started gorging themselves on all the junk food—the refined flour and sugar—all of the rich pastries and even some of the unclean delicacies they had never been allowed to taste before. What do you think happened? Well, by the time they finished gorging themselves on that for a week and a half, they were all sick. Probably half of them had colds. You can imagine the situation.

Daniel and his friends had been on a really strict healthy diet. They had been drinking a lot of water and eating a lot of fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains. And sure enough, when the man in charge came in to look at them, ‘Hey, how about that! You guys look healthy and you seem to feel good. These others over here are sluggish and look kind of “green around the gills.”’ So, he said he would give them permission to continue to eat this. They took a strong stand when they were confronted with compromise. What was the result? God blessed them. You know, God takes note of our efforts. God takes note, and God appreciates our efforts and our sincerity. When we step out and try to do something because we know it’s right, God has ways of working things out.

Verse 17, “As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom [God gave them insight and perception that made them stand out above everybody else there.]; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.” God took note of these young men and He blessed them.

And, of course, eventually this period of time ended and they were to be brought in and examined before the king.

Verses 18-19, “Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king.” God made them stand out above all these fellows. The king talked with them, quizzed them, asked questions, held discussions and these four clearly stood out. The king was much more impressed with them than he was with any of the others.

Verse 20, “And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them [the more he talked to them], he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm.” He was impressed with these young fellows. They were perhaps twenty years of age by this time. The king thought these guys had more “on the ball.” They were ten times smarter than all these advisors he had over here. You see—God can work things out. And God’s law and truth are a source of wisdom.

Daniel 2:1-2, “Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him. Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.” He called them in and he said, ‘I want you to tell me my dream and the interpretation.’

Verse 4, they said, “You tell us the dream and we will tell you the interpretation.”

You find that a lot of these kings were rather quick to “fly off the handle.”

Verse 5, “‘But the king answered and said to the Chaldeans, ‘My decision is firm [KJV, “The thing is gone from me.”]; if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap.’” The king said, ‘The thing is gone from me. I want to know what it is. And if you don’t tell me, I am going to chop you up in little pieces.’

Verse 6, “‘However, if you tell the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts, rewards, and great honor. Therefore tell me the dream and its interpretation.’”

Verses 7-8, they said, ‘You tell us what you dreamed and we will tell you the interpretation.’ The king was suspicious of them.

Verse 9, “‘if you do not make known the dream to me, there is only one decree for you! For you have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the time [situation] has changed. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me [declare to me] its interpretation.’” The king said, ‘If I tell you the dream, you will make up some kind of meaning for it. But if you really have insight, if you really know, if God’s really revealing these things to you, then you will know what I dreamed. You tell me what I dreamed and then tell me what it meant.’ And they said, ‘We can’t do that.’

Verse 10, “The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, ‘There is not a man on earth who can tell the king’s matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean.’”

They answered, ‘Nobody can tell you what you dreamed. If you tell us what you dreamed, we have an interpretation for you. We just have to know what you dreamed.’ Well, the king wasn’t stupid. He was in some ways, but he was able to figure out a few things. He decided that these guys could make up something. They went on back and forth and they were scared. They were really sweating. But they knew better than to make up some dream that he had dreamed because he would know that it wasn’t the dream that he had dreamed. Then they would really be in trouble. So, they kept trying to stall for time.

Verse 12, “For this reason the king was angry and very furious, and gave a command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.” –‘They are all a bunch of frauds. Since they are all fakes, I might as well chop the heads off of all of them.’ He was fed up with this.

Verses 13-19, “So the decree went out, and they began killing the wise men; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them. Then with counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king’s guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon; he answered and said to Arioch the king’s captain, ‘Why is the decree from the king so urgent?’ Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel. So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation. Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. Then the secret was revealed to Daniel

in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.”

Daniel went back to his friends and said, ‘Let’s pray about it and God will show us.’ Daniel evidenced a tremendous amount of faith here. He was put in a situation where he was completely dependent upon God. Time and time again, what did Daniel do? He spent a lot of time in prayer.

Verses 20-21, “Daniel answered and said: ‘Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.’”

Then he went to the captain of the king’s guard and he said not to destroy the wise men of Babylon. ‘Bring me in before the king and I will tell the king what he wants’ (v. 24).

Verses 25-28, “Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king, and said thus to him, ‘I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known to the king the interpretation.’ The king answered and said to Daniel... ‘Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?’ Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, ‘The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets....’”

Notice Daniel didn’t claim credit. He didn’t say, ‘Yes, king, I really am quite a bit wiser than all these other wise men, and I have insight into this.’ Daniel didn’t claim any credit.

Continuing in v. 28, he said, “...there is a God in heaven that reveals secrets and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days....” It’s concerning what will be in the latter days; Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was a dream that relates to the end time.

As we go through, we have the dream that Daniel had described to Nebuchadnezzar.

Verses 31-38, “You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image’s head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron; its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was

found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory—you are this head of gold.” The Babylonian kingdom, symbolized by Nebuchadnezzar who was its king, was this head of gold.

Verse 39, “‘But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours [It won’t have quite the brilliance and luster that you have. Now, we know from history that the empire of the Medes and the Persians conquered Babylon in 539 B.C.]; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.’” A third kingdom would come along. The kingdom of Alexander the Great, the Greco-Macedonian Empire, conquered the Persians in 331 B.C.

It continues in v. 40, “‘And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron....’” Well, the Roman Empire emerged and by 31 A.D. had swallowed up all the pieces of the old Greek Empire. The Roman Empire continued down. About three hundred years later, it divided into the Eastern Roman Empire and the Western Roman Empire; it continued down to modern times through various revivals and resurrections.

It’s interesting to realize that at the beginning of this century, there were two titles in Europe used by European royalty that traced their origin back to Caesar. The word “Kaiser” is the German form of Caesar. Actually, the Latin pronunciation of Caesar is Kaiser. We use the Anglicized pronunciation, but even the Latin pronunciation would have been Kaiser. The Germans simply spelled it out to duplicate that pronunciation. “Kaiser” is the German form of Caesar; the Russian “Czar” or “Tsar” meant “Caesar.” The Russian Czars traced their title back through the Eastern Roman emperors. The Eastern Roman Empire, with its capital at Constantinople, continued down until the 1400s before the Turks finally conquered it. The niece of the last Eastern Roman emperor married the Grand Duke of Moskove and he took the title “Caesar” after Constantinople fell. The successors of the Eastern Roman Empire were the Greek-Slavic Orthodox realm of eastern and portions of central Europe that were the Greek-Slavic Orthodox areas. The various Orthodox churches acknowledged the supremacy of the patriarch at Constantinople.

If you have ever seen Russian printing, you realize that the Russian alphabet is derived from

Greek, as apposed to our alphabets in Western Europe, which derived from the Latin.

The successors of the eastern realm came down through the Greek-Slavic Orthodox areas of Eastern Europe and the Latin-Germanic Catholic realm in the west came down through the Holy Roman emperors. All that was centered in the west comes all the way down—and finally you have ten toes. We are told that these ten toes represent ten kings (vv. 41-42).

Verse 44, “And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed...”

We trace it clearly. Daniel 2 runs from ancient Babylon all the way down to the time ahead of us when Jesus Christ is going to return and set up the Kingdom of God. These ten toes represent the final ten kings—this ten-nation union that is going to be smashed by Jesus Christ at His return.

All of the things that have been happening in Europe, these are things Mr. Herbert Armstrong was talking about thirty, forty, fifty years ago and more. We have one or two here who have been associated with the work and have magazines and heard the broadcasts going way back to the time right after World War II. If you talk to anybody who has been around the Church for years, they will tell you that the events that happened when the Berlin Wall fell and when Germany reunited, they were not surprised. Nobody who has been around the Church for years was surprised or shocked because we heard those things years ago. I heard Mr. Herbert Armstrong talking about it way back in the 60s, and I’ve read articles that he’s written. I’ve talked to others who heard him say it in the 50s and in the 40s. The reason he said it was because he read Daniel 2 and other places that we will go through.

Here we find that the king was very impressed and he put Daniel over the province of Babylon (v. 48).

Daniel 3 shows the extent to which Nebuchadnezzar generally did not get the point. As he got to thinking about this, he decided that he would build a big ninety-foot tall image of gold, set it up in the plain of Dura and everybody would worship it (v. 1). And I’m sure he made the thing to look like himself. It started out with a head that looked like him and came on down. He was going to build this thing. Daniel had told him about this dream and he said this “image business” gave him a good idea. So, he put up this image and all the leaders were gathered together. They were going to strike up the band

and play, and when everybody heard the music, they were all supposed to bow down to the image. And Nebuchadnezzar said, ‘Anybody that doesn’t want to worship my new image, we are going to throw them into a fiery furnace (vv. 3-6).

Daniel 3:7, “...when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.”

Verse 10, “You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image.” ‘You made a decree and said that when you strike up the band, you want everybody to all fall down.’

Verse 12, “There are certain Jews...Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego...They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.” They evidently decided not to go after Daniel at this point. I guess they figured that Daniel had a little too much “stroke.” They would get his friends and then go for him next—a typical political move.

Verse 13, “Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king.”

He said, ‘I’ve heard a report that you don’t serve my gods and you’re not worshipping my image. I tell you what. I am going to give you another chance because I am a nice guy. I have the band right over here. I’m going to give the maestro the nod and the band is going to strike up. All you fellows have to do is fall down and worship and everybody’s happy’ (v. 14-15). Nebuchadnezzar went on and made a very foolish statement at the end of this.

Verse 15, “...But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?”

The king said, ‘If you don’t, I’m going to throw you into the fiery furnace. I don’t care which God you worship, He can’t get you out of that.’ That was not a smart statement.

Verse 16, “...‘we have no need to answer you in this matter.’” They answered, ‘You don’t need to give us time to think this over. We want to tell you something.’

Verse 17, “...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king.” They

said, 'Do you want to know which God can do this? Well, we want you to know our God can do it. He can deliver us and He's going to deliver us out of your hands. He can deliver us from this fiery furnace.'

Verse 18, "...let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image...."

Verse 19, "Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed...."

Boy, he was mad. He commanded that they heat the furnace seven times hotter. He wanted them to really crank up the steam.

Verse 20, "And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning furnace." They bound them up and threw them in (v. 23).

Verses 24-26, "Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, 'Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?' They answered and said to the king, 'True, O king.' 'Look!' he answered, 'I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.' Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, 'Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here....'" You better believe he was really asking nicely this time. They came out.

Verse 27, "...and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them."

Verse 28, "Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, 'Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego....'"

Verse 29, "Therefore I made a decree [he liked to make decrees] that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap...." This was Nebuchadnezzar's famous and favorite punishment. Every time he got mad he threatened to cut you up in little pieces—unless he threatened to throw you into the fiery furnace. So, now he was "gung ho." He gave them a promotion. You find out what an emotional sort that old Nebuchadnezzar was.

Then in chapter 4 there is actually a chapter of the Bible that King Nebuchadnezzar himself wrote.

It starts out in Daniel 4:1-2, "Nebuchadnezzar the king, to all peoples, nations and languages that dwell in all the earth: peace be multiplied to you. I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me." Oh, so he learned a little bit. You better believe!

He had this dream. He tells the story, and I am going to summarize it for the sake of time. He saw in the dream this tree; it was a great tree. All the birds and the beasts lodged in it and it grew strong. Then a holy one gave the signal from heaven to cut down the tree (vv. 5-14).

Verses 14-17, "He cried aloud and said thus: 'Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, and the birds from its branches. Nevertheless leave the stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet, with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth. Let his heart be changed from that of a man. Let him be given the heart of an animal, and let seven times pass over him. This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that *the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.*'"

Daniel came in and talked to Nebuchadnezzar about it. Daniel was astonished when he heard it (vv. 18-19). It really bothered him because he had developed affection and a liking for the king. Daniel told him that he represented the tree (vv. 20-22). The upshot of the vision was that the king was going to lose his sanity. His kingdom would be taken from him. He would roam the fields for seven years like an animal stark raving mad. At the end of those seven years, he would return to his kingdom (vv. 25-26).

Then he gave the king some advice.

Verse 27, "Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous [You need to repent.], and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity."

He told him, 'If you will really try to straighten out and do what you should do, maybe this won't happen anytime soon.' You better believe he walked softly for a while. It scared him to death. But a day went by, a week and a month went by—and nothing happened. The carnal mind begins to forget some of these things. It begins to fade. It doesn't seem very real. And sure enough, about a

year later he was strutting around up there in the palace.

Verse 30, “The king spoke, saying, ‘Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?’” ‘Look at what I’ve done and how great I am.’

Verse 31, “While the word was still in the king’s mouth, a voice fell from heaven: ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you!’”

He went absolutely insane and wound up living like an animal for seven years (v. 33).

Verse 34, “At the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever.” He came back and issued this decree that was an acknowledgement of the supremacy of God.

There are prophetic implications to chapter 4. I will not entirely go into it right now. I gave a sermon on this during the Feast of Trumpets 1989. You might want to go back to that because as we are going to see when we get into the handwriting on the wall, God lays out the appointed time (Daniel 8:19).

[The 1989 Feast of Trumpets sermon “Babylon” is included with Bible Study # 91.]

Seven times (v. 16) can be seven literal times. It can be seven literal years or seven prophetic times. What Nebuchadnezzar went through was typified by what happened with the fall of Babylon. These seven prophetic times translate out into twenty-five hundred twenty years that passed over until the final form of Babylon could once again begin to emerge. You might want to go back on some of that.

It’s no accident at all that the events that happened all centered around the Festival period of 1989. What used to be the communist block—everything began unraveling with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the communist regime around the Festival period of 1989. It all centered at the beginning of the Feast of Trumpets, and you can tie in those specific things. You can go back and look at the exact dates, and it was just “bang, bang, bang.” We sat and watched those things during the Feast of Tabernacles. Every night some of these things were occurring—twenty-five hundred and twenty years from the fall of Babylon. Babylon fell on the Feast of Trumpets 539 B.C. Twenty-five hundred and twenty years later brings you to the Feast of Trumpets 1982.

What occurred at that time was a reversal of policy in Germany. Overnight the coalition party that had formed an alliance with the Social Democrats announced they were pulling out of the alliance and they brought the Christian Democrats, which is the official Roman Catholic political party, into Germany. Politics in Europe do not have separation of church and state. There is an official Catholic party (Christian Democrats) in most of those nations. That’s why they use the term. It was formed by the bishops after World War II.

The Christian Democrat Party was brought to power as a result of the switch on the evening that began the Feast of Trumpets 1982. Two weeks later, it took power on the evening that began the Feast of Tabernacles in 1982. Exactly seven years to the day (seven literal times from that), the Berlin Wall fell and the whole situation in Eastern Europe came together.

Some of you who were at the Feast of Tabernacles in Biloxi heard those things back in 1979. Those things were gone through and laid out. We were told exactly what was going to happen—and sure enough it came out just exactly that way. I know I have preached on this at various times. It’s a matter that is laid out in advance. We will get into some of that a little bit later. If I don’t pick up speed, we are going to be bogging down here.

Daniel 4 tells the story of the lessons that the Most High rules in the affairs of men. God sets over nations whomsoever He will (vv. 17, 32). God has a master plan. God overrides history.

Daniel 5 tells the story of Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson who had not learned that lesson. Belshazzar made a great feast. They were really boozing it up in there.

Daniel 5:1, “Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand.” It wasn’t just a little tiny wine glass. He was really “belting” it down.

Verse 2, “...Belshazzar gave command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them.” These were sacred vessels.

Verse 4, “They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone.” If they were toasting each one of these gods, by the time they got down to the god of stone, you can believe they were pretty well “crocked.” They started out with the gods of gold. They all had to drink to the gods of gold.

Then they drank to the gods of silver. By the time they got down to the gods of stone and wood, nobody cared to what they were drinking. They were really going to it.

Verses 5-6, “In the same hour the fingers of a man’s hand appeared and wrote opposite the lamp stand on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. The king’s countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosed....” KJV, “the joints of his loins were loosed.”

Now that’s an interesting expression. It means that he had a very embarrassing accident about that point. It just absolutely scared the “daylights” out of him, and as I say, he had a very embarrassing accident about that time. “...and his knees knocked against each other.” He must have been rubbing his eyes and wondering if he was having the D.T.’s (Delirium Tremens) or seeing pink elephants. But what he saw was this hand that appeared out of nowhere and started writing. It just absolutely frightened him to death.

Verse 7, “The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spoke, saying to the wise men of Babylon, ‘Whosoever reads this writing, and tells me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck; and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.’”

He was the second ruler of the kingdom. This account doesn’t mention his father Nabonidus because he was several hundred miles away with another army and didn’t figure in the point at this time. Belshazzar had been here for a couple of years as the regent in Babylon.

The king’s wise men couldn’t explain what it meant and he was greatly troubled (vv. 8-9). The queen came in (v. 10).

She said in v. 11, “‘There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him; and King Nebuchadnezzar your father—your father the king—made him chief of the magicians....’” He was greatly thought of and he was able to interpret many things for Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 12, “‘...let Daniel be called and he will give the interpretation.’” Daniel was brought in. Belshazzar tries to “lay it on thick” (vv. 13-15).

Verse 16, “‘And I have heard of you, that you can give interpretations and explain enigmas. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be

clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.’”

Verse 17, “Then Daniel answered, and said before the king, ‘Let your gifts be for yourself....’” He knew that his gifts weren’t going to do him any good.

Verse 18, “‘O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor.’”

Verse 20, “‘But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed....’”

Verses 21-22, “‘Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses. But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this.’”

‘You remember this. You were a child when these events were going on. You remember this, but it hasn’t changed your conduct. You have this contemptible attitude toward the God of heaven.’

Verse 23, “‘And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house [temple] before you....’” They brought in the sacred vessels.

Verses 24-25, “‘Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written. And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN [KJV, PERES].’” These were words, in the language, that were units of measurement. The minah, the shekel and the peres were units of measurement. The problem wasn’t that they didn’t recognize the words. It’s like you had something that was suddenly written on the wall that said, ‘pounds, pounds, tons and ounces.’ What does that mean? You recognize the words, but the statement doesn’t make sense. ‘Feet, feet, inches and yards.’ I know what an inch is and I know what a foot and a yard is, but that’s nonsense. It doesn’t mean anything. It wasn’t that they didn’t know what a minah, a shekel or a peres was, but it didn’t mean anything. It was a meaningless expression. They knew that it had to mean something, but they couldn’t figure it out.

He said in vv. 26-28, “‘This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found

wanting; PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.” Verses 30-31, “That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. And Daruis the Mede, received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.”

Babylon had been besieged by the Persians for a period of time. But the Babylonians thought they were invincible. They didn’t think that Babylon could be conquered. The walls of Babylon were tremendous. They were so thick that there was like a highway that ran around the top. They could literally have chariots races on it. There wasn’t any way to break through; you could batter on it for a year. They thought it was impossible. No way! They had all the food they wanted. They had water. And they had an impregnable wall. There wasn’t anything they could do. So, they were feasting and thought they were invulnerable. They weren’t.

You know what the Persians did? They dug a trench. The Euphrates River flowed right through Babylon. There was a guard that came down into the water so you couldn’t come through with boats or anything like that. But the Persians dug a diversionary canal away from Babylon that connected the Euphrates River with a small tributary. That night they broke the earthen dam and diverted the water of the Euphrates. Within a very short time the water level started dropping when they broke the dam loose back several miles away. All of a sudden, the water was diverted and it began to drop. When it dropped far enough, they moved their army into the muddy river channel underneath the wall. While Babylon was boozing it up, all of a sudden, the army was on the inside rather than out. And in one night’s time Babylon fell.

People boast, and they think, ‘We have it made and we have security.’ I tell you what—when God is ready for something to happen, it can happen so quickly that it just makes you shake your head. That is a very important lesson.

This MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN is interesting. “MENE” has to do with numbers. We are told that this is something that has to do with numbers that are weights and they are to be divided. “MENE” is derived from “minah,” which is a unit of measuring weight. “TEKEL” is the alternate spelling of “shekel,” another unit of weight. “UPHARSIN” means “and peres.” The “u” or the “v” in the Hebrew language is the “and.” “Peres” is yet another unit of weight.

There are fifty shekels in a MENE and twenty-five shekels in a peres. There are one hundred

twenty-six shekels of weight altogether counting the one shekel.

When you divide them into their smallest unit of weight, which is the “gerah,” you find a reference to that back in Leviticus 27.

Leviticus 27:25, ““And all your valuations shall be according to the shekel of the sanctuary: twenty gerahs to the shekel.””

There are fifty shekels in a minah and twenty-five shekels in a peres. So, if you have minah and minah, add that and you have one hundred shekels. Add the one shekel, the shekel (or tekell) itself, and that’s one hundred one. Plus the twenty-five shekels that are the peres and you come up with one hundred twenty-six. We are told twenty gerahs to the shekel. To divide it down, take these numbers that are weights and divide them down to the smallest number. Then you multiply the twenty times one hundred twenty-six and you come out with two thousand five hundred twenty. Babylon was weighted and found wanting (v. 27). It remained in abeyance. Again, you come back to this two thousand five hundred twenty-year period—the seven times.

MENE = 50 shekels = 1000 gerahs
MENE = 50 shekels = 1000 gerahs
TEKEL = 1 shekels = 20 gerahs
PERES = 25 shekels = 500 gerahs
126 shekels **2520 gerahs**
x 20 gerahs
2520 gerahs

Revelation 12:14 defines times, time and half a time (three and one-half years). Revelation 11:2-3 defines that as forty-two months (three and one-half years) or one thousand two hundred sixty days (three and one-half years). Seven times is twice three and one-half years. Twice one thousand two hundred sixty is two thousand five hundred twenty. So seven times comes out to two thousand five hundred twenty prophetic days. Mene, mene, shekel and peres—if you take those numbers that are weights and divide them down to the smallest denominator, they add up to a total of two thousand five hundred twenty. Again, you have this interesting number that comes out. Babylon was weighed, found wanting and remained in abeyance for this period after it fell to the Medes and the Persians on this evening in 539 B.C.

Cyrus was the king over the entire Medo-Persian Empire. Darius the Mede was the number-two man that was set as king of Babylon. Cyrus did not enter Babylon, but he masterminded the siege. Once he saw what was occurring, he took

a large part of the army and went elsewhere. This was the fall of the capital, but all the battles weren't over. The battle with Nabonitus, who was the king of the Babylonian Empire, took place a little later. Cyrus took his army to go after Nabonitus and allowed Darius the Mede to come in as the king or regent in Babylon.

Daniel 6:1-2, "It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom; and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one [KJV, "of whom Daniel was first"]..."

Word must have gotten out very quickly about what Daniel had done. He was very impressed and set Daniel in positions of power.

People were jealous of him. They figured they couldn't find anything to accuse Daniel of except in areas pertaining to his worship of God (vv. 4-5). They talked Darius into making his crazy decree that nobody could pray to anybody except him for a month. They made the decree (vv. 7-9). Sure enough, they found Daniel kept doing what he was always doing.

Verse 10, "...And in the upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days." He didn't make a big public show about it, but he went to his house and knelt down and prayed. So, sure, they were spying on him. They went and told the king he violated the decree.

King Darius had a little more humility than Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 14, "And the king, when he heard these words, was greatly displeased with himself [It just really upset him that he could have been so stupid as to do something like that.], and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him."

But remember the law of the Medes and Persians? Once a decree had been issued, it couldn't be reversed. The king kept trying to figure a way to get Daniel out of this and he couldn't.

So, Darius told him in v. 16, "...they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, 'Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you.'" So, even Darius evidenced some faith.

He was ashamed of himself for having done something like this. He had allowed himself to be flattered and his ego "button" pushed to where he did something like this. He told Daniel he believed that the God that he served would deliver him. He knew how diligent he was and

believed God would deliver him. In fact, the king passed the night fasting. He wasn't able to sleep (v. 18). He just worried and was just sick all night about what he had done. So, he certainly showed a little more humble attitude than many of the kings we have run into.

Verses 19-20, "Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, 'Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?'" And Daniel said, 'Yes!'

Verses 22-23, "'My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him...Then the king was exceedingly glad for him....'"

Verse 24, "And the king gave the command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions...." We find that by this time, the lions had worked up a good appetite. The angel had shut their mouth. These old lions—can you imagine? Here are these lions. They had dinner right in front of them and their stomachs were growling and churning away, but they couldn't get their mouths open. They must have been pretty frustrated by the time those other guys were thrown down in there. The angel left and then the lions helped themselves.

Darius wrote a decree (vv. 25-27). He was impressed.

Verse 28, "So Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian." Daniel was given great favor.

We go through in sort of the story flow of the book.

Now, as we come to Daniel 7, we have a vision that Daniel had in the first year of Belshazzar. He saw four great creatures: a lion, a bear, a leopard that had four heads, and a fourth great dreadful beast (vv. 1-7).

Daniel 7:17-18, "'Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.'" We have this sequence.

Remember, you had the gold, silver, brass and the iron. Here you have the lion, the bear, the leopard and this terrible creature with iron teeth. It ends up with God taking the kingdom. Again, we have this same sequence. We will go more into that in the book of Revelation.

Verses 19-20, "'Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from

all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; and about the ten horns that were on its head, and about the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows.”

We are told in v. 25, ““He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.”” You will find this reference to either seven times or to half that duration that figures very prominently prophetically.

Just to call your attention to something, go back to Revelation 11.

Revelation 11:2, “...And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.” Now, how long is forty-two months? Thirty-six months is three years; six more makes forty-two—that’s three and one-half years.

Then notice in v. 3, ““And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.””

In v. 2, we find forty-two months and in v. 3, it talks about one thousand two hundred sixty days. Now, if you take a thirty-day month and multiply thirty times forty-two, that’s one thousand two hundred sixty. Forty-two thirty-day months is one thousand two hundred sixty days.

Continue down in Revelation 12:6, “Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.”

Continue down in v. 14, “But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time....” One thousand two hundred sixty days, forty-two months or time, times and a half a time—these are equated right here in Revelation 11 and 12. It’s not just me, reaching up in the air and pulling out some numbers. The Bible uses those numbers and clearly defines one thousand two hundred sixty days, forty-two months, time, times and a half a time, and three and one-half years. You double it and you have seven years. When you double one thousand two hundred sixty days, you have two thousand five hundred twenty days. So, certain of these numbers have significance.

[I can see one number that has significance is the *time*. There isn’t any way I can do justice to the rest of the book of Daniel if we quit by 8:30. I tell you what we’ll do. We are going to finish up the book of Daniel next time. I’ll make a two-part out of Daniel.]

Let me go on a little further here in Chapter 7. There’s still a lot of material here.

In chapter 7, Daniel sees these four creatures coming up out of the sea. He sees the one like a lion; he sees one like a bear. This bear has three ribs in its mouth (vv. 3-5).

Daniel 7:6, ““After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.””

Verses 7-9, ““After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words. I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated....””

He talks about the Kingdom of God being established.

Verses 12-13, ““As for the rest of the beasts [referring to the ten kings], they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven....””

Daniel uses the term “One like the Son of Man” or “One like the Son of God” several times. Do you know why he uses that term? Though Jesus Christ eternally co-existed with the Father, until He became flesh and was born of the Virgin Mary, He was not the Son of God. He became the Son of God. He was God—the Logos or the Word. There was a relationship between the Ones that we know as the Father and the Son, but they did not have a Father-Son relationship until the One that we know as Jesus Christ—the Word—became flesh. This is prior to Christ’s incarnation as a human being. Daniel can only describe Him as “One like the Son of man” or “Son of God.” That was what He was going to be, and that is the appropriate term that we use. But that exact relationship had not yet been

defined because this was several hundred years prior to that event in history.

Continuing in v. 13, "...One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him."

Verse 14, "Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed."

Daniel didn't understand what this meant (v. 15). He was told that these four great beasts are kings or kingdoms that will arise (v. 17).

Verse 18, "But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever."

He was really curious about this fourth beast and about the ten horns (vv. 19-20).

Verses 21-22, "I was watching; the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailed against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom."

Verse 23-24, "Thus he said: 'The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth [If you remember the image, this would be the legs of iron; this is the Roman Empire.], which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces. The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them [Or, 'in the same way.' Not 'after them' chronologically but 'in like manner as they arise' coming up out of this empire. There will be these successor states to the Roman Empire and this little one pops up. It is, in some ways, a successor and in other ways, it is not.]; he shall be different from the first ones, and shall subdue three kings.'"

Verse 25, "He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. [Here we have what, in reality, is a religious authority trying to change the law of God, trying to change the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday, trying to change the Holy Days to pagan holidays.] Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time."

Verses 26-27, "But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever. Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the

kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him."

The Roman Empire fell. After it collapsed in 476 A.D., there were three quick successor kingdoms that established themselves there in Italy and in portions of the Empire: the Vandals, the Heruli and the Ostrogoths. We will go into a little bit more about them next time.

The little horn (vv. 8, 24-25) is a reference to the papacy. The bishop of Rome was responsible for soliciting Justinian, the emperor of the east, to come in and to overthrow the Vandals, Heruli, and the Ostrogoths. Justinian came in to conquer those kingdoms and to establish what is called in history, The Imperial Restoration, which was established in 554 A.D.

When Rome collapsed in 476 A.D., the Vandals, the Heruli and the Ostrogoths successfully came in and took over. Justinian was solicited out of the east several decades later. Finally, in 554 A.D. he came in and overthrew them. We will pick up the story there next time.

You have the handout material on Daniel. We will come back and pick it up and go through some more details on Daniel 11.

There is an awful lot of material packed into the book of Daniel. There are, certainly, principles relating to Christian living and to handling ourselves in various circumstances. There is the history of the people of God during this period after the exile. There is also the background of a tremendous amount of prophecy that sets the tone for what's happening in the world today. Why do we see what's happening on the world scene? What we see are events of tremendous significance. There are events going on in Central Europe right now down in the Balkans. There are a lot of things that tie in and are setting the stage for the final emergence of a great power in Europe.

In Daniel 2, the final ten kings are composed part of iron and part of miry clay (vv. 33, 41). This term "miry clay" could also be rendered "ceramic." If you take something that is composed of iron and miry clay, it doesn't stick together well. You can make something of iron and ceramic and you can paint it and it can look all the same. But you know what? If you smote it with something hard, you know what would happen? All the ceramic would shatter.

What you have in Europe right now, on the one hand, is the Germanic realm. And, of course, Germany is the successor of the iron kingdom. Remember what the highest decoration that the

Germans gave? The Iron Cross! Everybody else gave gold medals. The Germans had the Iron Cross. On the one hand, you have hardness and regimentation. But what do you have in the Central European areas? What do you have in the Balkans? What do you have in the old communist regime, the old successor states of the Eastern Empire? You have something that can fracture a thousand different ways. That's what it is doing right now. Eventually it's going to be put together, but it has that potential to fracture. There's always been that fractious tendency in the Eastern realm. You can go back and look at ancient Greece. Greece was never a nation. It was composed of about fifty different city-states that were always squabbling among one another. There was always that fractious tendency.

If you look at the Orthodox realm as opposed to the Catholic realm, the Orthodox realm is split. You have Serbian-Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox and all these various Orthodox groups that are technically in communion with one another, but they fracture and they sub-divide. They have always had the fractious tendency in the Greek realm. The Balkans keeps dividing down. They keep dividing some of these countries down and down and down.

The word "Balkans" comes from a word that means "mountain." It is a very mountainous, rugged area. So you had all these little isolated groups, and everybody spoke a little bit different dialects. Until modern times, it was hard to get over the mountains. Every little group sort of thought they were similar, but there were differences. And it was difficult to even rule because it was such a rugged area.

There's always been that fractious tendency that they've had. That's why, when it's likened to a mixture of iron and miry clay, it's likened to something that won't stick together. When you smite it, the iron reverberates and the ceramic shatters. Now, when God smites it, the whole thing is going to shatter. Eventually, it's going to shatter internally. It won't last very long. We will go into that when we get to Revelation. We see the stage being set. You see these fractures that are spreading through Eastern Europe and all these nations are sub-dividing. Yugoslavia has already fallen apart. Czechoslovakia is about to fall apart right now between the Czechs and the Slovaks. They are going to divide it up. It keeps dividing and sub-dividing in those areas.

We will stop there and pick it up next time.

Bible Study # 90 & 91 Questions

SURVEY OF THE WRITINGS SERIES

Daniel

1. What was the first great test that Daniel and his friends faced after going into the Babylonian captivity? How did they handle it?
2. How did God bring Daniel to the attention of the king? What did Nebuchadnezzar do to reward Daniel?
3. What dream did Nebuchadnezzar have and what was the significance of the dream?
4. What great test of faith did Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego face? How did they respond?
5. What chapter of the Bible did Nebuchadnezzar write?
6. What great lesson did God teach him and how did he learn that lesson?
7. What did God do to deliver His judgment on Babylon?
8. What is the significance of the phrase MENE, MEME, TEKEL, UPHARSIN?
9. What kind of favor was Daniel given with the Persian king, Darius? In what way was the king introduced to the power of the God Daniel served?
10. What four beasts did Daniel see in his vision in Daniel 7, and what was represented by these creatures? What event is going to occur at the end of the time period dominated by these beasts?
11. What information are we told about the “little horn” in Daniel 7?
12. What animals did Daniel see in his vision in Daniel 8 and what did they represent?
13. What does Daniel 8:8-11 refer to?
14. What is the significance of Daniel’s seventy-week prophecy?
15. According to Daniel 10, how did Daniel chasten himself and draw close to God?
16. What insights are we given in Daniel 10 into the workings of the spirit realm?
17. Why has Daniel 11 been called the most detailed prophecy in the Bible?
18. When was the book of Daniel to be understood and by whom?
19. What is the significance of the one thousand two hundred ninety days and the one thousand three hundred thirty-five days?

Bible Study # 91
June 23, 1992
Mr. John Ogwyn
(Handout and Sermon at end)

The Writings Series—Daniel—Part 2

We are continuing in the book of Daniel. I want to come back a little bit to some material that we have touched on a little earlier. We are going to have a chance to pick up a few details that we had skimmed over.

Daniel is organized in terms of subject matter. As you go through the book, it does not strictly follow chronological development. You will notice that many of the chapters in Daniel are dated in terms of when the prophecy came. One of the things that you note is that Daniel dates some of the chapters later on in the book as having been received at times earlier than some of the previous chapters. Now there are reasons for that.

He starts out and sort of follows the chronological order up to chapter 3. Chapters 4 and 5 are interesting because they are many years apart. Many of the events recorded in chapters 6 through 12 certainly occurred prior to some of what is here in chapter 5. Daniel 4 and 5 are back to back not because they chronologically follow one another, but because there is a point that God is making in terms of the lesson. Chapter 4 records a lesson that Nebuchadnezzar learned. This lesson centered around the fact that, as is brought out in Daniel 4:17, “...in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.”

In Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar had this vision of this great gigantic tree that was cut down and severed. But it was not uprooted. The stump was left. It was banded with iron and brass, and seven times, prophetically, were to pass over the stump of this tree (vv. 10-15, 20-23, 26). And then the obvious implication was that it would begin to bud and put forth life once again.

There is sort of an interesting statement recorded in the book of Job.

Job 14:7-9, “For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its tender shoots will not cease. Though its root may grow old in the earth, and its stump may die in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bud and bring forth branches like a plant.” The point is that a tree can be cut down and nothing but the

stump is left. You can have new life that can spring up from those roots.

There was a rather remarkable tree that I noticed that way. I think it was on that stretch of Highway 90 between Beaumont and Dayton, Texas. There was a house on the side of the road and a tree had been cut down. The original tree had grown up and it had been cut off. Two shoots had come up later; one out of the very end and one on the other end had come up. But this time they had grown up considerably and it was a very odd-looking tree. It was almost like a built-in seat where the original trunk was. You could see that the trunk was much thicker. But two shoots had come up and it had grown to where it was now putting out shade.

We have, here in Daniel 4, this big tree that was cut down. The tree was symbolic of Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar personified the Babylonian Empire. He was the first king of what is called in history the Neo-Babylonian Empire—the empire that began to be put together about three years prior to the conquest of Judah in 604 B.C.

What Nebuchadnezzar saw here in chapter 4, the tree being cut down (v. 14), symbolized him being cut off. And yet specific instructions were to leave the stump. The stump was to be left in the ground. It was not to be uprooted or cut out. The stump was there and it was to be banded with iron and brass (v. 15). Nebuchadnezzar lost his mind and his kingdom.

A period of seven literal years went by (v. 16). Nebuchadnezzar learned a lesson. When he assumed control of his kingdom again, he had learned a lesson. He had learned, as a result of those seven years of his kingdom being in abeyance—as far as he was concerned—that God rules in the affairs of men (v. 17).

We pick up the story in chapter 5 a number of years later with Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson Belshazzar. In fact, we would date the seven years of Nebuchadnezzar’s insanity from 569 to 562 B.C. When we pick up the story of Belshazzar, this is dated in 539 B.C. So, about twenty-three years had transpired between the end of chapter 4 and the beginning of chapter 5. Nebuchadnezzar had been dead for many years by this time.

We pick it up in chapter 5. Nebuchadnezzar’s son Nabonidus became king several years later. Nabonidus associated Belshazzar with him on the throne as co-ruler. Warfare had broken out. Nabonidus took a great army and has now been gone from Babylon for a period of a couple of years. Belshazzar was left as the ruler in Babylon

as his father Nabonidus was leading the army that had gone out to deal with the Persians.

Babylon is under siege, but in their own mind, Belshazzar and his advisors are absolutely convinced that Babylon is impregnable—that Babylon can never be broken into. So, they have a party to show the absolute contempt in which they hold the Persian army. Cyrus the Great and his army had been encamped outside of Babylon for a period of months. Belshazzar held them in contempt and thought there wasn't any way that they were going to get into Babylon.

So, on this evening of the new moon in the fall of the year 539 B.C. (that was none other than the Feast of Trumpets), Belshazzar has this big drunken party. After they had been drinking for a while, he called for the sacred vessels which had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem to be brought in (Daniel 5:2-3). In effect showing that, 'Look, none of the other gods have been able to deliver their people from the mighty hand of Babylon. Babylon's gods [kings] are great over all.' To show his disdain, he brings out these sacred vessels that would have normally been shown respect because they were considered sacred to God.

So, he's in there and they are drinking toasts and really "boozing" it up. You remember the story of the handwriting on the wall. The handwriting was interpreted.

Daniel 5:26-28, "This is the interpretation of each word, MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." It was going to occur.

Now, Belshazzar had not learned the lessons that his grandfather had learned twenty-three years before—the fact that God rules over men. The nation had an opportunity to learn through lessons given to its first king. Nebuchadnezzar may have learned certain lessons, but certainly the nation as a whole and certainly his grandson Belshazzar who was sitting on the throne of Babylon had not profited at all. We have these two chapters in a position together showing the contrast.

As we touched on last time, one of the interesting things is the use of the term "seven times" in prophecy. We noted, as we went back to the book of Revelation, that there were three synonymous terms that were used in Revelation 11 and 12: forty-two months, one thousand two hundred sixty days and time, times and half a time.

Revelation 11:2, we find, "...they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months."

Verse 3, "...two witnesses...will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days..."

If you come down to Revelation 12:6, "Then the woman fled into the wilderness...one thousand two hundred and sixty days."

And in v. 14, "...the woman was given two wings...that she might fly into the wilderness ...where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time..."

Now, forty-two months is three and one-half years. Forty-two, thirty-day months, is one thousand two hundred sixty days. Take one thousand two hundred sixty and divide it by thirty and that will come out to forty-two. Forty-two thirty-day months is one thousand two hundred sixty days. So time, times and half a time is representative of three and one-half years or forty-two months or one thousand two hundred sixty days.

I will just call to your attention that we find in the book of Ezekiel and other places, the principle of a day for a year.

Ezekiel 4:6, "And when you have completed them, lie again on your right side; then you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days. I have laid on you a day for each year."

You will find that same statement back in Numbers 14:34, "According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection." So, the principle of a day for a year is utilized in prophecy. Seven times would be twice as much as time, times and half a time. Three and one-half doubled is seven. So, one thousand two hundred sixty years or one thousand two hundred sixty days doubled is two thousand five hundred twenty.

We see that aspect in Daniel 4. Nebuchadnezzar went through insanity for a literal period of seven years. Babylon was without a king for a literal period of seven years. In effect, it was under the regency of Daniel and his friends and others, perhaps of the family. But Babylon was without a king. The empire was sort of on hold for this period. Nebuchadnezzar personified that empire. He was not around for those seven years. He came back and he had learned a lesson. But his kingdom had not learned a lesson. His family had not learned a lesson.

Now we see the reference of the stump being banded seven times. That's what we were told in Daniel 4:14-16. The stump was to be left and seven times were to pass.

When we came down to Daniel 5, we saw the handwriting on the wall. We commented that MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN were numbers that were weights—the mina, the shekel and the peres. Just to mention, the “u” or the “v” in Hebrew as it is here in “upharsin” is just the conjunction “and.” That’s why I say peres rather than upharsin. The name of the weight was peres. “Upharsin” means “and peres.” These are simply alternate spellings. They are known by the more common Hebrew names. The mene, shekel and upharsin are the Chaldean names.

There were fifty shekels in a mina and twenty-five shekels in a peres. They were to be added. These are numbers (that are weights) that are to be divided. We noted that you are going to divide this down (just like in terms of math), going for the lowest common denominator. If you add something up this way, you would have to use the smallest number.

Mina is mentioned twice. The shekel is the smallest of the numbers that are mentioned here. There would be fifty shekels in one mina and fifty shekels in a second mina—that would be one hundred. The shekel itself would be one more—one hundred one. Then there are twenty-five shekels to the peres—that would be twenty-five more shekels. That would all add up to one hundred twenty-six.

Now what is the significance of that?

Go back to Leviticus 27:25, ““And all your valuation shall be according to the shekel of the sanctuary: twenty gerahs to the shekel.””

The smallest unit of measurement was the gerah, and there are twenty gerahs to the shekel. We see that the numbers that were given in the handwriting on the wall added up to one hundred twenty-six shekels. If you divide it down to the smallest, there are twenty gerahs to the shekel. If you multiply twenty times one hundred twenty-six, you would come up with two thousand five hundred twenty. Here’s the interesting thing. In chapters 4 and 5 you have these same numbers—two thousand five hundred twenty. They are given in two different ways, but you come out with the same thing. You have two totally different ways of arriving at it, but it comes out to exactly the same thing.

That evening was the fall of Babylon. Babylon fell. The point is that the Most High rules in the kingdom affairs of men and gives it to whomever He chooses (Daniel 4:25; Daniel 5:21). God sets over nations whomever He chooses. That’s an important lesson to learn. It has implications for us.

There are those who become upset, in terms of the Church, and have concluded that since Christ is unable to govern, they had better take over. You know, if God sets over nations whomever He chooses, how much more does He set over the Church whomever He chooses?

God governs in the affairs of nations. That doesn’t mean that since God governs in the affairs of nations that the best man for the job is always there—the best man for the job in the sense of what job God wants accomplished. No, Daniel 4:17 makes plain that, in terms of nations and governments of this world, sometimes the basest (lowest) of men are the ones that are set there, and God allows that.

Acts 17:26, “... [God] has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation.” God has a great plan and a great purpose. He puts individuals into positions that will carry out that purpose. Sometimes there are various lessons to be learned. God has done that even in the nations of the world where He’s not nearly as involved as He is right in his own Church. So, clearly we have to understand and realize that God is the One who is in charge and to whom we look.

We have this two thousand five hundred twenty-year period that clearly refers to the time, as it is mentioned in Daniel 4, when the stump is banded. No new growth can come out of the stump. It’s got a cap on it. It can’t be broken through and no new growth is going to come until the bands are broken or cut asunder. And then, you don’t have a full-grown tree that pops up overnight, but new growth begins to come.

In Revelation 18:2, the end-time empire is called, ““BABYLON THE GREAT.”” It’s not called Rome the Great or Greece or Persia the Great—it’s called BABYLON THE GREAT. It’s a restoration of something on a little different scale. It’s of wider range than what had come before.

Both Daniel 4 and 5 indicate the two thousand five hundred twenty years in different ways but come to the same conclusion. Two thousand five hundred twenty years would elapse during which all the attempts at putting Babylon together again would be doomed to failure. It’s very interesting in the way some of these things have worked out and the things that we see shaping up right now.

I want to go back and pick up a little of that in chapter 4 and 5. We commented on chapter 6.

I might mention that Darius the Mede was the ruler of the Medes who were tributary to Cyrus. Originally the Medes had been the dominant part of the empire. Cyrus the Great was the heir to

both the Median and Persian Empire. He united them together. His mother was a princess of the Medes. She was the daughter of the king of the Medes; his father was the king of Persia. The Medes had been the dominant power until Cyrus came on the scene and changed the configuration around. Darius the Mede was an older man. He was a prince of the Medes who were associated with Cyrus.

Daniel 5:31, “Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.”

Evidently, when Cyrus saw that the situation in Babylon was over and the matter was resolved, he did not bother to enter into Babylon that night. He left Darius with a part of the army to come in, take and rule Babylon. Cyrus took the larger portion of the army and quickly went elsewhere. He was on his way to meet Nabonidus to defeat him and completely overthrow the Babylonian Empire. Cyrus did not return to Babylon for a few years. So, we read of Cyrus besieging Babylon, and yet we read of Darius the Mede being the king entering in. Darius was serving under Cyrus, but he was the one who was actually there in Babylon. It was about two or three years before Cyrus returned.

Daniel 7:1, “In the first year of Belshazzar....”

Now this goes back earlier than chapter 5, but it is added in at this later point. Chapters 7 and 8 deal with things during the reign of Belshazzar. God, in His organization of the book of Daniel, wanted chapters 4 and 5 back-to-back for clear emphasis of the two thousand five hundred twenty years. Also, the emphasis of the lesson Nebuchadnezzar learned and Belshazzar didn't learn were clearly shown in a position with one another.

Now, we pick up some of the events in the story that happened earlier. In chapter 7, Daniel saw four creatures coming up out of the sea, each different from one another: the lion with an eagle's wings, the bear that had three ribs in its mouth, the leopard that had four wings and four heads and then a fourth great dreadful beast (vv. 3-7).

You can look at Daniel 7 and Daniel 2 together. You remember the great image in Daniel 2—the head of gold, the chest of silver, the thighs of brass and the legs of iron. Again, you had four kingdoms that were illustrated. Daniel explained to Nebuchadnezzar that he and the Babylonian Empire over which he ruled were represented by the head of gold. After him another kingdom would arise. There were four kingdoms (vv. 38-40).

Here again in Daniel 7:3-7, we have these four beasts.

Daniel 7:17, we're told, ““These great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth.””

The **lion** represented the first one; that would have to be Babylon, the starting point. It's the only one that was mentioned that, v. 4, “The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it.”

God uses the analogy of wild creatures (animals of the jungle) to describe these great world-ruling Gentile empires. The reason He uses that analogy is because that was the way they acted. The “law of the jungle” is that whoever is the biggest and strongest eats and devours the others—and this is the way these empires and kingdoms have conducted themselves. The only exception is brought out. It mentions the lion had a man's heart given to it and stood on its feet. Nebuchadnezzar went through his period of insanity and there was a change. He came back with a little different attitude. That is very evident in Daniel 4, but that's the only one. That lesson was lost on everyone else. Nebuchadnezzar personally learned a lesson, but others didn't learn from his lesson. So, it's had to be repeated.

Verse 5, the **bear** is the second kingdom. It represented the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians. It's pictured as having three ribs in its mouth. It is told to arise and devour much flesh. The three ribs represent the three kingdoms that were swallowed up by the Medes and the Persians when they established their empire. The significance would be that they swallowed up the kingdoms of Lydia, Babylon and Egypt.

Verse 6, the **leopard** is pictured as having four wings and four heads. The empire that swallowed up the Medes and the Persians was the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great. But it had a very short duration. His empire as a unified empire lasted ten years—actually less than that because he didn't finish his conquest at the beginning of the ten years. Alexander died and his empire split and divided. Four of his generals ultimately came out with portions of his empire. Seleucus ruled the portion that would be modern-day Syria coming across to Iraq. Let's say, modern-day Iraq and Syria would be the portion Seleucus ruled. Coming down into Egypt, Ptolemy, one of Alexander's generals, took that part. Lysimachus, who was the third

general, ruled ancient Asia Minor, the area up in what is now a portion of modern-day Turkey. Cassander, the fourth general, ruled over the area that basically would be modern-day Greece and coming up into some of the Balkan area.

There was a splintering of Alexander's empire. It splintered into four basic divisions, all of which were Greek speaking, Greek culture and Greek language. It was a continuation of what Alexander had started, but it splintered. They were unable to hold it all together. It's what's known in history as the Hellenistic period because it was the period of Greek dominance. It was the dominance of Greek language and culture that set the stage for the New Testament period.

Verse 7, then there was a fourth **beast**, dreadful and terrible. It was something that was really so beyond all these others that there wasn't even an animal that was used to signify it. It's pictured as having great iron teeth. It swallowed up and devoured everything else. It picked up all the rest. It was the fourth. And, of course, the Roman Empire did that. It swallowed up the remains of each of the four divisions of Alexander's empire.

A lot of people have heard the story of Mark Anthony and Cleopatra. Cleopatra was a direct descendant of Ptolemy. She was the last Greek ruler of Egypt. She committed suicide when Julius Caesar's nephew Octavian, better known in history as Augustus Caesar, defeated her army. In 31 B.C., the battle of Actium marked the complete triumph of the Roman Empire and the complete devouring of what was left of Alexander's old empire.

This beast (v. 7) is pictured as having ten horns; among these horns, a little horn pops up and causes the first three horns to be plucked up by the roots (v. 8). When the Roman Empire fell in the historical date of 476 A.D., the Vandals overran Rome and established a kingdom. Basically, three groups came in and vied for the supremacy in the Roman Empire. They are known historically as the Vandals, the Heruli and the Ostrogoths. From a historical standpoint, those would be the first three successors of the Roman Empire.

In 554 A.D. at the behest of the bishop of Rome, Justinian the Great, who was the ruler in Constantinople (the Eastern Empire), brought in an army and defeated the Vandals, the Heruli, and the Ostrogoths over a period of several years and caused their kingdom to be completely plucked up and ended. In 554 A.D., what was called the Imperial Restoration was proclaimed.

This was another successor to the Roman Empire, but this time at the behest of the bishop of Rome.

The first three, the Vandals, Heruli and Ostrogoths, though each of them nominally professed Christianity, were a different brand of heresy than the case of the bishop of Rome. There was quite a controversy.

We find here, in Daniel 7, this continuation that comes down and culminates in the return of Jesus Christ.

Daniel 7:20-21, the little horn, we are told, "...the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows. I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them."

He was not counted among the ten. But one of the successors of the Roman Empire was none other than the papacy itself. The papacy took much of its imperial trappings from the old Roman Empire. In the fading of the Roman Empire, the papacy achieved its greatest power and prestige. Now it's described, "whose appearance was greater than his fellows." Even though it was by comparison a little horn, it outlasted any of the rest of them. It's been around for a whole lot longer. It spoke great swelling things—great pronouncements and great claims were made. It was responsible for persecution against the true Church (against the saints), the inquisitions and such. And it endures until the Ancient of Days establishes His Kingdom (v. 22).

We are told in v. 25, "He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law..."

Who claims to have changed the Sabbath? Who claims the authority to change the Sabbath? The very calendar we use is called the Gregorian calendar. It takes its name from Pope Gregory because he changed the old Julian calendar that was promulgated by Julius Caesar. "Change times and laws." Well, he changed sunset to sunset. Time was measured in terms of a day from sunset to sunset. Based on a papal decree in the early Middle Ages, that was changed to midnight. The day of rest was changed from the Sabbath to Sunday. The whole configuration of things was changed. Here we see that authority brought out.

Daniel 8:1-3, "In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me—to me, Daniel—after the one that appeared to me

the first time. I saw in the vision, and it so happened while I was looking, that I was in Shushan, the citadel...and I saw in the vision that I was by the River Ulai. Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last.”

This was a peculiar looking ram. This ram has two horns and one of them seems like it's growing. It pops up a little later and gets bigger. You probably have never seen a ram that you just stand there and watch his horns grow. You've seen rams that had horns. But Daniel saw this ram and, all of a sudden, he saw these horns start growing. One came up first; then another one came up a little later and it was taller. So, this was a peculiar-looking ram.

Verse 4, “I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no beast could withstand him...”

Verse 5, “And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes.” Now this was a peculiar-looking goat. It didn't have two horns. It had one.

Verses 6-7, “Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power. And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him [the ram just sort of withered down], but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand.”

Verse 8, “Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven.” Now this must have been awfully peculiar. All of a sudden, the big horn got broken off and then four little horns sprouted out.

Verses 9-10, “And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land [a reference to the land of Israel]. And it grew up to the host of heaven [or to the people of God]; and it cast down some of the host [some of God's people] and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them.”

Verses 11-12, “He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. Because of

transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered.”

Verse 14, “And he said to me, ‘For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.’” Daniel couldn't figure out what all this was about. Well, we don't have to just guess.

Verses 20-22, notice what he says, “‘The ram which you saw, having the two horns—they are the kings of Media and Persia. And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king. As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power.’”

That is a very clear description of the empire of the Medes and the Persians. It spread out. The Medes represented the first horn. Even though the Persians came on the scene a little later, they became the dominant portion of the empire. Then the Greeks, characterized by this male goat, came forth and conquered and smashed the empire of the Medes and the Persians. This was represented by the one great horn—its first king, Alexander the Great. When he was cut off, four kings took his place, but none of them exercised a level of power he did. Here is a very clear explanation. When you put Daniel 8 together with Daniel 7 and Daniel 2, it is very clear who the succession of empires has to be.

Verses 23-25, “‘And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king shall arise, having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes [KJV, “dark sentences”]. His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power, he shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people. And through his cunning, he shall cause deceit to prosper under his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without human hand.’”

Here is something that obviously stretches down to the end time. There is a final king that is going to arise that is described as a king of fierce countenance. This is clearly the individual that is personified in the book of Revelation called the beast because he is the one that is going to stand up against the Prince of princes (referring to Christ) and will be broken without hand.

Remember in Daniel 2:45, we saw the stone cut out without hands that's going to smash the

image on its toes. Well, he (the beast) will be broken without human hand. In other words, it will be of supernatural origin.

There's a reference in vv. 13-14 that the daily sacrifice would be taken away. I am going to come back here in just a moment to comment on that a little further. I want to go on here.

Daniel 9:1, "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—" He was the uncle of Cyrus the Great. Cyrus made him king over the Chaldeans while he went elsewhere.

Daniel says in v. 2, "in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books [or perhaps better rendered, "I understood by letters"], the numbers of the years specified by the word of the Lord, given through Jeremiah the prophet...."

Daniel had been studying the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was an older contemporary of Daniel. The scroll had been taken from Jerusalem to Babylon along with all the other treasures out of the temple. That's the way the Bible was preserved during that period.

Continuing, "...that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." Daniel had been studying this seventy-year prophecy in the book of Jeremiah. He didn't understand what it meant. He, perhaps, even corresponded with Jeremiah about it. He had been fasting and seeking God, trying to understand where that fit in. It has, here, his prayer of contrition to God (vv. 3-19). Gabriel the angel appeared to him in this prayer and begins to give him some information (vv. 20-23).

Verses 24-25, "Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks...."

Seven weeks and sixty-two weeks are sixty-nine weeks. There's a reason why this distinction is made.

But notice, "from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem." This was the decree that was issued by Artaxerxes I. The record of it is given in Ezra 7 and the date in history is 457 B.C.

Now, here's something that the critics really have trouble with. You see, no matter how late

they try to put the book of Daniel, you can't put the book of Daniel after the New Testament because there are copies of it that are that old. So, you can't put it back that late. This really gives the critics a problem.

What does it say? "From the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there will be sixty-nine weeks." Let's just look. How many days in a week? Seven. Everybody agrees on that. Seventy weeks is how many days? Four hundred ninety days. So, sixty-nine weeks would be seven days less than that—four hundred eighty-three days. Now do a little math. We have sixty-nine weeks, which equals four hundred eighty-three days. We have already seen a day for a year. You have four hundred eighty-three years from the going forth of the decree to restore and to build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince. The decree was issued in 457 B.C.

Now just do a little subtraction. Four hundred fifty-seven from four hundred eighty-three—well, if your math is correct, you will come out with an answer of twenty-six. You add one to that and you have 27 A.D. Why do you add one? You're going from B.C. to A.D. You are going from 457 B.C. and going forward four hundred eighty-three years. There isn't any such thing as the year zero. The year 1 B.C. is followed by the year 1 A.D. There isn't any such year as the year zero. So, when you take those numbers and go through from B.C. to A.D. this way, you have to add a year to compensate for the fact that there isn't a year zero. You can work it out on a chart or do it however you want to if you have trouble following this. But if you start with 457 B.C. and come forward four hundred eighty-three years, you come out to 27 A.D. The significance of 27 A.D. is that this was the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus Christ. That's dated in the Gospel account. I'll give you the exact reference here.

Luke 3:1, "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee...." It goes through all the different things.

Verses 2-3, "Annas and Caiaphas being high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness and he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching...." This was in the spring of 27 A.D. Then we find Jesus' appearance here, coming to be baptized of John and the beginning of his public ministry as we have described here in vv. 21-23. The point is that the beginning of Christ's public ministry was in 27 A.D., exactly when prophesied.

Now here's a seventy-week prophecy. Sixty-nine weeks were going to elapse from the going forth of the decree until the coming of the Messiah.

In Daniel 9:25, we're told that, "...the street shall be built again [in Jerusalem], and the wall, even in troublesome times." What it amounted to was that the decree went forth in 457 B.C. There was a period of forty-nine years during which the rebuilding took place and was finished by 408 B.C. That was the first seven weeks. Sixty-two weeks later, we are told, brings us down to the full sixty-nine—the Messiah would come.

Verse 26, "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city [referring to Jerusalem] and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined."

Verse 27, "Then he shall confirm a covenant [Christ the Messiah confirmed the New Covenant] with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate..." We are told Christ was going to be cut off in the middle of a week. A ministry of one week (or seven years) was prophesied. But He was cut off in the midst of this. "In the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering." His ministry lasted three and one-half years; then He was crucified.

Verse 24 tells us, "Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness..." When Christ died, the need for sacrifices and oblations ceased.

Now the clear implications of Daniel 9 are interesting, in that Christ was cut off in the middle of the seventieth week. There are three and one-half years of a ministry yet to be completed. I think that when you put it together with everything else, this clearly will be what occurs in the first three and one-half years of the Millennium, the completion of His ministry to Israel. I might go into a lot of detail on that at some time. He was cut off in the middle of that seventieth week. The result was that the Romans ultimately came in a few years later and destroyed Jerusalem, the Temple and the whole works.

In Daniel 10:1-7, a little later after Cyrus had come back, Daniel sees another vision. He is

praying to God and the angel appears to him. We have a little bit of insight brought out here, a little bit of insight into what goes on in the spirit realm (vv. 1-7).

Verse 9, Daniel heard this voice.

Verse 11, "And he said to me, 'O Daniel, man greatly beloved...'"

Verse 12, "Then he said to me, 'Do not fear, Daniel...'" 'I have been sent to help you.'

Verse 13, "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia."

The reference is to the fact that the unseen power behind the throne in many of the governments of this world is nothing other than Satan and his demons. Here was Gabriel, who having been withstood by a great demon spirit, very possibly even Satan himself, was the real power behind the throne of Persia. Michael was sent by God to assist him and Gabriel came to reveal this information to Daniel.

Daniel 11:2-5, "And now I will tell you the truth: Behold, three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than them all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece. Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these. Then the king of the South shall become strong, as well as one of his princes; and he shall gain power over him and have dominion. His dominion shall be a great dominion."

Daniel 11 is the most detailed prophecy in the Bible. I gave you a handout that is a reference for Daniel 11. [Daniel 11 reference is included at end of this Bible study.] If you note, it is a verse-by-verse commentary.

Verse 2 says, "...three more kings will rise in Persia..." The point is made that there were actually twelve kings of Persia after Cyrus, but there were only three that were historically significant or important: Cambyses, Darius and Xerxes. The fourth is actually Xerxes (we have to count Cyrus to get the four). He is the first important king and is the one who led the attack on Greece in 480 B.C. That set the stage for the resentment and antagonism that ultimately resulted in a mighty king (Alexander

the Great) who united the Greeks, came in and conquered the Persians.

In v. 4, it describes that after Alexander's death in 323 B.C., his empire was divided among his four leading generals.

Verse 5 refers to a king of the South. Alexander's empire split in four divisions. There were ultimately two that proved significant in terms of Jerusalem. There was a king of the North and a king of the South—south of Jerusalem was the Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt and north of Jerusalem was the Seleucid kingdom of Babylon. There were problems back and forth and Jerusalem was in the middle.

We have recorded in Daniel 11 detailed squabbling back and forth as the kings of the North (the Seleucids) and the kings of the South (the Ptolemys) were going back and forth trying to dominate the area and dominate one another. I am not going to go through every detail of Daniel 11 because you have it in handout form and for the sake of time, I will let you go through it as you follow down sort of by marriage and by year all the way down.

We pick it up in v. 29, "At the appointed time he [Antiochus] shall return...." About this time, we are down to Antiochus who was the Seleucid king of the North. He was known in history as Antiochus Epiphanes. That was the name by which he called himself. "Epiphanes" in Greek means "of the glorious appearing." So, he had a pretty favorable impression of himself.

Verses 29-30, "At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter. For ships from Cyprus [this is a reference to the Roman fleet] shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved...." He came down and was going to "whip up" on the king of Egypt. But the Roman fleet sided with the Egyptians. They weren't going to let him conquer Egypt and they made him surrender. So, he had to go back and he was in a pretty bad attitude when he did. So, he started back through Jerusalem.

Continuing, "... and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage. So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant." He came back through and cut a deal with the apostate Jews giving them special favor.

Verse 31, "And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation." On the fifteenth day of Kislev (which is the tenth month) in 168 B.C., Antiochus stopped the

daily sacrifices at the temple. He offered a pig on the altar. He established a statute of Jupiter Olympus in the Holy Place. This is called "the abomination of desolation." This led to desolation or destruction in Jerusalem. There was a death penalty that was pronounced on the Jews who sought to practice the religion of the Bible.

Of course, there were many who tried to jump over. You always have people that look around and whatever side is winning, they tried to side with it. There are people who don't have deep convictions of their own. They are simply playing politics and trying to come out on top. But God has a way of dealing with people like that.

When Antiochus came in and tried to put a stop to the religion of God, defiled the temple, offered a pig on the altar and set up this idol, you had Jews who came over and tried to side with him. Oh, yes, they were going to "buddy-up" to him. They wanted to be on the inside track.

Any time an invader has come in, there have always been those who would collaborate. You can look at any period of history—World War II or any other period—you've always had those who will sell out the cause that they supposedly believed in. They sell out because they want to be on the winning side.

Here were those who wanted to be on the winning side. The problem with that is sometimes the side that looks like it is winning, won't win when it's all over with. If you want to be on the winning side, the side you better pick is God's side because that's the side that's going to win—God's side. It may appear to be coming out on the bottom end for a while, but the end of the story is that God's side is the one that's going to win. So, here are these who sought to do this.

Verse 31, "...and place there the abomination of desolation."

Verse 32, "Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits." This certainly speaks, in type, of the Maccabee revolt that was led by the priest Mattathias that succeeded in driving out the Syrians and cleansing the temple.

Earlier in Daniel 8:13-14, we read of the daily sacrifices being taken away and these two thousand three hundred days. The word "days" is not the word that is rendered "days" elsewhere in the Old Testament. It is not the normal Hebrew word for "day." Literally, what it says is, "for two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings."—Twenty-three hundred evenings and mornings. The King James translators rendered

that as “days,” but if you look at the context of Daniel 8, it is a reference to the sacrifices.

Sacrifices were offered every evening and every morning. There were two sacrifices a day, one in the evening and one in the morning. If we are talking about two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings, then you really are only talking about one thousand one hundred fifty days because you have an evening and a morning for every day. So, if you had two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings, you are looking at one thousand one hundred fifty days. The interesting thing is that from the fifteenth day of Kislev (the day the sacrifices were taken away and the abomination set up)—if you come forward until the purging of the temple and the rededication of the altar by the Maccabees three years later, it was exactly two thousand three hundred sacrifices that were missed. There were two thousand three hundred sacrifices that were not offered. That’s the real key to it.

In the book of I Maccabees (which is not a part of Scripture but a contemporary historical account), it gives the date. If you work it out on a calendar, that’s the way it comes out. There may be some sort of end-time correspondence to it, but there was clearly a fulfillment of this abomination that makes desolate, holding sway for this period of time.

In Daniel 11, we’ve gone through a very detailed blow-by-blow account of the events that occurred in the Middle East during, sort of, the time between the Testaments, down to the time that the altar was desecrated and then was restored. We sort of summarized in a verse and began to jump down to the very end time—the time of the end as mentioned in v. 40, “At the time of the end....”

The summary of the history of the people of God is given.

Daniel 11:33-35, “And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering. Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue. And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purge them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time.”

We have a summation. We pick it up here and come all the way down, summing up centuries in just a couple of verses.

There is a parallel in the events that occurred. Clearly, there was historically an abomination, which was the desecration of the Holy Place. It

was the taking away of the daily sacrifices and the desecration that led to destruction of Jerusalem. Historically, the abomination of desolation that Daniel describes occurred with Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 B.C.

But if you go to Matthew 24:15-16, Jesus said, “Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”

Christ spoke of a time yet future—a time that He speaks of in answer to the disciples’ question about what will be the sign of His coming and the end of the age (Matthew 24:3). He spoke of a future abomination of desolation.

Luke makes reference to this in Luke 21:20, “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near.”

Verse 24, “And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”

There’s also a reference in Mark 13:14, “But when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.” Clearly, the abomination that Daniel spoke of has significance for the end time.

Daniel 11:40-42, as we come down we are told, “At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries overwhelm them, and pass through. He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand; Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon. He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape.”

Verse 44, “But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many.”

Daniel 12:11, we are told, “And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.”

Clearly, the abomination that makes desolate is associated with the daily sacrifice being stopped. Right now daily sacrifices are not going on, which means, of course, that there will have to be at least the re-consecration of an altar. It doesn’t mean a full temple has to be built. Sacrifices were offered in the book of Ezra. It

makes plain that an altar was consecrated and work on the temple was begun. Sacrifices were begun a long time before the temple was ever completed (Ezra 3:3-6).

We have a summation in Daniel 12. Daniel asks the question, "How long?"

Verse 6, "...How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?"

He was told in v. 7 (latter part) that this time of trouble, "...it shall be for a time, times and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished." In other words, these one thousand two hundred sixty days are three and one-half years when the Church has its power scattered.

Revelation 12:14 shows that the Philadelphia era, or phase, of God's Church is in her place of protection in the wilderness and no longer actively pursuing doing a work and carrying it out in a powerful way.

Daniel 12:8, Daniel wanted to know what would be the end.

Verse 9, he was told, "And he said, 'Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.'" It didn't say that it would never be understood. It was written down to be understood, but it could not be understood until the end time—until this age, this time, this century.

Verse 10, "Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand."

Psalm 111:10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments." The wise are going to be those who fear God and keep His commandments. They will be able to understand when the end time was to come.

Daniel 12:11-13, "And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days." We can make a little sense of this. What is it that we are told?

Daniel 12:1, "At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince [the great archangel] who stands watch over the sons of your people [the children of Israel]. [Michael, as an angelic being, is the one that God gave responsibility for the nation of Israel.] And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was

a nation [He's talking about the Great Tribulation.], even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered. Every one who is found written in the book."

When it concludes, vv. 2-3, "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever." What are we told? We are told that this is going to end up when? —At the time of the resurrection when those that sleep awaken.

In v. 13, Daniel is told, "...go your way till the end; for you shall rest [You are going to die; you are going to lie in the grave.], and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days."

He gave him two sections of days—one thousand two hundred ninety and one thousand three hundred thirty-five days. The clear implication of v. 13 is that all these days end at the same point—the resurrection, the return of Jesus Christ. You go back out three and one-half years or one thousand two hundred sixty days. One thousand ninety days is thirty days prior to that—that's an extra month, something that starts a month before. Then the one thousand three hundred thirty-five days is a month and a half even earlier. We are clearly told that the one thousand two hundred ninety days not only ends with the return of Christ, but it begins with the taking away of the daily sacrifice. That's made plain in v. 11. We are not told what event begins the one thousand three hundred thirty-five days. We are just told, "Blessed is he who waits" for this whole time.

I am going to go into some of these things in sermons and Bible studies in Revelation.

I think one aspect of it, when you tie it in with Luke 21:20, Jesus said, "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near." He didn't say when you see Jerusalem being bombarded with armies. Look, if you are in a city and it's being shelled—like Sarajevo in Yugoslavia and in Bosnia right now—you don't need somebody to come in and say, 'I think the desolation of this place is pretty near.' Everybody knows that. You can look around and the whole place is falling apart.

Earlier we saw this individual—the beast power—an individual who will seek to obtain the kingdom by flatteries and how he will do that. He will enter in and will attempt to do some of these things in an underhanded way. When Jerusalem is encompassed with armies, it is not

going to appear to everybody else that the desolation thereof is near.

We have Christ's warning in Luke 21 and we will know. I think it's very likely that this extra forty-five days mentioned here is a time period prior to the onset of hostilities and the taking away of the sacrifices, during which God's Church will have time to flee and relocate. That's partly speculation, but if you put the whole thing together, I think it certainly fits. I realize that a lot of this is a little bit complex. We are going to come back. As we go through the book of Revelation, we are going to pick up more of this. You might go through and check over parts of it.

I think the handout material on Daniel 11 will give you the information that will tie in with a more detailed explanation of that.

There aren't any questions to be passed out on the final Bible study in the Writings series. Next Bible study will be Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles.

BIBLE STUDY HANDOUT

References for Daniel 11

Verse 2: While there were actually twelve kings of Persia after Cyrus, there were only three important ones. They were Cambyses, Darius and Xerxes. The fourth king referred to is Xerxes (i.e. the fourth important king, counting Cyrus as the first). He led an attack on Greece about 480 B.C.

Verse 3: The mighty king refers to Alexander the Great who led the Greek armies in the conquest of Persia.

Verse 4: After Alexander's death in 323 B.C., his empire was ultimately divided among his four leading generals—Ptolemy who got Egypt, Seleucus who got Syria and Babylon, Lysimachus who got Asia Minor and Cassander who got Greece and Macedonia.

Verse 5: Ptolemy I, the king of the South (Egypt), was a very strong king, but in 312 B.C., one of his top generals, Seleucus, took advantage of Ptolemy's involvement in a war to take Syria and Babylon for his own empire.

Verse 6: After several decades of intermittent fighting between the Ptolemys and the Seleucids, a peace was finally achieved in 252 B.C. when Antiochus II put away his wife Laodice and married Berenice, the daughter of Egyptian king Ptolemy II. In 247 B.C., Ptolemy II died and Antiochus divorced Berenice and took back Laodice. Laodice proceeded to murder both Antiochus and Berenice and to secure the Syrian throne for her son, Seleucus II.

Verse 7: Berenice's brother Ptolemy III of Egypt invaded and plundered Syria in 245 B.C. to avenge his sister.

Verse 8: Seleucus II died in 226 B.C.; Ptolemy III, in 222 B.C.

Verse 10: Seleucus III and Antiochus III, sons of Seleucus II, both warred against Egypt and in 218 B.C., Antiochus III conquered part of Egypt's empire including Palestine.

Verse 11: In 212 B.C., Ptolemy retook Palestine from Syria.

Verse 12: Ptolemy IV made a speedy peace treaty and soon dissipated the fruits of his victory in a wanton live style.

Verse 13: In 205 B.C., after Ptolemy IV had died and was succeeded by his infant son Ptolemy V, Antiochus launched a successful war during which he wrested Palestine from the Egyptians.

Verse 14: Apostate Jews sought to aid Antiochus in his war against Egypt.

Verses 15-16: Antiochus took Sidon, beat Egypt in Palestine and in 198 B.C., annexed Palestine to Syria.

Verse 17: Antiochus arranged for his daughter Cleopatra to marry Ptolemy V, thinking in this way to gain Egypt for himself. This backfired because Cleopatra sided with her husband against her father.

Verse 18: Antiochus then turned his attention to try to conquer the islands and coasts of Asia Minor. The Romans under Scipio defeated him at the Battle of Magnesia in 187 B.C.

Verse 19: Antiochus then tried to recover his dissipated wealth by sacking the temple of Belus, during which he was killed.

Verse 20: Antiochus' successor Seleucus IV was murdered after 11 years by Heliodorus, a tax collector he had put over getting revenue for the kingdom. Heliodorus was later driven out.

Verse 21: Seleucus didn't leave an heir, so his brother Antiochus Epiphanes—having obtained the favor of a neighboring king—succeeded in driving out Heliodorus and taking the kingdom.

Verse 22: Antiochus attempted to replace the Jewish high priest with one of his own choice.

Verses 23-24: Though only a few were with him, Antiochus prospered and invaded Galilee and Lower Egypt. Though his fathers had favored the Jews, he hated them.

Verses 25-26: Antiochus launched an invasion of Egypt in which he met with great success—partly because Ptolemy Philomater was betrayed by his own officers in 171 B.C.

Verse 27: At a banquet in 174 B.C., Antiochus pretended to ally himself with Ptolemy against

his younger brother Euergetes II. Both were trying to deceive one another.

Verse 28: On his way back to Syria from Egypt, he passed through Palestine and desecrated the temple in 168 B.C. He slaughtered 80,000 Jews.

Verses 29-30: Antiochus returned to Egypt, but the Roman fleet sided with the Egyptians and made him surrender. On his way back through Jerusalem, he extended special favors to apostate Jews.

Verse 31: On 15 Kislev 168 B.C., Antiochus stopped the daily sacrifices at the temple and offered a hog on the altar. A statue of Jupiter Olympus was set up in the Holy Place. This is a type of the future Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Jesus Christ in Matthew 24.

Verse 32: This speaks in type of the Maccabee revolt led by the priest Matthias which ultimately succeeded in driving out the Syrians and cleansing the temple.

Verses 32-35: This begins to skip ahead to the end time and provides a 2000-year capsule history of the Church of God. The remainder of the chapter is dealing with the end-time fulfillment of prophecies.

Sermon—Feast of Trumpets
September 30, 1989
Mr. John Ogwyn

“Babylon”

Last night was an anniversary. It was, in fact, the two thousand five hundred twenty-seventh anniversary of the fall of Babylon. You may not initially see what that has to do with Trumpets, but in many ways, what we are celebrating here today ties in very directly with an event that occurred two thousand five hundred twenty-seven years ago last night. In many ways, the events that we are celebrating here today are events that will culminate in the fall of Babylon the Great and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. These events that we are celebrating were, in many ways, prefigured by an event that happened so many hundred years ago.

I would like for us to understand more clearly the prophetic implication of the fall of ancient Babylon to see what it portends for us today and to understand it in light of this Feast of Trumpets. I would like for us to understand more clearly where we stand at this critical juncture in the course of human events—in the course of the events that are prophesied right in the pages of our own Bible.

Let’s start out by setting the prophetic stage. You may wonder, where would you start to set the prophetic stage? To set the stage of events that have transpired, we would begin with Genesis 11. Genesis 11 begins the story of mankind’s attempt to build his own civilization and government apart from God after the flood.

In Genesis 11, we have the story of the attempt of mankind, under the leadership of Nimrod, to build the Tower of Babel. This was the beginning of the city of Babylon. This is the tower from which Babylon takes its name. Babylon had its beginnings a little over a hundred years after the flood—just a little over a hundred years after God had wiped out humanity off the face of the earth and spared only the family of Noah.

The family had increased and now there was an individual prepared to stir up and lead mankind in a rebellious effort to establish their own government, society and civilization. There was the attempt of mankind—all branches of the human family—working together. But the problem is that when everybody works together apart from the direction, leading and inspiration of God, His Spirit and His laws, the results are catastrophic.

Mankind attempted to do something under the leadership of Nimrod—the Tower of Babel, the beginning of Babylon. It was cut short because God stepped in and intervened.

Genesis 11:6-7, “And the Lord said, “Indeed the people are one and they have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.”

God confused their language and the nations were forced to scatter out on the face of the earth as God intended (v. 8). At that point, we are introduced to Babylon; we are introduced to the Tower of Babel.

Now, as we come down historically, we pick up the story of Babylon again. We pick up the story of Babylon in the book of Daniel.

God scattered the empire that Nimrod sought to build a hundred years after the flood. God scattered the empire that Nimrod sought to build centered around the Tower of Babel. Centuries passed. A civilization continued to grow up and thrive there in the plains of Shinar, the area centered around ancient Babylon.

As we pick up the story in the book of Daniel, we find an empire that began to come together centered around ancient Babylon. It became the first of four world-ruling empires.

In Daniel 2, we have the story of a great image that Nebuchadnezzar saw. He had a very troubling dream. In this dream he saw a great image. It was an unusual image because the head was of gold, the shoulders and the chest were of silver, the thighs were of brass, the legs were of iron and the feet were of iron and clay (vv. 31-33). Now this was an unusual mixture. Normally when you see a great statue or image, the whole thing is made of the same thing. But in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream he saw this gigantic image set upon a plain and it was made of different things. At different points, the composition of the image changed. And then, most puzzling of all, he saw a stone cut out without hands (a stone of supernatural origin) and it came down and smashed this image on its toes (v. 34). When it smashed the image on its toes, it didn’t just crack the toes off, the whole image turned to dust and the wind blew it away. The stone became a great mountain until it filled the whole earth (v. 35).

If you had been Nebuchadnezzar and you had awakened from something like that, you’d be scratching your head, too, wondering, “What in the world is this?” Maybe you would have

thought it was something you ate the night before.

Nebuchadnezzar sensed that this dream had important implications. It was at this point that Daniel was brought to Nebuchadnezzar's attention. Daniel was given wisdom by God to reveal to Nebuchadnezzar the meaning of the dream (v. 19).

Daniel began to interpret the dream for him. He spoke to Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 2:37, "You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory." He said, 'You are a great ruler, a great emperor. You rule over many nations. You rule not simply Babylon, but a great empire of many nations put together under your rule.'

Verse 38, "...you are this head of gold." This head of gold represents the Babylonian Empire and was personified by Nebuchadnezzar as its king.

Verse 39, "But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth." "...another kingdom inferior to yours..." symbolized by the silver was the empire of the Medes and the Persians that succeeded Babylon. Then he said, "...a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth." This was historically the Greco-Macedonian Empire of Alexander the Great that swallowed up the Medes and the Persians.

Verse 40, "And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters all things; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others." The Roman Empire succeeded and swallowed up all of those that continued through. These two legs all the way down to the end and the ten toes (v. 41) at the bottom represent what is extant at the time when the God of heaven will set up a kingdom (v. 44)—in other words, the time immediately ahead of us.

What we have in Daniel 2 is the outline of history from the time of ancient Nebuchadnezzar (six hundred years before Christ) all the way out to the time immediately ahead of us. We have a summary of over two thousand five hundred years of the history of this world that continues right on out to the years immediately ahead of us when the God of heaven is going to intervene and set up a Kingdom.

So, we are introduced to Babylon once again. Babylon is the fountainhead from which this world's civilization springs. It had its origin with Nimrod and the Tower of Babel, and here we see

it personified with Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire.

As we continue through the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar had another dream. This was a most troubling dream.

Daniel 4:4-5, "I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace. I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me." He saw something that concerned him very much. He began to explain what he saw.

Verse 10, "These were the visions of my head while on my bed: I was looking, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great." It was a very impressive tree. It was tall.

Verses 11-12, "The tree grew and became strong; its height reached to the heavens, and it could be seen to the ends of all the earth. Its leaves were lovely, its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, the birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it." There were many leaves and a lot of fruit. It was a bountiful and very impressive tree. The beasts had shade under it and there were nests in it.

Verses 13-15, "I saw in the visions of my head while on my bed, and there was a watcher [an angel], a holy one, coming down from heaven. He cried aloud and said thus: "Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, and the birds from its branches. Nevertheless leave the stump and roots in the earth [Don't uproot it; don't dig out the stump. Cut it down, cut off the branches, scatter it away, but leave the stump and the roots in the earth.], bound with a band of iron and bronze..." 'Put a cap on this stump to protect it, bind it and leave it there.'

Verse 16, "...and let seven times pass over him." Seven times would pass over it.

Nebuchadnezzar was troubled. He was wondering what this was.

Verses 20-22, he was told that the tree was symbolic of him and of the Babylonian Empire.

Nebuchadnezzar went through a very remarkable personal experience. God warned him, through Daniel, as to what this portended for him personally.

Verses 23-25, "An inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, "Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts of the

field, till seven times pass over him”; this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: they shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.”

He was impressed for a short period of time, but as months went by and nothing happened, he lapsed back into his old attitude. One night when he least expected it and was standing there surveying the great Babylon that existed, all puffed up in his pride and vanity as to what he had accomplished (vv. 28-30), he was struck with insanity, and for seven years he roamed the fields like a wild animal (vv. 31-33). At the end of those seven years his sanity returned and he was restored to his kingdom (vv. 34-36). He continued to rule Babylon for several years until his death.

Nebuchadnezzar went through an experience that had implications and significance, not simply for him personally, but for Babylon and for the civilization that Babylon was symbolic of. We are going to come back to that in just a moment. Nebuchadnezzar went through an event that taught him a lesson. His successors did not learn that lesson. Nebuchadnezzar was a different man when he came out of this experience. Several years passed. We come to the next chapter, Daniel 5.

Daniel 5 is not in chronological order. It is in the order of subject matter. It is put next to Daniel 4. It is the last event of Belshazzar. Belshazzar was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. He was the son of Nabonidus who was the king, or the emperor, of the Babylonian Empire. He had associated his son Belshazzar with him on the throne as co-ruler. At the time that Daniel 5 records these events, Nabonidus was elsewhere in the empire with an army. Belshazzar was sitting on the throne and holding sway in Babylon.

In Daniel 5, we pick up the story of an event that actually took place on the Feast of Trumpets 539 B.C. The dating of that event is attested to in many historical documents. It is one of the most well-documented occurrences of the ancient world in terms of when it occurred. You have to understand that Babylon was, to all intents and purposes, impregnable. Babylon appeared to be the city that was impossible to conquer.

Herodotus, the Greek historian, gives us the dimensions and the information of Babylon. The

walls of Babylon were three hundred thirty-five feet high. Do you realize how high that is? That is as tall as a thirty-three-story building. The walls were eighty-five feet wide. There was literally a racetrack for chariots that ran around the top of the walls of Babylon. There were a hundred brass gates. The Euphrates River flowed through the middle. Babylon was impregnable. The Babylonians were absolutely certain there wasn't any way to conquer Babylon.

The armies of the Medes and the Persians were besieging Babylon and sought to besiege it. Belshazzar thought so lightly of that and treated it as such a trivial matter that he had a great feast. He had a big party, and as was often the case, these parties turned into a regular drinking bout, as we find here.

Daniel 5:1-2, “Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them.”

They were sitting there really “boozing” it up. He began to feel pretty good and was really going to impress all of these various high-ranking rulers of the Babylonian Empire. They were sitting there, laughing and mocking this vast army of Persians that was gathered around to besiege Babylon. How ridiculous it is that anyone could think that mighty Babylon could fall. After he had “boozed” it up for a while, he began to feel pretty good. He said, ‘Let’s get the sacred vessels from the temple in Jerusalem in here and we will drink another toast to that because our gods [the gods of Babylon] are above all the other gods.’ They brought in the vessels from the temple and they began to drink and to “booze” it up out of the sacred vessels that God had commanded Solomon to make for the temple.

Verse 4, we are told, “They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone.” I’m sure they drank a toast to each of them individually. By the time they got through with all of them, you can believe they had gone through quite a bit.

About this time they were well lubricated. They were really in the process of “tying one on” and they got sobered up. If you want the absolute world’s record for how quickly somebody can be sobered up, read the next verse. They were sitting there just really enjoying the party.

Verse 5, "In the same hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." Here was this hand that just appeared out of nowhere and began to write in great letters on the wall.

Verse 6, "Then the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened...." KJV, "joints of his loins were loosed." If you look that up, you will find that is a rather poetic description of an "accident" that the king suffered about that time. He had a rather unfortunate accident. That's what it means when it says, "the joints of his loins were loosed." You talk about scared! I don't know about scared straight, but he was scared sober or at least about as sober as he could get, drunk as he was.

Continuing, "...and his knees knocked against each other." He wasn't feeling nearly so great and powerful. He wasn't feeling so important and so impressive. Something had thrown cold water all over the party. The party was over.

Verse 7, "The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers" The king said, 'Bring somebody in here. Get all the wise men in here and tell me what this means.' Well, none of them knew.

The queen (she was the queen mother) told him, 'In the days of your grandfather Nebuchadnezzar there was a man in high esteem by Nebuchadnezzar, one of the Jewish captives who was the interpreter of the secrets of God. If you bring him in here, he undoubtedly will be able to tell you what this means' (vv. 10-12). Daniel was brought in before the king (v. 13) and he read the writing.

Verse 25, "'And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.'" This phrase may be meaningless to us as reference, but the words themselves were not unknown words. It is a form of the term "mina, shekel and peres." These were weights or units of measurements. The shekel was a standard unit of measurement. There were fifty minas to one shekel. The peres was half of a mina. So, there were twenty-five peres to the shekel. That's all well and good, but if you saw something written on the wall that said, "pounds, pounds, ounces and tons," you may know the words are units of measurements and units of weight, but the words joined together that way would be absolutely meaningless to you. That's the way it was to them. The words were not some nonsense words. They were words that were known in the

Hebrew, the Aramaic and the Babylonian language. They were units of measurements with which these people were familiar, but these words appearing there didn't make sense. What was the significance?

Daniel told him in vv. 26-28, "'This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.'"

Verse 30, "That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain." That night! What he thought was impossible occurred.

Cyrus the Great of Persia had directed that the Persian troops would dig a canal to divert the Euphrates River. That night, as the party drew on, they burst the dike and began to drain off the flow of the Euphrates River as it was going through Babylon. The height of the River went down, down, down until finally they were able to put the army in the riverbed, march under the great iron gates of Babylon and emerge on the other side. Babylon fell in one night. Belshazzar was slaughtered.

Let's look a little bit. Obviously, Belshazzar had not learned the lesson that the Most High rules in the affairs of men (Daniel 4:25; Daniel 5:21). This is the lesson that God had impressed on Nebuchadnezzar. We have the story in Daniel 4 followed by the events of Daniel 5. There are other events that are recounted in the book of Daniel that chronologically come in between these two events, but these chapters are back-to-back because they tell a continuing story.

What happened to Nebuchadnezzar was symbolic for Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was cut off. The tree symbolized him. In reality, it symbolized the Babylonian Empire. It was cut off and was banded by bands of iron and brass. The stump was left. The roots were left in the ground. The tree was cut down. How long would the dry stump and roots be left in the ground? It said, "seven times must pass over him" (Daniel 4:16). What is a "time" in a prophetic sense?

Let's notice, very briefly, how the Bible defines its own terms. Turn back to Revelation 11. I want to illustrate the point of how long is "seven times." Let's notice some things that are used synonymously.

Revelation 11:2, "...And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months."

Verse 3, "'And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days....'" We saw forty-

two months and one thousand two hundred sixty days. Let's go down.

Revelation 12:6, "Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days."

Go down a little further to v. 14, "But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time...."

Let's notice here. We have several terms and they are used interchangeably. Forty-two months is how long? Three and one-half years. Thirty-six months is three years; six more months make forty-two. So, three and one-half years is forty-two months. One thousand two hundred sixty days is forty-two thirty-day months. You can multiply it out if you don't trust my math. One thousand two hundred sixty days equals three and one-half years. "Time, times and half a time" is a prophetic term to refer to three and one-half years, one thousand two hundred sixty days or forty-two months.

We read in Daniel 4:16, "....and let seven times pass over him.""

The tree was cut down, the stump banded with iron and the roots in the ground remained (vv. 14-15). Seven times would pass over it. Seven is twice as much as three and one-half. Time, times and a half time is three and one-half years. If that's one thousand two hundred sixty days, then how many days is seven times? Add it up. Take one thousand two hundred sixty and double it. That comes out to two thousand five hundred twenty. Two thousand five hundred twenty days is the equivalent (demonstrated right here) for seven times or two thousand five hundred twenty days would pass over it.

From a prophetic standpoint, God utilizes the symbolism of a day for a year when it comes to Bible prophecy.

For instance, Numbers 14:34, "....According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year; namely forty years...."

In Ezekiel 4:6, basically the same statement is made, "And when you have completed them, lie again on your right side; then you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days. I have laid on you a day for each year." So in terms of prophetic implications, a day for a year is utilized prophetically.

Two thousand five hundred twenty days is the seven prophetic times that were to pass over this stump from the time the tree was cut down and

the stump was banded with iron and brass. Seven times—two thousand five hundred twenty prophetic days or two thousand five hundred twenty years—was to pass over this stump. It was banded with iron.

Let's look a little further. We saw the handwriting on the wall, "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN." Let's look at that a little further. We see the significance. They are numbers that are weights, which are to be divided. The literal meaning of the word "peres" is "divide." It was a term that meant a "division" or "half"—numbers that were weights and were to be divided. The shekel was the basic unit. There were fifty minas to the shekel and twenty-five peres to the shekel.

Let's add up here. We want to find out how many shekels we have here. Mina, the first one, that's fifty. If you add up, you have fifty minas; then you have another mina, so you have fifty more—that's a hundred. The shekel is one shekel, that's one. And then you have twenty-five peres. You have fifty, fifty, one and twenty-five—or one hundred twenty-six. Now what is that? Let's go back to Leviticus 27 and notice something.

Leviticus 27:25, "....And all your valuations shall be according to the shekel of the sanctuary: twenty gerahs to the shekel." The gerah is a smaller unit than the shekel. The shekel was the basic unit. The mina was worth fifty of them. The peres was worth half that many; it was worth twenty-five. So, there were one hundred twenty-six shekels represented here. If you took these numbers that were weights and you divide them down to the smallest unit, we are told in Leviticus 27:25 that, "....the valuations are to be made according to the shekel of the sanctuary and there are twenty gerahs to the shekel." If you had one hundred twenty-six shekels, how many gerahs would that be? Multiply one hundred twenty-six times twenty. You notice something? Do you know what you come up to? You come up to two thousand five hundred twenty.

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. The seven prophetic times—two thousand five hundred twenty prophetic days or two thousand five hundred twenty years—was to pass over this tree after it was cut down. The stump was left banded with iron and brass.

Now we come to the time when Babylon was going to fall. We come to the night of the fall of Babylon—the Feast of Trumpets 539 B.C.—the handwriting on the wall because the kingdom had not learned the lesson that the king had

learned. So it fell. It was weighed in the balances and found wanting. Its days were numbered and it was divided to the Medes and the Persians. Babylon fell. Prophetically, there were two thousand five hundred twenty years that had to pass.

If you want to do a little more math, start with 539 B.C., come forward two thousand five hundred twenty years and you will find that brings you to the Feast of Trumpets 1982. That was exactly two thousand five hundred twenty years later. If you calculate it out and come out one year off from that, you have to add in one year because there isn't any such thing as the year zero. The year 1 B.C. was followed by the year 1 A.D. There isn't any such thing as a year zero. If you go through and calculate that up, you're off from just using regular math. But the Feast of Trumpets 1982 is the date you come out to.

What is the significance of the Feast of Trumpets 1982? That was exactly seven years ago. We are seven years down the road from the time that those seven prophetic times were up. When the seven times were up, the bands of iron and brass that bound the stump were clipped.

Notice what Job has to tell us.

Job 14:7-9, “For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its tender shoots will not cease. Though its root may grow old in the earth, and its stump may die in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bud and bring forth branches like a plant.”

The tree was cut down. The roots were left in the ground and they grew old. The stump was bound with bands of iron and brass. Seven times or two thousand five hundred twenty years passed over from the time Babylon was cut down until those bands were clipped. What happens when the band is clipped? As Job expresses it, ‘through the scent of water it will bud, and it will bring forth branches like a plant.’ The tree begins to grow again.

The tree is Babylon. The final world-ruling kingdom that is described in the book of Revelation and other places is not called Persia the Great or Greece the Great or Rome the Great. That final world-ruling empire that Jesus Christ is going to smash when He returns is called **BABYLON THE GREAT**.

Seven years ago from last night, an event occurred in Germany that was without precedent in post-war Germany. There was an abrupt switch. There had been an alliance governing Germany for a number of years. It was an alliance of the Socialist Party and the Centralist

Free Democratic Party. Together they had governed Germany for a number of years. Unexpectedly (as it were “out of the blue”), that night the Free Democrats decided to pull out of the coalition and the Chancellor of Germany was shocked by losing a vote of confidence in his own Parliament. This was on the evening that began the Feast of Trumpets seven years ago. Fourteen days later on the evening that began the Feast of Tabernacles (seven years ago), a new Chancellor was sworn in—the present Chancellor. A new government, the Christian Democratic Party, which is the official Roman Catholic Party in West Germany, came in.

We think in terms of separation of church and state. We need to understand that is not the situation in Europe. There are, in many cases, officially designated religious parties. The Christian Democratic Party, which exists in Germany, Italy, Spain and several European nations, is the official Roman Catholic political party. It was established as such in the aftermath of World War II. There is not the concept of a division of church and state there. In many cases, there are relationships that exist between church and state.

Very surprisingly, there was a remarkable governmental change that came about. The new government that took office began a series of decisions that have had implications in terms of the events that have occurred with the European Economic Community with the decisions to move forward.

Now, lost again in the events of the time, there was a matter of a few days later (right after the Feast of Tabernacles 1982), just as these bands on the stump had been prophetically clipped, Pope John Paul traveled to Spain. He spent ten days traveling through Spain, speaking and conducting mass meetings. On the tenth day of his trip to Spain, he made a speech on the unity of Europe. He made, in that speech, a remarkable statement and I want to quote it for you.

He said, “I, the Bishop of Rome and pastor of the universal church, issue to you, Europe, a cry. Give life to your roots. Give life to your roots.” A number of remarkable events occurred.

Let's step back. We're seven years down stream from the loosing of the bands. Let's step back. Let's look and assess briefly the events that have transpired in Eastern Europe.

Pope John Paul was elected, or chosen, as Pope on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles 1978.

You remember the story? Pope Paul VI died and was succeeded by an Italian prelate who took the name, John Paul I. This man held office for

just over one month and, shockingly, died. Everybody was caught by surprise. The College of Cardinals had to come back into session. On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles 1978, for the first time in four hundred fifty-five years, a non-Italian was elected as Pope—Pope John Paul II.

A few months later on the Pentecost weekend of 1979, he made a trip to Poland. Not only was he a non-Italian Pope, he was a Pope from behind the Iron Curtain.

You have to understand that in the aftermath of World War II, when the Russian boot was planted on the nations of Eastern Europe and the attempt was made to wipe out religion, there was a disheartenment and disillusionment that settled. There were attempts to revolt. Poland made its attempt. Hungary made its attempt in 1956; Czechoslovakia, in 1968. At the time, Russian tanks rolled in and put a stop to that “foolishness” in a matter of a few days.

It took Stalin three and one-half years, from the close of World War II in the fall of 1945 to the spring of 1949, to consolidate his hold on Eastern Europe. By the spring of 1949, the Iron Curtain, as it was called, had rung down on Eastern Europe. By that time, all of the nations of Eastern Europe had Communist governments. There was a three and one-half-year period from the close of World War II until Stalin was able to completely impose a Communist government on all the nations that were east of the line where his troops had stopped in 1945 in the defeat of Hitler’s Reich.

In 1949 the Iron Curtain came down on Eastern Europe. They imposed Soviet Communist domination and attempted to wipe out the impact of religion. There was a disheartenment and a disillusionment that had spread. The attitude was, ‘It’s useless to resist. God has abandoned us.’

You have to understand, to realize, how exciting it was to the people behind the Iron Curtain when a Polish Pope was chosen. That was something that was remarkable, something no one expected. A few months later on the Pentecost weekend of 1979, he returned to Poland. He set in motion events that by the Feast of Tabernacles 1980 (a little over a year later), there was widespread labor unrest. In almost forty years, the first independent labor union behind the Iron Curtain came to prominence. Solidarity was recognized legally right after the Feast of Tabernacles 1980. Things continued to rock along. There was the threat of Russian intervention and Soviet troops. Events began to

unfold on the Last Great Day of 1982—the Last Great Day of the Feast. Just a matter of three weeks after the bands on the stump had been clipped, the government of Poland sought to reimpose complete Communist rule. Solidarity was outlawed and Lech Walesa was put in jail. Seven years from that event, Poland has a non-Communist Prime Minister. Seven years! Those seven years have seen events that have begun to unfold, and we are now seeing the crumbling of what has existed behind the Iron Curtain.

Let’s understand a little bit of the post-war world. For many centuries in Europe, there were empires. The world was dominated by empires that ruled over many nations, many languages and tongues. This was the common story.

Beginning with the events of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic period (at the end of the eighteenth century/beginning of the nineteenth century), the influence of nationalism began to spread, first to Europe and then out to the world. At the beginning of World War I, there were three great multi-national empires that ruled over many different nationalities and language groups in Europe. The Ottoman Empire ruled from Turkey. They ruled over a large grouping of the Middle East and the Balkan parts of Europe. The Austro-Hungarian Empire ruled over much of Central Europe, and the Russian Empire ruled over a great deal of Central Europe as well as the whole Russian Empire on into Asia.

There were three great multi-national empires that dominated Central and Eastern Europe. The nations of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, portions of Romania, Austria, Hungary and various portions that were spun off to other nations were all created in the aftermath of World War I from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The same thing happened with the breaking of the Ottoman Empire. The Russian Empire changed. There was a Communist Revolution that overthrew the Tsar, but the Empire remained mostly intact. A few nations were pried loose. Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were pried loose, but they only stayed loose for a very short time. By 1939, Stalin made a pact with Hitler. He moved back in and he took them back. The nationalism that was set loose at the time of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic period began to spread and filter out throughout Europe and elsewhere throughout the nineteenth century. It flamed up in World War I and even more so in the aftermath of World War II. The flames of nationalism had swept around the world.

We're now seeing that ingredient of nationalism taking root inside Russia, the only multi-national empire left in Europe. There are many, many different language groups and constituent groups conquered over a period of several hundred years that were forged into the Russian Empire. These people have never looked upon themselves as Russians. They were subject to the Russian Empire, first to the Tsar and later to the Communists, but now the flames of nationalism have been fanned.

We have come to the end of forty years. We have come to the end of a period of trial and testing. "Forty," as used in the Bible, is significant of "trial and testing." After the establishment of the post-war world, we are now seeing a destabilization take place in Eastern Europe.

Let's go on. Let's understand. We looked at Babylon the Great. We saw the image of Daniel 2. We saw the head of gold, the shoulders of silver, the thighs of brass—Babylon, Persia, Greece. We come down to the Roman Empire symbolized by two legs of iron that culminated in ten toes.

Now understand something remarkable about the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire is symbolized by two legs. We have always commented on the fact that this is significant because the Roman Empire was split into the Eastern Roman Empire and the Western Roman Empire. Remember your history? It took place in the third century A.D. under Diocletian the Emperor. He split the empire for administrative purposes. A matter of a few decades later, Emperor Constantine, who was the emperor that made Catholicism the official religion of the Roman Empire, made the split final. Rome was made the capital of the Western Empire and the ancient city of Byzantium was made capital of the Eastern Empire. Constantine, being the "humble" sort, changed its name to Constantinople. You'd never guess where he came up with a name like that. The empire was so vast, communication and transportation being what they were, it was impossible to administer from one city. The empire was officially split to an Eastern and a Western branch, the two legs.

When we have followed the story of the revivals of the Roman Empire, we have only followed the revivals of the Western leg. In our studies of prophecy, we have only followed the story of the Western leg. The reason is because that is what is prophetically significant as we are told in Revelation 13 and 17, where we see the Beast pictured in the various revivals.

In Revelation 17, we see that there were seven revivals pictured as seven heads on a beast on which the woman rode. The Catholic Church only dominated the revivals of the Roman Empire that took place in the West. We know the Roman Empire in history as the Holy Roman Empire or as it was officially styled during the Middle Ages, the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. That was its official title. It took in most of central Europe. It took in Germany, Italy and a vast portion of Europe. The revivals that centered on Rome and were dominated from Rome were the only part that was the successors of the Western branch of the Roman Empire.

What is the obvious implication when we come down to the final resurrection of the empire that is symbolized by the two feet and the ten toes? The obvious implication is that the final resurrection involves putting the empire back together again. You have five toes on each foot and you have one foot attached to each leg. Have you ever seen somebody otherwise, where they had two feet attached to one leg and no feet attached to the other leg? That would be a rather unusual looking image—an image where you had two feet, but all ten toes are on one foot and no toes on the other foot. No, the obvious implication is that when you get at the end, we have two feet and ten toes. The final ten toes symbolize the final revival of the empire. We have not only the successors that come through the Western Empire, but we see, at the end, the East comes back together.

Many don't recognize that. Just as there was a continuation of the Western Empire, there was also a continuation of the Eastern Empire. Rome fell. The Western Empire came to an end in 476 A.D., one of the important dates you probably had to memorize years ago in World History. But the Roman Empire was revived in 554 A.D. There was the Imperial Restoration under Justinian, the restoration under Charlemagne, the restoration under Otto in the 900s, then the Hapsburgs in the late Middle Ages and under Napoleon. Finally, it collapsed in 1814. From the Imperial Restoration, for one thousand two hundred sixty years, we follow through these revivals of the Holy Roman Empire. Mussolini attempted to revive it once more. It was a feeble sixth resurrection that culminated in the Rome-Berlin Axis that plunged the world into World War II. And there is a seventh resurrection yet to occur. That seventh resurrection is the two feet, the ten toes.

What happened to the Eastern Empire while all these resurrections centered or dominated by

Rome were going on in the West? What was happening in the East? Well, the Eastern Roman Empire, known in history as the Byzantine Empire, continued down through the period of the Middle Ages until 1453 when the Turks conquered Byzantium (or Constantinople). The Turks conquered it and the Byzantine Empire (the Eastern Roman Empire) fell just a matter of forty years before Columbus discovered America. The Eastern Roman Empire, under the rule of Emperor Constantine XIII, fell in 1453.

That's not the end of the story because there was, a matter of several hundred miles away, an obscure little Grand Duke by the name of Ivan III. He ruled over a small territory centered around a village of wooden buildings. The buildings were of logs. It was not a very impressive city and it was not a very impressive state. This little Grand Deutsche (that's what it was termed) was the Grand Deutsche of Moskove. It is the name from which Moscow comes. It was a very small, little state centered around the area of Moscow, ruled by the Grand Duke Ivan III. Ivan III came to the throne in the 1450s. In 1472, he married Sophia who was the daughter of the last emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire. When he married her, he took the title of "Tsar." That's the title the Russian rulers were known as, "Tsar." If you spell it out in English, it looks like "Caesar." Well, it is the Russian word for Caesar.

Moscow was then termed "the third Rome" because they viewed Rome originally, then it was transferred to Constantinople and then to Moscow.

Ivan began a process of conquest that spread out and within a matter of a hundred years, gave life to the great Russian state, the Russian Empire. He was the beginning. He became known as Ivan the Great. He began the conquest that began the Russian Empire. He was the first Russian ruler to take the title "Tsar." He viewed himself as the successor to the Byzantine Empire.

Let's go back a thousand years to 990 A.D. Next year they are going to be celebrating the establishment of Christianity in Russia. Gorbachev is going to Rome to make arrangements for it. The Pope is going to go to Moscow in 1990 to celebrate the one thousandth anniversary of the establishment of Christianity in Rome. Gorbachev is going to Rome to visit the Pope in a matter of a few weeks. Part of what they are going to be arranging is the trip that the Pope is going to make to Russia to commemorate the one thousandth anniversary of

the establishment of Christianity in Russia. Christianity was established in Russia in 990 A.D.

There was a split that took place. Sixty-four years later, in 1054 A.D., what was called the great schism took place, which was the split between the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church. The Greek Orthodox Church was headquartered in Constantinople and the Roman Catholic Church in Rome. The Russians were Orthodox. They followed Constantinople and the Tsar. When the Grand Duke of Moscow took the title "Tsar," he viewed himself as the protector of the Orthodox Church. In Europe, you had two rulers with the title "Caesar," coming all the way down to the nineteenth century. In German, they didn't call themselves "emperors." That is the English term. Their term was "Kaiser," the German spelling of "Caesar." There were two rulers in Europe for hundreds and hundreds of years. From the time of Rome, all the way down to the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were two rulers in Europe who used the title "Caesar" and viewed themselves as the rightful heirs of the throne of Caesar.

The Kaisers, who ruled the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, traced their claim to the title back through all of the various resurrections of the Holy Roman Empire all the way back to Rome. The Caesars, or the Tsars, who ruled in Moscow traced their claim back through Constantinople to the Eastern Empire. So, you had two legs of the empire that came down. One was a German-Latin dominated Western European leg of the succession of the empire that came down. It was Catholic. That is the leg whose history is foretold in prophecy.

But there was also an Eastern leg, the Slavic leg, the successor of Constantinople and the successor of the Eastern Roman Empire that came down that was personified by the Russian rulers.

We come down and we find that what we term Eastern Europe is not really Eastern Europe. It is Middle Europe because Europe goes all the way into Russia. It goes all the way to the Ural Mountains. If you look at a continental map of Europe, the nations we call Eastern Europe—Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia—call themselves Middle Europe. All these nations that we think of as Eastern Europe, that's not the term that they use for themselves. The Germans do not refer to those nations as Eastern Europe, but as Middle Europe. Western Europe is the German-Latin end and Eastern

Europe is the Russian-Slavic end. Middle Europe is in between, and that is the area that the Russians and the Germans have fought over for hundreds of years.

Most of the time, those nations haven't even existed on the map. They have been ruled either by the Germans or the Russians. That's why it wasn't any new thing when Hitler and Stalin drew a line in 1939 and all the nations of Eastern Europe disappeared from the map. Hitler took part of them and Stalin took part of them. The Germans and the Russians have been doing this for centuries. You can trace it back. Poland existed on the map for twenty-one years, from 1918 until 1939. That was the length of its existence as an independent country. The Tsar of Russia and the ruler of Germany had divided it up between themselves way back in the 1700s. That has been the story.

What we're seeing in Eastern Europe is an unfolding. Logically, when you come down, you have the two legs and you come to the final two feet and then to the ten toes. The obvious implication is you have Western toes and Eastern toes—toes that come out of the Western world and toes that come out of the Eastern realm.

Let's look, very briefly, at the book of Ezekiel. We've kind of set the stage for some of this. I am going to try to summarize and conclude very quickly.

In Ezekiel 27, we find the description of the final great world economic combine. Notice what it says.

Ezekiel 27:12, “Tarshish was your merchant because of your many luxury goods...” We have explained that the ships of Tarshish refer prophetically to Japan and the Japanese fleet. “The ships of Tarshish...” (v. 25).

Verses 12-13, “Tarshish was your merchant because of your many luxury goods...Javan, Tubal, and Meshech were your traders...” Meshech and Tubal very specifically refers to Russia. Meshech is the name from which Moscow is derived. It refers to the Moscow branch of the Great Russians. Tubal refers to the Tubalsk, the Eastern and Western branches of the Great Russian people. There are three peoples called Russians: what are termed Great Russia, White Russia and Little Russia. The Little Russians are the Ukrainians; the White Russians are the Belarusians (Belorussia); and the Great Russians are Russia itself. There are two branches of Russia centered at Moscow and Tubalsk. We find, “...Javan, Tubal and Meshech were your traders...”

Verse 14, “Those from the house of Togarmah [referring to the area of Siberia and East Asia] traded for your wares...”

Verse 15, “The men of Dedan were your traders...”

Verse 17, “Judah and the land of Israel were your traders. They traded for your merchandise wheat of Minnith, millet, honey, oil and balm.”

It talks about the Middle Eastern nations. It talks about all those various things.

Verse 25, “The ships of Tarshish were carriers of your merchandise...”

Then it talks about destruction that is going to come and the wailing for the destruction of the city (vv. 26-32).

You can read Ezekiel 27 at your leisure. Go through and read Ezekiel 27. Then go back and read Revelation 18. You will find that many of the expressions and descriptive phrases John gives in Revelation 18 of the fall of Babylon the Great are exact quotations that are lifted out of Ezekiel 27.

Babylon the Great is a great world economic combine. It is a world economic order that is going to arise in Europe. What we are seeing in Eastern Europe, the bands have been clipped and the tree is beginning to sprout and bud. It is beginning to grow and it is going to make a great tree to fill all the earth. It is going to include all kinds of people in it. It is going to include the nations that we have viewed as behind the Iron Curtain. It is going to include nations all over the world. It will be a great worldwide economic combine. That is the description that is described.

We come to Revelation 18 and it talks about all nations have been made rich (vv. 3, 15). It is seemingly giving the world prosperity.

But then we find that there is a crisis that occurs in the Middle East that threatens the collapse of the worldwide economic order. The United States and Britain are involved in that. There is a rededicated altar that is set up in Israel, a holy place where sacrifices are to be made. There is a crisis that is precipitated in the Middle East that draws in the United States and Britain and threatens a collapse of a worldwide economic order.

In response to the crisis, we find in Revelation 17:12-13, “And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority [KJV, “power”] for one hour with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.”

There are going to be ten nations (ten rulers) in Europe, representing both Eastern and Western Europe that will collectively combine and voluntarily relinquish power to a super leader for the purpose of sending in an army to resolve the problem—as they see it—to resolve the threat of peace and prosperity. They move very quickly into the Middle East and occupy the land of Israel, and they move in very swiftly and occupy the United States and Britain—the Anglo-Saxon nations. The problem with the ten-nation combine, that very quickly comes together and emerges out of this great worldwide economic order, is that they are composed of iron and clay. These ten nations (rulers) that give their power to the beast are composed of iron and clay.

As you go through Revelation 17 and Revelation 13, there are not only economic implications, but there are religious implications. There is a worldwide unity that appears on the surface. ‘Peace, peace!’ they say. They come together to put a stop to this threat to peace, as they view it. Daniel tells us that these ten nations, these ten toes, these two feet, are composed of iron and clay. They are a mixture that will not stay mixed. It is partly strong and partly brittle. It will not endure. It only lasts for a short time because there is a disillusionment that comes. First, they are disillusioned with the religious leader and that causes these nations to turn on him. That brings things to a crisis. Revelation 9 describes the breakup of this worldwide economic combine. Once again history repeats itself.

Napoleon and the Tsar of Russia were allies, and Napoleon “stabbed him in the back” because he didn’t trust him. Hitler and Stalin were allies, and Hitler “stabbed him in the back” because he didn’t trust him. We are going to find, once again, the West and the East are going to be allies, but the Germans aren’t going to trust the Russians.

The first woe (Revelation 9:1-12) describes the Western European attack on the Soviet Union. They will pre-empt and, once again, do the same thing. They haven’t learned. Hitler didn’t learn from Napoleon and the future ruler is not going to have learned from Hitler.

We have the two woes unleashed. We have the first woe, Western Europe attacking Russia; then the counter attack is described as the second woe (vv. 13-21). This worldwide trade combine breaks into war and into catastrophe that brings us to the point that all life on this planet would be annihilated except for the fact that the God of Heaven is going to set up a Kingdom.

What did Daniel see at the end of Daniel 2? What did Daniel describe? This Stone of supernatural origin smashed the image on its toes. The ten toes and the image were smashed into dust (v. 45). Daniel said this symbolizes the fact that the God of Heaven is going to set up a Kingdom.

Daniel 2:44-45, “‘And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this....’”

Genesis 11 and the story of the Tower of Babel are followed by Genesis 12. What is that story? That is the story of a man God called out of Babylon, a man by the name of Abraham. Abraham lived in Ur of the Chaldeans (Genesis 11:31). Ur was a neighboring city to Babylon, a part of the land of Babylonia. God called a man out of Babylon to go out to a land that He would afterward show him (Genesis 12:1). We’re told that Abraham departed (v. 4).

We are told in Hebrews 11 that Abraham departed.

Hebrews 11:8-10, “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would afterward receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

Abraham turned his back on the civilization that man sought to build, the civilization that was described and personified in the Tower of Babel. The Tower of Babel represented man’s attempt to build and unify a one-world empire and a unified one-world government. Abraham turned his back on that. He left and went to where God showed him because Abraham looked for a city that has foundations, whose maker and builder is God.

The story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 is followed by the story of Abraham in Genesis 12. There are implications for us today.

Referring to Babylon, we are told in Revelation 18:2, “...Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen....”

The word for us is in v. 4, “And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.’” Just as God called Abraham to come out of Babylon, we, also, are called to come out of and turn our backs on spiritual Babylon.

We are living through the events that are mentioned in the pages of our Bible. The bands have been clipped and the tree is sprouting and growing. As we are living through these events in the days, weeks, months and years immediately ahead of us, there is a warning that Jesus Christ gave to His Church in our time and in our day.

Brethren, if we are where we think we are in prophecy, what Jesus said in Matthew 24:42-51 applies very directly to us. The warnings that John gave to the Church in Revelation 3 apply very directly to us. If we are where we think we are in prophecy, these things apply to us.

Revelation 3:6, “He who has an ear let him hear....”

Matthew 24:42, Jesus said, “Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.”

Verse 44, “...be ready....”

Verses 45-48, “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming.’”

He says, ‘It’s way off! Oh, it’s a long ways off! I have time to do a lot of things.’ “That evil servant shall say, ‘My Lord delays His coming.’” The result of thinking that it is way off is in v. 49, “[he] begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards.”

We find discord and animosity inside the Body. We find a worldly life style. We find they begin to eat and drink with the drunken. They begin to blend in, fit in and be part and parcel of this world.

Jesus said in vv. 50-51, “the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour when he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” That’s a very important warning for us today.

Roman 13:11-12, the Apostle Paul writes, “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation

is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent; the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.” –“The night is far spent; the day is at hand.”

In Hebrews 10:37-39, the Apostle Paul tells us further, “For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.”

Brethren, it is high time for us to awake out of sleep. The warning to God’s Church in the end time is the tendency to go to sleep, the tendency to go to sleep at the switch. Right before the time comes, the tendency is to begin to drift off to sleep and to be lulled into a spirit of spiritual slumber. Some are going to begin to smite their fellow servants. Others are going to begin to eat and drink with the drunken. That is the warning that is given to our time, our day and our people. That’s the warning that Jesus gave to His disciples.

We are told that it is time to wake up. God warns His people in the end time. He says, ‘WAKE UP! The night is far spent; the day is at hand.’

Revelation 18:4, He warns, “...‘Come out of her My people....’” Come out of Babylon. Leave the world behind. Don’t drag it into the Church with you. Leave the world behind. We are told to be busily “so doing.”

Matthew 24:46, “Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.” Doing the work of God.

Hebrews 10:37, we are told, “...He who is coming will come and will not tarry.”

Brethren, do you realize what it means? The time is literally really going to come when *the air is going to be split with the blast of the trumpet* and the dead in Christ are going to rise up (I Thessalonians 4:16), and *Jesus Christ is going to return to this earth*. He that shall come will come and will not tarry. That time is really going to come—it really, really is. It’s in the time ahead of us. We are right now living in the times that the prophets foresaw. We can’t set the exact day or hour. God has reserved those things into His own hand (Acts 1:7). But he is indeed blind who cannot look at the outline of what the Scriptures say, what we see on the world scene and what we see shaping up. The warning is going out. Are we going to wake up? Are we going to come out of Babylon? Are we going to be prepared, ready and so doing? Because, “He that shall come will come and will not tarry!”

Bible Study # 92
July 14, 1992
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Ezra, Nehemiah, I & II Chronicles

This evening we **are wrapping up the Old Testament**. We are right at the very conclusion of the Old Testament, wrapping up this section of the Writings. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah, as well as Chronicles, have already been covered in one form when we went through an earlier Bible study on the historical survey of the Old Testament. However, I want to cover these books this evening in a little different way because these were the books that marked the conclusion of the third section of the Old Testament, the Writings section.

These books are what are called “post-exilic.” That just means “after the exile.” The exile was one of the major events in the history of God’s dealing with ancient Israel. It was certainly a major event in the history of the Jewish people. They would rank, basically, the Exodus and then the exile, in terms of the major events that define them.

The exile was the captivity that Nebuchadnezzar brought about. He invaded Jerusalem and Judea in 604 B.C. He took some of the leaders and some of the young princes of the children of the noble families back to Babylon as hostages. He took some captives and exacted a heavy penalty or tribute—a yearly tax that was to be paid. Things went along for several years. Then, when he decided that the king of Judah that he had left on the throne wasn’t paying up as much as he should or as frequently as he should, he came back in 596 B.C. and put Zedekiah on the throne. In general, he did some other things. He finally came in, completely destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and took the whole nation into captivity in 587 B.C. That concluded the independent Jewish nation.

The book of Daniel tells the story of the entire period that Judah was under the Babylonian domination. Daniel was in that original captivity of 604 B.C. His time as an individual of note in the Babylonian Empire went all the way down to 539 B.C. when Babylon fell and the Medes and the Persians took over. It then extended for several years on into the time of the Medes and the Persians.

Ezra and Nehemiah were always reckoned as one book. They were simply two sections of one book. They did not appear separate in any

Hebrew manuscript up until about 1500 A.D. Ezra and Nehemiah tell the story of the restoration of God’s people after the exile.

The book of Daniel tells the story of the fall of Babylon in 539 B.C. We saw that the night of the “handwriting on the wall,” the army of the Medes and the Persians came in under Darius the Mede. Then a few years later, Cyrus himself came back and took the throne of Babylon, after having defeated all the armies elsewhere. He came back and ensconced himself there. Cyrus was the one who issued a decree that allowed the Jews to begin a return to Jerusalem. A period of almost seventy years had gone by. The Jews have been in exile since Nebuchadnezzar’s original invasion.

Cyrus issued a decree. When he issues that decree is where it opens it up in Ezra. Ezra 1 is the story of Cyrus issuing a decree. When he issued a decree, a man of the royal house, whose name was Zerubbabel, was appointed as the Persian governor for Judah. He was authorized to lead a delegation of Jews—those who wished to go—to lead them back and to rebuild the cities and rebuild Jerusalem. Accompanying him were a number of people, including the man who was to be the high priest upon the return to Jerusalem—a man by the name of Joshua. Zerubbabel and Joshua came back, led the delegation back out of Babylon and began the restoration. One of the things that they did immediately, of course, was the physical rebuilding; they laid and dedicated an altar and began work on the temple.

The book of Ezra carries us down through the completion of the work that Zerubbabel did. Then, we skip a period of time—in the neighborhood of just about sixty years—from the end of the story of Zerubbabel’s completion of the temple until the time that Ezra himself returned from Babylon. The gap is right there in the book of Ezra. In that gap, there isn’t anything in the book of Ezra that tells us exactly what happened. The only book of the Bible that fills in the middle of that gap is the book of Esther. The book of Esther gives the story, but gives it elsewhere. Ezra himself came back several years later. He came back as a priest. Then Nehemiah was allowed to come back about ten years later. He came back as the new Persian governor.

Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries. The book of Ezra covers a duration of about eighty years. The book of Ezra starts prior to Ezra’s lifetime. It tells the story of the original return under Zerubbabel. Then there is a gap of about

sixty years and it picks up the story with Ezra's return.

If you go through the story, as told in Samuel and Kings, and compare it with Chronicles—I and II Chronicles provide a parallel account of the accounts that are given in I and II Samuel and I and II Kings—you find that Chronicles tells the story from a totally different viewpoint. When we went through it in the historical outline of the Old Testament, we went through sort of a harmonized version of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles. We went through the historical flow and through whichever book had relevant material.

But if you were to just read the story flow, I and II Samuel and I and II Kings run through consecutively telling the story. I Samuel starts with the end of the Judges period—the time of Eli and Samuel—and comes all the way down through Saul and King David. Then we pick up the story with Solomon and come all the way through the events of all the kings of Israel and Judah, which takes us down through the end of II Kings.

When you read it in Chronicles, you are reading of the same period, but it's written in a totally different way. Chronicles does not try to repeat; it's not merely a repetition of what you can read elsewhere. Since it was written for a specific reason, a specific purpose, it highlights different information.

First, if you look at it, Chronicles has genealogies and then picks up the story of the kings. It tells you everything it has to say about King Saul in a few verses and spends the rest of the entire book of I Chronicles on the reign of King David. About two-thirds of I Chronicles is spent on the reign of King David. The first ten chapters of II Chronicles are spent on the reign of Solomon. And then everybody else is jammed into the next twenty-six chapters. We find, even then, that only a few kings are picked out and a great deal of attention is given to them. Most of the others are summarized in a matter of a few verses.

Second, Chronicles tells the story from a standpoint of what was going on in Judah and Jerusalem and virtually omits any information on what was happening in Israel, except as it had connection or relevance to what was going on in Jerusalem. Kings, on the other hand, tells the story in a much more evenhanded way.

Why was Chronicles written in that way? Why was the story retold from a different vantage point? One thing we have to understand is that Satan goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom

he may devour (I Peter 5:8). Satan has always—in the past, the present and the future—wanted to destroy God's work and God's people. I don't think that's any great revelation to any of you. I suspect all of you knew that and heard that before. We all know that. God inspired this material to be preserved for us because it gives us insight. When we find ourselves in similar circumstances, we know how to handle it.

I Corinthians 10:11, Paul tells us, "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come." The things of the Old Testament are written down as examples for us. They are written down as examples for our admonition.

He also tells us in v. 13, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man..." The point is that any problem we find, anything we encounter in our lives, anything we encounter as God's people today, similar type things have been encountered by God's people in the past. One of the reasons for the stories and examples in the Old Testament is so we can look through and see how God's people handled and responded to these matters. That's an important key to being able to handle it properly. We find Satan has always wanted to destroy God's people, and when the Jews came back under Zerubbabel, Satan was prepared. He had adversaries stirred up. But notice the way he went about it.

Let's start in Ezra. In Ezra 1 and 2, we have the story of Cyrus allowing the Jews to return; we have the list of those who were going to be going.

In Ezra 3, we find the altar was rededicated and the Feast of Tabernacles was kept.

Now notice, as they began to work, what happened.

Ezra 4:1-3, "Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the descendants of the captivity were building the temple of the Lord God of Israel, they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers' houses, and said to them, 'Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do; and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.' But Zerubbabel and Joshua and the rest of the heads of the fathers' houses of Israel said to them, 'You may do nothing with us to build a house for our God; but we alone will build to the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us.'"

Notice that we are told these were the adversaries, these were the enemies. What was

their first attempt? You know, the devil has a couple of different tactics. One, he will try and weasel in from the inside; if he can't "weasel" in and destroy something from the inside, then he will attack it from the outside. If he can't destroy it from the outside, he will try to "weasel" in from the inside. When you go down through the story of the people of God through the centuries, that's what you find. The devil is either trying to get in on the inside, "weasel" in and destroy it from within or he's trying to attack it and harm it from without. No, he's not particular; whichever way will work is fine with him.

The first thing he did—these fellows came and said, 'Hey, you know, look, let's all join up together. We all worship the same God; we're all going to the same place. We will just all kind of pitch in and do this thing.' Zerubbabel said, 'No we won't. Guess again. You have nothing whatsoever to do with us and what we are doing.'

Now, who were these people? They were the Samaritans. Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles are the books that conclude the Old Testament; they end the Old Testament. They set the stage for the New Testament. The Samaritans play a very important role, and their role is made plain when you read Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles. It is plain where God is working and where God is not working. Now, that is helpful because when we come into the New Testament, we are going to read some things about these Samaritans. We are going to find that they played a very key role in establishing a great false church that purports to be the Christian church. The origin of these Samaritans was given back in II Kings 17. You remember?

Samaria was originally the capital of Northern Israel. Omri, who was one of the kings of Northern Israel, was the father of Ahab. The city of Samaria was founded and built under his dynasty, which consisted of himself for a number of years, then his son Ahab (who is perhaps better known) and then their successors. Samaria was the capital of Northern Israel. Northern Israel, about two hundred years after Solomon's death and its establishment as an independent kingdom, was invaded by the Assyrians and taken into captivity. When the king of Assyria took them, he settled them in an area up between the Black and the Caspian Seas, and he brought in other people. He brought in Babylonians and settled them in the area, in the cities of Northern Israel, the cities centering there in Samaria.

This story is told in II Kings 17:6, "In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria

and carried Israel away to Assyria and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan and in the cities of the Medes." This was because of their sins. They had disobeyed God and had not heeded what God had said.

Verse 28, "Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the Lord." We find the king of Assyria sent one of the Israelite priests back to be in the area.

We are told in v. 23, "until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day." Up until the time that Isaiah wrote this, that was the way it was.

Verse 24, "Then the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath and from Sepharvaim [these were all suburbs around the city of Babylon] and he placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel and they possessed Samaria and dwelt in the cities." So, here's a different group of people. One of the Israelite priests was sent back to teach them.

Verses 27-28, "Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, 'Send there one of the priests whom you brought from there; let him go and dwell there, and let him teach them the rituals of the God of the land.' Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the Lord."

He taught them how they should fear the Lord. Now, don't you know these priests of Northern Israel did a good job. These were the ones that Jeroboam had made priests. Remember, those were some of the lowest people (KJV, I Kings 12:31). He had made them priests—people who were not Levites. Jeroboam had instituted the golden calf and all of this. That's what Israel had been doing ever since. So, don't you know, one of these priests was going to do a really good job of really teaching them how to serve God.

II Kings 17:29, notice what it says, "However, every nation continued to make gods of their own [used their own idols] and they put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made...."

Then it names off what they did and says in v. 32 (KJV), "So they feared the Eternal and made unto themselves the lowest of them priests of the high places...."

Verse 33, "They feared the Eternal and served their own gods...." Now that is a key statement.

Verse 34, “To this day they continue practicing the former rituals; they do not fear the Lord, nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances, or the law and commandment which the Lord had commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel.” It says they don’t really fear God; they don’t really keep His statutes or his laws or His commandments. They are not really obeying God.

Verse 41, “So these nations feared the Eternal and served their graven images, both their children, and their children’s children, as did their fathers so do they unto this day.” That’s the origin of the Samaritans. This is the group of people that showed up when Zerubbabel came back, and said, ‘We worship your God just like you do. We are all in this thing together. We are all going to the same place. Let us help. We will help build the temple. We’ll just all get together.’

They didn’t really worship God. They used God’s name, and this is the key to understanding the Samaritans and their contribution. Frankly, when you look at the Catholic Church, what you see is just “baptized” paganism. The Protestants have just taken it and maybe refined some rough edges, but they are just “chips off the old block,” too. Their holidays and their basic customs derive from “Big Mama” all the way back to Babylon.

Well, what do they do? They use the name of God; they use the name of Christ. They use the name of various people in the Bible; they use biblical-sounding terminology. They use the names of “saints” out of the Bible, and they keep on following the same old pagan stuff they have always followed. They had their various idols—the god of this, that, and the other. But now, instead of being the “god” of travel, well, he’s the “patron saint” of travel. Instead of being the “god” of this, well, he’s the “patron saint” of it. They just changed the name and kept doing the same thing. The only change was changing the name. Just sprinkle a little water on it—this statute was “this”; now it’s “that.” They kept doing the same thing. It’s incredible.

I don’t know if any of you have actually been to St. Peter’s Cathedral. If you’ve ever seen pictures of St. Peter’s Cathedral, you will notice right there in the great courtyard this giant obelisk that sticks up there; you see in all the pictures. Do you realize what that was? That was actually transported from Egypt. It was the temple of the sun god at Heliopolis in Egypt. It was one of the great feats of the ancient world. They actually transported that thing across miles

of North Africa, loaded it on barges, brought it across the Mediterranean and brought it up there at St. Peter’s courtyard. They wanted the real thing. It’s the most pagan thing you can get—the center and the absolute symbol of ancient pagan sun worship. Heliopolis, which means “the city of the sun,” was the center of the worship of the sun god in Egypt. They took it and set it up right there at St. Peter’s. I don’t want to get off into that or into some of the symbolism. But the point is that the Samaritans played a very important part and this has always been the Samaritan approach.

In Ezra and Nehemiah, we have the story of Satan’s attempt to undermine the work of God. We have the story in Ezra and Nehemiah and the restoration of God’s work. The nation had gone into captivity with the Babylonians and now the work was being restored. The work of God in that day consisted of building a literal temple and preparing the way for Christ’s first coming. Christ was going to come to His own (John 1:11); there was to be an identifiable group. That was necessary.

There were a number of important things to be done that set the stage for the New Testament. First, the Old Testament Scriptures had to be put in final form and preserved. Part of the work of God was the preservation of the Scriptures because that’s part of the very foundation of the Church. That’s what points to Jesus and identifies Jesus as the Messiah. So, it was important that the Scriptures be preserved. And if the Scriptures are going to be preserved, you have to know where to look to find them. The knowledge of the truth had to be preserved.

Second, an identifiable people of God had to be preserved to serve as a nucleus around which God’s Church would be built. When Paul went throughout the Roman Empire and preached—even in the Gentile cities—do you know where he always went to preach first? He went into the synagogues because that was where the converted Jews, as well as the Gentiles who attended synagogue services, were. Gentiles did not convert to Judaism but would attend synagogue services and hear the law read.

Why was it necessary to start there? Because you started with people who knew the law—people who were familiar with the Sabbath, the Holy Days, clean and unclean meats, and all of these things. They were familiar with the Scriptures. They were familiar with the Bible. You had a nucleus of people that were familiar with the Scriptures and familiar with the law. Then, as others who were not familiar with those things

were converted, they were added to the group. They were added to the nucleus where certain customs and practices were already being done. That was simply the way that God chose to build His Church. These things had to be preserved.

This is what we find. Satan tried to subvert by entangling the work of God with people who were not serving God. They were just practicing the same old paganism, but they had cleaned it up a little bit. These Samaritans continued to practice the same old Babylonian religion but called it by the name of YHVH, the God of Israel. Instead of calling their idol Baal or Marduk or whatever, they called him YHVH. They used the name of God and they used Biblical-sounding terminology to apply to the paganism they had been practicing. That was what the Samaritans did.

That's one of the reasons it's called the Babylonian Mystery religion. The thing was so mixed up and so mysterious that you couldn't figure out one thing from another. The first thing they did—they tried to subvert; they tried to come in from within. It has always been a major problem of the people of God to preserve their distinct identity and not to lose that identity by simply becoming absorbed with the world and the society around them. When God's people lose their identity, then they are quickly on the way to ceasing to be the people of God. So, the Samaritans tried to subvert it this way.

Zerubbabel rebuffed them and said, 'No, you don't have anything to do with this.' Notice what they did. Did they really want to help build the temple? Notice.

Ezra 4:4, "Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building." They stirred up trouble, spread gossip and rumors and, just in general, were a source of trouble.

They also went to court. I tell you—read v. 5 on down the rest of the chapter and it sort of sounds like 1979.

Verse 5, "and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia." They wrote an accusation. They went to court and literally got a court order from the court of the Persian king that was a cease and desist order that said 'you have to stop until we investigate this matter.'

They wrote an accusation.

Verse 6, "Now in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem."

Verse 12, they said, "Let it be known to the king that the Jews that came from you to us under Jerusalem are building the rebellious and the bad city, and they have set up a wall thereof and joined the foundations." It's amazing how you can make something sound bad. How are you going to build a city if you don't set up the walls and join the foundation? But the way they were telling it, it sounds sinister. 'They are setting up the walls of that place and are building the foundations.' That's what they came back for! That was no secret. But they said they were building the rebellious and bad city.

Then they made an accusation.

Verse 13, "Let it be known to the king that, if this city is built and the walls completed, they will not pay tax, tribute, or custom, and the king's treasury will be diminished." They said, 'You know why they are building that city? They are going to build the walls and then they are going to quit paying their taxes.'

That wasn't true, but you can accuse anybody of anything. They hired counselors (attorneys, lawyers) and they went to court. They said, 'We are worried about the king and don't want to see the king lose any money.' They were just being good helpful citizens. You can hardly read some of these verses with a straight face.

We have an order that was issued.

Verse 21, "Now give the command to make these men cease, that this city may not be built until the command is given by me."

Verse 23, "...they went up in haste to Jerusalem against the Jews, and by force of arms made them cease." They sent in troops and stopped the work. They took the work of God under receivership, if you will. It is a remarkable parallel to what we experienced in 1979, which just shows that the devil is not really original. The reason why there are so many parallels is because he does the same thing over and over again. Human nature is the same and the devil is the same. He has the same objectives and uses a lot of the same tactics. He tried to subvert, discourage and stir up adversaries and enemies. The work of God ceased.

Ezra 5:1, "Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them." Haggai and Zechariah were stirred up as prophets and told Zerubbabel that he needed to get back to building—and so he did.

Verse 2, "So Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Joshua the son of Jozakak rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem;

and the prophets of God were with them, helping them.” They got back to building and it went back to court. Finally, the issue was fought out in court.

Ezra 6:1-3, “Then King Darius issued a decree, and a search was made in the archives, where the treasures were stored in Babylon. And at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of Media, a scroll was found, and in it a record was written thus: In the first year of King Cyrus, King Cyrus issued a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem: ‘Let the house be rebuilt, the place where they offered sacrifices; and let the foundation of it be firmly laid, its height sixty cubits and its width sixty cubits.’”

Darius made a search of the records and found the decree that Cyrus had issued allowing the temple to be rebuilt. Finally, the court case was won. The temple was finished and rededicated (vv. 15-16). So, we go through this struggle with the Samaritans.

In Ezra 7, we pick up the story about sixty years later with Ezra the priest returning.

Ezra 7:10, “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it and to teach statutes and judgments in Israel.” He was given authority by the king to return and was allowed to take something back that had evidently not been taken back earlier.

Verse 14, “And whereas you are being sent by the king and his seven counselors to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, with regard to the Law of your God which is in your hand.” Ezra brought back the official temple scrolls of the Law from Babylon. He was given authority by the Persian king to go back and inquire of the state of the nation and to take the Law back with him. Ezra was allowed to go back.

We find that he came down and he came into Judah.

When he got to Jerusalem, he was informed, Ezra 9:2, “For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy seed is intermingled with the people of those lands. Indeed, the hand of the leaders [princes] and rulers has been foremost in this trespass.”

When you go through and find problems among the people of God, you very rarely find problems in the congregation if you don’t find problems in the leadership. When you find a righteous king of Israel or Judah, you find the people pretty well doing what they should do. When you find a wicked king, you find the people doing what they should not do. When you find a righteous judge that God had raised up, you find people

pretty well responding to that. When you find a lack of righteous leadership and a bad example being set, you find people not doing what they should do, at least as a general thing.

Here, we find the hand of the leaders and the rulers had been foremost in this trespass. What we have now come to is that the very identity of the people of God was threatened. They were on the verge of losing their identity—in terms of culture, religion, language and as a separate ethnic group—in every area. If this had gone on, within another couple of generations they would have simply lost their identity and been absorbed into the general mix of the Middle Eastern population. There wouldn’t have been a separate identity. There wouldn’t have been a Bible preserved and an identifiable people who would have remained.

Ezra was very concerned. He was astonished by what he saw and the state of things. Ezra called the people together. He called the nation together and told them that they needed to enter into a covenant.

Ezra 10:3, “Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the covenant of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God, and let it be done according to the law.” They made a covenant to put away all of these foreign wives. There had to be a distinction. The nation was at the point of losing its identity.

Verses 5-7, “Then Ezra arose, and made the leaders of the priests, the Levites, and all Israel swear an oath that they would do according to this word. So they swore an oath. Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib; and when he came there, he ate no bread and drank no water, for he mourned because of the guilt of those from the captivity. And they issued a proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the descendants of the captivity, that they must gather at Jerusalem.”

It then goes into this covenant that they made.

Now we skip down about twelve years. We pick up the story in Nehemiah 1. Nehemiah comes to the king of Persia and requests the job of governor (2:5). Ezra was not governor. He had certain civil authority, but primarily he was a priest and had the authority to teach and bring back the law. Perhaps, Nehemiah had been in communication with Ezra and maybe others. He knew what was going on and was very concerned about it. Things really hadn’t changed

a whole lot; we are going to see why they hadn't changed.

Nehemiah went to the king of Persia, Artaxerxes, and asked for the job of governor in Judah. He was given the job and was allowed to return with full governmental authority (v. 6). He came in and began to oversee the repair of Jerusalem. It describes that in Nehemiah 3.

Nehemiah 4:1-3, "But it so happened when Sanballat heard that we built the wall, that he was very furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews. And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, 'What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish—stones that are burned?' Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, 'Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall.'"

Tobiah the Ammonite was with him and he was making fun of it. He said a fox could jump over that wall.

Verse 6, Nehemiah said, "So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work."

We find that Sanballat, Tobiah and all of these others created trouble.

Verses 8-9, "and all of them conspired together to come and attack Jerusalem and create confusion. Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night."

When Nehemiah came back, he found the work was in shambles. The tendency of people is to lose their zeal and their enthusiasm. When they came back under Zerubbabel, they were all "charged up" to do the work; they were excited. They were coming back to Jerusalem. They were going to rebuild the temple and they were really going to get back on the right track.

There have been a lot of revivals and ups and downs of God's people through the centuries. That's a part of the story. And boy, they were all "charged up" and were really going to get back on the track. Difficulties came and time went on, and you know what happened. It's hard for people to maintain excitement and enthusiasm. They got sidetracked. They got absorbed in their businesses, building their own houses and doing their own thing. After a while, interest was diverted. When trouble came up and the work was interfered with, interest was diverted. Then God raised up a prophet, Zerubbabel, and he finished the temple. Then again, they got off track.

Sixty years went by. By the time Ezra got there, they were intermarrying with the people of the land; their religious practices were affected. It was a mess. Ezra preached and the people promised they were going to do better. They were all charged up, but it didn't last.

Nehemiah came back; the wall was still in shambles and all sorts of things. He said, 'The first thing we are going to do is get this thing cleaned up and get it into shape.' Immediately, the Samaritans were the source of the problem. Here they were stirring things up again. They did everything they could think of. They conspired and tried to discourage the people. They spread gossip and rumors and made accusations and threats.

Nehemiah was a remarkable character. Read through the story of Nehemiah. God has worked through different types of people and people of different personalities. The time that we are looking at here was a crisis period. It was a period when the very identity of the people of God could have been lost. It was one of those crucial periods in history. Nehemiah was a strong leader. I mean, he was the kind of guy that you would not want to cross. You can read the book and find out what happened to the ones that did. Nehemiah was a remarkable individual in that way.

Every leader that God has worked through hasn't necessarily been as forceful and determined as Nehemiah, at least in the sense that Nehemiah was going to get it done. It was going to be done that way, and he was not going to tolerate any deviation from it. A man of that caliber, a man of that sort of temperament, was really needed because if there had been someone who had taken a softer approach than Nehemiah, it wouldn't have "stuck." It was everything Nehemiah could do to set things back on the right track.

Certain things remind you of other things. Any time I read the book of Nehemiah and about some of the things where Nehemiah sort of "scorched the hair" off of them with some of the things that he said, it sort of takes me back a few years. It sort of reminds me of a few sermons that I heard Mr. Herbert Armstrong give in Big Sandy when he sort of "rattled" the metal building there. There are a few of you who remember some of those things.

When I go through and think of Nehemiah, I think Nehemiah must have sort of been like that. Nehemiah had a way of really throwing the fear of God into the people. He was facing a monumental task. So, they prayed to God, got

busy about it and they built. Nehemiah went to God about it, but they guarded this thing. You talk about working!

Verse 18, "Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet was beside me." The Samaritans said they would disrupt it. Nehemiah said, 'We are going to build this thing. We are going to camp out here; we are going to work around the clock.'

Verse 23, "So neither I, my brethren, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me took off his clothes, except that everyone took them off for washing."

'None of us even took our clothes off except to change, in order to wash what we had. There is no rest. We sleep in our clothes; we have our sword by our side. The guy who was to sound the trumpet of alarm was next to me and we kept this thing under surveillance around the clock.'

Nehemiah was the kind of guy that you weren't going to scare; you weren't going to discourage him. You talk about determined; you talk about a fellow that you didn't want to rile up. There were a couple of things you weren't going to do to Nehemiah. You weren't going to scare Nehemiah and you weren't going to discourage him. Nehemiah understood where the real help came from. It came from God.

Verses 19-21, "Then I said to the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people, 'The work is great and extensive, and we are separated far from one another on the wall. Therefore, wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.' So we labored in the work, and half of the men held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared."

In Nehemiah 10, we find that the people were brought together to renew the covenant and they were reminded not to intermarry with the people around, with other nations. They were commanded to strictly observe the Sabbath. They were told to bring in the tithes and the offerings and all these things were done (vv. 29-39).

In Nehemiah 13, Nehemiah was gone for a little while. When he came back to Jerusalem, he found that things had fallen in disrepair while he was gone. These people really didn't have a whole lot of heart to obey.

Nehemiah 13:15-17, "In those days I saw in Judah some people treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them about the

day on which they were selling provisions. Men of Tyre dwelt there also, who brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and sold them on the Sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, 'What evil thing is this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day?'"

Verses 19-20, "...I commanded the gates to be shut, and charged that they must not be opened till after the Sabbath. Then I posted some of my servants at the gates, so that no burdens would be brought in on the Sabbath day. Now the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares lodged outside Jerusalem once or twice." Here were people that hadn't really gotten the big picture yet. They sort of got on the outskirts.

Verse 21, "So I warned them, and said to them, 'Why do you spend the night around the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you!' [He wasn't talking about ordaining any of them, either.] From that time on they came no more on the Sabbath."

He came down there and said, 'I thought I told you guys to "get." If I see you here again, I am going to turn you every which way but loose.' They didn't come back.

Verses 23-26, "In those days I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people. So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, 'You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin.'"

Here is a key.

Verse 28, "And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest was a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite; therefore I drove him from me." Now, you wonder why there was so much problem of getting this thing straightened out. The high priest's grandson was married to the daughter of the leader of the Samaritans. That was why they had never really been able to get the situation straightened out, up until then. People knew what was going on and they said, 'Why should we do "so and so"?' The high priest's grandson is married to old Sanballat's daughter.' Nehemiah said he had enough,

‘You’ve had enough time to do something about this.’ So, he chased him out.

Now what happened? Josephus tells us that Sanballat then built a rival temple on Mt. Gerizim up in Samaria and made this grandson of Eliashib (whose name was Manasseh) the high priest of the Samaritans.

Let me just call your attention to the statement in John 4. When Jesus confronted the woman at the well in Samaria, do you remember what she said?

John 4:20, “Our fathers worshiped on this mountain [Mt. Gerizim], and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.” Why were the Samaritans worshipping in Mt. Gerizim? Because that’s where old Sanballat had built the temple and that’s where the apostate priest had gone.

Verse 22, Jesus said, “You [Samaritans] worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.” Jesus made it very plain where you look to find the work of God. It’s preserved in Jerusalem (Romans 3:1-2). It was preserved in the Jewish community, not by the Samaritans. You don’t look to Samaria to find the inspired text of the Bible. You don’t look to Samaria to find the pattern for what you should do. You don’t look to Samaria; you look to Jerusalem. You don’t look to the Samaritans; you look to the Jews. It was very apparent where God was working and where God’s work was centered. It was centered in Jerusalem.

The story of Ezra and Nehemiah is the story of revival and decline—God’s Old Testament Church getting off track and getting put back on track. As soon as somebody wasn’t looking, they were getting off again—on and off and on and off. God had a work to be done. He had to set the stage for the New Testament period and the coming of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. The problems that were extant, in terms of the Samaritan community, are clearly identified.

Now let’s just look very briefly at **I Chronicles**.

I Chronicles 1-9 deal with genealogy.

Chapter 10 tells the story of King Saul.

I Chronicles 11:1, 3, “Then all Israel came together to David at Hebron...Then they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the Lord by Samuel.”

Verse 4, “And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem....”

Verse 5, “...Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David).”

He made this the capital.

Verse 9, “Then David went on and became great, and the Lord of hosts was with him.”

I Chronicles 11-29 all deal with David.

Chapter 11 tells how he became king and Jerusalem was made the capital.

Chapter 12 goes on and tells a little bit about the things that David did as king.

Chapter 13 tells about bringing the ark to Jerusalem.

Chapter 14 tells more of David’s greatness as king.

Chapter 15 tells the story of how the ark was brought in.

Chapter 16 goes on and discusses more information about the ark being brought into Jerusalem and shows that this was the headquarters of the work of God.

Chapter 17 tells about David wanting to build the temple.

As you come on down through Chronicles, chapter 22 tells how plans were made for the building of the temple.

Chapter 23 gives more details of these plans.

In chapters 24 and 25, David sets and reorganizes the priests and the Levites; songs are written and added to the canon of Scripture.

Chapter 28 tells how Solomon was given the pattern of the house.

Chapter 29 tells more details about the building of the temple.

I Chronicles focuses on King David’s reign and primarily focuses on the part that had to do with building the temple.

II Chronicles starts with the reign of King Solomon. The first nine chapters deal with Solomon and the building of the temple.

II Chronicles 1:1, “Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, the Lord his God was with him and magnified him exceedingly.” It talks about all the grandeur connected with Solomon.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 tell about the building of the temple.

Chapter 5 talks about the building of the temple and about the Ark of the Covenant being brought into the temple.

Chapter 6 tells about the temple and God’s covenant with Solomon.

Chapter 7 tells about Solomon’s prayer and the dedication of the temple.

Chapter 8 tells about Solomon’s palace.

Chapter 9 tells about the Queen of Sheba.

Chapters 10, 11 and 12 tell the story of the split between Israel and Judah and what transpired.

Then we go through the story of the ups and downs, the revivals and the declines.

In chapters 14, 15 and 16, we look at the story of Asa, the story of the revival and the renewal of the covenant on Pentecost.

In chapters 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21, we have the story of Jehoshaphat, a righteous king who was setting judges and was trying to turn the people to obey God and to teach the law.

Chapters 22, 23 and 24 tell of a remarkable occasion. It tells the story of the royal family of Judah. One of Jehoshaphat's sons married the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and it tells the problems that were created. This is the only time that Samaria and Northern Israel get mentioned, and it was in a negative context. Jezebel and Ahab's daughter married Jehoshaphat's son and there was trouble. When her husband and her son died, she ultimately made herself king; she tried to kill all her kids and grandkids. She was a "chip-off-the-old-block" in terms of her mother. One of her little grandchildren, a little one-year old grandson Joash, was hidden in the temple. Six years later he was brought out and crowned king. He was made king and she was executed.

Chapter 26 tells of King Uzziah who tried to appropriate to himself the dignity of the priesthood.

In chapters 29, 30, 31 and 32, we have the story of King Hezekiah, one of the great periods of revival in Judah. It was a time when the very existence of the nation was threatened from without by Assyrian invasion and how Hezekiah sought God. God hearkened, intervened and wiped out the Assyrian army. It tells about the expansion of the canon of Scripture in II Chronicles 32:32. It tells how Hezekiah sought to repair the temple and rediscovered the Law. It tells about the great Passover that was held and how he was involved in all this sort of thing.

In chapter 33, we have the story of Hezekiah's son Manasseh and his problems.

Chapters 34 and 35 tell about the great revival under Josiah. In II Chronicles 34:15, it tells about the rediscovery of the Book of the Law and the revival that took place as the people turned back to God.

Chapter 36 summarizes everything else that happened, ends up with the captivity, and then the fact that Cyrus, King of Persia, allowed the Jews to return. II Chronicles 36:23 ends with permission to return, to go up.

Even though Samuel and Kings were already a part of the canon, Chronicles was written to tell the story from an entirely different outlook. It tells the story from a priestly outlook. It deals almost entirely with the history of the southern kingdom, the Kingdom of Judah. It deals with

the house of David. The emphasis is on Jerusalem as God's headquarters and the place where God has set His name. The focus is on David, Solomon, the temple and the periods of revival in Judah. It is setting the stage. It is focusing in on what we need to know when we come to the New Testament period. We got a little glimpse of it in John 4 when we found the contrast between the Jews and the Samaritans.

But, when you come down a little further to Acts 8, you read that Philip went to Samaria to preach. You find that there was a certain man there who was the religious leader of all the Samaritans. His name was Simon, Simon the Sorcerer, known in secular history as Simon Magus. "Magus" is simply the Greek word for "sorcerer" or "magician." That's where we get our word "magician."

We are told in Acts 8:9-11, that all of the Samaritans from the greatest to the least gave heed to Simon the Sorcerer. He was an individual that was looked to by all of them, wherever they might be, regardless of their station in life. We are told that he of a long time had bewitched them with sorcery. He was an individual who worked great false miracles and lying wonders. We are told that Simon was acknowledged by the Samaritans as being the great power of God. They viewed him as the religious leader, the great power of God. They looked to him; they venerated him as their religious leader.

We are told that when Philip came and preached and many of the Samaritans were baptized, Simon himself was baptized (vv. 12-13). But it's very apparent that all Simon did was get wet because a little bit later when Peter and John came down, Simon was very impressed with what they did. He called Peter aside and offered to give him money (v. 18). He offered to buy a position of leadership—to pay him. He wanted an apostleship. He wanted the power that Peter had and the position and rank that Peter had. He offered to buy it.

Acts 8:20-21, Peter said (KJV), "...Your money perish with you...you have neither part nor lot in this matter..." Now the expressions "part" and "lot" are only used one other place. It's used in Acts 1:24-26 to refer to Matthias being chosen by *lot* to have *part* of the apostleship of the twelve to take Judas' place. It was a play on words. It was used back in the Psalms as a prophecy of Judas and what would happen. It's used in Acts 1, and Peter uses the same play on words when he tells Simon "you have neither part nor lot in this matter."

Acts 8:23, he told Simon, “I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.” – ‘You are bound up and wrapped up in lawlessness, iniquity and in transgression of the law; you are bitter.’

We find, twenty years later, Paul is writing in II Thessalonians.

II Thessalonians 2:7, he says, “The mystery of lawlessness is already at work.” The mystery of lawlessness was already at work less than twenty years after Peter’s encounter with Simon of Samaria.

There were two dispersions; there were two Diasporas in the ancient world. One was the dispersion of the Jews throughout the Middle Eastern areas and into Europe. But there was another dispersion that had taken place during the days of Alexander the Great—a dispersion of the Samaritan community. There were sizable colonies of the Samaritans, particularly in Alexandria, Egypt and Rome, Italy. Simon, we are told, was acknowledged by all of the Samaritans, from the greatest to the least, as the great power of God.

What we have is the story of the beginning of two different churches that for a while gave the outward appearance of being one. Paul recognized and wrote to the Thessalonians that the mystery of iniquity was already at work. The mystery religion that taught lawlessness and turned grace into license was already at work less than twenty years after that.

Jude had to write to the Church and exhort them to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (v. 3). By the time Jude was writing in the late 60’s A.D., it was already getting to the point that you had to look for and be careful to find “the faith once delivered” because there was a counterfeit gospel. Another gospel was being preached—a false gospel—a gospel that was simply a message about the person of Christ but ignoring the message of the Kingdom that He brought. It was a message that turned grace into license to sin. It de-emphasized and played-down the law until, by the end of the century, the law was being outwardly and openly discarded.

The mystery of iniquity grew up around the nucleus of the Samaritan community in Rome and Alexandria, just as the Church of God grew up around the Jewish community as a nucleus, and then other cities of the Roman Empire. Simon and the Samaritans had always tried to take what looked like the best things going that any other religion had to offer and just sort of mix it in with what they had. They watered it

down and made it easy. People didn’t really have to do very much. The stage was set.

The post-exilic books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles are put at the end of the Old Testament to tell the story of the conflict between the people of God and the adversary of God’s work. They are there to tell the story of how Satan sought to undermine the work of God. They are there to tell the story of how God’s work was preserved and to make plain where God was working and where you should look for the authoritative canon of Scripture. You are not to look off somewhere, here or there, but you should look to the official Jewish community in Jerusalem.

John 4:22, Jesus said salvation was of the Jews. They are the ones who had retained and preserved the knowledge necessary for salvation, not with the Samaritans.

Acts 4:22, Jesus told the woman at the well, “You [Samaritans] worship what you do not know [You don’t even know what you are talking about.]; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.”

The Jewish community preserved the authoritative Word of God (Romans 3:1-2) and that is where you look to find the Bible. The stage was set for the New Testament work of God. The end of the Old Testament made it plain to God’s people in the first century of the New Testament where you should look to find the work that God was doing.

The Old Testament is filled with the stories of the ups and downs of the work of God and of the people of God. God has chosen to work through human beings; he raised up people and he raised up a work. Time goes on; people die and another generation comes along. There are very vital and important lessons. That’s why these examples are recorded for us. Human nature hasn’t changed. The pulls of human nature are the same. There may be specifics that change, in terms of what the specific issue is at a given point in time, but the principles remain the same. There is the importance of God’s people retaining and preserving their identity—the importance of retaining a complete allegiance and devotion to God, of not being enticed by the world around us and the attempts that Satan will make either to subvert God’s work from within or to attack it and destroy it from without.

The one thing you can be assured of is that the devil is never going to let God’s work alone. He is either going to be doing one or the other, but he’s not just going to go out and leave it alone. You go through the Scriptures and find over and

over this continual thing. God is allowing that because that's a trial and a test on God's people. Are we, when the work is being attacked from without, going to show courage and the dedication to look to God, to trust God and to serve God in the midst of external persecution and difficulty? When the work is being attacked and the devil is attempting to subvert it and destroy it from within either through gossip, rumor and accusation or through compromise, as occurred in the days of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah, what are we going to do? Are we going to keep our eyes on God's law? Are we going to be careful and do what we should do? These things were preserved for God's people. The thing we can be assured of is that we go through some of these things over and over. We have to keep our orientation where it should be—to serve God, to put God first and to realize that God has a plan and a purpose. We can't afford to get derailed from the track that God wants His people going down. As you go through the story, you find over and over that those were the issues.

When God concluded the Old Testament, He concluded it in the Writings section, with books that had a timeless message for the people of God. That set the stage for the New Testament with information that was important for God's people to understand at the time when Jesus came as the Messiah and the New Testament Church was raised up and established.

With that, we have concluded the Old Testament. We have concluded the section of the Writings. We will get into the book of Revelation next Bible study.

Bible Study # 93
July 28, 1992
Mr. John Ogwyn

Introduction to Revelation

This evening we are **going to be getting into the book of Revelation**. I want to **give you some background in regards to the book of Revelation, as well as an overview of the book and the material that is coming**.

The Apostle John wrote the book of Revelation. He was the last surviving of the original twelve apostles. He lived about twenty-five to thirty years beyond the other original apostles. The Apostle John, the last surviving of the twelve, wrote the book of Revelation while he was in exile on the Isle of Patmos. This was during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian. From secular historical sources, we are able to date the couple of years that John was in exile. He was banished to Patmos, a tiny, little rocky island off the coast of ancient Asia Minor. John was exiled and banished from the mainland to a tiny island in the Mediterranean off the coast of modern-day Turkey.

We date the book of Revelation about 96 A.D. Conceivably the date could vary a year, one way or the other. John was on Patmos for about two and one-half years or something like that, so we pick the middle date.

The first question we might look at has to do with the matter of John's authorship. Depending on which commentary you use and which sources you look at, you will find that many of the commentators, particularly the modern commentaries, will question that John wrote the book of Revelation. Let's look and understand why I say that he wrote the book of Revelation. There are several reasons for not questioning John's authorship.

To begin with, the fact that John was the author of the book of Revelation was never called into question until about 200 A.D. There aren't any records that there was a dispute. The book of Revelation itself clearly states that John wrote it. It starts out clearly stating that John wrote it. No one questioned until 200 A.D. that the John who wrote the book of Revelation was the John who was one of the twelve. The questioning of John's authorship was never an issue or question in the area of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) at the time of the first century and for quite a number of centuries afterward.

This was primarily an area of Greek settlement. There were other areas, but this was a Greek-

speaking area. There was a very large Greek population that had colonized in that area.

If you remember, the book of Revelation was addressed to the seven Churches in cities in Asia Minor. Churches were located in cities that were on an ancient Roman mail route. The cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea were the ones that were specifically enumerated in Revelation. The Churches in those seven cities were the recipients of this original book.

John had lived in Ephesus. It appears from the historical record that the city of Ephesus was where he lived during the latter years of his life.

The Apostle Paul raised up the Church in the area of Ephesus on his first evangelistic journey back in the late 40s A.D. It was the same area to which Timothy was later assigned responsibility. We find Timothy residing in Ephesus in the latter epistles of the Apostle Paul. Ephesus was an area that Paul visited on several occasions and had spent quite a bit of time there. It is the area where we find the Apostle John living in the 80s and 90s A.D. He was exiled from there by the emperor Domitian. About 98 A.D. he was allowed to return from exile on Patmos. He died within a relatively short period of time in or near Ephesus.

There isn't any record that any of the Churches in ancient Asia Minor or any of the Christian writers in that area ever disputed John's authorship. In those cities, it was taken for granted that John wrote the book of Revelation. The question of John's authorship was primarily raised after 200 A.D.

The original focus of that rejection was in the area of Alexandria, Egypt. The only reason they questioned John's authorship was to undermine the authority of the book or to remove it from the canon of Scripture. Of course, there were those in the area of Alexandria (and in Rome a little later) that certainly had incentive to do this.

There are various reasons why the book of Revelation was viewed as an undesirable book by the professing Christian church. What you find developing and what Revelation and other parts of the New Testament certainly make plain is that there is a clear dichotomy between two churches. One Church really was the Church Jesus Christ built—the Church of which He Himself was the living head, the Church that remained faithful to Jesus Christ and what He taught. A second church was a professing Christian church—a church that professed or acknowledged, on the one hand, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah—they acknowledged

that, they said that—but they didn't teach what He taught.

The professing Christian church substituted a message of their own devising. They substituted various heresies that were rampant in the Jewish world in the early first and second century A.D., along with the ideas of the Samaritans and some of the concepts that were extant in the pagan Greek and Roman world. All these heresies were brought into this other church.

There were two churches: one was a church that was certainly increasingly visible and powerful; the other was God's Church that was increasingly disappearing from public view.

II Thessalonians 2:7, Paul wrote, "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work...." The mystery religion that deals with lawlessness and is based on lawlessness was already at work.

About fifteen years after Paul wrote those words in II Thessalonians, the Apostle Jude wrote and told the Christians in Jude 3, "Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."

This shows there was an increasing danger of the faith once delivered being lost and obscured because something else was increasingly dominant and visible.

In the last Bible study where we concluded the Old Testament period, we focused on the role of the Samaritans. We went forward to the New Testament and saw that there was a man by the name of Simon the Sorcerer or Simon the Magician. In secular history he is called Simon Magus. "Magus" is simply the Greek word for "magician" or "sorcerer." It's where we got our word "magician."

In Acts 8:9-13, we are simply told that this Simon was the religious leader of the Samaritan community. He was one to whom all of the Samaritans gave heed, from the greatest to the least. He was considered by them to be the great power of God. He was an individual who practiced sorcery and witchcraft and accomplished various false miracles. We are told that he bewitched the people of Samaria with sorceries. He was an individual of great renown. He was an individual who was impressed by the preaching of Philip and he accepted (at least outwardly or seemingly) the message that Philip preached. When many of the Samaritans were baptized, Simon was baptized.

Verses 18-21, he sought to buy for himself a position of leadership. He sought to buy an apostleship from the Apostle Peter. Peter told him, 'You have neither part nor lot with us.' "Part nor lot" was a phrase that specifically had reference to an apostleship, a membership in the group of the twelve. The only other place that phrase is used in the New Testament is in Acts 1:24-26 where it refers to Matthias being chosen by *lot* to fill the *part* of Judas and be part of the twelve.

So, when Peter said in Acts 8:21, "You have neither part nor portion [KJV, "lot"] in this matter," that was the reference.

Verse 23, he told Simon, "For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity [lawlessness]."

We looked at the Samaritans and the Samaritan religion at the last Bible study. This plays an important role because when you go through the book of Acts, you find that the core, the center, of the congregations that were raised up in the New Testament were in the Jewish community in various cities. Whether in Ephesus, Colosse, Rome or wherever—it might be throughout the Gentile world—still, the starting point was in the synagogue.

As the Church expanded out of Judea and the immediate areas, still, the starting point was in the synagogue and the core of believers were Jews and Gentiles who attended the synagogue and listened to the law. There were many Gentiles who were sort of "hangers-on." They had not formally converted to Judaism and been circumcised, but they would regularly attend the Sabbath services and hear the law read. The original Christian community in any of these areas centered among the Jews who were converted and Gentiles, conversant with Judaism, who were converted. Then from there, other Gentiles were added in. You had a central core of people that were familiar with the law and the Scriptures.

That was possible because there was a Jewish Diaspora—in other words, a dispersion, a scattering of the Jewish community throughout the known world. It had happened because of the various captivities. God is able to take something that looks like a catastrophe and make something good and positive out of it. The captivities and the scattering of the Jewish community must have looked catastrophic to many, and yet God took it and made something positive out of it. This scattering of the Jewish community throughout the Roman world meant that there was a nucleus in virtually any city of size. There

were people who were conversant with the law and had access to the Scriptures.

You have to realize that access to the Scriptures was a key point. In many of these cities and locales, there was only one copy in the whole community, and that was in the synagogue. And a lot of synagogues did not even have a complete copy of all the books of the Scriptures. They may have only had copies of the book of the Law (the five books of Moses) and perhaps portions of some of the others.

You have to realize it was a very expensive proposition. If you had to hire a scholar to sit down and copy out by hand a manuscript of the Bible, how expensive do you think an entire copy would be? How long would it take someone to sit down and copy out the whole thing by hand? You are probably looking at the equivalent of a year's wages. That would be at a professional level because the scribes of the law were some of the most educated people in the community. Otherwise, you would wound up with all sorts of errors creeping in. So, you are looking at something that was very expensive.

For an individual to have his own copy of the entire Bible would have cost a fortune. As a result, there would have been only a very, very few people who could have ever had such a thing. An individual would have to be very wealthy. In most cases, there were copies in the synagogue and people came in and studied there. They came in and had access to it there, and it was read on the Sabbath. They could come in through the week and have access to portions of it. It was important. That was the nucleus.

The point I am getting to is that while the Jewish community was the core and nucleus for the spreading of the Gospel and for the expansion of the true Church of God, there was another Diaspora that had taken place in the days of Alexander the Great. There was a Samaritan Diaspora, or dispersion; there was a scattering from the Samaritan community. The two centers of the Samaritan community outside of Samaria were in Alexandria and Rome.

We read that Simon was the religious leader of the Samaritans. He was the one to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, as being the great power of God (Acts 8:10). What we have to understand is that here is a man who had influence and was recognized wherever there was a Samaritan community. We went into a little bit of the background of the Samaritans in the last Bible study and in previous Bible studies. We must realize that while they outwardly acknowledged the name of God and

identified with many things relating to the God of Israel and to the Scriptures, they in reality practiced the customs and the traditions of the old Babylonian pagan religion. There were various Greek thoughts that had come in and even other ideas and philosophies added in. So, just as there was the true Church, there was also a mystery of iniquity that was already at work in the early days that ultimately became the great visible church that was dominant.

In the book of Revelation, the seat of apostasy is clearly identified as being Rome. That's one of the reasons why some of the early church fathers objected to the book of Revelation. They did not like it because the seat of apostasy is clear.

In Revelation 17, it talks about the great whore, a great fallen woman, a great prostitute.

Revelation 17:1, we are told, "...the great harlot who sits on many waters." What is that?

Verse 15, "...The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues." Here is a great whore that is dominant over many different people, languages and nations. It is pictured as riding the beast (v. 3).

Verse 5, this is identified further, "And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

The true Church of God is pictured under the guise of a woman. The true Church is pictured as the virgin bride of Christ awaiting Jesus Christ. Here we have another woman who is pictured, but this time it is someone that would be typical of or a type of Jezebel, as opposed to Sarah.

Why do I say Rome is identified?

Verse 9, as we come down a little further, "Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits."

Verse 18, "And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth."

Now which great city reigns over the kings of the earth and sits on seven literal mountains? Even in the first century you could figure that out. The great city that was predominant was Rome. Traditionally, Rome was called "the city of seven hills." Rome was built on seven hills. It was the city of seven hills. It was a city that reigned over the kings of the earth. It was the world capital. Really, it was the capital of the known world—of the Roman Empire.

In Revelation 17, we have a woman (a false church) who is identified with Rome. How many great cities reign over the kings of the earth and

sit on seven hills? How many of those are you aware of? Certainly with that description, it fit into the first and second centuries. The identification of Rome as the seat of apostasy was clear enough that even early church commentators realized where it was, what was being addressed and who was being addressed. Therefore, you might realize that the book of Revelation was not particularly popular in Rome. It was not popular there because it pointed out Rome as the seat of apostasy.

Another factor is that by about 250 A.D., they began to get away from the understanding of the literal one thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth. The book of Revelation teaches the literal one thousand-year reign of Christ and the saints. Revelation 5:10, ““And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.”” That’s pretty clear; it’s pretty plain. We will go through that in a couple of Bible studies.

Revelation 20:4, “...And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” It talks about the fact of the one thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ.

Verse 6, “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection...they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

As the false church (that ultimately developed into the Roman Catholic Church) grew in terms of influence in the Roman world, the teaching of the literal one thousand-year rule of Christ and the saints was discarded. Certainly, by the time of the conversion of the Emperor Constantine, the teaching was discarded. It ultimately came to be viewed that the Kingdom of God was already here. The church was viewed as the kingdom of God on earth.

Augustine, one of the early Catholic Church fathers in the fifth century A.D., wrote the book for which he is perhaps most well known entitled, The City of God. He makes the point that the church is the kingdom of God on earth. Rome becomes the city of God and the Roman Empire is transformed. The book of Revelation clearly teaches the fact that the kingdoms of this world will collapse and be replaced by the government of God.

As the professing Christian church moved further and further in that direction and into political accommodation with the Roman Empire, the one thousand-year reign of Christ on earth became increasingly an unpopular teaching. The literal proof of the Millennium began to be considered as simply an opinion or

as one possible interpretation. Then within a matter of years, it began to be regarded as sort of a curiosity or something that was a doubtful idea and opinion. Within a matter of years after that, it was treated as absolute heresy and something that was contrary to teaching.

We have to realize that those who gave heed to Simon Magus and those in the areas of the Samaritan community accepted these fundamental errors. Fundamentally, their problem revolved around the authority of the law of God. The Samaritans had a tendency toward absorbing popular religious teachings and a melding of things together. They picked what was viewed as the best out of all of it and melded it together. That was the Babylonian approach and an approach the Samaritans had evidenced.

The fundamental problem was a problem with the law of God and with the necessity for literal obedience to the law of God. They got off track with that. The fundamental error was a misunderstanding of grace and a false teaching regarding the necessity to keep the commandments. Other heresies and other ideas came in. There were a variety of heresies and some of these various sects persecuted one another. They didn’t agree individually. There was one standard brand that sort of came out and became predominant.

During the time Constantine was emperor, there were various heresies in various parts. Constantine saw the potential of having one religion to unite the empire. The old Roman mythology was pretty well bankrupt. Nobody took it seriously. Many approaches to Christian teaching had spread. He saw there was a need for standardization and picked, as his brand, that which was promulgated by the bishop of Rome. He called the Council of Nicaea and basically presided over it. What came to be considered the Catholic Church derived much of the standardization from there. Various heresies that were extant in the pagan world were increasingly accepted and the heresies grew. They got further and further away from the truth. We, perhaps at some future time, will go through a Bible study on that. It’s very interesting as to how, once they began to get off track, they literally moved further and further away.

Revelation clearly teaches the literal one thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. By the second century A.D., that was an unpopular doctrine. The book of Revelation is very Old Testament in flavor. There are at least two hundred eighty-five specific Old Testament references given in the book of Revelation. The

Old Testament had fallen out of favor. Revelation certainly teaches obedience to the law of God.

In Revelation 12:17, the true people of God are those identified as those, “who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” The true people of God are clearly identified as commandment keepers. That wasn’t a very popular teaching at the time the authority of the book of Revelation came to be questioned. There isn’t any reason to question the authorship of the book of Revelation apart from trying to undermine the authority of the book. There was a clear agreement in the areas to which Revelation is addressed. There was never a dispute as to who wrote it. The dispute arose elsewhere at a later point in time.

The book of Revelation plays a very important part in the canon of the Bible. The canon is a set of books that are accepted as authoritative. There have been many books that have been written. There have been many books that have been written by servants of God, but everything that has been written was not chosen as a part of the canon of Scripture.

You can read in I Kings 4:32 about how many songs and proverbs Solomon wrote. You can look in the Bible and you don’t find all of those. Solomon wrote a portion of the Bible, but everything he wrote isn’t in the Bible. You find various prophets mentioned in the Old Testament for whom there isn’t any book in the Old Testament. That’s not to say that they didn’t write letters or certain things, but God didn’t preserve everything that any servant of His ever wrote.

There were specific things that God inspired to be preserved for His people for all times. Some things only had relevance to those people at that time. Elijah was a great prophet of God, but there isn’t a book of Elijah preserved in the Scriptures. Elijah’s message was, for the most part, a message that had relevance to his time, his age and his people. The portion of it that has relevance to us is preserved in I & II Kings and II Chronicles. We have a little summary of Elijah’s ministry and some examples but very little of what he preached. That was not primarily relevant for us and God didn’t see fit to preserve that.

Much of what Isaiah wrote is clearly preserved for us because it has relevance to us today that is far more relevant than the relevance it had at the time it was delivered. So, certain books were chosen as a part of the canon of Scripture.

The book of Revelation clearly finishes up the canon of Scripture. Revelation clearly is the logical conclusion of the Bible. Just as Genesis begins the Bible, Revelation ends it. The book of Revelation perfectly corresponds to the book of Genesis. The Bible starts in a logical place.

Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Where would you start with a book like the Bible? Well, you start in the beginning; that’s a logical place to start. You could start it in a number of places, but that’s where God chose to start and tell the story in a logical way.

We conclude with the book of Revelation. How does the book of Revelation perfectly correspond to the book Genesis? Here are two books written in two different languages in completed form. Moses wrote the book of Genesis and completed it prior to 1400 B.C. The book of Revelation was completed just prior to 100 A.D. You are looking at fifteen hundred years. Fifteen hundred years is a long time.

Fifteen hundred years ago was just after the fall of the Roman Empire. I tell you what—there’s a lot of “water under the bridge” in fifteen hundred years. How much do any of us know about what was going on fifteen hundred years ago? Here was a book that was written fifteen hundred years later than another book. It was written in a different language, in a different culture and different societal setting; yet **they perfectly correspond as the beginning and the end.**

Let’s notice **one contrast.** The book of Genesis starts where?

Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The book of Genesis starts with the creation of the heavens and the earth. What does the book of Revelation end with?

Revelation 21:1, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.” Genesis starts with the fact that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Revelation ends with the fact that the old heavens and earth pass away and a new heaven and a new earth come to be.

There is a **second contrast.** The book of Genesis opens with a tree in the midst of the garden, a tree that was called the tree of life (Genesis 2:9). We find man excluded from the garden (Genesis 3:22-24). Why?

Genesis 3:22, “...lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.” Man is excluded from the Garden of Eden. Man is excluded and cut off from access to

the tree of life. Genesis begins with man's exile from access to the presence of the tree of life.

Revelation 22:2, we find, "In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." We have a description of a time when access is given to the tree of life. The book of Genesis opens with man being excluded from the tree of life. The book of Revelation concludes with man being given access to the tree of life. The tree of life is made available. Again, we have this description.

Revelation 22:14, "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city." We conclude the book of Revelation with access to the tree of life.

There is a **third contrast**. In Genesis, we find death introduced.

Genesis 2:17, "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Death is introduced in the book of Genesis. Death is abolished in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 21:4, "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." We are told there will not be any more death. Genesis opens with death being introduced. Revelation ends with death being abolished.

There is a **fourth contrast**. Genesis 3 introduces Satan's deception of man.

Genesis 3:1-4, "Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, "you shall not eat it, nor touch it, lest you die.'" And the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die.'"

We open the book of Genesis with lies and deceits promulgated by Satan the devil. We end the book of Revelation with the story of what's going to happen to conclude Satan's deception.

Revelation 20:1-3, "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a

thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished...."

As we go through Revelation 20 and 21, we find that the consequences of Satan's deception are concluded. Satan and his influence on mankind are ultimately and finally removed. Genesis opens with Satan's deception. Revelation concludes with the final consequence and result of that deception.

Revelation 20:14-15, ultimately, "Then Death and Hades [hell, the grave] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."

There is a **fifth contrast** with Revelation and Genesis. The book of Genesis gives us the story of the removal of God's government from the earth; the book of Revelation concludes with the restoration of God's government and the presence of God. Mankind elects to build his own society, his own culture, his own civilization cut off from God and under the sway of Satan's deception. The book of Revelation concludes with the collapse and destruction of the civilization that man built.

In Genesis, we read of a city that had its beginnings with a tower—the Tower of Babel. If you look at Genesis 11 and 12, you have a story in contrast between two men who each had a vision of a city. In Genesis 11, you read of a man by the name of Nimrod who was looked to by others. We find that the beginning of his kingdom was Babel. He built the beginnings of Babylon. The story of the rest of the Bible—the story of mankind's civilization, society and culture—is the story of Babylon.

Revelation 18:2, we read, "And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen....'" —The destruction of Babylon.

In Genesis 12, we read of a man who came from the area of Babylon, a man by the name of Abraham or Abram as he was known originally.

Genesis 12:1, "Now the Lord had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, from your kindred and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you.'"

Verse 4, we are told, "So Abraham departed...." He left Babylon. He went to another place where he dwelt as a stranger, a pilgrim and a sojourner.

Hebrews 11:10 tells us, "for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." He died in faith, not having received the promises that he believed, and lived

his life in anticipation of (v. 13). The book of Revelation concludes with the destruction of Babylon, that final continuation of what Nimrod had begun.

In Revelation 21, we find New Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:2, “Then, I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God...”

A city whose maker and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10), a city that has twelve foundations (Revelation 21:19-20). That is the city Abraham looked for throughout the period of his life and died in faith without ever having seen it.

We have a clear contrast in the book of Revelation between the beginning of man’s civilization and society cut off from the government of God. The book of Revelation shows the collapse of that system and the restoration of the government of God to this earth. Genesis shows God’s government removed from the earth and Revelation shows God’s government restored to the earth.

The **sixth contrast** has to do with the final fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham. In Genesis 12, Abraham was told to go out of his country.

Hebrews 11:8, “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would afterward receive for an inheritance...”

Verses 9-10, 13, we are told that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob dwelt as pilgrims and sojourners and they died in faith, not having received the promises. They looked for a city.

Hebrews 11:15-16, “And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country...” They sought a city whose maker and builder was God. The book of Revelation shows the final fulfillment and accomplishment of the promises of God. We finally see the fulfillment of the promises God made to Abraham beginning in Genesis 12. Genesis shows the promises made; Revelation shows the promises fulfilled.

The **seventh contrast**, we will note, is that the book of Genesis introduces curses. The book of Revelation abolishes curses. There are several curses that are mentioned in the book of Genesis. We will notice three. In Genesis 3, we have the deception and the sin of Adam and Eve. We have a curse pronounced. The first curse is pronounced.

Genesis 3:17-19, “Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have heeded the voice of your

wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground...”

The ground was cursed because of mankind’s sin.

In Genesis 4, we read of yet another curse. We find Cain murdering Abel.

Genesis 4:11-12, “‘So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.’”

As we come forward, a little bit further in Genesis, we find the story of Noah. The sin of Canaan is described in Genesis 9. We find Canaan cursed.

Genesis 9:25, “Then he said: ‘Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren.’”

Genesis starts out with the introduction of curses on the human family. There are various curses. There were curses that were introduced on the very ground and its productivity and curses that were introduced upon branches of the human family because of sin. Curses are ultimately there because of sin.

When the book of Revelation concludes, we find that there will not be any more curses. God removed the curses that were there.

Revelation 22:3, “And there shall be no more curse...”

If you go through, there are various curses that you can read. I just mentioned three. It might be interesting to go through the book of Genesis sometimes and look at the curses that were introduced. We are to realize that those curses will not be completely removed until the time of the new heavens and the new earth because curses are ultimately the consequences of sin.

Revelation tells us the end of the matter, just as Genesis tells us the beginning. Genesis tells us the beginning of sin and the curses that originated from sin. Revelation tells us the conclusion of God’s plan and the removal of those curses.

There are **four basic ways of interpreting the book of Revelation**. The **first approach** of those is called a spiritual interpretation. That may sound like the best because, after all, we do want to be spiritual. But that is not the case. The spiritual interpretation means spiritual as

opposed to literal. It is an interpretation that originated in Alexandria. It is based on the concept of allegory. The Greeks had developed a practice of treating their earlier writings in mythologies as allegories. If you've read Greek mythology, you realize it's the stuff which modern soap operas are made. The moral tone and character of it are sort of like "As the Stomach Turns" or whatever it is. "As the World Turns"—that's what they call it. The point is that most of Greek and Roman mythology is about every sort of thing from rape, incest, murder, intrigue and lying. —Just read the stories that Homer wrote, The Iliad and The Odyssey, that Virgil, the Roman writer, wrote of the story, The Enid or when you read what Hesiod, another of the early Greek contemporaries of Homer, wrote of the basic myths of the Greek and Roman world.

In later centuries, they were a little bit embarrassed by this, so they developed a method of interpretation and treated it all as allegory. They said it was not meant to be taken as a literal story about people or about God. They said it was allegory and the names of the individuals were symbolic of various vices and virtues. That was the way they held on to the tradition of their mythology and yet got away from the embarrassment that was attached to the fact that such trash would be the best religious literature they could come up with. This was their approach. It became an approach toward interpretation and of treating things as an allegory.

That proved to be a very convenient method for some of the early writers, even in the Jewish and Samaritan communities in the early so-called Christian community because it was a convenient way of getting around the literal statements of the Bible. If you treat the Bible as an allegory, then you don't have to literally take what it says. If you come across something that's inconvenient to do or to believe, just treat it as an allegory.

The spiritual interpretation of Revelation originated in Alexandria. Alexandria was a seat of this sort of thing and this approach based on allegory. In other words, this approach overlooked the fact that Revelation claimed to be a prophecy. The primary Catholic approach to the interpretation of Revelation is that it is an allegory of the struggle between good and evil. If you were to consult a Catholic commentary, they would tell you that Revelation should primarily be understood as an allegory of the struggle between good and evil. If you treat it all as an

allegory, then when it says there is going to be a thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth, that's not saying He's really going to reign a thousand years—that's just an allegorical way of saying that good will eventually triumph over evil. They treat it as an allegory and get around having to really examine what the text says. That was the approach that came to be introduced when they couldn't actually get rid of it. It was too clearly attested to as a part of Scripture, so the approach was to treat it as an allegory. That was one way of interpreting it. You will find that mentioned in some of the commentaries.

There is a **second approach** that is commonly used by a lot of modern commentaries. I will give you the term. It is a technical term, but you may run across it if you read a commentary that deals with Revelation. It's called "Praeterism." That means the whole book of Revelation has already been fulfilled, that it was fulfilled at the persecution of Nero. They say, 'When it talks about these seven heads and all of this, this is just talking about Roman emperors way back in the first century. It is saying that John was simply writing about this time and all the symbolism refers to what was going on in the Roman Empire—the problems the church was having in the first century, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and all this sort of thing. That's all it was talking about.'

If you throw God out of the picture or if you don't believe that God was inspiring something, you say, 'Well, look, these people were simply writing about what was going on around them. They were writing about the events they were living through. And John describes with hyperbole and with exaggeration. He describes in symbolic language specific things that were happening in the Roman Empire at the time. It's not prophetic and there are all sorts of interpretations.'

Revelation 17:10, where it talks about the seven horns, it says, "...five are fallen and one is and the other is yet to come..." Certain commentaries will even tell you this is talking about Roman emperors and that Nero is the "one that is," that there were five before him and then the next one after him. They say, 'It's just that things were so bad at the time of Nero that John thought that the world was going to come to an end at the time of Nero.'

Well, that's silly. There are several reasons. It ignores all of the evidence that the true date of the book is about thirty years after Nero died. It would be sort of stupid for me to sit down and write a book about how World War II was the

end of the world. It wouldn't make a whole lot of sense. It's a little bit late to come up with something like that now.

There's plenty of evidence that clearly dates the fact that Revelation was written in the late 90s A.D. It was written at the time that John was in exile on the isle of Patmos. There are even secular records that attest to the date that John was in exile on Patmos and the specific persecution in the reign of Domitian. There are even secular historical records of the reign of Domitian that specifically date the period of the exile of Christian leadership that exiled John.

The book of Revelation claims as a time setting the day of the Lord (Revelation 1:10). They cannot accept the book for what it claims to be. The book of Revelation clearly claims to be something far beyond merely the historical record of what was happening in Rome at the time. The Praeterist approach is primarily used by many of the modern and more secular commentators that really want to distance themselves from God and any specific revelation from God.

There is a **third approach** of interpreting the book of Revelation. It is called the continuous historical approach. This claims that the book covers the whole period of church history from John until the present. What they try to do is to correlate the events that are described in Revelation with various historical events. The abomination of desolation, for instance, is often connected to the days that the Moslems built the Dome of the Rock on the site of the original temple. That is one point that is often made. It uses the historical approach. There is a tiny element in this approach, but there's far too much emphasis on the historical. It's the wrong thrust because the book of Revelation clearly says that its primary setting is the Day of the Lord (Revelation 1:10); the prophecies of Revelation center around the Day of the Lord.

A **fourth approach** of interpreting the book of Revelation is what's called the futurist approach. This claims that the book is future and centered around the time of Christ's return. This approach is the nearest to being correct. We will see more specifics on this as we go through the next Bible study. It will give you an idea.

Let's look a little bit at what Revelation is. Revelation 1:1, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John."

Here is the "specific purpose statement" of the book. Everybody who's been in Spokesman's Club knows the importance of having an SPS (specific purpose statement). Here is John's SPS. It clearly tells you exactly what Revelation is. It is the Revelation of Jesus Christ. A lot of people say you can't understand anything about Revelation. The word is "revelation." It's not the *concealing* of Jesus Christ; it's the *revealing* of Jesus Christ. The word in Greek is "apocalypse." It is where we get our term "apocalyptic." "Apocalypse" is a Greek word for "revealing." This is a revealing of information. You remember when Jesus ascended to heaven? The disciples asked Him, "How long?"

Acts 1:6-7, "Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' And He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.'" There were things that God had simply not revealed before.

Daniel concluded with a desire to know what his prophecies meant.

Daniel 12:8-9, "Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, 'My lord, what shall be the end of these things?' And he said, 'Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.'"

Revelation provides the information that is necessary. It is the revelation. It is the revelation by the living resurrected Jesus Christ of information that God gave Him.

Revelation 1:1, God the Father allowed this to be revealed by Jesus Christ for the purpose of "[showing] His servants the things that must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John."

The book of Revelation records three things. That's mentioned in v. 2. What did John bear witness (KJV, "record") of?

Verse 2, "who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, and to all things that he saw."

Three things: 1) "the word of God," which is direct statements of God, the law of God which is the revelation of God, 2) "the testimony of Jesus Christ," which is the things of which Jesus Christ bore witness to John and 3) "to things that John saw," which is John's dream or vision.

In much of the book of Revelation, John wrote a description of what he saw. He had to describe it in a language of his day. If you or I were to see a movie and in that movie there were all sorts of things that we had never seen before, if we were describing it to somebody else, we would have to

use terminology that had significance to us. We would say we saw something. 'It was like this, yet it was a little bit like that. It was sort of similar to something else and we saw it.' We would have to use the vocabulary we have.

As new inventions have come along, of course, new words have had to be created for the language. If you were to go back one hundred fifty years and mention the word "automobile," nobody would know what you meant. Certain words in the English language had origins in Latin. The term "auto" and "mobile" had their origin in the Latin language. "Auto" meant "self" and "mobile" had to do with "something that moved." So, a new word was created out of words that already existed. Here was something that moved by itself, as opposed to being pulled by an animal. But if you were to use that word at an earlier time, they wouldn't have known what you meant. That's why when the automobile was first invented, many people referred to it as a horseless carriage.

Mr. Armstrong used to tell the story of when he was a little boy about six years old. One day his father said, 'Quick, quick, come here and look. There's a horseless carriage.' That was something they had heard of but had never seen. He came running to the window to look out and here was a carriage that was hitched up to mules instead of horses. His father had a big laugh, 'See, it's a horseless carriage.'

The point is that John, with his vocabulary, had trouble describing what he saw. He had to describe what you read in Revelation in the vocabulary that he had, just as you and I would have to describe something we saw in the vocabulary we have. Many of the things he saw in vision were things that, at the time he lived, didn't yet exist. He was transported in vision about two thousand years into the future.

Revelation includes "the word of God," what God said. It includes "the testimony that Jesus Christ bore," the statements that He made to John. And it includes "the things that John saw." The theme of the book of Revelation is given in Revelation 1:10, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet."

This expression "in the Spirit" has to do with receiving a vision or a revelation of God. The word that is translated "on" in v. 10 is from a Greek word that would be spelled "en." Most times when that word is used in Greek, it is rendered by the English word "in." This little word in Greek is pronounced "in," only it is spelled "e-n." Our word "in" is spelled "i-n."

The Greek word "en" is most commonly rendered by the English word "in" and it means "in" in the sense of "during the time of"—"in" in the sense of time, as opposed to "in" as inside something. Our word "in" can have a variety of meanings. John says, "I was in the Spirit in [or during] the time of the Lord's Day."

Now, what is the Lord's Day? Many of the Protestants like to quote Revelation 1:10 and say they don't keep the Sabbath; they keep the Lord's Day just like God does. Show me here anything that gives any indication whatsoever that it is talking about Sunday. There isn't any place in the Bible that says Sunday or the first day of the week is the Lord's Day. The point is that he is not talking about Sunday or Saturday. He's not talking about either one. If you want to know what he is talking about, just turn back to the book of Joel.

Joel 1:15, "Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is at hand..." Joel talks about the "Day of the Lord." Revelation talks about the "Lord's Day."

That is a distinction we make in English; it wouldn't be an issue in French. If you were saying "the Lord's Day" in French, it would literally translate as "the Day of the Lord." We use the "'s" for possessive in English. We use two different possessives in English. You can say either "Day of the Lord" or "Lord's Day." We have two ways of making the possession. You can say "John's house" or "the house of John." In the French language, as in many other languages, you don't have that double type of possessive. A number of you speak French. The only way you translate it would be "Day of the Lord."

By the way, that's the way a French Bible translates Revelation 1:10, "I was in the Spirit in the day of the Lord..." which is exactly the way the Greek is, too. The Greek does not have "'s." The problem with Revelation 1:10 is a problem that only exists in English translations. If you were reading it in a French translation or in original Greek, it wouldn't create the same problem.

It only creates a problem in English because some have tried to say that "Lord's Day" means something totally different from "Day of the Lord." They say it's talking about Sunday. Where does it say anything about Sunday? It doesn't mention first day, seventh day or any other day. John was in the Spirit. He was transported in the Spirit (in vision) forward to the time of the Day of the Lord. That's the point of the book of Revelation. The theme of the book of

Revelation is centering around the Day of the Lord. The book of Revelation isn't centering around the Sabbath. It's not centering around Sunday. It's centering around that period in time of God's intervention, the period when God steps into history and intervenes in the affairs of man. It's called in Scripture by the general broad term "the Day of the Lord."

This is man's day—a time when God is pretty well keeping hands off except in specific cases where He might choose to intervene because He is working out a plan and a purpose. But, basically, this is the day of man. This is the time when man is pursuing his own way. The time is going to come when God will step into history.

Revelation centers on that Day of the Lord. Revelation 1:10 makes it very clear that the primary setting of the book of Revelation is prophetic. It is for a time in the future, centering around the time of Christ's intervention and return to the earth.

Revelation 1:1 shows that some of what is revealed consisted of things that were going to shortly take place. We are going to get into some of that next time. We are going to go into Revelation 2 and 3 that deal with the specific messages to the seven Churches. You will find there are story-flow chapters and inset chapters. The first five chapters are sort of inset chapters. Chapter 1 is an introduction.

Chapters 2 and 3 deal with a summary of the history of the Church from the time of the New Testament period all the way down to ahead of us.

Chapters 4 and 5 deal with a vision of heaven.

Chapter 6, we get into the story flow. Chapter 6 deals with the opening of the first six of the seven seals.

Chapter 7 is another inset which gives the story of the sealing of the one hundred forty-four thousand.

Chapters 8, 9 and 10 continue the story flow down through the events connected with the seventh seal.

Chapters 11, 12, 13 and 14 again are inset information.

Chapter 11 deals with the two witnesses.

Chapter 12, the true Church is protected in the wilderness.

Chapter 13 gives a description of the Beast.

Chapter 14 focuses on the one hundred forty-four thousand again.

Chapters 15 and 16 continue the story flow of the seven last plagues.

Chapters 17 and 18 again are insets.

Chapter 17 is about the Beast and the great whore.

Chapter 18 is the fall of Babylon the Great (or Rome).

Then the story flow is continued in chapters 19, 20 and 21.

Chapter 19 gives the marriage supper. It tells us about the marriage supper of the lamb.

Chapter 20 is about the Millennium and the White Throne.

Chapter 21 describes the new heavens and the new earth.

Chapter 22 is another inset with sort of concluding remarks.

If you follow the story down through, chapter 6 has the first six seals. Chapters 8, 9 and 10 have the description of the seventh seal (the seven trumpets). Chapters 15 and 16 have more description of the seven last plagues, which are a part of the seventh seal or the seventh trumpet of the seventh seal. Then chapter 19 tells what happens after that—the marriage supper. Chapter 20 is about the Millennium and the White Throne. Chapter 21 is about the new heavens and the new earth.

It just runs down in story flow with continual insets that sort of break into the story flow to give you information and details about something. We will go through that in detail in the following Bible studies.

The next Bible study we will cover the first three chapters of Revelation, primarily focusing on the message to each of the seven Churches.

Bible Study # 94
August 11, 1992
Mr. John Ogwyn

Book of Revelation Series—Revelation 1—3

I want to get right into the book of Revelation this evening. We had an introduction to the book last time. Primarily, we **are focusing on Revelation 2 and 3 this evening that deal with the seven Churches of the book of Revelation.**

Much of the material we looked at last time focused on the setting of the book and the fact that this is written as a revelation—a revealing—from God Himself. It was given to Jesus Christ to show His servants the things that must shortly come to pass. It was sent and signified by His angel unto His servant John (Revelation 1:1). This is the message that God gave.

We saw in v. 10 that John addressed the fact that he was in the Spirit. He was transported into the Day of the Lord in Spirit. This is a time setting. This is a point of time that focuses in on the end time, the time of the return of Jesus Christ, the period of the Day of the Lord, as it's termed in the book of Joel and other places.

Revelation 1:10-11, "...and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,' and, 'What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.'" So, in vision, John is transported.

All of a sudden he hears this great voice behind him.

Verses 12-19, "Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lamp stands, and in the midst of the seven lamp stands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and His hair were white like wool, and white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. Write the things which you have seen, and the things

which are, and the things which will take place after this.'"

Then He begins to interpret some of the symbolism that John saw.

Verse 20, "'The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lamp stands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lamp stands which you saw are the seven churches.'"

There were seven Churches picked out in Asia Minor. If you have a map of Asia Minor in your Bible, I would suggest you turn to it. Asia Minor is now modern-day Turkey. These seven Churches were there. If you look closely, you will find there were other Churches that were also nearby. For instance, very near Laodicea was the Church of Colosse, to which the book of Colossians was written. There are several other cities that are mentioned. These seven are picked out.

Understand that God uses numbers in a symbolic fashion. Seven is used over and over in the book of Revelation because seven is symbolic of completion and perfection. Go back to the seven days of creation; seven stands out as God's number of completion and perfection. All through the book of Revelation you find seven stars, seven candlesticks, seven Churches, seven angels, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven last plagues, seven heads of the beast. You have the number seven over and over. You have seven here, there and yonder that is used in a symbolic way all through Revelation.

These Churches were picked out. These were Churches on a Roman mail route. They are addressed in a particular order.

The seven candlesticks—where does that symbolism come from? Does it remind you of something? If you think about it, it will remind you of the tabernacle back in the book of Exodus. Let's go back and notice, very briefly, Exodus 25 and Exodus 37.

Exodus 25:1-2, "Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 'Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering....'"

Verses 8-9, "'And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just as you shall make it.'" God revealed the way it was to be.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Hebrews that it was because it was the pattern of heavenly things (Hebrews 8:5). The things in the ark had symbolic value. They were built in a particular

way. Hold your place in Exodus 25. I want to read what Paul says in Hebrews 8.

Hebrews 8:1-2, “Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.” This is referring to the tabernacle that Moses pitched. He said that Jesus Christ is the Minister of the true tabernacle.

Continuing down in v. 5, “who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, ‘See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.’” Why was it so important that Moses make it according to the pattern? – Because it had symbolic value. Everything in the tabernacle symbolized something either in heaven or in God’s great heavenly plan.

In Exodus 25, we go through what was to be built.

Exodus 25:31-32, we find, “‘You shall also make a lamp stand of pure gold...And six branches shall come out of its sides: three branches of the lampstand out of one side, and three branches of the lamp stand out of the other side.’” There were six branches that came out of the candlestick. There was one central branch that came up, and then three on one side and three on the other, which made, of course, seven altogether.

Verse 37, “‘You shall make seven lamps for it, and they shall arrange its lamps so that they give light in front of it.’”

In Exodus 37, it describes further the making of this and how they were to do that.

Exodus 37:17, “He also made the lampstand of pure gold....”

Verse 23, “And he made its seven lamps, its wick-trimmers, and its trays of pure gold.” It talks about the seven lamps and the snuffers of it.

Here’s the point. In the tabernacle itself, when you went into the Holy Place, there were three articles of furniture. The priesthood walked into the Holy Place and there were three articles of furniture. There was a rectangular room. On one side there was a table that contained the twelve loaves of showbread or the bread of presence. This was brought in fresh every week. It was symbolic of the twelve tribes. It was there as an offering to God. These twelve unleavened loaves were on this table, the table of showbread. On the other side was this big seven-branched

candelabrum. Really, it was not a candelabrum in the sense that it held candles. It held a little bowl of olive oil because that was what they burned rather than a waxed candle. This was perpetually kept burning. This was the only light in there. Then at the back, right before the curtain that separated off the Holy of Holies, was the altar of incense.

Revelation 1:20 tells us that the seven candlesticks are the seven Churches. In the tabernacle we had this seven-branch candlestick. In Revelation, we have seven candlesticks. The people of God were symbolized by what was described there in the tabernacle. The twelve loaves were symbolic of each of the twelve tribes. They symbolized the people of God and were presented before God. These unleavened loaves represented the people of God.

Then we had the light that was provided by this candelabrum. What did Christ say in the Sermon on the Mount? Didn’t He say that we are to be the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-15)? God’s people through the centuries are symbolized as the light of the world. The lamp burned olive oil. Olive oil is used in the Bible as a type of God’s Spirit.

How do we give off light to the world? For light to be given off, there has to be a fuel supply. Our lights in here are electric. If the electricity went out, we wouldn’t have any lights. If you have candles and all the wax burns away, you don’t have any more light. If you have a kerosene lantern, when the kerosene burns up, you don’t have any more light. There has to be a supply of fuel. Olive oil was the fuel. Just as in our lives—the only way we are going to be a light to the world is God’s Spirit in us. This was symbolic of the people of God.

I don’t have time to go into the parallels of the Old Testament. But if you go through the history of the people of God **in the Old Testament period, there were seven successive stages in the history of the people of God:** 1) the period of Moses and Joshua, 2) the period of the Judges, 3) the period of the united monarch of Saul, David and Solomon that ruled over the entire nation, 4) the period of the divided monarchy that continued on down to the captivity, 5) the period of restoration and after the time of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah, that restoration period that continued all the way down through the Hellenistic time, 6) the revival that took place at the time of the Macabbees, about one hundred sixty years prior to Christ and the brief work that they did in the physical sense and then finally, 7) the final stage of the history of the Old

Testament Church was what we found when we come on the scene in the New Testament when Christ said the Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat (Matthew 23:2). That was the final stage of the history of the Old Testament Church.

The New Testament Church also has its history symbolized in seven stages, symbolized by these seven churches that were picked out.

These churches were picked out to illustrate something. There were other Churches in the area. This was not a letter to every Church that was in Asia Minor. There were many more than seven Churches. Colosse was right there where the rest of them were but wasn't in this group to receive the letters.

There were seven that were specifically picked out. They were on a Roman mail route, but the mail didn't run in only one direction. We have one-way streets. They didn't have one-way roads that they could go from "here to there," but they couldn't turn around and go back the other way. They didn't build roads that way in the Roman Empire. Roads ran both ways.

If you looked at the seven Churches, they sort of go around in a circle. You could have started one way or started the other way. He started where he started because there was a particular symbolism involved. God inspired that John would pick out and focus in with a message to each one of these seven congregations, focusing on certain characteristics of that congregation that were used to typify the people of God down through the centuries.

The history of God's people can be summarized in seven successive stages, symbolized by the seven candlesticks. In the Old Testament, it was one candlestick with seven branches because it was in one place, one location and everything came out of the one place. The New Testament Church was different. You are looking at different groups, different places stretched across half of the globe, as we will see as we progress through the history of the New Testament Church.

It's important to understand that Jesus Christ pictures Himself standing in the midst of these candlesticks (Revelation 1:13). The candlesticks represent the Church, the light of the world. The seven candlesticks were literally oil lamps, if you want to be technical about it because what's addressed here burned oil. Christ is pictured as standing in the midst. He wasn't just in the midst of those seven congregations in ancient Asia Minor. He is symbolized as standing in the midst because the seven Churches symbolized God's

Church throughout the centuries. Jesus Christ is pictured as standing in the midst. We see Him addressing it this way, and He addresses a message to each of the seven Churches.

Let's briefly look and summarize the history of the seven stages of God's Church. Then we will go through some of this material verse by verse.

The Church at **Ephesus** is the starting point, so that would obviously be the Church in the apostolic time. The Church of God, of course, had its beginnings Pentecost, 31 A.D. It was originally centered in the area of Judea. John died in Ephesus. This was the headquarters of the Apostle John. Remember, John outlived all the other apostles by about thirty years. For about the last thirty to thirty-five years of his life, he was the last living of the twelve. The Church was originally centered in Jerusalem and in Judea. Jerusalem was the headquarters. The Church spread out through the ministry of Paul and the other apostles. There were a number of things that happened.

I've brought these books along for a purpose. I want to show you something in just a few moments that is very instructive for us.

By 70 A.D., the true Christians had left Jerusalem. Remember, the Romans came in, destroyed Jerusalem and the Church fled Jerusalem in 69 A.D. They went to a little place called Pella and were there for a period of about sixty-five years. In the meantime, of course, various problems and difficulties had come in. There were heresies that came in. The Apostle John lived until the 90s A.D. He died in Ephesus. The Jerusalem Church, as I mentioned, fled Jerusalem in 69 A.D. They fled to Pella. By 135 A.D., most of the Jerusalem church apostatized. That is the year the Jerusalem church ceased to keep the Sabbath and the Holy Days and began to observe Sunday. I'll read the documentation on that in a moment.

Sunday observance began to be openly promulgated in Rome and I have, interestingly enough, a book here entitled From Sabbath to Sunday—A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity, published by the Pontifical Gregorian University Press in Rome. So, this is not just what I might say or what somebody else might say. It has the imprimatur of the Vatican right here. You can read it. You can even translate the Latin inscription: "With the approval of the Vicar in Rome." And it's dated. This represents a statement of history that is in accordance with what Catholic scholars would not take exception

to at all, in terms of the statement that Sunday observance did not begin in Jerusalem.

Sunday observance began in Rome and they date it. There isn't any proof of it earlier than 115 A.D. In fact, the date for the first Easter Sunday service that was held in Rome, as opposed to a Passover observance, dates to 115 A.D. About fifteen or sixteen years after the death of the Apostle John, it was openly being taught that Sunday was the day of worship and not the Sabbath. I want to go into this because I think we should understand.

How can people get so far off in such a short period of time? There were people who had heard John preach. You're only one man removed from Jesus Christ Himself. John was the disciple whom He loved. He was the one who took care of Mary during the latter years of her life. He was the one who was there as a part of the twelve. If somebody knew what Jesus taught, it should have been John. He certainly should have known. He was with Him as a disciple three and one-half years. He was the one that Christ trusted to take care of His mother. So, John certainly should have known and understood. And, interestingly, we are going to see some things, but I don't want to get ahead of myself. I want to give you an outline and then I want to come back and fill in some details. I want to fill in more of the details on Ephesus because that's an important area.

It's interesting that the literal city of Ephesus came to an end shortly after 135-140 A.D. The population moved a short distance to higher ground. Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia.

I will read a brief quote from this book. This is a Protestant book. I have Catholic books and Protestant books here, as well as a couple of these early church fathers. For example: Apostolic Fathers, Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, and Gibbon's Triumph of Christendom in the Roman Empire. So, these are not just something that represents what Mr. Herbert Armstrong said or what the Church says in terms of our "ax to grind."

It's interesting—this book that I say is a Protestant book, a book by Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, The Story of the Christian Church. He makes an interesting comment.

He says, "We name the last generation of the first century, from 68 to 100 A.D., 'The Age of Shadows,' partly because the gloom of persecution was over the church; but more especially because of all periods in the history, it is the one about which we know the least. We

have no longer the clear light of the book of Acts to guide us; and no author of that age has filled the blank in the history. We would like to read of the later work by such helpers of St. Paul as Timothy, Apollos and Titus, but all these and St. Paul's other friends drop out of the record at his death. For fifty years after St. Paul's life, a curtain hangs over the church, through which we strive vainly to look; and when at last it rises, about 120 A.D. with the writings of the earliest church fathers, we find a church in many aspects very different from that in the days of St. Peter and St. Paul."

Amazing! Very different because you see one church was on the horizon when the mist settled, and another church was on the horizon when the mist departed. How did the change take place? What happened?

Revelation 2 and 3 gives the history of the true Church. The Church at Ephesus was symbolic of the first stage of Church history, which is basically the history of the Church from about 31 A.D. down to about 135 A.D.

The Church at Smyrna pictures the second stage in the history of the Church. We pick up the story in the period after the death of the Apostle John and trace it down to about the mid-seventh century. We will use 650 A.D. as an approximate date.

The first leader, on whom we will focus, was Polycarp. Polycarp was the bishop or leader of the Church in the literal city of Smyrna, which was a neighboring city to Ephesus. Polycarp had been a disciple of the Apostle John. In fact, we have two or three of the letters of Polycarp that actually remain. They have been preserved. Polycarp died about 160 A.D. He had been a disciple and personal acquaintance of the Apostle John. He was a very elderly man when he died. He was probably in his late 20s when the Apostle John died and he was well into his 90s at the time of his own death.

We come down. We'll read a little bit about the Church during this time. Various names are applied to the Church. The history of the true Church was primarily written by its enemies. The true Church was being persecuted. It was on the fringes of the Roman Empire during much of this time.

This period, which is symbolized by the Church at Smyrna, was a time of intense persecution and martyrdom. One of the names attached to the people of God was the term "Ebionites." There were others who were called Ebionites, too. It was a term that meant "poor people." We will see some things about that.

The Catholic Church, as we know it, emerged during this period. It arose from the confusion and multiple heresies that existed in the first century. It wasn't just one heresy in a straight-line shot; there were multiple heresies. There were certain things that became predominant. There was the emergence of a predominant leadership in Rome. It was the alliance of church and state made at the time of the emperor Constantine that ensured the supremacy of the bishop at Rome and the particular brand of Christianity that he happened to champion. The Council of Nicaea, which was called to standardize Christian practice, was called by the authority of the emperor Constantine. The Council of Nicaea was presided over by the emperor Constantine. He was the one who actually sat in the chair and presided over the meeting. The empire had become split and splintered, so it was his intent to use religion to reunify the empire. The old Roman state religion no longer had much influence.

I will give you a quote about Polycarp and later Polycrates. Polycrates was a later disciple of Polycarp. A dispute that was called the Quartodeciman Controversy came to a head around 200 A.D. "Quartodeciman" is just a Latin word that means "the fourteenth." The controversy about the fourteenth is what it means. We celebrate the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. The controversy was when should the Passover be celebrated? You know, of course, that the term that is used in the Latin to refer to Easter, which is celebrated in the Catholic world, is the Latin word for Passover. It's called the "Paschal" season. A similar term is used in French to refer to it. French, Spanish and Italian all use terms that are derived from Passover. What it amounted to was the old Samaritan trick of calling the wrong thing by the right name. They appropriated names from the Bible and applied them to pagan things. The controversy over celebrating Passover was: should you celebrate the fourteenth day of the first month as Passover or should you celebrate on a Sunday morning as the Paschal service?

Eusebius was a Catholic historian and bishop who attended the Nicaean Council. He lived in the fourth century A.D. He was there with the emperor Constantine and the others at the Council of Nicaea. He wrote a history of the church up until the time of the emperor Constantine.

Quoting here from Eusebius' history, he said, "The bishops, however, of Asia [referring to

Asia Minor], persevering in observing the custom handed down to them from their fathers, were headed by Polycrates. [Polycrates was the disciple of Polycarp, and Polycarp had been the disciple of John]. He, indeed, had also set forth the tradition handed down in them, in a letter which he addressed to the vicar and the church of Rome. 'We,' said he, 'therefore, observe the genuine day, neither adding thereto nor taking there from. For in Asia great lights have fallen asleep [interesting his use of terms], which shall rise again in the day of the Lord's appearing in which He will come with glory from heaven and will raise up all the saints.'"

Now, Polycrates didn't believe that they had all gone off to heaven. He didn't say, 'They are up in heaven watching us.' He said, 'They've fallen asleep and they are going to wake up when Christ comes back in power and in glory.' He names all various ones. He mentions Philip, one of the twelve apostles who sleeps in Hieropolis. He mentions John who rested on the bosom of our Lord, who's buried in Ephesus. He mentions Polycarp of Smyrna. He goes through and mentions various others.

He said, "[All these who are now] awaiting the episcopate from heaven [the visitation from heaven; the return of Christ], when he shall rise from the dead. All these observed the fourteenth day of the Passover according to the gospel, deviating in no respect, but following the rule of faith. Moreover, I, Polycrates, who am the least of all of you, according to the tradition of my relatives, some of whom I have followed. For there were seven, my relatives bishops, and I am the eight; and my relatives always observed the day when the people threw away the leaven."

Oh, they observed the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread! He said "my relatives always observed the day when the people threw away the leaven."

"I, therefore, brethren, am now sixty-five years in the Lord [He had been in the Church for sixty-five years, so he was a very elderly man by this time—certainly well into his eighties.] who having conferred with the brethren throughout the world, and having studied the whole of the sacred Scriptures, am not at all alarmed at those things with which I am threatened, to intimidate me. For they who are greater than I, have said, 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'..." Upon this vicar, the bishop of the Church of Rome forthwith endeavored to cut off the churches of all Asia, together with the neighboring churches, as heterodox, from the common unity. And he publishes abroad by

letters, and proclaims that all the brethren there are wholly excommunicated.”

It goes on. A little later he talked about Polycarp, who had actually made a trip to Rome many years earlier, trying to explain to the church at Rome that the Passover should be kept on the fourteenth day of the first month.

It said: “And when the blessed Polycarp went to Rome in the time of Anicetus [bishop of Rome], and they had a little difference among themselves...for neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp not to observe it because he had always observed it with John the disciple of our Lord and the rest of the apostles with whom he associated; and neither did Polycarp persuade Anicetus to observe, who said that he was bound to maintain the practice of the presbyters [elders] before him.”

So, Anicetus followed the tradition in Rome which dates back to 115 A.D. Anicetus’s predecessors were Pius, Hygenius, Teleforus and Sixtus. Sixtus is the first of the bishops who is mentioned by Eusebius as having observed Easter Sunday. Sixtus, according to the dates given, came to his position in 115 A.D. That is why I gave the date 115 A.D. The idea certainly was around before then, but it was in 115 A.D. that Sixtus took over control as the presiding bishop in Rome and accepted Easter Sunday. We are going to see a little later how he made and introduced something like that.

Notice Polycarp and Polycrates. Here were people who were the true Church, who had a connection to the original apostles and even a matter as preserved by Catholic historians recognized, they were observing the days we observe. This would be the time of Smyrna.

Pergamos was the third church and the third phase mentioned. There was a time when the Church was in hiding. The very word “Pergamos” means “fortified.” They were known in history as Paulicans and Bogomils. These were terms that were applied to them. Some of the leaders, of whom we have record, are men such as Constantine of Mananali, Simeon who flourished about 690 A.D. and Sergius who flourished about 830 A.D. Pergamum was originally the seat of the Pontifex Maximus. It was also the city of Escalapius the serpent, the original city.

Thyatira was the fourth church; the fourth stage. It symbolizes the Church in the Middle Ages. It was a period during which one of the primary terms that was applied was the Waldenses. Peter DeBruys and Peter Waldo were some of the best-known leaders. Peter Waldo flourished between

about 1150 and 1200 A.D. These were people who were scattered in the latter part of their history. They were scattered in areas of Southern Europe and Eastern Europe, down in the Alpine areas stretching across through portions of France and Italy. Originally, they had moved into that area from Bohemia. By about 1500 A.D., they were pretty well extinct.

However, the fifth stage, the Church at **Sardis**, known as the Lollards in English History, came to England in the late 1300s and 1400s. They spread in from some of the German and Bohemian-speaking realm. There are records of Sabbath-keeping Churches in England during the 1500s, 1600s and 1700s. We have a record of Stephen Mumford who came from England to Newport, Rhode Island in 1668 A.D. and established the first Church of God in the new world. It started in Rhode Island in 1668 A.D. In the early 1800s, a group called Seventh Day Baptists split off from the Church of God. About 1860 A.D., the largest portion of the Church followed the wife of an elder in the Church. This woman claimed to be a prophetess and to have visions. Her name was Ellen G. White. Those who followed her took the name Seventh Day Adventists. It was the remnants of these people that Mr. Herbert Armstrong came among in the 1920s and gave rise to what we term the sixth stage of the history of the church, typified by the Church at **Philadelphia**.

It’s interesting. The original city of Philadelphia was in a very earthquake-prone area of Asia Minor, and it was the site of frequent earthquakes. The name “Philadelphia” means “brotherly love.” We find that the Church in Philadelphia is pictured as going through open doors to do a work. We find that it is promised protection from the tribulation. This represents the work that God raised up through Mr. Herbert Armstrong, of which we are a continuation.

The Church at **Laodicea** pictures the final stage. Laodicea, in Asia Minor, was originally a very wealthy city. It was known for its soft wool and for its very soft life. It was a very prosperous area. There was a great pagan temple in Laodicea, which served as sort of the medical center of Asia Minor. It was an area to which pilgrimages were made from all over the area. It was also prominent in the manufacture of eye salve. We will notice a “play” on that a little later in the message to the Laodicean Church. The name “Laodicea” means “the people judge.” “Lao” means “people” in the Greek language; “dicea” is the word for “judge.” It clearly is the era that is the final stage of the Church. The

description given is very much in tune with the permissive, do-your-own-thing, materialistic, complacent attitude that is so pervasive in our society. And, certainly, the people of God are not immune from the attitude and the spirit of the time.

I want to go back and comment a little bit on the situation at Ephesus—the Ephesians Church and the message to the Church at Ephesus.

Revelation 2:1, “To the angel of the church of Ephesus write...” This is addressed to the angel of the Church of Ephesus.

Verses 2-7, “I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”

What is he talking about? The test of the Ephesians era was they had to weigh the claims of those who claimed to be apostles and were not.

Paul addressed that in II Corinthians 11:13-15, “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness...”

This is going back to Simon the sorcerer. We studied about him in Acts 8. We went into a little bit about him last Bible study. According to history, Simon the sorcerer (from Samaria) left Samaria and went to Rome by 42 A.D. I should have brought the Encyclopedia Britannica, the old eleventh edition, to read the article. They have about a three-page spread on Simon Magus. If you look him up in a modern encyclopedia you won’t find much, but the old encyclopedia had quite a spread on him. According to historical sources, he went to Rome about 42 A.D. and remained there on up until his death in the late 60s. He was very much responsible for

the heresies that eventually coalesced into the Catholic Church.

The Church in Ephesus (the Ephesians era) was tested in having to weigh the competing claims of those who claimed to be apostles—whether or not they were. They hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans. “Nicolaitans,” if you translate it, “Nicolas” is the Greek translation of “Baal.” “Nicolas” (“*niko*” in the Greek) means “conqueror” or “ruler”; “*lao*” means “people”—ruler of the people. “Balaam,” “*Baal*” means “lord” or “ruler”; “*am*” means “people.”

In Jude 3, Jude told them, “...contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

Verse 11, “Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit [KJV, “reward”], and perished in the rebellion of Korah.” This is the mystery of iniquity that Paul said was already at work when he wrote to the Thessalonians in the 50s (II Thessalonians 2:7).

Here is the way things got off the track. I am reading from a book, The Collier Catholic Reader’s Series entitled “Heresy and Orthodoxy.” In the book, he is quoting from the writings of Marcion. Marcion was a teacher. This is written about 144 A.D.

Here is the statement: “Paul alone preached the gospel, the essence of which is salvation by faith. For it’s enough to believe and to love.”

This is the statement that was made and began to be preached; you see how he got off the track. We are warned about those who would turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, into lawlessness. They confused God’s grace with a license to sin. They say the law is done away and that grace replaces the law.

Notice Peter’s warning in II Peter 3:15-16, “and account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.”

Peter said there are people who are taking what Paul said out of context. They are twisting the Scriptures. What were they teaching? They were teaching that all you had to do was to believe and to love. If you really understand what it means to believe, and if you really understand what it means to love, yeah, that’s fine. But they didn’t understand it that way.

John said in I John 5:3, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments....”

But their teaching was, ‘Look, all you have to do is believe on the person of Jesus Christ.’ Their gospel is a message that exalts the person of Jesus Christ and leaves aside the message Jesus Christ brought. It substitutes a gospel *about* Jesus for the gospel *of* Jesus Christ, the gospel He, Himself, brought. It was an “all you have to do is to believe and to love” gospel. That sounds good. That’s pretty and that’s flowery. That sounds beautiful. But if all you have to do is to believe and to love, it sets the stage for the next thing. This was the foundation of the heresy that was undermining the necessity of observing the law.

When you look at the earliest church fathers, they didn’t say it was wrong to keep the Sabbath. They simply said, ‘It’s fine to do it as a custom, but it’s not necessary for salvation.’ They didn’t try to stop people from doing it, originally. They just said, ‘It’s fine to do it and to follow the example of the apostles and the ones that have gone before, but it’s not necessary for salvation. Because for salvation all you have to do is to believe and to love. All you have to do is believe in Jesus and love one another. That’s all you have to do to be saved. Now, it’s fine to observe these things.’

But by about the time of John’s death, intense anti-Jewish persecution began to break out in Rome. There had been several previous expulsions of the Jews from Rome. But at that time, a very virulent wave of anti-Semitism swept Rome, in particular, and other parts of the empire. So, at that point, the bishop of Rome said, ‘Sabbath observance is fine, but it’s not necessary for salvation. All it does is get us unnecessary persecution because we are confused with the Jews. What we need to do is to make a clear distinction in our identity from the Jews. So, let’s not follow their custom anymore. It’s not necessary for salvation. All we have to do is to believe and to love. We just have to believe in Jesus and love one another. So, why should we get persecuted because everybody’s mad at the Jews? Let’s substitute. Let’s just have our services the next day.’ That sounds reasonable, right?

It’s interesting. Let me find my quote here in From Sabbath to Sunday, Chapter 7: “Anti-Judaism in the Fathers and the Origin of Sunday.” This quotes Ignatius who was bishop of Antioch right after the Apostle John’s death. You have to realize there was a mixture; there were people who were lurking around the

fringes. There were various ones who had various positions, and once John died, it all came out of the woodwork.

Even when John was alive—read I, II and III John—you remember, John even wrote in III John 9-10, “I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.”

John said, ‘If I come down there, I’m going to deal with that fellow.’ But you see, John was on up into his late 90s and he died. And when John was dead and no longer on the scene, then you had all this stuff that began to erupt.

Ignatius writes and I’ll just read the quote from his writings here in the Apostolic Fathers, “For if we are still practicing Judaism, we admit that we have not received God’s favor.”

The frequent recommendations to abandon the practice of Judaism imply a strong leaning toward Jewish practices within the Christian community of Asia Minor. You don’t have to keep telling people not to do something if they are not doing it already. The fact that you had letters written to Christian churches in the second century condemning the practice of Judaism means that these people were doing these things. The condemnation of Jewish practices such as Sabbatizing (which is the observance of the Sabbath) and the beginning of the use of the term “Lord’s Day” had to do with this.

Ignatius urges Christians to stop practicing Judaism and to stop living like the Jews. He’s writing within five or ten years of John’s death.

Ignatius says, “If then those who have walked in ancient practices attained the newness of hope, no longer walk observing the Sabbaths, but fashioning their lives after the Lord’s Day. It is monstrous to talk of Jesus Christ and to practice Judaism.” He is writing this sort of thing.

I want to read a little bit here from the Epistle of Barnabas. He’s writing about 120 A.D. He tried to spiritualize away the law. He said, “Moreover, concerning the Sabbath, likewise it is written in the Ten Words, which He spoke to Moses face to face on Mount Sinai, ‘You shall hallow the Sabbath with clean hands and a pure heart.’ And in another he says, ‘If my sons keep the Sabbath, then I will bestow mercy upon them.’ Of the Sabbath he speaks in the beginning of the creation, ‘And in six days God made the works

of His hands, and ended on the seventh day, and He rested on it and made it holy.’ Now give heed children, what this means, ‘He ended in six days.’ It means this: in six thousand years the Lord will bring all things to an end; the day with Him signifies a thousand years. This He, Himself bears me witness, saying, ‘Behold the day of the Lord will be like a thousand years.’ Therefore, children, in six days, that is, in six thousand years everything shall come to an end. ‘He rested the seventh day’ means when His Son shall come and abolish the time of the lawless one, shall judge the ungodly, shall change the sun and moon and stars, then shall He truly rest on the seventh day.”

He goes on to say that, “If therefore a man is able now to hallow the day which God hallowed, though he be pure in heart, we’ve utterly gone astray. But if after all then and not till then shall we truly rest and hallow it when we ourselves be able to do so after being justified and receiving the promise.”

His contention was, ‘We can’t really keep the Sabbath until after Christ gets back. We don’t need to do away with it.’ There’s an interesting statement that he made. Barnabas took a very allegorical approach to the Scripture.

He said, “Now for as much as Moses said you shall not eat swine or eagle or falcon or crow or any fish that has no scale upon it, he received in his understanding three ordinances. So, then it’s not a commandment of God that they shouldn’t bite with their teeth, but Moses was speaking it in spirit. Accordingly, he mentioned the swine with this intent. You shall not cleave, says he, to such men that are like swine; that is when they in their luxury forget the Lord.”

What he did was quote Scripture and say, ‘He didn’t really mean that. He didn’t really mean you shouldn’t eat swine in the sense of eating it with your teeth. He’s just saying you shouldn’t associate with people who act like pigs.’ They gave an interesting line of reasoning.

I am going to paraphrase a little of this for the sake of time. They said, ‘Now, look, on the first day of creation God said, “Let there be light.” He did that on the first day. We call the first day of the week Sunday. Who is the light of the world? –Jesus Christ. He’s called, in Malachi 4:2, the Sun of Righteousness. So, really, the first day is the day that should be symbolic of Jesus Christ.’ This was the sort of reasoning that they used. See, no commandment and no particular point.

Justin Martyr, who was writing about 150 A.D., used various things to justify Sunday worship—the creation of light on the first day, the

resurrection of Christ. They quite often used the term “the eighth day.” What is the eighth day? Well, it’s the day after the Sabbath. So, the eighth day would be the first day. Justin Martyr went into all sorts of things—the fact that circumcision was on the eighth day (well, circumcision of the heart...), there were eight souls in the ark, the flood covered the mountains fifteen cubits, which means seven plus eight. Now what does that have to do with it? It was only at a later time that the emphasis on a Sunday resurrection began to be the primary reason. That couldn’t be used at first because you had to get further and further away from the time of the original apostles. Since John was there as a witness to the resurrection, you couldn’t very well preach about Easter Sunday when he was around. He was there. He saw Jesus Christ in His resurrected state. But once John was dead, the “floodgates” were open. All kind of things could come out. John wasn’t around to say, ‘No, it wasn’t that way.’ Paul’s writings were the ones that were primarily twisted and misapplied.

Let me read just one other brief thing. This was from Edward Gibbon who was a famous British historian. He was writing on “The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.” To show you a little bit of the way things changed that way, he says, “The ancient and popular doctrine of the Millennium was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ. As the works of the creation had been finished in six days, their duration in their present state, according to a tradition that was attributed to the prophet Elijah, was fixed to six thousand years. By the same analogy, it was inferred that this long period of labor and contention, which was now almost elapsed, would be succeeded by a joyful Sabbath of a thousand years and that Christ, with a triumphant band of the saints and the elect who had escaped death or who had been miraculously revived, would reign upon the earth until the time appointed for the last and general resurrection.” He explains what the church taught.

“The doctrine of Christ’s reign upon the earth was at first treated as a profound allegory.” By the time of the second and third century, it was profound allegory. Irenaeus, Ignatius and some of these others said it was a profound allegory.

“[It] was considered by the Greeks as a doubtful and useless opinion.” He said, ‘That’s just a matter of speculation. We don’t really know about that. He may not really reign for a thousand years. We can’t really prove that He’s going to literally come back and rule for a

thousand years. That's just speculation. And, you know, it gets our minds off this speculating about Christ coming back and everything. That's doubtful and useless opinion.'

"...at length it was rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism." It started out being accepted and taught as the truth. Then it was a profound allegory. Then it was just sort of a useless opinion and didn't really matter one way or the other. Then it progressed to being heresy and fanaticism and they were ready to persecute you if you believed that. It was a step-by-step progression. This sort of approach was the way so much of the rest of this went. The first approach was to continue to do the law. They continued to follow many of these customs. But what they undercut was whether or not it was necessary.

It's sort of like boiling a frog in water. You turn up the heat and the water comes to a boil. If you threw the frog in the boiling water it would hop out. But if you put it in cold water and turn up the heat, it gets warm gradually and the old frog doesn't notice until it's too late.

If they had come along and just immediately said the Sabbath and the Holy Days were done away and they were going to keep Sunday, Easter and Christmas, boy, that's quite a contrast. They couldn't do that while John was alive. They couldn't just instantly come up with that as the "first dash out of the box." What they came up with is, 'Look, the only thing you have to do is to believe.'

As Marcion wrote, 'It's just to believe and to love. That's all that's necessary, to believe and to love—believe in Jesus and love one another. All of these other things really aren't necessary. It's fine, but it's not necessary. Well, if it's not necessary, why should you be persecuted for it? Maybe we should just do something else.' And so they did. They said it would make a clear demarcation of their history from that of the Jews.

I will read a little bit. Gibbon says, "The history of the church in Jerusalem affords a lively proof of the necessity of those precautions and of the deep impression which the Jewish religion made on the minds of its followers. The first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem were all circumcised Jews and the congregation over which they presided united the Law of Moses with the doctrine of Christ. [In other words, it was the true Church.] The Jewish converts were called Nazarenes. [We find that term is actually used in the Bible; that was a term that was applied to them.] The Nazarenes retired from the ruins of Jerusalem to

the little town of Pella beyond the Jordan where that ancient church languished about sixty years. And after the second Jewish revolt in 135 A.D., it links under the reign of Hadrian the desperate fanaticism of the Jews filled up the measure of their calamities. And the Romans, exasperated by their repeated rebellions, exercised the right of victory with unusual rigor. They completely destroyed Jerusalem, founded under the name of 'Aelia Capitolina' a new city on Mount Zion to which he gave the privileges of a colony and denounced the severest penalties upon any of the Jewish people who should dare to approach its precinct. He fixed a vigilant garrison of a Roman cohort to enforce the execution of his orders. The Nazarenes had only one way left to escape the common prescription. They elected Marcus for their bishop, a prelate of the race of the Gentiles. He was a native of Italy. At his persuasion, most of them renounced the Mosaic Law [which would be the Sabbath] and by their sacrifice of their habits and prejudices, they purchased a free admission into the colony of Hadrian."

Then he goes on to describe, "The obscure remnant of the Nazarenes which refused to accompany their Latin bishop spread themselves into the villages adjacent to Damascus and are known by the title of Ebionites." He went on to describe, "Traces of the Ebionites can be discovered as late as the fourth century."

When Christ talked to the Church in **Ephesus**, He addressed those who had to make a distinction. The test of the true Church at that point was 'to try those that said they are apostles' (Revelation 2:2). —Whether or not they were. How do you try them? You put it to the test.

Isaiah 8:20, "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." There isn't any truth in them. The test as to whether someone was what he said he was, was whether or not he taught God's truth. It was a time of demarcation between many who called themselves "Christian." We find that very few really preserved and held on to the truth. They took the path of least resistance, undermined by things that took place over a period of years.

During much of the Ephesians era, there wasn't a clear distinction between the true Church and the false church. In many cases, brethren were meeting in congregations that consisted of various ones because everybody called themselves Christians and congregated together. Communication, transportation and many things played into this. The clear cleavage between

what became the Catholic Church and what remained as the true Church of God was accomplished during the time of the **Smyrna** Church.

Revelation 2:8-9, he says, “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, “...‘I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich) [Spiritually, they were rich; physically and materially they were in poverty and under great persecution.]; and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.’””

The Samaritans anciently claimed to be Jews, but they weren't. You can read of that back in the period of the Old Testament. We read of it when we went through Ezra and Nehemiah. Here were their modern-day New Testament descendants. The followers of Simon Magus claimed to be spiritual Jews and they weren't that either. The message to Smyrna is, ‘I know those that claim to be My true people and really aren't. For them to attach My name to them is blasphemy. I know that these false heretical groups are not the Church of God. It's the synagogue of Satan.’

Verse 10, “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days [There was a ten-year persecution from 303 to 313 A.D. by the emperor Domitian that seems to be addressed here.]. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

This Church was perhaps the most persecuted period. It was a time of intense persecution. It was during the next stage that God removed His people from the bounds of the Roman Empire. For about one thousand two hundred sixty years, the Church remained primarily outside the pale of the Roman Empire and the populated urban areas.

It was basically during this Smyrna period that the emperor Constantine came on the scene. There are historical records in the church fathers concerning controversies involving the true Church and the heretics, all the way up to the time of Constantine.

The Council at Nicaea was called to settle the issue of when to observe Passover. The Roman practice of Easter Sunday was the decree. Then just five or six years later, the Council of Laodicea set enforcement on the issue of Sunday observance in place of the Sabbath. You don't have to make an issue of those things if they were universal. If Christ is the One who had changed it, why do you find disciples three

hundred years later still doing something else? The only reason that Constantine and the Roman government had to get in on the act was because they were trying to make something that had crept in and had become predominant, universal. But it wasn't by any means universal. The true Church visibly disappeared from the scene during this period.

Smyrna comes from the word “*mer*.” It means “perfume.” That was what was offered on the altar of incense. They were, in that sense, a living sacrifice to God.

“**Pergamos**” means “fortified.” The Church at this point, the seventh century A.D., migrated out of Asia Minor up into the very mountainous regions of Armenia and remote mountain valleys. They were pretty well isolated from the general population.

Revelation 2:13, Pergamos was told, “I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.”

Pergamos was the ancient seat of the Pontifex Maximus of the Babylonian Mystery religion. It was in 133 B.C. that Attalus III, god-king of Pergamum, died. In his will, he left his kingdom and his title “Pontifex Maximus” to the Romans. He literally bequeathed his kingdom to the Roman rulers in his will in 133 B.C. The title “Pontifex Maximus” was used by the Roman rulers. It became a title of Julius Caesar; he became Pontifex Maximus. It continued on down and all the emperors of the Roman Empire used that title up until Emperor Gratian in 378 A.D. He resigned the title “Pontifex Maximus” and bestowed it upon Pope Damascus in 378 A.D. That title has since been used by Rome. That's why the term “Roman Pontiff” is used referring to the pope. It goes back to that title. That's the trace of it.

It refers to Pergamos as being “the place where Satan's seat dwells” because that ancient city was the location of that. “Antipas” in Greek could be translated “anti pater” or you could translate it literally as “anti pope” or “one who was against or opposed the pope” in that way. It's very likely a reference to Constantine of Mananali who was martyred in 684 A.D. for preaching against the pope. They labeled him as the antichrist of the gospels. It describes this.

The Church at Pergamos began to remove itself from the confines of the empire up into that area of Armenia.

Verse 14, he said, “But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam....”

Verse 15, “Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.”

There was a certain involvement of spiritual fornication. It was a time of persecution. There were various attempts of those who would try to make political arrangements and alliances with the world trying to protect themselves.

Verse 16, they were told, “Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.” They were warned that the way to resolve their problem was not to enter into political alliances.

The term “Bogomils” came to be applied to this group of people. They moved up into the areas of Armenia and on into sections of what’s now portions of Bulgaria and portions of Eastern Europe. They moved in that very mountainous Trans-Carpathian mountainous area. Many of them got tired of running, entered into alliances with some of the people around and tried to protect themselves. This is what they are being indicted for here. There were others who trusted God and they moved on a little further.

We pick up the remnants of them in the next Church, the Church at **Thyatira**. Cloth merchants coming from that area of Bulgaria came into the Alpine areas of Europe and brought the truth that emerged there in the Middle Ages. It was the brightest flame in the Middle Ages. Particularly, the preaching of Peter Waldo had significant effect and influence through that remote Alpine area in southern France and northern Italy.

Verses 19-20, he says to the Church at Thyatira, “I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and beguile My servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols.”

There were those among the Waldenses who counseled people, ‘Go ahead and attend mass (which was enforced by civil decree) to avoid persecution. Go ahead and attend mass. You know it doesn’t really mean what it says. You go ahead and partake of the symbols there at the mass.’ In reality, you are eating something sacrificed to an idol because that’s what’s there. Idols are all over the place.

He says, “to teach and beguile [KJV, “seduce”] My servants to commit immorality [KJV, “fornication”].” –To enter into illicit relationships with the world and the society around. He said, “you allow that woman Jezebel” Jezebel was a type of the great whore of Revelation 17. The Catholic Church was personified in Jezebel. If you really want to know what God doesn’t like in a woman, go back and study about Jezebel. She sort of sums it up. When God gets ready to mention a bad example, she’s the one He uses. He uses her here symbolic of the false church because she literally committed fornication (immorality) with various surrounding kings trying to build alliances. The church, as a symbolic woman, symbolically entered into illicit relationships and various alliances. Thyatira was indicted on this. They had allowed some of these things, and He said, ‘I am going to allow persecution.’

Verses 22-23, “Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death. And all the churches shall know....” We have the emergence of the beginning of some of the reform movements. Even the problems and persecutions that came are made reference to here.

Revelation 3:1, the Church at **Sardis** was told, “...you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.” They were spiritually dead. This is certainly the description of the Church when Mr. Herbert Armstrong came among them. They had a name, but for all intents and purposes they were spiritually dead.

Verse 2, they were told, “Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.”

Verses 3-4, “...hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.” But, of course, many had defiled their garments. “Sardis” means “remnant.”

Philadelphia was told in v. 7, “...“These things says He who is holy, He who is true, ‘He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens.’”” “Philadelphia” means “brotherly love.”

The key of David was the symbol of opening and closing, the power to open and close. This was coming forth from the throne of David. It’s

interesting that the key that unlocks and opens up prophecy to our understanding is the knowledge of where the throne of David is, the throne that God established, the throne to which Christ will return. Christ pictures Himself to Philadelphia as opening doors for a work to be done and in some cases shutting doors.

Verses 8-9, he says to Philadelphia, “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet....”

That means in the resurrection. We will have to be born into the Family. We will have to be God, as a part of God’s Family, for anybody to be able to worship us because it’s a sin to worship even an angel.

When John bowed down before an angel, the angel said in Revelation 19:10, “...See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant....” He said, ‘Stand up. I’m a servant of God just like you are (cf. Daniel 8:16-18).’ So, if Christ is going to make somebody come worship at our feet, that will only be after we have entered into the Family of God and have, in that sense, been literally born as sons of God. We are sons of God right now but not in glory as at the resurrection. We are not sons in the full sense that we shall be.

Verse 10 (KJV), “Because you have kept the word of My patience....” That’s the test of this era—to patiently wait for God to do what He says He will do. If you get ahead of God, you get in trouble. That’s one thing that is very important for us to understand and to remember.

It was God’s purpose to bring Israel under Joshua across the Jordan River and into the Promised Land, wasn’t it? God intended to do that. Because the Jordan was at flood stage, you couldn’t cross it. God worked a miracle. He opened the Jordan River and let them come across on dry ground. Do you know how He did it? He had the priests bring the ark. They carried it on their shoulders and came down. When the first priest stuck his first foot into the water, the waters stopped and the waters parted. The priests walked out and stood in the middle. They held the ark in the middle and people walked across.

What do you think would have happened if somebody had gotten ahead of the ark? If they had said, ‘well, God wants us on the other side so why wait,’ you know what would have

happened? They would have drowned in the river. You don’t get ahead of the ark.

Verse 10, the Philadelphia Church is told, “Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.” This is a reference to the Great Tribulation.

Verses 11-12, “Behold, I come quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God....”

The pillars of Solomon’s temple had names. You can go back and read it in I Kings 7:15, 21 and II Chronicles 3:15, 17. The pillars of Solomon’s temple were named Boaz and Joaichim. It literally meant “strength” and “stability.” That’s what’s involved here. The pillars were supports—strength and stability. That’s part of what God’s trying to build in. He says the reward is being with Christ at headquarters in the New Jerusalem.

The Church of the Laodiceans is the final stage of the Church.

Verses 15-18, he says, “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth. Because you say, “I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing”—and do you not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.”

The problem is that they don’t see themselves. Their own evaluation is that they think they are in great shape. This is descriptive of a complacent, materialistic, permissive sort of watered-down, tepid approach, very much in harmony with the state of our society and our world. The world we live in is a lot more conducive to producing Laodiceans than it is Philadelphians. Christ indicts this final stage of the Church because they reflect too much of the spirit of society, as opposed to the Spirit of God. They don’t really see themselves for what they are. They want to basically do what they want to do. They are not all stirred up and all excited about God and about God’s way. They are preoccupied with other things.

Verses 19-21, he says, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If

anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him that overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” We see this involvement here.

We see these statements to the seven Churches. One refrain that runs through after the message to each one of the seven Churches is, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

There are three aspects of the messages to the Churches. The first aspect is that it was a literal message to seven literal congregations in Asia Minor nineteen hundred years ago. Second, it certainly is descriptive of attitudes that have been extant in and among God’s people all the way down through the centuries. At any given time, you would find people who reflected a variety of these attitudes and states of mind. But that’s not all it’s about because we have seven distinct congregations that are successive stops on a mail route. It’s not simply of historical significance to what was going on in congregations nineteen hundred years ago. It’s not simply attitudes that are prevalent. Surely there are those who have lost their first love and there are those who are Laodicean. There are those who are “this” or “that” in terms of attitudes. But third, there are also seven distinct successive stages typified by seven distinct successive stops on a Roman mail route that symbolized the seven stages through which the history of the Church of God will pass. We should be aware of that and aware of these things because they are messages for us.

Revelation 3:22, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

You, perhaps, thought that by taking seven Bible studies on the book of Revelation, we could go into every detail and cover in depth every word of the book of Revelation. I have skimmed the high points of the first three chapters and haven’t covered a third of what I wished I had covered. But we’re not going to spend twenty-one Bible studies on Revelation. We are just going to keep it to seven. We will come back and pick up some of this stuff in later Bible studies and sermons on other subjects. This is to give you an overview.

You have study questions for next time. We are going to cover chapters 4, 5 and 6. By the way, if you have copies of Revelation: The Mystery Unveiled and The Beast of Revelation, Myth, Metaphor or Soon-Coming Reality, it would be good to study them.

Bible Study # 94 Questions

SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION SERIES

Revelation 1—3

1. How do we know that the seven Churches of Asia Minor refer to seven successive Church eras?
2. What is the significance of the golden candlesticks that are mentioned? What is the Old Testament parallel?
3. Who were the Nicolaitians?
4. What is the “synagogue of Satan”? Why is that particular phrase used?
5. What is the “doctrine of Balaam”?
6. What is the meaning of the word “Laodicea”?
7. What is the significance of being a pillar in God’s temple (Revelation 3:12)?
8. What is the “key of David”?
9. What scripture proves that the prophecy for Philadelphia has a special significance for today?
10. What is the significance of Antipas?

Bible Study # 94—99 Questions

SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION SERIES

Book Summary

1. What has always been the main purpose in questioning John's authorship of the book of Revelation?
2. Give four reasons why many desired to reject the book of Revelation as an authoritative part of the Bible.
3. Give two reasons for believing that the author of Revelation was the Apostle John.
4. Give five ways in which the book of Revelation corresponds to Genesis.
5. Give the four main ways of interpreting the book of Revelation and briefly explain each.
6. What is the purpose of the book of Revelation?
7. What is the theme of Revelation?
8. What are reasons for believing that the seven Churches of Revelation refer to seven successive Church eras?
9. What is the doctrine of Balaam?
10. What does the word "Laodicea" mean?
11. Does Revelation 5:9-10 mean people in heaven? Explain.
12. How do we know that the rider of the white horse in Revelation 6:2 doesn't refer to Christ?
13. What is the significance of the "souls under the altar" in Revelation 6?
14. What is the time setting of the one hundred forty-four thousand?
15. Draw a diagram showing the seals, the trumpets and the seven last plagues. Show how they relate to each other. Explain each.
16. Who is the innumerable multitude?
17. What is the meaning of Revelation 11:12?
18. Explain the fulfillment of Revelation 12:6.
19. What scripture in the Old Testament identifies the Beast of Revelation 13?
20. Make a diagram showing the identity of the Beast of Revelation 13.
21. Explain the fulfillment of Revelation 13:3, 5.
22. What is the "second beast" of Revelation 13:11-12?
23. What is the "image of the beast"?
24. Prove what the "mark of the beast" consists of.

25. What is the significance of the three angel messages in Revelation 14?
26. What is the time element of the seven last plagues?
27. What do “many waters” (Revelation 17:1) symbolize? Prove.
28. Make a diagram showing the identity of the seven heads and ten horns of the Beast of Revelation 17.
29. Explain the resurrections mentioned in Revelation 20.
30. Since the Church is called the “bride of Christ,” why is the New Jerusalem called the same thing?

Bible Study # 95
September 8, 1992
Mr. John Ogwyn

Book of Revelation Series—Revelation 4—6
(Chart at end)

We are getting on a little further into the book of Revelation this evening. We **are going into chapters 4, 5 and 6.**

One thing I might mention at the beginning. You know there are various groups, particularly a number of the Protestants, who teach the doctrine of the rapture, which is the idea that the second coming really isn't the second coming. It is sort of the second "almost" coming, sort of a near miss. The doctrine of the rapture, of course, is not found in the Bible.

It's amazing how certain terms find their way into the religious vocabulary and you don't find them in the Bible. The Protestant doctrine of the rapture, you won't find in the Bible. The doctrine of the trinity, you won't find in the Bible. It was not used until a couple of hundred years after the Bible was completed and a Catholic writer used it.

The doctrine of the rapture is the idea that Christ doesn't really come all the way back. He only comes as far as the clouds and He catches up the church. He takes them all up to heaven; we sit up there and watch while the Tribulation is going on. Perhaps you've seen a car with a bumper sticker that says, "In case of the rapture this car will be driverless" or whatever. "This car will be without a driver in the case of the rapture." One of the scriptures that they quote to prove their doctrine is Revelation 4.

Revelation 4:1, John says, "After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, 'Come up here....'" They stop at that point and say, 'This is the point at which the rapture occurs and throughout the rest of the book of Revelation, the church is no longer on the earth. The church is no longer pictured as on the earth throughout the rest of the book of Revelation, so this proves the rapture.'

Well, it doesn't prove the rapture. It's not talking about that at all. This is a vision that John saw. Let's go on and read the rest of the verse.

Verses 1-2, "...the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, 'Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.' Immediately I was in the

Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne."

John saw a vision, and his vision transported him into the presence of God. It's a remarkable thing when we read some of this. John was describing what he saw in the vocabulary that he had. Sometimes you read a description and you have trouble picturing it in your mind. But what you have to consider is that if you were shown things you had never seen before, how would you describe it? You would have to use words and terms that you were familiar with and say, 'It was like this' and 'it was like that.' You wouldn't know what it was. You wouldn't know the name of it unless someone told you, and if you put down the proper name, no one else would know what you were talking about.

What if someone of a hundred years ago were transported forward into the future and saw a television and a VCR and then they went back to their point in time and were trying to describe to someone what they saw. If they used the word "television" and "VCR" that would be meaningless because nobody in the 1890s would have any idea of what that was. You might as well have called it a "whatyoumacallit" because it would be just about as meaningless to them.

It reminds me of an old man that I knew in the Church in Texas. He told me about when he was a boy, which was in the 1890s. One day they went to town in a wagon and while his father was shopping, he was wandering around as kids would. There was what was called a "magic lantern show" that was being held in the back part of somebody's barn there in town. There were barns in town back at that time. The magic lantern show was sort of the ancestor of the moving picture. It was a very primitive sort of thing. It was literally a magic lantern show because the lantern was the means of light and there was a sort of flipping through these cards. Some of you may be familiar with that. Anyway, it was a very crude and primitive thing, but it did project the picture onto a sheet that was hung there in the dark barn. The lantern was what gave the light and somebody had to manually put through the sequence. It looked like it was moving. It gave the illusion of moving—jerking, yes, but moving nevertheless. When he got back home, he was telling his Dad about seeing moving pictures. And his Dad whipped him for lying. He said, 'Pictures don't move. Don't be coming back telling me tall tales.' It seemed a very farfetched thing.

The point that I am making is what is unfamiliar is very difficult to describe. You describe it in

terms that are familiar to you. Back then, they called it a magic lantern show because they literally used the lantern and it seemed like magic. Instead of still shots, you saw things projected on the screen that seem to be moving. It was very primitively done.

John described things that he had never seen before. He described things that there were not appropriate words for in his vocabulary to describe. He described things and if he had put down the real name of it, nobody he was writing to would have known what it was. They would be looking at it and wouldn't be able to figure it out either. John described, in the vocabulary of his day, the things that he saw.

As we go through the book of Revelation, some of these things may very well have to do with futuristic battle scenes, weapons and things of this sort that there simply weren't any words for. When he describes battles and weapons, he talks about chariots. He talks about something that looked like a swarm of locusts flying through the air. If he had seen a squadron of attack helicopters moving through, what would it have looked like? It would have looked like a swarm of locusts coming through. He would have looked up and would have seen, transported in vision, things that were simply beyond the scope of his imagination. So, he would have used terminology familiar to him.

Just like when the first cars came along, they were called horseless carriages. That was the way people described them. It was like a carriage but didn't have a horse in front of it. In describing some of these things, the problem is a matter of vocabulary.

If somebody wants to make the point that God's Church isn't found on the earth again after Revelation 4:1, all they have to do is go to Revelation 5:10 and find that we are kings and priests on the earth. There are plenty of other places. Revelation 12:14 talks about God's Church literally being taken to her place in the wilderness, to a place of protection or a place of safety to be protected from the Tribulation. There are some that object to the use of the term "place of safety" because they say that exact term is not in the Bible. No, it's not exactly what it says.

Revelation 12:14, "But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent."

We could call it "the place in the wilderness where the Church is nourished for a time, times

and half a time" every time we discuss it, but it's simpler to refer to it as "a place of protection" or "a place of safety"; a place for God's Church to be protected and nourished. What is a place of safety? It's not a matter of quibbling about terms. We find that the place where the woman, or the Church, is to be nourished is a place in the wilderness. It's a place on the earth, not off up in heaven somewhere; it's not in some situation like that.

John sees a vision (Revelation 4:1). John had seen another vision about sixty-five years or more before he saw what he saw in Revelation 4. John had seen another vision. That vision is recorded back in Matthew 17.

You remember at the very end of Matthew 16:28, Jesus said to the disciples, "...there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

Then the very next verses, Matthew 17:1-2 says that a week later, He took James, Peter and John and went up into a mountain apart from the rest of them and was transfigured before them. They saw Him in His glorified state. They saw Moses and Elijah in glorified form conversing with Him (v. 3).

At the end of that experience He told them, v. 9, "...Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead." They saw a vision. That was the fulfillment of the promise that some of them would not taste death until they saw Him coming in the Kingdom. They saw it in vision. They saw Him in the glorified state that is representative of the Kingdom of God. They saw Him with individuals who will be in top positions in the Kingdom of God. They saw a vision of the resurrection. They were transported in vision into the Kingdom.

Now, over sixty-five years later, John is an elderly man in his nineties in exile on the island of Patmos and is given a vision. He had previously been given information. Now, in vision, he is transported into the very presence of the throne of God.

There are those who say, 'We don't know anything about what God is like or what heaven is like.' Oh, yes, we do! We wouldn't know it if God didn't tell us. But we can know. It's not the idea, 'well, whatever you try to imagine and visualize—God and whatever you are imagining—it won't be that way.' Perhaps, if all you had was imagination, but there are various things that you can certainly know. We know that there is a brilliance, a glory like the sun. In fact, we even know what color His hair is.

Revelation 1:14, “His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow....”

Verse 13 describes the garment that He has on. It describes various things. So, those things that God reveals can certainly be known. Now, if God doesn't reveal it, we can't know it. But God does reveal certain things. He wants us to have a grasp of what He is like. So, He reveals information about Himself and about His throne. God gave John the vision. John was to write these things down to show these things to the servants of God (Revelation 1:1).

When John was transported in his vision, he saw a throne in heaven and he saw an Individual sitting on that throne.

Revelation 4:2, “...I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.” There are several places in scripture where we find references to that. You can go back to Ezekiel 1; you can go to the book of Daniel where it talks about the Ancient of Days sitting on a throne (Daniel 7:9). There are places in Daniel 7 and Ezekiel 1. There are places that are references to God and to a vision of heaven and God's throne. This is what John sees.

Revelation 4:3, “And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.” What he saw was a reflection of light. It was brilliant. There was a splendor and a brilliance of color and light that was just overpowering to him. He saw it like a rainbow.

We've probably all seen prisms. My wife has a little one that hangs on a shade. Certain times of the year, at the right angle of the sun, the sun will hit it and will make little rainbow colors that come through the kitchen and shine on a kitchen cabinet. Many of us have seen that sort of thing. It's just a tiny bit, but it's pretty. We see here where God is surrounded by things like that.

Verse 6, “Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne....” The light that is emanated and the refraction of that light, the brilliance of color and beauty were just overwhelming. He describes it like a rainbow around the throne. There was all this brilliance and this beautiful light.

Who is it that designed color to be a part of life? That's an incredible thing. Here you have sunlight. There isn't any color in sunlight, but when it shines through a glass prism, all of a sudden you have red, yellow, blue—you have color. Where did that come from? Well, it came from the light. How did it get there? God put it

there. He designed light in a way like that. He designed all sorts of things and we see just a tiny glimmer of it. Here, on this earth, we get to enjoy some of the beauty that God has designed. But do you think God has given us something that is beyond what He has? Do you think God looks down and is sort of envious and thinks, ‘People get to have all the fun; they get all these nice things.’

Sometimes people, particularly young people, are concerned. They want Christ to come back, but they don't want Him to come back too soon because they want to be able to have some fun in life. If you stop and think about it, do you think God looks down and is envious of what people are doing? Do you think God says, ‘Those people get to have all this fun. They have such exciting lives and get to do these thrilling fun things—all I get to do is just sort of sit here.’

Psalms 16:11, “...In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” Believe me, there isn't anything we can enjoy on the human level that even holds the flicker of a candle to the kind of enjoyment we can have on the God level. There just isn't!

It's hard for us to fathom. Just like it would be hard for your two or three year old to fathom the things that you enjoy as an adult. Why would that be so thrilling? A little child can sit there and make all these noises with his mouth and run his little truck across the floor. He's having a ball. Do you look down there and say, ‘I wish I could do that again. That's just so much fun.’ Would you just want to spend your day making all those noises with your mouth. No, there are a lot of other exciting things—things that never even entered into his mind. He can't comprehend what it's like to live on an adult level. And in the same way, we can't comprehend what it's like to live on the God level. God gives us a little bit of insight.

John sees this and he's overwhelmed by it.

Revelation 4:4-5, then he notices, “Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes, and they had crowns of gold on their heads. And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.”

I am going to show you a little bit about who these seven Spirits are. We are going to see that this is identified in the Scriptures. Who are the twenty-four elders? What are they? The term for “elder” in the Greek language is the word “presbyteros.” The Presbyterian Church takes its

name from that term. That's the style of government they have—government by the elders or the presbyters, as it is in the Greek. Basically that word means what our word "elder" means in English. The primary meaning of "elder" is "one who is older," and by implication, therefore, "one who has great experience and wisdom." The elders of ancient Israel were the ones that people went to for counsel and advice. They were the ones who made judgmental decisions in a community. The elders were the ones who gave guidance. They were older men who had experience and were looked to by others as a source of wisdom. They occupied governmental function, in the sense that they often sat as a council to make decisions and give advice. The Jews applied that term to the members of the Sanhedrin.

Here, we find created beings at the throne of God who occupy very high-level positions in God's government. Who are they counseling and advising and making judgmental decisions pertaining to? –Undoubtedly, the various angelic creatures and creation. We are not told how many angels there are. Perhaps there are billions of them. In Revelation 5:11, it talks about ten thousand times ten thousand. Well that is a hundred million, so you know that there are many. And it talks about many others, so there are perhaps even billions of angels. We are not told exactly how many, but God is not the author of confusion (I Corinthians 14:33). There is order and organization in everything that God does.

Twelve is God's number for organization, for government structure or for organized beginnings. When God began the nation of Israel, He did so with twelve tribes. When you go back to the book of Exodus and Numbers, you find there were twelve princes, a prince for each tribe. When you go into the New Testament, Christ chose twelve apostles as a foundation of the New Testament Church. So, twelve is a number of organizational beginnings. It denotes governmental structure.

Here in Revelation 4:4, we have twice twelve. Two times twelve is twenty-four. Here is the governmental structure that the angelic realm is predicated upon. God doesn't have angels out there just sort of swarming all over the place. There's organization and structure. There is structure and a hierarchy. God doesn't reveal all of it to us. We don't need to know it all, but He gives us little bits of insight.

These twenty-four great angelic creatures sit like a council and occupy a position of

administering the angelic realm right there at the throne of God. They are a source of advice, counsel, instruction to the angels and deal with matters that come up. They are seen there.

It mentions these seven lamps burning before the throne.

Verse 5, "...And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."

Verse 6, "Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal..." Here we find this great expanse. John describes it. It's like crystal. It was reflective. Evidently it was sort of like a mirror finish. Perhaps parts of it may have even been some sort of crystalline design that refracted light. There was brilliance and shine to it. John had never seen anything like it. And, of course, the reason is because there is nothing like it. It is something that exists at the throne of God.

Then it describes these four creatures that were full of eyes.

Verse 6, "...And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back." It describes them as having characteristics like a lion, a calf, a man and an eagle (v. 7) and they had six wings (v. 8). We think that sounds like an awfully unusual creature. It seems unusual to us because you and I have never seen anything like that.

They are mentioned back in Ezekiel 1. Ezekiel 1:5-10 describes four creatures. Ezekiel tells us they have four faces: one face was like a man, one was like a lion, one was like an eagle and one was like an ox; it describes that they had wings. They were unusual-looking creatures. The reason they strike us as unusual is because we have never seen anything like that and have trouble imagining anything like it.

Let me ask you a question. What did God model the animals here on earth after? Ever thought about that? You know, God modeled man after Himself. He made man in His image (Genesis 1:26; Genesis 5:1, 3). God made man a clay model that had the shape, outline and imprint of His characteristics. God modeled man after Himself. There are creatures in the spirit realm. Many of the angels also have the look of what we would term a human being. They carry that outward form and shape. But there are others that don't.

The proof of that—remember when Elijah was taken up into heaven in a chariot (II Kings 2:11). He was taken up into the sky (the atmosphere). What was he taken up in? He was taken up in horses and chariots of fire. Where do you think

they got the horses of fire? Do you think they went down to the auction and bought the first horses that came through the ring? They wouldn't have gotten very high off the ground, and you wouldn't have gotten them close to a chariot of fire, that's for sure. These were angelic horses. They were horses that existed in the angelic realm. We know that there are creatures that have the appearance of a horse because even Jesus Christ is pictured as sitting on a horse.

Revelation 19:11, "Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war."

Verse 14, "And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses."

We find a description that there are angelic creatures. Since they are made of spirit, they are angelic creatures, creatures in the angelic realm. Certainly, some beings in the angelic realm have the appearance of what we would term animals. Just as God modeled man after Himself, certain animals that He made were modeled after counterparts or certain characteristics of angelic beings. Now, I am not saying that every animal you come across has some sort of a heavenly counterpart. I don't think that's necessarily the case at all. There isn't any indication of opossums and armadillos and all the rest of it. So, I am not indicating that at all. But there are some. How many are there; I don't know. We are not told. We have certain ones.

Revelation 4:5, "...And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."

Revelation 1:4-5, if we go back, "John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead..." We again read of the seven Spirits before the throne of God.

Revelation 3:1-2, "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, "These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: 'I know your works....'" There's a reference to these Spirits. What are they? Let's turn back to the book of Zechariah and we will notice in Zechariah 3 and 4.

Zechariah 3:8-9, "...For behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH [This is a reference to Jesus Christ; in most of your Bibles, the term "BRANCH" is probably in all capital letters.]. For behold the stone that I have laid

before Joshua: upon the stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave its inscription," says the Lord of hosts, "and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.""

Zechariah 4:10, "For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the Lord, which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth."

Revelation 5:6, "And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth."

"...seven eyes which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." We find that reference in Zechariah 4:10. We find these seven Spirits referenced in other places in the book of Revelation. This is not the Holy Spirit. These are spirit beings.

Just hold your place here, and let's notice one other place.

Hebrews 1:7, "And of the angels He says: 'Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire.'" His ministers are His servants. His angels are spirits. Some servants are likened to flames of fire. Here, this describes created angelic spirit beings that evidently serve as an information-gathering source to God. They are the means by which God keeps up with every single thing that's going on all over the earth.

Our technology is very primitive, but there are certain things that we are aware of that can give us some insight. Our technology is perhaps more than generations past, though I don't think we should think that what we have is comparable to what God has. To compare what we have to what God has is like comparing a little flickering candle with the sun in full glory. There's not a whole lot of comparison. A little flickering candle and the sun both provide light and heat, but the distinction between them is awfully significant.

We can put satellites in the sky and we can have various ones located in orbit in various places around the earth. We call them spy satellites. They can send back pictures. Somebody can be sitting in a room watching on a television set something that is going on a world away. We have telephoto. We can take photographs and watch things that are going on a long ways away. We have sent probes into outer space. We can sit and watch film footage coming from the moons of Jupiter—just incredible things. Somebody

can sit and watch something projected onto a television screen.

Here, it's being projected back. These seven Spirits that John described serve, in that sense, as the eyes of God. They are the means by which God watches what is going on. They are described here.

John sees a great celebration of praise for God going on in heaven.

Revelation 4:11, "'You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.'"

For all of this brilliance, magnificence, power and grandeur that are described in the spirit realm, none of them are created to be part of God's Family. Just hold your place here and let's go back to Hebrews. God is speaking of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1:4-5, "having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say: 'You are My Son, today I have begotten you?' And again: 'I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son?'"

For all the grandeur, power and greatness that these angels were created with, none of them are part of God's Family. They are created as servant beings to serve and carry out God's government. But we have the opportunity to actually be a part of His Family, to actually be a part of the very Family of God.

In Revelation 21:7, God says to us, "...I will be his God and he shall be My son.'" 'You are My sons!' Now, if we are sons and He's the Father, that's a Family, isn't it? It's a relationship the angels can't have. We don't just become angels. We won't sprout wings, grow a halo and become an angel. Our destiny is far, far greater than any of the angels.

Let's compare it. In a monarchy, the only way you can be a part of the royal family is to be born into the royal family. If you're a commoner, the highest thing that you could aspire to is to be the Prime Minister. If you actually look at the meaning of the words "Prime Minister," it simply means "the first servant" or "the chief servant." But you can never be higher than that because the only way you can be a prince or a king is to be born into the royal family.

The angelic beings have great power, authority, grandeur and greatness—far greater than what we have as human beings right now. Our destiny is not just simply to be a super angel. It is far, far above the angelic realm. It's incredible.

John sees a little bit of this. He sees heaven. He sees the very throne of God.

Revelation 5:1, "And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll [KJV, "book"] written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals."

Verse 3, "And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it." None of the created angelic beings that were in heaven—not the twenty-four elders, not the four living creatures, not Michael or Gabriel or any of the angelic beings that were in heaven—were worthy to open that book. There wasn't any human being alive on the earth that was worthy to open that book. There wasn't anybody dead and buried under the earth that was worthy to open that book. John was just overwhelmed that there wasn't anyone who could open the book (v. 4).

Verses 5-6, "But one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.' And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain...."

John uses the metaphor "Lamb of God." He uses it in his gospel and he uses it in the book of Revelation. It is referring to Jesus Christ.

He describes in v. 7, "Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne." He took it out of the hand of God the Father.

Verse 8, "Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."

"Golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." Do you ever think of God having a means of storing up prayers? It describes here golden bowls full of incense. Incense was offered in the Holy Place and was symbolic of the prayers of God's people—it's sweet savor coming up to God. God evidently has a means by which He preserves the prayers of His saints. They are really precious to Him. If we consider and think about that, we might be more careful in our prayer life. Think about that.

I don't know about you, but I have a box at home. In that box, I have an accumulation of cards. I have things my children made for me years ago when they were really small. I have cards that they would make or a letter that they

would write to me. I have cards that various people have sent over the years. From time to time I like to go back through, look and think back about some of that and to sort of take encouragement from some of that. We often save things that our children do when they are young because it means a lot to us. It's very precious to us. As they get older, you look back and see some of these things. It's something you enjoy reminiscing about. God appreciates and values the prayers of His children.

Verse 9, "And they sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain....'" I want to call your attention to a technical point in vv. 9 and 10, so we can understand it.

The King James Version translates it with the first person pronoun.

Verses 9-10, "... 'And have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.'" First-person pronouns are used. Many other translations will render the third-person pronoun which is "they" or "them," and that is correct.

The Greek text that the King James was translated from is called the "Textus Receptus." Overall it is a very accurate text. It is not identical to what is called the "Majority Text" or the "Byzantine Text," which comprises about ninety percent of the Greek manuscripts. It is a text that was available there in Europe and was primarily compiled from those. Overall it was a very excellent text, but when you check the Majority or Byzantine Text, which is really the authoritative New Testament manuscript, it uses the third-person pronoun "they" or "them." That is correct because if you look at the context, angelic beings are the ones that are singing. Well, they haven't been redeemed out of tribe and tongues and peoples and nations. They would be using the third-person pronoun "they" or "them." Most modern translations render it that way. The New King James renders it the way the Old King James does, but they have a footnote in the margin where they tell you that the King James text is really a deviation from one of the few originals.

The angelic creatures are singing a new song to Christ.

Verse 9, "... 'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed *them* to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.'" It's talking about human beings from

every ethnic background who have been redeemed to God through the blood of Jesus Christ. Angelic beings are singing this. So naturally they would use a third-person pronoun. Verse 10, "'And have made *them* kings and priests to our God; and they shall reign on the earth.'"

Verse 11, "Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." He saw a hundred million and then thousands of thousands. That's millions! John saw millions of angels. One choir was a hundred million angels. Can you imagine what sort of a volume of song that ten million angels could make?

We hear our choir sing and that's inspiring. When you go to the Feast they have a large choir that consists of a hundred or two hundred at a big Feast site and that's really impressive. Can you imagine the choir that God has in heaven? –A hundred million angels. That must be quite a thing.

They were singing and glorifying God and Jesus Christ. They were worshipping Him because now the Lamb opens the seals (v. 5). The Lamb is Jesus Christ. He opens the seals. He is the Revelator. Jesus Christ is the One who reveals what the seals meant.

A document was written and sealed. It says it was a book (v. 1, KJV), but what we are seeing is actually a scroll. Books that are bound, as we think of them, didn't come into use until at least a couple of hundred years after the time John had written Revelation. Up to that time a scroll, which is unrolled, is what was utilized. Here we find something that was sealed. It was sealed and a seal was broken. You unrolled it and then you got to another seal. You broke that seal and unrolled it further.

Seals were put on letters. It was a way of making something tamper proof, of ensuring that only the authorized individual used it. In ancient times and coming on up into fairly modern times, sealing was generally done on legal documents. Sealing wax was put on them and then a signet ring was pressed into the warm wax. Something that identified or authenticated the genuineness was pressed into it. Pages of a will or something similar were folded. Then they would heat wax, let that blob of wax fall on the fold and then put a seal in it. If anybody broke it, it was obvious. You couldn't repair it. So, it would be apparent whether or not it had been tampered with. It was a means of protecting a legal document and

guaranteeing that no unauthorized entry was made. Nobody had access to it. If they did, it was readily discovered that they had done so. No one was authorized to open it except the individual who was authorized to break that seal.

No one was allowed to break that seal. God had written it. He had sealed it and no one was authorized to break the seal. No one was worthy to break the seal except Jesus Christ. He broke the seal. As Jesus Christ would break the seal, John described it. It's like John is in heaven. He's transported to heaven and he's before the throne. The seals are broken and it's like he's watching on a big television. Now that's a poor analogy, but it sort of gives you the picture. It's almost as though he's there. All of a sudden, he sees all of these events going on. Then another seal is broken and he sees all these other events going on. This is a remarkable thing. You can sort of picture it. It's something like a giant movie screen, though perhaps a 3-D movie screen or something far more impressive than anything we have.

All of a sudden, John actually sees these events taking place. What he sees is symbolic and these symbols are interpreted. Where would we look to find the interpretation? We have to go to the interpretation given by Jesus Christ because He's the Revelator. He's the only one worthy to open the seals.

Revelation 6:1-2, "Now I saw when the Lamb opened **one of the seals**...And I looked, and behold, a **white horse**. And he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer."

Verses 3-4, "When He opened the **second seal**, I heard the second living creature saying, 'Come and see.' And another **horse, fiery red**, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another and there was given to him a great sword."

Verses 5-6, "When He opened the **third seal**, I heard the third living creature say, 'Come and see.' And I looked, and behold, a **black horse**, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, 'A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius....'"

Here was food rationing—famine. Food was being rationed out. A denarius was the daily wage of a laboring man at that point in time. So, here we are looking at a small ration of food for a day's wages—at least a day's wages, what we would term "minimum wages." We are looking

at food being scarce, being rationed and being very expensive.

Verse 7, "When He opened the **fourth seal**, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, 'Come and see.' And I looked, and behold, a **pale horse**. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades [grave; the grave follows after death] followed with him. And power was given to them [The previous horsemen, particularly the red horseman of war and the black horseman of famine, together with the pale horse of death.] over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death...."

Among those three—warfare, famine and disease—one-fourth of the earth's population dies, along with many animals. It's a horrendous event.

Verses 9-11, "When He opened the **fifth seal**, I saw under the altar the **souls** of those who had been **slain** for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' And a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed."

Let's talk about this fifth seal a little bit. There's some who point to Revelation 6:9 and say, 'This proves there's people in heaven. People go to heaven when they die because it talks about them right here.' Well, if Revelation 6:9 proves that people go to heaven when they die, it also proves that they all go under the altar, which must be a rather crowded place by now. They want to take that literally and say that proves they are going to heaven. If you are going to take it literally rather than symbolically, then it proves they went down under the altar and they are stuffing another one down under there. Those who believe in going to heaven don't think they are going to lie under the altar stacked up like cordwood for centuries and millennia. They think they are rolling around the streets of gold.

What is it talking about? What was under the altar? The altar in the tabernacle and temple was where the sacrifices were slaughtered. What was under the altar? There was a basin that collected the blood of the sacrifices. There was a basin at the foot of the altar and the blood ran down. The blood was collected in the basin and was utilized. The blood was symbolic of the life of

the creature. We are told that the life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11).

Let's go back to the book of Genesis 4. We read the story of Cain and Abel.

Genesis 4:8-10, "Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose against Abel his brother and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is Abel your brother?' And he said, 'I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?' And He said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground.'"

Did he mean that Abel's blood literally had a voice? Well, no, he's using what is termed "metaphorical language." The very presence of the blood of a righteous man demands retribution from a just and holy God. He told Cain, "Your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground." In other words, the very presence and existence of the blood of Abel demanded retribution from a God who is holy and just—not simply One who stands by and ignores it—when one of His servants is slaughtered.

Now, the blood of righteous Abel cried out. If the blood of one righteous man—one martyr—cried out for vengeance, how much more loudly is the collective cry from the blood of all of the servants of God who have been slain down through the centuries—from righteous Abel on down? How much more loudly does the blood of all righteous men cry out collectively? The martyrdom of men and women of God demands that a God who is just and holy has to intervene for there to be justice. If God is a God of justice, then somewhere along the line there has to be some retribution. In this life, many times the righteous perish and the wicked prosper (Psalm 73). Unless there is a final evening of the score, then how do you come out ahead by obeying God?

What he sees is the collective martyrdom of the people of God down through the centuries who were figuratively crying out, just as Abel's blood had cried out.

Revelation 6:10, "And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, do You not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?'"

Verse 11, "And a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed."

They would rest a little while longer; they would remain in the grave yet a little season

until the resurrection. There is a final end-time martyrdom yet to come.

Revelation 12:13-14, "Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time [three and one-half years] from the face of the serpent." He's not allowed to get at her. He tries, but he can't. So, he's angry.

Verse 17, "And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." He goes to make war with those who weren't taken to a place of protection. He goes to make war with the only portion of God's Church that he is allowed to get at—the portion that is not in the place of safety.

When you go through Revelation 3, it is apparent that the Philadelphia Church is taken to a place of protection and the Laodiceans are not. I covered some of that in a sermon. The Tribulation is Satan's wrath. It is Satan's wrath against the people of God—against God's people nationally and against God's people spiritually. God's people nationally are the nations of modern-day Israel—the United States and British Commonwealth nations, the people who were the descendants of Abraham and with whom God made His covenant.

Jeremiah 30:7, "'Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.'" It is the time of Jacob's trouble. It's a time that is terrible. There is none like it. Here is an unsurpassed time of calamity called the time of Jacob's trouble.

Let's go to Matthew 24. Here we find Christ the Revelator. Hold your place in Revelation 6 and Matthew 24 because we are going to go back and forth a little bit.

Matthew 24 is the focal point of Bible prophecy. This is where Jesus Christ unveils and gives the key to understanding what we read in Revelation 6.

In Matthew 24:21, He talks about a time of "great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be." You can't have two times that are worse than any other time. If the time of Jacob's trouble is a time such as there has never been, and if the time Christ speaks of right here in Matthew 24:21 is the time worst than any other time, then obviously it's the same time.

It is Satan's wrath. It is Satan's wrath against physical Israel. It is the time of Jacob's trouble. It is also Satan's wrath against God's Church. God protects the Philadelphians era of His Church. Satan can't get to them. He wants to, but he can't because God won't let him. So, he then goes after the only part that is there, which is the remnant—those that have been left behind, the Laodiceans. He goes after them with full force and fury. Many of them are martyred. That is the final time of the martyrdom of the people of God. The Great Tribulation is Satan's wrath.

Revelation 6:12-13, "I looked when He opened the **sixth seal**, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind." This is speaking of giant meteor showers, **heavenly signs**. It is just an incredible thing.

Now, let's go to Matthew 24:3, "Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?'" How are we going to know?

Verse 4, "And Jesus answered and said to them: 'Take heed that no one deceives you.'" The first thing we have is deception. We have false messiahs, false Christs.

What is the first seal? It's someone coming on a white horse (Revelation 6:1-2). Some commentators will tell you this is talking about Christ. No, it's not talking about Christ. Christ doesn't come back until Revelation 19. He's pictured as coming on a white horse all right. What we find in Revelation 6 is somebody masquerading as Christ, somebody who tries to give the outward appearance.

But notice there is a significant difference. The rider in Revelation 6 has a bow (v. 2). Christ is never pictured as having a bow. He's pictured as having a sword (Revelation 19:11, 15). The sword represents the word of God (Hebrew 4:12). The bow was the symbol of Nimrod the mighty hunter. Back in Genesis 10 and 11, we have the story of Nimrod and the tower of Babel. Genesis 10:8-10, "...Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, 'Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.' And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel...." Here was the beginning of Babylon. He was the great conqueror, the mighty hunter and the founder of the Babylonian Mystery religion.

Here we find the final end-time successor. We find those who were a perpetuation of the Babylonian Mystery religion coming with the sign and symbol—in reality, the successor of Nimrod—coming and purporting to be Christ.

What did Jesus say?

Matthew 24:5, "'For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.'" They are going to come giving this impression. There's going to be deception. There are going to be false messiahs, false Christs.

I may go into some of these seals a little more on the Feast of Trumpets. The **first seal is the white horse of deception**—"those coming in My name."

Matthew 24:6-7, notice the second thing, "'And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom....'" The **second seal is the fiery red horse of wars**. There's going to be wars on the international scale. That's kingdom against kingdom. There's also going to be wars in terms of ethnic strife and violence, which is "nation against nation" or ethnos against ethnos.

We use the word "nation" in modern English to refer to various countries like Canada, the United States, Mexico, Britain, France or whomever. But the word "nation" derived from a Latin word that we get our word "nativity" (like in nativity scene). Hospitals have a prenatal unit. The word comes from the Latin word for birth. When you talk about "neonatal" or "prenatal" you are talking about the care prior to the birth of a child, as in prenatal care. When you talk about a nativity scene, you are talking about the traditional Christmas scene centering around what is purported to be the birth of Christ. Our English word "nation" is derived from the same Latin root. It means those who are bound together by birth, those who share a common ancestry. It's translated from the Greek word "ethnos," from which we get our word "ethnic."

You can see the ethnic violence and that's happening all over the world. It's happening in Africa, Asia, Europe and all over the world. It's happening in this country. It is violence of one group against another, who may be within the same country, but they are of different "ethnos," different ethnic groups. In some cases, there are different political entities such as countries or nation states—"kingdom against kingdom." It is

warfare and violence internally among various ethnic groups and on the international scene.

What was the second seal? Wasn't it the red horse? The red horseman had the power to take peace from the earth; that's war (Revelation 6:3-4). That's the second seal. Christ interpreted it right here in Matthew 24.

What did He say the third seal was? Famine! Matthew 24:7, "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famine...." What was the **third seal**? It was **the black horse, rationing food, famine** (Revelation 6:5-6).

What was the fourth seal that Jesus revealed? Matthew 24:7, "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines, **pestilences**...."

Revelation 6:8, "...And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword [warfare], with hunger [famine], and then with death." The **fourth seal is the pale horse which is death**. There will be disease epidemics. There will be things like the black plague that devastated Europe during the early Middle Ages. We are finding that there are things and will be things we have only seen the very beginning of. I tell you what—AIDS and some of these other things that are coming along—they haven't seen anything yet, in terms of what is going to transpire.

It talks about **earthquakes** right along with this (Matthew 24:7; Revelation 6:12), an upsurge in earthquake activity. There will be earthquakes and natural disasters in various places. We are certainly experiencing that.

Matthew 24:8, he says, "...all these are the beginning of sorrows." The first four horsemen are the beginning of sorrows.

What's next?

Matthew 24:9, "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake." Oh, that's martyrdom! What was the **fifth seal**? —A **future martyrdom of the saints** (Revelation 6:9-11).

Matthew 24:29, he comes down, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." That's the **sixth seal**; that's the **heavenly signs** (Revelation 6:12-17).

Jesus Christ opened up the seals of Revelation. Matthew 24 is where we look to find the interpretation that Jesus Christ gave of these symbols. The **sixth seal is God stepping into**

history. That is the **beginning of the Day of the Lord**.

Verse 17 is the last verse of Revelation 6.

Revelation 6:17 says, "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

The Great Tribulation is Satan's wrath. Satan's wrath is directed primarily at the people of God, physically and nationally, as well as spiritually. It is aimed at the modern-day descendants of Israel (the United States and British Commonwealth nations) and at God's Church, God's people, spiritually. It's the time of Jacob's trouble and it's the time when Satan goes to make war with the remnant that is left behind. That's the **Great Tribulation of Satan's wrath**; that's the **fifth seal**.

The other seals are already opened prior to the beginning of the Tribulation. They are opened one at a time. They follow one another sequentially. But the first seal is not closed back up when the second one is opened. The first is opened first and it begins. It's followed by the second. Now, you have the first and the second both going on. Then the third one is opened up and the first and the second are still going on. And then the fourth one is opened up and all are going on. The first four horsemen are already riding when the Tribulation starts. They haven't done everything they are going to do because each of these seals, as it's ongoing, is continuing to build in its intensity.

When the Tribulation starts and it proceeds along, we come to a point where God steps in and the Day of the Lord begins. The final one year of that three and one-half year period represents God stepping in and beginning to deal with the beast power.

The sixth seal is simply God saying, 'Let Me have your attention, please!' Only He says it very dramatically. He is going to get the world's attention. I want to tell you what—an earthquake has a way of getting people's attention. A hurricane can get your attention. I've been in hurricanes and I've been in earthquakes. The advantage of a hurricane is that at least you know it's coming. If you want, you can try to do something, either by taking refuge or leaving and getting away. An earthquake just comes. You don't know it's coming until it's here and there isn't any place you can go because the most solid permanent thing you know of is shaking and quivering like a bowl of Jell-O right under your feet.

If you go up in an airplane and there's a lot of turbulence, you say, 'If I ever get my feet on solid ground again, you're not going to get me

back up here.' I've known of people who have been talked into going on a deep-sea fishing trip. They got out there and, boy, it (rough sea) was going. They were saying, 'If I ever get off this boat and get my feet on solid ground again, you're not going to get me back out here.' We think if we are in the air and it's turbulent or if we're on the water and it's turbulent, well, if we can just get onto solid ground, we're okay. But when you are on solid ground and it's not solid—it begins to quiver and shake like a bowl of Jell-O—where are you going to go and what are you going to do? The only things you can do is stand there and pray that it doesn't get bad enough to bring down whatever you're in on top of you. It's just a matter of intensity.

Science can't tell you how intense it's going to get. They can't tell you when it's going to come. Interestingly enough, certain animals are the best predictors—horses in particular. They can sense it a day or so before. We think we are so smart. Our instruments can't pick up what animals sometimes can pick up. God's designed a few things in, and we still haven't figured out all of it.

The point is that God is getting ready to step into history and He does so in a dramatic way. Earthquakes begin to shake; there are tremendous meteor showers and inexplicable signs in the heavens like a total eclipse. Incredible things are occurring and it's frightening. God is getting ready to intervene. That is the sixth seal. It sets the stage for the seventh seal.

I will call to your attention that you may want to go back and read Ezekiel 1 (the vision that Ezekiel saw) and compare it with Revelation 4. Ezekiel saw a miraculous appearance. God appeared in a certain conveyance—a way that He at times chose to transport Himself through the universe. It describes this. Some will say Ezekiel saw the first UFO. It's not a UFO. "UFO" means "unidentified flying object." What Ezekiel saw is clearly identified. It's the throne of God. It was an IFO, an identified flying object. There isn't any question as to what Ezekiel saw because he explains and interprets it. There's an awful lot packed into the book of Revelation. We've only just sort of skimmed the surface of it.

Next Bible study we will have a chance to go through chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10 as we progress a little further.

The Seven Seals of Revelation

First Seal	Second Seal	Third Seal	Fourth Seal	Fifth Seal	Sixth Seal	Seventh Seal
White Horse: Deception Revelation 6:1-2	Red Horse: War Revelation 6:3-4	Black Horse: Famine Revelation 6:5-5	Pale Horse: Pestilence Revelation 6:7-8	Martyrdom and Great Tribulation Revelation 6:9-11	Heavenly Signs Revelation 6:12-17	Seven Trumpet Plagues Revelation 8:2

Seven Trumpets: The Day of the Lord

First Trumpet	Second Trumpet	Third Trumpet	Fourth Trumpet	Fifth Trumpet	Sixth Trumpet	Seventh Trumpet
Green grass and one-third of the trees are burned up. Revelation 8:7	One-third of sea becomes blood, one-third of ships and sea life are destroyed by fire. Revelation 8:8-9	One-third of waters turn bitter. Revelation 8:10-11	One-third of sun, moon and stars do not shine. Revelation 8:12	"Locusts" wield the Beast's military power. Revelation 9:1-12	200 million men army gathers. Revelation 9:13-21	The Kingdom is proclaimed. The Second Coming Revelation 11:15-19

Seven Last Plagues

First Plague	Second Plague	Third Plague	Fourth Plague	Fifth Plague	Sixth Plague	Seventh Plague
Sores afflict those who accepted the mark of the Beast. Revelation 16:2	Sea turns to blood, all sea creatures die. Revelation 16:3	Rivers turn to blood. Revelation 16:4-7	Man kind, scorched by the sun, blasphemes God. Revelation 16:8-9	The Beast's seat of government is afflicted. Revelation 16:10-11	The Euphrates is dried up; world armies gather to Armageddon. Revelation 16:12-16	The earth is utterly shaken. Revelation 16:17-21

Bible Study # 95 Questions

SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION SERIES

Revelation 4—6

1. Who are the twenty-four Elders?
2. What is the significance of a book with seven seals?
3. What does incense symbolize?
4. What does Revelation 5:9-10 mean? Are there people in heaven?
5. How do you know that the rider on the white horse of Revelation 6:2 does not symbolize Jesus Christ?
6. What is the significance of the “souls under the altar”?
7. What is the significance of the “bow” in Revelation 6:2?
8. What scripture interprets the six seals?
9. Why is the third horseman pictured with balances?
10. What account elsewhere in the Bible helps to further explain the vision John describes in Revelation 4?
11. What do white robes symbolize?
12. What is the time setting for the sixth seal?

Bible Study # 96
September 22, 1992
Mr. John Ogwyn

Book of Revelation Series—Revelation 7—10

As we continue along, we will go right into the book of Revelation this evening. We **are getting into Revelation 7, 8, 9 and 10 this evening.**

There are several things to understand in terms of a basic outline of the book of Revelation and what is involved. Chapter 6 gives us an outline of the first six seals of the book of Revelation. Then in chapter 8 we get into the seventh seal. There are seven seals to the book of Revelation that seals the whole book. Coming down you have seven seals and then the seventh seal is comprised of seven trumpets. When the seventh seal is opened, seven trumpets begin to blow successively through that period of time. And then the seventh trumpet consists of seven last plagues. **We have that outline as we go through. You have the seven seals; the seventh seal is seven trumpets and the seventh trumpet is seven last plagues.** I am going to touch on some of these things in more depth on the Feast of Trumpets. I will comment more on other things here this evening.

I want to give you a little bit of a background. There are a couple of things to understand in regard to this. The first six seals are all listed in Revelation 6. That's a good way to remember them, by the way. Where are the first six seals? Well, Revelation 6. *The six seals go through: 1) the false prophets, 2) wars and rumors of war, 3) famines, 4) disease epidemics, 5) the Great Tribulation and 6) a great earthquake and heavenly signs.*

The heavenly signs set the stage for the Day of the Lord; **the seventh seal is the Day of the Lord.** The Day of the Lord is comprised of the seven trumpets. The trumpet plagues that are dispersed from them begin in Revelation 8.

The Great Tribulation is the fifth seal. From that we understand that the first four seals are all opened prior to the beginning of the Tribulation. *The Great Tribulation, we are told, consists of the last three and one-half years prior to the return of Christ.* It's defined in Scripture as time, times and a half time or one thousand two hundred sixty days or three and one-half years. It's the time that God's Church is to be protected in a place of safety. That's in Revelation 12, which we will get into next Bible study. This is our last Bible study until after the Feast.

There is a distinction that needs to be understood between the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. **The Tribulation, the fifth seal, is Satan's wrath.** Satan's wrath is poured out in two directions: it's poured out against God's people nationally and against God's people spiritually (God's true Church). God's people nationally are, of course, not only the Jews, but also the modern descendants of the so-called "lost ten tribes."

Approximately one-third of the Bible consists of prophecy. The most important key to unlocking and understanding Bible prophecy is the identity of Israel because if you don't know who and where Israel is, then you are in a fog. When you read prophecy in the Old Testament, you don't know who it's talking about. That is an important key. It is a doubly important key when you understand the responsibility of warning Israel that is outlined in the book of Ezekiel—the message of the watchman and all these things. It represents an important key to understanding Bible prophecy.

In Jeremiah 30:7, we are told of the Tribulation, "Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's [Israel's] trouble, but he shall be saved out of it." That's why I say that the Tribulation is the wrath against physical Israel—the United States and British Commonwealth nations, in particular. It's the time of Jacob's trouble. We are told in Jeremiah, "...that day is great, so that none is like it..." Now, you can't have two times that are "great, so that nothing is like it." If something else is like it, then it doesn't stand out as unique. This is a unique period. It is a time of great trial and great tribulation. No time is comparable to it.

When you go to the book of Matthew 24, it talks about the time of the Great Tribulation.

Matthew 24:21, "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be." Here's a unique period of time called the Great Tribulation. It surpasses every other time of adversity that has ever been known up until that time.

In Jeremiah 30:7, we are told, "...it is the time of Jacob's trouble..." No day is like it. So, we are talking about the same thing—the Great Tribulation.

In Revelation 12, we find that the Church is taken to a place of protection, a place of safety. Satan goes to make war with that portion of the Church left behind—the Laodiceans era. It is wrath directed at physical Israel and at spiritual

Israel. The prophecies of the Old Testament particularly relate to the national aspect of it.

This period of Tribulation—this time of intense pressure, adversity and all of the calamities that are associated with it—includes invasions, captivity and all the things that are prophesied in the books of Ezekiel, Isaiah and Jeremiah, as well as in the Minor Prophets. It includes all of these things. This is Satan's wrath.

What it amount to is that God removes His protection. It's not God's wrath, but God removes His protection. You know if we don't value what God gives us, God may say, 'You want to do it your way; go ahead and see how well you handle it.' Nationally, we have not really appreciated and valued God's blessing and God's protection.

The Laodiceans are not really stirred up and excited about the work of God. They don't have the burning zeal to really do the work that the Philadelphians are pictured as having. Rather, they are described in Revelation 3 as having sort of a compromising, lukewarm, little bit of a watered-down attitude. They don't have that zeal. That's what they are told they are lacking.

In Ezekiel 3 and 33, it talks about the watchman. The watchman is to go and deliver the message and be a watchman for the house of Israel. The watchman has the zeal to do the work to proclaim the message of God, to give the warning and the witness message that God has given. Philadelphians have the real zeal to go forth and to do that. In the book of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 9:4), it talks about those who sigh and cry for the abominations of Israel, those who are really bothered by what's going on. That zeal is there. That's one of the great contrasts.

We come down. The fifth seal is opened in Revelation 6. Then there comes a point where God steps in. **The sixth seal—the heavenly signs and earthquake—is the beginning of God's intervention.** These other events have been going on now for a period of time. The sixth seal sets the stage.

Revelation 6:17, "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" **The seventh seal is the Day of the Lord; the Day of the Lord is the day of God's wrath.** God gets ready to pour out His wrath, especially directed at the world that is under the full sway of Satan.

We note that Revelation 7 is an inset. If you are following the story flow, you come down through the sixth seal in Revelation 6. Then in Revelation 8:1 the seventh seal is opened. That is the sequence. Chapter 7 is a break into the sequence.

It seems very likely that what is termed "*Day of the Lord*" probably refers to the last year prior to Christ's return. We know that many times a day is used for a year in Bible prophecy. I am going to prove to you in a few moments that there are a number of months that are involved in this. There's a specific period of five months that's mentioned in the context of one of the trumpet plagues. When you look at the severity of them, it's unlikely that we could be looking at any sort of an extended period of time.

The Tribulation begins with the cessation of the sacrifices in Jerusalem. And, of course, they haven't started yet. They will start and they will be stopped. It doesn't say how long they will continue between the time they are initiated and the time they are stopped. But when they are stopped, we are told in the book of Daniel and other places that it will be the beginning of a period of one thousand two hundred ninety days. That is one month more than the one thousand two hundred sixty days that the Church is to be protected in a place of safety. So, we are looking at the onset of these things about three and one-half years before Christ returns. They continue on along for a two-and-one-half year period and the beast power is doing these things. But part way through the Tribulation (about two-thirds of the way through), God begins to step in. God begins to intervene. The heavenly signs are when He gets people's attention.

Then in chapter 7, He does something. Let's notice.

Revelation 7:1-3, "After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth... Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, 'Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.'" *The events of the Day of the Lord are held up for the completion of the sealing of the servants of God.*

Now, how are they sealed? What does that mean? With what are they sealed? If you get a legal document, what does a seal do? A seal authenticates genuineness. Sometimes you have to get a legal document notarized. The notary affixes his seal. The seal authenticates genuineness. That's the purpose of a seal. The seal that God places on His servants authenticates that they are the genuine thing.

Ephesians 1:13-14, "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of

your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the guarantee [KJV, “earnest”] of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”

We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. God’s Spirit seals us. It authenticates us as the genuine article. It’s the earnest of our inheritance. You know what “earnest” is? If you have ever purchased a house, you frequently put down what’s called “earnest money.” That is a proof that you are going to come back. They, at that point, take the house off the market. You give them a certain portion; that’s earnest money. That means you are going to be back and fulfill the terms of the contract. You are going to come back at a designated time and complete the verbal agreement made with them. You are going to pay in full. You are going to finish what you have promised. This is the proof that you are going to come back and follow through with that promise.

When God gives us His Spirit at baptism, it is the earnest of our inheritance. You haven’t received the inheritance yet. When we’re baptized, we don’t suddenly become immortal to where we never die. You have the Spirit of God residing in you. In that sense, you have eternal life in you, but you have to endure to the end in order to be saved. That Spirit is the authentication of our genuineness. It is the earnest of our inheritance. We are told that we are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. God’s Spirit seals us as the real thing. It is the evidence that God is going to ultimately finish what He has started in us. When God gives you His Spirit, He starts a process.

In Job 14:15, Job tells us, “...You shall desire the work of Your hands.” Job understood that God was going to have a desire to finish what He had started in you. There are other scriptures in the New Testament that talk about God bringing to completion the work that He has started in our lives (Philippians 1:6).

Revelation 7:4, “And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed.”

This sealing of the one hundred forty-four thousand—the Holy Spirit is what seals God’s people.

We read an analogy that is given in Ezekiel 9 of the writer’s inkhorn.

Ezekiel 9:4-5, “and the Lord said to him, ‘Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads

of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.’ To the others He said in my hearing, ‘Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, or have any pity.’” Everyone is going to be subject to this.

Verse 6, “...but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary...” They begin right there. It talks about being set aside. It talks about God’s people being sealed in that way.

One thing to understand is the fact that the greatest harvest of our work is yet in the future. There are people who have listened to the broadcast and read the magazines or booklets for years. They have heard all these things and somehow it doesn’t seem that important. They have either filed it away or said, ‘that may happen some day; it doesn’t really pertain to me’ or whatever they have done. But I am going to tell you what; when these events begin to happen (some of them have begun to happen) and when the reality of the Tribulation is here, it’s going to be a little late to be arguing about some of these things that maybe some have argued about.

When the events that are prophesied really begin to fully come about, you’re going to have people who are going to come to repentance during that period of Tribulation. Some of them are going to be martyred and others are going to survive through it. But there are going to be individuals who really begin to repent and their whole attitude changes. Instead of wanting to strive, argue about “the way I see it” and all this sort of thing, that is not going to be their attitude. When the troops are marching down the streets, it’s going to be a little late to argue about the Greek and the Hebrew. The Tribulation is going to be here. Individuals who have sort of played around with the truth, in many cases, are going to wake up at that point because the reality is going to be there.

Revelation 7:3, we find that they are told to wait, hold up, until we seal the servants of our God. There is a sealing that is completed. If you check this, it doesn’t necessarily have to mean that none of the one hundred forty-four thousand have been sealed prior to this time. There are two different ways of reading the term for “seal.” Either the whole one hundred forty-four thousand are sealed at this point or the final group that comprise the one hundred forty-four thousand (those that bring it up to the full contingent) are sealed at that time. In other words, this sealing marks the completion

of sealing those who will comprise the one hundred forty-four thousand. I think the clearest understanding of it is that the last of those who will be a part of that group will be sealed at this time.

God has selected this number for certain reasons. There are twelve thousand who are assigned for each one of the tribes of Israel. You have this assignment that goes on down (Revelation 7: 5-8). Twelve is the number of organized beginnings. Twelve is an organizational number that is used throughout Scripture, so here is something that is going to play an important part in God's government.

Revelation 7:9, "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number..." When you say, 'no man could number,' what does that mean? Does that mean nobody can count that high? Well, no. You can count up into the millions and billions. We've been able to number the people of the United States in terms of population. When it says, "a great multitude which no one can number," it is simply talking about a large crowd of undetermined or undefined number that no man could number, in the sense that no man was permitted to number. No man was allowed to number it. It was a large crowd. God has a specific designation, this one hundred forty-four thousand. But, in addition, there is a multitude (a large crowd or group) that comes out.

Continuing v. 9, "...of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes..." We see them here as well.

Verse 11, we see the angels here, "And all the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God."

Verse 13, "Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, 'Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?'"

John says, 'Well, I'm not sure. I'm sure you know.'

Verse 14, "And I said to him, 'Sir, you know.' So he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"

We find a number of people who are defined as having repented during the Tribulation—in many cases, having been martyred. The great harvest of this work is yet future. The time setting on this is important.

Many years ago in the early part of this century, the Jehovah's Witnesses have locked in on the

one hundred forty-four thousand in this verse and decided they were the one hundred forty-four thousand, which presented a problem to them when their membership got larger than one hundred forty-four thousand. I think there are over a million of them now. So, they obviously can't all be the one hundred forty-four thousand. The sealing did not take place in 1914 or 1918. The sealing that is described here is to take place in the future. The heavenly signs have not occurred yet. The Tribulation has not occurred yet. We are looking at an event that is yet future, an event that will occur.

The reason this is set apart is that God, at this point, is getting ready to pour out His wrath on unrepentant mankind. God will protect those who have really learned their lesson and come to repentance through the Tribulation. God will protect them from His wrath that is poured out. The Philadelphian Church is in a place of protection, geographically, where they have been protected through the Tribulation, which is continuing. Now, God is getting ready to step in and pour out His wrath. God is going to protect those who have really learned their lesson and come to deep repentance from the consequences of what He is going to pour out.

Revelation 8:1-4, "When He opened the **seventh seal**, and there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. And he was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand." – God's people praying to Him.

Incense was used in the tabernacle. The smoke of the incense is symbolic of the prayers of the saints ascending. We symbolically have pictured the prayers of God's people for God's intervention, deliverance and judgment all the way down through the centuries. Up until this point, God has not stepped in and answered those prayers. Collectively, those prayers are preserved. Now they are offered up. It's now time. It's time for those prayers to be answered.

Verse 5, "Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake." Pretty impressive!

Verses 6-7, "So the seven angels who had the **seven trumpets** prepared themselves to sound. The **first angel sounded**: And hail and fire

followed, mingled with blood....” Here is a lightning storm. You talk about a thunderstorm! I suspect all of us have been in thunderstorms and perhaps had some hail. It can be pretty intimidating. Lightning flashing and hail falling can be pretty frightening. There’s never been a storm like this. When God gets ready to unleash the weather, you talk about showing man how puny he is. Oh, we can do so much. Look how great we are. Yeah, just one little “blow” (hurricane) came through here. It just rattled, shook and shivered things every which way. And that was nothing by comparison.

Verse 7, it talks about, “... a third part of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.” Lightning triggers forest fires. Can you imagine this kind of storm that is occurring worldwide and fires breaking out everywhere? You wind up with a third of the vegetation destroyed. There is tremendous hail coming down. There is lightning and thunder. That would be just about the most frightening thing people have been able to imagine up until then. But they haven’t seen anything yet. That’s only the first trumpet.

One of the things that has to happen is (go back to the plagues of Egypt) God has to humble haughty man.

In Isaiah 66:2, God says, “...But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.” – Somebody who has that spirit of humility and walking with God, rather than filled up with pride and thinking how great we are and what we can do.

Revelation 8:8, “Then the **second angel sounded**: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood.” This could refer to a giant meteor or asteroid that hits the earth. Where it describes a mountain burning with fire, that is perhaps some sort of gigantic volcanic activity.

The result is in v. 9, “and a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.” Here is something horribly disruptive to the oceans. Can you imagine the horrible stinking mess you wind up with when a third of the sea life is destroyed?

Anybody who lived on the Atchafalaya River in Louisiana got a little bit of a taste of that with all the destruction of fish following the hurricane and the stench and smell out there. All these fish stinking will almost be enough to be a plague in itself. One dead fish can smell pretty bad; here’s a whole bunch of them.

This is followed by vv. 10-11, “Then the **third angel sounded**: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water; and the name of the star is Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood; and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.” We are looking at a poisoning effect that this has on the ground water and on the fresh water. A large part of this becomes undrinkable. Many people die.

Verse 12, “Then the **fourth angel sounded**: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened; and a third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.” This is some sort of disruption in the earth’s orbit—a tilt on the axis to where there is a disruption of the cycle. Everything that gives any sort of normalcy and stability is disrupted.

Verse 13, “And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, ‘Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitance of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound.’” **The next three trumpets are called the three woes**. The first four are the easy ones. We hadn’t even gotten to the three woes yet. If what has already happened isn’t bad enough to be called a woe, you certainly don’t want to be around for these.

Revelation 9:1, “Then the **fifth angel sounded**: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. And to him was given the key to the bottomless pit [shaft of the abyss].” “Star” is often used as symbolic of an angel. When “star” is mentioned in the earlier chapters, it could very well be referring to an angel or perhaps also a meteor or an asteroid.

Verses 2-3, “And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. And the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.” Here, it refers to power being given to unleash something.

John describes what he sees. This is one of the keys to understanding some of the symbolism. John is describing what he sees in the language of his day. When he describes this war-making power, he describes it as looking like a horde of locusts, yet not really locusts but sort of like that. He could be describing big attack helicopters. Can you imagine? What would that look like to John. The sky becoming dark with these big

military attack helicopters. What would that look like to him? It would sort of look like a swarm of locusts or some sort of thing that comes through. Exactly what it was is not entirely possible to know. You find it described here as something rising up out of this great abyss. Later on we find the beast is pictured as ascending out of this great abyss, this bottomless pit (Revelation 17:8). We are looking at something that is pertaining to the beast power that is swallowed up. We are looking at something that comes up out of this great abyss, a great war-making power that comes upon the earth.

Verse 4 describes some sort of futuristic weapon. Revelation 9:4, “They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God in their foreheads.”

Verse 5, “And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. And their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man.”

Here is some sort of a bomb. There was a lot of work that was done on what is called the neutron bomb, which was supposed to kill people and not destroy buildings. This has always been one of the things that people like to come up with—how to wipe out the enemy without wiping out everything the enemy has. So, this is some sort of a weapon that they come up with.

In this case, it’s not exactly a neutron bomb. It doesn’t kill people. Perhaps it has something in it that affects the central nervous system or some sort of thing that creates some sort of pain and torment yet doesn’t necessarily result in death. It’s not destructive to plants, buildings and things of that sort. It only affects human life. God is going to protect those whom He has set apart.

It describes this torment. It describes it like the torment of a scorpion. If you have ever been stung by something like that, you realize how painful something of that sort can be. This is something that causes some sort of an allergic reaction that hangs on and on but does not necessarily end in death. In fact, people are going to be so miserable they are going to seek death and not find it (v. 6). Things they thought were going to deliver them are not going to deliver them. They are not going to come up with a vaccine that’s going to solve this problem. They are not going to run down and get something prescribed that is going to solve this.

Just like in Egypt. What in effect has to happen—just like the plagues of Egypt—people have to recognize that everything in which they have placed their trust and confidence in to

deliver them, can’t. The gods of Egypt are not gods. God executed vengeance against all the gods of Egypt. The ten plagues that came on Egypt executed judgment against the gods of Egypt. It showed that the gods of Egypt were not gods. They could not deliver the people who placed their trust and confidence in them.

John describes what these weapons look like. He talks about them looking like locusts.

Verse 10, “They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails...” This would indicate weapons that are fired out from the rear or from the bottom. What would it look like to John to see some sort of wave after wave of attack jets, attack helicopters or something like that coming over?

The real instigator is in v. 11, “And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.” —Which means “destroyer.”

Verses 12-16, “One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things. Then the **sixth angel sounded**: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar, which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘Release the four angels who are bound at the great River Euphrates.’ So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million, and I heard the number of them.”

Here was a great army that consisted of two hundred million.

Verses 18-19, “By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.”

This is a pretty good description of a nuclear attack—fire, smoke and brimstone that issued out. It describes that their power is in their mouths and in their tails. So, it comes out both the front and the back. What you have described here is something that’s not quite as high tech, but it’s pretty efficient. Not quite the high technology of the fifth trumpet. What you have described here is an insanity that breaks loose that would result in total destruction and annihilation of the human race if God did not step in to stop it. Really a loss of sanity because the fifth trumpet (vv. 1-12), this great military machine that arises up out of the beast power, is described as something coming up out of this

great industrial complex. This is the military power of the beast. Against whom is it directed? Well, it is directed at those who counter-attack them in the last part of the chapter (vv. 13-21)—the sixth trumpet.

Let's notice. Just hold your place and go back to Daniel 11.

Daniel 11:40, ““At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him: and the king of the North shall come against him....” The king of the South is referring to the area south of Jerusalem, the Arab-Islamic combine centered there. The king of the North is the area north of Jerusalem, referring specifically to the beast power. Europe is going to come in with an invasion. They are going to invade the Middle East and take possession of this whole vital area (vv. 40-41). *This marks the onset of the Tribulation—this period of Tribulation against the people of God spiritually (the Church) and God's people nationally (physical Israel)*. This is going to go on. The whole world is going to be tied up, dominated and acquiescing to this. But there's going to be trouble and rumblings.

Verse 44, we are told, ““But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many.””

As time continues into the Tribulation, the beast power is going to be more and more convinced that there is trouble and resistance in the East. There are problems and rumblings in nations like China, India and what used to be Soviet Central Asia. They are not satisfied with the status quo and with the place they have in the new world order that is going to come about. There is a lack of trust.

The beast power comes up with this technology. They think launching this pre-emptive blitzkrieg-type of an attack will resolve their problems. They launch it, all right, and it is tremendously devastating and destructive. But there is a counter-attack. The only place you can put together an army of two hundred million is from places like China, India and that area. This vast invasion army has prepared a nuclear attack. An all-out nuclear attack is launched against Europe.

Very likely this is the timing of the destruction of Rome that you read of in Revelation 18. This takes place perhaps just days or a week or two prior to the very end—just right down to the wire—as the sixth angel sounds (Revelation 9:13) and this nuclear attack is launched that is destructive to the beast power. When this is launched, a third of the people die as a

consequence of this attack (Revelation 9:18). They don't have quite the sophisticated technology.

Revelation 9:19-21, ““For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm. But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.”

What is the idolatry God is talking about? – Materialism, violence and sorceries. Interestingly enough, the word “sorcery” in the Greek language is “pharmakon” or “pharmakeia.” It could very easily refer to drugs and the drug problems that are so prevalent—the drug pushers and all of the things connected with that. That's the sense. We even get our modern word “pharmacy” from “pharmakeia.” The term referred to various potions, poisons and things that were mixed up, various concoctions that certainly included many of the things that are commonly abused drugs of today. That may very well be a reference to that sort of thing. Certainly it is one of our major social problems. Violence, drug dealings, immorality, theft—a pretty good rundown of major social problems we encounter.

We see these trumpets blown and God's hand removed.

Verses 13-14, ““Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘Release the four angels who are bound at the great River Euphrates.’”

Euphrates is evidently going to be sort of a dividing line in terms of a sphere of influence with what are called the kings of the East and the beast power. This is going to result in an armed invasion of the Middle East. The beast and the false prophet have their headquarters in Jerusalem. For this period of time, they have made Jerusalem the place from which they are seeking to direct the new world order they are establishing. We will get to that in a moment.

But this matter of the Euphrates—the Euphrates River right now is in the nation of Iraq, close to the border with Iran. It is close to the Iran-Iraq border. Based on this prophecy, we have speculated as to whether or not there may literally be a dismemberment of Iraq. It's sort of

interesting. The area where the Shites are, in southern Iraq, is the area to the east of the Euphrates River and they, of course, are tied in with the Iranians, in the sense that they are sort of allied with them. It's very possible that Iraq may become dismembered at this point in time or a little later on when the beast power invades the Middle East and they simply choose not to go beyond the river Euphrates.

Anciently, the Euphrates River was the line of demarcation between the Roman Empire and the Partheon Empire. The Partheon Empire stretched through Iran and into India, and then the Roman Empire stretched from the Euphrates to the west on through Western Europe. That was sort of the line of demarcation between East and West and in many ways still serves that point.

There have been demon spirits that been restrained and have not been allowed to progress beyond that point. Satan and his demons can go no further than what God allows. One of the reasons they don't do worse than what they have done is because of restraints that God places. In the book of Job, you find that Satan can't go beyond what God permits him to do. When God removes restraints, there are things that happen. At the appropriate time, God removes certain restraints. He simply takes hands off and allows these things.

Now we have an inset. **Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 all provide an inset into the story flow.**

We don't come to the seven last plagues until we get to chapters 15 and 16. *The purpose of an inset is to go back and pick up some threads of the story and bring them down to this point.* Here, we are down to the point just before Christ returns because, after all, the seventh trump is the last trump, isn't it? When are we going to be changed from mortal to immortal?

I Corinthians 15:52, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

We are not at the last trump yet. We are just prior to it. Now, we are going to go back and pick up details of the earlier story and bring them down.

Revelation 10:1-4, "And I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head; his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. And he had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. And when he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. Now when the

seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them.'" That was not something that needed to be written.

Verses 5-6, "Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer." Or as one translation renders it, "no further delay." There would no longer be a lengthening of time.

But rather, v. 7, "but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets." We are coming down to a point where there should be no further delay.

As we come down, chapter 11 follows right on the heels of chapter 10. When the seven thunders had finished, it is at this point that John is told that the time is now come for God to begin to step in. Here we are picking up an earlier sequence. We are picking up the seven thunders uttered earlier.

What do the seven thunders have reference to?

The most likely explanation that I have ever heard of this is one that I discussed with an evangelist in the Church a number of years ago. Down through the centuries the Church of God has thundered God's message. The message that God delivered through them has been thundered to the world. You know, some thunder is near, close, loud and overwhelming. Other thunder has a faint distant roll. It's thunder, but it is a roll of thunder that is faint in the distance. Some is closer and has great power. *The point is that down through the centuries, each of the seven Churches has thundered God's message.* Some have been a faint distant echo; others have been a powerful blast. At the time when the messages of all the seven Churches have been delivered, it is at that point that there's no longer a reason to wait any longer. Rather, it is time for God to step in. It is the culmination when the seventh angel sounds. Everything will come to a climax.

Revelation 10:11, John is told, "And he said to me, 'You must prophecy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.'"

It continues on. There isn't really a break in the sequence.

Revelation 11:1, "Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying,

‘Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.’”

Verses 3-4, “‘And I will give power to my two witnesses...These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.’” *The two olive trees are symbolic of the two witnesses.*

Verses 14-15, as we come on down, “The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly. Then the seventh angel sounded...” We pick up the story flow again in Revelation 11:14. Chapters 10 and 11 provide an inset. They go back and pick up the story, bringing us down through the role of the Church in the end time. We are not going into chapter 11 very much this evening. That deals with the work of the two witnesses.

Each of the seven Churches has its job to do. Some do their job powerfully; others do their job faintly. Christ is going to be more pleased with the job some have done than others. There is a job that each of the seven Churches have to do, based on the circumstances of their time and age, the opportunity set before them and the zeal that they have to pursue those opportunities. The time is going to come when the thunder will cease and God begins to fulfill these things that will take place. One interesting thing John is told is that he is given a book and told to take it and eat it (vv. 8-9).

Revelation 10:10, “And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter.” It was sweet and it was tasty, but when he had eaten and digested it, it became bitter.

In many ways that’s the way prophecy is. It can be tasty. It can be interesting. It can be sort of like eating desert. It can be sort of the desert at Bible study when you get interested in these things—and that’s fine. A third of the Bible is prophecy, so prophecy is important. But two-thirds of the Bible isn’t prophecy. Those two-thirds are pretty important, too.

All the prophecy in the world won’t do you any good if you are not living a Christian life and doing what you should do—keeping the commandments, seeking to serve God and really walking with Him. Prophecy is given to encourage the people of God. It is given to warn specific nations and specific groups of what God’s judgment will be if they don’t repent. It is given as a proof of God. God is the One who can declare the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). Prophecy is given to stir up and motivate the people of God. It helps us to perceive where

we stand in the overall scheme of things of the plan of God. It is able to stir up and inspire us to do the things we need to do and give us hope and encouragement with respect to the future.

It can be tasty when you eat it. But when you really digest it, when you really grasp what it is talking about, some of these things are horrible. They really, really are. That’s the way it was with John. It was tasty to eat, but then as he digested it, it was bitter. So, many things are going to happen and it will get so bad before they get better. It’s like the world has to hit bottom before it can begin to surrender and recover. Until people are brought to the point that they’re prepared to really surrender unconditionally and turn their life and their will over to the care of God, there’s not going to be a whole lot that can be done. There has to be a consequence, so there are things that are going to take place.

We see these things are outlined. As we come down, we have the **trumpet plagues**. The trumpet begins to sound. Evidently, **this final year—this Day of the Lord—signals God’s intervention.** It starts out with tremendous cataclysmic storms—thunderstorms, hail storms, fires break out worldwide, terrific devastation of the environment, of grasslands and trees and tremendous fires. It’s followed by destructiveness that occurs to the oceans and seas. Sea traffic is disrupted, sea life is destroyed and a third of the ocean waters become like blood. Very swiftly on the heels of that, a third of the freshwater becomes poisonous and there are tremendous problems in that regard. There is tremendous death that takes place as a result. This is followed by the fourth trumpet blast which sees these great upset astronomical conditions that are just totally disruptive, followed by what then are called the **three woes** (Revelation 8:7-13).

The first of those results in the military machine that ascended up out of the abyss—the beast system—launching an all-out attack on Asia with high-tech sophisticated weapons, attempting to quell it before anything gets out of hand (Revelation 9:1-12). You see, the point is that they never really trust one another. This is going to result in a great counter attack. A gigantic army is mobilized and counters an attack. A nuclear attack devastates Europe and sets the stage for the final gathering of armies. When the seventh trumpet blows, the armies that are converged in the area of Armageddon advance toward Jerusalem to be destroyed because as those armies come in, Christ returns and the

seven last plagues are poured out in that final day—the day that Christ returns. These armies temporarily throw aside their disagreement with one another to seek to repel what, for them, is going to look like an invasion from outer space. That’s going to be stopped in a moment.

We come down through these trumpets. We see this inset that shows the work of God down through time. There are events that are going to occur in the end time. There is a measuring of the temple or the Church (Revelation 11:1).

Mr. Herbert Armstrong felt that chapter 11:1, at least partially, had analogy to God’s Church, in effect, to measuring up. It talks about measuring those that worship therein.

The temple can be used to refer to a literal temple (to a building); it can be used metaphorically to refer to the Church collectively. Even our bodies are called the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19).

Many times, several examples or analogies are used to refer to the same thing. In some cases, the same analogy or example is used to refer to two or three different things. The point of an example, analogy or figure of speech is to help illustrate a spiritual truth. It is to help physical people grasp something that is on the spiritual level by comparing it to something that is on the physical level.

That is why God’s Church can be collectively compared to a temple. The temple was built as the dwelling place of God. The Church is pictured as collectively being a holy temple of the Lord—the spiritual temple.

In I Peter 2:5-6, Christians are compared to being living stones—like component parts. Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone. This is one example, one analogy. The term “temple” is also used to refer to individual Christians.

I Corinthians 6:19, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit....”

The same analogies apply to something a little differently. The Church is compared to the bride of Christ. We will marry Christ. Paul uses that analogy in Ephesians 5.

The whole point is that he’s not saying the Church has changed into a literal building or the Church has changed into a woman. It’s to illustrate an aspect of spiritual truth. It’s to give us something physical that we can relate to, so that we have a concept of what it is God is describing that illustrates at least one aspect of what God is doing.

Mr. Herbert Armstrong felt that Revelation 11 was generally a reference to the Church at the end time—let’s say a measuring that was going

to be applied. I’m sure we may not understand every detail of certain prophecies until we have arrived at the juncture in history where it’s necessary for us to understand. It isn’t necessary for us to understand everything in total detail right now. We have sort of a broad outline of understanding, and the closer we get to that juncture of history, the clearer some of the things will be.

We have a little bit of an overview, coming down through chapter 10.

Chapter 11, as I mentioned, gets to the two witnesses, which we will comment on briefly next time. We will comment on their work. They will be the ones primarily doing the work of God during the Tribulation when the Philadelphian Church is in a place of protection. The Laodiceans certainly have to witness in a personal way with their lives, as they have to come to grips with their lack of taking God’s way seriously, and their attempt to sort of have a foot in the world and a foot in the Church. They are going to have to get both feet in the same place.

Those events are yet to come. God will use these two individuals, these two witnesses. They are described as His representatives, in the way that He used Moses and Aaron in the court of Pharaoh, to serve as a witness and a testimony during this period of beast-power domination and control.

I think this pretty well brings us to the conclusion of our Bible study period this evening. We are already four Bible studies into Revelation. We have three more Bible studies in Revelation to wrap things up.

Bible Study # 96 Questions

SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION SERIES

Revelation 7—10

1. What is the time setting for the completion of the sealing of the one hundred forty-four thousand?
2. What does it mean to “seal them”?
3. What is the significance of the “innumerable multitude”?
4. Of what is the seventh seal composed?
5. What is Revelation 8:12 referring to?
6. What is the first woe?
7. What is the second woe?
8. What is the third woe?
9. Why are all of these terrible events recorded in chapters 9 and 10 really happening?
10. What does a trumpet symbolize?

Bible Study # 97
October 27, 1992
Mr. John Ogwyn

Book of Revelation Series—Revelation 11—13
(Chart at end)

We are getting into chapters 11, 12 and 13 of the book of Revelation tonight. We have a chart that I think will be helpful as we go through some of the material this evening. It is a chart that lays out in chart form the material that we are going to go through in Revelation 13 on who is the Beast and the succession of the beast powers. Some of you may have this chart in the booklet, The Beast of Revelation—Myth, Metaphor or Reality?

Mr. Herbert Armstrong had a similar chart. In fact, before we get started, I might tell you something. When I was a student at Ambassador College, I had a chance to see the original version of this in a mimeographed copy of the magazine at that time. I think it was the 1937 or 1938 copy of the magazine. The chart looked just like it is now except it was drawn out by hand and mimeographed. This had been set to type and hand lettered. I actually went through and compared to see if there was any difference.

There was exactly one difference, and I will show you exactly what it was. If you take the far right-hand column, go all the way to the bottom. The second one from the bottom on the far right hand says, "Italy and Germany ending in the Hitler-Mussolini Axis 1870-1945." See that? The only difference in the original chart was the fact that it said, "Italy, united by Garibaldi, 1870-[blank]" because it was 1937 or 1938 and 1945 hadn't gotten here yet. Mr. Armstrong didn't know the date would be 1945. He didn't know what date to fill in there. But that was the only difference.

As a young college student I was sort of intrigued by that—of being able to go back through that at that time. They had available, there in the college library in bound form, all of the magazines and all the literature going back to the first material that had ever been printed. They had a bound copy available in the reference section there in the library. It was very interesting to me as a young college student to go back and go through that to see what had been said and what the earliest literature and things like that had looked like.

This chart will make it easier for you to follow the Bible study this evening. This will be sort of a handy detachable copy you can have and keep.

This is the fifth of our seven-part series on the book of Revelation. We are going to be covering chapters 11, 12 and 13 of the book of Revelation. **We will spend a great deal of this time in chapter 13.** That is one of the reasons that I passed out this material. The chart will give it to you in written form and make it much easier to follow.

Chapters 10 and 11 sort of go together. Last time we commented a little bit on the tie-in from chapter 10 into chapter 11. Chapter 11 is an inset to be taken in connection with chapter 10.

Chapter 11 focuses in on the activities of the two witnesses. In many ways, the actions of the two witnesses were typified by Moses and Aaron. You could say that what Moses and Aaron did in the court of Pharaoh was sort of an analogy to the way that God is going to use the two witnesses at the end time. Here were two of God's servants that came before the leader of the world power at the time. They came in as representative of God, stating God's announcements and proclamations and, in case after case, announcing plagues that were going to come.

Many of the plagues of the book of Revelation were foreshadowed by many of the plagues that God sent on Egypt. Part of the reasons for the plagues is much the same as why God sent the plagues He did on Egypt. If you go back and read the account in Exodus, one of the things stated about the plagues God sent on Egypt was that they were sent against all the gods of Egypt. In effect, God was showing that the gods the Egyptians worshipped were not gods.

Their gods were not able to deliver them. They worshipped the Nile. The Nile couldn't deliver them. The Nile was turned to blood. They worshipped the sun god. The Creator God who made the sun blotted it out and it became so dark that you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. So, the gods the Egyptians worshipped failed to deliver them.

We see the same thing today. We find, in our time, that we have our modern gods. We have our gods of technology and progress that we worship as a nation and as a world. We think we can deliver ourselves from so many of the problems of the past.

We are going to find that all of our great technology and all of our great skills can't deliver us. Our great medical skills are not going to keep the plagues from wiping out a large part of humanity. Our great technology—all of our computer resources, our transportation and all of these things—are not going to keep the famine

from coming. It's not going to keep many of these catastrophes from occurring.

The two witnesses are going to announce these plagues. We will notice some things about them.

Chapter 12 is another inset. It focuses on God's Church. Where is the Church going to be during the time that all of the catastrophic events are going on?

Chapters 8 and 9 brings us through the events of the Day of the Lord.

With Chapter 10, we begin to get into an inset. It goes back and shows sort of an overview of the work of the Church coming down into chapter 11 that leads up to the events of the two witnesses.

Then chapter 12 goes back and picks up the story of the Church in terms of how God protects it.

Chapters 10 and 11 focus on the Church in terms of how God worked through His Church and how He will work through His Church in the context of all of these plagues.

Chapter 13 focuses in on the beast. It describes the succession of world-ruling empires by using the descriptions of Daniel 7 and sort of bringing them up to date. It continues on details that Daniel did not primarily give. God inspired Daniel to give the overview. John picked that up and focuses in greater detail. Other identifying signs are pointed out: the number of the beast's name, the image of the beast, the mark of the beast and the second beast that looked like a lamb but speaks like a dragon. There is a tremendous amount in this material.

Revelation 10:11, "And he said to me, 'You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.'" If you notice, it just continues right on.

Revelation 11:1-2, "Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, 'Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.'" "

Most likely, as is so often the case in Scripture, this is something that is a type and an antitype. There is going to be an altar that is rededicated. There is going to be a restoration of physical sacrifice because the Bible very clearly prophesies that they are going to be cut off; they are going to be stopped (Daniel 11:31). You can't stop it unless you start it. So, there is that physical aspect. There are references to the Gentile nations coming in and the beast power taking over Jerusalem.

However, there can also be allusions here to the Church itself, which in the Bible is likened to a spiritual temple. Mr. Herbert Armstrong applied these verses, in type, to what he was doing back in 1978-1979. Some of you remember that. At that particular time, he drew the analogy of what he was doing to measuring the temple (the Church) in terms of what he viewed as the responsibility that God had given him to put the Church back on the track after the events of much of the 70s.

There is reference to the forty-two months. Three periods are used synonymously in the Scriptures: forty-two months, one thousand two hundred sixty days and time, times and half a time. Forty-two months is three and one-half years. Thirty-six months is three years; six more months makes forty-two. Twelve hundred and sixty days—if you divide one thousand two hundred sixty by thirty (just strike off the zero and divide three into one hundred twenty-six), you get forty-two. So, one thousand two hundred sixty days is forty-two thirty-day months. These terms are used interchangeably. There is a reference to this period of three and one-half years—the time of the Tribulation. It is a time when the beast power will be in occupied possession of Jerusalem.

Certainly, there are allusions to the events of, let's say, measuring or preparing the Church and the fact of a distinction that is given. There are various analogies that are drawn. We have the analogy of the temple itself. There was a temple compound, a courtyard. There was an outer courtyard called the court of the Gentiles. People who were interested in being able to hear the message could come in. But there was a gate that went into an inner courtyard, the court of the Israelites. It was forbidden to enter the inner courtyard unless you were circumcised. Circumcision was the sign of the full acceptance of the covenant.

Inside that inner courtyard (the courtyard of the Israelites) was the altar of burnt sacrifice where the sacrifices were made. Then a little closer to the temple proper was the brazen laver, which was a big brass pot that contained water out of which anyone who was going to enter the sanctuary had to wash. Then there was the temple itself into which only the priesthood could enter. There was the Holy Place and then the Most Holy Place—the Holy of Holies—into which only the high priest could enter. That symbolized the very presence of God. The closer you got in, the greater level of sanctity was required. The whole issue was descriptive of

access to God—how close were you to God or how far were you from God. That’s sort of descriptive. If this is an analogy drawn to the Church then, clearly, we have those who are described in the courtyard as sort of the hangers-on and those who are really going all the way with it. That’s the measuring rod that is described here in v. 1.

Verse 3, we are told, “And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days.” Who are the two witnesses? You want to know?

Well, it tells you right here.

Verses 4-6, “These are the two olive trees and the two lamp stands standing before the God of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth, and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.”

The two witnesses are actually the ones who will announce and call down the succession of the plagues that we have been going through a little earlier. God allowed Moses and Aaron to do that. God used Elijah to do that sort of thing. Elijah prayed and God shut the heavens (I Kings 17:1; James 5:17). In fact, there is an account in the case of Elijah where fire was called down (I Kings 18:38). Elijah called down fire from heaven. So, the work of the two witnesses has been prefigured by individuals who have gone before.

Now, let’s notice a little bit of the symbolism. In v. 4, they are compared to two olive trees and two candlesticks. There are some things that could perhaps be speculated about. I will just call your attention to some of the things that you might want to cross reference here. Hold your place and turn back to Zechariah.

Zechariah 4:1-7, “Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep. And he said to me, ‘What do you see?’ So I said, ‘I am looking, and there is a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps. Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left.’ So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, ‘What are these, my lord?’ Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, ‘Do you not know what these are?’ And I said, ‘No, my lord.’ So he answered and said to me: ‘This is the word of the

Lord to Zerubbabel: “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the Lord of hosts. “Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’””

Verses 9-14, “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands shall also finish it. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me to you. For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the Lord, which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth.’ Then I answered and said to him, ‘What are these two olive trees, one at the right of the lamp stand and the other at its left?’ And I further answered and said to him, ‘What are these two olive branches that drip into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden oil drains?’ Then he answered me and said, ‘Do you not know what these are?’ And I said, ‘No, my lord.’ So he said, ‘These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.’”

You sort of come back full circle to Revelation 11. The two anointed ones are the two witnesses who are symbolized by these two olive trees. If you go through the context of Zechariah 3 and 4, it focuses on two individuals. Zechariah was writing at the time when the temple was being restored and the Jews were being brought back out of Babylon. Zerubbabel was the leader out of Babylon. He was the one who brought them back. That’s what the name “Zerubbabel” means; it means “out of Babylon.” He led the Jews out of Babylon. He came back and was ruler over them. Joshua the high priest who is mentioned in Zechariah 3:1 accompanied him.

Joshua the high priest is pictured as being clothed in filthy raiment and needing to be cleaned up by God. He goes through that in Zechariah 3. So, in that sense, Zerubbabel and Joshua served as a model for the description that is given. The prophecies that are made in Zechariah 3 and 4 stretch far beyond the literal Zerubbabel and Joshua of twenty-five hundred years ago. It comes down to individuals who, let’s say, have roles that would be played in the end time. If you look in the context of Zechariah 3 and 4, we could say that the two olive trees, in that sense, would be analogous to the role of Joshua and Zerubbabel.

The other comparison in Revelation 11 is the two lampstands (KJV, “candlesticks”). The two witnesses are compared to the two olive trees

and they are compared to the two candlesticks. The candlesticks are alluded to back in Zechariah 4. There are seven candlesticks that are described in Zechariah 4, and if you look in Revelation 11:4, there are also two candlesticks.

In Revelation 1:20, we are told (last part of the verse), "...and the seven lampstands [KJV, "candlesticks"] which you saw are the seven churches." This has led some to speculate that the two witnesses, who are compared here to being two candlesticks and two olive trees, may be the individuals who would be the physical leaders of the last two stages or eras of God's Church, pictured in Revelation 3 as the Church at Philadelphia and the Church at Laodicea. There are seven candlesticks that symbolize the seven Churches or the seven stages of the one Church.

Actually, the original symbolism of these seven candlesticks goes back to the temple. The seven candlesticks provided light in the temple. They really weren't candlesticks as we think of them burning wax candles. They were shaped like that but had a golden bowl that was filled with olive oil. Olive oil was the fuel that was actually burned and gave off light. It was like an oil lamp. The oil was olive oil, and that was the light.

Now, in this sense, who is it that is going to be the light to the world from God? Well, these two individuals are going to represent God. The olive oil is used as a type of the Holy Spirit, so the analogy of a candlestick is certainly appropriate. The two olive trees symbolize the Holy Spirit of God. We have speculated on this. We have, of course, wondered who the two witnesses are. Various ones have speculated various things at various times. I don't have any names to fill in the blanks here, but God certainly does. At the appropriate time, it will be evident and it will be evident by the way God is using them at the time.

The time setting of the work of the two witnesses is the time of the Great Tribulation. They will have great miraculous power. But, of course, realize that the false prophet is working false and lying wonders for the beast during this time, countermanding that God is working true miracles through His servants. They will accomplish this during this period of one thousand two hundred sixty days.

Revelation 11:7-8, "Now when they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt,

where also our Lord was crucified." Jerusalem is where they are going to be prophesying. It's where the beast and the false prophet will have set up their headquarters.

Verse 9, it says, "Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three and a half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves." How are they going to do that? It will probably be on television and satellite hookup. This is a verse that you could never have literally understood in times past. Now, we can watch what is going on half a world away. When they are rioting in Tennenman Square in China, people in Europe and America are watching it. Here, we are going to find people and kindred and tongues and nations that are going to see their dead bodies. This is going to be the focus of things. They are not buried. They are just allowed to lie out there.

Verse 10, "And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another...." You see, when the plagues come, they will blame their problems on the two witnesses. Instead of repenting at the message of the two witnesses, they are going to be like Pharaoh. Pharaoh thought his problem was Moses. In Pharaoh's mind, the problem was Moses. Pharaoh thought that if Moses would quit calling down all these plagues, he wouldn't have any problems. The problem wasn't Moses; the problem was Pharaoh. He wouldn't repent. He wouldn't do what God said, which was, "Let My people go."

The people of the world who are caught up in this beast system, as far as they are concerned, the problem is these two witnesses. Nothing is allowed to get to them. Three and one-half years go by and nobody can harm them. If somebody tries to harm them, fire comes down. I tell you what—it wouldn't be long before you would run out of assassins who are wanting to line up for that job. You talk about a suicide mission! This would be a real suicide mission.

Things go along. They come in and announce what God is going to do next. Instead of people repenting, realizing that they and their sins are to blame for what's happening, they are going to view these two fellows as the problem. If they could be rid of them, everything would be okay. When they are finally allowed to be killed, everybody is rejoicing. They think the problems are over.

Verse 11, "Now after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on

those who saw them.” I think that’s probably an understatement. All these people have been dancing and having a party. Here are the two corpses lying out there for three and a half days. All of a sudden, they stand up and sort of dust themselves off. You can just imagine the pandemonium that breaks out.

Verse 12, “And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here.’ And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them.”

Now, we realize that there are three heavens spoken of in the Bible, and you have to determine it by context. The Bible speaks of the clouds of heaven and the birds flying in the midst of heaven. It uses the word “heaven” to describe the earth’s atmosphere—where the clouds are, where the birds fly or the rains of heaven are. Then there is another heaven that’s spoken of. It talks about the stars of heaven, outer space. So, you have the heaven of the earth’s atmosphere and the heaven of outer space. Then there is the heaven of God’s abode, which Paul refers to in II Corinthians 12:2 as the third heaven.

The Bible doesn’t use the phrase “first and second heaven.” That exact phrase isn’t found in the Bible, but it does use the term “third heaven.” If you have a third heaven, you have to have a first and a second. The Bible does use the term “heaven” referring to the rains of heaven, the clouds of heaven or the birds of heaven. That’s clearly the first heaven. That’s the one closest to the earth. Then the stars of heaven obviously have to be the second one; that’s outer space. Then the third heaven is the heaven of God’s abode.

When it talks about “ascending to heaven in a cloud” (Revelation 11:12), the context has to describe which heaven. Christ is going to come. When He returns to the earth, He’s going to return in the clouds of heaven. The saints are going to be caught up to meet Him in the clouds (Acts 1:9-11; I Thessalonians 4:16-17). They ascend up to heaven in a cloud. How high do you ascend in a cloud? You ascend up into the earth’s atmosphere. Once you are above the earth’s atmosphere, there aren’t any more clouds. You won’t ascend to the moon in a cloud. You don’t go into outer space in a cloud.

Revelation 11:12, “...and they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them.” They see that they are rising up.

Verses 13-15, “In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand men were killed,

and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven. The **second woe is past**. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly. Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’”

In terms of the resurrection and ascension of the two witnesses, we could compare that to Elijah ascending up and being caught up into the heavens in the fiery chariot (II Kings 2:11). At first glance, it would seem that when the two witnesses are raised up, this is the first resurrection and the return of Christ. But if you continue down in context, you get the idea that this may actually be a few days before the end because the seventh angel doesn’t sound until v. 15. So, it’s very possible that the two witnesses are actually raised up in the same way that Lazarus was raised up (John 11:43-44) or caught up into heaven in the same way Elijah was caught up into heaven and removed from where he was. If it is before the coming of Christ, it is likely a matter of a day or two or three—just immediately before.

That is sort of the context because the earthquake that’s described in v. 13 is not the great earthquake that is described a little bit later. In the earthquake of v. 13, only a tenth part of the city falls. The great earthquake described in Revelation 16:18 is the greatest earthquake the world has ever seen. In Revelation 16:19, we find that the city was divided into three parts. The earthquake mentioned in Revelation 11:13, at the time the two witnesses are resurrected, is simply a prelude. I guess you could say that the earthquake of Revelation 16:18-19 is the aftershock. Those who come from California are familiar with aftershocks of an earthquake. In this case, the aftershock is going to be a lot more than the original shock.

If you put it together and really examine it closely, I think the indication is clear that the three and one-half years the two witnesses will prophesy in Jerusalem will almost be an exact overlap of the Tribulation but not exactly. It may actually have its beginning a few days or a week or so earlier because they are going to prophesy one thousand two hundred sixty days and then they are going to be killed. They are going to be dead three and one-half days; then they are going to be raised up, caught up into the clouds and disappear from everyone’s view. An earthquake is going to occur. It will be a great earthquake. It will destroy ten percent of the city. Now that

sounds bad until you read on in Revelation 16 where you have an earthquake that causes everything to fall apart. So, we are looking at an event that is just setting the stage. When that is finished, the second woe is passed and the third woe comes quickly (v. 14). The **third woe is the seventh trumpet**, which is described in v. 15. We sort of get the view of what's going on.

Revelation 12 is another inset.

Revelation 12:1-5, "Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. And she bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and to His throne."

Who is the male Child? The male Child is Christ. Who is the woman? The woman is used symbolic of the Church. The Church is a continuum that had its beginnings in the wilderness—the Old Testament Church in the wilderness, the congregation of Israel.

The symbolism of the sun, the moon and the stars is associated with Israel. Hold your place and let's go back to Genesis. Notice this symbolism that is associated with Israel.

Joseph had a dream.

Genesis 37:9, "Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, 'Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me.'" That was symbolic of what was going to happen later on when Pharaoh made him ruler over all the land in Egypt. The sun, moon and stars were used symbolic of the family of Israel—in other words, Jacob and Rachael and the twelve sons who became the twelve tribes. The sun, moon and twelve stars were used symbolically of the family of Israel.

Here we have a woman—the Church, the congregation of Israel as she was—who is described with the symbolism that denoted Israel who brought forth the Messiah. Israel, in that sense, brought forth the Messiah who was ultimately caught up to God. In the Old Testament period, it was the congregation (KJV, "church") in the wilderness (Acts 7:38). It was the congregation of Israel. In the New Testament

period, it is the Church of God. It is still symbolically the woman or the Church (God's people).

Revelation 12:6, after the Messiah is caught up to God, we find, "Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days." We are going to come back to that and make comment on it in a moment.

In v. 3, we saw the great red dragon.

Verse 9 defines the great dragon as the devil and Satan. We find him described as a dragon with seven heads and ten horns (v. 3), which is symbolic of the beast system and symbolizes his kingdom.

The reference, in vv. 4 and 9, of his being cast to earth and his angels pulling a third part of the stars (stars were used to symbolize angels) has led us to understand that very likely Satan pulled one-third of the angels when he rebelled and was cast down.

Verses 7-9 gives us a glimpse of that, "And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

Verse 10, "Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.'"

Verses 12-14, it says, "'Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.' Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent." Here we find something different.

In vv. 5-6, we find the woman fleeing after the Messiah is caught up to heaven. That was a type of what will occur at the end. In the description that we have in v. 6, the woman, or the Church, is taking the initiative and fleeing into a wilderness area, which is basically an area that is

sparsely inhabited, and remains there for this period of one thousand two hundred sixty days, as it is described.

Verse 13, “Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth....”

There was war in heaven a long time ago and Satan was cast out (Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28). But here in Revelation 12, we are reading of another war when Satan is cast down. This time he has great wrath because he knows that he has but a short time (v. 12). The Tribulation is Satan’s wrath. It is prompted by his being cast back down. He comes down and he has great wrath because he knows that it’s almost over. In rage and frustration, he lashes out at the people of God.

The difference is: in v. 6 the Church *flees* and in v. 14 the Church is *taken*.

Verse 14, “But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.”

What the Church went through in the Middle Ages was a type of what it will be going through at the time of the Great Tribulation in the end time.

In 325 A.D. at the Council of Nicaea, it was established that from that time on those who continued to keep the Sabbath and the Holy Days, contrary to the customs and practices by those who called themselves Christians in Rome, were now to be persecuted by the power of the government. The Roman emperor Constantine devised, in collaboration with the bishop of Rome, a standard brand of Christianity among all of the groups that called themselves Christian, and enforced a uniformity and unity.

Unity is a wonderful thing, but first and foremost, unity has to be with God and has to be centered around God. Unity for unity’s sake—if you’re unified with the devil, you’re not in good shape. That’s not the kind of unity that God wants. *We are going to find that the world is going to enforce unity; it’s going to be called “the mark of the beast.”* Unity, as God looks on it, is unity that originates with God and with the Spirit of God. There’s a unity of the Spirit of God.

The unity that Constantine enforced was a unity that was imposed by the iron power of the state. In 325 A.D., pressure on the Church was brought to bear from the government—primarily to those existing in the areas of Asia Minor. It forced the people who refused to compromise with the law of God to liquidate what they could liquidate

and, in some cases, just walk off and leave it and get out of there. They went to the area of the mountains of Armenia. Portions of them went up into some of the Balkan mountain area; some branched out into the Alpine Mountain region. Some went up into the Tran-Carpathian Mountain areas of Central Europe.

In recent months, we have come in contact with remnants of Sabbath keepers who are there. These were areas that God’s people fled to—areas that were sort of on the edge of civilization—mountainous, wilderness regions.

In ancient times when transportation and communication was pretty skimpy, if you were in a remote area, the power of the state didn’t really come in where you were. It’s sort of like some of the old hillbillies back during the last century and certainly the early part of this century. The revenue men simply didn’t get that far back into the hills because it was remote and transportation was difficult. There are areas of this state that it has not been that many years ago that outsiders just didn’t venture in. They didn’t have much way to get in and couldn’t find their way around. It was sort of remote and cut off.

That’s the way these areas were. God’s people simply disappeared into some of those remote areas that were so far off the beaten path that it wasn’t worth the trouble and effort of the civil government to try to penetrate that far back. Now with modern communication and transportation, it’s sort of hard to lose yourself.

That was not the case at this time. God’s people simply fled and moved into those areas. We pick up bits and pieces of them through the medieval period. They remained in those areas that were the border areas of the Holy Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire and the other empires. This was sort of the border area. What it amounted to was they were left alone for the most part.

If you want to run an exact one thousand two hundred sixty-year period, using a day for a year, you could run it from 325 A.D., when the Council of Nicaea and the Roman emperor Constantine imposed a death penalty for any Christian who continued to Judaize, as the decree stated it. By Judaize, he meant keeping and observing the days the Jews kept—the Festivals, the Sabbath. If you come down one thousand two hundred sixty years, it brings you to 1585 A.D.

That was the year in which England gave religious liberty. Full religious liberty and toleration was not given, but that was the last recorded imprisonment for Sabbath keepers. There wasn’t any more imprisonment. Sabbath

keeping and observance was not reckoned as a criminal offense. It was decriminalized in England in 1585 A.D., and it was in that year that the first congregation began to emerge in the “light of day” there in England.

There are records of early Sabbath-keeping congregations that date back at that point—the Millyard Church in England, a Sabbatarian Church from whence later Stephen Mumford (less than one-hundred years later), in the 1660s, came from England to Rhode Island and founded the first Sabbath Church in the new world, from whence the Church has spread through Rhode Island, into New Jersey, down into the area of West Virginia and from there, in the middle 1800s, on into the Northwest. It is this group with which Mr. Herbert Armstrong came into contact.

It was at that point, one thousand two hundred sixty years later (1585), that God’s Church finally was able to emerge from hiding. For the first time in one thousand two hundred sixty years, God’s people were able to emerge and at least be able to function openly in society.

That period of persecution, martyrdom, all the atrocities of the medieval period, the Inquisitions and the attempts to destroy any deviation was merely a type. What the Holy Roman Empire did during that time was a type of what the final resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire will do in the end.

In v. 14, we are told the Church is taken into her place to be protected and to be nourished.

Verse 17, “And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

When you compare it, we have a distinction. Revelation 3, the Church in Philadelphia, that sixth era or sixth stage in the history of the Church has the promise given to it.

Revelation 3:10, “Because you have kept My command to persevere [because they faithfully held on to and kept the word of God’s patience], I also will keep you from the hour of trial [or the hour of tribulation], which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”

The Laodiceans are told in v. 16, “...because you are lukewarm [complacent], and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth.” Because Christ loves them, He is going to allow them to be chastened, so they can be awakened (v. 19).

Revelation 12:17, you find that Satan is going to make war with the remnant—those who are left behind. We find that distinction.

We see the reference to a place of protection, or a place of safety, as we have termed it. The specific words “place of safety” are not used here, but the word “place” is used. What is the purpose of the “place”? It’s a place to be safe from the dragon. So, we call it “the place of safety.” I don’t see where that represents a problem. It simply is descriptive of a place where God will protect His people from the atrocities of the Tribulation.

Revelation 13:1-3, “Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.”

Ultimately, they were worshipping the dragon, which was the source of power. They worshipped the beast by admiring the beast.

Verse 4, “So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?’” They adored and worshipped the beast. The beast had this veneration. They stood in awe of the beast. They were deeply impressed with its system.

Verse 5, “And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.”

Verses 7-8, “And it was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue and nation. And all who dwell on the earth will worship him....” Everybody will be directed toward worshipping it.

At this point, let’s stop and I will direct your attention to the chart that you have.

If you look at the top, you will notice that we have several things lined up. We have Daniel 2, Daniel 7, Daniel 8, Revelation 13, Revelation 17, with an explanation of the symbols and events fulfilled in history.

Look at the chart. Remember, Daniel 2 uses the analogy of the great image that Nebuchadnezzar saw. He saw the head of gold, the shoulders of silver, the thighs of brass, the legs of iron, the feet of iron and potter’s clay with the ten toes

that are smashed by Christ at His return (vv. 32-35). When you go down through the progression in Daniel 2, we are told in v. 44, "...in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed..." That is defined. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar in vv. 37-38, "You, O king, are a king of kings...you are this head of gold."

Verses 39-40, "But after you shall arise another kingdom [which was the Medes and the Persians]...then another, a third kingdom [which was Alexander the Great which swallowed up the Persian Empire]...And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron [that was the Roman Empire that swallowed up Alexander's empire]." It continued all the way down. The final end time culmination of the Roman Empire is in the final ten toes, which are described as iron and potter's clay (vv. 41-43).

In Daniel 7, Daniel sees four creatures that are compared to a lion, a bear, a leopard and a great fourth beast that has ten horns (vv. 3-7). When we go through the sequence that's given in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7, we find by comparing the two visions that Daniel defines the head of gold (the Babylonian Empire) in Daniel 2 equated with the lion in Daniel 7. The second kingdom, the kingdom of silver in chapter 2 is the bear of chapter 7, which symbolized the Medes and the Persians. The third kingdom of bronze in chapter 2 corresponds to the four-headed leopard, which symbolized the empire of Alexander the Great because after his death, it split into four sections. Then finally, the fourth beast in chapter 2 is represented as two legs of iron and in chapter 7 as a creature possessing great iron teeth. This fourth creature that had the ten horns was the Roman Empire. This chart lines it up. You can see how it lines it up coming down.

Revelation 13 and Daniel 7 correlate very much. They looked at it from different perspectives. Daniel looked at it at the time when only one creature had emerged. The Babylonian Empire was on the scene, to be followed in Daniel's lifetime by the Persians.

Daniel saw four creatures: the lion, the bear, the four-headed leopard and the fourth great creature. John saw it as one creature that had characteristics of a lion, a bear, a leopard and had seven heads (Revelation 13:1). Well, how many heads were in Daniel's vision? The lion had a head, the bear had a head, the leopard had four and then the fourth creature had one—that makes seven heads. The fourth creature of Daniel's vision had the ten horns.

You find that Daniel looked at it as four different, distinct creatures that were emerging. John saw one big system that had the characteristics of these four that Daniel had seen. It was simply the same thing viewed in a little different way. You still had the same creatures described. You had the same number of heads and the same number of horns. Now the seventh head (the fourth creature) had ten horns. The ten horns were the ten successive stages of the old Roman Empire that continued down through history.

I am not going to totally cover the chart this evening because we are going to cover some more when we get to Revelation 17. We are going to realize that when John describes it in Revelation 13, he is describing the beast as he viewed it in his day and continuing to the future. The Babylonian-Roman system had not yet received its deadly wound (Revelation 13:3). The beast received a deadly wound in 476 A.D. The Roman Empire fell. The last Roman emperor, Romulus Augustus, was forced to abdicate and the Roman Empire fell. The date that is often used as the closing date of ancient history is 476 A.D. The fall of Rome was the end of ancient history and the beginning of the Medieval World. Just like 1492 A.D. is considered the end of the medieval period and the beginning of the modern world.

We are told that the beast received a deadly wound; then the deadly wound was healed and it was given power to continue forty-two months (Revelation 13:5). The deadly wound was healed in 554 A.D. There occurred what was called the Imperial Restoration. You can see it on the chart. The Imperial Restoration occurred in 554 A.D. Justinian, the ruler from Byzantine (the Eastern Empire) at the behest of the pope came in and cleared out the other occupying groups. The Roman Empire was restored in the West. The restoration of the Roman Empire was called in history the Imperial Restoration.

There were successive periods down through history. There was successive crownings. You had the Imperial Restoration by Justinian, beginning in 554 A.D. The Roman Empire continued down. The pope crowned Charlemagne on Christmas day in 800 A.D. as the restored Roman emperor. There was the crowning of Otto, the German king, in 962 A.D. Continuing down, there was the Habsburg ("Hapsburg" in English) Dynasty and the crowning of Napoleon. When Napoleon was defeated in 1814, that ended the forty-two months or one thousand two hundred sixty years

of unbroken continuation of the Roman imperium—the Roman Empire.

When Napoleon was defeated in 1814, that succession had a stop. So, the deadly wound was healed and power was given to continue forty-two months (Revelation 13:3-5). This is described right here on the chart. If you look toward the bottom, the line that goes across, you can see the deadly wound and the quotation that is given. We will compare some of that with Revelation 17 at the next Bible study.

Let's notice some other things. We find that this blasphemous system had the name of blasphemy stamped on it (Revelation 13:1). Throughout its history from the time that it was restored under Justinian (the Imperial Restoration), it was known as the Holy Roman Empire, as opposed to simply the Roman Empire. It was the Holy Roman Empire, or as it was called later in the Medieval period, the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation. That was, in effect, a blasphemous title because "holy and reverend" is the name of God (KJV, Psalm 111:9); to attach God's name to that Babylonish system is blasphemous. There is nothing holy about it.

In Revelation 13:11, we find another beast described, "Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon." It outwardly looked like a lamb. It had two horns. A horn is symbolic of governmental authority. It was like a lamb yet it spoke as a dragon.

Verse 12, "And he exercises all the authority of the first beast [the old Roman Empire] in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship [To worship is to give loyalty, allegiance and devotion.] the first beast [the Roman system], whose deadly wound was healed."

The second beast is the papacy. The Catholic Church is described here. "The two horns"—it had civil power and ecclesiastical power. The Catholic Church is both church and state. Vatican City is a state. It has diplomatic relations with many nations. They are on the verge of establishing diplomatic relations with Israel right now. They have established diplomatic relations with Russia. They exchange ambassadors. It is the only church that is a state. The pope has the position of a head of state and Vatican City is sovereign territory.

Technically, Vatican City is not a part of Italy. It is located in Italy, but the Italian law doesn't have predominance there. It is a sovereign territory, a sovereign state. At one time during the Middle Ages, they ruled as a temporal power.

They ruled a larger section. The papal state was the whole middle section of Italy. Now, all that's left is Vatican City. It has both temporal power and ecclesiastical power, so it is symbolized by two horns. It outwardly resembles a lamb—like Jesus Christ. It has the outward guise of that. Yet in reality, it is not Christ's system but Satan's system. It exercised the power of the old Roman Empire.

Verse 12, "And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed." Once the deadly wound was healed, the Roman Empire came back as the Holy Roman Empire. The Catholic Church insisted that everybody give loyalty, devotion and allegiance to the Holy Roman Empire.

Next Bible study I am going to bring some history books—secular history books that came out of the college—outlined series on medieval and ancient history. I want to read some quotes out of the one that deals with the Roman Empire and the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages.

Here, we find in v. 13, "He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men."—Lying miracles that deceive people.

Verse 14, "And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image of the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived."

An image is something that bears an outward resemblance. What we have here, in terms of an image of the beast, is a system that is set up. The papacy and the establishment there really was, in that sense, an image. It was a reflection. Here was a church government that was organized on exactly the same pattern that the old Roman Empire was.

I'll read some quotes. It describes, "that during the age of Constantine the Roman Empire was divided into dioceses, thirteen in number, made up of numerous provinces over which bishops with the title of metropolitans or primates presided." The point is that they used the Roman Empire as its model. It used the structure of the Roman Empire and, in that sense, it was a religious model of the secular realm.

They insisted in v. 15, "...as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed." This man-made church governmental structure of the Roman Catholic Church insisted that those who would not give their loyalty and devotion to the

image of the beast should be killed. During the Middle Ages, if you would not conform to that system and give your loyalty, allegiance and devotion to the religious and civil system, you were in danger of being killed. And that is ultimately going to happen again. What occurred then was a type of what is going to occur again in the Great Tribulation.

Verses 16-18, “And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.” Let’s notice several things relating to this.

Let’s first note the mark of the beast. A “mark” is a “sign or an insignia that is *forced*.” It is like a brand. We are told that it is a mark on the hand and the forehead.

In Deuteronomy 6:8, God’s people are told God’s law is to be what? ““You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.”” *The law of God is a “sign” for God’s people.*

Exodus 31:13, ““Speak also to the children of Israel, saying, “Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you.”” God’s law is a sign that is to be carried on the hands and between the eyes—in other words, the forehead of God’s people. Your hand is the means of action. If I work, labor or do something, I do it with my hands. If I think, I do it with my mind. God’s law is to control our thought and our actions. The Sabbath is tied in to our thought and our actions. We rest and observe the Sabbath in our minds and by what we do. Exodus 31:17, ““It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever....”” The Sabbath is a sign between God and His people forever. It was a sign of obedience.

Here, in Revelation 13:16, we have a sign of disobedience, a mark or brand of disobedience.

In Revelation 14:10, it talks about the wrath of God.

Revelation 14:9-10, “...‘If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God....’”

Notice in Colossians 3:6, “Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience.” On whom is the wrath of God

poured out? It’s poured out on the children of disobedience. *The mark of the beast is a brand of disobedience to the law of God. The Sabbath is a sign of obedience to the law of God.* The wrath of God is poured out on the children of disobedience.

Revelation 14:12, “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” We are looking at a distinction between keeping the commandments and not keeping the commandments.

In Exodus 31, God uses the Sabbath as the sign of obedience to God. It is the commandment that is pointed out as the test commandment—the one that is used as the sign of obedience.

What is the sign of disobedience? –The breaking of the Sabbath and the observance of pagan holidays (Sunday, Christmas, Easter and all the pagan holidays) in replacement of God’s Holy Days.

Why is it called the mark of the beast—the beast was the Roman Empire? Did you know Constantine proclaimed Sunday the official day of rest throughout the Roman Empire? Do you know what it’s titled? I don’t have my copy here, but I could read it to you. Eusebius was a Catholic historian who was actually the secretary who kept the minutes at the Council of Nicaea and recorded Constantine’s decree. Constantine referred to it as “requiring all to keep the venerable day of the sun.” The sun god! The old Babylonian sun god! The old Babylonian Mystery religion! The worship of the sun god! This was the day of the sun. It was the day that was viewed as holy to the sun god. That’s why it had his name.

You see different days were holy to different gods. Each day, if you were a particular devotee of this god, well, you paid special attention to this day or that day. Different ones had different things, different rituals that took place. Each day was sacred to a particular god. It connected with various things. It connected with astrology and all kinds of things. We don’t need to get into it, but it was the mark of the beast because it was a day that had its origin in the old Roman-Babylonian system. It was adopted by the church and used as something that is set out as a brand of disobedience.

If you look at Christmas, Easter and the various pagan holidays, they go back to pagan antiquity and they are tied in with the old Babylonian-Roman system. They are a part of something that was foisted off and enforced. Constantine issued the decree that made Sunday a day of worship.

He closed Roman courts on Sunday and all of those things. I will try and remember to bring the book with some of the material because we will go through more on this. We are going to get into Revelation 14 next time. There are parts of it that we are going to get this time and parts of it we will pick up next time.

Here is a brand of disobedience that is going to be enforced once again. There is going to be an attempt at a unified one-world system. Unity is great if it originates with God. Unity is horrible if it originates with the devil. You'd better not be united with the devil.

Nearly the whole world is going to look at us as being sort of the odd ones out. They are going to say, 'Everything would be great if you oddballs would conform. Then we could all be unified.' We don't want conformity with the devil. We want conformity with God. God is the One we want to conform to. If there's only one person obeying God and nine thousand nine hundred ninety-nine who aren't, who needs to change? Who needs to get in step with whom? It doesn't matter how many people want to repeal the Ten Commandments. That's not up for debate. That's not on the ballot because God is the One who decrees it and they stand by God's authority.

Here, we have a brand of disobedience. A brand that is symbolic of ignoring the law of God and replacing it with festivities of pagan origin.

There is also the reference to the number of the beast, 666. In earlier times, alphabets like the Greek and Hebrew alphabets had numerical value. When we were in school, most of us learned about Roman numerals. "V" is five, "X" is ten and "L" is fifty. We learned Roman numerals. Do you realize that's the way that math was done? Can you imagine having to do all your math additions and subtraction with something like that?

We were up into the early medieval period before we had what we call our "numbers," which were called Arabic numerals. The Arabs didn't actually invent them, but they served to transmit them. They were adopted as a separate means of numbers.

In Greek and Hebrew in which the Bible is written, all the letters had numeral value. So, every name had a number attached to it. It wasn't numbers that you made up. You could simply figure it up in Roman numerals. Some names would have numeric value. Take, for instance, "Louis" in Roman numerals. The "L" would be fifty. The "O" doesn't have value. The "U" was a "V" in Latin; the alphabet's the same. That would be "V," which is five. The "I" would be

one. The "S" doesn't have a value. So that would be a Roman numeral value of fifty-six.

Names are not spelled the same way in different languages. You have to translate a name from one language into another. In French, you would spell Peter, "P-i-e-r-r-e." In English, you would spell it "P-e-t-e-r." In Greek, you would spell it as "P-e-t-r-o-s" and in Hebrew, you would spell it "C-e-p-h-a-s." There's different ways of spelling it out in a different language.

If you take the name "Romulus," translate it into Hebrew and spell it out in Hebrew script, it adds up to 666. That's the numeric value. If you translate it into Greek and spell it out in the Greek letters, it adds up to 666. It's the only word, that I am aware of, that when translated into Hebrew and spelled out in Hebrew script, adds up to exactly the same numeric value as when you translate it into Greek and add it up in Greek script.

Romulus was, of course, the founder of the Roman Empire—the Roman system. The name Rome and Roman derives from him. So, in effect, that name is labeled here. Now, many things tie in with the Roman system that in Greek, Hebrew or Latin will add up to that. But the two biblical languages are normally where you would expect it, not in some man-devised thing. You could spell out anybody's name, invent your own number value and make it add up. If I had time, I would show you several little tricks you can do of adding up things. It doesn't prove anything. But when you go back to where you would actually expect to find this, you would expect that the languages of the Bible would be the ones that you would look to try to find this numeric value.

Nero Caesar, the emperor at the height during much of the New Testament period and the height of persecution during the New Testament period, his name in Hebrew adds up to 666.

There are various names associated with the Roman Empire and the Roman Government that adds up to 666. There were signs all over Italy during the time of and previous to World War II that said, "Viva el duce." These were signs of support for Mussolini. If you add it up to numeric value in Roman numerals, it adds up to 666. There are a lot of different things that certainly stamp this number on the Roman system. What we are looking at is the Roman Empire, the Holy Roman Empire, the Roman Catholic Church and the whole Babylonian system that is stamped through and through. We will cover this part more next Bible study. We will cover other portions as well.

This sort of brings us toward a conclusion. There's so much material to cover here. When we started into Revelation and said we were going to cover Revelation in seven parts, we said we would not go into such detail that we would cover everything. I think you are already seeing that covering Revelation in seven parts still means you are just skimming the surface because there's so much detail. Some books in the Bible are written where there is so much detail that is packed in that, if you are going to get anything out of it, it takes a little more time.

You have this chart. I will have some other material for you next Bible study that will supplement this and hopefully the two together will be helpful. When we get into Revelation 17, we will cover some of the material that we did not have a chance to cover this evening, in terms of the beast power and its resurrections. These are things that are very applicable for us because they help us understand where we stand in the context of what God is doing.

As we look at the world scene, God wants us to understand where we stand. One of the purposes of prophecy is to understand where we stand in the scope of world affairs and world events. God doesn't spell out every detail where we can pinpoint the day and the month and the year. That's not the point. But God does want us to discern the times. So, hopefully, some of the material we are going through this Bible study and some of this handout material will be helpful to you in that regard.

Next Bible study, we will cover Revelation 14—18.

Prophetic "Babylon": The Successive Reigns of Gentile Kingdoms

Material	Symbolic Description	Historical Parallel
Head of Gold (vv. 32, 36); Chest and Arms of Silver (vv. 32, 36)	1st Head of Babylon	Nero-Babylonian (or Chaldean) Empire, 625-539 B.C.
Belly and Thighs of Bronze (vv. 32, 36)	2nd Head of Babylon	Macedonian Empire 336-310 B.C.
2 Legs of Iron (vv. 33, 40-43)	3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Heads of Babylon	Hellenistic Empires of Alexander the Great and his 3 Diadochi 336-31 B.C.
	7th Head of Babylon	Roman Empire (Christianity declared "heretical" official religion in 324) Fall of Rome (A.D. 476) Kingdom of the Vandals A.D. 429-533 Heraclius (under Ostrogoths) A.D. 476-489 Kingdom of the Ostrogoths A.D. 480-554
10 Toes on 2 Feet of Iron Mixed with Ceramic Clay (vv. 32, 42)	7-Headed Scarlet Beast (Rev. 17:3)	Apparent End of Beast
	1st Head of Scarlet Beast (Rev. 17:8)	3 Successive Horns (Barbarian hordes of Arianism destroyed on papal authority—this period called the "transition age" in Philip Myers' Ancient History, p. 571)
	2nd Head of Scarlet Beast (Rev. 17:8)	Religious Christian Religion Pulling the Beast
	3rd Head of Scarlet Beast (Rev. 17:8)	Revels of the Beast: The 7 last horns of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 are the same as the 7 heads of the Scarlet Beast of Revelation 17
	4th Head of Scarlet Beast (Rev. 17:8)	is of which are "fallen" when Napoleon is defeated in 1814-15
	5th Head of Scarlet Beast (Rev. 17:8)	Imperial Reestablishment of the Holy Roman Empire (Carolingian Empire) Holy Roman Empire (10th century onwards as Pope) Habsburg Dynasty (Charles V. emperor in 1550) Napoleonic Empire 1804-1814
	6th Head of Scarlet Beast (Rev. 17:8)	One (Rev. 17:10)—now understood by God's Church in end time (Dan. 12:9-10)
	7th Head of Scarlet Beast (Rev. 17:8)	Other Power That Has "NOT YET COME" (Rev. 17:10)
	8th Head of Scarlet Beast (Rev. 17:8)	Final Revival of the Roman Empire (10 national rulers under a single leader)

Bible Study # 97 Questions

SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION SERIES

Revelation 11—13

1. What does Revelation 11:12 refer to?
2. Where is the symbolism of Revelation 12:1 drawn from?
3. What does it refer to?
4. What does Revelation 12:6 refer to?
5. What scripture shows that God offers the Church a geographical place of protection from the Tribulation?
6. What are the seven heads and ten horns of Revelation 13:1?
7. Where else is the same “Beast” described?
8. What does Revelation 13:3 refer to?
9. What does Revelation 13:5 refer to?
10. What is the “second beast” of Revelation 13:11-12?
11. What is the “image of the beast”?
12. Prove what the “mark of the beast” is.

Bible Study # 98
November 10, 1992
Mr. John Ogwyn

Book of Revelation Series—Revelation 14—18

If you didn't get the handout that I handed out last time, you might want to go ahead and do so now. The handouts I have given you will simply make it easier for you to follow the Bible study because we are in that section of the book of Revelation that gets a little bit technical as far as keeping horns, heads and all sorts of things like that together. If you have the chart to follow along, it will perhaps be a little bit easier for you to do so.

Last time we finished up going through Revelation 13, which is a rather detailed exposition on who is the beast and focusing in on the succession of revivals of the Roman Empire. I brought something along and I want to read a few quotes just in preface of this Bible study this evening. This is a college text from The Problems in European Civilization Series. This particular book is titled The Holy Roman Empire in the Middle Ages. It has selections from top authors in the field on analyzing the significance of the Holy Roman Empire. I don't want to get off into all of that, but there are a number of things that are sort of interesting. It's amazing how much is recognized even in the secular realm.

Did anybody see the editorial cartoon in the paper today? Anybody take note of that? It's very interesting. I think I will post it on the bulletin board. It shows this setting out in front of this old building in Argentina. Of course, Argentina is where all the Nazis fled after World War II. It shows these two old geezers sitting out there. One is obviously Adolph Hitler and the other is his buddy. They are sitting there and the Nazi flag is in the background. It shows these guys pouring gasoline in the boats. Hitler is sitting there in his wheelchair and his buddy is sitting there in his wheelchair. Hitler is reading the paper. The headlines are: "German Riots, Neo Nazis Attack Immigrants." He looks at his friend and he says, "Pack your bags Borman. It's time."

So, it's interesting that even the secular media has picked up on the significance of some of what is going on because whoever did this didn't have a particular religious "ax to grind." But it's like even the world is beginning to grasp that something is happening and it makes them a little bit uncomfortable. They don't quite know.

We can have understanding as to what is happening, to where it is going to lead and how it will culminate. Not that we know every detail and can plug in dates and specific names for every specific thing. God hasn't revealed all of those details to us, but He has revealed a broad outline, an overview. He revealed something that enables us to make sense of the world in which we live and to understand from whence we came, where we are going and how the events in which we are living are going to culminate.

I am going to do it a little differently this evening. We finished up in Revelation 13. I **want to carry that over into Revelation 17, which sort of picks it up, and then I am going to come back to Revelation 14 and 15.**

I want to read a couple of quotes out of this book, The Holy Roman Empire in the Middle Ages. This is from one particular historian, Johannes Holler. He says, "In the memory of the German people, the old empire [speaking of the Holy Roman Empire] lives on as a time of greatness and splendor that must one day come to life again."

That's sort of an interesting thing and in many ways, sort of ties in with the little editorial cartoon.

Last Bible study in Revelation 13, we talked about the image of the beast and how the papacy and the structure of the Roman Catholic Church derived from the structure of the old Roman Empire.

James Bryce, who was a famous British historian, a professor at Oxford University and also ambassador to the United States, wrote an article titled "The History of the Holy Roman Empire Must be Deduced from Its Theory." He says, "Thus the emperor [speaking of the Holy Roman emperor] answers in every point to his antitype, the pope. His power being yet of a lower rank, created on the analogy of the papal, as the papal [system] itself had been modeled after the elder empire."

This makes the clear statement that the papacy was modeled after the elder empire, the old Roman Empire. Keep that quote in mind.

Let's look at Revelation 13:14, "And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image of the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived." Who was the beast that was wounded? The old Roman Empire came to an end. So, they said, 'We should make an image of the beast.' He says that the papacy itself was

modeled after the elder or the old Roman Empire.

Holler says, “The parallel holds good even in its details, for we have seen the churchmen assuming the crown and the robes of the secular prince. The Holy Roman Church and the Holy Roman Empire are one and the same thing seen from different sides. Catholicism, the principal of the universal Christian society, is also Romanism. That is, it rests upon Rome as the origin and type of its universality, manifesting itself in a mystic dualism...”

I like that expression, and it seems like we read about mystic things here. In fact, we read of something called Mystery Babylon the Great.

It says, “...manifesting itself in a mystic dualism as divine and eternal, its head is the pope to whom souls have been entrusted as human and temporal the emperor commissioned to rule men’s bodies and acts.”

Just a couple of other things: this was part of the teaching; this is speaking in the latter part of the thirteenth century. It is a book that was written about the Roman Empire and its translation to Germany. It goes through and the point that it makes is: ‘It was the will of God, not of men, that led to the granting of the Roman Empire to Germany.’

Maybe just one or two others: “The empire was always viewed as the city of God and the emperor as the vicar of Christ. His first duty being the furtherance of justice and law.”

A couple of other quotes: “The task of the empire was to be God’s protagonist on earth, to fulfill His aims here, to protect Christianity and the church, to preserve the righteousness of God and the divine order of the Universe on earth.”

That’s just a fancy way of saying that when you read about the mark of the beast and about how the papacy exercised the power of the first beast, their allegiance must be given to the empire.

Revelation 13:12, “And he exercises all the authority of the first beast [the old Roman Empire] in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.” It pointed people toward the fact that their devotion, allegiance and loyalty must be given to the empire. The beast ultimately enforced a mark and persisted in these things.

Holler says, “The most important struggle assigned to the Holy Roman Empire was the fight against infidels. [Infidels were somebody who didn’t believe what they believed; this was the basis of all the religious persecution.] The Holy Roman Empire was made synonymous

with the people of God, with Christendom. In the imperial symbols, this claim was displayed to the whole world with the imperial apple filled with earth from the four corners of the world. The emperor holds the whole world in his hands. The royal gold of the crown signifies the dominion over the world.”

The Holy Roman emperors were crowned and one of the things that they received was this golden apple. In this apple were four spoons of earth taken from what were considered symbolically the four corners of the earth. Four extremities symbolized the fact that he ruled the world as God’s vice regent. He didn’t exercise real power over the whole world, but as far as he was concerned, he did. And this was accepted. You’ve heard the song “He holds the whole world in his hands.” Did you know the Holy Roman emperor made that claim?

The imperial crown was called “*corona urbis et orbis*.” In other words, “The crown of the city and of the globe”—speaking of the crown of Rome and of the world. That was the way he was. The title he carried as Holy Roman emperor was “*caput mundi*” which means “head of the world” and “*dominator orbis et urbis*” which means “lord of the globe and of the city.” So, he was the head of the world, the ruler of the globe and the ruler of Rome. Rome was sort of on a level with all the rest of the world. I think it’s interesting to understand that this is the symbolism and these are the claims to which the Holy Roman Empire laid claim during the Middle Ages.

Here’s another thing that ties in with the matter of the image of the beast. Speaking of the original Roman Empire before its collapse, Holler says, “The dismantling of the emperor’s priestly powers were paralleled by the pope’s accumulation of the titles, ranks, offices and duties of the emperor. [This of course happened. Even the title “Pontifex Maximus,” which is commonly used by the pope, was previously a title of Roman emperors.] The Roman church was the unique legitimate successor of the Roman Empire, the empire of ancient Rome. [Only papal Rome could be Rome’s heir.] The pope was the only lawful inheritor of the rights and authority of the old Roman emperors.”

Anyway, enough quotes. But I think it gives you a flavor that, certainly, even secular historians, who are not writing from any religious standpoint, focus in on the correlation between the Roman Catholic Church and the old Roman Empire and ultimately the Holy Roman Empire,

which was revived by the papacy during the Middle Ages.

If you have the chart, you can follow that down and look at the one thousand two hundred sixty years of continuation of that Holy Roman Empire through the various emperors that were crowned.

Revelation 17:1-3, we find, “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, ‘Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.’ So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.”

To call itself the Holy Roman Empire was in itself a blasphemous title because “Holy and reverend is God’s name” (KJV, Psalm 111:9). Here was a title that was attached. This was not really the Holy Roman Empire, but this was the way they termed it.

A woman, of course, is used in prophecy to symbolize a church. Here, we find quite a contrast to the true Church, which is symbolized as a chaste virgin waiting for Jesus Christ who’s coming back as the husband to marry the Church (Revelation 19:7).

Here we find a woman who is pictured as the very opposite of a virgin. She is described as a great whore.

Verse 5, she is, we are told, “...THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” She entered into illicit relationships with kings of the earth.

The true Church is compared to a virgin, in that the Church does not enter into relationships with the civil governments of this world. The Church looks to Jesus Christ as the One who is in the role of the Protector and Provider for the Church.

Here we find a description of a church that has entered into many alliances and relationships with all sorts of civil governments. And she has harlot daughters. Her daughters are the offspring of her relationship with all of these kings of the earth. Right? If she is the mother, then who is the daddy? There’s a bunch of daughters and all of them have different fathers. You find that nearly all of the churches that came out of the reformation were national churches. The Lutherans in Germany, the Church of England, or the Anglicans in Britain—you had all of these

different churches that came out that were national churches. They held on to the basic traditions that came from “Big Mama.” They held on to Sunday, Christmas and Easter—the whole overview and perspective that they had derived from her, but they each had a nationalistic flavor. You had state churches in all of the various Protestant nations: Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, England and Scotland. All the Protestant nations had their own state church. You had the Dutch Reform Church or you had the Lutheran Church, which was the state church in each of the Scandinavian nations plus Germany. Each one of those had its own little brand. The Church of England—the Anglican or Episcopal Church—was the state church of England. The Presbyterian Church was the state church of Scotland. They were the daughters. They were fathered by the kings of the earth and were mothered by the Great Whore of Babylon—just to be very plain and say what the Bible says.

Verse 5, we are told she is called, “...MYSTERY BABYLON, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” This is the mystery religion that originated in Babylon now grown great.

Verse 6, “And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus....”

Verses 3 and 7 describe a beast that is ridden by the woman. When someone rides a horse, they are astride the horse. But sometimes you mount a frisky horse and he doesn’t always do exactly what you want him to do. Sometimes he sort of gets away from you for a while.

If any of you have ever ridden very much, you know that if you are sitting in the saddle, you are supposed to be in control. But sometimes you are not in as complete control as you would like. Sometimes he tries to throw you off. Sometimes he takes off running and you spend quite a while trying to slow him down or keep him from trying to jump something he’s going to jump or from going in the direction he wants to go in. If you manage to sit in your saddle, you can eventually regain control, but he may be a frisky creature.

Well, that’s the history of the woman and the beast. She’s ridden the beast. She’s managed not to be knocked off and thrown out of the saddle. Sometimes the beast was a little more docile when she said “whoa” or when she said “giddy-up.” Other times he sort of had a mind of his own and she just held on for the ride. That has sort of been the history of the woman and the beast that you read of down through the period

of the Middle Ages. She's continually remained in the saddle. She hasn't always been able to exercise as total a control as what she would like, but she never got bucked off. She always managed to sort of ride it out. If you have that picture in mind, then when you read the history of the events, you can sort of visualize it that way.

Notice on your chart, it lays it out in several ways. Daniel 2, Daniel 7, as well as Revelation 13 and Revelation 17 are laid out as the main groupings. There is Daniel 8 as well, which focuses in on the ram and the goat.

You will find that Daniel sees the beast from his perspective. He was writing almost six hundred years before John was writing. Daniel saw it at the time when the beast was first arising. Daniel actually saw four different creatures, but there were seven heads between them. He saw them as distinct empires: Babylon came up, Persia came up, Greece came up, which split into four heads. Then the fourth terrible creature (the Roman Empire) came up. It had the ten horns, the successive revivals of it. He viewed it that way.

When John was writing about six hundred years later, the Babylonians, the Persians and the Greeks had passed into history and the Romans were on the scene. The Romans had swallowed up the aspects of all the predecessors. John looked at it as one creature. It had seven heads and out of that seventh head came ten horns.

In Daniel, the fourth beast had the ten horns. But if you count heads, it was the seventh head. That's what John saw. He saw it as one creature. The seventh head was the focus that he placed attention on because that was what was viable in his day. And he saw these ten horns. He saw that creature dying. He saw that succession ending. He saw the old Roman Empire collapsing—the deadly wound. Then he saw it revived and it was revived in a particular way.

When you come to Revelation 17, we pick up something a little different. Notice on your chart that the entire creature of Revelation 17 is ridden by the beast. The only part of the beast of Revelation 13 dominated by the woman (the church) was the last seven horns. The Catholic Church did not dominate Babylon, Persia, Greece, the original Roman Empire and the first three successor states to it (the Vandals, the Heruli and the Ostrogoths). None of those were dominated and controlled by the Catholic Church. But beginning with the Imperial Restoration in 554 A.D., there was a period of papal domination.

The final seven horns of Revelation 13 are comparable to the seven heads of Revelation 17. It is laid out on the chart in that way. What we are focusing on, in Revelation 17, is simply the creature that the woman rode.

Revelation 17:11, we are told, “‘And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition [destruction].”

That's sort of a very ambiguous statement. If you break it down, “the beast that was” was the Roman Empire; “is not,” it ceases. What comes back when the wound is healed is really, in effect, sort of “the eight” if you're looking back to Revelation 13 where you had the seven-headed creature. The beast that was and then is not because it's cut off, receives a deadly wound. When it is revived, in one sense, it is like the eighth. It is like another entity that has come up, and yet it's really of the seven. It's just a continuation. In some ways, it looks like something different, and yet it's really just a continuation of the previous creature. It is ultimately going into perdition. It's going into destruction.

Speaking of the seven heads, a very interesting thing comes out.

Revelation 17:10, “There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time.” Have you ever stopped and thought about that? The statement, “five are fallen, one is and one is yet to come,” can only be true at one precise short period of time. He didn't say that “one is fallen and six are yet to come” or that “three are fallen.” He says, “five are fallen.”

If you go down through the historical period, you are looking at Justinian the Great and his Imperial Restoration, which began the revivals of the beast. It is the beginning of this creature that the deadly wound was healed. Justinian the Great, the revival under Charlemagne, the revival under Otto the German, the revival under the Habsburgs (Hapsburgs in English) and the revival under Napoleon—that's five. And they are fallen. The time setting for v. 10 is after Napoleon because five of the kings are fallen.

The sixth revival was what? The sixth revival began with the unification of Italy under Garibaldi in the 1870s and culminated with the revived Roman Empire of Mussolini that ended at the end of World War II in 1945—“one is.” The other is “not yet come.” That's the one that's still has not yet come. Today we wouldn't say the “five are fallen and one is and the other is not yet come.” Today we would say, “six are fallen

and one is not yet come.” The time setting of v. 10 makes sense in the context of the time when Mr. Herbert Armstrong came to understand these things back in the late 1920s/early 1930s. That is the period that was specifically prophesied of.

When Daniel wrote the prophecies, he didn’t know what they meant. Was he told, ‘I gave you these things to confuse you because nobody will ever know what they mean?’ That’s not what he was told.

Daniel 12:9, he was told, “...‘Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.’”

Verse 10, then he was told, “...and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.” If we are in the time of the end, then the wise should understand. If somebody doesn’t understand, perhaps they are not wise because it says the wise will understand. Right?

Where do you get wisdom?

Psalm 111:10, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments....”

It’s interesting. When God began working with Mr. Herbert Armstrong, the first thing he learned was about the Sabbath and the Holy Days. That was the starting point. His willingness to keep the Sabbath and Holy Days was the basis by which God opened his mind to understand other things. If he hadn’t been willing to keep the Sabbath and the Holy Days, he never would have understood the rest. That was the starting point. *Obedience* is the key. That is the starting point.

Daniel 12:4, the angel told Daniel, “‘But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end....’” But at the time of the end, the wise will understand.

It is important to understand and to realize that because the statement is made in Daniel 12:9-10, “And he said, ‘Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, made white, and refined [KJV, “tried”]....’” That’s God’s Church down through the ages. People have been called out. They have been purified, made white and cleansed by God’s power. They have been tried. They have gone through trials and difficulties.

Continuing v. 10, “...but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.” That is a very clear-cut promise and a very clear-cut prophecy. You can go through many scriptures to understand all about where wisdom comes from. So, we shouldn’t be surprised that the wise understand. We shouldn’t be surprised that some

of these things are understood. As we move forward in time and we get closer to the end, even more details become apparent.

It’s sort of interesting that in Revelation 17:10, the time is zeroed in. God already had the time period in mind because God knew when the time of the end was. Right? He didn’t just start wondering if it is at the time of the end.

Isaiah 46:9-10 says, “‘...For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.”’” God declares the end from the beginning. He knows where He’s going before He ever starts, which is part of the basis of our faith of trusting Him.

Revelation 17:12-13, we are told, “‘And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they received authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.’”

We have a picture of ten kings, ten rulers in Europe that merge their power and relinquish power to one great super ruler. Traditionally, that sort of thing has only happened in the context of a crisis. People get scared. When you put other prophecies together, I think we have pretty clear indications of some of the things that are going to scare them.

You have to realize what Europe has gone through. I should give a sermon on this. I don’t want to take too much Bible study time or we won’t get to the rest of the Bible study.

You have to realize what has happened to Europe in the twentieth century. Europe completely and totally dominated the world at the beginning of the twentieth century. You know what happened to Europe? Ethnic strife in the Balkans got out of hand in the early part of the century—1910, 1911 and 1912. It had been simmering and finally erupted. It was drawn more and more into it until it finally erupted in 1914 as World War I—the bloodiest, deadliest war in which Europe was ever engaged.

When the war was over, Europe was in shambles. All the old continent-based empires—the German Empire, the Austrian Empire and the Russian Empire—had all collapsed into shambles. Within a generation, it set the stage for the things that produced Hitler and Mussolini coming to power. Again, the world was plunged into World War II, which was sort of retribution. The Germans were really sort of “licking their wounds” for what had happened a few years

earlier. World War II ended in 1945. Britain and France, who possessed overseas empires, had managed to hold on and even flourish in the aftermath of World War I. But by the time World War II was over, everything in Europe was exhausted. The Russians dominated all of Eastern and Central Europe. That “scared the daylight” out of Western Europe, which was too exhausted to do anything else. The empires of Britain and France now dissolved in the aftermath of World War II and Europe was in the very humbling position of having to be dependent on the United States to protect them for a period of several decades.

Now everything on the world scene has changed. What are they looking at now? They are looking at a situation where—guess what! They are still “going at it” down in the Balkans, and it’s about to get out of hand again. There are already some that are afraid because this thing keeps spreading.

What happens is every one of these little, tiny entities there in the Balkans has friends elsewhere. Serbia, historically, has had connections with Bulgaria and Russia because they are all Orthodox. In portions of the rest of it, they had connections with Turkey because they are Muslim. In Bosnia and some of that area, there is a great deal of animosity. They are already looking at a potential of Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey and Albania being dragged in. There are tremendous arms sales going on right now. In fact, Greece has bought all sorts of armaments that the United States is discarding in Germany. The Germans have turned around and sold them to the Greeks. What do you think the Greeks are going to do with them? Well, why are they buying them? They are buying them because they are preparing to shoot somebody with them. And what the Greeks haven’t bought, the Turks have bought.

There are no two people that hate each other any more than the Greeks and the Turks. They have been “going at it” for the better part of a thousand years. They have been “at it” ever since the Turks came into that area of the world. You are looking at a bubbling caldron of hatreds and animosities that is getting out of hand. The only time those people have ever had peace is when some empire has sort of ruled over them and kept them in check. As soon as everybody else leaves them alone, they start shooting at one another again. That has sort of been their history.

But the thing is that other people get dragged in. That doesn’t have the effect on us that it has in Europe. It “scared the daylight” out of them

because they know what happened the last time they stood by and let things get “out of hand” in the Balkans. It cost them world domination for the better part of a century—for three-quarters of a century. It totally disrupted them. They spent the twentieth century rebuilding and trying to recoup what they lost; they don’t want to go through that again. It frightened them in a way that it doesn’t frighten us because they saw what happened the time it had gotten “out of hand.” It blew up into a mess for them. That scares them.

As this thing continues to go along and as the situation gets more and more volatile in Europe, they see their future, their peace and their prosperity threatened. Crisis in the Middle East and trade war with the Anglo Saxon powers is coming. Whether it erupts over this particular issue or not, it’s in the air and it’s building. God is the One who knows the timing of it. I don’t necessarily expect this is going to bring full-scale trade war, but it heightens the tensions and is setting the stage.

We have a lot of things going and, of course, we have a very sizable percentage of the good Catholics in America and probably a majority of the house of bishops who are ready to tell the pope, ‘Go fly a kite. We will ordain women if we want to.’ They are not quite prepared to tell him in those words, but I’m sure he gets the message. I don’t think this pope cares for it very much. The problem with American Catholics is they want to put everything to a vote. When he tells them something “infallible,” he expects them to accept it. So, things are building and we read of it right here in Revelation 17.

Now let’s go back to Revelation 14. It is an inset and it pictures the Lamb standing on Mount Zion and the one hundred forty-four thousand with Him. We are looking at a time after Christ’s return—a time when He will stand on Mount Zion and the one hundred forty-four thousand are with him. They learned a song that no one else was allowed to learn. The one hundred forty-four thousand, we are told, represent the firstfruits (vv. 1-4).

We see three angels who fly in the midst of heaven (vv. 6-9). Remember there are three heavens in Scripture. The heavens can refer to where the clouds are and where the birds fly, the birds of heaven or the clouds of heaven. Outer space is referred to as the heavens. We use that term; we talk about looking up into the heavens, speaking of the stars, the moon and the sun. Then there is what the Apostle Paul calls in II Corinthians 12:2, the third heaven, which is the heaven of God’s abode. So, three different places

are designated as heaven. When this angel flies through the midst of heaven (v. 6), this is obviously the first heaven because he's preaching. He proclaims a message that the hour of judgment is come (v. 7).

Revelation 14:8-10, immediately after him, "And another angel followed, saying, 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.' Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, 'If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.'"

We read here that these things are going to be poured out right at the time when Christ returns.

Verse 12, we are told, "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

The saints are defined as those who keep God's commandments and have the faith of Christ.

Verses 14-16, "And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, 'Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.' So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped." It describes the events that were going on.

It goes right on. We see the **seven last plagues** beginning to be poured out.

Revelation 15:1-3, "Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete. And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses..."

If the Old Testament has been done away as a lot of Protestants think, why would they be singing the song of Moses?

It mentions this sea of glass. The Bible makes reference back in Ezekiel 1 to a very amazing picture. Ezekiel saw something and he was certainly amazed by it. He saw what originally

looked like a whirlwind. It looked like a tornado coming toward him. Of course, that scared him. When it got closer, it looked even worse. It looked like there was fire in it and was enfolding itself. Well, you can imagine. He's just standing there and sees this thing getting closer and closer. Then when it gets even closer and he can make out something out of it, he sees out of all of this the most awesome sight he's ever seen. There appears to be this great sea of glass and on it was a throne. There was all the brilliance of color, the rainbow and the One like the Son of God sitting there. Under it were these creatures that had an amazing look to them.

You couldn't call it a UFO because it is fully identified. It's not an unidentified flying object; it's an identified flying object. It was like some conveyance by which God transported Himself and it appeared here to Ezekiel. You find described this sea of glass, a crystal sea.

Evidently when you put Revelation 14, 15 and 16 together, when Christ returns, we are told that He returns in a cloud (Matthew 24:30; Revelation 1:7).

I Thessalonians 4:16-17, we are told, "...and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air..." Now, we know from Zechariah 14:4 that in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives. But does He just come down instantly? Well, it says we meet Him in the clouds. So, there's a point at which we meet Him. What happens at that time?

Let's put chapters 14, 15 and 16 together. In Revelation 14, it describes Him there in the clouds watching these plagues being poured out. We are told in Revelation 14:10 that they are poured out in His presence. Revelation 15:2 describes the saints standing on the sea of glass. Very likely, as Christ returns, there is a period of about a day that these things are actually poured out. We are there in the area of the clouds. It is a time when rewards are given out. It is a time when we see the things that are transpiring because all of these things are poured out in His presence.

Revelation 15:2-3 describe the resurrected saints standing on this sea of glass and singing praises, singing the song of Moses. Then there is a vision of what happens in heaven when the seven angels come out of the temple having the seven last plagues (vv. 6-8). And then the **first angel** goes to pour out his bowl (Revelation 16:1).

Revelation 16:2, "So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and

loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.”

I don't think we can necessarily prove this one hundred percent, but I think the clear indication is that these plagues have a duration of hours, not a day, weeks or months. My basis of saying that is looking at some of the plagues.

Revelation 16:3, “Then the **second angel** poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died.” How long could life on the planet survive if all the sea became blood and everything in the sea died? –Hours or maybe a day or two. This is not a plague that could endure for weeks or months. There simply wouldn't be any life on the planet within a very short period of time. You are looking at something that very likely could only go on for hours.

Verse 4, “Then the **third angel** poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.” Well, life on the planet can't survive with that. You are looking at maybe hours before everything that's left alive begins to die.

Verse 8, “Then the **fourth angel** poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire.” We find the scorching heat, solar flares and activity. People are scorched.

Verse 10, “Then the **fifth angel** poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness...” You are looking at things that can only last for very short durations of time.

Verse 12, “Then the **sixth angel** poured out his bowl on the great River Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared.”

Verses 13-14, “And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”

These demon spirits are allowed to go forth and to bring about this convergence of armies. How long does it take armies that are ready and mobilized to converge? How long does it take airplanes and helicopters to fly a hundred miles? We are not talking about days and months. We are not talking about people having to ride for

nine months to get somewhere. We are talking of military buildup that's already there and ready.

These demon spirits are allowed to go out and stir up this convergence at Armageddon to strike at this time. We are looking at something that will culminate with the seventh plague, and Christ Himself returns to the earth.

Zechariah 14:4, we are told, “And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives...” His coming is a deliberate coming. We are told in other places the saints meet Him in the heights of the clouds (I Thessalonians 4:17). We meet Him at cloud level. Evidently we remain there for a period of time because when you look at Revelation 14:14, he said, “And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.”

Verse 10, we are told, “...And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.”

When the seventh trumpet sounds, the seven plagues are poured out (Revelation 11:15, 18; Revelation 15:1). The seventh trumpet is also the signal for the return of Christ and the resurrection. So, you are looking at events that everything culminates within a very short period of time.

There's a reason why it has to get so catastrophic. People have to come to a point of utter desperation where they give up on everything else. People can go through a lot and still think that somehow they can do it. The only way the world is going to surrender to God is to come to a point where they have bottomed out so much that they are absolutely convinced that they are totally powerless to solve the problem. Everything becomes unmanageable and they give up.

We're not at that point yet. People think all they have to do is elect “so and so.” People think, ‘We have a new Democratic President. He will be able to work with the Democratic Congress and that will solve all the problems.’ If any of you hold to that illusion, I hate to disappoint you, but I don't think that's going to happen. That's not going to solve all the problems. If we had reelected President Bush, he couldn't have solved all of the problems either. The point is not that somehow we are going to elect the right guy and he's going to fix it. If man could fix it, he'd fix it. People have to be convinced. They are not convinced. They don't need Christ to come back. They think we can fix our own problems—they are not that bad.

God's going to say, 'Just all come down.' The kind of things that can begin to happen is incredible. It's going to take the very supernatural intervention of God Himself to put a stop to these things.

Revelation 16:17, the **seventh angel** pours out his bowl into the air.

When Christ comes back we are told in vv. 18-21, "...and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And great hail from heaven fell upon men, every hailstone about the weight of a talent [about one hundred twenty pounds]..." Now that's incredible.

I didn't bring it, but there's an interesting article in the newest Newsweek magazine. It talks about what would happen if meteors and things of different weights and sizes fell on the earth and the things that can happen. It's just incredible. We have historic records of some things that have happened. There are geologic records of things far greater that have happened, which go back, undoubtedly, to some of the great cosmic battles of Satan's rebellion. Scientists don't understand that's what it was, but we are told. Of course, the whole basis of the Tribulation is that Satan is thrust back down (Revelation 12:12-13). So, you may very well, in the tantrums that he throws, find cosmic things occurring. Even in some of the plagues, we are looking at consequences that are unleashed. In effect, God lets man have the consequences of what he has produced and what he has done by following the devil's way.

You're looking at an earthquake that is so tremendous that it just totally reshapes the topography of the earth. That's important because there are a couple of things that happen with that earthquake. Prophecies in the Old Testament talk about mountains being made low and valleys being made high. That doesn't mean everything is going to be made flat as a tabletop. It just means that the earth is made a more viable place.

Do you know why we have some of the problems in terms of climate that we have? Take rain for instance. We have the great American desert. Do you know why we have the great American desert? Because the Rocky Mountains are high enough that they block off the flow of

the rain that blows in from the Pacific and so much of it doesn't cross over. You have the same thing in Africa with the Sahara Desert—the Atlas Mountains block off certain things. If you look at a globe, you'll find that you always have deserts on the other side of mountains. Look at the Himalayan Mountains. You have the great Gobi Desert of China. Mountainous areas divert and disrupt the flow of clouds, the moisture and rains that come in.

What are you going to do if you are going to make the deserts bloom like a rose (Isaiah 35:1)? Well, you are going to have to change the topography of the earth a little bit to where it changes the flow of the clouds that blow in from the sea. When the rain blows in, it doesn't all get dumped on one side of the mountain. It's able to flow across and provide a more even distribution.

We have vast areas of the earth that are uninhabitable. Perhaps somebody can live at the South Pole. We have scientific camps that are set up down there. But the South Pole is not a viable place to live. If you couldn't bring in food from other places, you couldn't live down there because you can't grow your food. It's too cold. There are vast areas of the earth that are too hot, too cold, too dry or too wet to be useful to man.

It's not that everything is going to become the same, but it's going to be balanced out enough that the entire earth is basically usable. If you have decent rainfall, then things open up and are usable in a different way. You won't have vast areas of desert that are uninhabitable.

You have vast areas that are now productive farmland. People can grow crops, run cattle, graze sheep and do things that are useful and viable. You go through great stretches of places like Nevada, Arizona and Colorado and you have vast areas where there either isn't any life or very little life that can be supported because rainfall is so sparse. The climate pattern needs to be changed. That's why there's this great earthquake that totally rearranges a lot of the earth's topography.

One of the things it's going to do was brought out in one of the sermons at the Feast when it was talked about how the Dead Sea becomes the living sea. You remember when Christ returns at the Mount of Olives, it splits in two—it divides—the great East-West Rift Valley. Part of the mountain moves to the north; part of it moves to the south. So, you have this Great Rift Valley that runs through. It connects the Dead Sea with the Mediterranean. There is a bubbling fountain called in Zechariah a fountain of "living

water” that breaks forth from under Mount Zion (Zechariah 14:4-8).

Notice Revelation 16:3, “Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died.”

Just hold your place and turn to Ezekiel 47:1, “Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east...”

Verses 2-8, there’s this bubbling fountain that comes out and it turns into a river. He saw the river and it stretches out and flows all the way to the Mediterranean. It flows across there.

Notice what it says in vv. 8-9, “Then he said to me: ‘This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed. And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes.’”

What’s going to happen to all these fish that died? Did you know fish are going to be resurrected? What it is—there is a healing that takes place. In other words, when this great earthquake occurs, this Great Rift Valley forms and this bubbling spring begins to come up. It is symbolic. It is there to remind us that life is going to flow forth from Jerusalem. This water will flow forth in this new channel. As it hits the Mediterranean, everywhere it touches, all of a sudden, it’s like a ripple effect and very rapidly life begins to spread around the earth. The waters that were like blood begin to change to be like water. All of sudden dead, stinking, putrid fish are healed. It becomes a living sea. Can you imagine what that’s going to be like and the impact of something like that? Immediately Christ begins to heal a wrecked and destroyed planet.

Some of the great calamitous events of Revelation 16 may very well endure for merely a matter of hours or in some cases days. Then there begins the removal of those consequences. Tremendous events begin to take place.

Revelation 17 provides an inset. It describes the woman riding the beast (v. 3, 7). We’ve already talked about that.

Verse 18, “And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.” What was the great city? What city would John have called the great city that dominated the kings of the earth? That is Rome.

In fact in v. 9, it even alludes to the woman sitting on seven mountains or seven hills. Rome, of course, has traditionally been called the city of seven hills.

Revelation 18:1-2, “After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen...’” We’ve already seen that this was the second angel’s message. Here we see details as to what that meant.

Verse 2, “... ‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and has become a habitation of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!’”

Where are Satan and his demons going to be restrained? Revelation 20:1 tells us that he is going to be put in a great bottomless pit; a great abyss, a great hole in the ground. Here in Revelation 18, you’re told where the hole in the ground is going to be. It’s where modern Babylon is. It’s going to become the habitation of demons, the prison of every foul spirit. It’s going to become the place where they are all going to be locked and restrained. *What you find, and just to be very plain (we will see as we go through Revelation 18), that where Rome is, is going to become just one big giant nuclear crater into which Satan and his demons will ultimately be confined for the duration of the Millennium.* What is called the “eternal city” will henceforth be known literally as the “infernal city.” That’s what it says. Babylon is fallen and it has become the habitation (the location) of all the demons. That’s where they are going to be.

Verse 3, “For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication...” She has intoxicated the nations with her false doctrines and teaching. What has come out from her has intoxicated the nations. It uses intoxication, a state of intoxication or stupor to describe the state of the nation. When somebody is intoxicated they have lost their sense of perspective. Their conduct and everything is all exaggerated. It’s out of control. That’s what we are looking at if you look up some of those words and terms in the dictionary. It’s a lack of and absence of sobriety. Sober conduct is conduct that is restrained, controlled and balanced. So, you are looking at what’s out of control, out of balance and unrestrained. That’s the state of the world.

Why is the world in the state that it’s in? Well, the world has imbibed of something that has given it a false sense. It’s interesting that when

someone is intoxicated, they often have a very distorted sense of their own power and ability. If you try to argue with a drunk and tell him that he is too drunk to drive, there's one thing he knows and it's that he can do anything. He doesn't need for you to get in his way. He knows what he's doing. In fact, it's sort of proverbial about the drunk who's ready to take on everybody else in the bar. He can whip anybody in there.

From a spiritual standpoint, we are looking at a world that has become that way. Their sense of their own limitations is totally distorted. Just everything is distorted. It's out of control and exaggerated and that erupts in the situation that exists.

You see, rather than recognizing limitations and dependence upon God and having balanced sober judgment, we find that the world is described like being on a spiritual drunk. What the world has was supplied by Babylon the Great.

God says in v. 4, "...Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues." God's message to His people is, 'Don't be part of Babylon the Great.' God is going to deal with her.

Verses 8-10, "Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her. And the kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.'"

That, to me, is a pretty graphic description of a nuclear blast. You are standing afar off for fear of her torment. You see the smoke of her burning. What is it you see from a distance when a nuclear weapon has been dropped? You see this great mushroom-shaped cloud. You can see it for miles away. What do you do? You stay away for fear of her torment, for the radiation that's going to come down with it. You have the original blast, which is a great burning and melting. The heat is just incredible. If you read what happened when we bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it's just incredible. I won't even go into the details because they are enough to turn your stomach when you realize some of the things that happened.

And you realize, in terms of power, the weapons we have today so far overshadow those. The heat that was generated and the melting point of

certain things—you talk about utterly burned with fire. You're talking about something so hot that literally concrete is melted and disintegrated. It's not just blasted to smithereens. You know, when you melt concrete, you've gotten hot! You're looking at something that, at the flashpoint, the air catches on fire. That's what happens at the flashpoint. The air itself catches on fire because you reach the ignition point of oxygen and all the gasses in the air. So, the air itself is burning. That's an incredible thing. Even though we have the technology to do it, it just boggles our minds because it goes beyond what we are familiar with in our everyday life. That's what happens when one of these things occurs.

Verses 17-18, "For in one hour such great riches came to nothing." And every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, "What is like this great city?"

These big ships that are out to sea converge and see this cloud going up. They know what's happened and they lament. Why? —Because the whole system and this city, which symbolized the very focal point of it, has collapsed.

Revelation 18 focuses more on the economic aspect. It talks about how all the merchants who have been made rich will weep and mourn because nobody buys their merchandise (v. 11). It describes their merchandise (vv. 12-15).

Verse 15, "The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing." It talks about the shipmasters (v. 17).

Babylon the Great is a great religious, military, political and economic combine: Revelation 13 focuses in on the military and the political aspects. Revelation 17 focuses in on the religious aspect. Revelation 18 focuses in on the economic aspect.

It is centered in Europe and centered in Rome. It is a great economic combine. That's why we have always understood that the European Common Market, in some ways, sets the stage for it. Not that the Common Market is going to evolve into the beast, but it is the basis. That's what they are trying to do. They are trying to build a great economic combine that will dominate the world economically. But they are reaching the point where they are being forced to understand that they won't successfully dominate the world economically unless there is military and political power to go with it. That's what they are being confronted with right now. Then they are going to have to face the fact

that they are going to need a “glue” to hold everything together; that’s where religion comes in. That’s the part religion will play. It will be an emotional “glue” to hold things together.

The whole system is going to collapse at this point as described in Revelation 18.

Revelation 18:21, “...‘Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore.’” We have the destruction of that system. This world’s society is headed toward a climax and a conclusion. As we look at the world and see what is transpiring on the world scene, we are seeing the coming together of some of these things. We are looking at something that is going to come together, and it is shaping up on the world scene right now. We have just little bits and pieces all around the world. We have the situation in the Middle East, the situation in the Balkans and the unsteadiness in Eastern Europe. We are seeing all of these things that are going on. Europe recognizes the need to do something. They recognize the need to put it together and, of course, a strong revived Germany right at the heart and core. Events are shaping up.

We don’t know the exact time frame. God hasn’t revealed those details, but He certainly gives us enough insight to understand the times in which we are living. These prophecies were written so that at the end time, the wise would understand. They are not put in the Bible just to take up space. It’s not that God wanted to write a book of so many pages and couldn’t think of anything else to say, so He threw in a few prophecies that take up a third of it that nobody would ever understand. You know, that doesn’t make sense. God doesn’t waste any words. What He says is there, and it is for our benefit. We have an overview, and as we see some of these things begin to come together and begin to converge, we need to really take heed to it.

We are almost to the end of our series on the book of Revelation. We have one more Bible study on Revelation. At that point, we will have completed going through the entire Bible.

Now you know everything you always wanted to know about the Bible, right? You have all the answers? No, there’s plenty more. Plenty more!

I will mention again that we do have a question box in the back. Because of the nature of a lot of these Bible studies of recent date, we haven’t been taking Bible study questions. I don’t want you to think we will never have a chance to ask questions at Bible study again. No, if you have some that you want to send up, you can put in the box. When we finish the series on

Revelation, we’ll take what we have. If we have enough, we will make a Bible study out of it. If we don’t, we’ll answer the one or two that we have and we will go into a new series. With that we will be concluded this evening.

Bible Study # 98 Questions

SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION SERIES

Revelation 14—18

1. What is the significance of the three angel messages recorded in Revelation 14?
2. What constitutes the seventh trumpet?
3. What is the time element of the seven last plagues?
4. What indication do we have that millennial geography will differ greatly from that of the present?
5. What do the “waters” (Revelation 17:1) symbolize?
6. What are the seven heads and ten horns of Revelation 17?
7. How do we know that the Beast of Revelation 13 and the Beast of Revelation 17 are not identical?
8. Why is the woman of Revelation 17 described as a harlot? From what does this symbolism originally derive?
9. What does Babylon symbolize?
10. What is the ultimate fate of the city?

Bible Study # 99
December 8, 1992
Mr. John Ogwyn

Book of Revelation Series—Revelation 19—22

It has taken us five and one-half years to complete, but we **are at the point of concluding this series of Bible studies this evening. We are down to the last four chapters of the last book, the book of Revelation.** I think we've had some of you who have been here for just about all of this. You've had the opportunity to go through the entire Bible and that's good.

We've gone through the Bible in terms of books. After we've covered Bible study questions next time, I think we are going to get into a study of doctrines of the Bible. We will go into some things in that regard. No matter how many times you study the Bible, there's always more there that you can go back through. But this has given us an opportunity to go through it systematically.

There is one thing I would like to mention as we finish up the material for this evening. The last couple of Bible studies were focusing on the mid-section of Revelation—particularly the material involving the successions of the beast power and the things of that sort. The last time, as we were going through Revelation 17, we looked at the seven revivals of the Roman Empire that were to be dominated by the church—the woman of Revelation. Of course, that was pointed out on the chart that I handed out and in the Bible studies. That series of succession began with the Imperial Restoration by Justinian (the Eastern Roman emperor) in 554 A.D. That is when the “deadly wound” was healed (Revelation 13:3). That's what's called the “Imperial Restoration.”

Now, I would like to give you a little bit of background. We said that these were the specific revivals and the church dominated them. What is our basis of drawing that conclusion?

I have a couple of books I want to quote from. One is a volume entitled The Age of Faith by Will Durant. It's part of a multi-volume history. The other is an interesting book. It's entitled The Bad Popes. If they looked at all of them, perhaps the book could be longer than this. But it focuses in on seven medieval popes. It's not a religious attack on them. It focuses in on certain crisis periods of the medieval church. There are some interesting quotes. I will share a few of them with you.

When the Roman Empire collapsed in the West in 476 A.D. (if you look at your chart), that was prophetically called the “deadly wound.” At that point, the Roman Empire became divided between two successor states: the Heruli under Odoacer (also known as Odovacar) and the Vandals.

The Vandals took over the southern part of Italy and North Africa. They had come through Rome a little earlier. What they did to Rome is why the word “vandal” is in our English vocabulary today. That was originally the name of the people, but what they did to Rome has sort of given meaning to their name. Now, we talk about people “vandalizing” things, which means they did “like the Vandals did.” So, you can get a pretty good guess as to the way the Vandals did things. The Vandals wound up occupying the Western Roman Empire in terms of North Africa and up into the southern “boot” of Italy.

The Heruli under Odoacer came down and occupied the northern part of Italy and Rome. The Eastern Roman emperor recognized (he sort of de facto) those rulers as patricians and gave them a title and a rank. While they took the title “king” and ran the empire themselves, they continued the Latin language and many of the outward trappings of the Roman government. So, in that sense, they were a part of the Roman order but were greatly at odds with the papacy. The reason was that they were adherents, not to Catholicism, but to a particular brand of religion called Arianism. The Arians had certain heresies that they introduced. They were opposed to the doctrine of the trinity, which was fine, but their own explanation and approach in the other direction was just about as wrong as the Catholics. They introduced a different set of heresies.

The Vandals and the Heruli both claimed to be Christians but were Arians, not of Catholic persuasion. This, of course, was a considerable threat to the primacy of the bishop of Rome and the brand of Christianity to which he adhered. So, he besought Zeno, the emperor in the East (in Constantinople), to send troops to uproot and get rid of the Heruli and the Vandals. The emperor in the East didn't have any troops to send, but he paid the Ostrogoths (a Germanic people up north of Italy) to invade. They were also Arians. He paid them to invade and to cast out the Heruli, which they did.

His successor, Justinian, sent troops into North Africa at the behest of the pope and cast the Vandals out of North Africa. In the meantime as Theodoric (who was the king of the Ostrogoths)

took over, the situation continued. Again, the papacy considered itself threatened. He appealed to the emperor Justinian. There was a war of about eighteen years duration called the Gothic War that finally ended in 553 A.D. By that point, all three—the Vandals, Heruli and Ostrogoths—had been uprooted from the Western Roman Empire.

If you remember Daniel's vision, when he saw the seventh head (the Roman head of the beast), it had ten horns. And then there was a "little horn" that came up out of it that had the first three horns plucked up (Daniel 7:7-8). The "little horn" was the papacy, which at his behest had the first three successive states, the Vandals, Heruli and Ostrogoths, "plucked up" because their brand of Christianity was a different brand. They were Arians as opposed to Catholic in their doctrine. So, this was the case.

Then 554 A.D. is called the date of the "Imperial Restoration." Here is what the Imperial Restoration entailed. In 554 A.D., Justinian promulgated a decree. He had cast out the Vandals, Heruli and the Ostrogoths. How was he going to govern Italy? He promulgated a decree requiring that "fit and proper persons, able to administer the local government, be chosen as governors of the province by the bishop and chief persons of each province" (Durant, pp. 519-520).

The bishop of Rome was now given the "deal" that was cut. When Justinian cast out the Vandals, Heruli and the Ostrogoths, he acquiesced to the right of the pope to choose the rulers in Italy. In that sense, they were to be subservient, looking to him as emperor in the East, but the actual rule in Italy was to be done by those who were chosen by the pope. It marked the "Imperial Restoration." The imperial powers—the powers of the Roman Empire—were restored. The power of the emperor was restored in the West.

That situation continued along for a short period of time. Justinian died and another group of people, called the Lombards, invaded Italy from the north. They invaded northern Italy and came down and took Rome. They were content to rule as vassals of the Roman emperor in the East, and they continued to send tribute to him. They were allowed to exercise power on behalf of the Eastern Roman Empire. This situation continued down.

Of course, the Imperial Restoration under Justinian was the first restoration. That continued for a period of time, and then an issue came up in

726 A.D. This is about one hundred seventy years later. Here is what arose.

This is quoting from the book entitled The Bad Popes: "The primitive Christians had attacked image worship as the work of the devil and there had been wholesale destruction of every type of idol when Christianity had at last triumphed. But over the succeeding centuries, the images crept back appearing under new names, but to the critical eye was an identical role. [Which, of course, is exactly right; all the old pagan insignias continued.] It was the Christians of the East who first began to feel that much of the pagan religion that their forefathers had destroyed at such cost in martyrs' blood was insensibly being restored. Disturbed by the mockery of the neighboring Muslims, a decree was issued."

Trouble came up. Let's come down. Roman emperor Leo, III solved the problem.

"In 726 A.D., the Eastern Roman emperor Leo, III, issued an edict commanding the breaking of all images throughout the empire in the West as well as the East."—So, the breaking of the idols. Gregory II was pope. He was in the eleventh year of his reign. He wrote two letters to the emperor defying the edict and urging him to return to "the true path." This meant idol worship. The result was that finally in 731 A.D., a decree was issued by the pope at Rome pronouncing to "excommunicate all those who would attack the images of the saints." Things had come to a head over the issue of idol worship. There was a decline of Byzantine power in the East. The pope sort of severed the situation when he excommunicated the emperor and his adherents to the East for wanting to break idols. Oh, that was terrible to break all these pretty images.

Now he was faced with difficulty because the Lombards were making the situation even worse. They were pouring in. He sought to the Franks, to a man by the name of Pippin. In 755 A.D., the pope made a long journey to the Frankish court and besought Pippin to come down. Pippin, who was king of the Franks, came in and drove out the Lombards. The situation continued along.

Pippin is not very well known, but his son, Charlemagne, is much better known. Fifty years later there continued to be problems. The Lombards were coming in and Rome was threatened. Finally, Charlemagne came in and cleaned out things.

I will read this quote: "Charlemagne had hastened to Rome at the appeal of Pope Leo, III, to put down a rebellion. In return, on Christmas

day 800 A.D., Leo crowned him emperor of the West.”

To give you a couple of details out of the other book, The Age of Faith: “Christmas day, Charlemagne, wearing the tunic and the sandals of a Roman patrician, knelt before St. Peter’s altar in prayer. Leo suddenly produced a jewel crown and set it on the king’s head. The congregation cried out, ‘Hail to Charles the Augustus, crowned by God, the great peace-bringing emperor of the Romans.’ The royal head was anointed with holy oil. The pope saluted Charlemagne as emperor and offered him the act of homage that had previously been reserved for the emperor in the East.”

First, there was the resurrection under Justinian; now, the resurrection under Charlemagne. This created a problem because now there were two emperors. The emperor in the East was a little bit miffed at the fact that somebody else was claiming to be Roman emperor. But finally in 812 A.D. (twelve years later), the Greek emperor recognized Charlemagne as co-emperor of the Romans; Charlemagne gave certain portions of Italy to the Eastern Empire.

A couple of other quotes: “Charlemagne and his advisors conceived of this new authority as a revival of the imperial power.”

It was a revival, a restoration, of the Holy Roman Empire. That’s what was taking place.

The situation continued. After Charlemagne’s death it says, “One hundred fifty years passed since Charlemagne had been crowned emperor of the West by the pope. During the century and a half, the crown of the empire had become the debased pretext for faction and war, even sort of a hollow title that continued on. Finally there were, again, invasions by revival of some of the Lombards and again invasions of Northern Italy. The pope again needed to look for a champion. This time he looked to Otto the Saxon German king. Otto came in, invaded Italy at the pope’s behest and finally reached Rome in 961 A.D. and cast out the Lombards at the behest of the pope.”

Then we are told: “Above the shrine of Peter, Otto knelt and received that crown, whose weight eventually crushed the crown of the German kingdom. On February 2, 961 A.D., the Holy Roman Empire came into being tying Italy and Germany together.”

Otto was crowned. We could go through the other revivals. I am not going to go through them all, but you can come down to the Habsburgs (“Hapsburg” in English). The final emperor to be crowned in the 1500s was Charles V. Charles the Great and the pope, having come in at his behest,

again crowned the Habsburg emperor. You can go through the story of the crowning of Napoleon by the pope. The restorations of the empire are very much tied together. I think it is good to realize that even from secular sources we can document the outline that we have utilized.

Let’s continue. We covered Revelation 18 last time. We covered the destruction of the Babylonian system as it is outlined here.

Revelation 19:1-4, “After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude [angels] in heaven, saying, ‘Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her.’ Again they said, ‘Alleluia! And her smoke rises up forever and ever!’ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God who sat on the throne, saying, ‘Amen! Alleluia!’”

Verses 7-9, “‘Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.’ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!”’....”

The bride represents the Church, the firstfruits, which are God’s called out people. You could go through Hebrews 11 and start out with righteous Abel all the way down through Enoch, Noah, Abraham and down through the centuries, down through the New Testament era and all the way down to our time and the time immediately ahead of us. We are told that the wife has made herself ready. She is arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints.

The priests of ancient Israel wore white linen robes. Those things have significance. The white linen was symbolic of righteousness. We have to put on God’s righteousness.

Psalms 119:172, “...all Your commandments are righteousness.” It is righteousness that has to come from God because it’s not just the commandments in the letter. It goes beyond the letter to the spirit of the law as Christ magnified and amplified it. Those who will be in the marriage supper are clothed with fine linen.

That is the danger being pointed out to the Laodiceans in Revelation 3. They are poor and wretched and miserable and naked and blind

(v. 17). They have taken their clothes off and are too blind to know it. That's the problem you see. They are told that they need two things: they need to anoint their eyes with eye salve that they can see, and they need to get some garments that the shame of their nakedness may not be revealed (v. 18). What do they need to be covered with? With righteousness! We are told that any Laodiceans who are going to be a part of this are clearly those who have gotten spiritual sight where they could see; you can't work on a problem you don't see. The most dangerous problems are the problems you don't see. You can never work on something you don't see. The greatest affliction of the Laodiceans is that they don't see their condition. They are spiritually blind to the state they are in because if they could see themselves for what they were, then they could work to rectify the rest of it. Any of the Laodiceans that are going to be in this group are: 1) those who have gained some spiritual sight to where they could take stock of themselves and see what Christ sees and then 2) to have obtained spiritual garments from God to obtain righteousness.

The Church collectively is described symbolically as the bride of Christ. The firstfruits are at the marriage supper of the Lamb. John was overwhelmed with this.

Revelation 19:10, "And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, 'See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.'"

Jesus provided the testimonies (witness) that is the spirit of prophecy. The spirit is what gives life. God breathed into Adam the breath of life or the spirit of life, and Adam became a living soul. He didn't *have* a soul. He *was* a soul. What gives life and animation to prophecy is the testimony of Jesus, that which Jesus Christ bore witness of. Of course, the book of Revelation together with Matthew 24 and the parallel accounts are the backbone of the prophetic witness that Jesus bore. Much of the book of Revelation is direct quotation from Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:1, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place...." It was given as a revealing, as an unveiling.

Daniel 12:9-10, Daniel was told, "...Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end...none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." It was intended to be opened up;

that was the whole purpose. God didn't give all this section of the Scriptures (a third of the Bible) to have a padlock on it until after Christ returned. If that was the case, He could have saved Himself (and us) the trouble and the extra space in the Bible.

We can only understand prophecy in the context of the gospel message that Jesus Christ brought and the specific things that He gave which provide so much of a framework.

Revelation 19:11-13, "Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God."

"The Word of God" is a name that John uses throughout much of his writings in reference to Jesus Christ.

You read in John 1:1-3, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."

As you come down in v. 14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The Word of God is a reference to Jesus Christ.

Revelation 19:14-16, "And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it he should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

Christ is going to have to strike (KJV, "smite") the nations. He is going to have to rule the nations with a rod of iron. Why? Because at the time of His return, there are many that are still going to be rebellious. Human will is a very difficult thing to break, and it's the matter as to why many of these horrible events have to occur. Before a person comes to a point of total and unconditional surrender to God, you have to come to a point where you recognize that your life, managed by you, is not good. Your life is unmanageable by you. You must admit that things are out of control and you can't fix it yourself. You have to be at the end of your rope

to where you are ready to turn loose of self-will and unconditionally surrender.

It's interesting that in working with alcoholics, they say the first step an alcoholic has to take is to come to a point of admitting that they are powerless over their addiction and that their lives have become unmanageable. They have to recognize and accept the hopelessness of their condition. That is an interesting parallel because God draws a parallel with the world as on a spiritual drunk.

Revelation 17:2, “with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.” He says that all nations have become drunk on the wine of the great whore. The world has been intoxicated with the false doctrines and teaching of the false religious system.

Behavior that is controlled by intoxication is behavior that is out of control. It's exaggerated. It lacks balance and proper perception. That's a pretty good description of the state of the world. It's out of control. Behavior and conduct is exaggerated. There is a lack of perception of what's normal and what's appropriate. The world is going to have to hit bottom. The world is going to have to come to a point where people are at the end of their rope. They will have to finally come to take that first step and to realize that they are absolutely powerless to fix it because they don't know how to fix it.

People don't think that right now. Oh, they think, 'We have a new president in there and he's going to solve it. We have a new governor in; he'll fix it.' How many have we already had? How many of them have fixed it? How many presidents have we already had, and how many leaders do we have around the world that were going to fix it? Back in the 1950s, the nation of Somalia thought all it had to do was get its independence from France and their problems would be solved. They'd have independence and they'd have freedom.

Look around the world. In effect, the whole world is going to have to be in that sort of “basket-case” condition for people to realize, Jeremiah 10:23, “...the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.” The way of man is not in himself. That's why Christ is going to have to come back with a rod of iron (Revelation 19:15). He's not going to use the rod of iron on those who have a humble and contrite spirit and tremble at His word (Isaiah 66:2). The rod of iron is reserved for those who are still puffed up and cocky and

“Nobody's going to tell me; I know what I am going to do” attitude. They are going to find out that God says, 'No, your time is over.' The sun will have set on man's six-day week. The millennial Sabbath will have started. God is going to say, 'Your time is over. Christ is coming back as King of kings and Lord of lords' (Revelation 19:16).

Revelation 19:19, “And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.” These armies have converged at Armageddon; suddenly they are going to turn their weapons on the returning Jesus Christ. This sort of reminds you of Psalm 2.

Psalm 2:4, “He that sits in the heavens shall laugh....” You know, little puny man!

They are going to come together. You know what Christ is going to do? He's going to pick up the beast and the false prophet. He will carry them and throw them alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone (Revelation 19:20). Suddenly, the emptiness of that system is going to be shown. These two individuals, the beast and the false prophet that ride atop of it, are going to be picked up and cast in that lake of fire.

Evidently, this lake of fire is in the Valley of Hinnom outside of Jerusalem. It is between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, known in New Testament parlance as Gehenna.

There's a great earthquake that's going to hit at the time of Christ's actual return. The Mount of Olives splits in two (Zechariah 14:4-5)—tremendous earthquake activity.

Where are you going to get a lake of fire? That sounds like some sort of volcanic activity or something of that sort. A vast crater opens up and all of this bubbling, molten magma begins to come up. Instead of spewing out, it's just going to be coming up and bubbling up. We know there are things like that on earth. There are geysers that come up under tremendous pressure and all sorts of things.

When this gigantic earthquake hits, it's going to shift things around in such a way that there is actually going to be a lake of fire that is going to be there in this valley outside Jerusalem. The first two candidates for it are the beast and the false prophet. That sort of gets everybody else's attention. By the time the armies are consumed and the beast and false prophet are thrown in the lake of fire, then it's a matter of looking around and saying, 'Okay, anybody else have any questions?'

All of a sudden, you are going to find that everybody is in a listening mode. Rebellion is not going to be tolerated. This lake burning with fire is going to be there throughout the Millennium. It will be there as a symbol of what's going to happen to individuals who are incorrigible, individuals who cannot be taught and will not submit.

Evidently, these two are the only ones tossed into this lake of fire at this time because the armies are consumed. They are literally consumed by the birds, by the buzzards and things of that sort. In fact, you can go back in other scriptures and find that there's going to be other things that come in. In one case, there's going to be an invasion and it takes seven months to clean up after that and to do all the burial (Ezekiel 39:11-14).

When Jesus Christ returns there are these great dramatic events that surround His return.

Revelation 20:1, "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit [The bottomless pit is a great chasm as far down as can be imagined or measured; there isn't any discernable bottom, certainly, by human beings.] and a great chain in his hand."

Verses 2-3, "He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit...." This is not the lake of fire. It's a bottomless pit.

We read in Revelation 18:2 that when Rome is destroyed in these atomic blasts, there is a great crater that is left that becomes the habitation of every demon and every foul spirit. So, this is clearly the bottomless pit. There are caverns that are uncovered there that stretch down into the depths of the earth. Satan and his demons are confined there. They are not confined physically in the sense they couldn't get out. They are confined to that geographic location and are not able to get out because God doesn't allow them out. Undoubtedly, God places angels there and Satan is not allowed to come out throughout this thousand years.

Revelation 20:3-6, "and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his

image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (But the rest of the dead did not live again, until the thousand years were finished.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

It's interesting that this is the first place in the Scriptures that clearly defines the reign of the Messiah as being of one-thousand-year duration.

There is a brief allusion in Psalm 90:4. The term "thousand years" is mentioned, but it's a very vague poetic allusion. Peter quotes and paraphrases this section from Psalm 90 in II Peter 3:3-9 where he talks about scoffers thinking that the Lord delays His coming, that all things continue as they were and it's way off somewhere. They think it's remote and God's not going to intervene.

Peter goes through in II Peter and outlines it in a more definitive way. He gives a much clearer allusion to the fact of the parallels between the thousand years as with a day in God's plan. When you put it together with the allusions of the Old Testament to the reign of the Messiah being like a Sabbath, you certainly get an implication.

Isaiah 14:7 and other places allude to that. You get something that's implied, but you don't get a real clear-cut statement that the time of the Messiah is one thousand years. Peter explains and draws the allusion of the week—"one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day." The Jews, to whom Peter wrote, were very familiar with the fact that the time of the Messiah was compared to a Sabbath.

Isaiah 14:7, "The whole earth is at rest and quiet; they break forth into singing." That is the expression that is used. The whole earth is at rest or is observing a Sabbath because the word "Sabbath" is the Hebrew word for "rest." The whole world is Sabbatizing and they break forth into singing.

The allusion was understood, but you have to get to Revelation 20 (the very end of the Bible) before God really spells it out clearly. There is a progressive revealing of truth. But the progressive revealing is in the Bible.

A lot of worldly religions think the progressive revealing is the fact that the Bible was fine for its day, but as time goes on, people become a little smarter and they figure out a little more. The

Catholics take that approach. That's the way they justify changing up the Bible with their own tradition. When they talk about progressive revelation, they mean that every generation understands things a little differently; each generation's experience sort of adds to it and God reveals through that.

God's revelation to man is complete in the Bible. Progressive revelation, from a Biblical standpoint, is the fact that God didn't tell everything there was to reveal in Genesis. You have to get to the book of Revelation before you get the end of the story. There is a progressive revelation, but the progressive revelation is between Genesis 1:1 and Revelation 22. There are more details that are continually added through the story, and when you get to the end of Revelation, we have everything we need.

We are going to notice that a little later. There's not some other revelation apart from the Bible. There may be deeper understandings of the Bible. But many of the Protestants believe that Biblical revelation isn't enough.

The flak going on today is that a lot of pressure is on the Catholic Church about ordaining women to the priesthood, and the same issue has come up in many of the Protestant churches. Their concept is that Biblical revelation isn't enough. They say that they didn't do it back then, but we have progressed a lot. Obviously, God should have changed with the times, has changed with the times and He would do it now. He just didn't do it back then. The Bible is not where they go.

The Catholics are sort of in a "pickle" on it because they don't want to ordain women. But if you will notice, they don't quote Scripture as proof. They just say they have the model that Christ didn't choose any women for the twelve apostles. And they lay claim to the apostolic succession. They don't quote Scripture. They don't quote I Corinthians 14:34 and others about women not preaching in the churches. The reason is because...

[Some wording was lost when tape was turned over.]

...sort of inference from other things and ignore the plain teachings of Scripture on it. They don't call on the strongest verses because if they started calling on verses to prove that, then people would pretty soon start calling on verses to prove a lot of other things, like images in the church and things of that sort. They don't want

to get into having to cite chapter and verse on things.

The mindset of people tells us a little bit of the way people look at things. What it amounts to is people are reading contemporary culture back into the Bible. They operate under the illusion that somehow everything that is changed in human culture represents progress.

Well, the Bible says in II Timothy 3:13, "...evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." The Bible doesn't teach historical progress in the sense of moral and cultural progress. It prophesizes that there would be technological progress, but there's a vast difference between technological progress and moral and cultural progress.

Some people say the solution to all the problems is education. It's interesting. Do you know what the first totally literate society in history was? The late nineteenth century Germany had total literacy—and they also had Adolph Hitler. Education didn't solve all their problems. Everybody in Germany could read and write. They prided themselves in being the first totally literate society. They had total, one hundred percent literacy. It's not a matter of if you can read; it's what you read. If you were reading Hitler's Mein Kampf rather than the Bible, you'd be better off if you couldn't read.

The whole foundation underlying the world's approach is faulty. The whole foundation on which our society is built is faulty. In Ezekiel 13:14, it talks about the foundations being uncovered. They are going to be uncovered and shown the hollow shells that they are.

We are going to reign for a thousand years. We could go back to the Old Testament and go through a lot of things about what those thousand years are going to be like. Revelation does not give us those details because they are found elsewhere.

Revelation provides the testimony of Jesus Christ, which is the spirit of prophecy (Revelation 19:10). It gives us a means of putting everything else together and making sense of it. If you had the book of Isaiah and you didn't have the book of Revelation, you wouldn't be able to put it together in terms of what's going to happen—when and what these periods are going to be. You'd know that there was a time of the Messiah, but wouldn't know when and you wouldn't know after what.

If you go through some of the Old Testament prophecies, in some of these books you find a chapter here that talks about "this," and then it skips over to "something else." It does not go

through sequentially. It's topical. It will talk about the Tribulation here and it will talk about the Millennium there. Then it will talk about the Day of the Lord, then about the Tribulation again and then about something else. It just kind of hops, skips and jumps around.

When you understand the book of Revelation, then you have a framework. You can go back and plug in those chapters where they fit because you have a framework of a sequence of events. You have to have the book of Revelation to understand the sequence of events. And you have to have Matthew 24 to understand the book of Revelation. That's where the seals are opened up. It gives a broad outline. Now, there are details we are not going to understand until we get right down to that time. We will understand at the appropriate time. But there's a broad outline and the closer we get to the events, the more details we will understand.

Revelation 20:7-8, "Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog..." This is Gog and Magog spiritually because Gog and Magog physically are in one corner of the earth over in the East.

You read in the book of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 38) that just a few years into the Millennium there is an invasion of the Middle East from the areas of the Far East—Gog and Magog, the areas of what used to be called Soviet Central Asia, China, Mongolia, up into Siberia, some of the vast gigantic areas of the East. They are going to come in at the beginning of the Millennium and they are going to have to be put to a stop.

At the end of the Millennium when Satan goes out to deceive the nations, they are spiritually Gog and Magog. In other words, these are people at the end of the Millennium that still have the same mindset that some did at the beginning. The ones at the beginning haven't learned yet. They are going to be resurrected and dealt with. God is going to have to get their attention. Nothing can get their attention so much as being struck dead. Then when they wake up, they'll be ready to listen. Christ can do that. He wakes them up and says, 'Alright, now that I have your attention, let Me explain some things to you.' All of a sudden, they are very receptive.

Here are these people at the end of the Millennium; spiritually speaking, they are still in this attitude.

Verse 8, "...To gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea." It's an

undefined number. It gives the idea that there will be a number of them.

Satan is loosed. God does things to test His people. God ultimately sets a choice before everyone.

Moses told Israel in Deuteronomy 30:19, "...I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life..." God said, 'I set before you a choice.' And He even told them what to choose. God gives us a choice, but He tells us what to choose. He defines what the choice is. He says, 'I set before you a choice—good and evil, life and death.' "...choose life that you and your descendants may live." God compelled them to choose.

It's easy to go along when all the pressures are that way. But how much is internalized? It's an incredible thing. We read this, and I am amazed every time I read it because during the Millennium, people are going to have the Bible. They are going to be taught out of the Bible. They are going to read this in the Bible, so how in the world could somebody be deceived? They will have been reading in Revelation 20 how Satan is going to be turned loose at the end of the Millennium and he's going to deceive the people. How could people be deceived?

Brethren, there are prophecies in the Scriptures. There are prophecies in Jude and II Peter and other places about deception that is going to occur. There are many warnings to the Church in the Bible.

Jesus mentions in Matthew 24:48-50, "But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of."

I can remember reading that scripture years ago and wondering, 'How in the world?' The closer we get to the time, why would anybody say, 'My Lord delays His coming'? How would that scripture apply to anybody? How could people in the Church wind up doing that?

There are warnings that are there. It's amazing how we can sometimes be blindsided. The real key comes down to what we are internalizing—what we are putting in ourselves and to what extent we are walking with God personally. Are we going along in order to get along? Going with the flow is one thing, but it's a vastly different thing from walking with God. It's vastly different.

God is going to put us in situations. He wants it clearly evidence how many of us are simply

going along in order to get along and how many of us are walking with Him.

It's going to come up at the end of the Millennium. A lot of people are going along. As long as the devil is locked up, they'll go along. They are not giving any trouble. But when Satan is loosed, they are receptive to it. They get caught up in it. That should be a lesson for all of us.

Revelation 20:9, "They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city [This is evidently referring to Jerusalem.]. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them."

Verse 10, "And the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*...." If you have a King James or New King James Bible, notice the "are." It says, "...where the beast and the false prophet *are*...." You'll notice the word "are" is in italics. There isn't a verb in the Greek. The beast and the false prophet simply modify the lake of fire and brimstone. The emphasis in the verse is that the devil is cast into the same lake of fire that the beast and the false prophet were thrown into a thousand years earlier.

Now the translators, operating under the illusion that man has an immortal soul, supplied the word "are" to make it more readable in English because they assume the beast and the false prophet were still there. But that's reading something into the Bible. The Bible just defines the fact that the devil is thrown into the same lake of fire the beast and the false prophet were thrown into a thousand years earlier. You have to go elsewhere in the Bible to find out what happened to the beast and the false prophet.

When you go to Ezekiel 18:4, you're told, "the soul that sins shall die." The beast and the false prophet died. They were burned up. The devil doesn't burn up. He's just thrown into the same lake that they were thrown into earlier. He's going to be tormented. He'll be tormented because he's spirit; he is not tormented by the fire. It's not that the fire burns him. He's tormented because he is going to see the destruction of everything for which he worked.

The book of Jude indicates that he and the demons are ultimately going to be exiled into some further reach of outer space.

Jude 13, they are referred to as, "...wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness and darkness forever." Perhaps some black hole out there somewhere. Science thinks they have discovered black holes in the universe. They

don't know what they are for. Perhaps that's what they are for.

He's going to be cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11-12, "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened [The books of the Bible are opened.]. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books."

Verses 13-14, "The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." This is a period of judgment at the end.

I went into that in detail in Pensacola, Florida on the morning of the Last Great Day, so I am not going to go back into detail this evening for lack of time.

This culminates God's working with man. At this point, every human being who has ever lived has had an opportunity for salvation. They have either accepted that opportunity or have rejected it. At the end of this time, whoever is not found written in the Book of Life is cast into the lake of fire. The Book of Life is opened again at the beginning of this time when the dead, the small and great, are raised. The first resurrection is better (Hebrew 11:35) because if you are raised in the first resurrection, you're raised to immortality. You don't have to worry about a second death. There is a mortal resurrection and a second death. The Book of Life is opened so that there is a choice. At that point, you have an opportunity to either have your name written in or not. At the end of this period of judgment, if your name isn't in there, you go into the lake of fire. If your name is in there, then you enter into life.

Peter describes in II Peter 3:12, "...the heavens will be dissolved being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?" The earth is purged with fire. The earth will have been cleansed twice: once by water and once by fire. It was cleansed by water in the days of Noah. It will be cleansed by fire in the future. You can wash something with water, but you have to use fire in order to sterilize it. God is, in effect, going to sterilize the earth because everything that has ever in any way been tainted with sin is

obliterated. The only thing that survives is that which has been made spirit.

Revelation 21:1, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.” The sea was totally vaporized when the earth burned. All of the elements melted with a fervent heat.

If you do a little reading in science, you’ll find out what kind of temperatures we are talking about where literally the air catches fire. Exactly what transpires and the things involved in that is just an amazing thing.

Verses 2-5, “Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’ Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I made all things new’ And He said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful.’”

New Jerusalem comes down. That is compared to a bride because that’s going to be the dwelling place for the bride of Christ—the Church. The Church was married to Christ a thousand years earlier (Revelation 19:7-9; 20:6). When the New Jerusalem that’s adorned like a bride comes down, that will be the dwelling place of the Church, of the firstfruits. The rest of the earth will be inhabited by all of the other billions that have come into the Family. We will see that as we come down.

We are told in v. 7, “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.” This is a time when all who are there will have free access to the water of life (v. 6). It’s a time of eternal life.

Those who won’t be there are mentioned in v. 8, “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

The fearful are the first mentioned. Everyone has fears. This is not saying that if you are ever afraid of anything you won’t be in the Kingdom. Why the fearful are excluded? These are people who don’t simply have fears. Everybody has fears. What do your fears do?

Remember Israel who came out of Egypt. Why didn’t that generation enter the Promised Land? Because they were afraid to follow where God led. The spies came back and told them about the giants. Their fears paralyzed them and they wouldn’t follow where the Spirit led (Numbers 13:31-33; Numbers 14:1-9).

God had been leading them. Remember? –A pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day (Exodus 14:19-20). They wouldn’t follow.

You can’t get into the Kingdom if you won’t follow God. You can’t get there if you quit going. When fear takes control, it produces either paralysis or panic. Everybody has fears. But what do our fears do? As long as we keep following God, keep putting one foot in front of the other and following Him, we will get there. These are things that keep people out. They are being paralyzed or panicked by their fears and turning away from God.

Revelation 21:8, “...the unbelieving [They do not believe God.], abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers...” The Greek word is “pharmakon” or “pharmakeia.” It would certainly include the whole realm of the drug culture and the terribly devastating spiritual effects that something like that has.

Continuing, “...idolaters, liars...” People can’t hold on to those patterns of conduct and be in the Kingdom. That’s not what God wants to perpetuate forever. We have to be willing to follow Him. We have to believe Him. We have to be willing to change the way we live, think and act. It doesn’t mean that we attain perfection in the flesh on our own strength. It means that we don’t want to hold on to the world’s way. We put those things to death.

Verses 9-10, “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.”

Jerusalem is the dwelling place of the bride.

Verse 11, “having the glory of God. And her light was like a most precious stone, like jasper stone, clear as crystal.” It’s described here.

Verse 12, “Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.”

God had a plan from the beginning. In the book of Genesis, you read that Jacob had twelve sons. In the book of Revelation, you read that the New

Jerusalem has twelve gates named for those twelve sons. It's not an accident that Jacob had twelve sons. God didn't look down one day and notice this guy had twelve sons and was so impressed with that, He decided to build a city and name the gates after them. God had a plan in mind from the beginning.

Why were there twelve tribes of Israel? Why are there different branches of the human family? Why are there different races and ethnic groups? Why are some of these things? Is it accident? Is it evolution? No, God had a plan in mind. Before He ever started He knew where He was going to end up.

God had a Family in mind—a great universe-ruling Family that is organized and has a structure to it. The whole structure is a family structure.

When God placed animals on the earth, we are not told that God originally created a male lion and a female lion and that all the lions that ever existed descended from them. Or that back in the Garden of Eden, God made only one bull and one cow and that every cow on earth is descended from those two. There isn't any indication that God did that or that God only created two fish or whatever it was.

But God created two people, a man and a woman. Why? It's not important that all the dogs be related or that all the lions be related, but God is building a Family. He could have created many different people. He could have created a thousand people simultaneously and put them in groups in different places. He chose to start with two because it was His purpose that every human being that would ever live be a part of the same family descended from Adam and Eve. We are all part of the same family, one family grown great. God made Adam and Eve.

Your children bear whatever heritage you have. That's just the way we are. If a man and a woman are Oriental and they get married and have children, their children have Oriental heritage and appearance. If two people are white, if two people are black or whatever it may be, God built that in. God did it in a way people would have never thought of. It was important that everybody be related. We all go back to Adam and Eve. We are all part of one family because God is building a Family. There's a family relationship. God designed it that way.

But He built in something unusual. He built in the genetic heritage in the ovum that was inside of Eve's body. He built in the genetic blueprint to give rise to all of the different races and groups because that was a part of God's plan,

too. It was His plan that there would be one family that would sub-divide into various other families but would be a part of the same family.

It's interesting because we can see as we come down a little bit further in Revelation 21:24, "And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light [Speaking of the New Jerusalem.]...." The Greek word for "the nations" is "*ethnos*." That's part of the organizational structure. The Church—the bride, the firstfruits—which is called out of every nation, is going to be there in the New Jerusalem. But then all the other millions and billions that come in after the firstfruits are described as being structured using the family patterns because all of the various ethnic groupings are just branches of the same family. It's like one family.

Can you imagine the White Throne Judgment? It will be like a giant family reunion. When people are resurrected in one particular area, you will literally be able to line it up. Here is old Grandpa and Grandma. They are the progenitors of this whole branch of the family. You have the next generation, the next generation, the next generation, perhaps coming down for twenty, thirty, forty generations. All these generations come down. It all comes down.

There's a family structure that God has built in. God is building a Family. He has devised things to where there is a family structure that is built in, over and over and over because the family ultimately originates with God. God created the first two human parents. They gave rise to everyone else, and that is sub-divided into various identifiable families. Those families maintained identity and come down as various families. All ultimately become a part of one spiritual family. We started out as one physical family and we wind up bound together as one spiritual family.

God knew where He was going before He ever started. It's not an accident. It's not happenstance. It's not blind chance or evolution. God had a destination in mind. It's not going to be some giant mob scene where He has billions of people sort of swarming around. There's structure and there's organization.

We are told there are twelve gates. The gates are the access to the city.

Verse 25, "Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there)." God, Himself, is there. The brilliance of the Father, of Christ and of the firstfruits is there. This is a brilliant glowing place, a city like you have never seen.

The whole topography of the earth has changed at this point. The city, we are told, is twelve thousand furlongs for length, breadth and height (v. 16). Twelve thousand furlongs is like fifteen hundred miles. That is centered evidently where Jerusalem is today. But the whole topography of that area has totally changed.

Here's a city that stretches fifteen hundred miles. That's like from El Paso, Texas to Atlanta, Georgia. That's sixteen hundred miles. That is a vast area. If you took something fifteen hundred square miles and set it down in the United States, it would take up almost half the country; between a third and a half of the whole country would be taken up by a city that size.

This is going to be an incredible city. There are streets of gold and brilliance. The gold is translucent. It's almost like you can see through it and yet it's gold (v. 21).

There are twelve gates and each gate is a giant pearl (v. 21). It is just incredible.

The wall around it is two hundred sixteen feet in height (v. 17). That's like a twenty-one story building that surrounds it. These gates of pearl—can you imagine a pearl that's equivalent to twenty-one stories tall? It's a vastly incredible thing. It so boggles our minds that we can't even imagine it.

It describes the foundations that are visible, the stones that are there and the twelve apostles have their names in the foundation (v. 14). It's not an accident that there were twelve apostles. It's not that Christ couldn't find fifteen or something else. There was a structure that's built in.

Twelve is the number of organization. God structures His whole government on the number twelve. His Family into eternity is structured on the number twelve. There are twelve gates, so that means everybody who enters into the presence of God in the New Jerusalem comes in through one of the twelve gates. That's a structure based on the twelve tribes. Everybody is assigned to one of the twelve gates, to one of the twelve tribes. Everybody has free access to come and go because everybody is part of the Family.

The whole earth is transformed. There must be smaller versions of this city all over.

A garden spot, that we cannot begin to imagine, has been made the headquarters of the universe. There's a government structure that starts with the firstfruits. The structure that God has imposed stretches to all humanity as a part of a great extended family structure. God is building a Family. There is a universe into which we will expand with the New Jerusalem serving as the

headquarters. Why are there so many stars? How many of them have their own solar systems? We don't know. Why is all this spread out there? We are told that God will put all things under our feet.

Hebrews 2:8, "'You have put all things in subjection under his feet.' For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him." The Moffatt translation renders "all things," "the universe." We are told He has not withheld anything. Here we are in this vast plan.

Revelation 22:1, "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb." We see the tree of life here (v. 2). There's no more curse (v. 3).

The book of Revelation provides the answer to what we encounter in the book of Genesis. In the book of Genesis curses are introduced. First came sin and then came curses. God provides the solution to sin. When He solves the problem of sin, He solves the problem of pain and sorrow. The curse will be removed that came upon mankind. It's amazing how Genesis and Revelation correspond when you put them together.

Here are two books written in two different languages, composed across a time span of over sixteen centuries; yet they so perfectly correspond together. They are written by two men in totally different cultures, totally different languages, separated by a period of sixteen centuries. Sixteen centuries ago was the fall of Rome. That's a long time.

Genesis opens with the garden. It opens with the river, with the tree of life, with man being expelled, being cut off from God and being denied access to the tree. It introduces the curse.

Here in the book of Revelation, we read of a reversal of all those things.

Verses 3-7, "And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever. Then he said to me, 'These words are faithful and true.' And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. 'Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.'"

John was so overwhelmed.

Verses 8-14, “Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, ‘See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.’ And he said to me, ‘Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still. And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.’”

The way to have access is through keeping the commandments, “Blessed are those who do His commandments.” If Christ did away with the commandments, why is the very last thing we are told in the book of Revelation, “Blessed are those who do His commandments.” If you want to be blessed, you need to keep the commandments. People think the commandments were nailed to the cross.

It’s interesting. What’s the last thing God tells us in the Old Testament, right before it starts the New Testament?

Malachi 4:4, “Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.”

Immediately, people turn the page. They get to the book of Matthew and they say, ‘Well, we can certainly forget the law of God, the Law of Moses which was commanded in Horeb.’ The last thing God tells us in the Old Testament, “Remember the Law of Moses My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb.”

You get to the book of Revelation (the last book of the Bible) and you find that the saved are singing the song of Moses (Revelation 15:3-4). The last thing He says now, “Blessed are those who do his commandments...” They will be the ones who have access to the tree of life and enter into the gates and into the city.

Verse 15, “But outside [KJV, “without”] are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.” The outside is excluded—not that these are sort of outside the wall, but “without” in the sense of excluded, not a part

of them. “Dogs” is a slang term referring to “false prophets.” It originally referred to “male prostitutes.” It was a Hebrew slang-term in that way. Then it became a term that the Jews used to make reference to false prophets who, in a sense, sold themselves for hire. You know, preach “whatever” for a price.

Verse 16, “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.” He is the Root from which David sprang and the Offspring, in the sense of the descendant.

This is the time when everyone who is thirsty can come and drink of the water of life (v. 17).

Verses 18-21, “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming quickly.’ Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

The scripture clearly shows that the book of Revelation is to be the finality, the capstone of the Bible. There isn’t any room to add anything. You don’t add anything else to the Bible.

There isn’t any room for the book of Mormon or something else that was purported to be some later revelation. There isn’t any room to add on some other revelation later. The book of Revelation is the end. That’s the concluding part of the Bible.

When you come to the end of the book of Revelation, you obviously have come to the end of the story. You are on the brink of eternity. You are standing on the threshold of eternity as a part of the Family of God. Everything you need to know to be a part of the Family is given. Our minds can’t fully grasp and comprehend all the details of what it’s going to be like to be a part of that Family, but you see if we get this far, the rest of it is taken care of. We have everything we need to know to get this far.

Verse 20, “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming quickly’....” He is going to come. He is going to bring to culmination the very plan and purpose of God. We have it outlined here for us.

I hope that this has been a helpful series for you, as we have gone through, concluding now with the book of Revelation and wrapping up our

Bible study series. So, with that we will be concluded.

I see we have an announcement:

Mr. Rice: Mr. Ogwyn, on behalf of the Lafayette congregation, they asked me to present this card for all of your dedication and hard work in presenting this Bible study series and for the many years of hard work. They have a reception planned after Bible study.

Mr. Ogwyn: I don't get caught speechless very often, but thank you very, very much. That's...very pleased, thank you.

Bible Study # 99 Questions

SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION SERIES

Revelation 19—22

1. Who is at the “Marriage Supper of the Lamb”?
2. Who is described on a white horse in Revelation 19?
3. Where very likely is the great abyss of Revelation 20:1?
4. How do we know that the general resurrection is not a gradual process over the course of the one thousand years?
5. What is the “books” mentioned in Revelation 20:12?
6. When Satan is loosed after the Millennium, will he deceive only the nations of Asia? To whom does Gog and Magog refer?
7. Does Revelation 20:10 prove an ever-burning torment in hell for the “beast” and the “false prophet”?
8. What is the only place mentioned that Jesus is preparing for the saved (cf. John 14)?
9. Since the Church is already described as the “bride of Christ,” why is the New Jerusalem described as the “bride”?
10. What scripture proves that Revelation is intended by God to be the last book in the Bible?

Question: What language did Adam and Eve speak?

Answer: Some have speculated that it was a form of Hebrew. It was the original language. We are told in Deuteronomy 32:8 that God separated the sons of Adam.

Question: Does Satan hear our prayers to God? Can he partially answer them and how would we know that he was?

Answer: It gets back to knowing what God's will is. There are ways that God conveys to us, in terms of understanding His will. The first way is through what God has revealed in the Scriptures. God reveals things in several different ways. God reveals in a statement of Law—"you shall do this; you shall not do this." You shall not steal, etc. That is a statement of absolutes of law. It is easy to know God's will in something like that.

There are other ways that God conveys His will. Everything is not completely listed as "you shall or you shall not." There are principles of wisdom stated in the Bible.

Proverbs 12:24, "The hand of the diligent will rule...." Stop and consider the principle of it. It takes careful, consistent work. It takes that to get ahead. That is an explanation of how God wants us to go about our work, etc. If we want to know God's will, look and see what's pleasing to God. When you are looking for what God wants you to do, is it in harmony with God's laws and the principles brought out in the Bible?

Another principle is seeking the right counsel.

Proverbs 18:1-2, "A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; he rages against all wise judgment. A fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart." Somebody that isolates himself is simply seeking to do what he wants to do. Their mind is made up and they are going to do what they want to do.

Proverbs 12:15, "...he who heeds counsel is wise." Seek wise counsel from those who are tuned in to God.

We have to be very careful of dragging God into anything that happens. How do you know? We have to be careful of reading God's will into circumstances. There are times when God does open doors and things just come together. You first start with the Law. That is a plain statement. The Law is a statement of fact. The Writings are

the application of the Law. The Prophets are examples; they amplify. We look at this as our starting point. If it is good, then it is better when you talk about it. Talk to those who we respect and exude certain wisdom in their life.

It gets back to: How can you know whether it is God's will? Humanly, one of the hardest things we ever have to do and the hardest prayer is, "Not my will, but Yours will be done." Too often we spend our prayer time in talking God to our way. We need to see it God's way. Sometimes God gives us what we ask for. If it is our way, then we may come to regret it. What we want to do is to seek God's will. Then we can discern the difference of what is God's answer or the devil's counterfeit.

Question: Where are Enoch and Elijah?

Answer: They are dead and awaiting the resurrection.

Hebrews 11:5 mentions that Enoch was translated, "...Enoch was translated so that he did not see death...." Then we have to wonder. What happened? What does it mean to be "translated"?

Hebrews 11:5, "By faith Enoch was translated so that he did not see death, 'and was not found because God had translated him'; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

Verse 6, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him...."

It goes on to discuss Noah (v. 7), Abraham (v. 8) and Sarah (v. 11). In v. 13, we are told these all died, including Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah.

Verse 13, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

Enoch died and he died in faith. It clearly states in Hebrews 11:13 that Enoch is dead, "These all died in faith...."

What does it mean, "He was translated that he should not see death"?

We are told there are two deaths.

Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment."

We are told of the second death.

Revelation 20:14, "Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." There are two deaths. "It is appointed for men to die once." Everyone dies the first death. Even Jesus Christ died the first death.

Colossians 1:18, "...the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence." So, the idea that Enoch and Elijah did not die would give them preeminence over Jesus Christ. That would mean that they had an honor that Jesus Christ Himself never had because He died. For that matter, even the doctrine of the assumption of Mary would tie in with the same thing. It would actually give her preeminence over Jesus Christ because it would say that she ascended into heaven in place of dying. That assumption is just that—an assumption. And it is an erroneous assumption. It is erroneous to assume the assumption, if that makes any sense. It is appointed for men to die once, but after that, the resurrection and the judgment.

John 3:13, Jesus said this to Nicodemus, "No man has ascended up to heaven, but He who came down from heaven [And John adds in a parenthetical statement.], that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven."

At the time John was writing, it was sixty years after Christ had said it. Jesus Christ was back in heaven so, "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man, who is in heaven." We are told in John 3:13 that Jesus Christ is the only One who has ascended to heaven, which means Enoch did not ascend to heaven, nor did Elijah.

II Kings 2:11, "...Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."

We must realize that there are three heavens spoken of in the Bible. In some cases, we are told about the birds flying in the midst of heaven. In other cases, we are told about the stars of heaven. We are also told about what is called the third heaven (II Corinthians 12:2). The term "heaven" can be used to refer to the earth's atmosphere—the birds in the midst of heaven or the heavens giving forth rain. When we talk about looking up into the heavens, in the sense of outer space or the stars, we are talking about the second heaven. The third heaven is the heaven of God's abode.

Which heaven was Elijah taken up into by a whirlwind? Well, a whirlwind operates only in the first heaven. When you get above the first heaven, there isn't any air. So, the whirlwind Elijah was taken up into simply transported him from one geographical location into another.

God used "horses and chariots of fire" (II Kings 2:11). Since a jet aircraft wasn't available and God didn't choose to make it available at that time, He used a horse and chariot of fire, which would be a very effective means of traveling. It

was effective. God wanted Elijah removed and He removed him!

Hebrews 11:5, "...Enoch was translated [transferred], that he should not see death..."

Clearly, this is speaking of the second death (Revelation 20:14) because all have died.

Hebrews 11:13, "These all died in faith..."

Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment."

So, Enoch was translated or transferred. His allegiance, his loyalty, his citizenship was translated or transferred from the kingdom of this world to the kingdom of God and he died in faith. Evidently he was physically removed, perhaps to a different geographical location.

Question: Did Moses and Aaron suffer the first three plagues along with the rest of the Israelites? (Exodus 7-8)

Answer: The first three plagues were: 1) the Nile turned to blood (Exodus 7:20), 2) the frogs (Exodus 8:5) and 3) the lice (Exodus 8:16). Certainly, everyone who lived in Egypt was affected when the Nile turned to blood and there were frogs and lice all over the place. These were things that everyone had to contend with. After this third plague, God put a division between the Israelites and the Egyptians (Exodus 8:22). I would take it from this that everyone would certainly have been affected by the Nile turning to blood, in the sense, that the whole thing was blood. It didn't matter who you were; you were impacted by that. And there were frogs and lice everywhere—that kind of nuisance.

Question: Exodus 11:2, "Speak now in the hearing of the people, and let every man ask from his neighbor and every woman from her neighbor, articles of silver and articles of gold." What was the gold and silver used for?

Answer: It was used for a variety of things. Israel carried out some of the physical wealth of Egypt—gold, silver and jewelry. A lot of it was used in the construction of the tabernacle a little bit later on. Probably the bulk of it was used in the building of the tabernacle, the priestly garments and things of that sort.

Question: Exodus 12:34, "So the people took their dough before it was leavened, having their kneading bowls bound up in their clothes on their shoulders."

Answer: I'm not exactly sure what the question is, except that I might comment that the normal process of leavening was that they let the bread sit out. They used a sour-dough process, as I

have mentioned before. Since they did not have commercially prepared yeast, they used the old methods of leavening, which was basically sour dough. You make up a dough, let it sit out and it will rise. It will begin to ferment and to sour. It will speed up the process if you make what they call a sponge and put it in the dough. That will feed it and get it going. But if you just make it up and knead it and let it sit out overnight, you will find that it will begin to sour and rise a little bit. Unleavened bread was the bread of haste, of urgency, because you didn't have time to let it sit out and rise. They had everything packed up. Since their kneading troughs were packed up, the bread that they ate was unleavened because it had not been allowed to sit and rise.

The Jews have strict regulations in the preparation of Matzos, as to how long the dough is allowed to sit before it is cooked because if you allow it to sit long enough, it will begin to sour and the sour-dough process will begin to set in. So, they have Rabbis spending great lengths of time sitting around, debating how many minutes the dough could be allowed to sit before it could be baked and still be considered unleavened. They tend to go in for all of that.

Question: Exodus 13:2, “Sanctify to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and animals; it is Mine.” Are the firstborn males that open the womb still sanctified?

Answer: It's interesting; the spiritual application of that is brought out. In Hebrews 12:23, we are called “the Church of the firstborn.” We are!

In Numbers 3, the Levites were established as the priesthood. They took a census of the firstborn males in Israel and they substituted the entire tribe of Levi as the firstborn, instead of the firstborn of each tribe, as the priesthood. The priesthood was concentrated into one tribe. God took that tribe in lieu of the firstborn of each tribe. The Church today, collectively, represents the “Church of the firstborn.” So, in that sense, the firstborn are sanctified to God and we are part of that.

Question: As the Israelites crossed over to the Promised Land, how were they able to communicate with the inhabitants of the land? Weren't their languages different?

Answer: That's a good question. Yes, the basic languages were different, though there were probably certain things that they had in common. There were certain languages that were commonly used and there were second

languages, just as we would have in most areas of the world today. We have languages such as English, French or Spanish as second languages in many areas of the world to provide a basis.

The Israelites would have spoken Hebrew as their own native tongue, as well as some of them being fluent in the Egyptian language.

In the land of Canaan, there was contact back and forth and certainly there would have been at least a limited use of the Egyptian language by some of the people.

Aramaic, akin to Hebrew, was a kind of language of trade and commerce throughout a large part of the Middle Eastern area.

For the most part, I don't know if there's any indication of a lot of communication back and forth. There was obviously some. You have the account of Rahab the harlot. She was able to make herself understood to the spies and they were to her. We are not told what language they communicated in. Likely it was some form of Egyptian.

In some of these areas, particularly where there was trade and commerce, you tend to have a language of trade and commerce. Even if people are not fluent in it, they can get by. This was an area that was on the route of what's called the Fertile Crescent and the caravan route. While not every individual would have had knowledge of other languages, there certainly were people who were in contact with the public and caravans and would have probably tended to have at least a limited knowledge of a dialect and Aramaic as well.

Question: Were there flags in Israel and what did they look like?

Answer: That is an interesting question. When Israel was encamped, as recorded in Numbers 2, there were standards, or flags, that were raised. They were camped three tribes to a side of each of the four sides represented. There were three tribes to each of the four sides. There was a particular ensign or standard, which was just another term for flag that marked the area of that tribe. There are references to it in Jewish tradition and some things that have been preserved.

Numbers 2:2, we might notice briefly, “Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard [flag], beside the emblems of his father's house...On the east side...Judah...”, Issachar (v. 5) and Zebulun (v. 7).

Verse 10, “On the south side...Reuben...”, Simeon (v. 12) and Gad (v. 14).

Verse 18, “On the west side...Ephraim...”, Manasseh (v. 20) and Benjamin (v. 22).

Verse 25, “The standard of the forces with Dan shall be on the north side...”, Asher (v. 27) and Naphtali (v. 29).

Concerning the particular things that pertain to it, there is not a specific description of the flag in the Bible, but there are references in the book of Deuteronomy to things that were described as having relevance to each of these tribes. In Jewish tradition, the pictures of the ensigns of Israel have been preserved.

One of the interesting things to note is that most of the things that made up the ensigns have been preserved in the royal coat of arms of Great Britain. Also, portions of it are preserved in that of the United States, France and some of the other nations of Israel.

Deuteronomy 33:17, the statement describing Joseph, “His glory is like a firstborn bull, and his horns are like the horns of the wild ox; together with them he shall push the peoples [Gentiles] to the ends of the earth; they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.”

It is interesting because if you were to look on the royal coat of arms of Great Britain, you would see the unicorn pictured on there. The bullock also figures in it.

In terms of Judah, Judah is described in Genesis 49:9 as a lion’s whelp. The lion was the symbol of Judah. Christ was called the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5). The lion, of course, was symbolic of Judah and is descriptive because from Judah was to come the kingly line. That’s why the lion is also in the royal coat of arms of Great Britain; the Queen (Queen Elizabeth) is a direct descendant of King David.

She occupies the throne of David. The very coronation stone over which she was crowned is Jacob’s pillar stone (Genesis 28:18; Genesis 31:13), which the children of Israel carried through the wilderness. It was a physical rock that literally followed with them through the wilderness because they took it there. It’s described in the books of Kings and Chronicles (II Kings 11:14; II Chronicles 23:13). It was the stone, the pillar, on which the kings of Judah were crowned, coming all the way down.

It was taken by Jeremiah to Ireland at the time of Judah’s fall, later transferred to Scotland and then overturned the third time and brought down to England. It’s there as a physical sign of the covenant that God made. It is preserved there under the chair of the throne of King Edward and labeled. They recognize what it is. Even the very

label that’s there identifies the coronation stone as “Jacob’s pillar stone.”

You have united in the coat of arms and the insignias that represent Ephraim and represent Judah because the royal family in Britain is the descendants of the kingly line of Judah ruling over the tribe of Ephraim, the chief of the tribes of Israel. You find that much of the insignias, the material of the coats of arms and the flags that are described are identified with the British Isles, actually date back to that particular time that is described here.

Question: Joshua 1:12, “And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh Joshua spoke, saying.” What is the meaning of the half-tribe of Manasseh and why were they a half tribe?

Answer: Manasseh was the only tribe that couldn’t get along with itself. And they still can’t! The bloodiest war we ever fought in this country was the war between one-half the tribe of Manasseh and the other half of the tribe of Manasseh. Interestingly enough, the major battle at the beginning of that war was known as the “Battle of Manasseh’s Junction” and the “Battle of Bull Run,” but the term that was primarily used in the South was the “Battle of Manasseh’s Junction.” This is an interesting term.

If you trace it back, you will find that Manasseh had a wife and a concubine. Part of his descendants came from the wife and part of them came from the concubine (Deuteronomy 3:13-15). They never really got along very well between and among themselves. When they came up to the Promised Land, half of the tribe of Manasseh wanted to settle on the east side of the Jordan River. They didn’t want to cross the Jordan River. They were more agricultural, particularly involved in cattle raising and this type of thing. They desired the pastureland on the east side of the Jordan River. So half of the tribe of Manasseh was given its inheritance on the east side of the Jordan River along with the tribes of Gad and Reuben.

Then the other half of the tribe of Manasseh crossed the Jordan with the other tribes of Israel. The Jordan River, of course, was the dividing line, so half of them were on one side and half on the other side. The half that descended from the wife were on the west side. “Gilead” often refers to the area inhabited by Reuben, as well as the area inhabited by one of the half-tribes of Manasseh. The term “Gilead” goes back to that. And just as we find that distinction in ancient Israel, you find it preserved right on down.

When this country began to be settled, there were basically two fountainheads. One was in Virginia, which was kind of a fountainhead of the South, and the other was in Massachusetts, which was the fountainhead of the North. Those were the two centers.

When you come to the American Revolution, prior to Andrew Jackson (our seventh president), every president of the United States before him was either a Virginian aristocrat or a Massachusetts's Adams. Those two areas dominated the early history of this country and settlement primarily spread out on an east to west basis, coming from New England or coming from Virginia and the Carolinas across. That was the tendency and the distinction then. You could even track it back to the British Isles and to different areas that they came from, which gets into a different story. But anyway, it's kind of an interesting subject.

Question: Deuteronomy 16:5, ““You may not sacrifice the Passover within any of your gates....””

Answer: The point of “not in your gates” simply meant that you were to congregate where God said to congregate and not just pick your own spot. You couldn't say, ‘Well, I am not going to go up to the temple in Jerusalem this year. I'll just stay and do it here.’ In terms of the sacrifices, they had to be performed at the place where God had set His name. That was the principle on it. Basically, all the sacrifices were performed in Jerusalem, originally at the tabernacle and later the temple. And that, by the way, is the answer to why the Jews, though they observe the evening, do not sacrifice the Passover lamb at the time of Passover. The reason is that there is not a temple and they are told here not to do it within their gates but to go to the place where God has set His name. So, that is their reason on it.

Question: II Chronicles 7:14, ““...My people who are called by My name...” is the specific matter that is asked for explanation.

Answer: Notice v. 11, “Thus Solomon finished the house of the Lord and the king's house....” Verses 12-14, we find, “Then the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: ‘I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray

and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.””

The question relates to “the people who are called by God's name.” I think the simplest way of saying it is that it is a reference to the people of God. In the context of II Chronicles 7, we are looking at Old Testament Israel and the time of the dedication of the temple. It was a national reference to Old Testament Israel who were the people of God. The point is that if they departed from their relationship with God and God's punishment came upon them, if they would humble themselves (that is fasting and prayer) and really turn to God with their whole hearts, God would hear. God would listen and God would restore His blessing.

I think the clear implication is that, in principle, this would certainly apply to us today as God's Church, God's people spiritually.

Duality is something that runs throughout the Bible. A basic principle of understanding much of Scripture is God's use of duality. He uses it in prophecy. He uses it in many ways. He uses it with God's people nationally (referring to physical Israel) and also God's people spiritually (the Church of God). Israel was, in that sense, both the Church in the wilderness (Acts 7:38) and God's people nationally.

That's why the Tribulation is two things. The Great Tribulation is the wrath of Satan. We've explained this, of course, when we went through the Bible Study on Revelation. The Great Tribulation is the wrath of Satan directed against whom? It's the wrath of Satan directed against physical Israel. Primarily, physical Israel is the United States and British Commonwealth nations.

In Jeremiah 30:7, the Tribulation is called the time of Jacob's trouble. It is directed at physical Israel, but it's also directed at spiritual Israel—at least the portion that Satan can get at.

When you go to Revelation 12, you read of the Church. When you tie it in with Revelation 3, it refers, in that context, to the Philadelphia stage or era of God's Church.

Revelation 12:14, “But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place [a place of protection; a place of safety], where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time [the duration of the Tribulation], from the presence of the serpent.”

Verse 17, we find, “And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the

commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” The remnant are those that are left behind. They’re in the Church of God. They keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. It is basically a reference to the Laodiceans.

The point is that Satan’s wrath is directed two-fold: It is directed against God’s people nationally—physical Israel. That’s why it’s called the time of Jacob’s trouble. It’s also directed against God’s people, spiritually. That’s why Satan goes to make war with the remnant of her seed. The remnant are those of the Church that are left behind.

The principle of applying this statement, “My people called by My name,” is certainly that the Church of God is God’s people called by God’s name. In that sense, Israel is called by God’s name because God’s name actually makes up part of the name Israel. When Jacob’s name was changed to Israel, the ending “el” has to do with God. “El” means “God.” It’s a contracted form of “Elohim.” “Israel” means “prince of God” or “prince with God.” So, the name “Israel,” in that sense, reflects God’s name. God gave His people that name nationally. It was a national promise to the people at the time of the dedication of the temple, but the principle would apply all through time.

When you study the story of the people of God down through the centuries, you find the ups and downs that reflect the story of the people of God. The principle is always (whether collectively as a Church, individually in our own lives or even nationally as a nation) that if the people of God find themselves in affliction and really turn to God with prayer and fasting and really seek Him, God will hear and God will listen.

Question: II Chronicles 21:17, “...so that there was not a son left to him except Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons.”

II Chronicles 22:1, “Then the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah his youngest son king in his place....”

Answer: It is not uncommon for kings to have more than one name and you see at least a couple of names that are used. I think that clearly, in the context, the two names refer to the same person. Perhaps he was known by one name as a prince and another name as king. That is not uncommon. Royal children will have several names and in certain contexts, use different ones.

Question: Ezra 2:63—What does it mean for a priest to consult the Urim and Thummim?

Answer: We read of that in the Old Testament from time to time. The high priest had a breastplate and on that breastplate, there were twelve stones. The name of each of the tribes was inscribed in Hebrew on those stones. The consulting of the Urim and Thummim had to do with a way in which God would answer the high priest and would reveal His will by, evidently, causing certain of these stones to light up and the result of it spelled out a message. The Urim and Thummim makes reference to the breastplate and the stones.

According to Josephus, we are told that John Hurcanus, who was a high priest of approximately one hundred or so years prior to Christ, was the last high priest whom God answered through the Urim and Thummim. Basically, he seems to have been the last high priest. Even Jewish tradition acknowledges that God no longer answered the high priest through the Urim and the Thummim after that time. I think it was a matter that they simply had gotten far enough away from God that God did not respond to them in that way.

Question: Where does Job come in, in history? Where does his life take place? What country?

Answer: We are told in Job 1:1, “There was a man in the land of Uz....” We are not given a lot of details about where this land of Uz was. In Genesis 10, it mentions the sons of Aram, who would be the grandsons of Shem.

Verse 23, “The sons of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether and Mash.” Aram was the father of the Arameans or the Aramaic people. They were kindred to the Hebrews. Armenia takes its name from Aram, primarily through the son Hul. Anciently, the area of Uz was in the area kind of between Egypt and Syria. That anciently was the general area of Uz. You might look on a Bible map and get the area if they show the Arameans. If you were to look on there, it would have been the area to the east of what became the land of Israel and north of Egypt and south of Damascus.

There is another reference to a similar word where it refers to the children of Abraham’s brother Nahor.

Genesis 22:20-21, “...it was told Abraham, ‘Indeed Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: Huz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram.’”

Job’s friends are mentioned.

Job 2:11, “Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place—Eliphaz the

Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite....” It mentions them coming together.

Job 32:2, “Then the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram....”

In Genesis 22:20-21, we noticed the sons of Abraham’s brother Nahor were Huz, Buz and Kemuel the father of Aram or Ram.

Elihu that is mentioned in Job 32:2 was a Buzite. In other words, he was a descendant of Buz. He would be at least a grandson or great grandson of the kindred of Ram, which equates with what is mentioned in Genesis 22:21.

Job 2:11 mentions Eliphaz the Temanite. Teman was a son of Esau (Genesis 36:10-11).

The Bible does not give or clearly define Job’s lineage. We have speculated on certain things in times past. The thing that becomes apparent from the book of Job—from the friends that are mentioned and the information that is given about the location being an area that was on the border of Egypt—is that the people that were involved were people that were of the general stock of Abraham and Abraham’s family.

We see that Elihu the Buzite would have been a descendent of Abraham’s brother Nahor and Buz and down in that line, which would have made them kindred to the descendants of Abraham.

Eliphaz the Temanite was a descendent of Esau (Genesis 36:10-11).

This is several generations after Abraham. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—Jacob’s generation was the generation of the grandchildren of Abraham.

Job’s friend, Eliphaz the Temanite, would have been at least the generation of the patriarchs—the twelve sons of Jacob.

What you’re looking at is that the general time setting would be prior to the time of the Exodus, but it would have been after the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is probably contemporary with the time that Jacob and his family were in Egypt. The events described in the book of Job involved some of the people of the general family of Abraham that were nearby, but they were not in the direct lineage. The ones that are specifically mentioned by name, the indication is they were general relatives. They were kindred people and yet not necessarily the exact lineage.

We are told the book of Job traces back to Moses. In other words, Moses was responsible for its inclusion with the books. So, it was something that took place prior to Moses. I think that’s clear. When God’s great power is described, there isn’t any mention or allusion to

the events of the Exodus. It mentions the events of creation and the flood but not the Exodus. It is something that pre-dates the Exodus. It would probably be contemporary with the story of Joseph and his brothers. It would be in that general time setting and that generation.

Question: Psalm 51:5, why did David say, “in sin did my mother conceive me”?

Answer: This is not a reference to the Catholic doctrine of original sin and their subsequent doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Most Protestants don’t realize that the Immaculate Conception doesn’t refer to Christ but to Mary. Their doctrine is based on their idea that original sin is transmitted through sexual intercourse and that a child is conceived in original sin. This is really what their doctrine is. This is part of it.

Another part of it is that Mary was conceived immaculately. Their story is that she was the only one who did not have original sin because her parents were evidently so righteous. They claim she was the only one not conceived in sin. And since Christ was born of a virgin, He didn’t inherit original sin either. Of course, it’s a bunch of pagan garbage.

Psalm 51:5 hasn’t any reference to that. It was a poetic expression. It just means, “I was a sinner from the beginning.”

Psalm 51:5, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.”

He goes through Psalm 51 saying, v. 4, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight....”

Verse 7, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” He said, ‘Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity; purge me. Get out the lye soap and clean me up.’ That’s really the sense of it. ‘I am rotten from stem to stern. I’m a sinner from the beginning.’ David is looking at his nature. There isn’t any particular theological implication in the sense that, “in sin my mother conceived me.” It is a poetic expression of David expressing the fact that, ‘Look, I am a sinner, the son of a sinner. I come from a long line of sinners.’

We all do, by the way. ‘I am just a sinner from the beginning. I am rotten through and through.’ This is how David saw himself. He said, ‘Oh God, please clean me up. Change me, transform me,’ which is really the concept of what repentance is all about when we really grasp and see ourselves as David saw himself.

Question: The question involves several different scriptures and involves the matter of

judging. When is it appropriate to judge and when is it not?

Answer: We live in a society today that prides itself on tolerance and people don't want to judge anything. If you say something about something, they say, 'Oh no, you shouldn't judge.' Several verses are brought to mind. The question is asked in terms of what's the proper application for us as God's people.

Let's notice some of the verses.

Isaiah 5:20-21, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!"

Coming on down.

Verse 24, "Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom will ascend like dust; because they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel."

Jeremiah 23:13-14, "'And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria: they prophesied by Baal and caused My people Israel to err. Also I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem: they commit adultery and walk in lies; they also strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns back from his wickedness. All of them are like Sodom to Me, and her inhabitants like Gomorrah.'"

One more verse back in Isaiah 59:10, "We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes; we stumble at noonday as at twilight; we are as dead men in desolate places." The point is as it is brought out in these verses, God's law is a moral compass. To "judge" is to "make a distinction." That's what it means to judge. It means to "make choices, decisions or distinctions." We can distinguish between what is appropriate and what is inappropriate. God's law is a moral compass. If you cast away the law, you cast away the compass and you can't tell which direction you're going.

We live in a society that prides itself on tolerance. In reality, they've sort of thrown away the moral compass and want to treat all behaviors as though they are on the same level. That is certainly not valid from a Biblical standpoint. We can and should judge conduct in terms of what is appropriate and inappropriate. We have the criteria for judging that right here in the Scriptures.

What we cannot judge and what is God's prerogative to judge is the hearts and minds of

individuals. God looks on the heart. We can see what someone does and judge the conduct as inappropriate. We don't know how much that person knows and understands and to what extent God is working with them. God looks on the heart. I can't tell you how sincere someone is. God knows. He looks on their heart. Now, sincere or not, I can tell you based on the Bible whether they're wrong or whether they're right in what they're doing.

There is the kind of judging that only God can do. God is the One that has to look in the heart. He is the One that has to evaluate a person's motives and understanding. God evaluates those factors. That's not for us to judge. They have to ultimately give an account to God.

What we are to judge is whether this is right or wrong or whether we should follow "this" or follow "that." We have judging to do as well. Our judging is not the hearts and minds of individuals. Our judging is the appropriateness of various conducts and whether it is something that we should follow or not. We have to make those judgments. God gives us a criterion. God gives us the basis. He gives us His Word. He gives us His law. It is a moral compass.

He puts us in situations where we are confronted with having to make choices. We have to make choices in our daily life. We are pressured from every direction and most of those pressures are in terms of choosing the wrong way. We have to take responsibility. Every time you make a choice, you've judged something.

If you say, 'Well, I'm not going to judge,' then, in effect, you've judged that everything is on the same level and that everything is okay. To say that something is a sin is not judging the heart and mind of the individual. God says, "Thou shall not commit adultery." If somebody commits adultery, that's a sin. I'm not judging them to say that. I'm not judging them as an adulterer or that they've committed adultery if I know that to be a fact. That's not judging them as a person.

God is ultimately the One that is going to judge them in terms of their relationship with Him, to what extent they have repented and to what extent God is working with them. God will consider all these factors. In terms of the ultimate destiny, God is the One who has to judge that. But we can certainly judge and should judge that adultery is wrong and that we are not going to do it. If we can't judge that, then we're in trouble.

That's where the world comes in. The world says, 'Well, who's to decide what pornography is?' It really shouldn't be that hard to figure out.

Anybody that wants to open their Bible can pretty well figure out some of these things.

Any judgment you make has to be based on something as a criterion. If you say, 'that's too long' or 'that's too short'—what was your criteria? You had something that you used as your standard.

Maybe someone measures a board and you say, 'You've cut that too long. You're going to have to cut two more inches off of it.' You judged. You used a standard of judgment. You used a tape measure, a yardstick or whatever.

God gives us a spiritual standard of judging. It is the basis by which we are to judge conduct. It is the basis by which we judge the appropriateness or inappropriateness of certain actions. We have to make those judgments. There are a lot of things we're confronted with on a daily basis. God evaluates us on the basis of how well we take and apply His word. God evaluates us on how well we apply His word in circumstances that we face.

Question: Matthew 2:14—Can we know by the Bible or history how long Joseph, Mary and Jesus stayed in Egypt?

Answer: There isn't any specific reference, nor am I aware of a tradition of an exact amount of time.

Matthew 2:19-20, we are told, "But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, 'Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead.'"

Christ was born in the fall of 4 B.C. and Herod died the following Passover. So, it would have been shortly after the spring Feasts—probably sometime between Passover and Pentecost that Joseph and Mary returned. Christ would have been less than a year old. They, perhaps, were in Egypt for no more than a matter of months—maybe one, two or three months, something of that sort.

Question: Matthew 5:25, "Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison."

Answer: The basic principle is: don't involve yourself in a bunch of litigation. Try to settle out of court peaceably. If you get entangled in this world's legal system, there is no telling what kind of trouble you will wind up in before it is all over. It's a principle; don't have this

adversarial, 'I am going to hold out and demand that I get everything that's coming to me,' rather than having a peaceable attitude. Be willing to settle. Try to work out a peaceable arrangement. If you have a problem with someone or some type of dispute, seek to work it out in a peaceable way. Realize that even if you have to accept things that aren't exactly right, chances are you are still going to come out better than if you get yourself entangled in this world's legal system. There are problems any way you "slice it." It's an emphasis on trying to settle things peaceably.

Question: Matthew 8:4; Mark 5:43; Luke 5:14—Why couldn't anyone tell of their healings?

Answer: It wasn't that they couldn't, but often Christ would tell those that He had miraculously healed not to mention it because He knew that as soon as the notoriety spread, persecution was going to intensify and He would have to leave the area because of the religious leadership being stirred up. Particularly in the earlier part of His ministry, He did not seek to call a lot of public attention to Himself because He knew what the consequences would be. So, in many cases, when He would heal someone, He would simply say, 'Look, keep it quiet. Don't make a public issue of it.' He knew the effect of the notoriety.

Question: Matthew 19:13—This is a question concerning the blessing of little children who are not in the Church, but whose grandmother or grandfather is in the Church.

Answer: Basically, the principle would be those who have responsibility for the child. In some cases, the grandparents are raising the child and that's a little different. I think one thing to realize is that with God's blessings comes responsibility. We will probably go through some of this in the sermon on the Sabbath. If we are going to claim God's blessing, we must be prepared to follow through with our responsibility. We can't just lightly claim God's blessing as though it were some magic wand and then not exercise our responsibility.

That would be the problem with children that are perhaps related or friends or whatever. Unless you have responsibility or someone is prepared to exercise the proper responsibility in rearing the child God's way, then for God's blessing to be fulfilled, that blessing must be accompanied by obedience.

There are certain things and certain principles in the Scriptures that you can go through concerning blessings. God desires to bless us,

but there are responsibilities that we have. Anytime God offers His blessings, there are other things that are involved with it. There are responsibilities that we have. Perhaps that will clarify, as far as what's involved.

Question: Why, in Matthew's account (Matthew 20:20-21), the mother of James and John asked Jesus to grant her sons' to sit on His right and left hand and in Mark's account (Mark 10:37), it states that James and John were asking?

Answer: It is just one of the occasions where the two accounts complement each other. James and John were "in" on it. They wanted it. Mark tells it in a more succinct fashion—the fact that they wanted it. Matthew adds in that they had brought their mother into the circumstance. She was the sister of Jesus' mother Mary. They had brought their mother into it. Matthew simply adds in a detail Mark ignores because the basic fact of it was that James and John were kind of striving for status there.

Question: Matthew 26:41, what did Jesus mean by, "Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation...?"

Answer: The very fact that if we are not remaining vigilant and not staying close to God through prayer, we will be caught up in various temptations that come along. The key to not being enticed and entangled in some of these temptations is to be vigilant and alert, not simply to world conditions but to ourselves. Be alert to what is going on, what's happening. Be alert, pray and stay close to God.

Question: Explain Mark 7:27-28, "But Jesus said to her, 'Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.' And she answered and said to Him, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs.'"

Answer: This is a reference to the Canaanite woman who came to Christ (v. 26). We are specifically told in John 1:11 that Christ came unto His own in His first coming—primarily to the Jews. He was in Judea and Galilee and didn't travel throughout the world. He concentrated His message in the area in Judea and Galilee. This woman came up and Christ, in one sense, was testing her attitude. The English translation is a little harsher than the Greek. The reference is really, let's say, to puppies underfoot.

It was a matter of priorities. Christ was not dealing with everyone at that time. Yet the woman displayed an attitude of humility when

Christ told her that. She said, 'Well, that's true, but even little puppies there under the table eat the crumbs that fall.' Christ was impressed with her attitude and, in a sense, dealt with her ahead of time. It was simply not God's time to deal with everyone. Christ's ministry was directed to the Jews. It was in God's time schedule that they be given that opportunity. And they, of course, rejected the proclamation that was given to them.

But there were individuals among the Gentiles that evidenced outstanding attitudes of faith, and Christ, in a sense, dealt with them ahead of time. It was simply not the time that He was directing His efforts toward a broader spectrum. But there were individuals, as this woman and the Roman Centurion (Acts 10), that evidenced an attitude that Christ took note of. It is a matter of realizing that God may be dealing with certain ones, and yet God will take note of an attitude of humility and faith even if that's maybe not where He would primarily be working.

Question: Mark 9: 35, "And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.'"

Answer: They were disputing who should be the greatest. He said, 'Look, if you want to know how to get to the top, it is to serve the most. Be willing to lower yourself and be the least. As you look around, the examples you see in the Roman world and your idea of status is that the guy does nothing and has everybody else wait on him.' He says, 'I am telling you, the one that really is the greatest is the one that is serving, helping and willing to do whatever needs to be done—the one who is willing to humble himself as a little child, to help and serve others.' Christ showed that God's view of what is important is a little different than man's view.

Question: Mark 9:38-42, "Now John answered Him, saying, 'Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.' But Jesus said, 'Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. And whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a

millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.”

Answer: Realize, that in Jesus’ ministry, He came among the Jews who had been, to various extents, practicing the religion that God had given through Moses. Judaism, as was normally practiced in the New Testament period, really was not the religion of Moses; it was a humanly devised religion that had a lot of human tradition and “dos” and “don’ts” attached to it. But there certainly were many who were sincere to whatever degree, who were observing God’s laws and with whom God was working to one extent or another. Jesus makes the point to the disciples that it was not their job to get out and tell others, ‘No, you can’t do “this” or “that.”’ He said, ‘Look, if he is not against us, if he recognizes My authority and is not speaking evil of us, leave him along.’ In effect, He told the disciples to mind their own business and let God take care of His.

In terms of offending one of the little ones (vv. 41-42), Christ says in effect, ‘The way you treat My disciples, I take it personally. If one of My representatives does something in a positive way for My sake for one who follows Me (for one of My disciples), that counts to his credit and if one causes offense, that counts to his discredit.’ It is a matter that God takes note of. God takes note of the way we treat His children, which ought to give all of us cause to consider and realize that the way we treat one another is a serious matter.

Question: Mark 10:25, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

Answer: It’s explained in the context.

Mark 10:23-24, “Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, ‘How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!’ And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, ‘Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!’”

That really is the problem—those who put their trust and confidence in physical wealth. It’s very difficult. Through a comparison, He is using a statement that’s obviously an extreme statement. It’s an attention-getting statement.

Verses 26-27, “And they were astonished beyond measure, saying among themselves, ‘Who then can be saved?’ But looking at them, Jesus said, ‘With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.’”

It’s not that anyone who has any wealth will not be in the kingdom, but there is a problem. The

human tendency is to put our trust and confidence in what we can see, taste, touch and feel. The more we put our trust and confidence in what we have and what we can see, the less we put our trust and confidence in Whom we can’t see and the more we open ourselves up to trouble. Certainly, God can work with those who have wealth or those who don’t.

Question: In John 16:7-8,13, why is “He” used instead of “It” in referring to the Holy Spirit?

Answer: I think the simplest explanation is the fact that in the Greek language and in most languages other than English, you don’t have the neuter in the same way. For instance, in the French language, it is masculine or feminine. If you were talking about the table, it’s spoken of in the feminine or if you were translating it literally and you were referring to something, it would be either “he” or “she”—even though in English we would refer to it as an “it.”

Other scriptures show that the Holy Spirit is not a person. One of the simplest ways to prove that is that we are told in Matthew 1:18 that Mary was with child of the Holy Spirit. If she conceived by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit were a person, then that would make the Holy Spirit the Father, right? And yet Christ prayed to the Father to send the Spirit (John 14:16). Mary was with child of the Holy Spirit. Obviously, the Holy Spirit was not a person, else that would have been the Father. Think that one through.

There are various other places where it talks about the Spirit being poured out from on high (Acts 10:45). Again, you don’t pour out a person. The Holy Spirit is a power that emanates out from God (Luke 1:35; Acts 1:8).

Many times when the masculine or feminine pronouns are used, they are rendered into English as the neuter “it” in many contexts. Here, the translators didn’t do that because they did not understand the fact that the Holy Spirit was not an individual. Since the translators themselves believed in the doctrine of the trinity, they simply rendered it this way. If you were reading this section of Scripture in the French Bible, the question would not arise because everything would be rendered as masculine or feminine. If you were reading it in the Greek, the same would be the case. In English, we make a distinction between “he,” “she” and “it.” It creates a little problem or causes a misunderstanding.

Question: Acts 7:25, “For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would

deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand.” Did Moses know before leaving Egypt that he was to deliver Israel?

Answer: Moses had come to understand that God was going to use him to deliver Israel. He thought God had put him in the position as prince of Egypt and God would use him to help the people. The people were unwilling to accept him in that role. He thought he knew how God was going to do it. Then during the forty years in the land of Midian, he probably thought God was not going to use him. God did it a totally different way. We try to second-guess God. God delivers us from our problems. Very, very rarely does He do it the way we anticipate it. We have to walk by faith.

Question: Why does it say in Acts 9:7 that the men heard the voice and then in Acts 22:7, it says the men did not hear the voice?

Answer: Acts 9:7, “And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.”

Acts 22:9, “Now those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me.”

They did not understand what was said. They heard a noise, but they did not comprehend the message that was spoken. That is the sense of it.

Question: In Acts 16:4, are the “decrees” of this verse referring to Acts 15:29? Can decrees be imposed on us? Were the decrees nailed to the cross?

Answer: They felt to be baptized you had to become a Jew. The sign of the covenant of Abraham was circumcision. It was an issue. It was difficult for many Jews to accept the fact that Gentiles didn’t have to be circumcised. The issue had gone to Jerusalem. When an issue arises and it cannot be resolved on a local level, it goes to headquarters—specific matters of Church government.

In Acts 15, a decision was made. The decree was written up and sent out. One of these decrees had to do with circumcision.

Were the decrees nailed to the cross? (Colossians 2:14) That is not what it is referring to. What is blotted out?

Turn back to Acts 3:19, “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out...” Our sins are blotted out. What does that have to do with the handwriting of ordinances? If you were to look up this phrase “handwriting of ordinances” (Greek, “*cheirophon*”), it means “something handwritten.” This is a

manuscript, specifically, a legal document or bond, a handwritten bill. It is a written record, like a signed handwritten bond of indebtedness. It was a term often used in the Greek world referring to a debt. Our handwritten bill of debt was blotted out. Christ paid our debt in full. The catalog of our sins—our personalized debt—was paid in full. We owed our life and Christ paid the penalty. It was against us, contrary to us and He took it away. Our sins were nailed to the cross. He took all of our sins. As a result, our sins were nailed to the cross.

Can decrees be imposed on us?

Yes, the authority for that is in Matthew 16:19 where the Apostles were told, “And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Binding and loosing had to do with official judicial decisions. The judgment was to be made based on the law. The law doesn’t change; circumstances change. That comes on down today.

The Scribes and Pharisees were in that office, but they weren’t doing what they were supposed to.

Matthew 23:2, “...‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat.’” Moses’ seat is to make judgments.

Matthew 21:43, “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.” It will be taken from the Pharisees and given to the Church.

How do you know which day to celebrate as Holy Days? We know from the Hebrew calendar. Who made that determination? God revealed it, but the Jews have preserved it.

Question: Why do Protestants most often quote the Apostle Paul as their authority? Peter was the chief apostle (the leader of the twelve). John had a very special relationship with Jesus and James was the brother of Jesus. Why is it that almost all scripture references used are from Paul instead of these three?

Answer: Paul wrote more of the New Testament than any other one person, so there is a lot to quote from Paul. He wrote fourteen books.

The reason the Protestants like to quote from Paul the most—one factor is the fact that Peter says in II Peter 3:15-16: “...as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own

destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.”

Peter said centuries ago that Paul wrote some things that are a little hard to be understood. Paul was a deep thinker. He frequently dealt with philosophical concepts. He wrote some things that are a little more difficult to understand. Peter made reference to that. It was hard to be understood in the time that it was written. Peter said Paul wrote some things that are a little more difficult to understand and those that are unstable and unlearned twist them, just like they do the other Scriptures—but they particularly like to twist Paul.

They take certain things out of context. This was the case centuries ago at the time of the New Testament (Peter himself warned about it), and it is certainly our case today. We find that there is an emphasis given to what the Protestant world terms “Pauline theology.” That is simply based on what Peter expressed.

God used Paul in a very remarkable way. He was deeply educated and grounded in the Old Testament Scriptures, and God used him to write more of the New Testament than any other one person. God also included the writings from James, Peter, John and Jude, as well as the four gospels. That’s why, when we started going through the New Testament in the order in which God inspired the Greeks to preserve it (the manuscripts are inevitably preserved throughout the Greek world and the so-called Byzantine texts), the General Epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude preceded Paul’s epistles. They set the stage. That’s why, when we went through them, we went through them in that order. When you go through James, Peter, John and Jude, you go through faith, hope and love and warnings against apostasy. By the time you come to Paul, you are a little more grounded to understand some of the things Paul wrote. You understand Paul in the light of James, Peter and John. In that sense, that’s why they need to be understood first because they deal with more basic subject matter.

Question: I Corinthians 15:29—Concerning the phrase, “baptized for the dead.”

Answer: The whole context deals with the resurrection. If there isn’t a resurrection, what is going to happen to those who are dead?

I Corinthians 15:29, “Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead [“Baptized for the hope of the dead” is the sense of it.], if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they

baptized for the [hope of] the dead?” This is a gross misunderstanding.

Questions: I Timothy 3:1—Why don’t we have bishops?

Answer: We do. We don’t normally use that term in English. It is an English term. The term in the Greek language is “*episcopos*.” It’s the Greek word from which the Episcopal Church takes its name. “*Episcopos*” simply means “overseer.” It is one of several terms that is used to refer to the ministry. Certain churches—the Catholic Church, Episcopal Church and others—use “bishop” as a title to refer to an individual in a church hierarchy. In reality, all elders are bishops. They are overseers, individuals responsible for the oversight of the congregation. We don’t generally use the term simply because it is a term that has been misused by the world and carries the connotation that is not scriptural. We more commonly use the term “elder.”

In reality, there are four basic terms that are used in the New Testament. One is the Greek term “*presbyteros*,” which means “elder.” A second term is “*episcopos*,” which means “overseer.” It is translated “bishop” in the King James. A third term is “*poimaino*,” which means “shepherd.” It’s the word that’s translated “pastor.” Any time you see the word “pastor” in the New Testament, it is translated from the exact same word that is also translated “shepherd.” Then, also the term “*diakonos*,” which means “minister.” Those four terms: bishop, elder, overseer and minister would be pretty much interchangeable, used in the sense of referring to anyone, whether a local elder or another rank. The term pastor (or shepherd) would refer basically to the one who had the oversight of the flock or the congregation.

Question: I Peter 5:13, “She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son.” Is this physical or spiritual Babylon?

Answer: The book of I Peter is a straightforward letter or book. It is addressed to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (I Peter 1:1). It is written from Babylon (I Peter 5:13). Babylon was the capital of the Parthenon Empire. This was one of the major areas where the ten tribes of Israel were. Babylon had a large Jewish community.

There isn't any reason to take that he was in Babylon, other than in a literal fashion. If it is not symbolic, then it is to be taken literally.

Another aspect of demonstrating that it was the literal city of Babylon, the Catholic Church wants to claim that it was Rome. They should go back to Revelation 17. When it comes to I Peter, they claim Peter was in Rome being the pope. They want to leave out Revelation.

Also, if the letter is coming from Rome it would be coming from the west, and there isn't any way you would start a letter from up in the northeast corner of Pontus. You would have to start it probably in Asia and come through another way.

I Peter 5:13, "She [the Church] who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son." We would take the expression, Babylon, literally. To whom were they sent? They were sent to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.

Question: I John 5:7-8 appears to support the trinity.

Answer: I John 5:7, "There are three that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one." This is not a part of any of the original Greek texts. Basically, any commentary will bring that out. Most modern translations simply show the verse with a footnote. Verse 7 does not appear in any Greek manuscripts; it only appeared in the Latin Vulgate.

It's an interesting story as to how it came to be a part of the King James translation. The King James translation was primarily made from the Greek Textus Receptus (as it is called), as published by Erasmus of Rotterdam, who was a scholar a couple hundred years earlier. He was responsible for and helped to compile an authoritative Greek text that was utilized in the western world. When he came out with his Greek text, it, of course, did not have this verse because it was not in any of the Greek texts. It stirred up quite a bit of controversy. Basically, it came to be put in under threat of his life by the local Catholic bishop. It's a story that will be brought out in any of the commentaries. So from that standpoint, it can't be utilized as a proof of the trinity because it really has no authority in the Scriptures. It is not actually a part of inspired Scripture. It is not in any of the Greek manuscripts that we have or that there is any record of.

Question: Is the Laodicean Church era to come after the Philadelphia Church era?

Answer: Yes. In Revelation 2 and 3, we have the Church addressed. In Revelation 1:20, John sees seven lampstands and this is explained. Christ is pictured as standing in the midst (v. 13). The entire Church is being pictured by seven lampstands. It was to be a light to the world. These are not the only Church congregations in Asia Minor. They were to typify the Church of all times.

Revelation 1: 1, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place...." John was given this vision to be revealed; to reveal "things which must shortly take place." It was a prophecy. It was something that had implication way beyond the seven little congregations which were addressed here in chapters 2 and 3. These seven were selected out. They were stops on a Roman mail route. There was this particular order in which they were addressed. We have something that was typical and representative of the Church of all time. It typified the entire Church because God's number of completion is seven. Each of these congregations had characteristics selected out.

From a standpoint of prophecy, we begin in Revelation 2 with the Church at Ephesus. This is a particular time period of the Church. There are seven distinct eras. It was successive, as in the nature of the mail deliveries. They also have an application to individual Christians of all time, but these messages are primarily a prophecy. It begins with the time of the Apostle John and projects itself out to the time of the Lord. The Laodicean era is the final or seventh one mentioned; the Philadelphia is the sixth.

It became plain in the early 1950s (about 1951-1953) that an understanding of some of this had opened up. Mr. Herbert Armstrong had been puzzled. Those in Oregon clearly were the Church of God, yet they were so small and totally lacking in vitality, life and power. It was a paradox and he could not understand. If it was the Church of God, why was it was lacking in power? He puzzled over that through the years. In the time around 1951-1953, those coming out of college began intensive study in certain sections of Scripture. It became plain that this was the revelation in chapters 2 and 3. Sardis was told that it was at the point of death, and then Philadelphia, which had little strength and yet had kept God's Word, had set before it an open door. It was plain that God had raised up Mr. Herbert Armstrong for the Philadelphia era.

This was the era that was prophesied to be kept from the Great Tribulation (Revelation 3:10). It

became apparent that the scriptural description of these people was identified here in Revelation. They were pictured as lacking power and they did. The understanding of the history of the Church from the apostles to our time became clear.

Yet there remains one final era characterized as the Church of the Laodicea. Some of the specifics remain to be seen. The distinction between Philadelphia and Laodicea will be apparent prior to the Tribulation and is something that we will simply have to wait and see. It should serve as a warning for each of us, as to what God says is going to occur to some. We find an attitude, described in chapter 3, characteristic of the Laodicean Church and characteristic of this age. We live in a permissive society. We live in a society that tends to have a very watered-down, lukewarm, type of approach to life. We would all do well to be warned of that. Perhaps at a later time we will go through an entire Bible study on Revelation 2 and 3.

Question: Revelation 6:6—What is the oil and the wine that is not to be hurt?

Answer: That is a reference to the horse of famine. It describes the four horses of the Apocalypse. The third horse is the horse of famine. It describes, in symbolic terms, that he has a balance scale, a type of scale that was used in time past.

Revelation 6:6, "...‘A quart of wheat for a denarius [KJV, “penny”], and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.’" It describes rationing, where they are rationing out this small increment of grain. There is severe famine and it describes grain, the very staff of life, being rationed out.

The term that is translated “penny” in the King James is a reference to the sum of money that was a day’s wage for a common laborer—not exactly a penny as we think of it, though some of you can probably remember when you worked for a few cents a day. Our concept of money today is vastly different than the concept of money simply forty or fifty years ago and much more so back then.

“...do not harm the oil and the wine” is simply describing commodities that are in short supply. They are told, ‘Be very careful, we are rationing grain and some of the luxury items like oil and wine.’ They are being very, very carefully rationed out because of severe shortage.

Question: Who are the two witnesses?

Answer: Would you like for me to name names? No, I won’t name names. The reason I won’t name names is I don’t know names. There was a time when several of us thought we had them figured out a number of years ago, and it’s very apparent that we didn’t. So, I don’t think I am going to nominate anyone new to the job.

The two witnesses are mentioned in Revelation 11:3-4, “‘And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lamp stands standing before the God of the earth.’”

You find reference to them in Zechariah 3 and 4. You find symbolism of God’s two representatives. You can find parallels to the two witnesses in the person of Moses and Aaron, God’s representatives who went in before Pharaoh. The plagues that Moses and Aaron called down are very similar to what the two witnesses will be calling down.

The two candlesticks mentioned are representative of two Churches. Some have speculated on this that they are Philadelphia and Laodicea. I don’t think that is necessarily the case. Understand that candlesticks, as we know them, did not exist back then. A more accurate translation would be lampstand because wax candles simply did not exist at this time in history.

What was utilized at that time resembled a pottery bowl. In some cases, it was a bowl that was set on a stem that came down and you filled up the whole thing with oil. You would have, maybe, a high stem and then you would have stems that would come out. You would fill up the main thing with oil and the oil would keep the lamp lit. You would fill up the main stem that came up higher. You would fill that up with oil and the oil was an open stem that came up to a little bowl on each side. So, it was the oil that was burning.

Generally in the Middle East, they used olive oil because that was the most readily available source. God uses olive oil as a type of His Holy Spirit. Many analogies are drawn from the Bible from the use of olive oil. The fuel source that was used in the tabernacle and later in the temple was olive oil. Olive trees would be, of course, the source of olive oil. The two lampstands that are filled with olive oil represent a type of God’s Spirit. In other words, the two individuals are filled with the Spirit of God. At that time, God’s representatives serve as a contrast to the two other individuals in Revelation 11 who are Satan’s representative—the Beast and the false

prophet. Who does God have? He has two witnesses, two individuals who are undoubtedly alive on the face of the earth right now, and we, in terms of knowing exactly who they are, cannot lock in on that right now.

The point is that when the time comes, God selects whom He will and places that individual in that office. The individual may very well be around.

We look on the horizon and we try to figure things out, but we are doing so on the basis of things as they are now. But if we're talking about ten, fifteen or twenty years in the future, then there's no telling. Things can change drastically. Things can change drastically in five years or even in one year. You see, that is the problem in trying to zero in on a specific individual.

There will be two men that God will utilize in that capacity as His direct representatives to serve as witnesses to the world and, in effect, call the hand of the Beast and the false prophet. This is in much the same way that Moses and Aaron went in before Pharaoh as God's representatives and contended with Pharaoh's magicians, Janes and Jambres, and there was the contest back and forth.

You find various analogies. You can draw an analogy to Joshua and Zerubbabel and their function in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. In the book of Zechariah, they are the two olive trees and the two lampstands. Zechariah 3 and 4 are the chapters that refer to that. It's clear in Zechariah 4 that's the analogy of the two candlesticks (or "lampstands" would be more accurate). The two olive trees clearly typify Zerubbabel and Joshua in the book of Zechariah. They were the two individuals who were leaders in God's work. They were doing God's work at that time and were representing God to the people in dealing with foreign rulers. They were dealing with the enemies of the faith. Some of that ties in with the way we got the Bible.

But to try and zero in on two specific individuals is not possible at this time. The point is that at certain times in history, God has utilized a team, as in the case of Moses and Aaron or as in the case of Zerubbabel and Joshua. God has not always chosen to utilize a team in quite the same way. You will find in the New Testament at the beginning, Peter and John stood out in a special way. They were kind of a team. You would find them as a team being brought before various ruling groups. There are other times when you find an individual mentioned in the singular fashion and you don't find any mention of someone else. God has sometimes done it a little

differently. They are simply going to be God's chosen representatives at the time of the very end. During the time of the Tribulation, there will be those two individuals whom God will use to hold out as His witnesses and warning to the world in much the way that Moses and Aaron did.

Question: Revelation 20:7-10—Are those that perish lost forever? Is there hope for them?

Answer: The Millennium is a time of judgment. God is not judging the world right now, but He is going to be judging during the Millennium. The Scripture does not teach a second chance. It teaches *a* chance of salvation—an opportunity for an individual to have his mind opened by God to understand God's calling and purpose. But realize that when we know and don't act on what we know, that's our chance. It's not a matter of second chances and third and fourth chances, over and over. It's a matter that once we really know and understand—God has dealt with us. We understand and we are having our opportunity. We have to make a commitment. There will be those who make the wrong choice, those who simply choose the wrong fate.

From the time setting, it would appear here in Revelation that we're looking at a period at the end of the Millennium. Here are individuals who have had an opportunity to fully know God's way. God has been working with them. They have had an opportunity and they simply have not availed themselves of that opportunity. They have allowed themselves to be deceived because they did not believe the warnings. Don't you think there will be sermon after sermon after sermon preached on these scriptures, particularly as we get toward the end of the Millennium? Don't you think we will warn people of what's going to happen and to be aware lest it happen to them? There are going to be individuals who sit there and think, 'That could never happen to me.'

I had a point very vividly impressed upon my mind. We were at the Feast of Tabernacles and Mr. Herbert Armstrong called a meeting for the ministry. He addressed the assembled ministry. He opened the Bible to the section in Acts where Paul talked to the Ephesians elders (Acts 20:17-38).

He went through the section of scripture where it says, Acts 20:28, "...take heed..."

Verse 30, "...from among yourselves men will arise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." 'Some of you will depart and will seek to lead away a

following.’ This was a charge to the Ephesians elders.

Verses 28-30, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”

Mr. Herbert Armstrong read this to us and he said, ‘Fellows, this is not a statement of what has happened in the past; it’s a prophecy of what’s going to happen in the future. This is going to happen again. Don’t let it happen to you.’ I remember that very emphatically and the point emphatically made as only Mr. Herbert Armstrong could make it. I had never heard Mr. Armstrong go through this scripture in that way either before or after. But that Feast for some reason, he was inspired, and I think I know why he was.

He was inspired of God to go through that section in his address to the ministry and to really drive it home. ‘This is going to happen! Don’t let it happen to you!’ What really impressed me was that just a matter of weeks later, there were a number of those in the room who heard those words, who did allow it to happen to them—some within a matter of weeks, some within a matter of months, some over the course of the next few years. The point is that people can be warned and they don’t always heed the warning.

There are going to be those in the Millennium who are going to be warned, ‘Look, Satan is chained up right now. The time is going to come when he is going to be turned loose and he’s going to try to deceive you—and this is the way he’s going to do it. Don’t let it happen to you.’ There are going to be those who ignore that, and it will ultimately lead to their destruction. The whole world ultimately has a choice set before it—good and evil, right and wrong. Israel of old had that choice (Deuteronomy 30:15,19). We have that choice today. The people who live in the Millennium are ultimately going to have to be given a chance to choose.

For a period of time, they will have the right way instilled in them. Satan won’t be around to muddy the waters. We will be able to create a society without Satan’s influence, but they are going to have to make a decision to reject that influence. God has to know that if they had a

choice, they would choose the right. If they never had that choice, it would be a little different.

Question: In the book of Revelation, it talks about the various tribes and it talks about the twelve tribes. The question relates to the fact that most people, even in the Israelite tribes, have some level of mixture in terms of a tribal mixture. If they are going to be separated out, there are many who would not be totally of one specific tribe and the same would be for ethnic groups as well.

Answer: I think the principle is the fact that God is ultimately the One who will tend to that. In cases like that, people normally take after one side of the family or the other, and there is a sense of identity that is there. Many things are obviously clear. Some things or some issues may not be as clear. That’s why some of those things will have to be resolved when Christ comes because He is the only One that knows how to sort out the details in the appropriate way. Perhaps much of it would not be unclear, but some would be in terms of how God would allocate things and assign individuals as He reallocates the earth as recorded there in Revelation.

Question: Is it permissible for a baptized member to date a non-baptized individual under any conditions?

Answer: The basic principle of dating, of course, goes back to marriage. For one who has made a commitment to God—who has been baptized and is converted—to become involved with someone who is not, is not appropriate.

In the context of the Church and young people who have grown up in the Church and who are here as a part of the congregation, we sometimes have situations where there are some who are baptized and some who are not—basically, that young adult age spread. In terms of single dating and in terms of anything that would involve romantic involvement, something of that sort really shouldn’t go that far. There needs to be a common bond in terms of commitment to God’s way.

It may be partially on what you mean as a “date.” In the context of Church socials or participating in young adults group activities, something of that sort, it is a little bit different. It would be best that if someone has a specific question on that; it is the kind of thing that’s best handled on an individual basis. If someone has a specific

question, they can check with me on it personally.

Question: The question involves the fact that the Catholic Church has issued a new catechism. The Catholic Church in issuing the new catechism states, “doctrines and scriptures should be understood to reflect more accurately the current mood and consciousness of society.” This is stated in the introduction of the Catholic Bible Course. The question relating to that is: Would that be accurate from a Biblical standpoint?

Answer: The scripture is very clear that Jesus Christ came preaching the gospel or the good news of the kingdom of God. God’s message is not designed to reflect the current mood and standards of society. Society has cut itself off from God and chosen to go its own way. Jesus Christ came with God’s message.

You might notice Malachi 3:1, “Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. ‘Behold, He is coming,’ says the Lord of hosts.”

What do we find here? We find that Jesus Christ was to come as the Messenger of the covenant. He came proclaiming the message of the New Covenant. It was a prophesy that a messenger would be sent to prepare the way before the One who was coming as the Messenger of the covenant.

You might notice in Acts 10:36-37, “The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached.”

You want to know about the gospel or the origin of the gospel that Jesus preached?

We’re told in Mark 1:14-15, “Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.’”

Peter said in Acts 10 that this message was the word which God sent. So, who’s the origin? Where did the message originate? It originated with God. It was sent to the children of Israel. Jesus Christ was the Messenger and the message had to do with peace. It began to be published, starting in Galilee, after the baptism which John preached.

When we come back to Mark 1:14, we see, “...after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God.” That’s the only way to peace. The good news of the Kingdom of God is the way that peace is coming, and that is the only way. That is the good news that holds the key to peace.

This was a message about the New Covenant. What is the New Covenant? The New Covenant has to do with God writing His laws in our hearts and in our minds (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 8:10). Jesus did not come with a message that was going to do away with the law. He came with a message that had to do with putting the law in our hearts and in our minds.

The gospel was the message of the Kingdom of God. What does a kingdom have? First and foremost, a kingdom has a king, doesn’t it? It has laws, it has subjects and it has territories. Jesus Christ came with a message that made all of those things plain.

You remember Daniel 2:32-35. We’ve gone through this numerous times. You remember the great image that Nebuchadnezzar saw: the head of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the thighs of brass, the legs of iron, the feet of iron and clay and the ten toes. The stone cut out without hands comes down and smashes the image on its feet, and the image turns to dust and blows away. The stone becomes a great mountain that fills the earth.

We’re told in Daniel 2:44, “And in the days of those kings [the final ten] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.”

The God of heaven is going to set up a kingdom. Where is it going to be set up? It’s going to be set up on the earth. It’s going to rule over all the kingdoms of this world.

We read in Revelation 11:15, “...‘the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’”

The kingdom of God is going to hold sway over all the earth. Jesus Christ is going to rule as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16).

The law will go forth from Zion (Isaiah 2:3).

Jesus Christ came with a message of the good news about how peace is going to come and how we can have a part in that. The kingdom of God is something that we can inherit (I Corinthians 6:9). It is something that we can enter (John 3:5).

That gets into a whole different subject. I’ve

gone into that in some of the outlying Bible studies.

Jesus Christ did not come with a message that simply reflected the spirit of the age. He came with a message that reflected the Spirit of God. The spirit of the age has been different things at different times. The spirit of the age has never been in tune with the Spirit of God. It's not in our time and it wasn't in the time of Christ.

Paul brings out the statement in I Corinthians 9:19-22, "...I have become all things to all men...." Paul used psychology, in a right way, to help them to understand.

In terms of the way Paul approached the subject, let's notice a couple of examples in the book of Acts. Let's notice the different approach with a different audience.

Notice Acts 17:22, "Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, 'Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious.'" –'You're exceedingly religious.'

Verses 23-26, "'for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation.'"

Verse 28, "'for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'"

Here he quotes from one of the Greek poets. Verse 29, "'Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.'"

Coming on down:

Verse 31, "'because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.'"

You can go through this whole section of Acts 17 and you'll find that Paul did not start out by quoting scripture. There aren't any verses that he quoted. In fact, the name Jesus Christ is not mentioned in this specific section. Paul was speaking to people who were not familiar

with the Bible. He was talking to people who were unaware of Jesus Christ or any of the controversy that had surrounded Him. Paul introduced the subject starting from where they were to bring them to the fact and reality that there is a Creator God who is going to intervene and judge the creation, and there is One that He has borne testimony of through the resurrection as being the instrument of that judgment. It was an introduction. It was not everything there was to say, but it was the way Paul approached the subject, dealing with people who didn't have any knowledge of the Bible.

Go to Acts 22 where he's speaking to Jews (people who were familiar with the Scriptures).

Acts 22:1-2, he said, "'Men, brethren, and fathers, hear my defense before you now.' And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent...." He spoke in Hebrew to really get their attention. He certainly didn't speak in Hebrew on Mars Hill; on Mars Hill he spoke in Greek. He approached the people from that standpoint. He started out by introducing himself.

Verse 3, he said, "'I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.'"

He starts out emphasizing his relationship with the Jewish community—acknowledging and pointing out his study of the law. He recounts the story of his conversion (vv. 4-14) and goes on through.

You could notice other accounts that are directed toward the Jewish community. You could notice Peter's sermon in Acts 2 or you could notice Stephen's sermon in Acts 7, where Stephen started out with God appearing to Abraham (vv. 2-8), then gives sort of a synopsis of the Old Testament (vv. 9-53). Stephen was addressing Jews in Jerusalem who were familiar with the Scriptures.

If you're speaking to people who don't even know what a Bible is and you start quoting verses of Scripture, that's not an effective starting point. You have to first lead them to the realization that the Bible is the Word of God and then prove to them what it says.

It doesn't do any good to prove to a Buddhist what the Bible says, when you haven't even proven to him that the Bible is the Word of God. You have to start with people based on where they are. The message is the same, the standards of God don't change, but their technique and approaches are different. You can go through the

book of Acts and find that there were different approaches used with different audiences, but they weren't coming to different conclusions and weren't preaching different gospels. They simply used a different introduction to capture their attention and help them relate to the message they were conveying.

We have traditionally done that over the years. Years ago, when Mr. Herbert Armstrong was traveling in some of the foreign countries (particularly in non-Christian areas), he used an approach modeled much more after Acts 17. When he was speaking to audiences that had a general familiarity with the Bible, his approach was different. We have, I think, an appropriate way of approaching the subject, but it does not allow for different gospels. The one gospel that Jesus Christ brought from God—the message that He came proclaiming—is the good news of the Kingdom of God which He bore witness. That is God's message.