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Bible Study # 47
January 23, 1990
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Major Prophets Series—Introduction

This evening we are going to get into the Major Prophets. We want **to examine a little bit about who the major prophets were. We want to look at their place in the Scriptures, the roles that these individuals played, and the role that these books play in the Bible—and the roles that they should play for us.** We are going to look specifically at **Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.** We are going to look at a little bit of background in each of these three books and perhaps gain some insight that can help us to understand a little more of what is involved. Then we will begin, step by step, through the book of Isaiah, then Jeremiah and Ezekiel. I have study questions that I will pass out at the end of the Bible study that will carry us through the first 14 chapters of the book of Isaiah, which is what we will cover next time. As you can see, we will go through this in some detail.

To begin with, let's understand a little bit as to who the prophets were. The prophets served as God's spokesmen to His covenant people. God made a covenant with the ancient Israelites at Mount Sinai, which was based upon the covenant that He had made with their forefather Abraham several centuries earlier. God began to deal with the covenant people by sending His spokesmen, His messengers.

The sense of the word "prophet" was "one who proclaimed or announced." We think of prophecy as something being predicted—as simply concerned about the future. This is one aspect of prophecy. That is generally what we think of when we use the term, but the word for prophecy or prophet is used in a broader sense in the Bible. Some aspects that are referred to are certainly predictive and deal with future events. There are other aspects that deal simply with God's announcement, God's proclamation and God's message to His people. The prophet was the one who announced or proclaimed. God's prophet announced or proclaimed God's message.

Samuel is reckoned as the first of the prophets. The term "prophet" began to be applied first to Samuel. This term came into vogue, into use, at the time of Samuel.

1 Samuel 9:9, we are told, "(Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he spoke thus: 'Come, let us go to the seer'; for he who is

now called a prophet was formerly called a seer.)" The term "prophet" is a broader term than "seer." "Seer" was restricted to "one whom God gave insight to see the future or to see what others did not see." The term "prophet" included the one to whom God gave that insight, but it reflected, let's say, a larger role. The prophet came on the scene at a time when the priesthood began to deteriorate in terms of its faithfulness in fulfilling their function. Had they been faithful, the role of seer, spokesman or messenger from God was a role that would have been played by the high priest and those assisting him.

At this point, God began dealing with Samuel who was not of the high priestly line. Samuel was of the Levitical line but not of the high priestly line. He was not in line to become high priest, but God used him as a spokesman. The high priest of the family of Eli continued to hold that position. Because of the example they had set, God ceased to work through that hereditary line in the way that He had previously. While they functioned in an official and ceremonial capacity, God now began to raise up spokesmen and messengers, beginning with Samuel. With Samuel God began a prophetic succession. The term "prophet" came into vogue at the time of Samuel.

Samuel evidently established schools or colleges (using our modern term) for the training of the prophets.

1 Samuel 19:18, this is mentioned, "So David fled and escaped, and went to Samuel at Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and stayed in Naioth." "Naioth" means "schoolhouse" in Hebrew.

Verse 19, the word got back to Saul that David was there.

Verse 20, "Then Saul sent messengers to take David. And when they saw the group of prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as leader over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied." It describes a group of prophets prophesying. Now the term "prophesying" is a term that can include a variety of things. It can in context (depending on the way it's used) describe everything from an inspired message to a song service that is particularly inspiring or inspirational. It can describe inspired preaching, the spirit of song service or the delivery of a message that has to do with future events. It can, depending on context, mean all of those things.

In the context here, we have those who were of Samuel's school of the prophets at what we call

the schoolhouse. What it describes is this group who were having what we would term a “song fest” or something of that sort. They were going through, perhaps, what is included in the book of Psalms today. Samuel gathered about him a group of what were called “a group of the prophets” or “sons of the prophets.” It simply meant those who were students at his prophetic school.

These schools are mentioned at the time of Elijah and Elisha, about 120 years after Samuel’s death (2 Kings 2). It describes Elijah having been responsible for three schools of the prophets: one at Gilgal (v. 1), one at Bethel (v. 3) and one at Jericho (v. 5).

Verses 3 and 5 describe the students as “sons of the prophets.” The term “sons of the prophets” is a term that simply refers to the students at the school that Elijah ran.

Evidently, Samuel was responsible for beginning the schools. It was the “Ambassador College” of the day. The schools were a means of teaching, a means of instruction. There was not, as in the priesthood, a direct hereditary father-son succession. Rather, the prophet filled the position or role because God called him and used him in that way, as a messenger or as a spokesman. There was generally a certain amount of training that was involved. All of those who were trained did not go on to be used in some significant fashion. The roles varied.

There are **two basic categories of prophets**: Those who were oral prophets and those who wrote down their prophetic message. The **oral prophets** had messages that pertained primarily to their own time, their own people, in their own day. **Elijah and Elisha were primarily oral prophets.** There is no book of Elijah nor is there a book of Elisha.

We read of Nathan, the prophet in the time of King David. We read of various ones that are mentioned in passing in the Old Testament of whom there is very little record of what they said. We have an example more of what Elijah did than we do of what he said. Clearly the bulk of the message that those individuals were given by God pertained to their own day, their own people and it pertained to that time. That’s why it was not recorded and preserved for us because the portions that pertained to us were recorded.

Primarily, the example that those individuals lived and set was the portion of their work that had the greatest relevance for us today. That’s why that’s what we have. We have far more of the story of what Elijah did than we have the

story of what he said because the primary thrust and impact of his message was for people at that time. While what he did and the way he did it had a primary impact on the people at that day, it also set a pattern. His ministry set a pattern that would characterize the ministry that prepared the way for Jesus Christ. John the Baptist did that prior to the first coming of Jesus Christ.

There is an Elijah work to prepare the way for the second coming of Jesus Christ. Elijah’s work and ministry set a pattern that would be noted, let’s say, in preparing the way for the Messiah. The message Elijah delivered was not what we think of as a prophetic message in the sense that the books of Daniel, Revelation, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Malachi, or whatever have as far as relevance to us today. The oral prophets were messengers of God, but the primary thrust of their message was a relevance to the audience to whom it was delivered.

Now, on the other hand, we have the **written prophets**. The books of the **Major and Minor Prophets** in our Bible are clearly written prophets. The thrust of their message was not primarily for their time. They delivered messages that were relevant for their time, but God gave them a revelation that had more significance for us today than it had for the people of 2,500 years ago. Their message was written down and not only was it written down, it was preserved. There is an enduring significance not simply to the messenger or to the work that the messenger did, but there is an enduring significance to the message itself—the message that was delivered. As I have mentioned, the term “prophet” in the original use of the term was viewed not so much as a foreteller of events but as “a bearer of God’s message.”

We use the terms “Major” and “Minor” Prophets. It is important that we understand the difference. The terms “Major” and “Minor” as applied to the prophets was not an attempt to catalog their worth or their value. It does not catalog the importance of the message, as saying that Isaiah’s message was more important than Malachi’s or Jeremiah’s was more important than Hosea or Haggai. That’s not what the terms mean. It is simply a reference to length. There is a vast difference between Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel in terms of the length, as compared with the 12 minor prophets of Hosea through Malachi. So, the terms “Major” and “Minor” have been used relative to the size of the book.

Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel are the ones who are recognized or have been considered as the

Major Prophets. Their books are arranged for us in the order that these three men began their prophetic ministry. That's the reason why we have it that way. Why isn't it Ezekiel, Isaiah and Jeremiah or some other arrangement? Well, generally there is either the subject matter that is the basis of arrangement or it is simply arranged chronologically.

Isaiah began to prophesy at an earlier time. The beginning of Isaiah's ministry was prior to the time that Northern Israel went into captivity, which was in the late 700s B.C.—what would be termed the late eighth century. His ministry was a very lengthy ministry. He lived up until a ripe old age. He prophesied many years.

Jeremiah's ministry, in the same way, was a lengthy ministry. It began much later than Isaiah. Jeremiah began his ministry a couple of decades prior to the time that Judah began to go into captivity. In other words, he began his ministry a good 100 years or more later than Isaiah did.

Ezekiel's ministry overlapped with Jeremiah's, but it began perhaps 30 to 35 years later than Jeremiah's began. Jeremiah's was a rather lengthy ministry. Ezekiel's was a fairly short ministry. We will go through and note, in a few moments, the similarities and the differences between each of these books.

Isaiah is where we start. Isaiah began his writings in the last year of King Uzziah or in 732 B.C.

Isaiah 6:1, this is dated, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple." Isaiah described his calling. This is descriptive of the beginning of his ministry, of his calling.

Verse 5, he sees this vision of God; he is awestruck and overcome by a sense of his own unworthiness. Obviously, any time we really see and grasp the glory and the grandeur of God, we should correspondingly be struck with a sense of our own inadequacies.

Matthew 5:3, that's what's meant by the term Jesus said in, "Blessed are the poor in spirit..." The "poor in spirit" are those who recognize their own lack of spiritual self-sufficiency. They recognize how much they need what God has to offer. They are not as the Pharisee was when he and the tax collector (KJV, "publican") went out to pray. You remember the story Jesus told.

Luke 18:10-13, the Pharisee lifted up his eyes and said, 'Lord, I thank you that I'm not as other men are. I am this wonderful person. I'm glad you noticed me because I really deserve it.' This

was the sense of it. His perspective on life was a total contrast to the tax collector who recognized his own unworthiness.

When we get it in proper perspective, we recognize that none of us is worthy of God's mercy. God extends His mercy and His love, but it's not because He looked down and was so impressed with us that He thought 'I have to do something special for that fellow. I've never seen anybody that great. I'm really impressed with him (or her).'

Isaiah clearly did not have that perspective on life. He was impressed when God revealed Himself in this vision.

Isaiah 6:5, Isaiah said, "... 'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; ...'" 'I am not holy enough to see. I do not deserve this. I'm not worthy of a revelation like this.'

In the vision described in verses 6-7, an angel took a coal off the altar of incense, touched it to Isaiah's lips and he was symbolically purified.

Verse 8, God said, 'I need somebody to do a job,' and Isaiah said, 'Here I am! Send me.' It was recognition of what God could do through him. We have the description in Isaiah 6 of what was clearly the beginning of Isaiah's ministry. It dates it to the last year of King Uzziah.

The first five chapters of Isaiah set the stage for the message of Isaiah. The book of Isaiah was not a diary that Isaiah kept. He didn't just start writing this on the first day, and the second day he wrote—and the book just kind of goes through in the order of his life. That's not the case. There is more of a message content. The first five chapters kind of set the stage and introduce the book in terms of subject matter. Chapter 6 then picks up the story at the beginning by showing us how Isaiah began his ministry. Then the theme continues.

Isaiah 1:1, we are told, "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." We are told in chapter 6:1 that this began in the last year of Uzziah—which was 732 B.C. This is about ten years before the Assyrian invasion of Northern Israel. Isaiah's message was a message that utilized the events that were happening in his time, the things that Judah and Israel went through in his day, but the primary thrust of the book of Isaiah is for the last days.

Isaiah 2:2, we are told, "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days..." The emphasis, you see,

is a message for the latter days—“in the latter days” or “in that day.”

Isaiah 1:1 is a message concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now, at one time when the whole nation was united, Jerusalem was the capital city, not only of Judah, but the capital of the whole nation. When all the 12 tribes were united as one nation, Jerusalem was the combined capital. Jerusalem is used symbolically to describe the entirety of Israel. It refers symbolically to all of Israel. The book of Isaiah is very clear—there are specific references to the house of Israel, as well as of the men of Judah.

Isaiah 5:7, for instance, “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant.” It is clear that there is a distinction between the house of Israel and the house of Judah. The term “Jerusalem” is used symbolically. Many of the things that were going on in Judah were used symbolically to refer to all of Israel. But at the time Isaiah began to write, there were two totally separate nations of Israel and Judah.

Israel went into captivity beginning about ten years after Isaiah began his ministry, but the deportation of the Israelites took place over the next couple of decades or so. They didn’t have the cattle cars and the railroad trains available to them to herd the people and ship them out, but they were pretty efficient. It took a little longer, and they had to rely on the methods they had available. The depopulation of Northern Israel actually took place for a little over two decades. Isaiah’s ministry went through this period of time.

We have no information in the book of Isaiah about the end of Isaiah’s life, but according to Jewish tradition, he was sawn in two by order of the wicked King Manasseh during the first year of his reign. Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, was the most wicked king that Judah ever had. There is reference in Hebrew 11 to the men and women of faith. It mentions the tribulations endured by some, describes the fate of certain ones and mentions “sawn in two” (v. 37). There’s no place in the Old Testament where it specifically describes that martyrdom. However, there is a Jewish tradition that says that was the fate of Isaiah during the first year of Manasseh’s reign.

Isaiah’s ministry began in 732 B.C. (the last year of Uzziah) and continued down to the end of the lifetime of King Hezekiah, which would bring it down to 686 B.C. We’re looking at a 45-50-year period of his prophetic ministry. It was a lengthy ministry. He started out as a relatively young

man, and he was clearly in advanced years at the end of his ministry.

We’re not told a lot about Isaiah’s background. In Isaiah 1:1, we are told that he was the son of Amoz. According to the *Soncino Jewish Commentary* (a Jewish commentary on the Old Testament), Amoz was the brother of Judah’s King Amaziah. This would mean that Isaiah was a cousin of the royal line of the kings, and this connection would explain the ease with which Isaiah had continual access to the kings of Judah. Let’s look at the authorship of the book of Isaiah. If you want to look in any of the commentaries, particularly any of the more modern commentaries, you will find that the question of the authorship of Isaiah has been greatly disputed by all of the modern critics. Most modern critics claim that only the first 39 chapters of Isaiah were written by Isaiah; the rest were written by one who they called “Deutro-Isaiah,” which means “the second Isaiah.” There are some who even postulate a “Trito-Isaiah”; they think there were “three who wrote Isaiah.”

There is a very important reason why the critics divide the book of Isaiah and why some say part of it was written by Isaiah and part of it was written quite a bit later by another man who claimed to be Isaiah. There’s a real problem that they have with the latter part of the book of Isaiah and that is because of how specific certain prophecies are. The real problem that the critics have is with the idea that there is a God who steps into history and literally inspires His servants—a God who reveals the future because He determines and He governs in the affairs of men (Daniel 4:32). Any time you get into something that is clearly prophetic, the critics always want to say that it really wasn’t prophetic, it was written after the fact.

One of the problems they run into is a message recorded in Isaiah 44 and 45.

Isaiah 44:23-28, “Sing, O heavens, for the Lord has done it! Shout, you lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the Lord had redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel. Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, and He who formed you from the womb: ‘I am the Lord, who makes all things, who stretches out the heavens all alone, who spreads abroad the earth by Myself; who frustrates the signs of the babblers, and drives diviners mad; who turns wise men backward, and makes their knowledge foolishness; who confirms the word of His servant, and performs the counsel of His

messengers; who says to Jerusalem, "You shall be inhabited," to the cities of Judah, "You shall be built," and I will raise up her waste places; who says to the deep, "Be dry! And I will dry up your rivers"; who says of Cyrus, "He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure," even saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," and to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid."""

Isaiah 45:1-5, "Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut: "I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places; that you may know that I, the Lord, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me."""

God is naming, by name, Cyrus who God was going to raise up to do a job to free the Jews from Babylonian captivity and to allow them to return and rebuild Jerusalem. At the time the book of Isaiah was written, the Jews hadn't even gone into captivity, much less Cyrus coming along. Isaiah died 150 years before Cyrus ever conquered Babylon. Cyrus wasn't even "a gleam in his father's eye" when Isaiah wrote Isaiah 44 and 45.

This really bothers the critics. They say, 'Clearly Isaiah 44 and 45 weren't written by Isaiah because that would mean that this man was known by name years before he was ever born, and that's impossible!' Why is it impossible? It said right in the context that God said, 'Look, I'm God; I call things that are not as though they were' (46:10).

Let's look at the problem of somebody else having written part of the book of Isaiah. According to their teaching, this last part of the book of Isaiah could not have been written until after the Jews returned from exile in Babylon because the fulfillment of some of these things described what happened after the Jews returned, after the Persians had conquered Babylon. Now, what's the problem with that? What is the likelihood of being able to add in something like that? When you're looking at something that was

considered a part of Scripture, you're looking at what was considered the basic law of the land.

What do you think would be the likelihood of getting in and forging something on the end of the Bill of Rights and being able to fool everybody to think there are not ten amendments but 13 to the Bill of Rights—amendments kind of written there in the margin—saying this is a part of it. That's ludicrous! There are too many copies and it's too well known. If you tried to tack on to the bottom and claim that this was part of the original, that's silly! You'd never pull off a fraud like that because it's too well known.

Here you are looking at something that there was no way a fraud like that could be pulled off. Here was a book that had been accepted and established as a part of Scripture for many, many years. How can you come along and tack something on the end of it and claim it's been there all along? How can you pull off a fraud like that?

The only reason for objecting to it is the fact that the critics object to God. They object to the fact that there is a God in heaven who declares the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). As a result, they reject all prophecy. They reject anything that smacks of God's intervention in the affairs of man. They say, 'Well, there are certain differences in style or differences of language of some chapters at the end of Isaiah, as opposed to the beginning.'

Isaiah's ministry spanned 45 years. The message that he gave was the same. But, obviously, in a period of 45 years, from a young man to an old man, depending on what he's writing about, certain styles changed. Just the fact of the passing of years, there may be certain stylistic changes.

You can look at things that Mr. Herbert Armstrong wrote. If you have a copy of something he wrote in the 40s and compare it with something he wrote in the 80s, while the message and the thrust is the same, you may notice certain differences in terms of style of presentation. You may notice that there were periods, let's say, earlier on when some of his style of writing had emphasis of punctuation, capitalization or things like that which reflected a lot more of his early advertising training. And as the years progressed, some things that he wrote in later life did not reflect that exact same style of writing. There were certain changes that took place. The message was the same, but you can have differences just over a period of time.

When you look at something you wrote years ago and then look at something you would write

today, there are differences. I can look back at things that I wrote 20 years ago, and I don't think I would write it exactly the same today. I'm not saying that I wouldn't come to the same conclusion. A paper I wrote in college, I don't think I would express it exactly the same way today. I like to think I would express it a little better, but that may be an open question.

The point is that as the years go by, it is natural and normal that there are going to be certain stylistic variations. That doesn't disprove the same person wrote it. We are looking at a 40-50-year time period by the book's own claim. We would normally expect that there's going to be certain variations in terms of style over that long a period of time—plus the fact that the style of writing is going to vary somewhat with the subject matter that is being addressed. That's normal and natural also.

Isaiah 46:10 makes plain that this portion of Isaiah is intended as a prophecy, “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand and I will do all My pleasure.’”

Verses 9-10, “Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, ...” How do you think you can write something like this and tack it on to the end of a book that people have been familiar with. Then you say, ‘This is prophetic here. Look at how amazing this prophecy is,’ when it is talking about an event that happened 15 years ago. How do you plot out something like that if it makes no sense?

In fact, it's interesting because Isaiah is probably one of the books of the Old Testament that the critics dispute the most in terms of its authorship. Yet Isaiah is referred to probably more than any other one prophet in the New Testament. Isaiah is quoted by name 21 times in the New Testament. Isaiah is quoted ten times from the first portion of Isaiah and 11 times from the last portion. So, it is well divided.

There are four specific instances where Jesus Christ Himself quotes the prophecy and says Isaiah wrote it. Now, if anybody ought to know, Jesus ought to know and He thought Isaiah wrote it. And if Jesus thought Isaiah wrote it, Paul thought Isaiah wrote it, Peter thought he did and John and James thought he wrote it, I kind of figure that they may have known a little more about who wrote it than some character that thinks he is the world's greatest expert here in the

last few years. Isaiah is referred to by name 21 times and his prophecies are referred to 85 times in the New Testament. Isaiah is the most heavily quoted Old Testament prophet in the New Testament.

It's interesting that God bore extra witness of the one the critics want to dispute the most. It's like God just kind of “rubbed their face in it” by saying, ‘You are going to have to dispute not only Isaiah, but you are going to have to dispute everything that came afterwards.’

Isaiah's name means “God is salvation” and that seems to be the main theme of the book. The book of Isaiah has a lot of prophecies dealing with the Messiah. Many of the most striking prophecies of Tomorrow's World are there in the book of Isaiah. The book of Isaiah contains the most graphic prophecies of the coming of Jesus Christ, the promise of the Messiah, the prophecy that Christ would be born of a virgin, the prophecy that He would give His life as a ransom and of His scourging. All of these things are prophesied in the book of Isaiah, as well as the prophecies of Tomorrow's World, the prophecies that He would come as King of kings and Lord of lords. The book of Isaiah is filled with a lot of prophecies that really focus our attention on the fact that God is the only salvation; that's really the meaning of the name Isaiah, “God is salvation.” That's what Isaiah's message focuses on. Over and over it focuses on showing us why we need God's salvation and what we need God to save us from.

Part of the book of Isaiah is an indictment, but the other part of it is the good news that lies ahead. You have the indictment, the consequences of the indictment and the long-term results of salvation that God brings about. This is the thrust of Isaiah.

Jeremiah began his ministry, as I mentioned, a couple of decades prior to the time that Judah began to go into captivity. Jeremiah began his ministry 100 years or more later than Isaiah did.

Jeremiah 1:1-2, he began his ministry during the 13th year of King Josiah, which would date it to 625 B.C. and about 60 years after the death of Isaiah. Jeremiah began his prophetic ministry when he was quite young; tradition says he was age 17. Notice Jeremiah's response when God told him he was being ordained a prophet.

Jeremiah 1:5-6, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; and I ordained you a prophet to the nations.’ Then said I: ‘Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.’”

I would like to note a couple of things about Jeremiah and why God used someone this young. Jeremiah began his ministry during the 13th year of King Josiah. Josiah, during his 13th year, would have only been 21 years old himself.

In 2 Chronicles 34:1-3, we are told Josiah was eight years old when he became king and he began to really seek God in the eighth year of his reign (age 16). His 13th year (Jeremiah 1:2) would have been when he was 21 years old. This is when he really began to institute his reforms. Even though Jeremiah was quite young, he would have been close to the same age or perhaps four years younger than Josiah.

Jeremiah 1:1, Jeremiah's father was Hilkiyah, the high priest who was responsible for serving as the guardian of the young King Josiah during his growing-up years. Hilkiyah was responsible for a lot of the teaching and training that Josiah had. Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiyah the priest, would have sort of grown up with Josiah. Here was a young king, and God then began to work through Jeremiah when he was quite a young man. Jewish tradition says he was age 17, and that would certainly be in line with the statement of verse 6.

I want to point out that so many times the concept that we have of prophets is an elderly man with a long gray beard leaning on a staff. I think all of us, at some time, have that concept. I think a lot of times our young people kind of have the idea that God's prophets were all elderly men with long gray beards, kind of leaning on their staff because that was the only way they could get around. There were some of God's prophets that continued to function well on up into their later years, and certainly some of God's prophets reached a very elderly age. But the point is that some of God's prophets were very young, some of them were middle age and some of them were elderly. Even some of God's prophets who may have functioned well on into their latter years began to be servants of God when they were very young.

In other words, you don't have to be old to be a servant of God and you don't have to be young. You can be a servant of God at any age. You can be a servant of God as a teenager, a young adult, middle-aged adult or as an elderly person. And I think it's important for us to understand that, in a sense, there are role models and servants of God in every stage of life. Whatever stage of life we find ourselves, some of God's servants were also at that point. The idea that young people, by default, have to be out being little hellions and

"sowing their wild oats" is not always the case. There is an alternative. That's not what Jeremiah was doing when he was that age. That's not what Josiah was doing at that age.

It's interesting that Josiah was one of the most remarkable kings in all the history of Judah. The reforms he carried out were some of the most thoroughgoing. He exemplified all of the zeal and the idealism of youth. God has worked through young people, just as He has worked through older people. Jeremiah started out as a very young prophet, and instead of a long gray beard, he may not have even had a beard at all. He continued his ministry for a number of years, and in the latter period of the book, in the latter period of his prophecy, he was a very elderly man. He had served God for many, many years. He had served God very faithfully over an extended period of time.

Josiah came to the throne at a very crucial time in the history of Judah. The wicked King Manasseh had ruled for a long period of time. Things had really gotten in a mess. It was at the point that God was ready to remove Judah. The only thing that stood between Judah and captivity was a zealous young king by the name of Josiah. God was so impressed by the zeal of Josiah that He made the promise that He would protect Judah as long as Josiah lived. When Josiah died, "the show was just about over." God ceased protecting Judah. He allowed the nation to reap the consequences of what it had sown. But it shows, in a sense, what difference one person can make. In the case of Josiah, God looked at his attitude. He looked at his zeal. God looked at what Josiah did and He took note of it. God honored Josiah's obedience and zeal and spared the nation during his lifetime.

The reforms of Josiah are recorded in great detail in 2 Chronicles 34 and 35. We won't go into them at this time, but Josiah had been greatly influenced by the priest Hilkiyah who was the father of Jeremiah. Hilkiyah presided over the priestly part of the reforms launched by King Josiah; Josiah, in turn, was spurred on by Jeremiah. These two young men grew into early adulthood, undoubtedly having known each other and spending time together as boys when Jeremiah's father was the guardian of the young king. In many ways, the boys would have spent time together, kind of growing up together. This was an example of two young people who were a very positive influence on one another and who brought out the best in one another. They made a remarkable combination.

Jeremiah's name means "the Eternal establishes" or "the Eternal founds." This is very directly tied in with the commission that God gave to Jeremiah. The commission is recorded in Jeremiah 1.

Jeremiah 1:10, "'See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.'" We are going to see, when we get to the book of Jeremiah, the remarkable aspect of Jeremiah's prophecy. Because, you see, a very remarkable event occurred during Jeremiah's lifetime.

The beginning of his lifetime was marked by the reign of King Josiah—a righteous king—the last righteous king of Judah. The man for whom, in a sense, God spared the nation for a period of time. But in the aftermath of Josiah's death (within a matter of a few years), the Babylonians invaded and Jerusalem was taken in 604 B.C. Over the next 17 or 18 years, the Babylonians dominated until finally Nebuchadnezzar came, completely destroyed Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in 587 B.C. He burned the temple to the ground and took all the rest of the Jews that were left. He had taken a small group to Babylon in 604 B.C. He had come back in 596 B.C. and this time he burned the city and burned the temple. First he looted it of the things of value; then he burned the temple and the city and finally took everybody to Babylon. He killed the last king, Zedekiah.

Now, if you remember, God had made a promise to David.

1 Kings 2:4, "...He said, 'you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'"

1 Kings 9:5, "'then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, 'You shall not fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.''"

Here, during the lifetime of Jeremiah, outwardly, visibly, as it would appear, that throne ceased. God preserved it when the ten tribes rebelled against the house of Solomon (1 Kings 12). God established and continued that throne in Jerusalem reigning over Judah. But here was Judah gone into captivity, and here was the last king killed. Did God's promise fail? No, because when we look at the book of Jeremiah and when we look at his contemporary Ezekiel, we will see the role that Jeremiah played in transferring the throne of David from Jerusalem to the location that it was set. If you want to be specific, it was actually transferred from Jerusalem to Tara, Ireland.

You've heard of Tara, the famous plantation in the movie "Gone with the Wind." Well, it takes its name from the ancient capital of Ireland. Tara was the location of the ancient high kings of Ireland. Then it was later transferred from Tara, Ireland to Scone, Scotland. That's where the term "stone of scone" comes from because it was later transferred from Scone, Scotland down to London, England. It was overturned three times: once, to Ireland; the second time, to Scotland; and the third time, to England. We will notice some of that when we go through the book of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah was set over nations and over kingdoms. He was set to root out, to pull down, to destroy and throw down, but he was also set to build and to plant. We are going to see what Jeremiah rooted out, pulled down, destroyed and threw down and what he built and planted. It is a remarkable story.

Jeremiah 1:1, Jeremiah was born in the priestly city of Anathoth, which is a short distance from Jerusalem. He was born near the end of the reign of the wicked King Manasseh.

The period of Manasseh's reign was a period void of an active prophet, though evidently, there were some like Jeremiah's father Hilkiah who continued to maintain the truth privately. The temple, of course, was closed during most of those years, and there wasn't an active prophetic ministry. Manasseh, evidently, put Isaiah to death at the beginning of his reign, and there wasn't an active, prophetic ministry that was done openly. But the truth was maintained privately, and Jeremiah was the next significant prophet raised up. Jeremiah took an active part in helping King Josiah launch his reform movement. Throughout the book of Jeremiah, Jeremiah warns against the rampant sins of the people: adultery, idolatry, violence and oppression.

Now, with the death of Josiah, Jeremiah composed the book of Lamentations. It was a lament for King Josiah—the last righteous king of Judah—but it was also a lament for the nation because the prophecy had been made that God would protect the nation of Judah as long as Josiah lived. The obvious implication of that is, 'When Josiah dies, you had better watch out!' And that's what happened. It was a lament, not simply for the death of this righteous king, but for the captivity that was going to come upon this sinful nation.

The calamities that came upon ancient Judah in Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. (prophesied in the book of Lamentations) were,

in a sense, duplicated again centuries later in 70 A.D. when the Romans came in, destroyed Jerusalem and destroyed the second temple. Both of those destructions of Jerusalem and the temple were simply a type of the Great Tribulation, which is to come. Jesus said in Matthew 24:21 that is going to be a time of trouble such as has not been since the world began. Clearly, Jesus makes it plain in Matthew 24 that the events that happened to Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A.D. were a type of the end-time events that are going to happen to His people.

Lamentations becomes a very prophetic book of the Great Tribulation—of the destruction and end-time captivity. We are not going to go through Lamentations at this time, but we will pick it up a little later in the proper sequence. We need to understand that Jeremiah wrote it and he wrote it in the context of King Josiah's death.

Jeremiah's message of captivity and destruction for his nation brought him into great reproach from the kings that came after Josiah. It brought him great reproach from the royal court and from the citizens of Judah because people don't like to hear the truth when the truth is unpleasant; Jeremiah told it the way it was.

Jeremiah was an older contemporary of Ezekiel and Daniel. He corresponded with Daniel. There's direct reference to that in Daniel 9.

Daniel 9:1-2, "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books [understood by letters] the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord, given through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." Daniel came to understand, as a result of correspondence, what this 70-year prophecy Jeremiah had made was all about. Evidently, the question had been, "What was the full significance of it, and when did it begin?"

Jeremiah 25:11-12 was a prophecy that Jeremiah made of a 70-year captivity on Judah.

Ezekiel flourished at a little later time. Ezekiel, we are going to see, went captive with the second invasion of Nebuchadnezzar in 596 B.C. Jeremiah continued to prophesy in Jerusalem through this period of time.

Jeremiah 29:1, let's notice, "Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the remainder of the elders who were carried away captive—to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom

Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon." See, Jeremiah wrote a letter to the ones that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive. This group would have included Daniel and Ezekiel.

Jeremiah 29:10, "For thus says the Lord: after seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place." This was the 70-year prophecy that Jeremiah made. Jeremiah greatly influenced Ezekiel and Daniel. Ezekiel and Daniel were in Babylon. Jeremiah was in Jerusalem. He was older than they were. They both went captive as very young men. Daniel was certainly even younger than Ezekiel. Jeremiah wrote to the group in Babylon and instructed them in certain things concerning this prophecy. Daniel makes reference that he sought for a number of years to clearly understand exactly what was meant. Since Nebuchadnezzar had invaded several times, what time do we start? Which invasion begins the countdown of the 70 years? What was the full sense of it?

Northern Israel had gone into captivity long before Jeremiah wrote. Jeremiah focuses in using the backdrop of Judah and Jerusalem in his day, over 100 years after the northern tribes had gone into captivity. Jeremiah uses that as a backdrop to illustrate that the events that transpired at that time served as a parallel to events that were going to occur in the end time. There are many things in Jeremiah that clearly focus in on the end time, on the final punishment and captivity and then the subsequent renewal of God's people in this end time. The things that ancient Judah went through at the time Jeremiah wrote are a parallel to events that our people are going through in the end time. In effect, what you have is the same sins which lead to the same consequences and the same punishment. But you will ultimately see the conclusion and the answer that Jeremiah records.

I mentioned that Jeremiah was an older contemporary of Ezekiel and Daniel. After the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., Jeremiah took the king's daughter from Jerusalem, through Egypt and ultimately to Ireland. That's where he finished his prophetic ministry. We will go into some of that when we go through the book of Jeremiah.

A great deal of Isaiah's prophetic ministry centered on the time of King Hezekiah. He was a contemporary of at least one righteous king. Isaiah and Hezekiah were a very important combination in the history of ancient Judah.

Jeremiah and Josiah were another important combination in the history of Judah and played a major role.

Let's notice briefly about **Ezekiel**. Ezekiel, as Jeremiah, was of the priestly family. Ezekiel's name means "God will strengthen." He was taken captive in the second invasion of Nebuchadnezzar in 596 B.C., and he spent the remainder of his life among the Jewish captives near Babylon. Jeremiah and Isaiah both wrote in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Ezekiel wrote in the captivity; Ezekiel wrote at a time after the captivity had become a reality. The final destruction of Jerusalem had not occurred at the time that Ezekiel began his ministry. Ezekiel's ministry continued for a period of a little over 20 years. The complete destruction of Jerusalem did not occur until several years after Ezekiel's ministry began. Ezekiel's ministry was totally limited to the time he was in captivity in the area of Babylon.

As mentioned, he went into captivity in the second invasion in 596 B.C. He spent the remainder of his life in that area. His years of prophecy were from 591 B.C. until 569 B.C. We are not told what happened to Ezekiel. The book just simply ends. Jewish tradition says his fellow captives murdered him.

From Jeremiah 29:1, we would conclude that Ezekiel was at least partially instructed and influenced by Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 29:1-2, we are told, "Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the remainder of the elders who were carried away captive—to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon. (This happened after Jeconiah the king, the queen mother, the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem.)" This was the second captivity of 596 B.C.

We are told Ezekiel was a priest. We will notice here in the beginning of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 1:3, "the word of the Lord came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the River Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was upon him there." Ezekiel was a priest. He was in captivity near Babylon. Now, Ezekiel had a very clear-cut mission. He was assigned to be a watchman to the house of Israel.

Ezekiel 2:3, "And He said to me: 'Son of man, I send you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me;'"

Ezekiel 3:4, "And He said to me: 'Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them.'"

Verse 17, "'Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; ...'"

There's one thing about that. The house of Israel had been in captivity for well over 100 years when Ezekiel wrote. They had been in captivity for almost 140 years when Ezekiel wrote. Now, why would you write a message warning of captivity to people who had been taken captive 120 or 130 years earlier? Clearly, the message was not for them. You see, Ezekiel never delivered his message to the house of Israel. Ezekiel wrote down his message. Ezekiel's message is for the house of Israel today!

Some of you who remember back, remember the radio broadcast over the years. You remember Mr. Herbert Armstrong going through the book of Ezekiel and emphasizing the message of the watchman. The message of Ezekiel was clearly a message for today because Ezekiel never left the area of Babylon. He was there with a bunch of Jewish captives hundreds of miles from where Israel had been taken captive.

The tribes of Israel had been settled, not down by Babylon in southern Mesopotamia by the River Chebar, but they had been settled where? 2 Kings 17:6 says they were settled by the Assyrians in the cities of the Medes. They were settled up by the River Gozan, which is up in the area between the Black and the Caspian Sea—a little south of where all the fighting is going on right now in the Soviet Union. Azerbaijan is kind of between the Black and the Caspian Sea. It is north of where the Israelites were settled. The Israelites were a little south of that mountain range but in kind of that vicinity up north of the Tigris-Euphrates area in the cities of the Medes.

The Medes eventually migrated from there, up through the heartland of the Soviet Union and are in the area that we would call the Ukraine today. The Israelites, centered there around the Black Sea, later crossed the Black Sea and went up through the heartland of Europe. This was the invasion of the Gauls—the coming of various tribes into northern Europe.

Ezekiel never went to that area. At the time Ezekiel wrote this, he was in the boundaries of a totally different empire. What do you think the likelihood of Ezekiel coming up and saying, 'Listen, I just got a message from God. You guys

are going to have to turn me loose because I cannot be a slave here in Babylon anymore. God just told me that I have this message and I need to take a hike to about 200 miles from here. There are these people who need to hear what I have. Turn me loose because God's given me a job.' –“Fat chance” getting loose on that. What's the likelihood? Do you think they said to Ezekiel, 'Oh, you can't be a slave here in Babylon if God told you to go up there. Well, we will surely turn you loose.'

No, Ezekiel wrote his message! That's why Ezekiel wrote it down. It is a message that applies for our time, our day and on out ahead of us. There are some very remarkable things in the book of Ezekiel, but the real impact, the real message of the book of Ezekiel, is for the house of Israel today. The warnings of a future captivity had no immediate relevance to a people already in captivity; that, of course, is what we see.

There's an awful lot in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. As I mentioned, we are going to get into the book of Isaiah first. The questions will be dealing with the first 14 chapters of the book of Isaiah. That is what we will want to read and study by the next Bible study, as we begin to get into this.

Bible Study # 48
February 13, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Isaiah 1—14

This evening we are getting into the book of Isaiah. We **are going to cover the first 14 chapters**. Isaiah's name means "the Eternal is Salvation," and that name ties in very closely with the subject matter of Isaiah's writing.

Isaiah makes very plain that God will not permit uncleanness in His covenant people. God will punish them for their iniquities. However, God will also restore and bless Israel following their national repentance. The book of Isaiah deals with this.

It is one of the most Messianic books of the Old Testament. It is a book that focuses in on the prophecies of the Messiah—the prophecies of Jesus Christ. The most detailed prophecies of Jesus Christ—both in His first coming and what will be His second coming—are contained in the book of Isaiah. We will notice them as we go through.

There's a continual contrast that is drawn in the book of Isaiah. On the one hand is God's punishment for various evils, and on the other hand is the ultimate restoration and glory that will come when the Messiah appears. There is this contrast that is being drawn, developed and explained as we proceed through the book of Isaiah.

The backdrop of events in Judah at the time, the place and circumstance in which Isaiah was writing provides a backdrop for the prophecies and the details that he goes into. Isaiah lived in Judah and wrote in Judah. Some of his ministry overlapped the closing days of the Kingdom of Israel (the northern kingdom) who ultimately went into Assyrian captivity. The sins of the nation had been continually worsening, and God was going to use Assyria to chastise the people.

Assyria conquered Northern Israel and took them captive during Isaiah's ministry. Most of Judah's territory was occupied at a later time. The Assyrian armies came in and conquered Northern Israel around 721 B.C. There was a period of deportation of the Northern Israelites that continued over a period of about the next 20 years.

There was an invasion of Judah that took place in the 14th year of Hezekiah, which was 701 B.C. This invasion threatened to take Judah into Assyrian captivity at the time. Hezekiah went to

God and God miraculously delivered them by wiping out the Assyrian army encamped around Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:13—19:35). God put a stop to that.

Isaiah brings out the ultimate fall of his own nation. The backdrop of crisis in his day and time served to set the stage for the prophecies that relate to our day. Isaiah laid continual stress on the fact that beyond the destruction the people could see lay ahead, ultimately lay the salvation of God—the only hope of Israel. Throughout the book of Isaiah, there is this thrust, this emphasis on the fact that God's salvation is the only hope of Israel.

In order to set the stage for the fact that this is the only hope, Isaiah emphasizes and describes at various points the sins of the nation and the punishment that will come upon the nation, but he then shows the fact that it's not the end of the story. There is a salvation that lies on beyond. One of the reasons he goes into some of the things that he does and to the extent that he does is to demonstrate the fact that Israel needs something beyond itself to save itself.

Let's look at a brief outline. Chapter 1 is sort of an abrupt introduction to the book of Isaiah. In Isaiah 1, the nation of Israel is indicted for its sins. It is indicted as a sinful nation, which must receive God's wrath.

Isaiah 2 through 5 begins with a picture of Christ's millennial rule. Then there follows a detailed indictment of Israel's sins as a society and a prophecy of captivity and destruction. God starts out with an introductory indictment in chapter 1.

In chapter 2, He focuses in on the way the story will end up, with a brief description of the millennial reign of the Messiah. Then He proceeds into a very detailed indictment of the sins of the nation and the captivity and destruction that will come.

In chapter 6, we go back and pick up the story of Isaiah's calling. The first five chapters are really introductory material that sets the stage for what the prophecies of the book are all about. In chapter 6 we go back and pick up the story of how God called and began to work through Isaiah.

In chapters 7 and 8, there is a prophecy that God would help Judah against a combine of Israel and Syria. That event is used as a backdrop of prophecy of the Messiah. Then there is a prophecy of the ultimate canonization of the Bible in the New Testament by the disciples of

Jesus. We will notice those prophecies as we go through.

In chapters 9, 10, 11 and 12, Christ's coming is prophesied. It tells us of God's use of Assyria to punish Israel. Then we have His redemption of Israel, His punishment of Assyria and the establishment of the government of God. These events are detailed in sequence.

In chapter 13, we have a prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, which is really a type of the ultimate, future destruction of Rome. It is paralleled in Revelation 18.

Chapter 14 is where we will end up this evening. In the beginning of chapter 14, we have the description of the house of Israel restored to prosperity during the Millennium. We culminate that chapter with a section that describes the origin of Satan the devil.

Let's notice here, as we begin to go through.

Isaiah 1:1, "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." We have a time span here of about 60 years (a lengthy time span) of Isaiah's ministry. It began quite a ways back. We have the prophecies that he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is used to typify the entire nation—to typify Israel as well as Judah because Jerusalem was the only city that was a combined capital of Israel and Judah. The prophecy deals not only with Judah, but it deals with the whole nation, all the tribes of Israel. Jerusalem is used symbolically to represent all of the tribes of Israel because Jerusalem was the focal point, the center place. This was the city from which David and Solomon reigned as king over all the tribes. Jerusalem is used in a symbolic way.

We use terms like that even in our modern terminology. Today, on the radio, there was the statement made about the arms talks and Moscow's response to Washington's proposal. Moscow is the capital city of the USSR and the name is used to symbolically refer to the whole nation or government of the nation. The city of Washington symbolizes the government of the United States. We use some of the same terminology, so when you see Jerusalem referred to in this way, it is used in a symbolic fashion to refer to the whole nation—to the combined 12 tribes.

Isaiah saw this over a period of time. God begins with His indictment. God makes comparisons here.

Verses 2-3, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the Lord has spoken: 'I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me; the ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.'"

God says, 'My people don't seem to have as much sense as a dumb animal.' Have you ever dealt with animals? A cow knows where the feed and stall is. A cow is not too smart. God says, 'I feed and take care of My people and they don't have as much sense as an ox or a donkey because at least these animals know who feeds them, where to go and respond to their master and their owner. My people don't seem to be able to figure that out.'

We pride ourselves on being very educated, very far-advanced people. God says that He doesn't think we really rank all that smart. We haven't figured out something that dumb animals have figured out. God says He has nourished Israel like children. He draws the analogy of providing for children. He gives the analogy that even an animal recognizes its owner and Israel doesn't.

The consequence is given as He continues.

Verses 4-6, "Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away backward. Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is not soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment."

There's a consequence. God says that the nation is sick from head to toe. A sickness is internal. There are prophecies later on in Hosea where it talks about Ephraim seeing his sickness and Judah seeing his wound (Hosea 5:13). When we get into that a little later, we will notice specifically that a sickness refers to an internal condition; a wound is something that is externally imposed.

Our nation, Israel, is described as a nation sick from head to toe. And remember, while the term "Israel" refers in a general way to all of the tribes of Israel, it refers primarily to Ephraim and Manasseh.

Genesis 48:16, Jacob crossed his hands and laid hands on Ephraim and Manasseh, and he said, "... 'Let my name be named upon them,'" His name, Israel, was named on those boys and their

descendants in a very special way. Prophetically, the term “Israel” generally refers to Ephraim and Manasseh in a specific way and in a general way to all of the tribes.

God’s indictment here is of a nation sick from head to toe. God describes an internal moral deterioration and decay. That is the condition that God describes, and there is a consequence that is going to come from that condition. First, God diagnoses the problem: ‘You’re sick from head to toe and the sickness is not healing up. It is breaking out in putrefying wounds and sores.’ He says there is going to come a consequence—the prognosis. First you have the diagnosis; then you have the prognosis.

Isaiah 1:7-10, “Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire; strangers devour your land in your presence; and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. So the daughter of Zion is left as a booth [cottage, shelter] in a vineyard, as a hut in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Unless the Lord of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah. Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah...”

Simply put, there is going to come a desolation on Israel as a nation as punishment. The destruction will not be total because God will preserve a remnant. A remnant will survive, but there is going to come a devastation of this nation. This is described here. This massive destruction is ultimately going to occur. If it weren’t for God’s stepping in, there would not be anything left (Matthew 24:21-22).

God compares our nation to Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18 and 19). Why do you think He would do a thing like that? We have come so far that in many of the major cities of this nation, they celebrate with parades what they call “gay-pride” week. I suspect they must have had one of those in Sodom and Gomorrah. They were pretty proud of things. There’s not even a sense of shame. It’s like, ‘We do these things, and not only do we do them, we are proud of it.’ It’s absolutely incredible. If you have a talk show and they’re interviewing somebody, chances are they don’t go very far before this character may wind up talking about some celebrity and his homosexuality. That’s how far we’ve come. Things like that are just openly talked about and discussed as though it’s no big deal.

God even compares the nation to rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah.

Verse 11, “‘To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?’ says the Lord. ‘I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs or goats.’” He says, ‘What are you going through the motions of religion for? I’m sick and tired of you going through the outward form of religion.’ And we call ourselves a religious nation. Let’s notice.

Verse 14, “‘Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them.’” This verse is often taken out of context and misapplied by certain Protestants who say, ‘See, God hates the Sabbath and the Holy Days; you shouldn’t keep them.’ “Your New Moons and your appointed feast My soul hates.” He didn’t say, ‘My appointed feasts, My Sabbaths, My day’—He said “*your*.”

There’s a difference between the days that God says belong to Him and the ones that He says belong to the people. Whose are they? Whose days does God hate? Does He hate His own? That wouldn’t make sense. Does God say, ‘I am going to give you these days, but I surely hate them’? What sense would that make? The problem wasn’t with God; the problem was with the people.

There were two problems. In some cases, they substituted in their own festivals. Northern Israel did that right after they rebelled against Rehoboam. Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, changed the Feast from the seventh month to the eighth month (1 Kings 12:31-33). They introduced their own festivals. In some cases, it was a substitute for God’s festivals; in other cases, while they held on to the outward form of the day that God had set, they didn’t celebrate it the way He said. It was a matter that they had come to the point, as it’s described here, of going through the motions of religion, but there wasn’t any substance of the heart.

For that matter, we can come to Sabbath services every week and warm a seat. We can go through all the various motions. We can do everything the Pharisees did, and God is not impressed with that—not any more than Christ was impressed with the Pharisees. The point is we are what we are on the inside. Our religion is something that needs to be lived and not something that is simply put on.

Verse 15, God says, speaking of this, “‘When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. [‘I’m not even going to look when

you make your prayers; I'm not going to listen. Why? Because...'] Your hands are full of blood.”

Verse 16, “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil...” ‘You’re going to have to clean up. You are going to have to cease to do evil.’

Verse 17, “learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.” God says you are going to have to repent. It’s not a matter of going through the forms of religion. It’s not a matter of when you get into trouble saying, ‘Oh, God, please deliver me.’ If you’re really sincere, then you’re going to have to change your actions. You are going to have to start doing what’s right. You’re going to have to have an attitude of give, help, love and concern—not an attitude of greed, materialism, selfishness, pride, vanity and violence. God says, ‘There has to come a change if you want Me to listen.’

Coming on down, He describes and indicts the leadership of the nation.

Verse 23, “Your princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; everyone loves bribes, and follows after rewards. They do not defend the fatherless, nor does the cause of the widow come before them.” It talks about ‘the princes are rebellious and companions of thieves; they all love gifts.’ That sounds like the front page of the paper. It’s almost a badge of status.

If a state official in Louisiana hasn’t been brought before the Grand Jury to be investigated about something, it’s like he almost doesn’t have any status. Everybody who’s anybody gets called before the Grand Jury. Some of them get indicted and occasionally they beat the rap. On a federal matter, they may even be sent to jail. Right now, there are about four U.S. senators that are being investigated. They were tied into some big Savings and Loan bailout that involved about a billion dollars of government money. It just so happened that the guy who owned the Savings and Loan was the major contributor to each of their campaigns. Some are Republicans; some are Democrats—doesn’t make any difference. You can buy one vote as well as the other. He wasn’t a respecter of persons.

‘Your princes are companions of thieves.’ This is the crowd they keep company with. ‘And they follow after reward. They do not defend the fatherless, nor does the cause of the widow come before them.’ They are not judging the cause of the fatherless and looking after the widow. They

are not concerned about those who can’t take care of themselves. They can vote themselves a massive pay increase and turn around and be ready to cut the Social Security benefits taking care of the elderly. There ultimately comes a day of reckoning. God is not impressed. He just doesn’t think that some of the priorities are exactly where they should be.

God then begins to talk about what is going to happen.

Verse 28, God says that there is going to be a destruction of the transgressors. After this kind of preliminary indictment where Isaiah sets the stage, he now goes into prophecies of what is going to come. It is not just going to stay this way. It’s not simply going to end with destruction because God begins to talk about what’s going to happen in the last days.

Isaiah 2:2, “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it.” The government of God is going to be established. All the different nations and different groups and tribes of people are going to begin to flow up to it. What are they going to say?

Verse 3, “Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

God is going to set up His government here on this earth. Jerusalem is going to be the future capital. It’s going to be worldwide in scope. It will be established in the top of the mountains. All nations shall flow to it. It will be headquartered in Jerusalem. Different groups of people are ultimately going to come up.

Later on in the book of Isaiah, we’re actually given a little bit of the sequence of the order in which some people are going to start coming up. We are going to see the way the government of God is actually established. We won’t get into it this time, but next time we will. It is interesting because it even names specific peoples who will be among the first to send ambassadors up to Jerusalem and say, ‘Will you please come down here and teach us? We want some of these things.’

Verse 4, “He shall judge between the nations, and shall rebuke many people;” Some people need to be instructed; others need to be exhorted and admonished. There are a few that are going

to have to be rebuked and corrected. It is a matter that depends on the attitude. Some are going to be willing. They just don't know; God instructs. There are others that are going to be pretty self-willed and are going to think they have a better way. God's not going to put it to a vote. One vote, all right! And the vote will be God's. The ballot will be unanimous. Man has proven and is going to have opportunity to prove he can't govern himself. If people are ignorant of the right way and you put it all together, then you have "collective ignorance"—and what good is that?

Verse 4, continuing, "...They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." God is going to rebuke many people until they beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. God is going to put a stop to the war-making ability. He sets the stage showing what is ultimately going to happen.

Verse 6, "For You have forsaken Your people, the house of Jacob, because they are filled with eastern ways [or, "full of divination from the east"];" This is one of the first things that God indicts the nation as He begins to get very specific. He sets the stage in chapter 2 as to what's ultimately going to happen. God is going to set up His government, and this is the way it is going to work out.

But what is happening right now? Why is God forsaking His people? God's people (the nations of modern-day Israel) aren't looking to God or the Bible. They are looking to some crackpot "new movement" or they are looking to some Eastern mysticism. They are looking to all kinds of ideas and crackpot philosophies—the so-called great wisdom of the East that God is not impressed with. Frankly, using a little common sense, look at the nations of India, China, etc., nations that have produced so-called great wisdom—the great philosophies of the East. What have those things ever done for the East? You find there some of the most poverty-stricken, superstitious, backward, ignorant areas on the face of the earth. What has it done for them? We want to import it over here and say maybe we should get a little of that. It's insane! Yet, this is what God says in verse 6 and this is what we find.

Verse 7, "Their land is also full of silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures;"

Verse 8, "The land is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands," God indicts the

nation for seeking answers elsewhere than from the God of Israel and His word. The nation is indicted for materialism and for idolatry. These are the things that are going to happen and are happening—the materialism, the idolatry, the looking elsewhere for answers, looking away from the God of Israel. God says there is going to come a consequence.

Verse 11, "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."

Verse 19, "They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily." I'll tell you what. When the earthquakes begin to hit and it culminates in the earthquake that occurs at Christ's return—which is going to be an earthquake of such mammoth proportion that it is actually going to reshape the topography of the earth—nobody is going to be strutting around as to how great they are. Let the forces of nature shake the ground right under you, and about that time, nobody is really impressed with himself. It has this humbling effect. God is going to get everybody's attention, and they are all going to be humble because it is kind of hard to be anything else when the ground is shaking. The most solid thing you know is shaking like a dishrag. God has a way of solving that.

He goes into details of the condition and state of our own society.

In Isaiah 3, He gives an indictment on society; there is a lack of wise, competent leadership in the nation. He describes a period of juvenile rebellion and women's lib, a society dominated largely by haughty women. He talks about the leadership, the mighty men, the judge, the prophet and the prudent. These all passed away; they are gone. God says you are not going to have the great, wise, competent leadership that has been available at certain times of crises in the past.

Isaiah 3:4, "I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them." They are children and babes by comparison.

Verse 5, "The people shall be oppressed, every one by another and every one by his neighbor;" We are talking about internal strife and civil strife. We are talking about people seeking to oppress one another to gain selfish, greedy advantage. We are talking about a society divided against itself.

Verse 5, continuing, "...the child will be insolent toward the elder, and the base toward the honorable." Here is a breakdown in the structure of society, a breakdown in respect.

I think one of the most fundamental things we see that has occurred in our society since the 1960s has been the breakdown of respect. Anybody who has been involved in the public school system over a period—of let's say a 25-year period of teaching to look back on—will point out and zero in on the absolute breakdown of respect as one of the major changes that has taken place in our society since the mid-60s. And when respect breaks down, the entire foundational units of society begin to crumble. When you lose respect in society—whether it is those who are younger respecting those who are older, whether it is for the structure of society, the respect and way others look up to those who are in a leadership capacity or the respectful interaction of people in society—when that respect begins to break down, the entire foundational units of society begin to crumble. This is zeroed in on.

Verse 6, "When a man takes hold of his brother in the house of his father, saying, 'You have clothing; you be our ruler, ...'" This part is not here, yet. Right now everybody and his brother are trying to be President. But believe me, before the end of this age, there's going to come a time when they almost can't find anybody who wants to be President.

Verse 7, they are going to say, 'Look, this thing is about to collapse, and I don't want to be responsible for it.' A time will come when the "rats" are going to be trying to desert the ship, trying to blame somebody else.

Verse 9, "The look of their countenance witnesses against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom; they do not hide it."

Driving here this afternoon, I was listening to a talk show interview and they were interviewing this guy. It started out how he had gone from being an athlete to being a dancer; before they got very far, he was talking about his lover, when he "came out" and all this kind of garbage. I wanted to pull over to the side of the road and throw up. "They declare their sin as Sodom; they do not hide it." There's no shame, no embarrassment. Drive down and look at the movie marquee. We advertise it.

Verse 9, continuing, "...Woe to their soul! For they have brought evil upon themselves."

Verse 12, "As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O My

people! Those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths."

Verses 16-18, God continues, "Moreover the Lord says: 'Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with outstretched necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, making a jingling with their feet, therefore the Lord will strike with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will uncover their secret parts.' In that day the Lord will take away the finery: the jingling anklets, the scarves, and the crescents..." He describes all of these various ornaments and things.

He talks about the time of captivity.

Verse 24, "And so it shall be: instead of a sweet smell there will be a stench; instead of a sash, a rope; instead of well-set hair, baldness; instead of a rich robe, a girding of sackcloth; and branding instead of beauty." This is talking about the destruction. When it talks about hair falling out, in some cases, perhaps, it is the results of radiation sickness—the destruction that is ultimately going to hit.

God describes a society whose priorities are upside down. The structure of society has been displaced. God designed proper roles for men, women and children, not roles of superiority and inferiority. God didn't create inferior people. God created human beings in His own image, but He created male and female. God structured a proper and appropriate role for each. One role is just as important as the other. Try eliminating one bunch and see how long the human race stays around.

God established that society have a certain structure. The family is the foundational unit of the structure of society. But we have here a society that is based on materialism. We have a society where the structure is turned upside down. We have a society where the hallmark is pride, haughtiness and what goes on the outside, not what comes out from the inside. There is a replacement, a substitution of the "daughters of Jezebel" in place of the "daughters of Sarah." It is a totally different set of priorities and values. What was looked up to, what was idealized, what was viewed as proper and appropriate, what was the ideal to aspire to, has been thrown aside and replaced with something new. God is not impressed.

We come on down and it talks about the destruction and the consequences of some of these things.

Isaiah 4:4-5, "When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the

blood of Jerusalem ..., then the Lord will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night.” God will bless the nation when He restores them and when the lesson has been learned.

What has happened to the nation?

Isaiah 5:1, “Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard:” He describes God’s vineyard (Israel) as protected, hedged about, walled off and protected from other nations.

Then in verse 5, God says that because the nation has not appreciated and valued what God has given, He is going to take away the hedge. He is going to allow the protection to be taken away.

I think we have not fully realized the extent to which our nation, the nations of modern Israel (Ephraim and Manasseh), have been hedged off and protected. We are the only nations that have not been invaded by foreign troops. The United States, Britain, Canada and Australia haven’t had foreign troops set foot on their soil. Can you name other nations that haven’t? Try to come up with one.

Look at Latin America and the other nations of Europe. Why could Hitler not go beyond the English Channel? Why couldn’t he get across? Why couldn’t he get beyond? Why couldn’t the Kaiser get beyond? Napoleon? Why hasn’t anyone ever been able to get beyond since the last migration of Israelites in 1066 under William the Conqueror? Since that time, foreign troops have never been able to set foot on British soil. Why? Why haven’t there been any invasions by foreign troops?

The only destructive war we ever had in this country was the war between our states where the states of the North and South fought against one another. That was a war so destructive that there were more American lives lost in that war than in every other war that we’ve ever fought added together. But those weren’t outside forces. Those were forces right here within the nation of Manasseh. We haven’t fully appreciated and valued what it means to not have foreign troops on our soil and not have our land devastated.

Russia can’t say that. Moscow was burned and destroyed. There was a tremendous loss of life, literally running up into many, many millions, tens of millions during World War II. I don’t think we recognize the devastation that Russia went through in the time of World War II. There were great quantities of the area that was occupied. They had gone through an invasion

during the time of Napoleon. There wasn’t destruction on quite as massive a scale, but there was an invasion. Nations like China, Japan and India have been invaded. God says, ‘I have put a hedge, a wall, but I am going to tear that wall down. I am going to open you up and let them come in.’

Then He begins an indictment as to why He is going to do that.

Verse 8, “Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, till there is no place where they may dwell alone in the midst of the land!” We haven’t properly used the things we have, even the way we’ve built our cities. God says selfishness and greed have been the motivating factors.

God says there is going to come a famine.

Verse 10, “For ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield one ephah.” Ten acres are going to yield about three-quarters of a bushel. That’s not very much. You’re not going to stay in the farming business very long.

Verses 11-12, “Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may follow intoxicating drink; who continue until night, till wine inflames them! The harp and the strings, the tambourine and flute, and wine are in their feasts; but they do not regard the work of the Lord,” They are partying. They are out abusing alcohol and various other drugs—wanting to party. That’s what they want to spend their life doing. They are not concerned about the work of God. They are not concerned about doing what God says. It’s pretty descriptive.

Verse 13, “Therefore my people have gone into captivity,” They are going to go into captivity.

Verse 20, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;” There is an upside-down set of values.

Verses 21-22, “Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe to men mighty at drinking wine, woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink...” Last of the big boozers! Their pride is how much they can manage to “put down” before somebody has to carry them out. There is this upside-down set of values that produced the epidemic of chemical abuse in this country. This is catastrophic!

Then there are very descriptive terms that describe the legal profession.

Verse 23, “Who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away justice from the righteous man!”

They are not out trying to find justice. It's an adversarial system with each side trying to win.

Back two or three years ago, I heard an interview with one of the most prominent criminal defense attorneys in this nation. He was being asked about his clients. He just made the point that he has seldom, if ever, defended a really innocent man. 'I am not after justice; I am out to try to get my client off. My job is to win the case for my client. That's what I'm being paid for. I don't have any apology for that. The District Attorney is out trying to win the case for the state. He's not trying to get justice. He's trying to win the case for the state, and I'm trying to win the case for my client.'

That was an analysis. God says 'woe to them who justify the wicked for reward.' They are not concerned about what's right, just and equitable. They are out to do what they can do and to get what they can get.

Verse 24, God says they are going to be devoured like fire devours stubble. Ever burned off a field? You know how that fire goes. God says, 'When I light the match, it is going to go like fire through a stubble field. It's going to go, "...because they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel."

We have a very descriptive area, describing an overview of the nation. It describes the greed, corruption and materialism. It describes the breakdown of respect, the very foundational force that holds society together. The structure of respect should begin in the home and reflect throughout all of society. It describes the emphasis on the external—the materialism and the things that God says are not of value in the long-term—and the rejection of the true values, rejection of the things that really proceed from God.

God set the stage having briefly introduced in chapter 2 the fact that, in the last days, the ultimate conclusion is that the God of heaven is going to set up a kingdom.

In Isaiah 6, we come to the calling that Isaiah received.

Verses 1-5, in the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah sees this vision, and in vision, he sees God sitting upon a throne. He is overwhelmed with this. He goes symbolically through the things that occur. He doesn't feel worthy.

Verses 6-7, in his vision, God symbolically cleanses him.

Verse 8, then God says, 'I have a job to do.' Isaiah's response is, "Here am I, send me." God then says that He will.

Isaiah 6:11-13, Isaiah asked the question, "Then I said, 'Lord, how long?' And He answered: 'Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, the houses are without a man, the land is utterly desolate, the Lord had removed men far away and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. But yet a tenth will be in it, and will return....'" There is going to come a captivity from which only a tenth of our nation will return. God is going to save out a tithe. We're looking at 90 percent destruction that will occur. That is destruction on a scale that we cannot imagine or comprehend. We don't realize what is taking shape, what is occurring right now, and the things that are beginning to shape up in Europe.

Isaiah 10:5, God talks about that, "'Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation.'" This nation is blindly negotiating away. We are talking about Germany reuniting and will they stay in NATO or not. We are ultimately going to find out that with a reunited Germany, NATO is going to be the least of their concerns. Whether or not they stay in is going to be the least of our concern because we are going to find that the Assyrian is going to be the rod of God's anger. God is going to use the Assyrian nation (the modern-day Germans) to chastise and correct our nation. That is going to occur.

We have to look at things that God indicts our nation for and the things that He hates. We have to look at these things as we go through. What we need to do is to ask God to change our set of values from the inside out. We want to learn to hate the things God hates; we want to learn to love and value the things that God values. In our lives as men, women, children, families, employees, employers and human beings, we want to learn to value and appreciate what God values and appreciates. We want to recognize the contrast in the values that are so common in our society.

We live in this society and are influenced by it. Our children are even more influenced by it. We must really dedicate ourselves to try to fill our minds with a godly set of values and to instruct our children as to why the set of values that they see at school, on television, entertainment and in all of the things around are not the values to hang on to because there are consequences that are

going to come. These things are destroying an entire nation.

In Isaiah 7, God begins to describe the alliance of Syria and Ephraim and the conflict that was taking place with ancient Judah at the time Isaiah was writing this—and the fact that that was not going to be a successful combine.

Verses 17-20, the Assyrians were going to take them into captivity. There were events that were going to happen that really, in a sense, foreshadow events that would happen way on down the line.

Notice the sign of salvation that God would give. Isaiah 7:14, “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” “Immanuel” means “God with us.” This is a prophecy of Jesus Christ. It is quoted in the New Testament (Matthew 1:23). This is set into the context of the prophecy as the nation is looking at what is sure destruction. They are looking at what they can see, and the warning is, ‘Don’t base what is going to happen on what you can see.’

At the time Isaiah wrote this, Judah saw Northern Israel (headed up by the tribe of Ephraim) was making an alliance with the nation of Syria. They were going to invade the Jews. It looked like destruction was on the horizon. This combine was going to come in and really “put it” to them. But before any of that really happened, the Assyrians came in and conquered the whole thing. The picture can radically change. Events can happen very quickly. Isaiah’s message was, ‘Look, don’t depend on what you see. God is the source of salvation.’

Isaiah 8:7-8, He continues talking about Assyria, how He is going to bring the king of Assyria into the nation and how it will pass through Judah. It describes the destructive conquest; after describing the invasions and the things that occur, then it begins to focus in on salvation.

Isaiah 8:13, “The Lord of hosts, Him you shall hallow; let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread.” Don’t be worried; don’t be impressed with what all these other nations and people are going to do. Focus on God!

Verse 14, “He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” He is speaking of the Messiah who was to be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. People took offense.

Verse 15, “And many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken, be snared and taken.”

Verse 16, “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples.”

Verse 20, “To the law and to the testimony!” That is a description of the Bible.

Revelation 12:17, remember when it describes the offsprings of the woman (the “Church”), “...who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” That expression is used two or three places. That is a description of the Church. “To the law and to the testimony” is simply another way of saying the Old and the New Testament. The law is reference to what we term “the Old Testament”; the testimony of Jesus Christ is what we refer to as “the New Testament.”

Isaiah 8:20, continuing, “...If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” We ultimately look to the Bible—to the law and to the testimony, to the law of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ—Genesis to Revelation. We look to the whole book.

Who’s going to be responsible for putting it together?

Verse 16, “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples.” This canon of Scripture would be completed among the disciples of the Messiah, the One who would be the “stone of stumbling.” Who gave us our New Testament? The disciples of Jesus! The disciples of Jesus Christ are the ones who sealed it up and finished it. It wasn’t the Catholic Church in the Nicene Council or something 200 or 300 years later. The only thing they ever tried to do was take it apart. It was already in existence when you read of the first Church Council discussing it. The only thing they discussed was trying to get rid of some of the books that were in it. The testimony was bound up and sealed up among the disciples. We have gone into that before, focusing in on Peter and John specifically.

Verse 17, “And I will wait on the Lord,”

Verse 19, “And when they shall say to you, ‘Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,’ [seeking out astrology, fortune-tellers, séances and things of that sort] should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?”

Verse 20, “To the law and to the testimony [That’s where you look—to the Bible.]! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” If someone claims to represent God, the real test is whether he is

teaching what the Bible teaches—“to the law and to the testimony.” Is he teaching the entire Bible?

Isaiah 9:1 is prophecy of the Messiah, a prophecy that He would come from beyond Jordan and Galilee of the Gentile nations.

Isaiah 9:2, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.” The reference here is a prophecy of Christ.

Verse 6, “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder.” Jesus Christ was born to be a King.

Verse 7, “Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it...” Jesus Christ is going to sit upon the throne of David when He returns. This is describing a prophecy of where salvation will come from. It will come from the Messiah who we know to be Jesus Christ.

God continues showing that the nation does not recognize its need for salvation.

Verse 10, they say, “The bricks have fallen down, but we will rebuild with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will replace them with cedars.” ‘We will work it all out; we will fix it some way or another.’

Verses 14-16, “Therefore the Lord will cut off head and tail from Israel, palm branch and bulrush in one day. The elder and honorable, he is the head; the prophet who teaches lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err, and those who are led by them are destroyed.” God indicts the leadership for causing the people to err. He says those who are in the responsible positions, those in the leadership positions, are causing error. They are not leading the nation in the right way.

Isaiah 10:1-3, “Woe to those who decree unrighteous decrees, ... to rob the needy of justice, and to take what is right from the poor of My people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless. What will you do in the day of punishment, ...”

Verses 5-7, “Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger, and the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Yet he does not mean so, nor does his

heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off not a few nations.”

Right now, as they are planning German reunification, that’s not what they mean in terms of the destruction. ‘He means not so, neither does his heart think so.’ At this point, they don’t really think that they are going to do it again, but it’s in their nature. When they go to war, they go to it with brutal efficiency and they are going to do it. God says they don’t realize what they are up to; right now, at this point, that’s not necessarily what they are actively planning. But the circumstances are going to come about and Satan is going to stir them up; they are going to come—and God is going to allow them to do so. God is going to remove the hedge, the fence, and He’s going to allow the Assyrians to be the rod of His anger, to chastise and correct this nation in a way we have never experienced. He indicts us as a hypocritical nation. Then God is going to deal with the Assyrians after that.

Verse 12, “Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Lord has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, that He will say, ‘I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks.’” God is going to use the Assyrians (the Germans) to punish us, and then He’s going to “take care” of them. He’s going to turn around and use the Russians and Chinese to punish them. There’s going to be a succession. We’re going to see the succession as we go through the Major Prophets. And we will ultimately see the battle that will actually be fought several years into the Millennium. There are events that are going to occur.

Verse 20, “And it shall come to pass in that day that the remnant of Israel, and such as have escaped of the house of Jacob, will never again depend on him who defeated them, but will depend on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.” They are going to come back from captivity. They are going to learn a lesson.

Isaiah 11:1, we are told, “There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.” This is speaking of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who was born of the seed of David. David was the son of Jesse.

Verses 2-5, “The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. His delight is in the fear of the Lord, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with

righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist.”

He is going to judge in righteousness; He’s going to judge with equity. There’s going to have to be correction and things straightened out. But notice the extent of change which is going to take place.

Verses 6-7, “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.”

Verse 9, “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” When the knowledge of God is pervasive, God is literally even going to change the nature of the animals. God uses wild animals as a description of the way many of the kingdoms of this world act.

When God describes the great world-ruling Gentile kingdoms in the book of Daniel and later in Revelation, He describes them under the guise of wild animals. He describes them as animals that are out for prey, out to devour and to destroy—under the analogy of lions, leopards, bears and this type. God says this is the nature human beings have—they act like a bunch of wild animals. That very nature, even in the animals, is going to be changed to symbolize, to demonstrate, that there is a different way of life. There’s going to come peace, rest and tranquility. There’s not going to be the danger and the harm.

Verse 10, “And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people [in other words, stand like a “flag” that everybody can seek to]; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious.” It really is!

Verse 11, “It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left, from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and the islands of the sea.” The remnant of Israel is scattered in Assyria, North Africa and various areas.

Verse 12, “He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”

Verse 13, “Also the envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim.” There is going to be peace that is going to occur because the nations of Israel will have learned a lesson when God begins to bring them back from the captivity. At the end of the captivity, at the beginning of the Millennium, they are going to come back in a humble, submissive and teachable attitude.

Verse 15, “The Lord will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt;”

Verse 16, “There will be a highway for the remnant of His people who will be left from Assyria, as it was for Israel in the day that he came up from the land of Egypt.” God is going to begin to bring His people back from captivity at the beginning of the Millennium. He’s going to gather them back by way of a highway God’s going to have constructed right through part of what’s now sea. There’s going to be a highway to bring them down directly so that they can come back.

Isaiah 12 is a very short chapter that ties in with this.

Isaiah 12:1, “...‘O Lord, I will praise You; ..., Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.” It describes the time of the Millennium.

Verse 3, “Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” A time of salvation will be opened up. God indicts the nation of Israel, shows their sins, shows what He disapproves of, shows the calamitous events that are going to occur and then He shows the salvation that He holds out—the only source of salvation.

Now He begins to focus in on some of the nations He uses as a tool against Israel and what is going to happen to them.

Isaiah 13:1, “The burden against Babylon....”

Verse 6, “Wail, for the day of the Lord is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.” This is the Day of the Lord that is going to come. The Day of the Lord comes after the tribulation.

Verse 10, it talks about the heavenly signs.

Verses 11-12, “I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a mortal more rare than the fine gold, a man more than the

golden wedge of Ophir.” God will give a sense of priorities. When all this is over, people won’t place value on material things. People place a lot more value on material things than they do on other human beings. God says, ‘When I get through, they are going to learn what’s important.’

Verse 13, “Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts and in the day of His fierce anger.” This describes the Day of the Lord.

Verse 17, “Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them [speaking of Babylon], who will not regard silver; and as for gold, they will not delight in it.” The Medes are the nation that’s settled in the area of what is now the modern-day Ukraine. That is part of Russia, the Soviet Union. What you have and what we are going to see is the pendulum swings that take place.

Right now there is coming into a greater European orbit of what is Eastern Europe, Central Europe and Western Europe. There is coming a European orbit that is certainly going to include many of the nations of what we’ve considered behind-the-Iron-Curtain nations—nations of Central Europe that we’ve tended to think of as the Eastern Bloc. We are even seeing some of the nations that are constituent parts of the Soviet Union in that European orbit. I think that much of Russia and some of the other nations are going to, at least for a time, be allied with the Beast Power. Some of the nations of Central Europe will actually be part of it. I don’t think there’s any indication that Russia will not ever be one of the ten kings. But I think, clearly at the beginning, there is a very great likelihood that they are going to be allied with it. It may be part of that nuclear arsenal that winds up being used against us. Where is Germany going to get their nuclear arsenal? It’s evidently going to be in the context of a European defense force. Where’s it going to come from? The scripture shows that as events go on, there is going to come disillusionment and a lack of trust between Germany and Russia that is going to involve a “double-cross.”

If you remember, World War II started out with Hitler and Stalin being allies. Stalin was Hitler’s ally. That’s the way he picked up Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, a good chunk of Poland, parts of Romania and parts of “this” and “that.” That’s where he got it all at the beginning of the War. He stole it at the beginning of World War II

when he and Hitler were allies. They made a deal and split it up between themselves.

And then Hitler “stabbed him in the back.” Hitler didn’t trust Stalin. When he thought he was in a position to do it, he launched an attack on Stalin. He caught him by surprise; then Stalin launched his counterattack on Hitler. Hitler bogged down as the Russian front won by “General Winter”—the most formidable “soldier” the Russians have. When it drops to 40 degrees below zero, things don’t work very well. The mechanized equipment the Germans brought in froze up, literally.

It’s an interesting story if you read it. It was the last successful use of horse cavalry in modern warfare. Do you realize that took place in World War II? The weather dropped to 40, 50, 60 degrees below zero, and all the mechanized equipment froze up. The Russians brought in Mongol horsemen from Siberia. The Germans were on foot and about to freeze. All their tanks and lubricating oils froze up. The Russians brought in by train these Mongol horsemen and thousands and thousands of Siberian ponies from Siberia. Those things you couldn’t freeze out if you tried. They lived for thousands of years in Siberia. They brought in all these Mongol horsemen. They hitched those horses up to Russian stuff, pulled it around and “rode circles” around the Germans. The Germans couldn’t even get their guns to fire. The things froze up. That’s what defeated Hitler on the Russian front. It’s amazing when technology breaks down—you go back to “old faithful.” There are things that survive.

Anyway, what did you have? You had the pendulum swing. You’re going to have the same thing. Basically what is going to happen, the first woe is Europe coming against Russia. The Germans and the Russians have never trusted one another. They have worked together at various times in history, but there’s a lack of trust. The first woe is Europe attacking Russia. They are going to try to get a pre-emptive attack. They are not going to be successful.

The second woe is the Medes (Communist bloc of nations) are going to come. There is going to be a backlash. Communism right now is being phased out, but don’t think that all the hard-liners and that entire bunch will disappear. They may fade from power. But what’s going to happen when this newfound prosperity and what promises to be success in linking up with the West turns to dust? When this turns into dust, you are going to have a pendulum swing and you

are going to have an alliance of Russia and China coming back.

Verse 17 describes the Medes, “Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, who will not regard silver; and as for gold, they will not delight in it.” There’s going to be a revival, a takeover, of the old hard-liner communists. They are going to rise up and unite the whole Asiatic area of China and India, and it will be dominated by Russia. This will occur well on into the tribulation. These are the events of the Day of the Lord. These are the events in the last year before Christ returns. That pendulum swing will swing back, and they will come in and devastate Europe. They will devastate Babylon. The destruction that you read of in Revelation 18—the destruction and nuclear devastation of modern Rome—that’s who’s going to do it.

Verses 19-20, “And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans’ pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It will never be inhabited....” Now that occurred to ancient Babylon, and it’s going to occur to modern Babylon.

Revelation 18 makes plain it’s going to occur to modern Babylon because Revelation 18 was written way after it had happened to ancient Babylon. That was already old stuff when Revelation 18 was written. Isaiah prophesied it and it happened to ancient Babylon, but it’s going to happen to modern Babylon. Revelation 18 makes that plain.

Isaiah 14:1-2, “For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will still choose Israel, and settle them in their own land. The strangers will be joined with them, and they will cling to the house of Jacob. Then people will take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them for servants and maids in the land of the Lord; they will take them captive whose captives they were, and rule over their oppressors.”

When Christ comes back and all of this occurs, those who were the keepers of the concentration camps and whatever are going to come bringing out the captives, kind of “dusting them off” and taking them back gently. They are going to try to do what they can to get out of trouble. The “shoe is going to be on the other foot.” The way God is going to get the point across to those who were part of the Beast power is by making them servants. They are going to be brought back and they are going to be made servants. Everybody needs to learn to serve.

Here’s a group of people brought back to Israel in the position of servants. Very possibly, it may be a generation or may even be the time of the first Jubilee that the people of the Beast power are brought back from their position of servants in Israel to their own land. So, they’ll have the opportunity of learning to serve. That’s a good place for those who were the haughty, the mighty, those who dominated, to learn how to serve and to perform lowly functions as servants. We all have to learn to serve. There is nothing wrong with being a servant. Jesus came as a servant. He was willing to wash the feet of the disciples. We need to have that attitude of service. Leadership from God’s standpoint is service. There are those whose opinion of themselves and their status are such that they are going to need to be in the role of servants in the beginning of the Millennium.

Obviously, the law of God will be such that certainly by the time of the Jubilee, they will go out and be given back their own land. They will have a chance after they have had a generation or two to really learn the lesson and have it impressed. Then they will be to a point where they can be trusted to go back to their land and be instructed by those of the government of God.

Verse 3, “It shall come to pass in the day the Lord gives you rest from your sorrow, and from your fear and the hard bondage in which you were made to serve.” God is going to give rest from sorrow, fear and from hard bondage.

Verse 4, “that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon....”

Verse 7, “The whole earth is at rest and quiet; they break forth into singing.” That’s descriptive of the time of the Messiah, of Tomorrow’s World, a time of a millennial Sabbath.

Verses 12-15, we have a description of the one who is really the power behind the throne, the ultimate king of Babylon—Lucifer. His desire was to ascend into heaven and to exalt his throne above the stars of God. He wanted to be like the Most High. Lucifer became Satan and is ultimately the source of all of the problems because this satanic attitude is the source of all the problems.

We end up here in chapter 14 with Lucifer desiring to take God’s place and the events that are going to occur.

There’s an awful lot packed into the book of Isaiah. There is an awful lot that deals with the things that are going on here and now. It gives God’s view of our society; it gives His

perspective. It gives the events that are going to occur immediately ahead and then on beyond that into the World Tomorrow. There is an awful lot that we have yet to uncover as we continue through the Major Prophets.

This is where we will conclude this evening. Next time we are going to cover chapters 15 through 35. I hope to see you here for that the next time.

Bible Study # 49
March 13, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Isaiah 15—35

We are looking at the second section of Isaiah. This particular section of Isaiah, that we **are looking at this evening, deals primarily with prophecies against some specific Gentile nations, as well as some directly against Israel.** This section **concludes with accounts of God's intervention in human affairs and also a description of the time when God's government holds sway during the Millennium.** We will also **notice prophecies relating to the Church in the place of safety.** I think there are a couple of prophecies that many of you may not have been familiar with before that I think you will find of interest. It gives us at least a little bit of insight.

Isaiah 15 opens up with a prophecy against Moab. The Moabites are a people who inhabit much of modern-day Iraq and some of modern-day Jordan. The Moabites and the Ammonites are basically in the area of Jordan and Iraq. The Ammonites are centered in Jordan. The capital city of Jordan takes its name from that ancient tribal name. It's spelled the same way and pronounced "Ammon" today. Basically, this is where those peoples were anciently, and the modern nation is still pretty much in the same geographic boundaries that exist today. In many cases, you have several different ethnic groups that are lumped together inside the same modern nation-state. It's not exact. Iraq, for instance, consists of several different groups such as the ancient Moabites, as well as a certain amount of Arab stock from Arabia that moved in there at an earlier time, as well as other ethnic groups such as the Kurds and others like that.

The description here describes some of the waste in which Moab is laid.

Isaiah 15:1, "...Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste and destroyed, because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste and destroyed." Moab is laid waste.

Certainly in this context, we are told in Revelation 16:12 that the Euphrates River will ultimately be the demarcation line between East and West and that the kings of the East will assemble their army east of the Euphrates. The Euphrates will be dried up and they will cross it and will invade. The Euphrates goes through a goodly portion of Iraq. It kind of divides the

nation of Iraq, which would give us the indication that Iraq is ultimately going to be devastated and at least partially occupied if that's the case. Chapter 15 kind of fits in with some of the other prophecies.

Isaiah 16 is an interesting section.

Isaiah 16:1, "Send the lamb to the ruler of the land, from Sela to the wilderness, to the mount of the daughter of Zion." The word "Sela" in the margin says "Petra." "Sela" is the Hebrew name, while "Petra" is the Greek name of the same geographic location. It is known today by its Greek name "Petra." "Petra" and "Sela" mean the same thing. They both have the meaning of "a great rock." The modern place-name of this location, Petra, is known by its Greek name, but it is referred to here in the Hebrew text by the Hebrew name. Many of the commentaries recognize the location to which is being referred as the area that we would term modern-day Petra.

Here is a description that mentions "the ruler of the land from Sela [the area of Petra] to the wilderness, to the mount of the daughter of Zion." It is describing the area that would include Petra. Now the modern-day ruler of that area is King Hussein of Jordan. That is currently in his territory. 'Send a lamb (send a present, as it were) to the ruler of this area from Petra to the wilderness.'

Verses 2-5, "For it shall be a wandering bird thrown out of the nest; so shall be the daughters of Moab at the fords of the Arnon. 'Take counsel, execute judgment; make your shadow like the night in the middle of the day; hide the outcasts, do not betray him who escapes. Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab, be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler. For the extortioner is at an end, devastation ceases, the oppressors are consumed of the land. In mercy the throne will be established; and One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness.'"

By the time we get down to verse 5, it is pretty obvious from the context, time wise, that it brings us down to the return of Christ because it brings us down to a time when the extortioner will be at an end, when the spoiler will cease, when oppressors will be consumed out of the land, when finally, in mercy, the throne will be established and a King will reign in righteousness there in the tabernacle of David. That is something that is yet to happen and will occur at the return of Christ.

We're looking at prophecy that centers around the area of Petra. It has to do with Moabites, many of whom have been dislodged from location. At least a portion of Iraq has been invaded, at least up to the Euphrates River. There are many dispossessed, homeless people. They're coming into an area that is inhabited by many of their kinsman.

Actually Moab and Jordan were of the same family. Until Iraq overthrew the monarchy back around 1960 or something like that, the monarch of Iraq was the uncle of King Hussein of Jordan. They were very closely related; it is the same family that ruled both kingdoms. So, they are related peoples, related kingdoms in related areas. They border. If you become dislocated, the logical place you flee is into Jordan there in the area of Petra, which is a fairly empty area.

In verse 2, the statement describes the Moabites as a "wandering bird."

Verse 1, there is a statement made basically to "the ruler of the land" because he is the one who is addressed.

Verses 3-4, "...make your shadow like the night in the middle of the day; hide the outcasts, do not betray him who escapes. Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab;" Moab is not God's outcasts. God addresses Moab and He says, 'Let My outcasts dwell with you, Moab.' This is one of the indications that we have looked at to make us wonder in terms of the location of the place of protection—the place of safety for God's people during the tribulation—as perhaps being the area of Petra. You have probably heard that speculation. Well, this is one of several verses in the Bible that seems to indicate Petra as being a place where at least some of those who are called "God's outcasts" will dwell and be protected until the time of the return of Christ. This is kind of the setting and context here.

Isaiah 17:1, "The burden against Damascus." This chapter discusses Damascus. We have addressed the burden of Damascus or modern-day Syria. Damascus is the ancient and the modern capital of Syria. It's one of those unique situations. Damascus, to my knowledge, is the oldest continuously inhabited city. It has continually been the capital of that area since way back in Biblical times. It is a rather unique situation when you consider all the fighting and the wars that have gone on with so many invading troops, off and on. Most cities have been destroyed a long time ago, and others have been built to take their place. Damascus is still there. But Damascus is not going to remain

because it will ultimately be taken away from being a city and become a ruinous heap.

The timing of that is brought out.

Verses 7-8, "In that day a man will look to his Maker, and his eyes will have respect for the Holy One of Israel. He will not look to the altars, the work of his hands; he will not respect what his fingers have made," That's looking on into the future. The setting of this prophecy is at the time of Christ, the time when Damascus will ultimately be destroyed.

In Isaiah 18, we are addressing an interesting prophecy in terms of what it describes. What it describes are the very first people who are going to voluntarily send emissaries up to Jerusalem and say, 'Come and teach us your ways.'

Isaiah 18:1-2, "Woe to the land shadowed with buzzing wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, which sends ambassadors by sea, even in vessels of reed on the waters, saying, 'Go, swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth of skin [KJV, "scattered and peeled"; margin reference, "outspread and polished"]," The Jewish translation renders it "a people who are very tall and who are oiled"—a reference to a style of presenting themselves.

The KJV is very awkward, but it is descriptive of the area south of Ethiopia—the area beyond the rivers of Ethiopia where the headwaters come down. We are looking at the area that centers on southern Ethiopia, Uganda and down into the area of Kenya—that area in East Africa is what is described. One particular tribe of the people who inhabit that area, the Watusi, is noted for their height. They are a people who are very tall and slim as compared to the peoples in other areas of Africa. That particular group of people is the dominant people there in East Africa. It's a descriptive term of a rather unique situation as we are going to notice here in chapter 18.

Let me summarize it. That is one of the areas that is the most devastated today. Look at the news of the Ethiopia, Uganda areas where large amounts of people have been dying of starvation and various diseases. It is one of the most tragic circumstances on the face of the earth today when you look at the destruction that has been wrought by the civil wars and the various things. What is described here? This describes the very first people who are going to voluntarily send emissaries up to Jerusalem and say, 'Come and teach us of your ways.'

Verse 7, "In that time a present will be brought to the Lord of hosts from a people tall and smooth of skin [People who are tall and oiled as their

traditional style of native presentation; they are noted for that.], and from a people terrible from their beginning onward, a nation powerful and treading down, whose land the rivers divide—to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, to Mount Zion.” What it describes here is at the time of Christ’s return. There is nobody who’s going to be more ready to respond than these people down below the rivers of Ethiopia, who have perhaps suffered more in the latter portion of the 20th century than any other area of the earth. When you read a little bit of what is going on and what has been going on there, it is a very terrible circumstance.

You read in Isaiah 2 of how many nations are going to say, “Come let us go up to the house of the Lord, and He will teach us of His ways.” Those who are evidently singled out here as being the first to respond are those in the area in East Africa, an area that has been trodden down, an area that has really suffered quite a bit of tragedy and trauma, particularly in recent years. It’s kind of an interesting inset as it describes their response. By that time, they will have had enough of what man’s system produces, and it won’t take a whole lot of convincing that they want what Jesus Christ has brought there to Jerusalem.

Isaiah 19:1, “The burden against Egypt.” We address the subject of Egypt. We find what is ultimately going to come about in Egypt.

Verse 2, “I will set Egyptians against Egyptians; everyone will fight against his brother, and everyone against his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom.” Egypt is ultimately going to be confronted with a great deal of internal unrest and civil strife. There’s a great deal of that below the surface in Egypt right now, and this is what is ultimately going to occur.

Verse 4, “And the Egyptians I will give into the hand of a cruel master, and a fierce king will rule over them,” says the Lord, the Lord of hosts.” This is, evidently, the Beast power. Other prophecies in Daniel show that they will come in and occupy Egypt.

In verse 5, we find the drought that is going to afflict Egypt.

Verse 17, “And the land of Judah will be a terror to Egypt; everyone who makes mention of it will be afraid in himself,” That certainly has already come about. Remember the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War? You realize that the land of Judah has become a terror to the land of Egypt, to the point that it says “everyone who makes mention of it will be afraid in himself.” It

scares them to even say the word. It singles out that it is the land of Judah because the nation that calls itself Israel in the Middle East is really, in Biblical terminology, the land of Judah.

Verse 21 describes what is ultimately going to occur, “Then the Lord will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day, and will make sacrifice and offerings;” God is going to have to strike Egypt. God is not going to have to strike Uganda, Ethiopia and Kenya when He comes back.

Verse 22, He is going to have to strike Egypt. But after He strikes it, He will heal it and they will return to the Lord. Other prophecies in Zechariah show that it’s going to take a while to get the point. They are not going to want to come up to the Feast and do certain things at the beginning (Zechariah 14:18-19). God will have to punish them, but He will do so for the purpose of bringing them to repentance. And when they repent, He will heal them.

There will ultimately be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria.

Verses 23-24, “In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians. In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land.”

Here we find described that in Tomorrow’s World when the lessons have been learned, Egypt and Assyria (modern-day Germany) will rank up near Israel as the great nations there in the midst of the land. They will serve as a blessing and as a conduit of God’s truth.

Of course, ancient Egypt gave their pagan religion to much of the rest of the world—not only to the rest of Africa, but also to other areas of the world. Greece borrowed their religion from the Egyptians, and the Romans borrowed it from the Greeks. So much of paganism goes back to the ancient Egyptians. They were responsible for that, both in Africa as well as in Europe. They have been a source of a great deal of problems in the past. The Germans (Assyrians) have been a source of problems and destruction, but when those people finally are converted, they will be a source of things that are positive. They will be a blessing in the midst of the land. It even describes a great highway that is going to be built that is going to connect Egypt with Germany, going through the land of Israel. It will be something at that time that will serve as a source of blessings to all nations.

Isaiah 20 is more of a historical prophecy inset. It describes an ancient Assyrian captivity of the Egyptians and Ethiopians, based on what had occurred a little earlier in Ashdod.

Isaiah 21 addresses the areas of Elam and Media. This refers to the Slavic world; the Slavic peoples are basically descended from Elam. Media is a related people. This would refer, particularly, to the Ukraine. This would be an area that would be descriptive of much of Eastern and Central Europe.

Isaiah 21:2, “A distressing vision is declared to me; the treacherous dealer deals treacherously, and the plunderer plunders, Go up, O Elam! Besiege, O Media! All its sighing I have made to cease.”

Verse 9, “‘And look, here comes a chariot of men with a pair of horsemen!’ And he answered and said, ‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen! And all the carved images of her gods he has broken to the ground.’”

This section describes these areas, the alliance that is put together (of East and West in Europe); there’s going to be a lot of treachery involved in that. The peoples involved are ultimately going to betray one another, just as Napoleon and the Czar betrayed one another. Napoleon betrayed the Czar way back in the early 1800s, and that ultimately led to Napoleon’s defeat. Hitler didn’t learn anything from history and did exactly the same thing with Stalin. And there are ultimately going to be more treacherous dealings in the future. It is going to lead to the destruction of Babylon (modern Rome).

Verse 11, “The burden of Dumah [Dumah is an Arab tribe that lives in the area of Petra; that’s their modern-day location.]. He calls to me out of Seir [“Seir” is the ancient name for the area of which Petra was the capital.], ‘Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?’” Here’s another indication of a group of people in the area of Petra. The modern-day native inhabitation right around that area is addressing one whom they regard as the watchman. If you go back to the book of Ezekiel, you will find that’s a term used to describe God’s work in the end time. They address one who they regard as the watchman. They see what’s going on and they inquire of him how much time is left.

Verse 12, “The watchman said, ‘The morning comes, and also the night. If you will inquire, inquire; Return! Come back!’” The watchman simply tells them that they had better turn to God and then come again.

Verse 13 concludes with the burden directed toward Arabia (Saudi Arabia, the modern Arabian Peninsula).

Verses 16-17, Kedar is addressed. Kedar is the main tribe of Saudi Arabia. It describes their destruction and being diminished (KJV, “overwhelmed”).

Isaiah 22:1, “The burden against the Valley of Vision.”

Then it refers to the time of the Day of the Lord.

Verse 5, “For it is a day of trouble and treading down and perplexity by the Lord of hosts in the Valley of Vision—” It describes some of the events that are going to come about.

Isaiah 23:1, “The burden against Tyre.” Ancient Tyre, addressed here, is symbolic of the state of Babylon the Great (modern Rome). In fact, some of the statements from Isaiah 23 are actually quoted and paraphrased back in Revelation 18 when it describes the fall of Babylon the Great. It describes the destruction of how it’s going to be overthrown.

Tyre was the great coastal trading city of the ancient world. It is used to typify the great trading combine that will ultimately arise. Actually, many of the descendants of the ancient people of Tyre have settled in portions of the southern part of Italy. Tyre, as the great trading capital of the ancient world, in that sense, is symbolic of Babylon the Great, which will not only be the religious, military and political capital, but it will also be a great trading economic combine.

It describes how God will bring about its destruction.

Isaiah 24:1, “Behold, the Lord will make the earth empty and make it waste, distorts its surface and scatter abroad its inhabitants.”

Verse 3, “The land shall be entirely emptied and utterly plundered,”

Verse 5, “The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.” You can go back to Exodus 31 and see where the Sabbath is described as an everlasting covenant.

Verse 6, as a result of that, “Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left.”

I will point this out because this is a verse that is quoted by the Seventh Day Adventist. If any of you are familiar with the writings of Ellen G. White and the Seventh Day Adventist Church, their teaching is that the earth will be desolate

during the Millennium. The Seventh Day Adventists, those who followed Ellen G. White, were split-off from the Church of God back in the 1850s-1860s. There were those who had been associated with the Church who accepted her as a prophetess and followed her visions; that gave rise to the Seventh Day Adventist Church, which dates from about 1860. Her teaching is that the saints will spend the Millennium in heaven taking part in the investigative judgment—pouring over the books—kind of like one great thousand-year soap opera. And you get to find out everything your neighbors were doing that you always suspected but never knew. Who in the world wants to spend a thousand years watching a sordid soap opera with every detail of every thing? This is what they anticipate doing. Their statement is that Satan is chained by circumstances because there is nobody on earth to deceive. That's their explanation.

In her writing, *The Great Controversy*, to prove her point that the earth is desolate during the Millennium, she quotes (or misquotes) Isaiah 24:6. The way she quotes it in the book is, "Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned [period]." If you read her book, you would not know that there were four words left out. She didn't quote the last part of the verse. She put a period where the Bible has a comma and left out the words, "...and few men are left." Yes, there is going to be great destruction and great devastation and all kinds of things are going to happen, but there are going to still be a few people who live through it.

Verse 10, "The city of confusion is broken down; every house is shut up,"

Verse 12, "In the city desolation is left, and the gate is stricken with destruction."

Verses 19-20, "The earth is violently broken, the earth is split open, the earth is shaken exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard,"

Verse 21, "It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord will punish on high the host of exalted ones," It describes the destruction that is going to come about, but there are going to be people who survive the events of the Day of the Lord. There will be a few men left.

Isaiah 25:6-7, once the earth has come to this point and the world has come to this devastation, God steps in and says, "And in this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all people a feast of choice pieces [KJV, "fat things"], a feast of

wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of well-refined wines on the lees. And He will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations." In other words, the veil that covers the eyes of people so they cannot see and understand is going to be removed. God is going to make a feast of fat things to all people. There is going to be a time of abundance and a time of blessing. To make that possible, the veiled understanding that has kept people from being able to really see and understand is going to be removed.

Verses 8-9, "He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken. And it will be said in that day: 'Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us.'" Certainly God is going to pour out His blessings once the world has come to its senses. Isaiah 26 continues with this theme. It's basically a song of praise to God.

Isaiah 27:1, "In that day the Lord with His severe sword, great and strong, will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan that twisted serpent;" This is descriptive of Satan the devil. It's the terminology back in Revelation 12:9 referring to Satan, that great dragon.

Verse 6, "Those who come He shall cause to take root in Jacob; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." Once the remnant is regathered and brought back, they are going to begin to have families. They are going to blossom and bud. They are going to begin to multiply and ultimately fill the face of the earth with fruit. Israel, at that time, will really be the blessing to all nations that God had intended for them to be. They will be a blessing as they begin to spread out once again evidencing God's way.

Verse 13, "So it shall be in that day that the great trumpet will be blown; they will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, and they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." This refers to the return of Jesus Christ and the effect that it will have on the Israelites ready to perish in the concentration camps of the future. It will be that final fulfillment of the great day of Trumpets.

Isaiah 28 begins an indictment on Israel of the things that lead to their captivity.

Isaiah 28:1, "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim [It might be pointed out that one of the highest concentrations of alcohol

abuse in the western world is in the area of Britain.], whose glorious beauty is a fading flower....” That has been the case. The glory of the British Empire has faded like a flower.

In verse 3, it describes this crown of pride that is there, and they are going to be brought down. God will bring them to repentance.

Verse 5, “...to the remnant of His people.” Only a remnant is left.

We have a little insight in terms of how the Bible is written.

Verses 9-11, “Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breast? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.’ For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people.”

Verse 13, “But the word of the Lord was to them, ‘precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little,’ that they might go and fall backward, and be broken....” The Bible is written where you have to get a little here and a little there and you have to build on it—one line upon another, here a little, there a little, but you build it taking precept upon precept, line upon line—build it in a step-by-step way. Those who will be taught have to mature.

Verse 9, “Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breast?” They have to take it a step at a time. The Bible is written so that those who are not being called are simply deceived. Even though they can read the Book, they don’t understand it.

Verse 16, “Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily.’” This refers to Jesus Christ.

In Isaiah 29, we continue with prophecies about Israel.

Isaiah 29:1, “Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt!” “Ariel” is a poetic term used to refer to Israel which means “lion of God.” That is the Hebrew translation of Ariel.

Verse 13, “Therefore the Lord said: ‘Inasmuch as these people draw near to Me with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, ...’”

Verse 14, God says He is going to work a marvelous work among them. The nation is

ultimately going to hear, but God describes a nation that pays lip service—and that’s all. They are not sincerely seeking God. They pay lip service to God and to religion, but their heart, their priorities, are elsewhere.

Verse 15, “Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the Lord, and their works are in the dark; they say, ‘Who sees us?’ and, ‘Who knows us?’” Can you imagine anybody being so dumb as to think that what he is doing is secret and nobody knows? Yeah, we can all have imagined that. The point is that God says “woe” to somebody who thinks he is “putting it over” by doing it secretly in the dark and nobody will ever know. God knows! Who are we serving? God knows!

The fact that no human being saw us doesn’t prove anything. If I do something in a dark closet, God can see in the dark as well as He can see in the daylight. I haven’t hidden anything from God, and God’s the One who ultimately judges. I better live my life in sincerity and truth before God, recognizing that God sees and hears. God will ultimately deal with the nation and with those who take this approach. It describes some of that through the rest of chapter 29.

Isaiah 30:1-2, “Woe to the rebellious children,’ says the Lord, ‘who take counsel, but not of Me, and who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; who walk to go down to Egypt, and have not asked My advice, to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!’” Israel is not seeking God but is seeking Egypt and other nations.

Verse 7, “For the Egyptians shall help in vain and to no purpose. Therefore I have called her Rahab-Hem-Shebeth [“Rahab sits idle].” KJV, “...therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still.” They won’t accomplish anything, and our nation won’t accomplish anything by trying to work something out with them. Perhaps they will be looking to them trying to work out something over the issue of oil or the Suez. We need to look to God.

Verse 8, “Now go, write it before them on a tablet, and note it on a scroll, that it may be for time to come [KJV, margin, “Heb. the latter day”], forever and ever.”

Verses 9-10, “That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children who will not hear the law of the Lord; who say to the seers, ‘Do not see,’ and to the prophets, ‘Do not prophesy to us right things; speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits.’”

‘We want you to tell us something nice.’ People don’t want to be told their sins by religious leaders. They don’t even want to be told the problem by the analysts and political leaders. They want to believe that everything is going to get better and better, and if somebody comes along and starts telling the seriousness of what’s going to happen, people don’t like that.

Because the politicians are aware of that, none of them want to talk about the seriousness of some of the things that are happening or are going to happen because that’s a good way to lose an election. You have to make people think that they can have a free lunch, take a free ride, put it all on their Visa and MasterCard and the bill will never come due.

That’s what we are doing as a nation. We have over a hundred billion dollars a year deficit as a nation (1990). You can’t live beyond your means indefinitely. You try it. I don’t recommend that you do. Perhaps some of you have. Sooner or later, somebody shows up at the door and they are there to collect. That’s life and it happens to nations as well as individuals. But the nation doesn’t want to hear that. We don’t want to be told. We don’t want to pay higher taxes, but we don’t want to get any of our government services cut either. We want everything! Everybody’s for cutting the government, but they never want to cut anything that applies to them. Cut defense!

Boeing has a big plant in Lake Charles, Louisiana. What do you want to do—cut the Boeing contracts? We have people here that are involved in that, and a lot of people in Lake Charles are involved directly or indirectly. You want to cut defense? Fine. That means you’re going to cut out a lot of Boeing’s contracts, and that means they are going to shut plants and lay off people. Not only lay off people, but what about all the related service industry? You’d shut down bases, etc.

The point is nobody wants whatever he’s getting money from to close down. We don’t want anything cut off, but we also don’t want to pay. You can’t do it that way. You can’t live life on a MasterCard or Visa forever and think that the bills will never come.

We say to our seers, to our prophets (both the secular and the religious sort), ‘Tell us nice things; don’t tell us bad news.’ We don’t want to hear bad things. ‘Tell us what nice people we are and how everything is going to get better and better. Paint a rosy picture. Give us some confidence. Make us feel good about ourselves.’ People want that in the secular realm and in the

religious realm. Hopefully, we will never get to the point in our lives that we don’t like being told bad news.

If we really find ourselves getting upset when corrective sermons come, then maybe we should go back and read Isaiah 30:10 and say, ‘No, that’s not the category I want to be in.’ When we don’t want to be told any bad news, then we are really cutting off our opportunities to grow. Correction hurts! I don’t enjoy being corrected, in that sense. It’s not pleasant at the time, but we can appreciate it afterwards because that’s the way we learn and grow.

Hebrew 12:11, God tells us, ‘Now no chastening for the present is pleasant, but afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness.’ I didn’t enjoy it when my dad put his belt on my rear end. I look back on it and I am very thankful that I had a father who loved me enough that he put that belt on me when I needed it. He held a tight rein on things, and I appreciate and value that.

It describes the nation and their attitude. They don’t want correction; therefore, they don’t want the plain word of God. This problem is ultimately going to be solved because when the Millennium comes and God’s government is set up, and after all these things are over with, they will be taught.

Isaiah 30:20-21, “And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.”

That is going to be a very interesting thing at the beginning of the Millennium as people get used to that. No longer will they just be able to ignore it and not want to hear the truth. The teachers won’t be far off in a corner anymore; you’ll see them! Suddenly, a spirit being will materialize behind somebody, and they will hear, ‘Wait a minute. This is the way; walk you in it.’ Talk about getting someone’s attention! That will kind of put a damper on things.

But it will give us a level of supervision that sometimes, as parents of small children, we wish we could have when we’re trying to keep them totally in our sight. The minute they get out of sight, they are into something. You’re trying to make sure they don’t get hurt and you find yourself having to say, ‘No, stop.’ Probably one of the very first words kids learn is “no” because

that's the one they hear the most often. So many things that little children think of could be harmful or dangerous.

We're going to have to deal with people and keep things pretty strict. Strictness does not mean a lack of love or a lack of mercy. But if you're going to get things back on track, things have to be strict. When things start getting loose and lax, things start wandering off the track, and pretty soon you have a mess—not because they started out to have a mess, but because things wander astray. If a shepherd doesn't keep his flock together and where they are supposed to be, if he gets lax and careless, pretty soon they all wander off. Some may get lost in the woods and wolves (or whatever it may be) get them.

God is strict because He does love us and doesn't want us to get hurt. He is certainly going to have to be strict at the beginning of the Millennium to get things back on track because people are going to have so much to unlearn. It is going to take them a while to get the point that God's way really is the best way.

It describes the things that are going to take place.

Isaiah 31:1, "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the Lord!" Their trust is not in God; their trust is in human deliverance. That is an important matter of faith. God wants us to look to Him as our Deliverer. One of the sins of the nation is looking elsewhere, looking to physical resources to deliver us.

Verse 4 describes the events that are going to occur, "...so the Lord of hosts will come down to fight for Mount Zion and for its hill."

Verse 7, "For in that day every man shall throw away his idols of silver and his idols of gold—sin, which your own hands have made for yourselves." It describes the events when Jesus Christ returns and how they are going to throw away their idols. When the Day of the Lord comes, things are going to "melt down" in a hurry, but the result of that is that it will bring about the event of chapter 32.

Verse 8, "Then Assyria shall fall by a sword not of man,"

Isaiah 32:1, "Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice."

Verse 2, as a result of that and that society, "A man will be as a hiding place from the wind [A man will be a welcome sight. You see a stranger

today, and you don't know how to react and respond.], and a cover from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." It will be like water in a dry place, like a shadow on a hot day. It's going to be a welcome sight because there will be a basis of trust and confidence.

Verse 15, "Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is counted as a forest."

Verses 17-18, "The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." Peace is the result of righteousness. That's why there isn't peace on earth today, and there will not be peace because first a king must reign in righteousness. 'The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance.'

The world has all kinds of peace marches, peace crusades, peace groups, etc. Peace is an effect! It is the effect, the result and the consequence of righteousness. You are never going to have peace until you first have righteousness. Righteousness must precede peace. Peace is simply a logical result. When people are living in righteousness, they have peace. When we are conducting our lives righteously, we have peace with one another. The lack of peace comes in as a result of a lack of righteousness on somebody's part.

The world has to learn righteousness before it's going to have peace. The world wants peace, but they want to have their own variety of peace. The devil, in effect, has sold people on the idea that there's more than one way to have peace. The devil has sold the idea that you can come up with some other way and you can work it out your way. The great peace conferences that men have put together have always set the stage for the next war.

The Spirit is going to be poured out from on high.

Verse 15, "Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high," Peace is going to come through Jesus Christ. Human nature will be transformed. Christ will establish the rule of righteousness, and together with that, the Spirit of God will be poured out. That sets the stage for a transformation of human beings.

Isaiah 33:1, "Woe to you who plunder, though you have not been plundered; and you who deal treacherously, though they have not dealt

treacherously with you!” This is referring to the Beast power. They are going to receive consequences for their actions.

Notice a couple of interesting verses.

Verses 5-6, “The Lord is exalted, for He dwells on high; He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness. Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, and the strength of salvation; the fear of the Lord is His treasure.”

We live in a very unstable world. Everything is in transition, and that has served to destabilize the lives of many, many people. “Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times.”

There is a source of stability that we can have in our lives as the world is “topsy-turvy” around us. We don’t have to feel like everything is changing around us because if we have wisdom and knowledge, there is a source of stability.

Psalm 111:10, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments.”

Proverbs 9:10, “The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” It is the starting point.

We have a source of wisdom and knowledge that can provide stability in our lives—a stability that the world does not have because the world doesn’t know where to look for any absolutes. The world doesn’t have absolutes. Everything is “topsy-turvy” and changing. A lot of people feel their whole lives are destabilized because it seems like everything is in a state of flux and changing. All the rules have changed.

The reality is that none of the rules have changed if you are going to go back to God’s rules. God is consistent.

Hebrews 13:8, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” All we have to do is get back to God’s rules. The wisdom and knowledge that comes from God is an eternal wisdom and knowledge and a source of stability. What’s right today was right yesterday and will be right a year, ten years, a hundred years and a thousand years from now. What was wrong five, ten, fifty, one hundred and a thousand years ago, is just as wrong today. If it’s wrong, it’s wrong; if it’s right, it’s right. We have the source of stability that the world doesn’t have.

That lack of stability is one of the things that contribute to so many problems, even the psychological and emotional problems that so many are beset with. They look around and see everything changing, and they feel like they have to change to be “up” with the times—or maybe I should say to be “down” with the times. The

times are on a toboggan slide. There’s no agreement on things that even a generation or two ago there was agreement on. You watch old reruns on television made back in the early 60s, and you can see the differences in what was taken for granted as normal. There was, at least, a certain agreement in society about what constitutes normal. Society has lost much of that agreement now. I’m not setting up any period as an ideal time because, no, it wasn’t. But there was, at least, more of a Biblically-based value system that tended to be taken for granted. That has been lost, and there is a lack of stability because of that.

What it describes is in the context of the end-times.

Isaiah 33:7-8, “Surely their valiant ones shall cry outside, the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly. The highways lie waste, . . .” It describes the time of the end that is going to bring about all of the destruction and all of the things that’s going to catch people by surprise. But we have a source of stability during those trying times.

Verses 14-15, “The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: ‘Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?’ He who walks righteously [the one who does what’s right] and speaks uprightly, he who despises the gain of oppressions, who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil. . .” It describes a time when the sinners of Zion are afraid. Who is going to dwell with the devouring fire? Who is going to be able to survive all these burnings? Who is going to be protected during the time of this catastrophe? —“He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly.” How are they going to be protected?

Verse 16, “He will dwell on high [or dwell on the heights]; his place of defense will be the fortress [KJV, “munitions”] of rocks; bread will be given him, his water will be sure.” Let me call your attention to something: “the fortress of rocks” should be translated “the stronghold of Sela or Petra.” “Sela” is the Hebrew term. Their place of defense will be the stronghold of Sela; bread and water will be provided for them. Again, this is one of those verses that seems to indicate the possibility that Petra may very well be the place of protection for God’s Church in the end time.

Verses 17-19, “Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; they will see the land that is very far off. Your heart will meditate on terror [You will

meditate on what is going on. You won't see these events; you won't be there at the time.]: 'Where is the scribe? Where is he who weighs? Where is he who counts the towers?' You will not see a fierce people, a people of obscure speech, beyond perception," They will ultimately see the King (Jesus Christ) in His beauty.

Notice what Jerusalem will be like in Tomorrow's World.

Verse 20, "Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts; your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet habitation," You will be able to 'look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts, of our festival seasons; your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet habitation.' It is truly going to be the city of peace. That's what the word "Jerusalem" means, and that's what it will be in Tomorrow's World.

Isaiah 34 describes the Day of the Lord.

Isaiah 34:2, "For the indignation of the Lord is against all nations, and His fury against all their armies;"

Verse 8, "For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, the year of recompense for the cause of Zion." Very likely, the Day of the Lord will be that final year of the three and one-half-year period. The tribulation begins three and one-half years before the return of Christ. But the last year of that is going to be God's wrath—the day of the Eternal's vengeance. It comes on down and describes that.

Then it describes what is ultimately going to be the consequence afterward. There is going to be rejuvenation to the whole world.

Isaiah 35:1, "The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose..." The geographic transformation that will take place will make Tomorrow's World a wonderful, habitable place for all humanity. We see the description of the great transformation that is going to take place. It will be a time of tremendous healings.

Verse 5, "Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped."

It's a time when the desert will bloom and dry land will produce water. God will divide their inheritance to the nations, but another aspect of that is that everybody's inheritance is going to be a nice place to be. In today's world, nations covet what other nations have and try to take it away from them. That won't be the case. Christ won't allow that. But He's also going to make sure that

everybody's heritage, everybody's habitation, is going to be a beautiful, productive place.

Scripture describes a highway that is going to be built and they are going to call it the "Way of Holiness." I like this description.

Verse 8, "A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray." I like this description. Road directions are going to be simple in Tomorrow's World. You're not going to get turned around and lost. If you've ever been in one of our big cities and gotten turned around on some of these expressways, sometimes it's like a bowl of spaghetti. You go to Houston and it's all headed every which way. You don't have to be a fool to be lost on something like that.

The highway that God is going to build in the Millennium is going to have a name. It is going to be called the "Way of Holiness." It's going to be a highway. It will be for the wayfaring man, and even if he's not really smart, he's still not going to get lost on it because it's going to be simple. That's descriptive of God's way of life. The Bible is simple. It's not all easy. Everything God says is not easy to do, but it is simple and clear-cut. Anytime somebody starts making it so complicated you can't understand it, you better sit back and have a big "question mark" because God talks about the simplicity of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3). God's way is simple. It's clear-cut. There's a difference between "easy" and "simple." A program can be simple but not necessarily easy to put into practice. God's way is simple and clear-cut, and this highway is, in a sense, going to be a reflection of that. Many times God uses physical things to symbolize something, and this is evidently going to be the case here.

This brings us down to a concluding point. The next Bible study we will cover chapters 36-49.

Bible Study # 50
March 27, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Isaiah 36—49

This particular portion **provides a historical inset into the main theme of the book. It gives us events in the life of Hezekiah and the invasion of Judah. It gives Hezekiah's subsequent illness and healing.** Throughout the book we **have an emphasis on the promises of God.** This historical inset, as it were, serves an appropriate place for faith-building realities of God's promises. It gives us some insights into what God does and the way He does it.

In chapter 40, a new section of the book opens up. The critics call it "Deutro Isaiah"—a second Isaiah. Critics have a problem with chapters 40-66. There is a prophecy concerning Cyrus, a king of the Medes and Persians. He was prophesied to come on the scene. They could not accept this, and the alternative is to say that it was written after the fact. One of the problems the critics have is acknowledging the fact that there is a God who rules in the kingdom of men (Daniel 4:17) and declares the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). Those prophecies are introduced with the statement, "Here is the proof that the God of heaven is far above all idols because He declares the end from the beginning." Prophecy is a proof that God exists. It singles out that this could not have been written on the human level. A person obviously changes certain methods of style and expressing oneself. We don't express ourselves always in the same way. The subject matter varies and the time of his life that it was written varies. Why should it be surprising that there are certain variations in that way?

Chapters 36 and 37 deal with the Assyrian invasion of Judah, Hezekiah's reaction to that invasion and God's deliverance.

Chapter 38 deals with his illness and his subsequent healing.

In chapter 39, we see what ultimately proved to be a mistake in terms of Hezekiah's dealing with the Babylonian ambassador.

Chapter 40 deals with a commission that God gives to this work—to His end-time work—to speak comfortably to Jerusalem and to prepare the way before Jesus Christ.

Chapter 41 focuses in on the fact that prophecy is a proof of God. God's greatness is contrasted with the puniness of man.

Chapter 42 continues to focus in on the coming of the Messiah. Prophecy is again pointed out as a proof of God and that Christ is coming to magnify the law. This is all brought out in chapter 42.

Chapter 43 deals with the regathering and the redemption of Israel.

Chapters 44 and 45 show how God will ultimately pour out His Spirit upon Israel. It also has a prophecy of Cyrus and the greatness of our Creator is praised.

Chapter 46 again points out prophecy as a proof of God.

Chapter 47 deals with what is actually Rome or the Catholic Church, as you will notice here.

Chapter 48, we see a prophecy that points out that modern Israel uses the name of God but is not really practicing what is preached. They will ultimately be punished and then redeemed. Chapter 49 shows that God will not abandon Israel. They will be regathered from their captivity from the entire earth. They'll prosper and increase under the government of God.

We come to the 14th year of King Hezekiah, which we would date as 701 B.C.

Isaiah 36:1, "Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them." The Assyrians had previously invaded and conquered Northern Israel. The process of deportation had been ongoing. The Assyrians returned now in the 14th year of Hezekiah and invaded Judah. They very quickly overran the nation of Judah and came to the point of laying siege to Jerusalem. They very quickly overran the whole land. They wanted to intimidate the Jews into surrendering the nation and Jerusalem without a fight. They began to tell them, 'Look, you'd better surrender.' We see the representative of the king of Assyria trying to intimidate them.

Verse 4, "Then the Rabshakeh said to them, 'Say now to Hezekiah, "Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: 'What confidence is this in which you trust?'"'"

Verses 6-7, 'What are you going to depend on to defend yourself from me? Why there is nothing you can depend on! You depend on the Egyptians; they are not going to do it. You depend on your God and He is not going to do it. Didn't Hezekiah just get through tearing down all these altars?' Of course, what the Assyrians didn't understand was God didn't want all those altars. God wanted to be worshiped in spirit and

in truth (John 4:23; Joshua 24:14) there in Jerusalem.

Verse 10, “Have I now come up without the Lord against this land to destroy it? The Lord said to me, ‘Go up against this land, and destroy it.’” He said, ‘God wants us to come here and destroy this land. Why, we’re here doing God’s will.’

About this time a couple of Hezekiah’s servants came out.

Verse 11, “Then Eliakim, Shebna and Joab said to the Rabshakeh, ‘Please speak to your servants in the Aramaic language....’” They asked the Rabshakeh (the Assyrian’s representative), ‘Why don’t you speak to us in Aramaic rather than Hebrew?’ Aramaic was the common language of diplomacy throughout the Middle East at that time.

What it amounted to was the representative of the Assyrian king was down below the city wall, everybody was gathered up there, and they were “all ears.” He was trying to sap their confidence and undermine their faith; therefore, he was speaking in Hebrew because he wanted all the people to understand him. He wanted those who were up there to hear and understand so they could go and spread the rumor. He was hoping this would undermine any credibility King Hezekiah had, and they would surrender without a fight. Hezekiah’s servant asked, ‘Why don’t you speak to us in Aramaic?’ He didn’t want to do that; he wanted to intimidate them.

Verses 16-17, “Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: ‘Make peace with me by a present and come out to me; and every one of you eat from his own vine and every one from his own fig tree, and every one of you drink the waters of his own cistern; until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards’.”

‘Why, we Germans have your best interest at heart. We are going to give you the Millennium, German style. We’re concerned about you Jews. We have some nice cattle cars out here that we’re going to load you up into and we’re going to take you to this nice place. We have this nice place in mind for you. Just surrender and come out; you can sit under your own vine and under your own fig tree.’

Now that expression is only used a couple of other times in the Bible. It’s used once to refer to the time of King Solomon (1 Kings 4:25), and the other time it’s used is in Micah to refer to the

Millennium (Micah 4:4). Solomon’s reign was a type of the Millennium.

It is a descriptive phrase to describe what it’s going to be like in the Millennium. It’s going to be a time of peace and prosperity. So, in effect, they showed up and said, ‘We will offer you the Millennium our style.’ Kind of sounds like the thousand-year Reich. It’s kind of funny how some of the tactics and inspiration that Satan has given to those who have done his bidding have not changed. He usually tries to present some sort of a counterfeit of what God promises. ‘We will take you to a nice place.’ Sure they will!

Verses 18-20, ‘Your God can’t deliver you.’

In Isaiah 37, word came to Hezekiah and he went to the house of God.

Verses 1-4, he was very concerned and had been deeply praying to God about this whole matter.

Verses 9-13, Hezekiah received a letter that laid out all kinds of accusations and demanded unconditional surrender.

Isaiah 37:14-17, “And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord. Then Hezekiah prayed to the Lord, saying: ‘O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Incline Your ear, O Lord, and hear; open Your eyes, O Lord, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, who has sent to reproach the living God.’”

In effect, when Hezekiah got the letter, he went into the temple, laid it before God and said, ‘Look, You can read this. You see what they are saying. They are comparing You to the gods of the nations. Now truly they have triumphed over all these nations, and those nations’ gods couldn’t deliver them because they are really no gods. You are the Creator God.’ He really besought God and earnestly talked to God. God sent word to Hezekiah by Isaiah that said, ‘I will take care of this; I will intervene in your behalf. I will defend this city.’

Verses 35-36, “‘For I will defend this city, to save it for My own sake and for My servant David’s sake.’” Then the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead.” The dead corpses didn’t get up and discover they were dead. It was the people who were alive who got up the next morning and saw the 185,000 soldiers (the army

of the Assyrians) who had died the night before.

Verse 37, “So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh.” KJV, “So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.” You can just imagine! He got up the next morning, started calling for his servant and nobody came. You can visualize in your mind how mad he must have gotten that nobody was there to bring him whatever it was that he wanted. He walked out of the door and what he saw was dead soldiers lying around—everywhere he looked he saw dead soldiers. I would suspect that he departed and went away and returned—all three of them—about as quickly as he could get on a horse and get out of there. He was “high-tailing” it.

Verse 38, when he got to Nineveh, he went in to worship in the house of his god. His sons came in and assassinated him. He had been saying some derogatory things about the God of heaven earlier and he found out very quickly who was able to deliver whom. He was challenging the armies of the Living God.

We see Hezekiah’s response. When he was confronted with a problem of this magnitude, Hezekiah went to God. He recognized that the source of our solutions, the source of our health, is God. He went to God in faith and in confidence.

Isaiah 38:1, “In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.”’” Isaiah came in and told him, ‘You had better get things in order because you’re about to die.’ Josephus tells us that these were the last three days of this Assyrian siege of Jerusalem. Interestingly enough (we know this from history and from Josephus), the night the Assyrian army died was the night of the Passover. The death angel passed through the camp, and guess who wasn’t under the blood of the lamb? The Assyrians! It was the same as the Egyptians many centuries earlier (Exodus 14:26-28). It was in the context of the Passover that God intervened and wiped out the Assyrian army. And it is also in that same context that God healed Hezekiah.

Have you ever seen that “when it rains, it pours”? Everything that can go wrong happens at the same time. Hezekiah must have felt like that. Realize that we read it and think, ‘Boy, wasn’t that great! Hezekiah had faith!’ And we got right

on. But you realize this thing had been building for months and months. The Assyrians had been sending ultimatums. They had been invading other nations. They had invaded Northern Israel much earlier, and God had spared Judah.

Hezekiah had been serving God. Remember the story of his great Passover—the most tremendous observance of the Passover since the days of Solomon (2 Chronicles 30). Since that had happened 12-13 years earlier, all this had been going along for a period of years. Now the Assyrians invaded and began to pour through the land. As a few weeks went by, they overran more and more of Judah. They went down and smashed the Egyptians. Then they came back up and brought both armies together to come against Jerusalem.

Don’t you think all through these months and now, particularly, in the last few weeks, Hezekiah has really been praying and crying out to God for deliverance? The Assyrians kept overrunning more and more until they finally overran the whole land. They had Jerusalem surrounded. They put siege around it and then began waging this psychological warfare to wear down and discourage the people. Then to top it all off, right at a moment like that, Hezekiah gets sick—really sick. He “takes” to his bed. God’s servant, Isaiah, finally comes in and says, ‘I have bad news. You’re going to die, so you had better just get your affairs in order. You’re going to die of this.’

Hezekiah must have been feeling pretty low about that time. He began to really cry out to God. He went to God with it. He besought God for His intervention in terms of healing. God intervened, healed Hezekiah and that evening wiped out the Assyrian army—that evening of the Passover. That was a tremendous intervention that God performed.

We need to recognize as we go through some of these things, Hezekiah lived through his trial the same way you and I live through ours—one day at a time. When it’s over and we look back on it, we know how it turned out and it seems simple enough as time distances us from it. But when you’re in the midst of it and you haven’t read the end of the story yet, you don’t know exactly what will happen; you only know by faith.

Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” It is fundamental to our relationship with God.

Verse 6, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him,” Hezekiah stands out as an

example of faith—an example of one who looked to God and trusted God, and God performed a tremendous miracle. God added 15 years to the life of Hezekiah.

Isaiah 38:5-6, “Go and say to Hezekiah, “Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: ‘I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; and I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city.’””

All of a sudden, all at one time, the whole thing began to break. But can you imagine how Hezekiah must have felt. He must have felt like the whole world was caving in on him at the same time. Here were the Assyrians about to lay waste to the city, and he was about to die. And where was God? God does not always step in at the moment that we think that He should do so. God chooses His time.

God worked a tremendous miracle here, and there were actually 15 Psalms added to Scripture, Psalms 120—134. These are termed the “Psalms of Degrees” or the “Psalms of Ascents,” as each one is entitled. Psalms 120—134, there are 15 of them.

Isaiah 38:20, Hezekiah said that he would establish songs that would be sung, “...with stringed instruments all the days of our life, in the house of the Lord.” This would refer to sacred music, music that we would refer to as Psalms. The 15 Psalms of Degrees are considered to be added by Hezekiah at this time.

In Isaiah 39, we find that even people of faith and those close to God sometimes make mistakes. There is a time to speak and a time to keep silent (Ecclesiastes 3:7). We can sometimes say things we would be better off not saying.

The king of Babylon sent an ambassador to Hezekiah in the aftermath of Hezekiah’s illness. The Babylonians were glad to see what had happened to the Assyrians because the Assyrians were threatening them. Hezekiah wanted to impress this visiting representative, so he showed him through the temple treasury and the palace treasury. He really kind of “laid it on thick,” which in the long run was not a very smart idea because the Babylonians took note of what wealth the Jews had—which they hadn’t realized before. In a later generation (when Nebuchadnezzar ruled), they remembered it and decided that Jerusalem was worth attacking after all.

Verses 5-7, God warned him of that and told him that it would eventually happen that way. We

should not seek to go around and impress other people. It will ultimately lead to problems.

This ends this inset. This inset is, in a sense, to bolster our faith, to encourage us and to point us to the reality of God’s fulfillment of His promises.

A new section opens up. We begin to get back into prophecy.

Isaiah 40:1-3, “Comfort, yes, comfort My people!” says your God. ‘Speak comfort in Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.’ The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’”

We find part of the mission of this work defined here in verse 3. It refers to John the Baptist who prepared the way for Christ’s first coming. That statement is quoted in reference to John the Baptist (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3). It would also be in reference to the work that God has done through this work—through the Philadelphia era of His Church—to prepare the way for the second coming of Christ.

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare [make ready] the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’” What is it that should be said as we go out with the gospel message? Let’s notice an interesting statement that we over the years have taken to perhaps refer to Radio Jerusalem.

Verses 9-10, “O Zion, you who bring good tidings, get up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, you who bring good tidings, lift up your voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid; say to the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God!’ Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.” Here is the proclamation of the good news of the Kingdom of God.

‘You who bring good tidings (the gospel) lift up your voice with strength. Broadcast it to the cities of Judah with strength.’ This gives the impression—and we have sometimes taken that as a possible indication—that there would be, before the end, a broadcast going forth from Jerusalem announcing the gospel to the cities of Judah.

It’s interesting. You know, God has a time scale and a time schedule. I remember very clearly, and many of you will remember back in 1967, I received a co-worker letter in the end of May where Mr. Herbert Armstrong was telling of the

exciting news that he had just signed a contract with Radio Jerusalem. In fact, it was the largest contract in radio history with King Hussein of Jordan. At that time, the old city of Jerusalem was under Arab/Jordanian rule. We were to begin a broadcast on Radio Jerusalem, and it was to begin on Pentecost of 1967. He was actually going to fly to Jerusalem and make that first broadcast live. I remember where I was when the Six Day War broke out and I heard the news.

Mr. Armstrong was on his way from Ambassador College in Bricket Wood, England, to the airport. He was in transit in a car on his way to the airport, ready to board a plane and touch down in a couple of hours in Jerusalem. Then he was to go in and make that live broadcast. It was within a matter of just a few hours, from the time that the broadcast was to go out, that all of a sudden, just like that, a war broke out which lasted six days. Interestingly enough, it ended prior to sunset on Friday evening. It was an incredible event that totally changed the complexion of the Middle East. That portion of Jerusalem was no longer under Arab rule. All of a sudden, the Jews had taken the West Bank, the Golan Heights and the Sinai. You name it and they took it.

We all thought that we were on the verge of Isaiah 40:9 being fulfilled. Now that has been a few years ago—23 years ago. It was not yet God's time to accomplish this prophecy in 1967; we thought it was. The doors had opened, everything had fallen into place and we thought this prophecy was on the verge of being fulfilled. It came within about five hours of being fulfilled. But it wasn't God's time. God is the One who opens doors and no man can close them when He opens them. But He is also the One who closes doors and when He closes them, no man can open them (Revelation 3:7-8). I think the time is ultimately going to come when this verse is going to be fulfilled.

From everything that I can see here in verses 9-10, it gives a clear indication that the gospel will be proclaimed from Jerusalem prior to the return of Christ because it says, "Behold your God shall come" or "is coming." That is a statement that is made prior to the return of Christ. He will come. It doesn't say He has come and He's already here. It says He is going to rule. His work is before Him and His reward is with Him. This proclamation that is going to have to be made to the cities of Judah has not really gone out. It has not really reached them as a warning and a witness yet. God will do so in His time.

Verse 15, as we come down, we focus on the magnitude and the greatness of God, "Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the balance;" All the nations are as a drop of a bucket compared to God. They are like "nothing" before Him.

There is an interesting statement. At the time of Isaiah, the various pagans believed that the earth was flat, that it rested on the back of a great turtle. You have to ask yourself, "On what did the great turtle rest?" They evidently never got that far. The Greeks, Romans, Assyrians, Egyptians and Babylonians all had these crazy ideas.

Verse 22, but Isaiah writing under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit wrote, "It is He [referring to God] who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers," God sits upon the circle of the earth! The word that is translated "circle" is a word that literally means "a sphere" in the Hebrew language. God sits upon the circle or "*chuwg*" of the earth. This is a term that refers literally to "a sphere." He understood under the inspiration of God that the earth was round. The contemporary pagans didn't understand that.

Verse 25, "'To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?' says the Holy One." To whom will we compare God?

Isaiah 41:4, "...I, the Lord, am the first; and with the last I am He."

Verses 21-23, "'Present your case,' says the Lord. 'Bring forth your strong reasons,' says the King of Jacob. 'Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; let them show the former things, what they were, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare to us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods; yes, do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed....'" What is brought out here is that fulfilled prophecy is a proof of God. It is brought out in Isaiah 41 as a means of telling the true and all-powerful ruling Creator God from the idols of men's invention. It is the great contrast.

Here, the critics want to come along and say, 'Well, Isaiah didn't write this part of the book. This was just added in later.' The whole context (the way that it is brought out) is, 'Look, I am telling you things that are going to come to pass afterwards.' Prophecy is a proof.

How do you stick in something like that afterwards and have it accepted? How do you challenge and make an issue out of the fact that you're going to tell things that are going to come

to pass and that's a proof that you speak for God, when you're telling about things that happened 50 or 100 years ago. That doesn't give you any credibility. How does something like that ever get accepted as Scripture? It doesn't make sense! The critics don't think it through. They simply don't want to acknowledge that there is a God who rules in the affairs of men. If they acknowledge that, then they may have to acknowledge the fact that He may have something to say about the way they live and that maybe they had better clean up their dirty little lives. They don't want to do that. The simplest thing to do is say, 'We just discount this.'

Isaiah 42:1-7, then a prophecy of Jesus Christ, "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands shall wait for His law.' Thus says God the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it: 'I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house.'"

As we see here, this is a clear reference to Jesus Christ. A portion of this is quoted in Matthew 12:17-21 and the remainder is quoted in Luke 4:18. It is an interesting reference to God's Servant, to Jesus Christ the Messiah who came in the role of a servant. He did not come trying to lead some kind of great demonstration or reform movement. He was not out trying to overthrow anything. He did not come to change things at that time. "A bruised [KJV, "braided"] reed He will not break." He did not come to fix things then, but He is going to come with justice. And when He does come, "He will not fail nor be discouraged till He has established judgment in the earth." He is coming, "as a light to the Gentiles." He is coming to open the eyes of the blind and to bring out of darkness those who are imprisoned in it. These prophecies and

statements are referred to in the New Testament as a reference to the Messiah.

As we come down, there is another reference to what the Messiah will do.

Verse 21, "The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the law and make it honorable." "He will magnify the law and make it honorable!" That was what Jesus Christ came to do. He fulfilled that on the Sermon on the Mount as well as other places. Christ did not come to minimize the law or do away with the law. He came to magnify the law.

Matthew 5:17, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill." He came to fill it up. He came to make it complete and full. He came to magnify. That was actually prophesied right here in Isaiah 42:21.

In Isaiah 43, we have a clear reference to the fact that the Lord of the Old Testament is the One who actually became Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Let's pick it up in verse 10 so that there is no misunderstanding on that.

Isaiah 43:10-13, "'You are My witnesses,' says the Lord, 'and My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior. I have declared and saved, I have proclaimed, and there was no foreign god among you; therefore you are My witnesses,' says the Lord, 'that I am God. Indeed before the day was, I am He; and there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it [who shall hinder it or turn it back]?"

When it says, "Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me," the word "God" is "Elohim." The "im" ending is a plural ending in Hebrew. When we make any word in English plural, we add an "s." "Elohim" is the term that is used for God referring to the God Family.

Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The word "God" is "Elohim."

Verse 26, later, "...Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness," This clearly shows the use of the plural pronoun. God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." We understand that this was a conversation between the One that we know as the Father and the One that we know as the Son, Jesus Christ.

When He says, “Before Me there was no God formed [there was no Elohim formed; there was no other God Family formed], nor shall there be after Me [neither would there be after Him; we are not coming as some other Elohim].” We will be a part of that Family. We will be born into that Family because Elohim is the Family name that, at this point, includes the One who we know as the Father and the One we call Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

In John 1, Jesus Christ is called the Word.

John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word...the Word was God.” There was that unity from the beginning. The God Family consisted of the Father and the Word. We can ultimately be born (born again) into that Family as a son of God. There is no contradiction to what it says here in Isaiah 43:10.

Isaiah 43:11, then the One who is speaking to Isaiah, inspiring these things, says, “I, even I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior.”

Acts 4:12, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Isaiah 43:11 clearly shows that the One who is referred to in Acts 4:12—the One we know as Jesus Christ—is clearly the Eternal, the Lord of the Old Testament and the One who is identified as the Savior. Christ came to reveal the Father. The Father was not the One who had dealt with the Old Testament patriarchs; it was the Word, the One we know as Christ. He came to reveal the Father because they did not know the Father (Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22).

Isaiah 44:1-4, “Yet hear now, O Jacob My servant, and Israel whom I have chosen. Thus says the Lord who made you and formed you from the womb, who will help you: ‘Fear not, O Jacob My servant; and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring; they will spring up among the grass like willows by the watercourses.’” Here we are shown that God is going to pour out His Spirit upon Israel and it is going to cause Israel to flourish like willow trees on a riverbank.

‘I am going to pour out My Spirit upon your descendants.’ That is ultimately going to occur in completion in Tomorrow’s World.

Verse 6, “Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God.’” There is no Elohim. There is no other God Family. “God” is used here, in that sense, as

the Family name. It refers to the Father and Christ.

In verses 9-11, He talks about the idols and they are ridiculed. He describes how they make this idol.

Verse 12, “The blacksmith with the tongs works one in the coals, fashions it with hammers, and works it with the strength of his arms. Even so, he is hungry, and his strength fails; he drinks no water and is faint.” He is a human being.

Verses 13-14, “The craftsman stretches out his rule, he marks one out with chalk; he fashions it with a plane, he marks it out with the compass, and makes it like the figure of a man...He hews down cedars for himself, and takes the cypress and the oak; he secures it for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a pine, and the rain nourishes it.”

Verses 15-17, he cuts down a tree and some of it he uses for firewood to warm himself or as wood for a cook stove to bake bread. Then part of it he takes and makes a god out of it. How silly that is. A guy cuts down a tree. He takes parts of it and builds a fire and takes a part out, carves it out, makes a god out of it and starts bowing down and worshiping it. God says what sense is that? The tree was growing. The rain made the tree grow. You’ve used some of it for productive purposes. Then you carved up some of it, started worshiping it and started thinking that’s your god. That’s pretty silly.

We can drive around, even in our area of the country and see all these little shrines that sit out there in people’s yards. In effect, that’s their god, even though they may not want to express it that way. That’s the way they treat it. They venerate it. They think that’s somehow going to deliver them. They can take the plaster of Paris and make a figurine or this or that for their bookshelf. They make a religious artifact out of it. They stand it up, put all kinds of devotional things around it, kneel down and pray and do the rosary. It’s the same thing. Human nature hasn’t changed a whole lot. People still do the same things.

Verse 28, God begins to address Cyrus, “Who [referring to God] says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be built,’ and to the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid.’”

Isaiah 45:1-4, “Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut: ‘I will

go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the Lord, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me.””

It is very interesting when you go through the story of Cyrus and see all the things that Satan tried to do to prevent this prophecy from being fulfilled. God prophesied what Cyrus would do 150 years prior to the time he would do it. What was Cyrus going to do? Cyrus was the one who put together and united the empire of the Medes and Persians. He went in and besieged and conquered Babylon. That was the night of the handwriting on the wall (Daniel 5:5-6). And he, in turn, issued the decree that allowed the Jews to return from Babylon and go back and rebuild Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 36:22-23).

If you go back into history, you will see that the Persians ruled over the Medes. The Persians looked down on the Medes and ruled over them. This king of the Persians (Cyrus' grandfather) had a dream. In his dream (as it was interpreted), he would have a grandson who would overthrow him and would take his place. He was determined that was not going to happen. When the time came for his daughter to get married, he decided that he would not marry her to anyone who would potentially be a rival to him; he would marry her to a Mede. He would not marry her to a Persian but to a Mede who was subject people. He married her to a son of a Median chief.

He didn't give a whole lot more thought to it. A little later he had the dream again and began to get worried. He found out his daughter was pregnant. He made arrangements for her to come to his palace to have the baby. He decided what he would do—he would take the baby when it was born and would have it killed. He called his servant who he trusted and said, 'Look, when the baby is born, I want you to take it out and kill it.'

The servant took the baby and when he went out of the palace, he couldn't bring himself to kill the baby. He "passed the buck" to somebody else. He gave it to a shepherd who kept some of the royal sheep and told him to take the baby, go and expose it out on the mountain and let the animals kill it. He got himself off the hook where

he didn't have to do the "dirty work" with his own hands.

It just so happened that the shepherd's wife had a child exactly at that same time and the child was stillborn. So, the shepherd got the idea that rather than kill this baby, he and his wife would raise it as their own. They would take their stillborn baby and put it in the basket out on the mountain; the king would never know the difference. They would have this little child to rear—and they did.

Things went on until the child grew to a pretty good size. Eventually, the child found out the story. He went on to rally all the Medes and he led in a Median army. The story of the Persian king's dream had gotten around, and when Cyrus showed up with an army of the Medes, the Persians were so overwhelmed and so intimidated—because they felt like this prophecy was certainly going to happen—they all surrendered without a fight. They all went over to his side because they figured they were doomed. He had escaped death until now and sure enough, his grandfather was out of a job. Now Cyrus was the king of the Medes and the Persians. He became king out of what had ought to be his death.

It's interesting because this story comes from the Greek historian Herodotus about 500 B.C. who wrote a story out of secular history. A pagan Greek historian recorded the story. Even the pagans recognized and even, in effect, testified to the authenticity of the story of Cyrus. Herodotus was a Greek historian who wrote the story of the Persian wars and the history of that empire.

When Cyrus united the Medes and the Persians, he headed for Babylon. Remember the story from the book of Daniel? Daniel 5, they showed up, and Babylon thought that it was impregnable. The Babylonians were feasting and having a big "blowout," a real orgy there in the palace. They were laughing because they said it was impossible for anybody to get in there.

In the meantime, Cyrus had dug a channel and diverted the flow of the Euphrates River so that the water level dropped and dropped. Within a few hours the water level had dropped down so low that he marched his soldiers through the riverbed and under the fortification. The city was thought to be impregnable, but the Euphrates flowed through the midst of it. They had this big iron grating that came down into the water so you could not even sail a boat under the wall. But Cyrus' engineers dug a channel canal to divert the Euphrates. When they broke the dike, the

river began to divert and the water level began to drop. Pretty soon it was below this iron grating that stuck down beneath the wall. The river got so shallow that soldiers just waded through the mud and muck and came right in under the wall. Before daylight dawned, the Persian army was inside and Babylon had fallen without a shot. From being impossible to fall, Babylon fell into his lap. The gates were actually opened. He didn't have to break through the gates. God said the gates were going to be opened.

Isaiah 45:1, "...to open before him the double doors, ..." That's what happened. Cyrus rode through on his horse.

Verse 18, "For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited: 'I am the Lord, and there is no other.'" The word translated "in vain" is the exact same word that is used in the book of Genesis where it describes the creation.

Genesis 1:1-2, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; ..." The word translated "without form" in Genesis 1:2 is the word "*tohu*." Genesis 1 tells us that 'God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was without form and void.' The earth was "*tohu*" and "*bohu*."

Here in Isaiah 45:18, it says God created the earth and He established it. He did not create it "*tohu*." Genesis 1:2 tells us the earth became that way. Isaiah 45:18 says God didn't make it that way. Something happened between the time God made it and the time we pick up the story in Genesis 1:2. What happened in between was the rebellion of Lucifer that resulted in the destruction, chaos and confusion that came to take place on the earth. This is just an aside that is good to note.

God says He declares the end from the beginning.

Isaiah 46:9-10, "Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.'" God says, 'I am God. I can tell you in the beginning what the end is going to be.'

There are people who are all amazed at some of the events that are going on in Europe. Those of us in this room are not amazed at those things. Some of you have been reading the literature and

listening to the broadcast for decades. You heard Mr. Herbert Armstrong say those things decades ago. Why could he do that? Was it just a lucky guess? No! He read the Bible. He believed what the Bible said, "God declares the end from the beginning." God knew the way the 20th century was going to end up, way back centuries and centuries ago. God is able to declare the end from the very beginning and He's able to bring it about. This bothers the critics because that means that there really is a God and He has something to say about the way we should live.

Verse 11, "...Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it." God shows there is none like Him because He alone is able to declare the end from the beginning.

Prophecy, in general, and the prophecies of Christ and His coming, in particular, are proofs of God. God is going to bring these things to pass.

Isaiah 47:1 is a reference to Babylon. It is not referring to the Babylon of old, but to the daughter of Babylon—in other words, the modern-day descendant, which would be modern-day Rome.

Isaiah 47:8, "Therefore hear this now, you who are given to pleasures, who dwell securely, who say in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, nor shall I know the loss of children'."

Revelation 17:5, remember where we're told of the great whore, "...Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." She had children. She had harlot daughters who came out of her. She was not going to know the loss of children. She didn't think she would, but God describes some of the destruction that is going to come upon that entity.

Isaiah 48 discusses the subject of prophecy.

Isaiah 48:2-3, "For they call themselves after the holy city, and lean on the God of Israel; the Lord of hosts is His name: 'I have declared the former things from the beginning; they went forth from My mouth, and I caused them to hear it. Suddenly I did them, and they came to pass.'"

Verse 5, "Even from the beginning I have declared it to you; before it came to pass I proclaimed it to you, lest you should say, 'My idol has done them, and my carved image and my molded image have commanded them.'" Again it is clearly showing, as it was written, that this was prophetic. It was understood to be prophetic. In terms of prophecy, it clearly pointed out the proof of God.

Isaiah 49:8, “Thus says the Lord: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard You, and in the day of salvation I have helped You; I will preserve You and give You as a covenant to the people, to restore the earth, to cause them to inherit the desolate heritage.’” Here is a statement referring to the fact, “in the day of salvation.” “The” is not a definite article used in the Hebrew. This is showing the fact that there is not simply one and only one (“the day”) but there is “a day.” There will ultimately come “a day.” There is simply not one day (“the day”), but “a day” of salvation. There is a day that pertains to us and there is a day that pertains to the world that is yet to be experienced.

Isaiah 49 (the latter part) shows that the time for the salvation of Israel is a day of salvation. Today is a day for the Church (1 Peter 4:17), but there is another day. There is a day that is coming, a day of national salvation for Israel that is yet to come. This is not that day right now.

Verse 15, ““Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb?”” He says that He is going to bring back His people.

He describes when Israel is regathered.

Verses 19-20, ““For the waste and desolate places, and the land of your destruction, will even now be too small for the inhabitants; and those who swallowed you up will be far away. The children you will have, after you have lost the others, will say again in your ears, ‘The place is too small for me; give me a place where I may dwell’.””

After the Millennium sets in and as the remnant of Israel is regathered to the Middle East, God describes how the population of Israel will begin to increase and multiply within a relatively short period of time. That little narrow area in the Middle East will begin to be outgrown. Here’s a remnant that is scattered, comes back from captivity and is regathered. It looks like they’ve been destroyed and devastated; yet within a matter of a few decades, the population is increasing and growing to the point that the descendants begin to say, ‘This place is too small. We really need to expand; we need a place to go.’ They are going to spread back. Israel is going to begin to recolonize the areas that God had given them. They will spread back to the United States, Canada, Britain and Australia—to the areas of Israel. That is going to occur in the beginning of the Millennium.

Well, we have focused in on this section of Isaiah. I think you will find the remaining portion

(chapters 50-66) to be especially meaningful for the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread season. There are a number of prophecies that refer clearly to Jesus Christ as the Messiah. There are a number of very meaningful statements. Really, in many ways, the most powerful portion of this book is chapter 53. It particularly deals with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It deals with a number of things that I think will be helpful for us to focus on at this time. This is a good section to read and study during the Passover season. On the next Bible study, we will conclude the book of Isaiah.

Bible Study # 51
April 24, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Isaiah 50—66

We are dealing with a wrap-up of the book of Isaiah—chapters 50-66, the concluding chapters of the book of Isaiah. This particular section **deals with prophecies that almost entirely look forward to the time of the Messiah.** There are a lot of details given concerning Christ's first coming and His crucifixion in Isaiah 53, as well as 50 and 52. This section gives some of the most detailed prophecies of His scourging and subsequent execution. The events and reasons surrounding these actions are given in the material we are covering this evening. The Jews did not understand these things. They did not understand this at the time these events occurred and they really have no real idea of the meaning of this section of Scripture to this day.

Acts 8:27-39 is a good illustration of the lack of understanding that the Jews had as to the meaning of this section of Scripture. We have the story of the Ethiopian eunuch. He was an individual of great ability and obviously he was one of the major leaders in the nation of Ethiopia. He was right under the Queen in charge of the treasury. He was a highly educated man, and like many of the upper class and educated class of Ethiopians of his day, he practiced the religion of Judaism.

A number of the upper-class Ethiopians had practiced the religion of Judaism from the time going back to the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon (1 Kings 10). The leadership of the Ethiopian people practiced many aspects of the religion of Judaism. In fact, Ethiopia and their connection with Scripture, and with the level of understanding that was maintained there, is probably a major factor in why Ethiopia is the only place in Africa that was never colonized. It has maintained its independence from the time of antiquity. Until the death of King Helai Selassie, the royal line of Ethiopia traced itself from generation to generation for 3,000 years of unbroken succession.

This leader from Ethiopia had been to Jerusalem. Being able to travel to Jerusalem was evidence of wealth and education. It was a long trip. He had come there to worship and he was returning. He was in his chariot, which was being driven by a servant that he had. He was sitting there reading the book of Isaiah. He was reading this

section of Scripture from Isaiah 53 and he did not understand what it meant. His lack of understanding was not due to his lack of education. It was simply due to the fact that the Jewish community did not understand this section of Scripture. This man, who had been up to the temple to worship in observance of one of the Festivals, was not able to understand it because nobody had ever been able to explain it to him before. The Jewish religious leadership, the priests, none of them understood it. This is brought out. This Ethiopian man in Acts 8 was reading what Isaiah the prophet wrote in Isaiah 53:7-8.

He asked Philip who the prophet was speaking of. 'Who was this individual that was being described in this prophecy?' Philip began to explain to him about Jesus Christ. This eunuch did not know that. The Ethiopians did not know and understand because it was not known and understood in the circles of Jewish religion then—nor do the Jews understand to this day.

We are going to notice some very specific prophecies of Jesus Christ and what He was going to do. In this section, we also have some fairly specific and detailed prophecies of the Millennium. It goes into how Israel will be restored and the way that it will be brought about. In this section, God also focuses on the requirements of individual religion. God continually flashes back, as it were, on the requirements of the individual's religion if it is to be acceptable in God's sight.

Isaiah 50:2, God brings out, "...Is My hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Indeed with My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness; their fish stink because there is no water, and die of thirst." God describes what He is capable of doing. He says the problems and punishments that Israel has are not because of His lack of ability to deliver them.

Verses 5-7, "The Lord God has opened My ear; and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away. I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help Me; therefore I will not be disgraced; therefore I have set My face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed." This is a prophecy of Jesus Christ. This is a prophecy of His smiting and His scourging.

Isaiah 51:1, we are told, "...Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug." In other words,

look back to our origin; look back from where we came.

Verse 2, “Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you;”

Verse 3, “For the Lord will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places;” God is going to bring comfort. He is going to bring relief to His people, nationally and spiritually. He is going to comfort Zion. He is going to comfort the nation of Israel.

Verse 3, continuing, “...He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord;” The land of Israel will be healed; it will be restored.

Verses 4-5, “Listen to Me, My people; and give ear to Me, O My nation: for law will proceed from Me, and I will make My justice rest as a light of the peoples. My righteousness is near, My salvation has gone forth,” God is going to make waste places blossom and through His righteous law, He will make the whole land rejoice. In that way, he will provide comfort to His people, to Zion. We go through God’s comforting of Zion and some of the events that will transpire.

Isaiah 52 describes the work of God.

Isaiah 52:7-8, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’ Your watchmen shall lift up their voices, with their voices they shall sing together; for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord brings back Zion.”

Here we see a description of God’s work. The Church is described as bringing the Gospel. It very thoroughly describes the Gospel message—the good news (KJV, “tidings”) that proclaims (KJV, “publishes”) peace, publishes salvation and announces the establishment of God’s government. How descriptive can you get to the New Testament message—the Good News of the Kingdom of God—which Jesus Christ came proclaiming? It describes the work of those going forth as a messenger. Maybe you never thought of yourself as having beautiful feet, but verse 7 shows that, at least by analogy. It describes it in that way because feet are what the messenger walks on. It is descriptive of going forth with a job to do, doing that job and announcing that message.

There is a very strong admonition that God gives to those in His work.

Verse 11, “Depart! Depart! Go out from there, touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of

her, be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Lord.” If we’re going to do the work of God, if we’re going to be God’s people, we must be clean. We must not be tainted and polluted by the uncleanness of this world and society. We live in a society that God describes as unclean. We’re told that if we are going to carry on the work of God, we are to be clean.

In ancient Israel, the priests of God had laws that regulated ritual cleanness. There were laws that regulated things. If the priests came in contact with something that made them ceremonially unclean, they could not serve in the temple. Basically, the things they came in contact with were things that would physically pollute them. If they touched a dead body or an unclean animal, they were unclean. When they were ritually unclean it meant they had to go and take a bath, wash their clothes and wait for the end of the day before they could come back in. This was to impress upon them the importance of cleanness. And if you are unclean, what you touch becomes unclean also.

This lesson was impressed in the ceremonies the priests went through. The priests and the Levites were the ones who, literally, bore the vessels of the Eternal. They bore the vessels there in the temple and the temple worship. There were strict regulations given about the importance of their being clean. These lessons were really written to teach the principle of cleanness and the importance of being clean, if we’re going to fulfill God’s work in a way that is pleasing to Him.

We, today, are spiritually “bearing the vessels of the Lord”; we are doing the work of God. That’s what that means—doing God’s work. We are doing God’s work. If ritual uncleanness made them unacceptable in God’s sight to carry that out, how much more would moral and spiritual uncleanness make us unfit in God’s sight to carry out God’s work. If we’re going to carry out the work of God, we have to be clean. We have to uphold God’s standards. This is a part of the message that Christ had.

Let’s notice some information concerning Christ’s scourging. There are several prophecies concerning Christ’s scourging.

Verse 13, “Behold, My Servant....” It describes Him as God’s Servant.

Verse 14, “Just as many were astonished at you, so His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men...” It describes His visage as being marred. It

describes Him in the aftermath of that beating. He was virtually unrecognizable.

I remember someone, a number of years ago in Corpus Christi, Texas, who had been through an automobile accident—a man who later went on to become a local elder. If you've ever seen someone who's been through an automobile accident, you know what I mean. God certainly can and does intervene and that was a very remarkable case. It made a very vivid impression in my mind.

It describes here Jesus Christ being marred more than any man. 'Many were astonished at Him. His visage was marred more than any man.' After the beating He was unrecognizable. Even those who knew Him would not have been able to recognize Him. When He was resurrected, Mary Magdalene stood there and thought He must be the gardener (John 20:14-15). She did not recognize who He was until He spoke to her. At that point, He manifested Himself in the way He had been as a result of that beating rather than in the form that would have been totally recognizable to her.

Isaiah 53:3-5, "He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed."

This shows what Jesus Christ went through. The word translated "grief" is a word that is in almost every case in the Old Testament (other than here and one or two other places), a word that is normally translated "pain" or "disease." What we see here is that Jesus Christ died for our sins. 'He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.' Through His sacrifice we have access to God; through that access to God, we have access to all of the benefits God offers and extends to His people. Access to God is made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It culminated in His death.

Verse 6, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." That is made plain. He died for us, for the sins of the world.

Verse 8, "He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation?"

For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of My people He was stricken." He died for us.

Verses 9-10, "And they made His grave with the wicked—but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul [His life] an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days...." He was resurrected.

Verse 12, "...because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." He died for the sins of the people. He was executed with criminals, buried with the rich and raised from the dead. These aspects of His sacrifice are all made evident here. We have the description of His scourging, how He was brutally beaten with stripes. His countenance was totally disfigured.

Verse 7, He didn't answer His accusers. We are told how, 'He was like a sheep brought to the slaughter. As a sheep before His shearers in silence (dumb), so He opened not His mouth.' He went through all of these things to suffer in our stead.

Isaiah 54 describes God's relationship with Israel and Israel's redemption.

Isaiah 54:5, "For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth." It describes God's redemption.

Isaiah 55:6-8, "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. 'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' says the Lord."

We are to seek God while He is accessible. We have the opportunity right now to seek Him. He is near and He is available. We are told not to procrastinate and put it off. There are events coming—the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. There are things that are going to transpire. We are told to seek God and to draw near to Him. We are told the way to do that. We are told to change both our actions and the way we think. It's not enough simply to change what you do. It is not enough for the wicked to forsake his ways, but rather, we must forsake our thoughts. The reason is because our thoughts are not God's

thoughts nor, for that matter, are our ways His ways.

Our ways are a reflection of our thoughts. Our actions reflect our thinking and if we are going to make fundamental change in our life, we have to change not merely the outward action, we have to change the inward thought. We have to change the way we think. Otherwise, what we have is mere external conformity—people that just go along. You can comply with what the Church says in doing this or doing that (or not doing this or that), but if you don't change the way you think, you won't understand why you're doing it other than, well, the Church says you shouldn't do this or that. People go along and they make external conformity, but they never make internal change. And if the pressure to conform is taken off, they go back to being the way they were because they never learned to think any differently. I think that's fundamental. It is something we have to understand. God is not concerned merely about what we do. More fundamentally than what we do, He is concerned about what we are and what we think on the inside.

The Pharisees conformed to all kinds of things outwardly. Now God is concerned about what we do in the sense that you can't be right on the inside and wrong on the outside. I think we understand that. You can't be keeping the spirit of the law on the inside and outwardly be murdering, raping, pillaging, stealing, committing adultery, taking God's name in vain, breaking the Sabbath and all these things. I think we all understand that. You can outwardly be keeping the various points of the law and conforming to what we are told, but inwardly be something else.

Many people conform to what the law requires. They even conform to what man's law requires out of fear of the trouble they would get into if they don't. But if they thought they could get by with it, they would do it. That's not the kind of attitude that God wants to perpetuate forever. That's why He said to not only change your action but to change your thoughts because 'your thoughts aren't My thoughts.'

What are our thoughts? Human nature kind of follows the line of vanity, jealousy, lust and greed. That's what makes up a large part of human nature and human reaction. The thoughts of vanity, jealousy, lust and greed come naturally to the natural man. That's what people tend to be motivated by. Advertisers know that; that's why they appeal to vanity, jealousy, lust and greed.

These things sell. That's not the way God thinks and He wants us to exchange our way of thinking to His way of thinking.

In verse 11, God explains that His word will not return to Him void. What God says will be accomplished.

In Isaiah 56, God addresses the importance of keeping the Sabbath—the importance of *all* keeping the Sabbath regardless of background or whatever circumstance. The Sabbath is not simply for the Jew.

Isaiah 56:2-4, “Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.’ Do not let the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord speak, saying, ‘The Lord has utterly separated me from His people’; nor let the eunuch say, ‘Here I am, a dry tree.’ For thus says the Lord: ‘To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant...’” God says blessed is the man that does this, not simply the Jew, but the man, the person, the human being. The “son of the foreigner” (KJV, “stranger”) would apply to someone who is not a native-born Israelite. It would be someone who is not born physically of the seed of Abraham; it would be a Gentile.

God says, ‘Regardless of your ethnic heritage, regardless of anything, when you obey Me, when you embrace My ways and you serve Me, you are acceptable in My sight.’ You are not somehow separated off into some separate spiritual category. Physical factors are not the basis of spiritual categories. Spiritual categories, basically, come down to those who obey and those who don't. And nobody has a “leg-up” because of ethnic origin, wealth, education, position, social status or anything else whatever it may be. Those may be physical factors in physical society, but God looks on the heart to judge human beings. God looks to the one who is humble and trembles at His word (Isaiah 66:2).

Here, in Isaiah 56:2-4, it specifically mentions the Sabbath as an outward sign and how God counts as His own those who obey Him and take this outward sign of the Sabbath, regardless of other physical factors.

We are told that through obedience, anyone—Gentiles, eunuchs—can become part of God's covenant people and share in His blessings. The Ethiopian eunuch mentioned in Acts 8 is an example of one who, in that sense, fits both categories that are mentioned here—the son of the stranger and the eunuch. The Ethiopian

eunuch was a man singled out to be mentioned in a positive light. We will, undoubtedly, have the opportunity to meet him in Tomorrow's World as a part of the firstfruits of God's plan. There have been many, but he is singled out as a literal fulfillment. We've read his account earlier and it describes one who obeys God and is therefore counted as one of God's people.

Then there is the statement that Christ quoted in the New Testament.

Verse 7, "...for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations." This is quoted in Matthew 21:13.

God characterizes the leadership of the nation as being, in effect, blind, asleep on the job and consumed by greed.

Verses 10-11, "His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yes, they are greedy dogs which never have enough."

This is a rather apt description. If you've ever seen a bunch of dogs trying to eat, you will realize that they can be the personification of greed. They all "muscle" in there and try to suck it up like a vacuum cleaner. God uses these vivid descriptions to describe human beings. He describes watchmen who are blind. They are like dogs that have lost their ability to bark. They've gone to sleep. And yet they are greedy dogs. God says the watchmen of Israel are that way.

Then a point to consider: why God allows some of the righteous to die before their time.

Isaiah 57:1, "The righteous perishes, and no man takes it to heart; merciful men are taken away, while no one considers that the righteous is taken away from evil." He is taken away from the evil to come. So, in some cases, God allows that.

Who is going to dwell with God?

Verse 15, "For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'"

In Isaiah 66:2, God describes those who are going to be a part of His Family as those who are humble, contrite and who really tremble at His word—those who really take God seriously. God is not impressed with people who are impressed with themselves. It is a matter of recognizing our dependence upon God and humbly seeking Him. That is the way to have access to God and to dwell with God.

God give His ministry and His work a commission.

Isaiah 58:1, "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."

In other words, we have not been commissioned to play a lullaby and put the world to sleep, but rather, we have to play revelry to wake them up. That's what God wants His work to do. That's what God holds His work responsible for; it's what He holds His ministry responsible for.

It will ultimately be part of the basis of what He is going to use to judge us upon. We all are judged for our areas of responsibility. You are judged for your areas of responsibility; I am judged for my areas of responsibility. If I just kind of play a lullaby, speak smooth things and prophesy deceits, if I just kind of go along and put you all spiritually to sleep, then I am ultimately going to have to give an account to God for that because His calling is that He wants the ministry and His work to, figuratively speaking, play revelry—to play "wake up" on the bugle. God wants the ministry and His work to sound the trumpet, to sound the alarm, to say, 'Hey, it's time to wake up and to go forth.' There is that responsibility.

God describes a people who are going through the outward motions of religion but are not accompanied by the inward change, the inward things.

He describes the kind of fasting that God takes note of. It describes a people who fast, but their fasting is in the wrong way and for the wrong reasons. God describes the kind of fasting that He is after.

Verse 4, "Indeed you fast for strife and debate, ..." We don't fast to get our own way.

Verses 6-7, "Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the cords of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?"

In other words, we are to fast in order to get our lives straightened out. We fast to make changes. Fasting is for the purpose of drawing close to God and seeing ourselves. Fasting is for getting the spiritual strength to cut the things that bind us to wickedness, that bind us to sins. We are to cut the ties to sin. We are to be cut free from sin and to get the help to make the changes that we need to make.

Verses 9-10, God does not want us simply pointing the finger at others and speaking wickedness (KJV, “vanity”), but rather, of having an attitude of giving, serving and helping.

Let’s notice what God says about the Sabbath.

Verses 13-14, ““If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken.””

We are to turn away our foot from trampling God’s Sabbath. It means we are not to be doing our own pleasure or pursuing our own interest and our own endeavors. Some translations render it “business”—not doing your own business on the Sabbath. But that can be misunderstood. Some have read it that way and have misunderstood it to mean your regular job. They say, ‘Well, if I’m not doing my regular job, it doesn’t matter what else I do.’ That’s not what it means. It says, ‘from doing my own pleasure.’ That doesn’t mean that if you enjoy it, it is sin.

God says that we should call the Sabbath a delight. It should be a delight and we should delight ourselves by a proper focus. It’s not a day to pursue our own interests and endeavors. It is not a day to pursue secular recreation and entertainment. It is not a day to go to the ball game or to lay up watching television—the Saturday cartoons or whatever is on. I assume that’s what is still on; at least it was 25 years ago. The point is that whatever is being pursued, it should be in conformity with making the Sabbath ‘a delight, a holy day of the Lord and honorable’—showing honor and respect to God.

That doesn’t mean you sit in the corner or closet and don’t eat all day. There is nothing wrong with eating a meal and having a meal of fellowship with brethren or something of that sort. We should enjoy the fellowship and the company of one another as God’s children fellowshiping together. But it’s not a time for secular pursuits, secular entertainment and recreation—even things that are not necessarily wrong, of and by themselves, but they’re not things you would do on God’s time, and the Sabbath is God’s time.

If you work for someone, on the boss’s time, there are certain things you don’t do (at least you’re not supposed to do), not because those

things are always wrong, but because they’re not things you would do on his time. Well, the Sabbath is God’s time and He gives us certain things as to the way that He wants us to deal with it.

In Isaiah 59, God brings out the biggest factor as to why sometimes God does not seem to answer. It brings out that, when the answer is held back, the problem is never God’s inability to respond.

Isaiah 59:1-2, “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.” Our iniquities can separate us from God. If God doesn’t answer, the problem is not that God is unable to respond. There may be factors that interfere with our closeness to God and our access to God.

In verse 4, it describes the iniquities of the nation and how no one calls for justice.

Verse 7, “Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood;”

Verse 8, “The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their ways;” It describes the tragedies that beset much of our nation.

Isaiah 60 describes the restoration of Israel under God’s government in the Millennium. It describes many of the gentile nations who will be part of the Beast power that take Israel captive and how they are going to come and begin the Millennium as servants of the restored nation of Israel. They are going to have certain lessons to learn.

Isaiah 60:10, ““The sons of foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you; for in My wrath I struck you, but in My favor I have had mercy on you.””

Verse 12, ““For the nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish, and those nations shall be utterly ruined.”” They’re going to have an attitude of service. There will be a willingness to serve and learning to serve. Many of these nations are going to have that lesson brought to them. They are going to be taught that.

Verse 5, ““Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart shall swell with joy; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned [KJV, “converted”] to you, the wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you.”” God mentions the wealth that is going to be restored to Israel.

There is an interesting statement. He talks about, ‘the abundance of the sea to be turned to you.’ Do you realize that even a few years ago, Dow

Chemical manufactured over 500 items from seawater? How can the abundance of the sea be converted? One cubic mile of seawater stores over 175 billion tons of dissolved chemicals that are worth upwards of 30-50 billion dollars. Just one cubic mile of sea water—maybe around 30 billion dollars—a substantial amount. Several hundred million of that would be gold alone in just one cubic mile of seawater. “The abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you.” There’s a lot involved there.

Isaiah 61:1, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, ...”

This is what Jesus read in Luke 4:16-20 as prophetic of His mission to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

Verse 4, “And they shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities, ...” That’s going to happen in the beginning of the Millennium. The cities will be rebuilt.

Verses 5-6, many of those who have taken Israel captive are going to learn to serve in the beginning of the Millennium by coming back in that way as servants.

Israel will finally set an example.

Isaiah 62:2, “The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory.”

It describes what God is going to do.

Isaiah 63:4 describes the day of vengeance of God, the day of the Lord. It describes some of the events dealing with that.

There is a plea for Christ to return and for God to establish His government.

Isaiah 64:1-2, “Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence—as fire burns brushwood, as fire causes water to boil—to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your presence!”

Notice what God has to say about our human righteousness.

Verse 6, “But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, ...” On our own, we can’t become what Christ would have us be. It’s not our own humanly devised righteousness. It’s not what we can do, of and by ourselves. It’s what God can do in us and through us.

In verse 8, we are told that God is the Potter and we are the clay, the work of His hands. We are to

be shaped and molded by Him. We are not to take on conformity to the image of this world and this society, but we are to be molded, shaped and refashioned by God to reflect Him.

Isaiah 65 describes God dealing with our nation and with our people.

Isaiah 65:2-5, “I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, according to their own thoughts; a people who provoke Me to anger continually to My face [a people who do everything I told them not to do]; who sacrifice in gardens, and burn incense on altars of brick; who sit among the graves, and spend the night in the tombs; who eat swine’s flesh, and the broth of abominable things is in their vessels; who say, ‘Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am holier than you!’ These are smoke in My nostrils, a fire that burns all the day.”

After they do all these things, they say, ‘Don’t come near me; I am holier than thou.’ That’s not an attitude that God is pleased with. God says, ‘I am not going to put up with that.’ This kind of attitude is offensive to God. God takes note of people who provoke Him to anger by pursuing all the things they shouldn’t and then culminating with an attitude of looking down on their neighbor, an attitude of condemnation.

Verse 20, “No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed.” What does that have reference to? The indication is that we are looking at a time at the conclusion of the Millennium. The time setting of Isaiah 65 is at the end of the Millennium.

Verse 17, it is a time setting when God is going to create a new heavens and a new earth. The time described here is at the conclusion of the Millennium, the conclusion of the White Throne Judgment period and right on the threshold of eternity.

In verse 20, we arrived at a point in human history when there will be no infants, no children. There won’t be anyone who has not fulfilled his days. It describes here a 100-year period. It describes the child living to age 100, but the one who is still a sinner, at age 100, he will be accursed. It is from this verse that we have come to derive the understanding that we know there will be children born during the Millennium. We also know that at the end of the Millennium, at the time of the White Throne Judgment, there’s a

time when all people will be resurrected and will be given an opportunity for salvation.

There has to come a point at which no new children are born because, otherwise, how can everything physical pass away and everything that is spiritual remain? There will come a time when there will be no more children born. And all of those who have been born will have an opportunity to grow to adulthood. When will that be? That is after the Millennium and during the White Throne Judgment period. How long will it last? The indication of Isaiah 65:20 is that the White Throne Judgment period will last 100 years, and we have described here what it's going to be like.

Verse 25, "...They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," says the Lord." It will be a time of peace.

We conclude here with chapter 66. We see that God is not impressed with the mere form of religion.

Isaiah 66:1-2, "Thus says the Lord: 'Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist,' says the Lord [I have made everything.]. But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.'"

Then, in verses 3-4, He describes those who go through the outward form of religion, sacrifices and things of that sort. The sacrifices, the outward forms of religion by the disobedient, are an abomination to God. God looks to basic attitude and motivation. God is not impressed with outward form unless it is accompanied by inward substance. For someone to hypocritically go through the outward motions of religion and yet not to be as they should be is offensive in God's sight.

Verse 3, "...Just as they have chosen their own ways, ..."

Verse 23, "And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,' says the Lord." The focus here on the Sabbath shows that the Sabbath will be kept during the Millennium. This is showing clearly that the Sabbath will be kept during the Millennium.

Verse 24, "And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh." This is not speaking

of an immortal worm. The description is of those who will be outside and will be cast into the lake of fire outside of Jerusalem, cast into the Valley of Gehenna. Some seize on this and say it is talking about hell and there are worms there that never die. That's not the focus of it.

Outside of Jerusalem there was a valley called the Valley of Hinnon (or Gehenna). It is the term that Jesus used in the New Testament to refer to the place of punishment for the wicked (Mark 9:43-46). It was an area where trash, refuse, bodies of dead animals and even of certain terrible criminals were thrown. They were thrown down there, and there was a fire that was always kept burning because things were added to it. It wasn't quenched; it wasn't put out. It continued to burn and the worm didn't die. This worm refers to maggots. It just simply refers to the fact that there were always dead carcasses there for them to eat on. Maggots turn into flies and then they fly away. They lay eggs and those eggs become more maggots. There is a continual diet there to feed these maggots. That's what it is describing. It's not a description of the immortality of worms.

You will ultimately either be a part of God's Kingdom and share life with Him, or simply be destroyed with those who rebel and pursue wickedness. That is the reference here.

At this point, we have pretty well concluded the book of Isaiah. There is a lot packed into Isaiah. I think we will see when we get into Jeremiah that there is certainly a lot packed into Jeremiah. These things written down in the Prophets are descriptive of attitudes and circumstances of our time today. There's a tremendous amount of insight into God's mind, nature and character, as well as insight into events through which we will live in the years ahead of us. We will cover Jeremiah in three sections and Ezekiel in three sections.

Bible Study # 52
May 8, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Jeremiah 1—15

This evening we are getting into the book of Jeremiah. We **are getting into the account of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry.** Jeremiah's ministry covered a period of about 40 years. He began his ministry during the reign of King Josiah. He continued during the reign of King Josiah and all the way down until the final invasion of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. From Judah, Jeremiah went into Egypt with the Jews who fled into Egypt. From Egypt, he proceeded by way of Spain all the way into Ireland. Some of that is gone into in the booklet, *What's Ahead for America and Britain?*

A major part of Jeremiah's commission involved the transferring of the throne of David from ruling over the house of Judah to ruling over the house of Israel. There would be a continuation of his throne and dynasty. A lot of that culminates in the book of Jeremiah. It was during the time of Jeremiah's ministry that there was what appeared to be an apparent end to that promise because the Babylonians came in and conquered Judah.

They took the Jews into captivity. They conquered Jerusalem and burned the temple. They sacked Jerusalem and killed the sons of King Zedekiah. They put out the eyes of Zedekiah and transported him in chains to Babylon. He came to a very gruesome and horrible end. In fact, the very last sight that he saw was the murder of his sons. The Babylonians murdered his sons before his eyes and then they blinded him. His sons being murdered was the last sight that he saw. Then they led him in chains to Babylon—a very horrible end.

Was that the conclusion of the story of David's dynasty? No, it wasn't. Zedekiah's sons were killed, but other scriptures show that his daughters were not. Jeremiah was responsible for safeguarding the daughters. There was one, in particular, who traveled with Jeremiah to Ireland who had a major part in the transferring of the throne of David from ruling over Judah to ruling over Israel.

One of the interesting things that we come upon in the story of Jeremiah is the relationship that Jeremiah had with King Josiah. It kind of sets the stage for the story. King Josiah was the king when Jeremiah first began to prophesy. There is something rather unusual about this. Generally

when we picture a prophet, the picture that comes to our mind is of an elderly man with a long white beard and kind of leaning on his staff. Some of God's prophets were elderly. But Jeremiah was, from all indications, about 17 years old when he started as a prophet. You don't generally think of a teenage prophet. Jeremiah was 17 and Josiah, who was the king, had just turned 20. They were a couple of young men, one a teenager and one just barely out of his teens. In fact, in a lot of ways, Jeremiah and Josiah kind of grew up together.

Remember the story of Josiah? He was proclaimed king when he was eight years of age (2 Kings 22:1). He did not actually have authority and power as king. He was under the oversight of the high priest, Hilkiah (2 Kings 22:4, 8). When we read Jeremiah 1:1, we find that Hilkiah the priest was none other than Jeremiah's father. Josiah was about three years older than young Jeremiah.

The father of Jeremiah, Hilkiah the priest, was the guardian of the young king. Hilkiah was responsible not only for the training and teaching of his own children, but serving as guardian of the king while he was a minor. Hilkiah was what would be termed the "Chairman of the Counsel of Regency"—in other words, the group that oversaw the affairs of state until the king became of age.

In 2 Chronicles 34:3, we're told that when Josiah became 16, he began to really, very seriously seek to learn more of God's way. He took a very serious interest in God's truth as a teenager. When he became 20 years of age, he assumed the full authority of kingship. He launched the most vigorous reform movement in the history of the nation.

It is interesting to note that a 20-year-old king and a teenage prophet spurred the most vigorous, intense and complete reform movement in the history of the nation. I think that is a picture that is not often grasped or realized. God can and has worked, through the years, with young people as well as middle-aged people and old people. It is certainly possible for young men to respond to God. It is possible for young people to respond to God working in their lives.

It's important to realize that it was a time when all of the zeal, drive and intensity of youth was channeled in a very positive way. Even though Jeremiah was quite young, he was dealing with a king who was only about three years older than he was. That relationship continued on through the years of Josiah's active kingship.

There was about a 15-year period of Josiah's life that remained. Josiah died fairly young. He was cut off in his prime.

The book of Lamentations was written by Jeremiah to lament the death of Josiah (2 Chronicles 35:25). Josiah was not only his friend but also his king. Lamentations served as a lament for what was going to happen to the nation.

God was impressed by the zeal Josiah evidenced. God had said the nation was going to be punished, but God also promised that He would not do it during the lifetime of King Josiah. God had promised that as long as Josiah lived, He would protect the nation, but when Josiah died, it was all over with—and that is basically what happened.

Lamentations was a lament at the death of King Josiah and for the events that would transpire to the nation of Judah and of Jerusalem in the aftermath of his death. And in that sense, it was prophetic of the events of the Great Tribulation ahead of us. Later, when we go through the book of Lamentations, we will notice the extent that it is a prophecy of the Great Tribulation. The events and captivity that befell ancient Judah prefigured the events of the Great Tribulation, which will be the same thing but in a much grander scale.

This evening we'll **cover the beginning of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry.** His ministry stretched over a period of over 40 years. It began when he was quite young and continued on up into his latter years. Actually, it continued past 40 years, but it is at that point that we lose sight of it because the story drops in the book of Jeremiah after Jeremiah's departure to Egypt. We don't have the continuation of the story of his ministry in Egypt, and then on to the areas of Tarsus and Spain and then on up to Ireland, but we do have accounts of it in secular history.

The first 15 chapters of the book of Jeremiah, which we will cover this evening, **focus primarily on God's indictment of the sins of Israel—the forsaking of Him as the true God.** God lists the indictment. He starts out by setting the stage. One of the themes that runs through so many of the prophets is first a formal indictment of their sins. This formal indictment of their sins sets the stage for the punishment that is to come. The punishment, in turn, sets the stage for the repentance that will result. The repentance, in turn, sets the stage for God's deliverance and then God's ultimate blessing, which is what God wanted to give all along.

But for God to continue blessing in the midst of disobedience is to be detrimental to the overall long-term welfare of the person. If God continues to just indefinitely bless us in the midst of disobedience, it serves to harden us in the way of disobedience. God wants us to be a part of His Family. God desires to give the nation His blessing, but the nation has to come to an attitude of obedience. They had to come to repentance, and God was going to deal with them to bring them to that repentance.

God starts out by indicting them. He showed why He was going to have to deal with them severely—why He was going to have to punish them. Then He explained what the punishment was, what the result of the punishment would be in terms of repentance, and then what the final deliverance would be.

The indictment against Israel focuses in on their forsaking of the true God. They forsook the true God. They went after false religion in place of the true God; added to that are the sins of violence, sexual immorality and a total lack of seeking for real truth and justice. There's also a condemnation of Israel learning the way of the heathen. We'll notice in Jeremiah 10 a reference to the Christmas tree. God shows the punishment and the captivity that He is going to bring on the nation. In these chapters, He also alludes to Israel's final repentance, deliverance and restoration.

Jeremiah 1:1, we pick it up, "The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin..." As I mentioned earlier, Jeremiah's father was Hilkiah the priest. Anathoth was a small village on the outskirts of Jerusalem. It was one of the priestly locations; it was one of the cities of the priests. Actually, it was more of a village.

Verse 2, we are told that the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah in the days of Josiah, in the 13th year of his reign. Josiah became king when he was eight years old; that would be when Josiah was 21 years of age.

Verse 5, God told Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; and I ordained you a prophet to the nations." God said, 'I had you picked out for a job before you were ever born.'

Some of these scriptures are quoted in the New Testament by the Apostle Paul to explain what he termed "the election of grace." "Election" is simply another way of saying "selection." The point is that you and I were selected. God chose us in accordance with His plan and purpose. It

was an act of God's grace, of God's mercy. We were not chosen because of some particular thing about ourselves. We didn't earn or deserve it. It was not because God was so impressed with us that He said, 'Boy, I certainly need him. I can't make it without him.' God does the choosing and God chooses on the basis that He chooses. God has the right to make decisions. He has the right to decide.

God chose to deal with Jeremiah and He chose to deal with Jeremiah before Jeremiah was ever born. He had done nothing good or bad, one way or the other, to deserve this calling. God had made up His mind about the job that He had for Jeremiah before he was ever born. God began to deal with him and said, 'I have you in mind; I have set you aside as a prophet to the nations.'

Jeremiah's response was that he couldn't do it.

Verse 6, "Then said I: 'Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.'" He said, 'I'm just a kid; how can I go out and go to the nations? How can I do those things? I'm just a kid.'

Verse 7, God said, 'Don't say that because I'm the One who's sending you. You're going to go wherever I send you; whatever I tell you, that's what you're going to say. I'm with you and I'll take care of you and inspire you. I will give you the words you need to speak.'

Then Jeremiah's commission was laid out. He had a specific commission.

Verse 5, he was ordained a prophet to the nations. He had a specific commission to go to nations (plural), not simply to ancient Judah.

Verse 10, "See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant."

He was to root out and pull down, destroy and throw down. And he was to build and to plant. This is a poetic illusion to what he was to do. He would preside over, as a prophet, the pulling down of the temple, the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, the rooting out of the nation and the pulling down or the overthrow of the throne. But his commission was not to stop there. His commission was also to build and to plant. He was to preside over the transfer of the throne to the house of Israel because God had made a promise to David that He would establish his dynasty and his throne forever. He would not deal with David's family as He had dealt with Saul's. The family of Saul was absolutely removed from the kingship.

2 Samuel 7:13-16, God told David, "....If he [your seed] commits iniquity, I will chasten him.... But My mercy shall not depart from him, And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." "If your descendants sin, I will punish them, but I will not remove them. I will not take My mercy away from them; I will not remove them.'

God continued His explanation to Jeremiah of the job that He had for him.

Jeremiah 2:2, "Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem,"

What did God say to Israel?

Verse 3, "Israel was holiness to the Lord, the firstfruits of His increase. All that devour him will offend; disaster will come upon them,' says the Lord." God has never intended to confine His dealings to Israel or to never move beyond Israel in His dealings. Rather, God started with Israel; Israel was the firstfruits. The fact that Israel was designated as firstfruits presupposes there was an increase that was to come—an increase that would include all of mankind. Israel was simply God's starting point.

If you remember the law of the offerings, the firstfruits were holy to God. God told Israel that when they began to harvest their crop, the firstfruits (the first part) was holy to Him. They gathered in the whole crop, but the firstfruits were holy to God. In the same way, God has begun His harvest of mankind. He chose Israel to be His firstfruits. That's where He started. Israel was chosen as the firstfruits and was to be holy to God.

Exodus 19:5-6, God offered them a covenant and an opportunity to be a holy nation. They were to be holy in the same sense that they would be set apart by having God's law. If they followed God's law, God would dwell in their midst. God would be the source of their holiness. God promised them protection and deliverance.

"All that devour him will offend; disaster will come upon them,' says the Lord." God said He would bless, defend and protect them. But we're going to see that there was a problem. He said, 'Look what I did for you. This is My message. This is the calling I gave you. This is what I chose you to have a part in. This is what I've done.'

Jeremiah 2:7, "I brought you into a bountiful country, to eat its fruit and its goodness. But when you entered, you defiled My land and made My heritage an abomination." This is what God has to say about the land that He's granted our

forebearers. He brought them into a bountiful country. But the land has been defiled. God's heritage has been made an abomination. We have defiled it. We have polluted it physically, morally and spiritually. We've made God's heritage an abomination. We look at some of the things that have been done, the things man has done with what God has given us.

Then God goes into an indictment of the religious leadership.

Verse 8, "The priests did not say, 'Where is the Lord?' And those who handle the law did not know Me; the rulers [KJV, "pastors"] also transgressed against Me; the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit." He said, 'The people that should have been teaching you, those to whom you looked for religious guidance, have deserted Me.'

Verse 9, "Therefore I will yet bring charges against you," says the Lord, 'and against your children's children I will bring charges.'" He said, 'I am going to continue to deal with you and to get the point across.'

Verse 11, "Has a nation changed its gods, which are not gods? But My people have changed their Glory for what does not profit." Look around and see if you can find an example of a nation that has changed their gods, which are yet not gods. God says to look at the pagan nations; they have been faithful to their paganism.

Isn't it incredible? You go over to some of these pagan countries and they're still worshiping the same idols they worshiped centuries and centuries ago. God says, 'The pagans have been faithful to paganism, and yet My people haven't been faithful to the truth.' Isn't that an incredible thing!

This is the tendency. We see it throughout the Scriptures. The tendency of the people of God who have the truth is to not appreciate it. They take it for granted and gradually let it be watered down. This has always been the tendency of human nature. It's easy to take it for granted. This is what ancient Israel did. We read that and say, 'How could those people be so carnal and do that?' Yet we have to recognize the tendency that can come up, even with God's people and with God's Church. God's Church can gradually take God's truth for granted and not really be excited about it, to value and appreciate it and then to gradually kind of water it down—to let it water down until it becomes blended more and more with worldliness. After a while, it finally comes to a point where God's people have lost their identity.

This is the story repeated over and over in the Old Testament and it is the warning we have in the New Testament. It is the tendency of human nature. We have those examples and it should be a warning for us. That's going to be the tendency of human nature. We're going to have to swim against the tide to do anything else.

Verse 13, "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water." Talk about a bad trade! Here, on the one hand, you have an artesian well and you don't appreciate that. You want to make a cistern. A cistern is not an ideal source to depend on for water. This is a broken cistern, which means whatever you are going to put in is going to dribble out and you won't have anything at all. If someone was willing to trade an artesian well as his water source for a broken cistern, you would think, 'That's pretty dumb!'

It's a very descriptive picture. When you get the picture, you see that's what God says our people have done spiritually. Here is God, the source of living waters. The Holy Spirit is compared to living waters. That's like an artesian well; the water comes bubbling up. There's a source of flowing water there that anybody can have—a source of pure water bubbling up from down deep inside the earth. God compares that to His Holy Spirit, which is a source of life. It flows out. He contrasts it with a trade for a broken cistern. He says, 'My people, Israel, have made a trade and they have really made a bad deal.' We certainly want to make sure that we don't make that trade. God indicts them for not only rejecting the truth but for choosing error.

Verse 19, "Your own wickedness will correct you, and your backslidings will reprove you." A lot of the punishments that are going to come upon us are cause and effect; there are consequences to our actions that will come upon us. A lot of things that are going to happen to this nation are the results of the things we have sown. We reap what we sow.

In Jeremiah 3, God begins to draw another analogy to His relationship with Israel. Now we get into the relationship of a marriage relationship. In Exodus 19, God entered into a covenant with Israel. That covenant was a marriage covenant; God established with ancient Israel a marriage relationship.

In Jeremiah 3:1, He describes Israel having played the harlot with many lovers, and yet God says that He is still offering them an opportunity

to return. Here was Israel who had been so unfaithful to God, figuratively, having played the harlot. Israel lived as a prostitute with all sorts of other lovers—with other nations. God says Judah didn't learn anything from what Israel did.

Jeremiah 3:8, “Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also.”

Verse 14, “Return, O backsliding children,’ says the Lord; ‘for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.’” Even though God has to put away faithless Israel and remove His protection from her, He pictures Himself in the role of the husband. He was the Protector and Provider. Israel was to be faithful and be a faithful helper. Israel was to further the plan and purpose that God had. Israel was to be supportive, a helper, one who is fitting and suitable. Instead of being faithful, Israel was faithless. But God says that He was still going to give them an opportunity to repent, to change, to learn, to turn around and go the other way. He tells them to repent, to “return, O backsliding children.” He says, ‘Eventually when you do, I am going to bring you back out of captivity.’

Verses 15-18, “And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land.... At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem; they shall walk no more after the stubbornness of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers.” —“The land of the north.”

If you go north of Palestine, you're going up into Europe. Judah and Israel are going to be regathered together. Now that has not happened yet. Judah is the only part of the 12 tribes that ever returned to the Promised Land. When Israel went into captivity, they never came back. They never returned. We will notice that at a later time Judah returned. But this is a time yet future, a time when Judah and Israel would return together. That's after the return of Christ. At that time they will have right and proper leadership

and be regathered from the land of the north. It is brought out that God is our source of help.

Jeremiah 4:1, “If you will return, O Israel,’ says the Lord, ‘Return to Me; and if you will put away your abominations out of My sight, then you shall not be moved.’” There is a need for change. There is a need to repent, to put away sin and to put away the abominations out of God's sight. We can't continue in sin and expect God will approve.

Verse 4, God talks about circumcision of the heart, “Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts, you men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,” Clean up our lives. This is prophetic of the Holy Spirit and is an allusion to the understanding that came about in the New Testament, of the circumcision that had a spiritual implication (Romans 2:25-29). It talks about God's word going forth and the results.

Verse 15, “For a voice declares from Dan and proclaims affliction from Mount Ephraim...” That had to be a future prophecy because Ephraim, Dan and all the others had long since gone into captivity well over 100 years before Jeremiah ever prophesied. It was looking all the way down to our day to God's work going forth from the British Isles and throughout Europe—going forth from that area. It was something that was not fulfilled until this point in time.

Verse 20, it talks about what is going to happen, “Destruction upon destruction is cried, for the whole land is plundered.”

Verse 22, “For My people are foolish, they have not known Me. They are silly children, and they have no understanding. They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.”

Verses 27-30, God talks about the destruction that is going to come, and yet He says, “For thus says the Lord: ‘The whole land shall be desolate; yet I will not make a full end. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black, because I have spoken. I have purposed and will not relent, nor will I turn back from it. The whole city shall flee from the noise of the horsemen and bowmen. They shall go into thickets and climb up on the rocks. Every city shall be forsaken, and not a man shall dwell in it. And when you are plundered, what will you do? Though you clothe yourself with crimson, though you adorn yourself with ornaments of gold, though you enlarge your eyes with paint, in vain you will make yourself fair; your lovers will despise you; they will seek your life.’”

God describes Israel under the guise of a harlot. She arrays and adorns herself in the traditional manner of the harlots, the harlots of antiquity. You can go through certain districts of many cities; you drive down the street and you can see some that are pretty much “decked out.” Jeremiah 4:30 comes to mind. They have the “look.” They don’t have to hold up a sign saying what their profession is. All you have to do is look at the way they’re “decked out”—how they’re dressed, all painted up and “bleached out.” You know exactly what they’re peddling.

God describes Israel in that connotation, ‘You’re looking at your lovers [other nations]. You think that somehow you are going to be able to appeal to them.’ He describes Israel under the guise of an unfaithful wife; when confronted with calamity, she thinks somehow she can be pulled out of the calamity by trying the old trick of enticing the lovers. He uses descriptive, poetic language that was descriptive of the women of ill repute. God describes that even when Israel was confronted with her calamities, instead of turning to Him, she started trying to “finagle” around as to how she could entice allies to come to her rescue. God says, ‘It’s not going to do any good; you have to learn the lesson.’

Jeremiah 5:1, “Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem; see now and know; and seek in her open places if you can find a man, if there is anyone who executes judgment, who seeks the truth, and I will pardon her.” Look and see if there’s any truth in judgment. God says you are not going to see much of that.

Verses 7-8, “How shall I pardon you for this? Your children have forsaken Me and sworn by those that are not gods. When I had fed them to the full, then they committed adultery and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots’ houses. They were like well-fed lusty stallions; every one neighed after his neighbor’s wife.”

God describes the immorality. God says, ‘When I blessed you, when you were prosperous and you had everything, instead of appreciating and valuing it, you lined up like troops for the harlots’ houses for every kind of immorality.’ It describes the allusion of everyone neighing after his neighbor’s wife—absolute rampant immorality. Immorality absolutely undercuts and is destructive to a society because morality is the guardian of the family. Morality guards and protects the family. It gives sanctity and “specialness” to the family. When morality breaks down, the family falls apart; when the

family falls apart, the community and nation fall apart.

The family is our basis of connecting to the past and to the future. When you think in terms of family, you think of those who’ve come before you and whose contribution you appreciate and value. But you also think in terms of the future. You have children and grandchildren, and in terms of what you’re doing, you’re thinking not just for yourself, but for them. There’s a sense of connection with the past and with the future. When people think in terms of family, they build the future. When people think only in terms of “here and now” and self, there is no concept of the future. When all they’re after is self-gratification, they don’t care what the consequences are tomorrow. The attitude is: ‘I don’t care what happens, I’ll be dead by then.’

It’s kind of like the famous quote that is attributed to King Louis XV of France. His son Louis XVI was the king when the French Revolution came about. Louis XV was pretty much of a waster. He squandered things and he knew that he was not properly governing the nation. He made the statement on more than one occasion, “After me, the flood!”

Some say, ‘I don’t think it will happen in my lifetime, but when I’m gone, it’s all going to come tumbling down. But I don’t care because I’m not going to be here.’ –No sense of concern or loyalty. What kind of world am I leaving to my children and grandchildren? ‘I won’t be here and if I’m not here, who cares!’ That’s a pretty selfish, self-centered approach. The world is filled with that, and the more there is a disintegration of the family and family loyalty, the more people don’t care what kind of world they are leaving. ‘Hey, I’m not going to be here; what do I care?’

Even economically we are running up this astronomical debt. The ones who are running it up think the bill won’t come due until after we’re dead. ‘Let the children and grandchildren worry about it. We don’t care if we build up something that won’t last. All it needs to do is last through our lifetime. That’s all we care about.’ This is a selfish, self-centered approach. That means you’re setting up a society to collapse—a society where immorality is rampant, a society that is selfish, self-centered and greedy. It’s only thought is for “here and now.” Right now! The only problem with “right now” is that, eventually, tomorrow and the day after are going to come.

A society that will endure and last is a society that is in preparation, a society that is building something that will last. The whole concept of craftsmanship is building something that will last. We talk about the extent to which we have become a “throw-away” society. So many things that are built, within a few years they are falling apart. They are not even built to be fixed—just throw it away and get another one.

A lot of this attitude gets back to the whole concept of morality—a selfish, self-centered society. A society that has lost its moral bearings is a society that cannot long endure. God describes that.

Jeremiah 5:11, “For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously with Me,” says the Lord.”

Verse 15, “Behold, I will bring a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel,” says the Lord. ‘It is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language you do not know, nor can you understand what they say.’”

Notice here that this is a prophecy to the house of Israel, not a prophecy to the house of Judah. Jeremiah had prophecies for Judah (referring to his own day and his own time), but the house of Israel had gone into captivity over 100 years before Jeremiah ever wrote this. So, these prophecies look way beyond his day. These prophecies come on down to our day, at the end time. He talks about that and the events that are going to come in. He says, ‘I’m going to bring this nation upon you.’

Verse 16, “Their quiver is like an open tomb; they are all mighty men.” It’s interesting that the word “German” literally means “man of war.” “Ashur,” who is the ancient ancestor, means “strong.” When He says they are mighty men (of war), it is really a play on words of the name of the nation that was going to be used as the instrument of punishment.

Verses 17-19, “And they shall eat up your harvest and your bread, which your sons and daughters should eat. They shall eat up your flocks and your herds; they shall eat up your vines and your fig trees; they shall destroy your fortified cities, in which you trust, with the sword. Nevertheless in those days,” says the Lord, ‘I will not make a complete end of you. And it will be when you say, “Why does the Lord our God do all these things to us?” then you shall answer them, “Just as you have forsaken Me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve aliens in a land that is not yours.”’”

God says, ‘You haven’t wanted to serve Me; I’m going to let you find out what service is.’ Those who don’t want to voluntarily submit to God are going to have a chance to submit at the end of the point of a bayonet to the German Gestapo of the future. Then they will find out it really wasn’t so bad to serve God. How glad we would be for the chance to serve God instead of serving the Beast power of the future.

Matthew 11:28, 30, it’s going to give new meaning to these verses when Christ said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, . . . For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” You think it’s hard to serve God? Stick around for a few years and try serving the Germans. You’ll find out we never had it so good.

The events that are going to happen in the Great Tribulation are going to far overshadow the events of World War II and the Holocaust; there will be no comparison. The magnitude of the events of the Tribulation will so overwhelm and overshadow those events that there will be no comparison. The events of World War II won’t even be mentioned because the events of the future are going to be so much worse and on such a greater scale. That’s hard to imagine.

Matthew 24:21, Jesus said, “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.” It’s going to surpass everything and anything that has ever happened, which means it is going to surpass the Holocaust, the atrocities that Stalin wrought in Russia, that Hitler wrought, and that all the dictators have wrought. These things are going to be paled by the magnitude of what is going to occur.

Jeremiah 5:23, ““But this people has a defiant and rebellious heart; they have revolted and departed.””

Verse 25, ““Your iniquities have turned these things away, and your sins have withheld good things from you.””

Verse 31, ““The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and My people love to have it so.”” People don’t want to hear the truth; they like it that way. That’s the incredible thing. People don’t like it if you start telling them the truth. They resent that. They want to be told that everything’s great and everything’s fine. They’re not anxious to have the leaders tell them the truth.

Let’s see a little more of what God has to say about the religious leaders.

Jeremiah 6:13-15, “Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely. They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, saying, “Peace, peace!” when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time I punish them, they shall be cast down,” says the Lord.”

God says that from the least of them to the greatest, they’re given to covetousness. God says that is really the motivating factor. A lot of people in the world have begun to recognize that. Turn on the Sunday morning “comedy hour” (if you want to call it that way); they spend more time begging for money than anything else. Then we had all these scandals that hit. God says, ‘Look, the whole bunch is given to covetousness. Money is what they’re after. They’re in it for what they can get.’ He says, ‘They are all dealing falsely. They’ve healed the hurt of My people slightly.’ Did God say that none of them have ever done anything that’s any good? No, He didn’t say that. They may have helped a little bit here and there, slightly. But they haven’t really solved the problem. They say, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.” They weren’t ashamed of what they had done. They hadn’t really turned from the abominations that are done in God’s sight.

Verse 17, God says, “Also, I set watchmen over you, saying, “Listen to the sound of the trumpet!” But they said, “We will not listen.”” God sets a watchman. This work was raised up when God raised up Mr. Herbert Armstrong and threw him into this work. We are now a part and a continuation of this end-time work of God.

God raised up His work (the Philadelphia era of His Church) to be a watchman, to proclaim a message, even though the nation is not really going to listen and to hearken.

Jeremiah 7:2-9, “Stand in the gate of the Lord’s house, and proclaim there this word, and say, “Hear the word of the Lord, all you of Judah who enter in at these gates to worship the Lord!”” Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Do not trust in these lying words, saying, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.” For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly

execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt, then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever. Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know.”

Verse 10, you do all these things, “and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, “We are delivered to do all these abominations?””

People were trusting in lying words saying, “the temple of the Lord.” In other words, God’s house is here. We are God’s people and God won’t let anything happen to us. A lot of people think, ‘The United States is the bastion of democracy, the best hope of mankind. God wouldn’t let anything happen to us. After all, we’re the best He has.’ Well, let’s not kid ourselves!

Here’s their approach: ‘the law is done away and we’re delivered to do all these abominations.’ They say that it’s okay because the law is done away. God says, ‘That is not the case.’

Verses 17-18, “Do you not see what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven;” This describes the origin of hot cross buns and why they come out at Easter time. “Easter” is the English spelling and pronunciation of the ancient Babylonian god Astarte, the queen of heaven.

The Catholic Church has simply taken the old Babylonian goddess Astarte or Easter (as they call her now) and they continue to worship the queen of heaven. Those of you who come out of a Catholic background realize who the queen of heaven is, don’t you? They talk about the queen of heaven; they call her Mary. Mary was the mother of Jesus. She was certainly given the greatest honor that any human woman could ever be given. She was chosen by God to literally give birth to God in the flesh—to give birth to Jesus Christ—and to be entrusted to bring Him up, to train Him and to teach Him. There’s no place in the Bible where Mary is called the queen of heaven.

The one called the queen of heaven here was the old Babylonian goddess. That’s why, today, what’s called the Roman Catholic Church is

nothing but a continuation of “MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (Revelation 17:5). That’s what it is, just a continuation of the same old Babylonian Mystery Religion. The same old customs are right on down to our day. Everything they do goes right back to ancient Babylon. You can read about it. In just a page or two (Jeremiah 10), we come to the Christmas tree. All these things go way back.

Verses 22-24, “For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices. But this is what I commanded them, saying “Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.” Yet they did not obey or incline their ear,”

The sacrifices were not a part of the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant was not based on the sacrifices. When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He did not originally speak to them concerning sacrifices. That’s not what the Old Covenant was about. The sacrifices were added after they broke the Old Covenant. They were added because of disobedience; they were added as a schoolmaster. The Sabbath wasn’t added. The holy days weren’t added. The laws of God were not added; that was part of the Old Covenant to begin with. The sacrifices were added. God didn’t originally speak of the sacrifices when He brought them out of Egypt.

Galatians 3:24, “Therefore the law was our tutor....” KJV, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster....” God added the sacrifices as a schoolmaster.

God talks about the things the nation did.

Jeremiah 7:25-26, “Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them. Yet they did not obey Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck.” God said, ‘Yet you haven’t listened.’

Jeremiah 8:5, “Why then has this people slidden back, Jerusalem, in a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast to deceit, they refuse to return.”

Verse 9, “The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken. Behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord; so what wisdom do they have?” When you reject God’s word, what kind of wisdom are you going to find?

Verses 10-11, “...because from the least even to the greatest everyone is given to covetousness; from the prophet even to the priest everyone deals falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly,” “Slightly,” that’s all it amounts to.

In Jeremiah 9 is the prophecy of the catastrophes and calamities that are going to happen.

Jeremiah 9:11, “I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins and a den of jackals [KJV, “dragons”].” The word actually means “coyotes” and things of that sort. “Dragons” is a bad translation. In other words, it is going to be deserted. There will be wild animals.

Verse 9, continuing, “...I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.”

Verses 12-14, “...Why does the land perish and burn up like a wilderness, so that no one can pass through? And the Lord said, ‘Because they have forsaken My law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice, nor walked according to it, but they have walked according to the imagination of their own heart and after the Baals, which their fathers taught them...’” They have done these things and as a result, there will be war and captivity.

Verse 16, “I will scatter them also among the Gentiles, whom neither they nor their fathers have known. And I will send a sword after them until I have consumed them.” This shows that the nation was going to go into captivity for its sins.

Verses 23-24, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the Lord.”

God says don’t glory in the physical things. Don’t glory in what you know or how strong you are or what you have. Don’t place your confidence in the physical. Those things will let you down. Money can be wiped out overnight. You can have a stock market crash; rapid inflation occurs. You can have all kinds of things happen. That’s not something that is foolproof. Physical strength can fail. Wisdom is limited. Whatever you know, it’s human knowledge and it is limited. Don’t take pride in the physical, but rather, the thing to have confidence in is that you know the true God.

Verse 26, “Egypt, Judah, Edom, the people of Ammon, Moab, and all who are in the farthest

corners, who dwell in the wilderness. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.” This shows that God is concerned about circumcision of the heart. Circumcision of the heart is a cutting away of the old attitudes and thoughts, the cutting away of the old attitudes of mind. He describes the Gentile nations as being uncircumcised and all the house of Israel as uncircumcised in the heart. Circumcision of the heart is the most important circumcision of all.

In Jeremiah 10:1-8 is the description of the Christmas tree—a pagan custom that God’s people are not to follow.

Jeremiah 10:1, “Hear the word which the Lord speaks to you, O house of Israel.” This is not addressing Judah because this sin is not the sin of Judah; it is the sin of the house of Israel—our people, our nation.

Verse 2, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Do not learn the way of the Gentiles [KJV, “heathens”];” Don’t learn heathen pagan customs.

Verses 3-4, “For the customs of the people are futile [vain; then He describes one of them]; for one cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers so that it will not topple.” They go and cut a tree. They bring it back and make it stand up straight. They decorate it and make it all glittery and pretty. Kind of sounds familiar, doesn’t it? God says that’s the custom of the heathens. Don’t learn the way of the heathen.

Every year right around Christmas time, an article will come out in one of the local newspapers about the origin of Christmas. They will readily tell you that Christmas trees go back to pagan customs and pagan traditions and ideas. They will readily admit, ‘We got this custom from the ancient Babylonians or that custom from the Egyptians or the Assyrians, and aren’t all these nice pagan customs okay?’ People sometimes make the excuse, ‘That’s not why we do it.’ God says, ‘Don’t learn the way of the heathen.’

You can look at any number of worldly customs mentioned in the Bible in a negative way, and people say, ‘Yeah, but that’s not why we do it today.’ No, the reason we do it today is because we’re trying to be just like everybody else. Why do people decorate their house for Christmas? It’s not because they are trying to worship the sun god. It’s because they’re trying to be like their neighbors; they are trying to blend in.

Would you like to be the one to explain to Christ when He asks why you did do so-and-so? ‘Well, everybody else was doing it. I didn’t want to stand out.’ Wouldn’t you feel really good about giving that explanation? Don’t you think He would be really impressed with that? Somehow, I just don’t think it will “wash” too well. People miss the point. If we just learn the way of God, we have all we can handle. Why go out and start learning the way of the heathen, trying to mix it in and creating our own way of doing things?

Verse 23 is a very important verse, “Oh Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.”

Proverbs 3:5-6, that is just another way of saying, “...lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.”

It’s not just inherently a part of us to know just what we should do. “The way of man is not in himself; it’s not in man that walks to direct his steps.” We don’t know by ourself. That’s why God tells us; God reveals to us. We are like God’s little children and God teaches and tells us.

Can you imagine just turning a little baby loose and not giving him any guidance? The way that they should go is not just inherent in them. They’ll do all kinds of things because they don’t know better. Some things they do can be so dangerous and destructive. We’re just grown up little babies. Spiritually we are still just kind of crawling along. The way of mankind is not in himself. Apart from God revealing it to us, we don’t know by ourselves. God reveals it to us not because He’s trying to give us a hard time, but because He loves us and doesn’t want us to hurt ourselves. Why did you set rules and restrictions for your little babies and your little children? Was it because you didn’t want them to have fun? Of course not! It’s because you didn’t want them to hurt themselves, to do something dangerous and wind up inflicting permanent damage upon themselves.

Jeremiah 11:2-5, “Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and say to them, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Cursed is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, “Obey My voice, and do according to all that I command you; so shall you be My people, and I will be your God,”

that I may establish the oath which I have sworn to your fathers,””””

Verses 7-8, “““For I earnestly exhorted your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, until this day, rising early and exhorting, saying, ‘Obey My voice.’ Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but everyone walked in the imagination [KJV, margin, ‘stubbornness’] of his evil heart; therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do,”””” God says, ‘I have warned them. I have told them.’

Verse 10, ““They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers who refused to hear My words, and they have gone after other gods to serve them; the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My covenant which I made with their fathers.”” God describes the covenant. God’s covenant message to our people, over and over again, has been a simple direct message: “Obey My voice!” Verse 7 brings that out.

Verse 8 shows that Israel proceeded to go its own way and will therefore receive, as a result, all of the curses mentioned in the book of the covenant. Go back and read Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. Read the curses of the book of the covenant. God made a covenant and He said, ‘Obey My voice; just obey My voice.’ The nation has not done that. It has refused the admonition that has been given and repeated over and over. There are going to be consequences to come about. They have gone into the imagination of their evil heart, in the stubbornness of their own heart. They’ve just done their own thing. They do the things they want to do. God describes that.

Let’s notice a couple of places to illustrate that the house of Israel and the house of Judah are distinct and separate. I would suggest you read the booklet, *What’s Ahead for America and Britain?* Understanding where our nations are identified in the Bible is the basis of understanding much of prophecy. If you don’t understand who is being talked about when it says “Israel,” then you can’t understand Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos and all the others.

Verse 10 is one place that shows a clear distinction between Israel and Judah, ““...the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My Covenant which I made with their fathers.”” That’s one place that shows a clear distinction between Israel and Judah. It shows that they are distinct.

Jeremiah 13:11, “““For as the sash clings to the waist of a man, so I have caused the whole house

of Israel and the whole house of Judah to cling to Me,” says the Lord, “that they may become My people, for renown, for praise, and for glory; but they would not hear.””” God describes the events that were going to come.

He shows in Jeremiah 11:10 and Jeremiah 13:11 that the House of Israel and the House of Judah are distinct and separate. Jeremiah was writing over 150 years after Israel had ceased to be a nation. Northern Israel had gone into captivity. Jeremiah still regarded them as a distinct, separate people. Israel is not the same thing as the Jews. The term “Jew” only refers to “the descendants of Judah.” It refers to the House of Judah; “Jew” is an English slang term for “Judah.”

In Jeremiah 12, the events of the captivity are cited.

Jeremiah 12:4, “How long will the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither? The beasts and birds are consumed, for the wickedness of those who dwell there, because they said, ‘He will not see our final end.’” It talks about all the things that have happened and the events that have occurred.

Verse 7, ““I have forsaken My house, I have left My heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of My soul into the hand of her enemies.”” God allowed the punishment to come.

Verses 15-16, ““Then it shall be, after I have plucked them out, that I will return and have compassion on them and bring them back, everyone to his heritage and everyone to his land. And it shall be, if they will diligently learn the ways of My people, to swear by My name, ‘As the Lord lives,’ as they taught My people to swear by Baal, then they shall be established in the midst of My people.”” God will deal with them and He will bring them back.

Jeremiah 13 describes what He is going to do and how He’s going to call them to repentance. He talks about Judah being carried into captivity.

Jeremiah 13:19, “The cities of the South shall be shut up, and no one shall open them; Judah shall be carried away captive, all of it; it shall be wholly carried away captive.”

Jeremiah 14 talks about the drought that was coming.

Jeremiah 14:2, “Judah mourns, and her gates languish;”

Verse 4, there was a lack of rain.

Verse 14, “...‘The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false

vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart.”

He says that they will perish along with the others.

Verse 15, “Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who prophesy in My name, whom I did not send, and who say, “Sword and famine shall not be in this land”—“By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed!””

In Jeremiah 15, we see a description showing three categories of the calamities and events that are going to occur.

Jeremiah 15:2, “... “Thus says the Lord: ‘Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity.’”” He describes all the calamities and events that are going to occur and the reason that these things were going to happen to Judah.

Verse 4, “I will hand them over to trouble, to all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, for what he did in Jerusalem.” God says Judah went into captivity because of the sins of wicked King Manasseh. The nation never recovered from that. Things got so far off the track for so long, they never got back.

God tells us that when they get into trouble, they say, ‘I’m sorry,’ but they don’t mean it.

Verse 6, “...I am weary of relenting!” What He is talking about is the old “broken record” of people. When they get in trouble, they say, ‘I’m sorry’ and do not really mean it. He’s not talking about a genuine turning away from our own ways. He’s talking about the same old thing, over and over and over again. That gets old. The events are described.

Jeremiah describes his regard for God’s word in a very descriptive poetic term.

Verse 16, “Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.” Jeremiah describes God’s word. It was delightful food. The word of God should be like our spiritual food. Part of the way we are spiritually nourished is taking in God’s word. Jeremiah says, ‘Your words were found and I ate them.’

Matthew 4:4, Jesus said, “...“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”” That needs to be our attitude toward God’s word. Jeremiah describes in the latter part of the chapter the attitude that

God is pleased with, the attitude of desiring God’s word and, Jeremiah 15:17, an attitude of not sitting in the assembly of the mockers. Having the right attitude toward God and God’s word—not taking it for granted, not mocking, but really appreciating and valuing what God says. Our attitude needs to be one of really appreciating God’s truth and God’s calling.

We are clearly living in very momentous times. You do not, *at all*, want to take for granted the tremendous things that God has opened our minds to see and understand. We want to value and appreciate them.

With that, we will conclude the Bible Study.

Bible Study # 53
May 22, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Jeremiah 16—34

We are continuing our survey through the book of Jeremiah. We **are dealing with the middle section of the book of Jeremiah**—chapters 16—34. This section **deals with various prophecies of Judah’s impending captivity**. He uses it as a type of events that will come upon the whole house of Israel at the end time. In the context of material we will look at this evening, **another thing that comes out is the persecution that Jeremiah faced as God’s spokesman**. This is important to realize because down through the centuries, God’s message has not been a popular message. Many times God’s servants have suffered great adversity and difficulties for delivering that message. We will see that here in the book of Jeremiah and we will see some of the things Jeremiah went through.

I think it is important for us to realize that there are probably a lot of things that we’re going to have to face and go through between now and the end of this age. We don’t know every detail of what it’s going to be, but the Bible certainly gives indications and certainly shows by example the fact that God’s message has never been popular. It wasn’t popular at the time of Jeremiah; it certainly wasn’t popular at the time of Jesus Christ and it’s not going to be popular in our time and in our day.

The Scriptures talk about events, a Great Tribulation, and various things. As I have mentioned before, we are in a time of a relative lull, a calm before the storm. We see events—things flash upon the world scene and then they fade. But what we have to realize is that the time is going to come when these events are going to flash on the world scene and they won’t fade. It will be time for things to begin to culminate and come together.

As you watch what’s going on in the Middle East right now, you realize what a volatile situation it is. I’m not saying that this situation is not going to settle down, but it demonstrates the depth of emotions and the lack of real solutions that is there. As we see in the book of Daniel, when the timing is ultimately right, the events in the Middle East will come to a head, but only when things in Europe have developed to the point that Europe is ready to respond—as the book of Daniel and other prophecies show that they will.

We are not at that point now, but we’re certainly moving far closer to it than we were a year ago. Consider what has transpired just since the last Feast of Tabernacles and all of the events that have happened in Eastern Europe since last Pentecost. We’ve gotten so adjusted to some of these things, I think we don’t realize how shocking it would have been had we announced it even last Pentecost. These things really began to come together at the fall Festival season.

Things are moving along and we are in a period of relative calm. A period of relative calm can be used in one of two ways. It makes an ideal time to go to sleep. There is not a whole lot to disturb your rest, so people can use it to either “go to sleep at the switch” or they can use it for time of preparation, recognizing that it is going to come to an end and they need to be prepared. Because when things happen, they will happen quickly enough, that if you’re not prepared, there won’t be time to prepare. That’s part of the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-12)—the five wise and the five foolish. The five wise were prepared. The five foolish weren’t. It ultimately comes down to that.

Mr. Herbert Armstrong drew the analogy many, many years ago, not as a matter of a dogmatic statement, but his own personal feeling was that the parable of the ten virgins—the five wise and the five foolish—would ultimately see fulfillment in the Laodicean and the Philadelphian eras. He felt the Church would, at that time, divide down the middle—five wise and five foolish. That was his personal opinion on that. I heard him say that over 20 years ago. When I heard him say it to me at that time, it seemed very far-fetched. I couldn’t imagine that. But as the years have gone by, I have appreciated his wisdom and insight more and have realized that it is a possibility. I am not saying dogmatically that is exactly what it is going to be, but that is certainly a possibility. I know that it is one possibility that Mr. Armstrong leaned towards.

The point that I am making is that as we go through Jeremiah and as we focus on the events of Jeremiah, it is important that we realize that we’re not simply looking at dead history. We’re not simply looking at old remote events. There are events, in some cases, directly prophetic of our own time and, in other cases, we are looking at events that are typical of the kind of things that happen to God’s servants and God’s work. We’re looking at events that parallel things through which we may very well go through—things through which many of God’s servants down

through the centuries have gone through. We have lived in a time of relative tranquility and peace. Individuals may have faced persecution perhaps on the job or in a family context because of their beliefs. But in terms of organized systematic governmental persecution, we have not faced anything very intense and very long-term for quite a while.

Another thing we will notice in this section is specific information of Jeremiah regarding the king and what was to happen to the house of David. The promise had been made that the dynasty of David would continue. Jeremiah, in his ministry, was actually there at a time when the temple was destroyed and when all the things that seemed to be a part of the fulfillment of God's covenant and God's promise were swept from the scene. The temple was destroyed, the king's sons were executed, and the king was blinded and taken prisoner. The independence of the nation ended, the city of Jerusalem burned, and the Jews were taken into captivity. You had a destruction take place. Did that mean that God's promises were of no avail? Absolutely not! Those promises were to continue, and Jeremiah played a vital role in the fulfillment of some of those promises.

We also have an interesting section that deals with Judah's partial observance of the Sabbatical year and the events that transpired afterwards. Basically, what it amounted to was that the Babylonians put a siege around Jerusalem and the Jews were scared. They figured they had "had it." Ever see how, when people really get scared, they are ready to "cut a deal" with God? Maybe you've done that. The Jews knew that they weren't doing what God said to do. One of the outstanding things they weren't doing was that they had not been observing the Sabbatical year.

The Sabbatical year is a law that applies to a nation. It is a national economic law. It has to do with a release of private debt in the seventh year. It had to do with servants being given liberty at the end of that time and various things. It had to do with the land being able to lay rest, with servants being given their freedom and with private debt being forgiven. It was a law that God instituted to keep the nation economically on an "even keel."

Right now our nation is so burdened down with debt that it's just a matter of time. God made for periodic adjustments because wealth will become maldistributed, and there can come such inequities that things eventually collapse. The

Sabbatical made provision for a fresh start. Those who worked harder were rewarded for it. But the Sabbatical made provision for a fresh start, an opportunity for private debt to be forgiven. You could not build up massive debt because private debt was going to come to an end every seventh year. You simply didn't build up a gigantic private debt. The economy would not be based on something like that.

The Jews (those who were in position of power) were looking at opportunities to make money. They didn't want to release debt. They didn't want to release slaves. Since they didn't want to do these things, they hadn't. When the Babylonians surrounded the city and they thought they were all going to be killed, they got scared and started trying to "cut a deal" with God. Oh, they were repentant and sorry; they would do all of this stuff. Jeremiah laid it out to them. He told them what they needed to start doing, so they did. They made an announcement. They released all the debt and turned loose the slaves. They did everything. They started observing the Sabbatical year.

Just a short time after they did that, the Egyptians launched an army that headed up to the area of northern Mesopotamia, toward Carchemish. The Egyptian army was going to launch an attack on the Babylonians. The Babylonians, who had Jerusalem surrounded, pulled the siege. They lifted the siege and the armies left. They went to fight against the Egyptians.

You know what the Jews did? They sat back and said, 'Boy, that's a relief. We didn't have to depend on God to rescue us after all. The Egyptians came to our aid. We knew those Egyptians would help us out. Let's forget about this Sabbatical year stuff. Bring the slaves back. We're going to exact a debt. We're going to do all the stuff. We're not going to wind up losing this money. We don't have to worry about that; the Egyptians have bailed us out.'

Immediately they went back to doing what they had been doing before. The Babylonians promptly smashed the Egyptian army and came back to Jerusalem. If you make a deal with God, you better fulfill your part of it. God can deliver us in various ways. Humanly, people want to trust what they can see. The Israelites wanted to put their trust in Egypt. They felt like if they could just get the Egyptians on their side, the problems would be solved. What they needed to realize was that the only way problems can be solved is to get God on your side. It's not a matter of talking God into seeing it our way; it's

a matter of coming to see it His way and making sure we get going in that direction.

There's a lesson of faith here. Again, we see the tendency of human nature—it wants to walk by sight; it does not want to walk by faith. We want to trust what we can see, touch, taste and feel—what we can sense with the five physical senses. And, in reality, the only thing that can be depended on is something that can't be discerned by the five physical senses. It is the power of God.

We find in this section the Biblical definition of human nature. We see God's rebuke of people for failure to properly keep the Sabbath. In chapter 18, we focus in on a lesson of God being the Potter and we being the clay. We look in on false shepherds. We see a prophecy of the New Covenant and the Holy Spirit.

In Jeremiah 16, Jeremiah was told how bad things were going to get. In fact, he was told not to marry and raise a family at that time because of the terrible captivity and the things that were going to occur. Notice the attitude of the people as God's servants told them of these things.

Jeremiah 16:10, ““And it shall be, when you show this people all these words, and they say to you, ‘Why has the Lord pronounced all this great disaster against us? Or what is our iniquity? Or what is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?’”” They said, ‘Why we are good people! God wouldn't do those things to us. What's so bad about us?’ That's what people still think. ‘We're better than old “so-and-so.” We're better than somebody else. We are not the best, but we're sure not the worst. God wouldn't do those things to us.’

God makes it very plain.

Verses 11-12, ““then you shall say to them, ‘Because your fathers have forsaken Me,’ says the Lord; ‘they have walked after other gods and have served them and worshiped them, and have forsaken Me and not kept My law. And you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, each one walks according to the imagination of his own evil heart, so that no one listens to Me.’”” ‘Each one of you just doing your own thing; you're walking after the imagination of your evil heart.’

If that was descriptive of ancient Judah, is it descriptive of us today? Have we not, as a nation, forsaken God? Have we not refused to keep God's law? We can say that our ancestors did that, and we've done worse than they did because we have turned away from the portions of right and wrong that they clung to. We are

getting to the point where we want to legalize sin and outlaw righteousness—a very upside-down perverted approach.

Verse 13, ““Therefore I will cast you out of this land....””

Up until now, the great event that has defined the history of God's people and the history of Israel was the Exodus. That was kind of the great point from which everything else flowed.

Verses 14-15, ““Therefore behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘that it shall no more be said, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ but, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from the lands where He had driven them.’ For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers.’”

God talks about the events of the future when Israel goes into captivity and they will finally be delivered again. It will be an event that will greatly overshadow, in terms of size and magnitude, the events of the Egyptian captivity and the Exodus from Egypt.

There is going to be a future Exodus of bringing the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He will drive them. He will bring them back. This is a prophecy that goes beyond Judah.

Verse 15 makes plain that it is a prophecy to the children of Israel. Realize that Jeremiah was writing 120 years after the ten tribes of Israel had already gone into captivity. The ten tribes were gone; they were history. Jeremiah is talking about events yet future. He is talking about events concerning the children of Israel, the house of Israel. The events that occurred to Judah were, in many ways, a type of end-time events to the house of Israel. These things are made plain. He describes what is going to happen. He describes that captivity is ultimately going to come. Eventually, God will deliver and He will bring them back. It will be an event of such magnitude that it will absolutely overshadow everything that has ever gone before.

Verse 19, ““...The Gentiles shall come to You from the ends of the earth and say, ‘Surely our fathers have inherited lies, worthlessness and unprofitable things.’”” As He deals with the nations, they will come up to be converted. They will want to learn God's way.

Notice what God says about putting our faith in human help.

Jeremiah 17:5, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his

strength, whose heart departs from the Lord.”
“Cursed be the man who trusts in man”—putting your faith and confidence in human beings and what they can do and losing sight of God and the reality of His power. If you get your focus on the human element, you’re under a curse. What’s the curse? The curse is that you are dependent on a weak, frail, human being, just like you are. You are trusting in a human being who is just as limited as you are. We cut ourselves off from access to the great power of the Eternal God and we put confidence in human beings.

He goes on and compares that.

Verses 7-8, “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters,”

You have a continual source of help.

Then we have some things about human nature defined for us.

Verses 9-10, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.” We are told that the primary ingredient of human nature is self-deceit. We kid ourselves. One of the hardest things for any of us to do, as human beings, is to be totally, brutally, frankly honest with and about ourselves and about our motives.

Have you ever noticed that if you want to do something, you can find a lot of good excuses as to why you should do it—you should buy this, or go here, etc. You can come up with a lot of good reasons that justify it. If you don’t want to do something, you can come up with a lot of pretty good-sounding excuses as to why you shouldn’t or you can’t. ‘I don’t think I can’—all these things that come to mind. We can come up with all these good reasons as to why we don’t think we can. There is a difference between a reason and an excuse.

“The heart is deceitful above all things.” It’s hard for us to really come to grips with our motives. We can kid ourselves. We can deceive ourselves. That is a crucial part of human nature. We can “lock in” and we can never work on a problem we don’t see. We have to see it in order to work on it. We have to honestly face something in order to deal with it. This is a very crucial part of human nature. “Who can know it?” “The heart is deceitful above all things.” First and foremost we kid ourselves. We make up excuses and justifications. It’s hard for us to really come to grips with the real reason we do things.

God says He searches the heart; He tries the mind. If we really want to see as God sees, God will show us, but you have to want to see. It’s a matter of examining why we do what we do. Why do we do or refrain from doing certain things? It takes time to get down to the heart and core of our real motivations. That’s a part of what Christianity and internalizing the law of God is all about. Christianity is much more than merely external observance. Christianity is about internalizing a new way of thinking. Obviously, if we internalize a new way of thinking, it’s going to be reflected in what we do on the outside. If we’re externally disobedient, then it’s a pretty good indication we’re not internally doing what we should do either.

However, the reverse is not true. A person can outwardly conform to everything and yet inwardly be simply like the Pharisees. We’re told that our heart is the seat of our emotions and of our thinking. “The heart is deceitful above all things.” We need God’s help to really properly perceive and not kid ourselves.

God begins to rebuke the nation concerning some of the sins. He refers to Sabbath breaking.

Verses 21-23, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; nor carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, nor do any work, but hallow the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers. But they did not obey nor incline their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear nor receive instruction.’”

He talks about the consequences of not hallowing the Sabbath.

Verse 27, “But if you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.” The specific reference to “bearing a burden” was burdens of merchandise, particularly from agricultural districts. People were simply bringing merchandise into Jerusalem. They were bringing forth things from the house with which to barter and trade for produce.

The Jews went to great lengths, after the captivity, to define what was a burden. They got into great debates among the rabbis trying to define how much is a burden. By the time of Christ, they had so “nit-picked” the thing apart that they had come out with the rabbinical ruling that anything exceeding the weight of three figs

constituted bearing a burden on the Sabbath. That is a carnal-minded approach.

Let's understand why it's a carnally-minded approach. The carnal mind wants a line drawn so they can get as close to it as possible. The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God. It really does not want to be as close to God as it can be. It wants to be as close to the world as it can be, and it wants an exact line. It wants to get up just as close as it can and kind of lean over the cliff but not lean over so far as to fall.

The rabbis said, 'Since the attitude of the people is that they are going to go as far as we'll let them, then what we need to do is to draw the line way back over here. That way, nobody gets really close to the cliff.' Nobody went too far because they drew the line so far back that no one could get close. What the rabbis said was that they were going to build a hedge around the law. Their reasoning was, 'Look, we went into captivity because we violated the law, particularly idolatry and Sabbath breaking. What we need to do is build a hedge around the law so that people can't even get close to breaking the law. We'll stick on all these "do's" and "don't's." You will have to go far beyond the limits we set in order to break the law. It will keep everybody "in line.'" That's a carnal-minded approach because it's dealing from the premise that people are going to go as far as they can go, as far as you'll let them get by with.

I think we need to understand that God is not going to have anybody in His Kingdom with that approach. The approach that God wants is to get as close to Him as we can. Our whole direction needs to be that we want to get as close to God as we can get. Not as close to the world as we can get by with, but as close to God as we can get. It's a different approach. When you have that approach, you don't have to build a hedge around the law because you're not trying to get up to the edge to lean over. You're not trying to "cut the corners" and take the liberties. You're trying to apply the principle.

We're not only to observe the law but also to understand and to apply in our hearts and minds the principles behind the law. That's why the Pharisees got into this contention with Christ. Remember where He had healed the man who was paralyzed and He told him to rise, take his bed and walk—and the guy did. And the Pharisees got all "bent out of shape." The fellow wasn't picking up his Sealy Posturepedic; that wasn't what he was carrying. What he had was like a sleeping bag. It probably wasn't even that

much. It was just a little mat. He rolled it up and put it on his shoulder. Christ didn't have the guy staggering down the street carrying a king-size bed and headboard on his back. That was not the point. He was healed. What was he going to do? Was he going to go off and leave it and not have the mat to lie down on anymore? It was silly. There was nothing in God's law that forbade the fellow to roll up the mat or blanket, stick it on his shoulder and go on his way. The Pharisees took the approach of trying to build a hedge around the law of humanly imposed "do's" and "don't's."

We have to understand that the tendency of human nature is to veer from one ditch to the other. We need to realize that we need to obey the law, but we need to go beyond simply obeying the letter of the law. We don't need to go beyond in the sense of inventing a whole lot of humanly-imposed ideas. We need to understand the principle and we need to apply the principle. We need to realize that when God talks about some of these things, there is a principle involved. There is a particular way that God wants His people to be, and we want to fit in with that. We want to be made conformable to the image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29), not conformable to the image of the society around us (Romans 12:2).

It goes on and further develops that in chapter 18.

Jeremiah 18:1-6, we have the story where Jeremiah was told to rise and go down to the potter's house.

I want to mention something. A number of years ago, there was an art show that was going on. It sounded interesting and we decided to go down and take a look and see what they had. The thing that I particularly remember about it was the potter that they had there. He had some beautiful vases and art objects that he had made. He was working at a potter's wheel. It was very interesting to watch him. I had never seen a real potter working before. As I watched him, Jeremiah 18 was running through my mind.

When a group of us gathered around, he started fresh. He picked out a lump (or brick) of clay. The first thing he did with this brick of clay that he picked out was to lay it down on this table and start beating on the thing with his fist. It was hard and it wasn't very pliable. He pounded on it for a little bit. After he had beat on it for a little while, he had this little bowl of water and he sprinkled a little water on it. After he had beat on it for a little bit with his fist, it began to kind of lose that

rigid brick-like shape. He sprinkled a little water on it and pounded on it a little more. He tore it in two and then put the two together. He'd reach back, put a little water on it and work with it. Gradually, instead of being hard and very difficult, it became more and more pliable. He was working it back and forth. When he had it really loosened up and really malleable, he plunked a big lump on the potter's wheel and began working with the treadle to make this potter's wheel turn. It was just incredible. Within a matter of minutes, this beautiful vase took shape. Before, it had just been a lump of clay; now it was a beautiful vase. The potter's wheel kept turning it around. He got out some instruments, put some fine touches on it and got it just right. Then he ran a string under it to separate the bottom of it from the potter's wheel. He got it loose and set it aside. He said he would let it dry for a little bit and then he would oven bake it to harden it. Then it would be painted and baked again. He described the rest of the process.

What happens when God first selects us? What happens when God calls us and begins to work with us? He's the Potter; we're the clay. He selects us. He calls us out. He chooses us from the midst of all these other lumps of clay. But then He has to bring us to the point that we can be worked with. Some of us are a little harder lump of clay than others. What does He do? Well, He has to pound on it for a little while. He has to bring us to the point that we can be molded and shaped because you can't shape a lump of clay until it is malleable and can be worked with.

You have to be pliable. Therefore, the first thing you have to do is get some of the stiffness out of it. What does God do? He pounds on us a little bit. A few trials come along. It gets our attention and takes a little of the stiffness out. What does He do? He begins to add some of His Spirit. That's what the water is. Water is even used in the Bible as a symbol of God's Spirit. God begins to add in some of His Spirit, and that Spirit makes us more and more pliable. He keeps working with us and working with us, adding in a little more Spirit. He keeps working with us until finally we're responsive to Him. Then at the point that we really become responsive, He can make us what He wants us to be. Then that character is hardened.

There is an analogy that is drawn: the trials and tests we go through are like being put through the fire (1 Peter 1:7) and hardened. Because once

you've fired a piece of pottery, nothing else can ever be made out of it. It can be destroyed and made into dust, but you could never take it, reshape it and make something else. It has lost that elasticity, that ability to be shaped. God ultimately gets us just like He wants us. In effect, He fires our character to where it hardens and to where we are set. There may be a few little decorative touches that He puts on, but it basically becomes set. It's an interesting analogy. God goes through that with Jeremiah. It's a good analogy to think about and to realize that God says, 'I am the Potter and you are the clay. Jeremiah, you want to find out how I work with you and what I'm doing. Go down to the potter's house; look and see what he does.'

Is prophecy conditional?

Jeremiah 18:8, "'if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.'" If a nation against whom God has pronounced punishment turns from their evil, He will turn from what He was purposing to do. The example of that is Nineveh—in the book of Jonah—repenting of their sins. Prophecy is conditional. If a prophecy of punishment is given, upon a lack of repentance, God describes the things that He is going to do—how there would be a captivity that would come and, verse 17, the nation would be scattered. These events were going to occur.

In Jeremiah 19, He talks about some of those things.

Verse 8 talks about the city being made desolate.

Verse 9 describes that the nation will have such an extent of famine that there was, literally, cannibalism that occurred. That literally occurred during the first siege of Jerusalem. Josephus records that there were some instances of it in the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans. Undoubtedly, it is going to be paralleled again in the events that mark the beginning of the tribulation, the famine and the things that are going to occur. There are going to be some very, very serious things.

Then there is the response to God's message being delivered. They weren't happy. They didn't like it and the government officials didn't like it.

Jeremiah 20:1-2, "Now Pashhur the son of Immer, the priest who was also chief governor in the house of the Lord, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things. Then Pashhur struck Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the Lord." Here he was

ready to throw Jeremiah in jail. He was going to punish him. He said, 'You shouldn't say things like this.' People become very antagonistic when the truth is told. Jeremiah made it plain to Pashhur what was going to happen to him.

Jeremiah 21:1-2, "The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur..., 'Please inquire of the Lord for us, for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon makes war against us.'" He said, 'The king of Babylon is making war against us, and we want to know if God will intervene for us.' Here's the irony of it. They were ready to throw him in jail. They were mad at him. Yet, when they got scared and their "back got against the wall," they came to him and asked him to inquire of the Lord for them. They knew where God was working.

There are some interesting examples that are mentioned in Mr. Herbert Armstrong's autobiography of some similar type events in the early years of the work. There are certain ones that he mentioned. There was a particular church that really had no use for him. They were of a Pentecostal variety, and they figured that they were spiritual and he wasn't. They had all kinds of things to say about him until the time when the pastor's wife fell over "under the spirit" and they couldn't revive and bring her back. Immediately, they set out to look for him. When "push came to shove," they knew whose prayers were answered. It's the irony sometimes, and this attitude is reflected right here in Jeremiah 21. Jeremiah came and explained what was going to occur. He told them exactly what was going to happen and how.

Verse 10, "'For I have set My face against this city for adversity and not for good,'"

He goes on to explain why all these calamities were going to come.

Jeremiah 22:9, "...'Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and worshiped other gods and served them.'" They hadn't obeyed God. They hadn't served God.

Verse 21, "'I spoke to you in your prosperity, but you said, 'I will not hear.'" This has been your manner from your youth, that you did not obey My voice.'" Again they had this attitude and this lack of obedience to God.

Jeremiah 23:1-6, "'Woe to the shepherds [KJV, "pastors"] who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!' says the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: 'You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your

doings,' says the Lord. 'But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking,' says the Lord. 'Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.'"

The term "pastor" is a term that means "shepherd." This certainly can apply both in the national sense as well as in the religious sense. It certainly would apply to false ministers and false religious leaders. It simply refers to those who are to be the shepherds of God's flock. Instead of properly tending the flock, they have been fleecing the flock. God says, 'I am going to deal with that. I am going to hold them accountable, and things are ultimately going to change.'

It shows the righteous Branch that God will raise up. The One who is characterized as David's Righteous Branch will be ruling over all—in other words, Jesus Christ. Ruling under Him will be various righteous shepherds—that's us. It describes the consequences of what has occurred, the things that set the stage for the prophecies.

Then it describes the future Exodus.

Verse 8, "'...As the Lord lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them.'" And they shall dwell in their own land."

Here we have a prophecy that clearly comes down to the end time.

Verses 10-11, "For the land is full of adulterers; for because of a curse the land mourns.... For both prophet and priest are profane;"

Verse 14, "'Also I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem: they commit adultery and walk in lies; they also strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns back from his wickedness. All of them are like Sodom to Me, and her inhabitants like Gomorrah.'" We have a description of how God characterizes the nation and the result of what He is going to do as a consequence of that.

Jeremiah 24 has the parable of the figs. We have two baskets of figs: one is characterized as very good figs and the other is characterized as very

bad figs. The good figs symbolized those who had already been taken captive to Babylon, over whom God would watch and would ultimately bring back to the land. This happened a generation later under Zerrubabel. The bad figs symbolized those left behind and those who had gone to Egypt.

Verses 9-10, they would suffer many punishments which were yet to come.

In Jeremiah 25, Jeremiah continues his prophecies and the things that were going to occur. He explains they were going into captivity and why they were going into captivity.

Jeremiah 25:5-7, ““They said, “Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the Lord has given to you and your fathers forever and ever. Do not go after other gods to serve them and worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands; and I will not harm you.” Yet you have not listened to Me,” says the Lord, “that you might provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt.”””

Verses 11-12, ““And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,” says the Lord; “and I will make it a perpetual desolation.”””

God describes the events that were going to occur and the 70 years that were prophesied. It wasn't totally clear, even at that time, as to what exactly the 70 years was about. In fact, it's interesting. Daniel who was a younger contemporary of Jeremiah had been studying this.

Daniel 9:2, “in the first year of his reign [speaking of Darius] I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord, given through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.” Daniel had been studying this. He had been trying to understand it. He was in Babylon. He had been taken captive from Jerusalem. He didn't understand exactly what the 70 years meant—when did it start and when did you stop it? How did this 70 years run? He had been studying the book of Jeremiah.

Daniel 1:2, the books of the Bible had been taken to Babylon along with the artifacts that had been taken from the temple. Daniel had access to the Scriptures. He had been studying it trying to understand. Finally he did. He understood it

shortly before it happened. The details generally become plain as we get closer to the time of fulfillment. The 70 years, basically, would extend from about 604 B.C., which was Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion, down to 534 B.C., which is when the Jews actually returned. Cyrus issued the decree in 535 B.C., but it took several months to get back. It was actually 534 B.C. before they returned, so it was 70 years from the time of the first invasion and captivity until the return of the captives from Babylon.

The people got upset in what Jeremiah had to say.

Jeremiah 26:11, “And the priests and the prophets spoke to the princes and all the people, saying, ‘This man deserves to die! For he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your ears.’” ‘Boy, we need to get rid of this guy.’

Great persecution began to come. I think we can understand that and even some of the parallels right on down to our day.

In Jeremiah 27:1-7, we have indication of how God was going to give Babylon dominance.

In verses 12-18, we have Jeremiah's advice to the king and the information that he brought out.

By the time you get to chapter 29, Jeremiah had some advice for the captives of Babylon. He wrote a letter.

Jeremiah 29:1, “Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the remainder of the elders who were carried away captive—to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon.” This would include Ezekiel who was one of the priests who had been carried captive. And it would include Daniel. This was the letter that was written.

Verse 10 describes the 70 years, “For thus says the Lord: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place.” Undoubtedly, this was the letter that Daniel was referring to in the book of Daniel when he was trying to understand, trying to grasp the significance of it.

Verses 4-7, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and

daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace.”

They were told that they were to settle down there, build houses, get married and raise their families. They were told they would not be coming back, to not put off those events and to pursue them day in and day out. The time would come when they would be delivered, but they should be pursuing their normal activities in the meanwhile. That was the appropriate way.

In some ways, we could parallel that today. What should we be doing? We need to go about pursuing our normal activities and being productive individuals. Yet, we need to be spiritually prepared and ready, realizing that this society, the Babylon in which we live, is not going to last.

It continues and describes some of the persecution that came in.

Jeremiah 30:2, “Thus speaks the Lord God of Israel, saying: “Write in a book for yourself all the words that I have spoken to you.”” Jeremiah was told to write in a book the words that God had spoken, and this is the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was told to write down and describe all these things.

Then we’re told of Jacob’s trouble.

Verse 7, ““Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.”” Now this is clearly referring to the Great Tribulation Jesus talked about.

Matthew 24:21, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no nor ever again shall be.”

Jeremiah 30:7, we are told, “that day is great, so none is like it.” You can’t have two times that are worst than any other time. Clearly, both describe the worst time; therefore, it’s the same time. One of the things that characterize the Tribulation is that it is the time of Jacob’s trouble. He also brings out what will occur after God brings them back from captivity, after He saves them out of that Tribulation.

Verse 9, ““But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.”” King David is going to be resurrected and is going to be king. They are going to serve Jesus Christ and they are going to serve King David. God will bring them back.

Verse 10, ““...Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid.””

There is no way you can take the description here and apply it to the return of the Jews to Judea in our time because they certainly are not ‘dwelling at rest and with no one making them afraid.’ That area is filled with terrorists, and there are all kinds of things going on. That is not the fulfillment of this event right here. This is yet future, after the return of Jesus Christ.

Verse 18 describes the great Exodus of the future.

Verse 24, “...In the latter days you will consider it.” It brings out that this prophecy is set in the latter days.

Jeremiah 31 describes the return of Israel.

Verses 7-8, Israel is being regathered and the remnant will be saved and brought up from the north country. They are going to be taken, not to Egypt, which is south, but they are going to be taken to the north country. The clear reference is the area up in Europe, the area where the Beast power is centered, which is north of Jerusalem. They are going to be regathered and brought back.

Jeremiah 31:10, “Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, “He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.”” It describes that gathering together.

It describes a time of rejoicing after the regathering.

Verse 13, “Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old, together; for I will turn their mourning to joy, will comfort them, and make them rejoice rather than sorrow.”

One thing as just a kind of aside—it’s interesting that when you read of music in the Bible, it is a unifying factor, a culturally-unifying factor. The idea of different music for different generations is a concept alien to the Bible. Music in our age and society, in the 20th century (particularly the latter portion), has become a divisive factor in society. It has become divisive to generations.

Different music is appropriate for different occasions. There is formal music that is appropriate for occasions of public worship to set an atmosphere of worship and reverence. There was the Levitical choir and orchestra. But there is also music that is appropriate for other occasions, music that is more informal. Here it describes a time of rejoicing. Music in this case was appropriate for a kind of impromptu street

dance—a time of festivity and rejoicing. We find that this is the role that it traditionally played.

We have to understand the extent to which our modern problems are something unusual. That's not always been. When you go back years ago, some of you remember that normally when there was a dance in the community, everybody was there, young and old people. They all enjoyed and took part in the occasion.

This is what is described here. We are looking at what God intends music to be; music that is a culturally-unifying factor. Music can express emotions and feeling in a way that virtually nothing else can. God has designed that and designed the laws that actually regulate music in terms of why music affects us as it does because music does have an effect. Certain music can stir you up or slow you down. It can raise or lower your blood pressure and heart rate. They have proven that in clinical studies. You can play a stirring march or soft lullaby, and it has a different effect. There is different music for different occasions.

There is a reference to Rachel.

Verse 15, "...A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children, because they are no more." This scripture is quoted in Matthew 2:17-18. The reason Bethlehem is considered the city of Rachel is because Rachel died in Bethlehem giving birth to Benjamin. She died and was buried there. Bethlehem was in the territory of Benjamin. In that sense, it was considered Rachel's city. She was identified with it because she died and was buried there. The Benjamites (Rachel's descendants) dwelt there.

In Matthew 2:1, Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem. Herod knew that the Messiah had been born, at least the One who was reported to be King of the Jews. Because Herod didn't want any competition, he sent the soldiers in to kill all the babies there in Bethlehem. This verse was quoted. It was a poetic reference to the devastation that took place. It describes, figuratively speaking, Rachel weeping for her children. It is a poetic reference to the destruction and devastation that occurred, and it specifically referred to Rachel because of Bethlehem being identified with her. Herod very directly fulfilled it at the slaughter of the infants. Figuratively, it could even refer forward to the time and events of the Tribulation when many of Rachel's end-time descendants will be slaughtered.

We have a description of the New Covenant.

Jeremiah 31:31-34, "'Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, But this is the covenant that I will make...: I will put My laws in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord.'"

This will ultimately be fulfilled after the return of Christ. It will be a time when that covenant is being written in the hearts of everyone, and there won't be anybody left to be taught. The new covenant will ultimately be completed when all have been converted or have rejected it and been destroyed. God is making the new covenant. It is made with us right now, and the rest of the world will have the opportunity to enter into the new covenant at a future date.

The basis of the new covenant is not that the law is being done away; it is that the law is being written in our hearts and in our minds. In other words, we are trying to learn to think like God. We are not trying to edge as close to worldliness as we can. We are trying to think like God. We are not trying to see what we can get away with. It's having the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5). God will put His laws into their hearts and into their minds—convert them. That's what "conversion" means. It means "a change, a transformation." It is more than just external conformity; it is an internal transformation. This is very, very crucial and important.

Jeremiah 32:2-3 goes back and describes Jeremiah's imprisonment.

Verses 3-5, people were upset at what he was saying, the things he was doing and the message he was proclaiming.

I call your attention to more references to the fact that there was a difference between Judah and Israel.

Jeremiah 32:30, "'because the children of Israel and the children of Judah have done only evil before Me from their youth.'"

Verse 32, "'because of all the evil of the children of Israel and the children of Judah,

....””” We have this clear reference to the fact that there is a distinction between them.

Jeremiah 33:7, “““And I will cause the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel to return, and will rebuild those places as at the first.””” This has not yet been fulfilled. Judah came back; Israel has not. That is yet future. It is another reference that clearly shows that Israel’s identity would be preserved down to the end; otherwise, how could they be brought back?

Verses 17-18, ““For thus says the Lord: “David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; nor shall the priests, the Levites, lack a man to offer burnt offerings before Me, to kindle grain offerings, and to sacrifice continually.”””

Verses 20-21, ““Thus says the Lord: “If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levites, the priests, My ministers.”””

God describes this covenant. This message was spoken shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem and, with it, the cessation of the functioning of the Levitical priesthood and of the reign of the house of David from Jerusalem.

This scripture shows that in spite of appearances, God intended to keep His covenant. He would preserve the house of David and the house of Levi. Other scriptures show that while David’s dynasty would continue an uninterrupted reign over the house of Israel, it would not be restored to Jerusalem until Christ comes. The Levites would also be restored to a functioning priesthood at that time.

Notice what he said about David.

“David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel.” Now the family of David had not ruled over the house of Israel for more than 300 years. By the time Jeremiah was writing this, the house of David—the family of David—had not ruled over the house of Israel for over 300 years. They had been ruling over the house of Judah. But this says they are going to rule over the House of Israel. We will notice that there are clear references in Jeremiah and Ezekiel to Jeremiah’s role in transferring the throne of David from Judah to Israel. We will notice some of that next Bible study. We will notice the commission that Jeremiah was given and how it ended up.

Jeremiah 34 recounts the occasion that I mentioned at the beginning of the Bible study. It recounts the siege of the city of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. It recounts Judah’s temporary repentance and observance of the Sabbatical year, then the Egyptians coming and the Jews thinking they were “off the hook.” They went back to their old ways. Then God said, ‘Just look out. You’re going to get the old punishment.’

Galatians 6:7, you can tie that in with the statement where God said, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”

You don’t “put one over” on God. It just doesn’t work that way. Human nature finds it difficult to realize that God sees and knows and that there’s no way that we would ever “put something over” on God. This is a clear lesson and parallel, here in Jeremiah 34, of the attitude of wanting to get out of trouble, but they didn’t have an attitude of really wanting to change. Sometimes that happens. We have to examine our own life and make sure we don’t do something just trying to get out of trouble and not really motivated by a desire and a heart that wants to change. We want God’s law in our hearts and in our minds. That’s the new covenant: being converted, being changed and transformed by a renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2).

As we go to God for that and for that help, God will work with us. He will add in His Spirit. He may have to work us like the potter does the clay. He may have to pound on us for a little bit to get us softened up where we can be worked with. Some of us take a little more pounding than others. God is going to do it because He is preparing to shape and form us and make us a vessel fit for the Master’s use. We are being shaped and transformed.

A lot is packed here in the book of Jeremiah. We will conclude the book of Jeremiah next Bible study.

Bible Study # 54
June 26, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Jeremiah 35—52

We are ready to finish up the book of Jeremiah. The first 11 chapters that we are going to cover this evening, **Jeremiah 35-45, provide a historical inset to the theme of the prophecy.** What we primarily have in these chapters is a historical account of the events of Jeremiah's ministry. We have the account of his warning to the governmental leaders in his day, the story of his subsequent arrest and, finally, the story of the Babylonian invasion of Judah and subsequent captivity of Jerusalem and Judah. We have the account of those Jews who were left behind and their electing to move to Egypt in spite of Jeremiah's warnings to the contrary. We have the consequences of that.

These chapters deal primarily with contemporary events and, yet, they also provide lessons for us today. There is a lot of insight, a lot of things that we can gain and learn from parallels with the work that God did through Jeremiah, the work that God is doing in our day and on out ahead of us. Also, these historical inset chapters provide kind of a summary or setting to help us to understand the context in which Jeremiah was writing.

One of the things about prophecy is that much of it is dual. To a great extent, what the prophet was writing or delivering had certain meaning and application for his contemporaries, for those people there at that time and that day. However, the prophecies that were written down generally had implications way beyond that day and down to the end time. That's one of the reasons that certain prophecies are written and recorded and preserved for us, while other prophecies are not. Men such as Elijah, Elisha, Nathan, Gad and many others are mentioned in the Bible as prophets. Yet the prophetic messages that they delivered evidently had primary implications to their day and their society because those messages were not written down and preserved for us.

But when we come to something like the book of Jeremiah, it clearly was preserved for us today. The implications of the book are things of which we need to take heed. Even the events that were contemporary accounts of Jeremiah's life, or things that he was going through, provide a background setting and stage and help us to

understand the circumstances of what happened. Many times when you understand the way it happened the first time (when you understand the circumstances and background of it), it helps you to have a clearer picture of the way some of these things may have implications for us today.

Jeremiah 46--51 provides an insight into God's punishment on the surrounding nations. You have the Egyptians, the Philistines, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, Damascus, Kedar, the Elamites and the Babylonians. These are all focused on and they all have their fates outlined. God will not only punish Judah.

Acts 10:34 KJV, "God is no respecter of persons." God will ultimately punish all nations for their sins. We have this brought in. We can understand some things as we note the modern identity of some of these nations that come down to us today.

Let's note in Jeremiah 35 an example and illustration that is given. We read of an interesting account of a group of people known as the Rechabites who are addressed here. The Rechabites were, in one sense, related to the Israelites in that they were descendants of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law. Jethro himself was a Midianite. The Midianites were descendants of Abraham through his son Midian who he had with Keturah (Genesis 25) after Sarah's death. The Midianites were a kindred people. They were also descendants of Abraham. The Rechabites were descended specifically from Jethro, Moses' father-in-law.

God calls the Rechabites to Jeremiah's attention. What we are told about them is that they had kept and observed from generation to generation precepts that were laid down by their human ancestor Jonadab, the son of Rechab. Jonadab had established a rule for his family. That rule was that his family was not to consume alcohol and they would not settle in towns and in fixed dwellings. They would live as nomads and they would forbear the use of alcoholic beverages.

Now, interestingly enough, you find the descendants of those people in the Middle East still doing the same thing. They are still nomads and they still don't drink alcohol. One thing—you have to hand it to them—is that they have a knack for consistency. They are not a people who are given to a lot of radical innovation. They are rather consistent from one generation to the next. The Rechabites had come inside the wall of Jerusalem. The Babylonians were laying siege and setting up camp outside the walls of

Jerusalem. God told Jeremiah he wanted him to do something. 'I want you to invite the leader of the Rechabites and some of the chief men. I want you to invite them into the temple and set a meal and wine before them. Invite them to sit down and have a nice meal.' Jeremiah did this. When it came to the occasion, the leader of the Rechabites told him he couldn't do this because it was not their custom to drink wine.

Verses 6-9, he said, 'We have not done this (by this time about three centuries) going back to the time of our father Jonadab, the son of Rechab. He established the rule for our family and we have all adhered to it ever since.'

Verses 13-16, God told Jeremiah, 'I want you to notice what has occurred. Notice how these Rechabites have observed the commandment of their ancestor. What about Israel observing My commandments? These people have such honor and veneration for their human ancestor. He laid down a humanly-devised rule and his children and his descendants for generations down all observe the rule. He established a rule for the family and it was observed out of honor and veneration for him. It was observed for generations to come. I gave rules to My people, My children Israel, and they didn't last "until the water got hot." They didn't honor Me at all. These people honor their human ancestor and Israel did not honor Me.'

Interestingly, God made a promise to the Rechabites. God was impressed at the dedication that those people had.

Jeremiah 35:18-19, "And Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts and done according to all that he commanded you, therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me forever.'"""

In other words, 'I am going to preserve this little tribe; I am going to preserve it as a witness. I am going to preserve them because I am impressed that a group of people who have had such an attitude of respect and such a tenacity, that I point them out as an example to Israel. I am going to make a promise to you that this tribe will never cease. It is not going to die out. It is not going to be wiped out by all the invading armies.'

They were never a great nation. They were never a mighty people. Many of the mighty peoples of the past have come and gone. Here is a group

what is still today a small Bedouin tribe, probably about the same size they always were. Here is just one more little Bedouin tribe out there in the desert regions in the Middle East.

It's an interesting commentary. God pointed it out as an example to Jeremiah for the fact that all they had was human instruction and commandment; yet, they were faithful to it. They acted on what they knew and held on to it. They had a respect there. God said to Israel, 'You had so much more; you didn't simply have a humanly-devised set of rules.'

Actually, it is interesting if you go back to the context in which Jonadab lived. It was a time when there was a lot of social strife. A lot of things were going on in Israel and Judah. In effect, what Jonadab did was to say, 'We are getting out of this. We see the vice and the luxury. We see the problems; we see the materialism, the idolatry, all of these things. We're going to leave city life behind us. We're going from the things that I view as a corrupting influence. We're going to go out of here, mind our own business, leave everybody alone and live our lives.'

Now God has not called us as His people to go off and hide in a cave and wait for the end. But we have the commandments of God. Israel had the commandments of God. Judah had the commandments of God Himself. They weren't as faithful to what God said as these people had been to what their own simple human ancestor had said.

Jeremiah 36 is kind of an interesting story.

Verses 1-2 give the account during the fourth year of King Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah. Jeremiah was told to take a scroll and to write all the things that he had been told to say from the day that God had first spoken to him. Really, what he was doing was writing the book of Jeremiah.

Verse 4, he was writing the book and Baruch, who was his assistant, actually wrote the words down.

Verses 10-14, he copied the words and went in and read those words in the temple. This created quite a stir when he went through and read all the prophecies and all the things Jeremiah had said. Some of the princes were a little bit upset. They had Baruch come in and read the book to some of them.

Jeremiah 36:15, "...So Baruch read it in their hearing."

Verses 16-17, they were a little bit taken aback and said, 'We really better take this to the king

because there were some very strong things that were said.' They had Baruch come in.

Notice, I think this is kind of funny. People who are in charge (or think they are in charge) of some level of functioning like to give the idea that they have some important questions to ask and they are really making a determination. I think it is kind of humorous. Since they did not want to appear overly impressed, they said they needed to ask something.

Verse 17, "And they asked Baruch, saying, 'Tell us now, how did you write all these words—at his instructions [KJV, "at his mouth"]?' " What do you say after you have just gotten through having the first two-thirds of Jeremiah read to you and you're told all the things that are going to happen to you? Well, they said, 'Tell us now, are you the one who wrote this? How, exactly, did you write all these words at his mouth?'

Verse 18, "So Baruch answered them, 'He proclaimed with his mouth all these words to me, and I wrote them with ink in the book.'" Baruch said, 'It wasn't really hard. He pronounced all these words with his mouth. That was the first step; he just kind of said the words [pronounced it with his mouth]. I took some ink and I wrote it in this book. Is it really difficult to figure out how I managed to write this thing down?' I think there was maybe just a tinge of sarcasm that Baruch had when he answered that and kind of described it in graphic detail. What it gets back to is a stupid question deserves a stupid answer. They asked a silly, self-evident question, and he just gave it back to them.

I think you will notice that Jesus dealt with people in that way. For people who asked sincere questions, Jesus always had time to explain in clear terms. He never put them down for asking. But when some of these self-important individuals (whose attitudes were wrong) asked the question, He didn't have any problem at really "pricking their balloon." They were trying to be argumentative anyway; they were pompous and trying to appear important. There were times when He answered in a sarcastic manner because they asked the question that way. He never answered people who were sincere in that way; they simply wanted to know. There were times when people simply needed to be answered that way.

Proverb 26:5, He applied, "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes [KJV, "conceit"]."

Jeremiah 36:19, they told Baruch, 'You and Jeremiah had better lay low. We are going to

take this book in and we're going to read it to the king.'

Verses 20-21, they read it to the king.

Verse 22, "Now the king was sitting in the winter house in the ninth month [this would be December], with a fire burning on the hearth before him." There was a fire there in the hearth. He was sitting there in front of the fireplace and they were reading this to him. They'd read a little ways—this was a scroll—and they would unroll it.

Verse 23, "And it happened, when Jehudi had read three or four columns, that the king cut it with the scribe's knife and cast it into the fire...." He took his knife, cut it and pitched it into the fire. He didn't pay any attention to this stuff. He wasn't impressed.

Word came to Jeremiah.

Verses 27-28, "Now after the king had burned the scroll with the words which Baruch had written at the instruction of Jeremiah, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying: 'Take yet another scroll, and write on it all the former words that were in the first scroll which Jehoiakim the king of Judah has burned.'" "Take another roll and write on it everything you said the first time; then we have a few things to add.' One thing is evident—God ensures the preservation of His word in spite of human efforts to destroy it.

People ask, 'How can you be sure that we really have the Bible? How can you be sure that some of it didn't get lost in the shuffle?' Well, how can you be sure there is a God? If you can prove there is a God (and that is something that clearly can be done), God is certainly capable of preserving His word. He did right here in Jeremiah 36.

The king said he'd show them; he'd burn up the scroll. God said, 'Big deal! I'll just have it written down again. You won't destroy it at all.' Plus they added in a few details—a few little points about what was going to happen to the king, which were none too good.

Verses 30-31 record the punishment that happened to Jehoiakim. It records how he died. He was not even to be given a decent burial and his descendants would not sit on the throne.

Verse 32, "Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, who wrote on it at the instruction of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire. And besides, there were added to them many

similar words.” They added in the rest of the story.

In Jeremiah 36, we have the story of Jehoiakim who was king and being replaced. Nebuchadnezzar came in and put Jehoiakim out of business. He went out of the “king” business really quickly. He was gotten rid of and Zedekiah, his brother, was placed on the throne instead. Jehoiakim was dealt with.

In Jeremiah 37, we pick up the story a few years later after Jehoiakim has been gotten rid of and his brother Zedekiah has been made king by Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar had three invasions of Jerusalem. He came in 604 B.C. He came back in 596 B.C. Finally, he returned in 587 B.C. and wiped out the place. He burned the temple and ended the Jewish independence. Nebuchadnezzar came in; his first step was to collect tribute money and to set up a vassal king. When he kept having trouble from the Jews, he finally came back and decided to put a stop to it.

Jeremiah delivered a message. He was willing to speak God’s word and tell it like it was. When you tell it like it is, that is not popular. God’s servants have never won popularity contests. They are never going to win some great popularity contest in their own societies. When you deliver an unpleasant and unpopular message, people don’t like what’s said. There were a lot of people who liked Jesus Christ personally. He was a very likeable individual, but they didn’t like what He said. They didn’t like what Jeremiah said, to the point that when Jeremiah called it like it was, they got mad and threw him in prison.

Jeremiah 37:15-16, “Therefore the princes were angry with Jeremiah, and they struck him and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe. For they had made that the prison. When Jeremiah entered the dungeon and the cells, and Jeremiah had remained there many days...” They kept him in a dungeon and he stayed there for quite a while.

Verse 17, Zedekiah the king called him out privately and asked him if he had heard any word from the Lord. ‘Got any news?’ Zedekiah was not a very courageous sort. He was kind of an opinion-poll politician; they have to read the opinion polls to find out what they are for and against. Their position on the issue changes somewhat from day to day. They’re rather intimidated by others around them. Zedekiah seems to have been this sort of fellow.

Can you imagine what some kind of an old dug-earth cellar they had Jeremiah in down there? Then they put him in the court of the prison. They moved him upstairs.

Verse 21, “Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah to the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread from the bakers’ street, until all the bread in the city was gone. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.”

There was a famine. They gave him a little bit of bread every day and moved him out of the dungeon. They really had him in just a terrible situation where he was, and he was anxious to get out of it. He was accused of all sorts of things.

Verse 13-14, they accused him of being in league with the enemy saying, ‘You are falling away to the Chaldeans.’ Again, he was falsely accused.

People suspect our motives. This is something that happened historically to Jeremiah. We, brethren, should not be surprised or shocked to realize the time is coming when we’re going to be vilified, accused and have our motives suspected. We’re going to have things said about us in terms of why we’re doing what we’re doing. People tend to want to accuse and be suspicious of motives.

For years people said of Mr. Herbert Armstrong that he was in it for the money. Now they never could explain why he was in it for so many years when there wasn’t any money. Nevertheless, that was what they said. Some of you were associated with the work and go back to a time when there wasn’t any money to be in it for. People look for a reason to accuse.

They accused Jeremiah and said, ‘You’re in league with the enemy. You’re on King Nebuchadnezzar’s payroll. You’re just trying to subvert the nation.’ In reality, Jeremiah wanted to save the nation. He told them the only way to salvation was repentance. If they didn’t repent, they were all going to be wiped out. People didn’t like to hear it. It’s kind of interesting the way Jeremiah was treated by his own people (the Jews) and by his own government. They threw him into prison.

In Jeremiah 38, the siege continues. They threw Jeremiah back into the dungeon, a different dungeon.

Jeremiah 38:6, “So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the king’s son, which was in the court of the prison, and they let Jeremiah down with ropes. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire. So Jeremiah sank in

the mire.” It was like throwing somebody into the swamp. Actually, when you check it out, it was an area where there was refuse. It was kind of the worst sort of fate. Actually, what they put him in had originally been dug as a cistern to store water. But there wasn’t any water there. There was mud and all kinds of gunk.

Verses 10-13, finally the king did have Jeremiah taken out before he died. You keep going through this. The king really didn’t have the courage to listen to Jeremiah and act on what he had to say.

Jeremiah 39 is the story of the final invasion in 587 B.C.

Jeremiah 39:2, “In the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, the city was penetrated.” The enemy came in and burned the walls.

Verses 6-7, “Then the king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes in Riblah; the king of Babylon also killed all the nobles of Judah. Moreover he put out Zedekiah’s eyes, and bound him with bronze fetters to carry him off to Babylon.” This was a very horrible punishment. They burned the city. They did all of these things, but, interestingly enough, Jeremiah was freed.

Verses 11-12, “Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, saying, ‘Take him and look after him, and do him no harm; but do to him just as he says to you.’” You talk about “carte blanche”!

King Nebuchadnezzar told the commanding general, ‘Look, this Jeremiah, you get him out of the prison and you treat him well. And you let him do whatever he wants. He’s got “carte blanche.”’ This was significant because what really occurred, in effect, Jeremiah was given a passport.

Jeremiah 40:4-5, ““And now look, I free you this day from the chains that were on your hand. If it seems good to you to come with me to Babylon, come, and I will look after you. But if it seems wrong for you to come with me to Babylon, remain here. See, all the land is before you; wherever it seems good and convenient for you to go, go there.’... So the captain of the guard gave him rations and a gift and let him go.”

What in effect happened was that Jeremiah, if you remember, had a commission. This commission was given at the beginning of the book of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 1:10, it was detailed, “...to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down,”

But he was also “to build and to plant.” Jeremiah’s commission involved both tearing down and building up. He was responsible to prophesy about the tearing down of Jerusalem, the rooting out of the people from that area, the overthrow of the throne and the transfer of it. But he was also responsible to build and to plant.

The final part of his ministry involved building and planting, which he had not done up until then. Actually, building and planting involved removing the throne of David from Jerusalem to the British Isles. If you check it out, the actual location to which it was transferred was to Tara, Ireland.

This was the seat of the old high kings of Ireland. Ireland was divided up into several component parts (each of which had a king), and there was a high king who dwelt in Tara. The throne was transferred there. Then quite a few centuries later, it was transferred from Tara to Scone, Scotland. That was at the time of Kenneth McElvyn, King of Scotland, about 800 A.D.

Then several centuries later, it was transferred a third time from Scone down to London, England, at the time of King Edward. That’s why there is a stone called the “Stone of Scone.” The Queen of England was crowned on it. It’s called King Edward’s chair. It was built for the coronation of King Edward. The stone was transferred from Scotland and is the symbol of the house of David. The rulers of the house of David have been crowned on it going all the way back to antiquity.

I made comment on it when we went through the book of Chronicles. There are several different places where it describes the fact that during the king’s coronation, he stood upon the pillar or stood upon this stone. This was the custom that is identified.

We see in Jeremiah 39:6, the king’s sons were killed before him, but in Jeremiah 41:10 and a little later in Jeremiah 43:6-7, we read of the king’s daughters. We read that they were taken down into Egypt. Jeremiah went down to Egypt and from Egypt he took at least one of the daughters of the king and maybe more. They traveled with him. They went from Egypt, crossed the Mediterranean and went to the southern tip of Spain. From there, they sailed up to Ireland.

Jeremiah, here in chapters 39 and 40, was given a “carte blanche.” He was given a passport from the king of Babylon, along with expense money, to enable him to carry out the job. He was now under the personal protection of the king of

Babylon. He was basically free to travel wherever he wanted to go by order of the king of Babylon. If you “messed” with Jeremiah, you weren’t “messing” with Jeremiah—you were “messing” with the king of Babylon.

He gave specific instructions. It now enabled Jeremiah to carry out the job God had given him. God opened that door for Jeremiah to be able to travel and to carry out the job he had been given to do. It points out to us how God can work through circumstances—sometimes in the most improbable circumstances—to make it possible for His servants to accomplish the job He has set before them.

We don’t know what parallels that we may find. In effect, Nebuchadnezzar was the leader of the Beast power of his day. He was the original Beast, if you want to look at it that way. What is the answer to the booklet, *Who is the Beast?* Well, if you had lived in the days of Jeremiah, you could have answered it very succinctly. It was King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel told him that. Remember?

Daniel 2:37-38, “‘You, O King, ...— are that head of gold.’” ‘You’re the one.’ Everything since then has been the succession because the Beast system is symbolized both by the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in Daniel 2, as well as the creatures that Daniel saw in Daniel 7. They reflect a succession of empires that date from the time of ancient Babylon, all the way down to our day and to the time immediately ahead of us.

The point we can realize is that God can work through circumstances, sometimes in the most improbable of ways. We don’t want to limit God by determining ahead of time how God has to do things. God can work things out. People have sometimes wondered, ‘How are we going to get here or there? How is this going to happen? How in the world could the Church ever get to a place of safety?’ God doesn’t tell us the details because it’s not the physical details that He wants us to focus on.

Luke 21:36, Christ told His disciples to pray, to stay close to God, to be watchful and to be vigilant so that they might be accounted worthy to escape the events of the Great Tribulation.

Revelation 12:14 talks about the woman (the Church) being taken into the wilderness into her place (a specific location) where she is nourished there for a time, times and a half time (the duration of the Tribulation) and protected from the face of the serpent. We’re not given the specifics in terms of how it is going to happen. We’re not given all the details. There may

be certain indications here and there, but you have to be careful of being overly dogmatic on some of those indications. Nevertheless, they are there.

The real point is that God has a variety of ways He can work out the details and He hasn’t seen fit to reveal all of that. We see some examples and realize that God could do it in a lot of ways. God can sometimes give us favor in the most improbable of people. God gave Jeremiah great favor with King Nebuchadnezzar. Later, God gave Daniel great favor with King Nebuchadnezzar. God has ways of working things out. We want to look to God and not limit God by our own humanly-devised things. Jeremiah was now free to go and do the job God set him to do.

In Jeremiah 42:1-6, the Jews wanted Jeremiah to pray for them. They said, ‘We will do what God says; we just want you to tell us.’

Jeremiah 42:19-21, Jeremiah told them under God’s inspiration. “‘The Lord has said concerning you, O remnant of Judah, “Do not go to Egypt!” Know certainly that I have admonished you this day. For you were hypocrites in your hearts when you sent me to the Lord your God, saying, “Pray for us to the Lord our God, and according to all that the Lord your God says, so declare to us and we will do it.” And I have this day declared it to you, but you have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God, or anything which He has sent you by me.’”

‘Don’t go to Egypt.’ He said, ‘I know you’re not going to do it because you never listen. But that’s what you’re supposed to do—don’t go to Egypt.’

In Jeremiah 43:1-2, when they heard a message they didn’t want to hear, they got mad and said, ‘You’re not telling us the truth.’

Verses 4-7, they said, ‘We’re going to do it. We’re going to show them.’ Here’s the attitude. People want to know. You tell them and then they don’t want to know. They are not going to do it. They don’t believe it; they don’t accept it. They are self-willed. This is pointed out. And, again, as God’s servants today, we can’t expect a whole lot better response or a whole lot better reaction.

They didn’t believe Jeremiah and said, ‘We’ll go down and the Egyptians will take care of us.’

Verses 10-11, Jeremiah said, ‘Guess again! Guess where Nebuchadnezzar’s going next? Egypt is next on his list.’ People found it difficult to believe. Egypt had been a dominant, independent nation for centuries and centuries and centuries. It was the oldest nation. They

couldn't believe that anything could happen to Egypt. Surely not! Egypt had been a major power since antiquity. Well, it did happen.

Jeremiah 43:6, we specifically call attention here to, "...the king's daughters," This shows that all of the royal family was not wiped out; the king's daughters were spared. That's the way the line of David was continued.

Jeremiah 44 shows how God dealt with the Jews who went down to Egypt and why He did it.

Jeremiah 44:12-13, "And I will take the remnant of Judah who have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed and fall in the land of Egypt. They shall be consumed by the sword and by famine. They shall die, from the least to the greatest, by the sword and by famine; and they shall be an oath and an astonishment and a curse and a reproach! For I will punish those who dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence..."

'I am going to punish them because they wouldn't listen. They went down there and they wouldn't listen. They just "tuned it out." If they couldn't hear what they wanted to hear, they would ignore it. God said, 'I am going to take care of that.'

This is a reference and, certainly, a parallel to what happens. Our people today have that same obstinate approach. They are going to do it their way and don't see why their way won't work. The only way that works in the long run is God's way.

Beginning in Jeremiah 46, we notice over the next few chapters that we have specific statements about various foreign nations. We start out dealing with the Egyptians. This is against Egypt.

Jeremiah 46:2, "Against Egypt." Certainly it has an application to that time and day. It was a reference to what God was going to do to Egypt through the Babylonians.

But as we come down to verse 10, we will see that the prophecy and the significance of what was told to the Egyptians went beyond that time. It comes down to our day and on beyond.

Verse 10, "For this is the day of the Lord God of hosts, a day of vengeance, that He may avenge Himself on His adversaries. The sword shall devour; it shall be satiated and made drunk with their blood; for the Lord God of hosts has a sacrifice in the north country by the River Euphrates." It talks about the day of the Lord of hosts.

Verse 27, "But do not fear, O My servant Jacob, and do not be dismayed, O Israel! For behold, I will save you from afar, and your offspring from the land of their captivity; Jacob shall return, have rest and be at ease; no one shall make him afraid."

That did not occur in that time and in that day; it is sometime yet future. It describes a successful invasion and destruction. It describes that there were implications of that invasion of Egypt on beyond our time. Read in the book of Daniel where the Beast power comes into the Middle East.

Daniel 11:42, "...and the land of Egypt shall not escape." They are going to invade Egypt. In a sense, there are implications that modern Babylon is going to invade modern Egypt, just like ancient Babylon invaded ancient Egypt.

In Jeremiah 47, we focus on the Philistines. The term "Palestine" is simply an alternate spelling. It is an English form of the Greek form "Philistine." It is kind of derived from that with a little different ending. That's why you will never hear a Jew use the term "Palestine." The Arabs refer to Israel as "Palestine." If you've heard Yassar Arafat interviewed, he will talk about Palestine. "Palestine" means "the land of the Philistines." "Israel," of course, means "Israel."

That's what the whole dispute is. To whom does it belong? Well, some of the descendants of the Philistines are right there and have always been there. That's why the Gaza strip is such a problem. If you go back, you'll find out that the ancient city of the Philistines was Gaza. If you look on a map of the area there, you will find those little villages. They probably haven't changed much—the same bunch of people and the same place. They are still mad; they are still fussing—same old thing.

Some of the descendants of the Philistines left from there. In fact, some of the Berbers of North Africa are descended from them. The Berbers are there in North Africa, particularly in the area of Libya. I haven't done any research on it to see Khadafy's ancestry, but it wouldn't surprise me that he is of Berber extraction. That is one of the dominant people in Northern Libya, which would make him a Philistine by ancestry. He certainly is by temperament and inclination. What you have, in a lot of cases, is the same people getting along just the same as they always did. There's no new thing under the sun.

Then God talks about the consequences of things that were going to happen anciently to Gaza. The Egyptians were coming in and they took over

Gaza. They ruled Gaza until the Israelites took it away from them back in the time of the Six-Day War. The Philistines (the Palestinians) have been living there all along.

In Jeremiah 48 and 49, Moab and Ammon are addressed: Moab in Jeremiah 48 and Ammon in Jeremiah 49. The Moabites and the Ammonites are pretty much located in the area of Jordan and a portion of Iraq. The modern capital of Jordan, Amman, takes its name from Ammon in the Bible; it's the same people. The Ammonites and Moabites are kindred peoples. Some of these tribes you find concentrated primarily in the area of Jordan and a portion of Iraq. The Moabites concentrated perhaps more in the area of Iraq and perhaps some of them in Jordan. The Ammonites more directly centered in Jordan. We find them addressed and some of the things we see prophesied. They will suffer destruction. Jeremiah 48:47 and Jeremiah 49:6 show this.

Jeremiah 48:47 KJV, “Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the Lord.”

Jeremiah 49:6 KJV, “And afterward I will bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon, saith the Lord.” They are going to face the Babylonian invasion that is going to come in.

Jeremiah 48:25-26, “The horn [leader] of Moab is cut off, for he magnified himself against the Lord.”

In verse 29, it talks about the pride of Moab.

One of the ancient locations of Moab was the area of modern Petra. Petra is a Greek name. The Jews call it Sela; the Greeks call it Petra. It basically has the same meaning in Hebrew or Greek. It is located in Jordan and it is known by the name that the Greek geographers gave it in the time of Alexander the Great. It was the ancient location of many of the Moabites.

Jeremiah 48:40, there is an interesting allusion to it, “For thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, one shall fly like an eagle, and spread his wings over Moab.’” Some have taken that as an allusion to the place where God would protect His people in the end time.

Compare it with Revelation 12:14 and how the woman will be taken into her place in the wilderness on the wings of a great eagle. Also compare that with other scriptures.

Isaiah 16:1, “Send the lamb to the ruler of the land, from Sela [KJV, margin, “Petra”] to the wilderness, to the mount of the daughter of Zion.” Sela was the Old Testament name; Petra is the modern name. There is a reference in

Isaiah 16:1-2 to someone who is the ruler in that area, and it talks about the daughters of Moab.

Verse 4, “Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab; be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler.” Some of these things are taken together.

Jeremiah 48:28, “You who dwell in Moab, leave the cities [talking about after Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion] and dwell in the rock [or dwell in Sela], and be like the dove which makes her nest in the sides of the cave’s mouth.” “You who dwell in Moab”—speaking of the Moabites.

This is what the Moabites did anciently when the Babylonians invaded. Those Moabites who escaped fled from the cities of Moab and went there into the area of Petra. They did do that, so there has been an allusion from this. “Dwell in the rocks, and be like the dove” describes the making of a nest.

Isaiah 16:4, “Let My outcasts dwell with you Moab, be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler.” If you put this together with Jeremiah, several of these verses have been taken as an allusion to the place where God would protect His people in the end time. Certainly, it cannot conclusively prove that this is the location. There are a couple of others in the book of Isaiah that even appear a little bit stronger than that. When you take them all together, they may give an indication, but they certainly are not total conclusive proof.

Nevertheless, it is the basis of why we have felt for many years that the spot that seemed most likely indicated by the Bible as the place where God would protect His people in the end time is the area there of Petra. That, together with a number of other scriptures in Isaiah, has been where the idea came about or why we’ve speculated along that line for many, many years.

In Jeremiah 49:1, we come to the Ammonites.

Jeremiah 49:7, “Against Edom.” We pick up the Edomites. There are several groups that are descendants of the Edomites. We have felt that many of the modern-day Turks trace their ancestry back to at least some of the tribes of Edom. The Amalekites were also the descendants of Edom. Many of them intermarried with the Philistines in the Middle East as well as in North Africa. Many of the Palestinians trace back to the Philistines and the Amalekites who are descendants of the Edomites. It describes the destruction that is going to come upon them. We also find that alluded to in the book of Obadiah.

Jeremiah 49:11, 17-18 show that the Edomite men will simply be totally destroyed. The women

and children will be left alive, but the male population will be destroyed.

In verse 23, Damascus is addressed. Damascus is the ancient capital of Syria and also the modern capital of Syria.

Verse 28 picks up the story of Kedar. Kedar would be primarily identified with Saudi Arabia. A lot of people don't realize that Ishmael also had 12 sons; Jacob's not the only one who had 12 sons. There are 12 tribes of Arabs, just as there are 12 tribes of Israelites. The primary tribe of the Arabs in Arabia is the tribe of Kedar. They are the ones who are the dominant tribe there in Saudi Arabia. We would take the reference in verse 28 to perhaps be referring to the European invasion of Saudi Arabia as they pour into the Middle East.

The Elamites are addressed in verse 34. They were anciently neighbors of the Babylonians. To a great extent, the Slavic people in Eastern Europe are descendants of Elam. Many of the Slavic peoples trace back to the Elamites.

In verse 36, it describes the Elamites anciently being scattered; this is what happened. They were scattered and basically went into Europe as a captive people, captive to the Assyrians (Germans). They have kind of always lived there, sandwiched in and dominated by either the Germans on the west or the Russians on the east. It's been the story of Middle Europe in the area of Poland and down through Czechoslovakia and some of that area. It is kind of a tragic story because their whole history has been one of being sandwiched between two strong and aggressive peoples.

Jeremiah 50 has prophecies of Babylon and God dealing with Babylon. We find that Babylon is going to be utterly destroyed.

Verses 9-15 describe Babylon being destroyed and not inhabited.

Jeremiah 50:39, "Therefore the wild desert beasts shall dwell there with the jackals, and the ostriches shall dwell in it. It shall be inhabited no more forever, nor shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation." Ancient Babylon was overthrown. The city of Nimrod was overthrown.

Now, interestingly enough, some of the statements here in Jeremiah 50 are paraphrased back in Revelation 18 when it describes Babylon the Great being overthrown. Just as ancient Babylon was overthrown by the Medes and the Persians coming in, so the allusion is to modern Babylon (Babylon the Great and coming right on down to modern Rome) will be overthrown by an

attack by the modern descendants of the Medes and the Persians. This will ultimately be fulfilled with a Russian counterattack (a pendulum swing) that is going to occur. There is going to be a Russian falling out with the Beast power and destruction.

When you read Revelation 18, you read of something in terms of destruction that went beyond the implication of anything available in the time that John wrote it because it was really a nuclear destruction. It describes the ships on the sea standing afar off for fear of her torment. They saw the smoke of her burning coming up and they stayed afar off for fear of her torment (Revelation 18:9-10, 19). A very apt description of what you would see in a nuclear attack. What do you see? You see a mushroom-shaped cloud and you stay far off for fear of her torment, the fallout that comes as a result—a very apt description.

Jeremiah 50 describes what is going to occur to Babylon.

Verse 15, "...her foundations have fallen, her walls are thrown down; for it is the vengeance of the Lord. Take vengeance on her. As she has done, so do to her."

Verse 23, "...How Babylon has become a desolation among the nations! ..."

Verse 31, "...for your day has come, the time that I will punish you."

Verse 38, we find a description, "...For it is the land of carved images, and they are insane with their idols."

How is God going to deal with Babylon?

Verses 9-15 show that Babylon will be utterly destroyed and will no more be inhabited.

Verse 23, "has become a desolation."

Verses 35-39 show God's dealing with Babylon and show that Babylon will be utterly destroyed to be no more inhabited.

God is going to use the Medes and the Persians to inflict this.

Verse 41, "Behold, a people shall come from the north, and a great nation and many kings shall be raised from the ends of the earth."

Verse 42, "...they are cruel..."

Jeremiah 51:11, "...The Lord has raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes. For His plan is against Babylon to destroy it," It describes the destruction.

Verses 27, "Set up a banner in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations! Prepare the nations against her, call the kingdoms together against her: Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz." This is describing certain geographical areas between

the Black and the Caspian Seas, Soviet Central Asia, some of that area where there is a lot of trouble and strife going on right now—the area of Soviet Armenia, the area of Ararat, Minni and Ashkenaz.

Verses 28-29 describe these people being allied with the kings of the Medes who are going to come and make Babylon a desolation. The kings of the Medes would trace back to modern Ukrainians; some of the modern peoples of the Soviet Union and European Russia go back to the ancient Medes. The Medes overthrew Babylon anciently and they are going to do it again.

I think what we are clearly seeing is a transition that is taking place in Europe. There is a vacuum being created by the falling apart of a strong, unified, cohesive, dominant Soviet Union. We are seeing a fracturing taking place. I think that it is very likely that portions of the Soviet Union will come into the orbit of the Beast power, at least for a period of time. It's not clear to what extent some portions of it will be formally part of the Beast power and to what extent some will simply be allied with it. But the Beast could never rise or have risen had the Soviet Union stayed the dominant power that it was.

What we are seeing is a fracturing. We are seeing disillusionment with Communism. What's going to occur yet future is disillusionment with the resurging Catholic Europe that is going to take place. We are going to see a pendulum swing, a reaction that is going to take place at least in some of the nations that were constituents of the Soviet Union. Whether they come back together again in exactly the same configuration, we don't know. But there will be an alliance of many of those nations that are going to turn on that end-time Beast power and are going to attack it. The modern descendants of the Medes are going to literally sack modern Babylon (Rome) and leave it absolutely totally desolate, as Revelation 18 describes in detail.

Clearly, Revelation 18 is describing our time today because the ancient city of Babylon that Jeremiah is discussing here was destroyed. John describes the Beast power. John was not talking about the ancient Babylon; he was talking about a modern end-time event.

Revelation 17:2, “with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.” This is a paraphrase of Jeremiah 51.

Jeremiah 51:7, “Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore the nations are deranged.”

Revelation 18:2, “And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great....’” That great city, Babylon the Great, is the name that is written in Revelation 17.

Revelation 17:4-5, “The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” Verse 2, “with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”

Jeremiah 51:7-9, now compare that with, “Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore the nations are deranged. Babylon has suddenly fallen and been destroyed. Wail for her! Take balm for her pain; perhaps she may be healed. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed. Forsake her, and let us go everyone to his own country; for her judgment reaches to heaven and is lifted up to the skies.” What John wrote in Revelation 17:4 is a paraphrase of Jeremiah 51:7.

Let's go on a little further.

Revelation 18:2-4, continuing, “...‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a habitation of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.’ And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.’”

Verse 10, “standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’” John paraphrased some of the statements that Jeremiah made in Jeremiah 51:6-8.

Jeremiah 51:11, “Make the arrows bright! Gather the shields! The Lord has raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes. For His plan is against

Babylon to destroy it, because it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance for His temple.”

It describes this destruction.

Verse 27, “Set up a banner in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations! Prepare the nations against her, call the kingdoms together against her: Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz.” This would refer to certain areas and is actually descriptive geographically of the areas between the Black and the Caspian Seas, Soviet Central Asia, some of that area where there is a lot of trouble and strife going on right now, the area of Soviet Armenia.

Verses 28-29 describe these people being allied, “Prepare against her the nations, with the kings of the Medes, its governors and all its rulers, all the land of his dominion. And the land will tremble and sorrow; for every purpose of the Lord shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without inhabitant.”

“The kings of the Medes”—the ancient Medes would basically trace back to modern Ukrainians and some of the modern peoples of the Soviet Union and European Russia. They go back to the ancient Medes. So, we see destruction that is going to come. The Medes did it anciently; they are going to do it again. I think we are clearly seeing a transition taking place in Europe. There is a vacuum being created by the falling apart of a strong, unified, cohesive dominant Soviet Union. We are seeing a fracturing taking place. I think it is very likely that portions of the Soviet Union will come into the orbit of the Beast power, at least for a period of time. To what extent some portions of it will be formally part of the Beast power and to what extent they will simply be allied with it, I don’t know, but the Beast could never rise or have risen had the Soviet Union stayed the dominant power that it was. What we are seeing is a fracturing. We are seeing a disillusionment with Communism. What’s going to occur yet future is a disillusionment with the resurging Catholic Europe that is going to take place. We are going to see a pendulum swing, a reaction that is going to take place at least in some of the nations that were constituents of the Soviet Union—whether they come back together again in exactly or what configuration—but an alliance of many of those nations that are going to turn on that end-time Beast power and are going to attack it. The modern descendants of the Medes are going to literally sack modern Babylon (Rome) and leave it as absolutely totally desolate as Revelation 18

describes in detail. Clearly Revelation 18 is describing our time today because the ancient city of Babylon that Jeremiah is discussing here was destroyed. John was not talking about ancient Babylon. He was talking about a modern end-time event. Jeremiah describes the Beast power.

Revelation 17:2 is a paraphrase of Jeremiah 51:7.

Revelation 18:2-3, “And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a habitation of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.’” –That great city, Babylon the great. That is the name that’s written in Revelation 17:5, “BABYLON THE GREAT.”

Revelation 17:2, notice, “with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”

Jeremiah 51:7, now compare that with, “Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord’s hand, that made all the earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore the nations are deranged.”

Verse 8-9, “Babylon has suddenly fallen and been destroyed. Wail for her! Take balm for her pain; perhaps she may be healed. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed. Forsake her, and let us go everyone to his own country; for her judgment reaches to heaven and is lifted up to the skies.”

What John wrote in Revelation 17:2 is a paraphrase of Jeremiah 51:7.

Let’s go a little further.

Revelation 18:4, “And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.’”

Verse 10, coming on down, “standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’”

Jeremiah 51:6-8, “Flee from the midst of Babylon, and every one save his life! Do not be cut off in her iniquity, for this is the time of the Lord’s vengeance; He shall recompense her. Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord’s hand, that made all the earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore the nations are deranged. Babylon has suddenly fallen and been destroyed.

Wail for her! Take balm for her pain; perhaps she may be healed.”

John basically paraphrased some of the statements that Jeremiah said.

Verse 11, “Make the arrows bright! Gather the shields! The Lord has raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes. For His plan is against Babylon to destroy it, because it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance for His temple.”

It was to be the king of the Medes who was to come and to destroy Babylon. The quotation in Revelation shows that the main application is to the end time and the end-time Babylon because Revelation 18 clearly has the context of the end time. But there is a reference and an allusion in Revelation 18 back to Jeremiah 50 and 51.

Isaiah 21:9, in fact, we would also note, “And look, here comes a chariot of men with a pair of horsemen! And he answered and said, ‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen! And all the carved images of her gods He has broken to the ground.’” “Babylon is fallen, is fallen!”

Revelation 18:2, “And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a habitation of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!’”

Notice any similarities? You think John ever read the book of Isaiah or Jeremiah? You find that one prophet picks up and goes into greater detail where the other one left off.

Isaiah and Jeremiah looked forward to the literal destruction of the literal city of Babylon, but what they said went beyond their time and day and had implications for the future. John, in the book of Revelation, saw an event on out beyond. He saw events of modern Babylon, the daughter of Babylon, as it is sometimes called in prophecy (Isaiah 47:1; Jeremiah 50:42; Jeremiah 51:33)—Modern Babylon, Babylon the Great.

John picks up and quotes or paraphrases a quotation from Isaiah and Jeremiah and gives more details. You have to go back to Isaiah and Jeremiah to understand part of it. When does this destruction come? When does this fire come on Babylon?

Revelation 18:8, her plagues, as we are told, are going to come in one day—“death, mourning and famine” means she is going to be utterly burned with fire. It describes this fiery destruction of Babylon.

Verses 9-10, it is going to have smoke that ascends so high that ships way out at sea see it from a distance and stay far off for fear of her torment.

In reading it today, we can see it in the context of modern technology; we realize that’s what happens if you drop a nuclear bomb on a place. The ships that are at a far distance see that mushroom-shaped cloud on the horizon and they keep their distance. Who is going to do that? Who is going to drop it? When we fit in the book of Isaiah, we see that the allusion is clearly the Medes or the end-time descendants of the Medes.

Jeremiah 50:18-20, another indication, “Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria. But I will bring back Israel to his habitation, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan; his soul shall be satisfied on Mount Ephraim and Gilead. In those days and in that time,’ says the Lord, ‘The iniquity of Israel shall be sought, but there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, but they shall not be found; for I will pardon those whom I preserve.’”

This is the end time. This is future. This is the time when Israel and Judah are going to be pardoned, the time when they are both going to be brought back. Israel is going to come back to their habitation. It ranks the destruction of Babylon with the redemption of Israel.

It mentions both Israel and Judah. It will be a time when they are going to be pardoned and their sins are going to be forgiven. Israel and Judah are going to be regathered. Clearly, this shows Babylon’s punishment in the light of God’s deliverance of Israel at Christ’s second coming.

We see that while there was a literal fulfillment, it also looked beyond their day to our day and beyond. It is important for us to realize these things are sure. They are going to happen, and God provides word of it here through His prophets.

Jeremiah 52 concludes the book of Jeremiah. This is just kind of a historical inset. It shows the total destruction that the Babylonians wreaked upon Judah, Jerusalem and the temple.

Jeremiah 52:10-11, “Then the king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. And he killed all the princes of Judah in Riblah. He also put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in bronze fetters, took him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.” They killed the sons of King Zedekiah, slew the princes, blinded Zedekiah and took him as a slave to Babylon.

Verses 12-13, “Now in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month (which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, who served the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. He burned the house of the Lord and the king’s house; all the houses of Jerusalem,”

They burned the city, destroyed the temple and the palace and, verse 14, they broke down the walls.

Verse 15, “Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive....”

They totally destroyed that area. We get a little bit of insight into the destruction that the Babylonians wreaked upon ancient Jerusalem. Interestingly enough, the Romans, the successors of ancient Babylon, did the same thing to Jerusalem and Judah in 70 A.D. And, ironically, they did it on the same day. They did it on the anniversary of the destruction—the tenth day of the fifth month, the ninth and tenth of Ab. Ab is the fifth month of the Hebrew calendar, which corresponds to our July/August (latter part of July, first part of August). The Jews, in commemoration of the Babylonian destruction, made the ninth day of Ab a day of national fasting and mourning—kind of like the Fourth of July in reverse. It was a day of mourning for the destruction of their nation, loss of independence and the destruction of the temple. They read the book of Lamentations and fasted on that day.

When the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D., they did it on the same day. The Orthodox Jews to this day continue to observe it as a day of mourning. It now commemorates the destruction of both temples.

Next time, we will get into the book of Ezekiel. We are now two-thirds through. We have just the book of Ezekiel left. There is an awful lot that is packed into these Major Prophets and these things that God has inspired to be recorded. Ultimately, the Bible has been preserved for us. It has been preserved for our admonition that we might study it and learn from it. Some things may have direct reference in terms of prophecy. Other things we may learn simply by example and illustration—seeing examples of what has happened to God’s people and God’s servants in the past and realizing that God’s people today, undoubtedly, will face parallel things between now and the end of the age. There will be many things that we will face and go through.

Bible Study # 55
August 14, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Ezekiel 1—16

We are getting into the book of Ezekiel this evening, and I think it's appropriate to start out with an illustration. The term "watchman" is a term that we don't frequently use anymore. Years ago there was what was termed a "night watchman." Everybody else was in bed sleeping; this one person was supposed to see if anything happened—fire breaks out or some vandalism occurs.

Going back further than that, at the time Ezekiel was written, generally towns were almost like a little fort. There was a wall around these towns. The fields that the people farmed were outside the wall. When there was danger, people came into the town inside the wall. The gates were closed and they were in a fortified situation where they were protected.

There was an important responsibility in these areas, and this was the job of the watchman. Normally, on any city wall, there was a high tower at a strategic point along the wall and in that tower was an individual whose job was to watch. In the type of terrain that you have in many areas in the Middle East, you could look out quite a distance and you could observe something out of the ordinary.

Particularly, you would see a dust cloud. A lone horseman or one individual walking wouldn't make much dust (a horse would make a little more than an individual walking), but a whole gang of horses and chariots would really kick up a lot of dust. You could see that quite a way on the horizon. It took them time to get there. The very fastest traveling was on horseback or in a chariot pulled by a horse, so you had a little time.

The watchman would observe and if it appeared that danger was approaching, his responsibility was to sound a blast of alarm. They sounded a blast. Generally, the shofar (a ram's horn) was customarily used because it made a high shrill sound that could be heard for a long distance. It wasn't long ago that bells were often used to signal the time—a dinner bell, etc. This ram's horn carried a sound more like what we would think of as a brass trumpet today. It was a very important job because the survival of the community could depend on the watchman doing

his job. In many cases, there would be marauding bands of robbers out to get what they could.

As we go through the book of Ezekiel, we find that he was told that he was to be a watchman for the house of Israel. He was the one responsible for standing on the pinnacle observing, taking note of what was happening and sounding the blast of alarm warning the nation of impending danger. But there was one problem with that.

As we go through it, we find that the book of Ezekiel was written about 596 B.C. There were three Babylonian invasions and all three were led by King Nebuchadnezzar. The first one took place in 604 B.C. Right after he became king, he launched the first Babylonian invasion there in the Middle East. He came all the way down through Judea and down toward Egypt. At that time he did not destroy those nations or deport the population. He took a few back, but what he basically did was ensure that a king friendly to him was on the throne and that they would start paying him tribute. He was satisfied with that.

Things "rocked along" for about eight years. Because things weren't working the way he had anticipated, he came back in 596 B.C. and changed kings (2 Chronicles 36). Nebuchadnezzar took the king (Jehoiachin or Coniah) as a prisoner of war and hauled him back to Babylon. He also took a number of leading citizens and he increased the taxes.

Another nine years later, about 587 B.C., the Jews again rebelled against him; this time he came in ready to do serious damage. He burned the temple, burned Jerusalem, destroyed the area and deported the population.

There were three invasions that took place over a period of time. Ezekiel is writing in the context of the second invasion, about 596 B.C. The point that I would like to make, and as we are going to notice in going through the book of Ezekiel, is that Ezekiel addresses the house of Israel. He says that he was given a message as a watchman to the house of Israel. Do you see what the problem is with that? The house of Israel went into captivity—not to the Babylonians but to the Assyrians about 721 B.C.—over 125 years before Ezekiel wrote. The northern ten tribes, the house of Israel, had long since been in captivity.

One hundred twenty-five years is a long time. One hundred twenty-five years ago takes us back to 1865 A.D., the year that saw the end of the War Between the States. That's been a long time ago. Anybody remember that? No, there is nobody alive that remembers that. One hundred

twenty-five years is a long time. When you start talking about the War Between the States, it's so long ago that it seems like ancient history to many people, particularly to young people.

That's how long had transpired between the time Ezekiel was writing his message and the time earlier when the house of Israel had gone into captivity. So, there was a problem. Ezekiel was writing a warning about impending captivity, but the people he's warning have been in captivity for 125 years. If that's who he was really warning, then you have to say he was a little bit late. And, in this case, I don't know if "better late than never" would have applied. If you are already in captivity, it's a little bit late for somebody to warn you that if you don't "straighten out," boy, are you going to be in trouble. One problem was the time element.

We will see that there is a distinction between the house of Israel and the house of Judah. That distinction is made plain in the book of Ezekiel. Solomon died 200 years before Northern Israel went into captivity. When King Solomon died, what happened? His son came to the throne. But that didn't last until the "water got hot" because the first thing the son was going to do was keep taxes high. Things haven't changed; "read my lips, no new taxes."

They were fighting about it centuries ago in ancient Israel. Solomon had taxes high. Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, came along promising a new deal. Elect him king and he would lower taxes. He swept into office. The northern ten tribes said, 'You are going to be our king. That's what we like; we don't like high taxes.' Rehoboam kept the southern tribe, the area around Jerusalem.

At that point, you had what was called the kingdom of Israel or the house of Israel in the north and the kingdom of Judah or the house of Judah in the south (1 Kings 12). Two hundred years came down since that time. The Assyrians invade and take the house of Israel into captivity and settle them in an area between the Black and the Caspian Sea, in the area of the River Gozan and the city of the Medes (2 Kings 17:5-6). Israel is in that particular vicinity, an area that was quite a bit to the north of Babylon.

At a little later time, the Assyrians began to pass from the scene; after they did, the Babylonians came onto the scene. They rise to prominence, invade Judah and take the Jews into captivity. Where do they settle them? They settle them down around Babylon. Here is the northern house of Israel living up in an area that is not

even part of the Babylonian Empire. They are in an area that is independently ruled by the Medes, up in the area between the Black and the Caspian Sea.

Here is Ezekiel coming along as a watchman for the house of Israel and warning the house of Israel. First, he is late because they were taken into captivity 125 years ago; second, how is he going to get there? He is a slave in Babylon. He was taken prisoner of war to Babylon.

Was he going to come up to the soldiers and say, 'I think I need to leave; I have this important message and it's for these people who live a long way away. So, I'll see you later. God told me to leave.' Would they say, 'We'll open up the gates of Babylon and let you right out'? That wouldn't "fly" now and wouldn't "fly" then. Ezekiel was stuck there. He didn't have any way of getting out. How is he going to do it?

The point of the fact is that Ezekiel's message was not for his day. It is warning of captivity for Northern Israel after Northern Israel was already captive. It can only apply to a time yet future when Northern Israel would again be established as a nation. It is a prophecy as to what was going to happen.

Ezekiel differentiates between the house of Israel and Judah. The split had occurred 325 years prior to the time of Ezekiel's writings. Northern Israel had its capital at Samaria. They had already gone into captivity and were settled in the city of the Medes, the northern-most part of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, the area slightly south and between the Black and Caspian Sea. The House of Judah was taken captive between 604 B.C. and 587 B.C. by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar. They were transported to the area of Babylon and settled in the southern Tigris-Euphrates Valley. The area where Israel had been settled over 120 years earlier was not ruled by Babylon. Ezekiel could not possibly have delivered his message to the people intended in his day. His message was warning of future captivity and destruction. This would have been meaningless to a people already in captivity.

The real impact of the message of the watchman for Israel is our time today. Mr. Herbert Armstrong began to understand that back during World War II and he began recognizing the responsibility of proclaiming Ezekiel's message. If it had meaning and impact for our peoples at that time—during World War II and the time right after—how much more does it have meaning for our people in the years immediately

ahead. We live at a very crucial and critical time in the history of mankind, and I think we all realize that. Somebody would have to be blind, indeed, to look at the world around and say they don't see anything going on that relates to Bible prophesy—those things must be for 100 years from now. Dream on! You can turn on the evening news, pick up a news magazine or newspaper and read things that a few years ago, the only place you ever saw it was in the Church magazines and telecast. Those of you who have been around for a few years know that. You remember that.

The first 16 chapters of the book of Ezekiel, which we **are going to focus on this evening, focus on the commission of the watchman.** There are specific warnings of calamity to Israel. There is a cataloging of Israel's sins. There are even a couple of inset chapters that give us a little insight into God's throne.

We will pick up the story in Ezekiel 1. God gets Ezekiel's attention. Ezekiel was here "minding his own business," so to speak.

Verse 1, he was among the captives by the River Chebar and, all of a sudden, he saw a vision of God. Ezekiel sees a vision that opens up. It was an incredible thing. Have you ever thought about how God goes places? Sometimes people have the idea that God just sits there.

When we were in Washington with the youth group, one of the places we went was the Lincoln Memorial. It's a very impressive place. There's this giant carved white marble chair, much larger than life. In this large throne-like white marble chair sits Abraham Lincoln, also carved out of white marble. This is sitting up on a high platform at the back of the memorial. It really dominates the inside. It is very impressive. I couldn't help but think as I saw that immovable, impassive white marble visage much larger than life, sitting there on that great throne-like chair, that's the way a lot of people conceive God.

Some people conceive God as just sitting there not changing expression, not moving and never getting up out of His throne. They think He just sits on His throne; it's like He is glued to His chair. God has a throne in heaven and He sits on that throne. But God doesn't just sit there immovable 24 hours a day, seven days a week, throughout all eternity, never getting up out of His throne. The fact that the scripture says He sits on the throne doesn't mean that He never does anything else.

I think it's kind of interesting in Ezekiel 1 because here's a picture of God—the One who

actually dealt with Israel, the One who we know as Jesus Christ—actually traveling through the universe in this conveyance, a rather impressive, striking sort of thing. When Ezekiel saw it, it appeared to be like this great circle of crystal. There was fire and flames shooting out. There were great brilliant lightening flashes. There were these unusual creatures under it. It describes wheels within a wheel—which is something like a gyroscope—and it can travel in any given direction. This wheel within a wheel enables it to turn in any way.

These creatures that were under it would strike us as very strange looking; yet, they were there. They had four faces; therefore, whichever direction they went was straightforward. Think of the advantages you would have if you had four faces. Any direction you went was straightforward. That's the way these creatures were. When Ezekiel looked up, he thought there was a whirlwind. It looked like a tornado or something. As it came closer, he saw it was like fire unfolding itself. As it came closer, he saw this great brilliant device that had come there very, very quickly. He describes it moving like lightening.

Ezekiel 1:14, "And the living creatures ran back and forth, in appearance like a flash of lightning." They had slowed down to the speed of light, which was slow by comparison to the speed they usually moved because if you just moved at the speed of light, you would spend a long time going across the universe.

Our closest star, Alpha Centauri, is somewhere around a couple of light years away. That means if you are traveling at the speed of light (186,000 miles per second), it would still take you two years to get there. That's a long way. There's nothing man knows that can travel at the speed of light—except light.

Here it describes these creatures that are attached to the transportation of the throne. When they ran and returned, it was like a flash of lightening. It was just instantly there. And that was in slow-motion because when they really wanted to go fast, they went beyond that to where they could transverse the universe virtually at the speed of thought. Some of the science fiction talks about another dimension. Well, there is another dimension; it is the spirit dimension. That is the dimension of eternity. That is the dimension that God inhabits. There are some incredible things; we are just given a little bit of it.

I think it is important for our young people to realize that God's Kingdom is not going to be

dull. Sometimes the concept of being in God's Kingdom is, 'Life sure is going to be dull because what does God do? He just sits on this throne.' Well, God does a lot of things, and I'll tell you one thing that God doesn't do—God doesn't look down on human beings and say, 'I wish I were a person; they have all the fun. They get to do all this exciting stuff and all I get to do is sit up here on My throne.' God never looks down envious of us and wishes He could come down and have fun.

It's important to realize that we don't give up anything to be part of God's Family. It's like you better have all your excitement and fun now because the end is coming. You'd better pack it all in because once the kingdom gets here, that's the end of anything exciting. Well, if you like to ride fast, hold on to your hat because you have never ridden anything like this. You think it is a thrill? Well, it is!

I remember riding rapidly on horseback or coming down a hill on a bicycle. I remember the thrill of the first time you experience that sense of speed. Well, you have never moved with speed like God can move with speed. When we are a part of His Family, we will have access to all kinds of things.

God gave Ezekiel a little bit of a vision of the greatness and the power and splendor of God; he recorded it for us. I think it is important for us to realize that because sometimes we can have this kind of concept that comes out of religious art, which comes out of certain ideas that have been built up, which really doesn't come out of the Bible. There's no Being in the Universe who lives a more exciting, more scintillating and more enjoyable, wonderful existence than God does. And He offers to share it with us.

It's not a matter of having to give up excitement, fun and thrills. Who designed you to where you could enjoy things? Who made it possible for you to even experience emotions? Anything you can experience right now is only enough to whet your appetite, and it is only a tiny shadow of what God can experience on the spirit realm. I think that's important for us to realize and for our young people to realize.

Ezekiel sees this vision, this throne.

In Ezekiel 2, Ezekiel is given a commission. What is he told?

Ezekiel 2:1-5, "And He said to me, 'Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you.' Then the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me. And He said to me: 'Son of man, I am

sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day. For they are impudent and stubborn children. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, "Thus says the Lord God." As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse—for they are a rebellious house—yet they will know that a prophet has been among them."

Based on verse 5, I would conclude that there remains yet a very powerful conclusion to this work to be accomplished. When all these things come crashing down, they are going to know that there has been a prophet among them. I don't think that would entirely be the case were everything to end now.

There are, in certain sections in the United States, many who know some things about the Church and a little bit of what we've taught. But in terms of having really shaken this nation—particularly Britain, as well as Australia, New Zealand, Canada (the portions of modern-day Joseph), as well as the other areas of the house of Israel in northwestern Europe—I don't think we have really shaken them in the way that God has yet for us to do. So, there remains a work to be done. At the right time, God will open the doors and will enable us to go through those doors if we are close to Him, walking with Him and if we're not "asleep at the switch." That may be in some cases.

Ezekiel's commission is described.

Ezekiel 3:4, "And He said to me: 'Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them.'"

Verse 17, "'Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me...'" He was told to go and do this.

Verses 18-19, "'When I say to the wicked, "You shall surely die," and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.'"

Basically, you give the warning. You do your part, but you don't control the response. But if you don't warn them, their blood will be required at your hands.

Verse 20, "'Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and

I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand.”

The job of the watchman carries with it a great responsibility. God’s servants will be held accountable for the consequences if they don’t convey God’s message. Satan would like nothing better than to have us get caught up in our own problems, to get caught up in petty squabbling and various things that divert our attention and our resources from the work that God has set before us to do. Satan would like to divert our attention and to subvert our efforts. I think we have to keep that in mind. It’s a matter of keeping priorities in mind.

Notice how clearly Ezekiel distinguishes Judah and Israel as two separate people. He told him he was to portray a siege.

Ezekiel 4:1-5, ““You also, son of man, take a clay tablet and lay it before you, and portray on it a city, Jerusalem. Lay siege against it, build a siege wall against it, and heap up a mound against it; set camps against it also, and place battering rams against it all around. Moreover take for yourself an iron plate, and set it as an iron wall between you and the city. Set your face against it, and it shall be besieged, and you shall lay siege against it. This will be a sign to the house of Israel. Lie also on your left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it. According to the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their iniquity. For I have laid on you the number of years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days; so you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.” This had to do with portraying the punishment that was going to come upon the house of Israel.

Verse 6, ““And when you have completed them, lie again on your right side; then you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days. I have laid on you a day for each year.”” He was to bear the iniquity of Israel 390 days, and for the house of Judah he was to bear it 40 days. This shows a very clear-cut distinction between the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

By the way, the 390 years, if we figure from the fall of the house of Israel (the Assyrian invasion and captivity) in 721 B.C. and come down 390 years (a day for a year), it would bring us to 331 B.C. Now, 331 B.C. was a significant date because that is the year when Alexander the Great conquered the Media-Persian Empire.

Remember, the house of Israel had been settled by the Assyrians up in the city of the Medes. We are told that in 2 Kings 17:6. The empire of the Medes had been a subject people to the Assyrians. In 612 B.C., they gained their independence from Assyria. They conquered Nineveh. Nineveh was actually overthrown by a confederation of peoples and collapsed. The Medes gained their independence.

The Babylonians rose as a great empire. The Medes remained a little independent entity up in the north. Things “kicked along” for almost 100 years until the Medes and the Persians united, overthrew the Babylonians, and ruled as an empire. The Northern Israelites had remained captives. They had remained in a servant status for 390 years—from the time the Assyrians brought them up and settled them in the city of the Medes, all through the time of the Median Empire until Alexander the Great conquered the Medes in 331 B.C. When Alexander the Great overthrew the Medes, then the servants of the Medes (the Israelites) were freed and were free to migrate. That marks the beginning of the great Celtic invasion of Europe—coming across the Black Sea and up into Europe. This is a rather remarkable thing and the dates exactly correlate. It dates back to this time. This was the 390 years. As we come down, notice we are given some information about what is going to happen. Ezekiel was told to take some hair and divide it in three portions.

Ezekiel 5:1-3, ““And you, son of man, take a sharp sword, take it as a barber’s razor, and pass it over your head and your beard; then take balances to weigh and divide the hair. You shall burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are finished; then you shall take one-third and strike around it with the sword, and one-third you shall scatter in the wind: I will draw out a sword after them. You shall also take a small number of them and bind them in the edge of your garment [KJV, “bind them in your skirts”; Hebrew, “wings”].””

Then he was told that this is what is going to happen to the house of Israel.

Verse 12, “““One-third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst; and one-third shall fall by the sword all around you; and I will scatter another third to all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them.””” That is what Ezekiel warned was going to happen to the house of Israel when they were taken captive.

That's a warning that applies to our time yet future. We understand the great invasion, the things that are going to take place, the fact that there is literally going to be famine and disease epidemics that are going to sweep this nation. The gods that our modern nations trust to deliver them from such things are going to fail. They are going to find that the gods in which they have placed their trust as a nation are going to fail in their time of crisis. The American people trust a multitude of gods. They trust the gods of war, military might, economic power, the gods of technology, and of medical science—of all the various modern-day gods at whose altars people virtually worship in our modern nation. They stand in awe and think that surely, whatever problem, they have some humanly-devised solution that can solve it or there is some humanly-devised protection that can shield them. Well, we are going to find that is not the case.

The only ones who are going to be spared—a handful—are the remnant that is bound up in the skirt. They're in a place of protection. This shows the calamity and events that are going to occur and the magnitude on which it will occur.

As we come down, we see what is going to happen to our cities.

Ezekiel 6:6, “In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste,” There is going to be bombing and destruction. There are going to be tremendous cataclysmic events that are going to occur. It is something just beyond the mind of most modern Americans to even imagine or conceive of. We think those are the things that happen to other people in other nations. We see the stories of what happened to other people in other countries, and it's difficult for the average American to conceive that such things could happen here because they never have. But why haven't they? –Because as the book of Lamentations brings out, God has set a hedge about our people (Lamentations 2:6; KJV, margin). But He's going to remove the hedge. Is it going to be an all-out battle? Are we really going to be able to mobilize and put on a great show?

Ezekiel 7:14, there's an interesting verse, ““They have blown the trumpet and made everyone ready, but no one goes to battle; for My wrath is on all their multitude.”” He says they have blown the trumpet to make ready, but nobody goes out to battle. The indication is we're not even going to be in shape to retaliate. Why? I don't know. It doesn't say exactly. Maybe the people we have manning the nuclear arsenal are

all “stoned” out of their minds when the word comes. That's not too farfetched. It doesn't say exactly. The indication is a very demoralized circumstance will have occurred and tremendous internal strife and tumult.

Amos 3:9 talks about the tumults in the midst of her, referring to our people. In other words, there will be civil strife and unrest.

When you let serious economic crisis come, then the consequence of that is that people in the cities get hit the hardest of all because they are the least able to independently survive. Generally, the people who are at the bottom of the economic rung are going to be the hardest hit. That's always the way it is. You're going to have a lot of really severe problems. There's going to be civil strife and great unrest when people start getting laid off. When there begins to be a great deal of economic calamity in a nation that has known plenty, it's hard for us to conceive there not being plenty.

There are some few of you here who remember the depression. As hard as it was on people then (people were better equipped to survive it than they are now), it's going to have a lot more calamitous results when it happens again. People are accustomed to having it so easy.

Some think the solution is to stock up on gold, food and guns and defend themselves. They will have their own place of protection. There are various survivalist groups that have some of these concepts. They, at least, have a little bit of insight into some of the problems that are going to occur and they think that's the solution.

Notice what God says about those who take that way out, those who decide that what they are going to do is stock up on gold, guns, hoard their food, maybe get a cave somewhere and defend what they have.

Ezekiel 7:15, ““...Whoever is in the field will die by the sword; and whoever is in the city, famine and pestilence will devour him.”” –Kind of take your choice here.

Verses 16-18, ““Those who survive will escape and be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, each for his iniquity. Every hand will be feeble, and every knee will be as weak as water. They will also be girded with sackcloth; horror will cover them; shame will be on every face, baldness on all their heads.”” It talks about being weak. The indication would be of a nuclear destruction. It talks about their hair falling out. These are symptoms of nuclear fallout.

Verse 19, ““They shall throw their silver into the streets, and their gold will be like refuse; their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord;”” One thing about gold—it becomes very highly radioactive when exposed to radiation. One of the first things you would want to get rid of is your gold. It’s kind of an interesting thing. In the book of James, it talks about how the gold will burn them. It’s very descriptive if you read a little bit about nuclear fallout and radiation; it’s very descriptive of what happens with nuclear fallout and radiation.

James 5:3, “Your gold and your silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasures in the last days.” It talks about the effects of becoming radioactive, and it will just eat your flesh like it was fire. It is so very, very descriptive.

Some of the things that are described here, you know, people must have read that for centuries and scratched their heads and wondered, ‘How in the world could something like that happen? What could that mean?’

Revelation 18:9-10, you read about Babylon the Great, ““And the kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’””

People must have read that for centuries and scratched their heads. People must have figured that must be just kind of a poetic expression because you can’t destroy an entire city in an hour. It’s impossible! It was up until 1945. Then a great city was destroyed in an hour. All of a sudden, we realize that Revelation 18 is not just a poetic exaggeration, not just poetic license; it was a very literal description of what happens when a nuclear bomb is dropped. You see ‘the smoke of the torment’—that famous mushroom-shaped cloud—ascending up miles out to sea. Everybody keeps his distance “for fear of her torment”— the torment of radiation sickness, a slow death. It is very, very descriptive.

We see some of what is said.

Ezekiel 7:19, ““They will throw their silver into the streets, and their gold will be like refuse; their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord; they will not satisfy their souls, nor fill their stomachs, because it became their stumbling block of

iniquity.”” Human beings put their trust in these things to deliver them. In the day of the final calamity, they are going to find that it is not going to be of any avail. If that is what we trust in to survive the Day of the Lord, we are going to be disillusioned. We certainly should be wise stewards of our resources and should use wisdom in terms of riding out the ups and downs of our day-to-day economic fluctuations. Yes, but in terms of counting on something like this for deliverance and as a protector when the calamity comes, forget it!

Verse 23, ““Make a chain, for the land is filled with crimes of blood, and the city is full of violence.”” “Make a chain.” It is link joined to link; one thing is linked to another—cause and effect. This is so descriptive of our cities in this country today.

God says, as a result of it, there are going to be consequences that are going to come.

Verse 24, ““Therefore I will bring the worst of the Gentiles, and they will possess their houses; I will cause the pomp of the strong to cease, and their holy places shall be defiled.””

Ezekiel 8 gives an interesting description. God says, ‘I am going to show you some of the abominations of the house of Israel.’

Ezekiel 8:6, “Furthermore He said to me, ‘Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel commits here, to make Me go far away from My sanctuary? Now turn again, you will see greater abominations.’” He said, ‘You see this? It looks bad, but you are going to see greater abominations than this.’

Verses 13-14, “And He said to me, ‘Turn again, and you will see greater abominations that they are doing.’ So He brought me to the door of the north gate of the Lord’s house; and to my dismay, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz.”

Verses 15-16, “...‘Turn again, you will see greater abominations than these.’ So He brought me into the inner court of the Lord’s house; and there, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, and they were worshiping the sun toward the east.”

Now, when is the sun in the east? When it is rising, right? What he saw was a sunrise service. The only time you would worship the sun toward the east is when it is rising. If you would like to do a little research on “weeping for Tammuz,”

you will find that this is the origin of Lent. It was a period of penance in the spring (going back to the ancient Babylonians) that culminated in a sunrise service—and it still is!

If you dig hard enough, you will find somebody who will come up with the idea of Mardi Gras back there, too—to kind of “kick it off.” If you’re going to do penance for 40 days, you want to make sure you have something to do penance for. No need doing penance for nothing. God looks at these things and He doesn’t like it.

People say today, ‘But we don’t do it for that reason. We are not weeping for Tammuz. We’re not actually worshipping the sun. We’re worshipping God. We just go out there and have this service at sunrise, but we’re not doing it for that reason.’ It’s the same thing people will tell you about putting up a Christmas tree; they’re not worshipping the sun god. They put up a tree because everybody else puts up a tree. It’s pretty and decorated with the lights—anything wrong with lights? Does God hate trees?

People use human reasoning and say, ‘I don’t see what difference it makes. We are not doing it to worship Tammuz or to worship the sun god. It’s just kind of a cute little custom and everybody is doing it. We don’t want to stick out like “sore thumbs” and we don’t want our kids to be deprived.’

Well, I would like mine to be deprived—deprived of the Great Tribulation, deprived of the wrath of the Day of the Lord. There are a lot of things I would like to be deprived of and I hope my family is deprived of. I think there are things you would like to be deprived of. People say they don’t see what difference it makes. That’s the whole point; *they* don’t see what difference it makes! It doesn’t make a difference to other people. Maybe they are doing it for that reason. No, generally the reason they are doing it is because everybody else does. Show me any place in the Bible that says that just because everybody else does it, it is a good reason and that’s what God wants His people to do.

Deuteronomy 12:30-32, I do find where God says, “take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, “How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.” You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to

observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.”

God says not to look around and see how all these pagans serve their gods and think that’s kind of a cute little custom. We should not do that.

John 4:23, God wants to be worshiped in spirit and in truth. What is truth?

John 17:17, “...Your word is truth.” God wants to be worshiped in accordance as He reveals. He doesn’t want us adding to it or taking away from it and kind of adapting it. He doesn’t want us looking around and adapting all these cute customs.

‘We won’t call it by the old pagan name; we will just change the name.’ So, the ancient Romans celebrating the Saturnalia started celebrating Christmas. They did the same thing at the same time, but they just called it by a different name. That makes it okay. Right?

You can read Deuteronomy 12 and Ezekiel 8 as well as I can. God directs how He wishes to be worshiped. We are responsible as individuals for what we do, and I think we have to understand that. You can do all kinds of things; maybe nobody else is going to know it and maybe nobody in the Church will find out. Big deal! We all ultimately give an account to God for what we do and what we know.

James 4:17, “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.” We all have to keep that in mind. Ezekiel has these warnings here, and we are admonished to take heed.

Ezekiel 8:17, “Then He said to me, ‘Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence; then they have returned to provoke Me to anger. Indeed they put the branch to their nose.’” The more literal translation is “they have put the branch to *My* nose.”

There are several amendments to the text called “emendations of the Sopherim.” The Sopherims, who were the scribes, made several little emendments to the text. They didn’t erase the text; they just made a little note up above it in terms of the way it was to be read. There were several places where they thought the language was kind of strong or offensive or they knew that what was described was almost blasphemous and they didn’t want to say it that way. They emended it to kind of soften the sound of it. When it said, “they put the branch to *My* nose,”

they thought that was a very harsh statement and changed it around.

When you actually look up that phrase, it is a reference to a very ancient pagan symbolism, an ancient phallus symbol. The Hebrew “*zmowrah*” is the term for “branch.” It refers to the phallus symbol, the obelisk. Actually, it is the origin of the steeple. That’s why you find it on the top. It goes back to the ancient “*zmowrah*.” God views it as offensive. People don’t see what difference it makes. It is irrelevant whether it makes a difference to people. The question we all should ask ourselves is, ‘*Does it make a difference to God?*’ That’s really the issue—does God care one way or the other? That is Who we have to be primarily concerned about pleasing.

I remember many years ago, back in the early to mid-70s, back around 1973 or 1974, things had gotten to such a point that there was an individual who was even in the ministry at that time (he has long since been out of the ministry and out of the Church) who absolutely shocked me. I was at a district ministerial meeting and I was absolutely shocked by what I heard. Several of us were standing around and he mentioned very casually that he had put up Christmas decorations that year. My mouth must have dropped open. I couldn’t believe what I was hearing.

His excuse was he was not doing it really to celebrate Christmas. He just didn’t want to be offensive to all of his worldly neighbors. They all go in for this and put it up. He just didn’t want to stand out as being different. They may have been offended because he didn’t have decorations up. My question was, ‘Aren’t you concerned about being offensive to God? If I were you, I would be a whole lot more concerned about offending God than I would the guy next door.’ Well, no, evidently he wasn’t. I guess he figured God would understand.

God understands—that’s the whole point! God understands when we are not doing what we should do. God offers mercy and grace, but He offers it upon repentance. God offers to save us *from* our sins, not *in* our sins. God is very merciful and compassionate when we repent. God doesn’t have a casual “anything-goes” and “I-don’t-care-what-you-do” attitude. He doesn’t say, ‘Whosoever will may come. Just do anything you want to do and it is fine with Me. No big deal.’ I go through the Scriptures and I find God made an awfully big deal out of a lot of things.

Ezekiel 9:4, “and the Lord said to him, ‘Go through the midst of the city, through the midst

of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.’”

Verses 5-6, then He told His angels standing by, “To the others He said in my hearing, ‘Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary.’”

This is not the mark of the beast; rather, this is the sign of God. God sent Ezekiel and He said, ‘I want you to go through and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations of Israel. Set a mark on those who are really bothered and grieved and moved by all the trash and the filth that they see around. But do not set a mark on those who are comfortable and complacent with it, who want to be part and parcel of it and dabble their toe in the cesspool. Set a mark on those who are bothered by it, take offense at it, are grieved by it, hate to see it and are yearning, “Thy Kingdom come.”’ God says, ‘I want you to note all of those because those are the ones I’m going to protect. When I do that, then it’s all going to break loose.’

You might read the parallel back in Revelation 7 and Revelation 14 about the sealing of the servants of our God in their foreheads. That is what is pictured here. After the sealing, then the plagues of the Day of the Lord come sweeping across. He says, ‘Start at My sanctuary, at My house; start with My people.’

It is important that we be among those who sigh and cry for the abominations of Israel. It’s important that the things that we see happening in society bother us—not in the sense that we should just sit around and be horribly depressed all the time. We should not have a casual, careless, indifferent attitude to what we see because God doesn’t have a careless, casual attitude to what He sees.

God sees the consequences. Little things lead into big things. It leads to grief, suffering and harm for people—human beings made in God’s image who are suffering unbelievably by the consequence of sin. It is important that we be bothered by that in the right way.

We are told in Ephesians 1:13-14 that we are sealed. God’s Holy Spirit has sealed us until the day of redemption. That is symbolic—there on our foreheads, the sealing of God’s servants.

In Ezekiel 10, we again find this portable throne that God utilizes. It’s very descriptive. We don’t have time to go into all of this, but it must have

been quite a remarkable thing. Ezekiel had to describe it in the language of which he was familiar. How would you describe an airplane, an automobile, a train or something of that sort if you had never seen anything like that before? You would use the language that is known to you. You would try and describe it using terms and comparisons that you are familiar with.

That's like our forefathers when the car first came out. They called it the horseless carriage. Mr. Herbert Armstrong told about when he was a little boy that his father was standing at the window and said, 'Everybody come quick and see a horseless carriage.' This was quite an event. They had heard of them, but none of them had ever seen one. They came running to the window and looked out, and there was a wagon pulled by a couple of mules. His father had a big laugh and said, 'See, that's a horseless carriage.' It was not being pulled by horses but by mules. That was back in maybe 1896. People utilized phrases like "horseless carriages" because how do you describe them? There wasn't a name for it. Eventually, a name was invented.

Ezekiel saw this throne. He saw this conveyance. He couldn't use the language of modern technology to describe it. It would be beyond our ability to describe. To try to describe it, he used the language and the phrases that it looked most like to him.

Ezekiel 11 describes why God will give His Spirit to Israel.

Verse 17, he talks about bringing them back after the nation has been punished and the consequences—gathering the remnant and bringing them back. That is yet future after Christ returns.

Ezekiel 11:19-20, "'Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.'" God says, 'I am going to change them.' He is going to give His spirit for the purpose of conversion, of changing us, of transforming us, and enabling us to walk in His statutes and His ordinances. A transformation by the Spirit of God makes us the people of God.

We see the way that Israel is characterized in Ezekiel 12.

Ezekiel 12:1-2, "Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying: 'Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, which has eyes to see

but does not see, and ears to hear but does not hear; for they are a rebellious house.'"

Verse 6, He says, "'...for I have made you a sign to the house of Israel.'"

Verse 9, "'Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, 'What are you doing?'" It goes down and describes the nation as a rebellious nation.

As we continue, there is an interesting description.

Ezekiel 13:2, "'Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, 'Hear the word of the Lord!'"

Let's understand a little bit about this word "prophet." The Hebrew word for prophet, "*nabiy*," is a word that means "those who announce or who proclaim." The prophet of God is one who announces or proclaims God's message. In some cases, it might be a revelation of future events. We think of the word "prophet" as being one who foretells the future. But the word "prophet" has a much broader meaning than that. A prophet is simply one who announces a message, one who conveys, proclaims or announces. A prophet of God is one who proclaims or announces God's message.

A false prophet is anyone who proclaims or announces a false message. In some cases, the message was a foretelling of future events, but that's not the only thing that God's message can convey. Here we see false prophets; it describes the false prophets of society.

I think sometimes we have tended to very narrowly view this and to think of some of the preachers on the radio and television of some of the worldly churches. We have identified it with them and said that these are the false prophets. Well, yes they are, but they are not the only false prophets. And, frankly, they are not the false prophets that are primarily listened to in this nation. The various ones on radio and television are not really the ones that most people in this country pay a whole lot of attention to. Only a tiny fraction of the people in this country really give a lot of credence and really pay a lot of attention to what the radio and television "false prophets" say.

The term "prophet" in the Hebrew—those who announce or proclaim a message—in our modern society would certainly refer in a general sense to the whole realm of the media. It is something that really did not exist in that way in ancient Israel, but it exists as a very powerful force in our society today. They (the media) are the opinion

molders. They are the ones who announce or proclaim a message that shapes the thinking and the opinions of people. This includes both the secular false prophets as well as the religious false prophets. It includes everything from the major television, radio, newspaper and news magazines—the whole realm of the opinion molders. It includes those who announce and proclaim, those that people look to for explanation and understanding of what is transpiring in the world around.

Verse 6 KJV, God says of them, “They have seen vanity and lying divination,” NJKV, “They have envisioned futility and false divination,”

Verse 10, “Because, indeed, because they have seduced My people, saying, “Peace!” when there is no peace—and one builds a boundary wall, and they plaster it with untempered mortar...” He says, ‘They’ve built up this edifice, and others have come along, whitewashed it and made it look good.’

But, verse 11, the whole thing won’t stand up because it is going to fall when a wind and storm comes. When the events that are going to transpire come, it is going to show what a shaky edifice has been built by those who claim to be “in the know,” those who are the “experts” and those who are the opinion molders and opinion shapers. It’s going to become very apparent when this occurs.

Verse 14, “So I will break down the wall you have plastered with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation will be uncovered; it will fall, and you shall be consumed in the midst of it.” It is going to be apparent on what a faulty foundation the whole society has been built.

Frankly, the biggest things that are the foundation of our modern society are the concepts of science (1 Timothy 6:20, KJV, “falsely so called”), evolution and all the things that are the spin-off of that. If there’s anything or any concept that underlies the thinking of modern “educated” people, it is the concept of evolution. The concept of evolution is the idea that there really isn’t a God who intervenes in human affairs. And if there is any kind of God at all, it is some kind of remote, vague “first cause.” They claim there’s really no God at all and this “first cause” really doesn’t have any relevance to us. It certainly doesn’t tell us how to live our lives and certainly does not intervene in the world or have controlling influence in the affairs of the world around us. The foundation of this society is based

on the fact that there is no God who steps into history. They believe everything just continues along, just as it always has been.

Verses 17-18 describe the daughters of your people. Some of the symbolism that’s used here is not entirely clear, but the concept is all of these various “do-gooder” causes and various movements that are out there.

Jeremiah 6:14, supposedly, all these various “do-gooder” causes go out and as it says, it, “heals the hurt of My people slightly.”

Ezekiel 13:19, “And will you profane Me among My people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, killing people who should not die, and keeping people alive who should not live, by your lying to My people who listen to lies?”

In so many cases, the consequence of some of these “do-gooders” is that all the sympathy is dished out for the criminal and the people who are out causing all the problems—“keeping people alive who should not live.” And as a consequence, those who are innocent and are going around minding their own business die a needless death. The professional “do-gooders” and sympathizers always seem to have their sympathy with the perpetrators of the problems and very little sympathy left over for the victims. They are out trying to do all these things. There are soup kitchens and all these things, and it’s not the solution to the problem. “By your lying to My people who listen to lies.”

Verse 20 KJV, describes all their various good works and the pillars that they sew and the things that they do.

Verse 22, “Because with lies you have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and you have strengthened the hands of the wicked, so that he does not turn from his wicked way to save his life.” You’ve been there to bail him out, to help him out and keep him from suffering the consequences of his actions. Really, what you’ve done is kept him from coming to repentance because you’ve been there to try to soften the blow. What he needed was not somebody to soften the blow. You’ve wound up making the righteous sad because the result has been a society that is filled with violence and all sorts of things. It’s a sad commentary as we see it.

Ezekiel 14:4, “Therefore speak to them, and say to them, “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Everyone of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, ...’”” He sets up the idols

in his heart. That's ultimately where idolatry is; it's what we set up in our hearts. It's what we look to, what we stand in awe of, what we're really deeply impressed with.

What does it mean to "worship"? Sometimes you need to look up synonyms because we think we know what it means to "worship." It talks about the world worshipping the beast. What does that mean? It means they are very deeply impressed with and they stand in awe of. That's what it means—to have that worshipful attitude, to just be most impressed with, to really stand in awe of. In our society, if you'd ask most people, 'Do you worship idols?' They would say, 'No.' Take a poll in this country; go up to people on the street and ask, 'Do you worship idols?' You'd go through and say, 'Ezekiel must have been wrong; nobody worships idols. Everybody says they don't worship idols.'

We're familiar with the statues and things that we think of with the Catholic Church. If you were to go to them and ask if they worshiped those things, they'd say, 'No, of course not.' They don't worship idols. Nobody claims to worship idols. But God says somebody is worshipping idols. You can't read it and all the things God has to say about idolatry and not come to the conclusion that somebody, somewhere, is worshipping an idol. In fact, it kind of sounds like a bunch of people are worshipping idols. They set up idols in their hearts.

Idols can be set up. They can be some literal figure that you see, bow down to and burn incense to. God very clearly says not to do that. But some people, who wouldn't dream of setting up this image and bowing down to it, have an idol in their heart. If we're not careful, that's the kind of idols we can set up. We'd be so careful not to bow down to some great big fat leering golden Buddha and burn incense to it. I don't think any of us would ever dream of doing such a thing. But we can set up an idol in our heart if we're not careful by really standing in awe of and being impressed with something other than God in a way that should be reserved for God.

Verse 13, God says, "...I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it."

Verse 14, even though Noah, Daniel and Job were there, they wouldn't save anybody but themselves. Things are going to get so bad, and God says that nobody is going to be able to save anybody else. God says He's not going to make a deal like He did with Abraham (Genesis 18:32, 'if there are ten righteous men in the city, I will

spare the whole city.')

God singles out these three individuals as three of the most righteous men who ever lived: Noah, Daniel and Job. These individuals are certainly singled out as men of outstanding righteousness. God says if they were there, He would save them. But He wouldn't save the city even for their sake.

Verse 15, "If I cause wild beasts [KJV, "noisome beasts"] to pass through the land, and they empty it, and make it so desolate that no man may pass through because of the beasts..."

—Animal plagues, noisome beasts that pass through the land, rabid animals or whatever it may be. You've heard some of these things about killer bees. So far nothing has really come of it. People can sit back and say, 'Well, you know something like that could never happen.' Well, God says it will. I don't know exactly how it's going to happen, but I believe it's going to happen.

Some of these things we've talked about, and Mr. Herbert Armstrong talked about them many, many years ago. We may have speculated about "time" in certain areas, as anticipating certain of these events happening. We may have "jumped the gun" on some of that in our eagerness. We may have introduced speculation about "time." God has reserved the times and the seasons to Himself (Acts 1:7). We tried to read God's mind, as we do sometimes. That's human nature. The disciples tried to do that, too. None of that diminishes from the accuracy of what is going to happen. We should never kid ourselves. We need to make a distinction between what's speculative and what's not.

There's nothing speculative about the fact that God is going to call noisome beasts to pass through the land to spoil it and make it desolate. That's what it says. That is not speculation. If I said, 'Well, He's going to do it in "x" amount of years,' now that would be speculation. The fact that He is going to do it is not speculation. That's a clear statement of fact.

Verse 17, "Or if I bring a sword on that land, and say, "Sword, go through the land," and I cut off man and beast from it..."

Verse 19, "Or if I send a pestilence into that land..."

Verse 22, "Yet behold, there shall be left in it a remnant [just a handful], who will be brought out," We see that there are going to be a lot of these things that are going to come about.

Ezekiel 16 is an analogy of Israel. Israel is pictured as a castoff infant and reared by God. After her maturity, she marries God. Then in the

aftermath of the marriage, Israel is pictured as entering into idolatry. God draws this analogy, which is brought out. He describes Israel in this poetic symbolism and, in a sense, shows the absolute horror of what Israel did in turning their back on God who rescued and nurtured them, who brought them up and married them, as it were in a symbolic sense.

There are many principles that we can deduce from this. There are many things that we can learn. We see the symbolism that God describes. He describes what Israel did. We understand the primary implications of it. I think that even in cases like this, it is one of the ways of learning how to be governed by the Bible and to let God reveal His will.

We know from the New Testament certain general principles, for instance, of proper modesty and not gaudy attire. Ezekiel 16 gives a picture symbolically of God arraying Israel. It is sometimes helpful to look at it, realizing that it's symbolic, but we realize that if God utilized it, then it is not inappropriate. He describes beautifully crafted shoes, beautiful garments with linen and with silk. He describes jewelry. He describes these things.

Ezekiel 16:9, "...I anointed you with oil [in the sense of perfumed oil]." We can see that Israel is arrayed as a bride or arrayed as a queen. There are occasions where it's not wrong to wear something that is appropriate for the occasion. Here it shows the utilization of jewelry, the utilization of beautiful clothes or even perfume. The things God utilized, the specific things that He mentions—basically perfumed oil, shoes, clothing and jewelry—show that it is not wrong for a Christian woman to utilize jewelry, for instance. Some religions totally prohibit the use of any jewelry. And yet we read from Ezekiel 16 and understand that it is not wrong.

Obviously, there are principles in the New Testament that show that we should be modest in our apparel. We are not to be gaudy and we are not to go to an extreme; jewelry is used tastefully and obviously for certain occasions, such as a wedding. Here, the sense is not only of a wedding but the coronation of a queen with a crown. Obviously, there would be things that would be appropriate that are not wrong in and of themselves as long as they are used properly, tastefully and not in a wrong manner. Some things God utilizes; other things He doesn't. You can draw contrasts between God arraying Israel as His queen and Israel arraying herself as a harlot later on in other passages. But we can

deduce here that it is not wrong that certain things are utilized. They are not intrinsically wrong in and of themselves—as certain ones have sometime thought—as long as it's done properly, appropriately, in proper taste and at the proper occasion.

It goes through and describes the contrast of Israel being called by God and God providing all of these wonderful things, offering Israel the opportunity as His wife, as His queen. And, yet, what did she do? She went and involved herself with all of the nations around. God compares that to harlotry. That's the way God spiritually views unfaithfulness—as a betrayal. He draws the analogy as a husband betrayed by his wife. In that sense, God pictured Himself as the husband. There is a sense of betrayal that is described.

This pretty well takes care of the first 16 chapters in the book of Ezekiel. There's an awful lot packed into the book of Ezekiel and an awful lot packed into the Major Prophets. There is a tremendous amount that is there. There are things that we would do well to take notice of and pay attention to because they're things that very directly impact us and the world in which we're living—events that are transpiring oh so rapidly and quickly.

Bible Study # 56
August 28, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Ezekiel 17—32

This evening we **are covering the mid-section of Ezekiel—chapters 17—32**. There are crucial parts in this section **that focus in on the prophecies of the continuity of David's dynasty in spite of the Babylonian captivity of the Jews**. This is something to note because God had made a promise to David at the time David desired to build the temple. He told David, 'You're not going to build a house for Me.' There were reasons for that. God said, 'Instead, what I will do, I will build a house for you. I am going to establish your dynasty.' God said, 'I'm going to establish that forever' (1 Chronicles 17:4-14).

God made that promise to David and the dynasty had continued along for, let's say, in the neighborhood of over 400 years. Now, we come to a time of the Babylonian captivity where Jerusalem is going to be destroyed. To all apparent visible signs, the dynasty of David is going to cease to rule. Was God's promise proved to be of no effect? God made a promise to David and even specifically told him, 'If your seed (descendants), who sit upon your throne, sin, I will chasten him, but I won't turn away from him as I did from Saul. I will chasten him, but I will not reject him as I did the family of Saul' (2 Samuel 7:13-16). God had made a covenant, a promise, to King David.

The people of God who were alive at that time had understood that promise. At least they understood there was a promise and they had, as many times is the case, read in things. God made a promise that He was going to preserve the throne of David and, undoubtedly, they had assumed it would be done in Jerusalem over Judah. Therefore, that meant the uninterrupted continuation of the line there in Jerusalem in Judah. That's not what God said. But we can all have a tendency to read in things and to assume things that aren't necessarily there.

This is a lesson for prophecy (and prophecy even for today) to realize there are times we may have assumed things that are not always necessarily what the text says. Many of the Jews had assumed that the promise to David meant the unbroken continuation there in Jerusalem over Judah. That's not what God had in mind. In fact, the dynasty was continued and does continue, but

the throne of David today is located in London. The throne was overturned, overturned, overturned. It was overturned from Jerusalem to Tara, Ireland; from Tara to Scone, Scotland; and from Scone to London, England.

Ezekiel 21:27 KJV, ""I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more [overturned], until He come whose right it is; and I will give it to Him."" –In other words, Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

This evening we will notice a couple of things relating to that and relating to some of the prophecies of David's dynasty. We **will notice some of the specific indictments of the sins of modern Israel and the ultimate punishment**. We find some of these things outlined here in Ezekiel.

Also, **the origin of Satan is addressed** in Ezekiel 28. This is a section of Scripture Mr. Herbert Armstrong used to go back to many times. Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28—we've heard him talk about Lucifer and tie it in with Genesis 2, the two trees. He kept doing that because he felt like people didn't really get the point. Sometimes I think some who thought they got the point, didn't; that has been shown.

In Ezekiel 22, there is interesting information that we will bring into focus a little more clearly as we come to it.

Ezekiel 17 is a parable to the house of Israel. Now, understand something. This is a parable to the house of Israel. Remember, as we went through the last Bible study, the house of Israel had already gone into captivity over 125 years before Ezekiel ever wrote this. Ezekiel was with the captives of Judah in the southern Mesopotamian area, which wouldn't be a good place to be in the modern-day Iraq.

He was kind of like some of the captives that are over there now. Saddam Hussein kind of saw himself as a modern-day Nebuchadnezzar. They had already started a construction project. He wanted to rebuild the palace of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon with the hanging gardens. They hadn't gotten around to rebuilding the palace, but they had put up a sign saying, "The palace of Nebuchadnezzar, rebuilt in the era of Saddam Hussein." He really was kind of equating himself with being the great conqueror. He was "riding high in the saddle."

Ezekiel was dealing with his ancient counterpart and he was a hostage of centuries ago. He wasn't any freer to leave Babylon than our hostages are to leave modern-day Iraq. Ezekiel couldn't travel all the way up to the area where the Israelites

were captive, which would be located on the border of modern-day Iran and the Soviet Union. The Israelites weren't in the area where Ezekiel was. They had already been taken captive 125 years earlier. It's kind of late to come in and give them a warning.

One hundred twenty-five years ago from today is 1865. It's kind of like somebody standing up today and prophesying that if the South doesn't repent, it is going to lose the War Between the States. You'd say that it's a little late to address that issue.

This is exactly the time period we're talking about. To come along and tell the house of Israel, 'If you don't repent, you are going to go into captivity,' would be like getting on television today and telling Louisiana, 'If you don't repent, the Union troops are going to come in and you're going to lose the War Between the States.' What does that have to do with anything? That's over with.

The reason I emphasize that is to prove that Ezekiel's message was not for his day. It's not that God forgot to send Israel a warning—then He sent one. Then somebody said, 'That was all over with 125 years ago!' And God said, 'How time flies; I forgot!' God didn't forget. The message Ezekiel was given has implications down through time.

We already saw that Ezekiel makes a clear distinction between the house of Israel and Judah. A very good place to prove that is in Ezekiel 4:5, 'he is to bear the iniquity of the house of Israel for 390 days.'

Verse 6, 'he is to bear the iniquity of the house of Judah for 40 days.'

The book of Ezekiel makes a clear-cut distinction between the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

Ezekiel 17 is a parable for the house of Israel, not the house of Judah.

In this parable, verses 1-4, he sees a great eagle that came to a big cedar in Lebanon. He cropped off one of the young twigs, carried it into a land of traffic (trade) and set it in a city of merchants.

Ezekiel 17:5-7, "Then he took some of the seed of the land and planted it in a fertile field; he placed it by abundant waters and set it like a willow tree. And it grew.... But there was another great eagle with large wings...." What is all this talking about?

Verses 12-13, it talks about how the king of Babylon went to Jerusalem, took the king and the princes, led them to Babylon and took captive of the king's offspring.

Then we come to something else. He is talking about Babylon captivity, but notice as we come down.

Verses 22, "Thus says the Lord God: 'I will take also one of the highest branches of the high cedar and set it out. I will crop off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and will plant it on a high and prominent mountain.'" He took of the highest branch of the high cedar. The high cedar represented Israel. The highest branch would represent the king. He was to go to the family of the king (that's the highest branch of the tree) and from it he was to chop off one of the young twigs. In other words, this would be one of the children of the king, "a tender one." This would be a daughter as opposed to a son.

One of the king's daughters was to be taken and planted upon a high and prominent mountain. A mountain is used in Bible prophecy to symbolize a nation. We are told in Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 how the Lord's house will be established in the top of the mountain and exalted above the hills and people shall flow to it. It talks about the seven mountains in Revelation 17:9. The seven mountains are seven kings. "Mountain" is used as symbolic of a great nation. "Hill" symbolizes a small nation. Here was a great nation that one of the king's daughters was to be taken.

Verse 23, "On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it; and it will bring forth boughs, and bear fruit," She was to be planted elsewhere, in a high mountain, a great nation. It was to take root and it was to be fruitful. In other words, she would marry and have children, descendants. It will "bring forth boughs and bear fruit." You've taken this young tender twig and you've rooted it elsewhere. Another great tree grows up from there that will ultimately become a great empire that will have worldwide implications. It will be a great tree.

Verse 23, continuing, "...and be a majestic cedar. Under it will dwell birds of every sort; in the shadow of its branches they will dwell." This was symbolic of all the nations that would dwell under it. In other words, you are going to crop off a little tender twig, root it, take it to another mountain, plant it and it's going to become a great tree. It is going to produce and be fruitful; everything is going to come and dwell there.

Verse 24, "And all the trees of the field shall know that I, the Lord, have brought down the high tree and exalted the low tree, dried up the green tree and made the dry tree flourish;"

Zedekiah was the last king of Judah. He was the last occupant of the throne of David there in

Jerusalem. One of his daughters was married to the son of the high king of Ireland. The present day British royal family traces back to that dynasty, the dynasty that was actually transferred by Jeremiah the prophet. We went through that when we covered the book of Jeremiah. You can read some of the background in the booklet, *What's Ahead for America and Britain?* It goes into some of that.

That dynasty ultimately ruled over an empire that came to have worldwide implications. "The sun never set on the British Empire" was the saying because literally there were far-flung British dominions around the world. Even though the British Empire is greatly dissipated and disappeared, it is still that throne—the throne of David—that is the common bond that links people. There's still people all over the world that are linked by allegiance to that common throne, whether in Canada, Australia, New Zealand or even certain areas of the Caribbean, certain Pacific islands, as well as Britain itself. A Canadian coin, stamp or dollar bill has the Queen of England's picture on it. She is not only the Queen of England, but she is also the Queen of Canada. That is a part of the birthright blessings—the throne of David—that God established. There is reference to it right here.

In Ezekiel 18, there are a couple of very clear-cut scriptures that show that there is no immortal soul.

Ezekiel 18:4, 20 both state, "the soul who sins shall die." Here are very clear-cut scriptures that show that "soul" does not equate with "immortality."

Verse 32, the context is that God does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked. God wants people to repent. We will ultimately have to bear the consequences of what we have done. If we repent, God will spare us; if we don't, we will die. 'The soul that sins, it shall die.'

Verse 21, "But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die."

Here we have a definition of repentance. Repentance is defined as turning around and going the other way. To receive God's forgiveness and mercy, we have to repent; we have to turn from our sins. That means we have been going one direction—the way of sin—and we have made a "U-turn" in the middle of the road. We turned around and started going the other way. We have turned from our sins and have begun to obey God.

Now, our obedience does not earn forgiveness, but it is the outward demonstration of our repentance. The sacrifice of Christ paid the penalty for our sins. There's no amount of law-keeping that is going to earn us forgiveness. But if we're not keeping the law, it is pretty evident that we're not trying to turn away from sin and we're not repentant. Because if I'm repentant, that means I don't want to be like the world; I don't want to be like the devil. I want to be like God. I desire to be like God. I'm trying to turn away from the old and embrace the new.

Verse 23, God has no pleasure that the wicked should die. What God desires is that the wicked will repent, that he will turn from his ways and live. This is important and it reflects the mind of God. God desires and delights to see not the punishment of the wicked but the repentance of the wicked.

Verse 31, "Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?" This is prophecy of conversion, a new heart. God does not delight in seeing our punishment; He wants us to repent.

We also see in this section that good past actions of ourselves or our parents are not going to get us out of trouble.

Verse 24, "But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die."

Matthew 24:13, that's why Jesus said, "But he who endures to the end shall be saved."

We have to keep on keeping on. You can't go along and do what's right for a while and then decide to quit, do wrong and turn away from God. Do you think God will say, 'He did keep the Sabbath for several years before he quit. He kept it for ten years; then he left the Church and broke it for five. So, We'll forget about these five because he kept it twice as long as he didn't.' That's not the way it works. If we turn away from obedience to God, then we've gotten off the track.

Jesus said, "He who endures to the end shall be saved." We have to hang on. We can't just say, 'Way back when I used to do "such and such" or my parents used to do "such and such."' We each have to be responsible for what we do.

Ezekiel 20 is an important concept; it makes an interesting point. It talks about God's choosing Israel.

Ezekiel 20:5, "...“Thus says the Lord God: ‘On the day when I chose Israel and lifted My hand in an oath to the descendants of the house of Jacob, and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, I lifted My hand in an oath to them, saying, ‘I am the Lord your God.’”””” He told them, ‘I am your God.’

Verses 7-8, ““Then I said to them, ‘Each of you, throw away the abominations which are before his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.’” But they rebelled against Me and would not obey Me. They did not all cast away the abominations which were before their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt.””

Verse 10, God said, ‘I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I brought them into the wilderness.’

Verses 11-13, ““And I gave them My statutes, showed them My judgments, “which, if a man does, he shall live by them.” Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them. Yet the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them; and they greatly defiled My Sabbaths.””

God shows and what we find here is that Israel did not willingly forsake Egypt. They did not willingly turn their backs on and forsake Egypt. God took the people out of Egypt, but taking Egypt out of the people was a different matter.

We have to understand they did not cast away the abominations that were before their eyes. They did not forsake the idols of Egypt. They did not forsake them in their mind. This is the important part of conversion. It is something fundamental. We have to understand; it's not enough to outwardly forsake the idols of Egypt. We have to forsake them in our mind because if we don't forsake them in our mind, when we are provided with the right set of opportunities, we will turn back to them because we never turned loose of them in our mind to begin with.

The Egyptians worshiped the golden calf, the Aphis bull. Israel did not physically take a golden calf with them out of Egypt. Israel did not take one with them, but when Moses was gone six weeks, they made one like they remembered (Exodus 32). They took it with them in their minds, and when they were given the opportunity

to do what they wanted to do, that was what they wanted to do. They longingly remembered what they had ceased to do. When they got the opportunity, they went back to it.

If you had the opportunity, what would you go back to? Do you really chafe under not being able to set up a Christmas tree? If you had the chance, boy, you would like to do that. What are you longingly looking back for? Easter eggs? That's the big thing—‘Surely wish we could have Easter sunrise service in the Church.’ What do we want to go back to? Do we want to be involved in this world's politics—trying to get old “honest Joe” elected because he could solve all the problems in the country and the state. He says he will. They all say they will. They've been saying that since anyone ran for office.

Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, ran for king of Israel (1 Kings 12). No new taxes! That was his pledge; he was going to reduce the old taxes. That's not any great new thing. That's what got Rehoboam kicked out of office and Jeroboam put in. What did Jeroboam do? Pretty soon he had changed the Feast (v. 32) and done all kinds of things. From that time on, God tells us all the kings of Israel walked in the ways of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. He wasn't a good king, but people thought he was going to be “just the man.” He was the guy they wanted. He was the people's choice.

We look at it; most of us are not going to go out, physically sit down and carve a great golden calf and start bowing down to it. We think we wouldn't do a thing like that. God uses Egypt as a type of this world. We have to understand there is a principle here. Israel left Egypt reluctantly. They kept rebelling every time they got the opportunity. They kept going back because they didn't leave it in their minds.

When we're in God's Kingdom, is God going to be worried that over in our corner of the universe we're building golden calves? God is off somewhere and as soon as we think nobody is looking over in our solar system (our galaxy or whatever it is), we're manufacturing golden calves for everybody to worship. We're instituting Christmas, Halloween and Easter; we're having people put up Christmas trees and hide Easter eggs over in our corner of the universe. God's not going to have to be worried that we're going to be trying to bring Egypt in and create little Egypt over there. God not only wants to bring us out of Egypt, He wants to get Egypt out of us. That's what conversion is all about.

Ezekiel 36:26, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you;” God says, ‘I’ll clean you up on the inside.’ If we are cleaned up on the inside, the outside will take care of itself.

The problem with the Israelites was they got cleaned up on the outside several different times, but they never got cleaned up on the inside. As soon as they got the opportunity, the inside manifested itself on the outside. God wants more than a veneer of righteousness. He wants a heart and mind that is yielded and surrendered to Him. He wants us to walk in His ways. He wants a new heart. Israel did not willingly forsake Egypt.

Hopefully, we have willingly forsaken Egypt. Sooner or later God will give us all a chance to turn back because He wants to see if we will. He wants to see what’s in our heart. That’s what He said in Deuteronomy 8. That’s why He led them 40 years in the wilderness. He wanted to humble them and to prove what was in their heart.

Sooner or later, God will give you the opportunity to turn back to Egypt. Symbolically, Moses will be gone for 40 days. You’ll have the opportunity to turn back to Egypt. Will you? God wants to know what’s in our hearts. If we’re really converted and yielded to God, we don’t want Egypt. We saw what it was and we don’t want it. We want God’s Kingdom. We may not do everything perfectly, but we’re striving for it. We want it and our mistakes are not mistakes of intent. Our mistakes are with the weaknesses we’re struggling against and the pressures around. But we’re striving and our eyes are set on the Kingdom. We want it and we want to be like God. This is fundamental to what conversion is all about.

Ezekiel 20:12, the Sabbath was given as a sign. It’s made plain that God’s Sabbaths are signs. They identify God. They identify that we serve the Creator God because the Sabbath harks back to the time of creation.

Verses 21-25, it’s made plain that Israel did not willingly obey God. They rebelled against Him. Every time they got the opportunity, they rebelled. I’ve made the point before.

After the Ten Commandments were given, Moses went up into the mountain for 40 days. He wasn’t up there 40 days because it took God that long to write the Ten Commandments with His finger. That wasn’t the problem. God could have zapped the Ten Commandments and had Moses back down in 40 minutes instead of 40 days. In fact, He could have saved Moses the trouble and sent an angel to bring down the Ten Commandments to them. If Moses had never left,

they would have never built the golden calf because Moses wouldn’t have let them, would he? Look what he did to the golden calf when he got back and found it.

God wasn’t going to let them stay in the golden-calf business because they were His Church. He was going to work with them. He had a job that spanned hundreds of years—many, many centuries and millennia. God had a purpose He was working out and He was going to use Israel. He wasn’t going to just let them go into the golden-calf business and forget all about it.

He brought Moses back, but He also let Moses stay gone long enough for the people to have the opportunity to do what was in their heart if they thought Moses was dead and gone and away from there. God wanted to find out what they would do. ‘Oh, for the good old days in Egypt.’ Somebody comes up with an idea and there they go.

There is a very important spiritual principle we have to think about because God is working with us and God looks on the heart. He is seeking to work with us in our hearts and minds. If our hearts and minds are really yielded to Him, other things will fall into place. We will do the other things because we are motivated from the heart, as opposed to doing the other things because somebody’s standing there ready to zap us if we don’t. We find that they didn’t willingly obey.

Ezekiel 20:24-25, “because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, profaned My Sabbaths, and their eyes were fixed on their fathers’ idols. Therefore I also gave them up to statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they could not live...” Some misunderstand and say, ‘See, God’s law is bad. God says He gave them statutes that weren’t good.’

Some Protestants like to point to this and say, ‘The Sabbath is bad; God even says He gave them bad laws. That’s why Christ had to come and do away with it. That’s why Christ came and nailed the law to the cross because the law was bad. It says so right here, doesn’t it? God gave them statutes that weren’t good and judgments whereby they couldn’t live. Boy, this really proves the Sabbath was done away!’ No, that’s not what it proves at all. Let’s read it in context. That’s always the key.

Verses 24-25, “because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, profaned My Sabbaths, and their eyes were fixed on their fathers’ idols. Therefore I also gave them

up to statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they could not live.”

Hold your place here, and let’s go back to Psalm 81:11-14. This is one you might cross-reference in your Bible. I have it written in the margin in my Bible.

Psalm 81:11-14, “But My people would not heed My voice, and Israel would have none of Me. So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, to walk in their own counsels. Oh, that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways! I would soon subdue their enemies, and turn My hand against their adversaries.”

‘If they had really yielded to Me, I would have taken care of their problems.’

Verse 12 KJV, but notice what He says, “So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust [margin, “or, the hardness of their hearts or imaginations”]: and they walked in their own counsels.”

“I gave them up to statutes that were not good.”

“So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart.” ‘I let them pursue things that seemed good to them.’

Acts 7:38-39, “This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles [the living law] to give to us, whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt...”

Interesting! This is the New Testament analysis! This is the application that I’ve just been making in Ezekiel, of treating the principles of the Exodus as a spiritual analogy. That’s not some idea that I came up with. That’s what Peter and Stephen and the others said. They did the same thing. They used it as a spiritual example. It was a literal historical account, but it was also a spiritual type.

Verses 39-43, “whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, saying to Aaron, “Make us gods to go before us; as for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned and gave them up to worship the hosts of heaven, as it is written in the book of the Prophets: “Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? Yes, you took up the tabernacle of Moloch,””

The point of Ezekiel 20:24-25 is that when Israel did not value and appreciate God’s righteous laws, He gave them over to do things that weren’t good. The statutes that weren’t good were not statutes that originated with God; they originated with the lusts and desires of the people—and God gave them up to do it. In other words, He allowed them to do it and to get the consequences of it.

Ezekiel 20:30, God is going to deal with them and He is going to say, “Therefore say to the house of Israel, “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Are you defiling yourselves in the manner of your fathers, and committing harlotry according to their abominations?’”” Do you do all these things?

Verse 31, “For when you offer your gifts and make your sons pass through the fire, you defile yourselves with all your idols, even to this day. So shall I be inquired of you, O house of Israel?”

We might point out that when it talks about, “defiling yourselves in the manner of your fathers, ?... For when you offer your gifts and make your sons pass through the fire,” they sacrificed children to the idols. We think that is horrible and, yet, we see in our nation a generation that has literally been sacrificed on the altar of materialism. Do you think that is less grievous in God’s sight? A generation has been sacrificed (been thrown away), been passed through the fires of a decadent, materialistic, selfish, convenience-oriented society of parents who don’t want to be bothered. Parents want to go out and pursue their own selfish interests and ambitions and are not centered there in terms of home and family.

We see the consequences. We see the devastation that has taken place. Now, we are into the generation who are the children of the generation sacrificed. We are seeing the spiraling, colossal problems that are just devastating our nation. It goes back to a set of values. We live in a very materialistic, self-centered, convenience-oriented society. People don’t want to sacrifice. They don’t want to give up anything and focus in on their responsibilities. There are some very strong parallels.

Verses 31-32, continuing, “...As I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘I will not be inquired of by you. What you have in your mind shall never be, when you say, “We will be like the Gentiles, like the families in other countries, serving wood and stone.””

In other words, 'We want to be just like everybody else; we are willing to be like all the other nations.' This is what Israel of old wanted to do. The attraction of the world around has always been the battle that God's people have had to face. If you go back to the book of Judges, you will find that's why God didn't immediately get rid of all the Canaanites out of the land. He wanted something there, in effect, for the people to have to make a choice.

Christ hasn't taken us out of the world and stuck us off somewhere in a little cave where we are totally isolated and insulated from the influences of the world. We have to daily reject the world and choose God. We're surrounded by this influence and this pull. It's a battle. That's the way we build character. How do you build your muscles? You build muscles by exercise and by pushing them against resistance. That's the way we build our spiritual character. We're resisting the world. God could have isolated us. He could have told His people to do what the Amish do, to create their own little society. Christ didn't tell His disciples to do that. He just simply didn't. That wasn't what God had in mind.

He talks about how they will go into captivity.

Verse 38, "I will purge the rebels from among you,"

Verse 43, "And there you shall remember your ways and all your doings with which you were defiled; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight because of all the evils that you have committed." They will come to repentance.

Ezekiel 21:2, "Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem, preach against the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel..."

Verse 26, "thus says the Lord God: 'Remove the turban [KJV, "diadem"], and take off the crown; nothing shall remain the same. Exalt the lowly, and abase the exalted.'"

The crown was taken off. There were two lines that came from Judah—Zerah and Perez. Judah had twin boys. One started to come out first and the scarlet thread was put around his wrist. But he withdrew his arm and the brother was born first. A breach was created because here was one who started to come out first, but he was not entirely born. He had the scarlet thread to identify him as firstborn, but then he wasn't the first-born. The other one, Perez, came out. Perez was the one that actually was totally born first. He was the one who came down through the birthright of the scepter promise. In other words, the birthright of the scepter promise is in the

family of Judah, not of Israel. Judah had the scepter promise, the promise of the line of kings. You might want to be aware of the scripture, one that is good to have written down.

1 Chronicles 5:2, "yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph's..." Judah had the scepter, the chief ruler; the line of kings came through Judah. But the birthright (material and national promise, wealth, prosperity, power) was Joseph's. That is clearly defined in 1 Chronicles 5:2. It is a good verse to clearly show that.

The line of Perez had continued down through King David and through the lines of David. The Zerah line—the descendants of Zerah, the royal family in Ireland—traced their descent back through the Trojan kings.

Now the crown was being taken off the Perez branch. It was going to exalt the branch that is low (the Zerah branch), the one that had the scarlet thread. The one that was high (Perez) is being put down; the one that was low is being raised up. But really it is reuniting because the daughter of the Perez branch was marrying the son of the Zerah branch. This is reuniting it.

"Remove the turban [diadem], take off the crown." We are going to transfer it from one branch of the tribe of Judah to the other branch of the tribe of Judah.

Verse 27, "Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! [Jerusalem to Tara, Tara to Scone, Scone to London] It shall no longer, until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him." —In other words, Jesus Christ.

In Ezekiel 22, we find the sins of the people characterized. It talks about violence, oppression of the defenseless, Sabbath breaking, sex sins, greed and extortion—all these various things.

Verses 2-3, the city sheds blood. It talks about the bloody city and all of the violence.

Ezekiel 22:7, "...they have oppressed the stranger; in you they have mistreated the fatherless and the widow." —Taking advantage of those who are not able to fend for themselves or who are at a disadvantage because of some minority status. Taking advantage of the fatherless and the widow is a very serious matter.

Verse 8, "You have despised My holy things and profaned My Sabbaths."

Verse 9, "...in your midst they commit lewdness." It goes on to all sorts of things.

Verses 10-13 even talk about adultery, incest and various problems of this sort. It talks about

violence and murder for hire. It talks about greed and things of this sort.

Verses 14-15, God says, 'You think I'm going to put up with this? I am going to scatter you among the nations and you will be dispersed.' The house of Israel is going to be dealt with.

Verses 25-28, "The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured people; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst. Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, nor have they made known the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood, to destroy people and to get dishonest gain. Her prophets plastered them with untempered mortar, seeing false visions, and divining lies for them,"

God indicts the three leadership elements of society. He indicts **the prophets, the priests and the princes**. Now let's identify them in modern parlance.

We've often talked about false prophets. Many times we have limited our concept of false prophets to identifying them with some of the television evangelists and radio preachers. We need to understand that while they are false prophets, they are only a tiny percentage and their impact on society is minimal overall.

The word "**prophet**" in the Hebrew language is "*nabiy*" and it means "one who announces or proclaims a message." It is a word that in our modern terminology **would best reflect the entire scope of the media**. They're the ones who have impact and are a very powerful segment of society. They're the ones accused of 'daubing with untempered mortar'; in other words, doing a whitewash job on what the other two have done. They have not really shown things clearly for what they are. They have not proclaimed the proper message. They kind of stick together and they have their approach. They have their line, so to speak, that they convey and people place credence in. God indicts the media, those who announce and proclaim to society. This would certainly include the religious media but also the secular false prophets—the whole gamut of media.

Next are the **priests** who **are the leaders of organized religion**. They're indicted for the fact that they haven't done their job. They should

have been teaching the people the difference between right and wrong and they haven't done it. They have tried to water down and do away with the law. They say the law is done away. They've hidden their eyes from God's Sabbath. They have so watered down and profaned that they haven't even taught the people the difference in terms of absolute right and wrong.

We have major Christian churches in this nation arguing over whether or not they should ordain homosexuals. That's incredible! Here they are claiming to be God's representatives and they're not spending their time indicting some of these things as a sin (for which God is going to send the nation into captivity). They're talking about whether or not they want to ordain them and perform marriages between them. Incredible! Absolutely incredible!

"Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy [They haven't taught people the difference between right and wrong], ... they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths." God indicts the media, those who announce and proclaim to the nation and those to whom the nation looks. He indicts the religious leadership, the leaders of organized religion who have molded and set the stage in that way.

Then God indicts the **princes**. The princes were those who controlled power and wealth in ancient times and they are the ones who control the power and the wealth today. These **would be the leaders of government and finance, the people who control the money and the governmental power**.

If you're going to look at it, what we have are the segments of society, the opinion molders: the media, the religious leadership and those who control the government—those who have the power in terms of government and wealth. He indicts each of these—the leadership, the princes, those who control the power and money—for being greedy and doing anything they can just to get dishonest gain. They misuse their power and their wealth. They are like wolves ravaging the prey. They are out for what they can get. We see some very strong indictments on three segments of society into which God divides the leadership. Their contributions are brought out.

In Ezekiel 23, God uses the illustration of whoredom to characterize the sins of Israel.

Verse 19, He describes the nation multiplying her harlotry.

Verse 38, He describes the nation profaning the Sabbath.

He defines them in the analogy of harlotry and, verse 40, of arraying themselves in that way.

The point is that physical action typified what Israel did spiritually. Instead of being a faithful wife seeking to please her husband (which is what should have been Israel's relationship to God), Israel began to go out and to seek out illicit relationships with other neighboring kings and other nations. Israel began to involve itself in illicit relationships as opposed to being faithful to the covenant she made with God, which is typified as a marriage covenant. She entered into these various arrangements. Israel is pictured as a harlot. God describes the things that characterize, and people identified with, a physical harlot. They looked down on that. That was not good. God said, 'You've done the same thing spiritually. You haven't been faithful to Me.' We have a view of how God views it and how it looks to God.

Ezekiel 24 deals with the bloody city, which is characteristic of Jerusalem and ultimately of the nation.

Ezekiel 25 is a prophecy against the Ammonites. They are going to be delivered to the men of the East for a possession. It is going to be interesting to see exactly what is going to happen. Ammon and Moab are in the area of Iraq and Jordan.

Verse 4, they are ultimately going to be delivered to the men of the East for a possession.

Amman is the capital of Jordan. It is going to be interesting.

Revelation 16:12-14, we read of armies that are going to mass on the River Euphrates, which is right there in modern-day Iraq. At the time of the Day of the Lord, they are going to finally be able to cross that river and they are going to come in. They are going to overflow into, at least, sections of Jordan and Iraq.

Ezekiel 26 deals with prophecies against Tyre.

In Ezekiel 27, the analogy that is drawn is of a great end-time commercial combine headquartered in Europe. If you read Ezekiel 27 and then go back and read Revelation 18, notice a little bit about what it talks about.

Ezekiel 27:29-30, "All who handle the oar, the mariners, all the pilots of the sea will come down from their ships and stand on the shore [land]...they shall cry bitterly and cast dust on their heads; they will roll about in ashes..."

Verses 32-35, "In their wailing for you they will take up a lamentation, and lament for you, 'What city is like Tyre, destroyed in the midst of the sea? When your wares went out by sea, you satisfied many people; you enriched the kings of

the earth with your many luxury goods and your merchandise. But when you are broken by the seas in the depths of the waters, your merchandise and the entire company will fall in your midst. All the inhabitants of the isles will be astonished at you; their kings will be greatly afraid, and their countenance will be troubled.'"

Revelation 18:2, "And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, !...'"

Verse 11, "And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore..."

Verses 12-13 then talk about all these various merchandise, all these various traders and all these things that came in.

Verse 15, "The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing..." The merchants would see these things.

Verse 17, "For in one hour such great riches came to nothing." Finally, it comes to nothing and the city is cast down.

Verse 19, "...For in one hour she is made desolate." If you read Ezekiel 27 and Revelation 18, you will see the parallel.

Tyre was a great commercial city, a great commercial capital located on the Mediterranean coast. It was destroyed by Alexander the Great a number of decades after Ezekiel wrote. The merchants of Tyre covered the whole Mediterranean. In fact, the city of Carthage in North Africa was settled by the people of Tyre; it was a colony of Tyre. Later, Carthage rose to such power as to challenge Rome. Rome and Carthage vied for the control of the Mediterranean world. Rome finally vanquished Carthage.

These were called the Punic Wars (if you remember your ancient history) because the land of Phut (Ezekiel 27:10, margin) in North Africa takes its name and goes back to the same root word from which "Phoenician" comes. These were the people of Carthage. They were a division of the Canaanites who were originally in Tyre and were later centered at Carthage, a great commercial capital.

The Romans devastated Carthage. When they finally defeated it, they forced the inhabitants either into slavery or pushed them down further into Africa. They plowed salt in the ground in Carthage to prevent it from ever being rebuilt there on the North African coast.

Tyre was a great commercial center. The Phoenicians were famous for all of this, and here was a great center, a great world market. It was a type of that final Babylon the Great. Much of the analogy in Revelation 18 is derived from Ezekiel 27. If you read the two, you get the same rhythm of scripture. It is clear that there is a relationship there.

In Ezekiel 28, we come to the prince of Tyre. This is talking about the ruler.

Ezekiel 28:12-15, ““Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre [The prince of Tyre was the human ruler. Who is the king? He is the one who is over the prince. What are we told of the king?], and say to him, “Thus says the Lord God: ‘You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: ... You were the anointed cherub who covers; I have established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.’””

Certainly, this is not talking about the human ruler of Tyre. This is talking about the one that we know as Satan the devil. He is called Lucifer in Isaiah 14. Here was an anointed cherub, one who had been in Eden, one in whom iniquity was found and was cast out of God’s government. He is the one who was the real ruler of Tyre (and Babylon and Egypt), the real ruler and god of this world.

What led to his downfall?

Verse 17, ““Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; ...”” Vanity! Pride led to his downfall. He was lifted up with pride and iniquity was found in him. It started out with pride, a self-centered attitude of pride and vanity that focused on the self and went on from there.

In Ezekiel 29, we find a prophecy against Egypt; an amazing prophecy.

Ezekiel 29:15, ““It shall be the lowliest of kingdoms; it shall never again exalt itself above the nations, for I will diminish them so that they will not rule over the nations anymore.”” Egypt was going to be abased and we find this is what happened.

Here was Egypt, a nation that had been a major power on the world scene for centuries and millennia. Ezekiel was writing in the sixth century B.C. Here we find, in the latter part of the sixth century B.C. (circa 591-569 B.C.), Ezekiel writing a prophecy that Egypt would cease to be

a major power. Now consider, by this time, Egypt had been a major empire on the world scene for almost 3,000 years. Egypt had been the dominant nation of the pre-flood world and the post-flood world. After the debacle at Babel (Genesis 11), Egypt again began to rise. Egypt had been a major power in the post-flood world all the way down until the time Nebuchadnezzar came on the scene. Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt and destroyed its power.

Since that time, Egypt never again was ruled by a native prince (Ezekiel 30:13). That’s been 2,500 years. The Babylonians ruled it, then the Persians and then the Greeks. Cleopatra, the ruler of Egypt, was Greek. She was a part of the dynasty that was descended from Alexander the Great’s general, Ptolemy. The Greeks ruled Egypt down to Cleopatra.

Then the Romans took over and ruled it as a Roman province, down through the time of the Romans. Then later the Eastern Roman Empire (the Byzantine Empire) ruled all the way down to the seventh century A.D. when finally the Arabs, having been converted to Islam, poured out of the Arabian Peninsula (what is now Saudi Arabia), overran Egypt, and it became part of an Arab Empire ruled from Damascus and later Bagdad.

The Turks conquered it and ruled it as a part of a Turkish Empire up until the late 1800s. The British finally set up Egypt, prior to World War I, as independent, but they were under the rule of the line of kings that weren’t Egyptian. They were Albanian in origin. They ruled up until Nassar overthrew King Farouk in 1953.

Talk about prophecy being a proof of the Bible! Was it a lucky guess? How would Ezekiel make a guess of a nation that had been a dominant player on the world scene for as long as history has been around and say it’s going to be conquered and will never again be a significant force on the world scene? This is one of the prophecies that is a proof of the Bible.

Ezekiel 30:13, ““...‘I will also destroy the idols, and cause the images to cease out of Noph [Ancient Memphis]; there shall no longer be princes from the land of Egypt; ...’”” Egypt had always been famous for their idols.

It’s interesting. When the Arabs came in from Saudi Arabia, one of the first things they did was get rid of the graven images. The Arab world (the Islamic religion) does not allow any sort of graven images. In fact, artwork is pretty much limited to geometric designs. They really discourage the use of any kind of statuary things

of that sort. How unlikely was it that Egypt was going to cease to be a place where they made images? There was no longer going to be a prince of Egypt in the land of Egypt, no longer a prince of native Egyptian stock. And it would be a base kingdom.

Verse 23, ““I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them throughout the countries.”” Most of the inhabitants of modern-day Egypt are not descendants of the ancient Egyptians. Most people in Egypt are Arab.

Just as a point of Middle Eastern history, the Arabs burst on the Middle Eastern scene and began to dominate the Middle East around 650 A.D. The Arabian Peninsula is the native area of the Arabs. They overran the rest of the Middle East, Egypt, North Africa, all the way across into Spain. They overran areas and migrated far and wide in the spread of Islam. They spread their influence far afield. The Arabs originated in the Arabian Peninsula. They are the descendants of Ishmael.

There were other people in some of these countries before the Arabs came. The people in Egypt today who are of native Egyptian stock are a very small minority. They are called “Copts.” The bulk of the ancient Egyptian stock was scattered. Interestingly enough, we find a group of people scattered throughout much of the world who call themselves Egyptians. We use the modern slang “gypsy,” which is simply derived from “Egyptian.” A slang spelling is what it goes back to.

Actually, if you trace it back, many of them were deported and taken into the area of India. It was from there that they spread out. They were known as “gypsies.” You basically could trace the gypsy migration back to an area of India, and this is where many of the Egyptians were settled when Nebuchadnezzar depopulated Egypt. He settled them on the eastern bounds of his empire, which stretched to the borders of India. That was where he settled many of this group of people.

It is just kind of an interesting “aside.” They were scattered and some remained. Those who remain are Copts. Interestingly enough, the Copts are not Muslim. They are members of what is called the Coptic Church, which is a branch of the Catholic Church in Egypt.

Ezekiel 32:11, the ultimate invasion of Egypt is brought out, “...“the sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon you.”” Babylon will ultimately invade Egypt. There are many interesting things in that regard.

I’d like to read a little bit of a column. I think it was Patrick Buchanan’s column. I don’t know how many of you saw it, but it kind of ties in with what’s going on in the Middle East. It ties in with some of this prophecy. I want to conclude here.

It says, “Even the President’s critics concede that in winning King Faud’s approval for United States forces in marshalling a global embargo and knitting together an Arab-American expeditionary force, George Bush’s first diplomat has been superb. We’ve had all the pleasure of seeing America’s best and greatest close an iron ring around Iraq. We find the President’s rhetoric has reached war pitch. Before an assembly of pentagon generals and admirals, Saddam Hussein has been called a liar, and we are told that should he achieve his goal of becoming a master of the Gulf, our job, our way of life, our own freedom is threatened.... Bush, this past Wednesday, directly compared Iraq to the Third Reich. A half-century ago our nation and the world paid dearly for appeasing an aggressor who should and could have been stopped. We are not going to make that same mistake. By using the Hitler analogy, Bush is virtually ruling out any negotiated settlement, for the modern-man Hitler is evil incarnate. Any leader who cuts a deal with him is guilty of another Munich, a fatal political charge. Is the Hitler analogy valid? Recall that Hitler, after annexing Austria and establishing a protectorate over Czechoslovakia, overran Poland, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Holland, France, Yugoslavia, Greece, the Baltic States, and drove 1,000 miles into the Soviet Union in two years. And Saddam, so far he’s managed to land-grab a tiny defenseless kingdom, not half the size of Denmark. Is Saddam a warlord of Hitlerian dimension or is he a Middle East thief, a Baghdad-bandit who stole Kuwait’s oil to sell it to us and get his bankrupt country out of debt?”

It goes on. “If Hitler is on the loose, where are the British, French, Spanish, Italian, German and Japanese troops to stand alongside the Eighty-Second Airborne to stop him? Why is everyone balking at upgrading the United Nation embargo into a blockade? The great men are talking about vacations; Congress hasn’t been called back to deal with the crisis that Bush says threatens not only our jobs but our way of life. The implications are clear. Here’s the point: if it comes to a shooting war, the United States is going to find itself, again, virtually without allies, except for a few British. And when we begin

dropping bombs on Arab towns and Arab troops, how long will our Arab allies stand beside us? It is now almost impossible for Bush to accept a Kuwait that is either a possession or vassal of Iraq. All this talk about 'standing up to Hitler' would be hurled back in his face at the next Democratic convention. If this embargo does not force Saddam to disgorge Kuwait, Bush will confront an alternative. Climb back publicly from the limb on which he has climbed so far out or take his country to war. But how is such a war to end? Who will keep them out after destroying Iraq's military regime and driving its army out of Kuwait? If the army is United States troops, will not those troops become targets of the same terrorists who picked off our Marines in Lebanon? Before Saddam goes down, he will take others with him. A United States attack could ignite an Arab civil war that could do for the throngs of the Middle East what Europe's World War I did for the throngs of Europe. Years ago an author called Britain's attack on the Suez 'The Lion's Last Roar.' Is this 'The Eagle's Last Scream'?"

It's kind of interesting because the situation in the Middle East is very volatile. We know the way the story is going to end. What we don't understand entirely is how is it going to get from here to there. It is going to culminate with a King of the South, with the Arabs getting their act together for the first time in probably 700 years in terms of uniting behind one individual who is going to push at a King of the North—a revived United States of Europe—the Beast power. The King of the North is going to retaliate by a blitzkrieg attack into the Middle East. The United States will have already "gone down the drain" prior to that time.

How are we going to see what is going to result in an American humiliation and Arab nationalism being stirred up to the fact that the Arabs are finally ready to unite, however briefly, behind one individual and are going to push at Europe? How is this going to trigger an attack on the United States and Britain, the modern state of Israel in the Middle East, and all of these things? Well, some of the details remain to be filled in. The Bible draws the picture as it stands at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. We look on a world scene and we see things today. We see the pictures converging, but there are many things to happen between now and then. We don't see exactly how all of it is going to converge. We might speculate and guess. Patrick Buchanan has

some speculations, which may play a factor. We will have to wait and see.

The next Bible study will end up our series on the book of Ezekiel. I hope that it will have been helpful in getting a little more insight into some of the prophecies that relate to our time and the time that's ahead of us.

Bible Study # 57
September 11, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Major Prophets Series—Ezekiel 33—48

This evening we **are concluding the book of Ezekiel. We are covering chapters 33—48.**

This set of chapters contains two very key prophetic chapters (chapters 37 and 38) that we want to comment on. These are chapters that are almost totally misunderstood; frankly, if you look at the various commentaries and things, they are basically not understood by anyone.

Ezekiel 37 is a vision of the valley of dry bones. Virtually none of the commentators understand because it is only when you put it together with Romans 11 and Revelation 20 that we can understand the time setting. Ezekiel 37 describes the event, but it doesn't explain *when*. You have to go elsewhere in the Scriptures to understand when it happens. In fact, *when* is not really made plain until you come to the New Testament. It then makes it plain that Ezekiel 37 can only be referring to the period that we call the Great White Throne Judgment period.

Ezekiel 38 and 39 are also misapplied by virtually all of the commentators. This event happens after the Millennium has started, not prior to the beginning of the Millennium. In times past, many of the Fundamentalist preachers who like to comment on prophecy have tried to use Ezekiel 38 and 39 to preach about a war between the United States and Russia. They could identify that the Soviet Union is made reference to and constitutes portions of this prophecy. And that is true.

We are going to see that nations that make up so much of the Soviet Union, China and that area are certainly referred to in Ezekiel 38 and 39. Many of these commentators have made a big deal of the fact that there was going to be a big war between Russia and the United States. You don't hear them emphasizing that quite so much now because of the change in what is going on in the world. One of the reasons we never taught that was because we correctly understood the time element.

In Ezekiel 38, we're going to notice four key verses that make plain the time element. When you understand the time element, then you understand what this prophecy is talking about. When we simply take it at face value, the time setting is very clear.

Ezekiel 40—48 is a section seldom commented on. It presents a problem particularly to many of

the commentators and various ones because there is a clear teaching in Ezekiel 40—48 that there is going to be a functioning Levitical priesthood, a temple and sacrifices during the Millennium. That may seem startling to some, but we are going to see that as we go through.

While some of the details of this section may not be completely understood at this time, it is clear that God is going to deal with the physical nation of Israel at the beginning of the Millennium to orient them physically to the law and to the covenant. The sacrifices will, evidently, serve as a schoolmaster for them (KJV, Galatians 3:24), as it was supposed to do for their forefathers.

It's kind of interesting. Even Jews "scratch their heads" when it comes to Ezekiel 40—48 because of some of the details that are mentioned. The *Jewish Commentary* dates the vision of Ezekiel 40—48 as the Day of Atonement, which began a Jubilee year. Whether that is true or not, the Bible doesn't say, but it certainly would be a very appropriate time for such a vision. The Jews solve their problems with this particular section by saying that only the prophet Elijah (who will usher the ultimate redemption) will elucidate these chapters. That is their comment on it. What they don't understand, they say the prophet Elijah will explain.

The reason they say the prophet Elijah is because of what it says in the end of the book of Malachi.

Malachi 4:5-6, "Behold, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

The Jews anticipate the fact that there will be one who comes fulfilling the role of the prophet Elijah and preparing the way for the Messiah. The issues that they don't understand, they say they will wait until Elijah comes and he will explain it. And then they pass on to something else.

There's quite a bit of what they don't know and have failed to recognize. They failed to recognize Elijah (John the Baptist) when he came and they failed to recognize the Messiah he heralded. They failed to recognize God's Work today that was raised up through Mr. Herbert Armstrong and they won't really grasp it until the time when the Messiah does come the second time.

Zechariah 12:10, we read, "...then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son,

and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.” They will repent. Then it will dawn on them what they did and Who this is who has come to save them from destruction. Then, at that point, things will be resolved.

Let’s pick it up this evening in Ezekiel 33. Ezekiel sets the stage, explaining the responsibility of the watchman. I’ve commented before on the symbolism of the watchman. The watchman is the one who was appointed to watch and to see what was going on. He was to stand up on the wall, to look and observe and sound the warning. Ezekiel was told throughout the book that he was being established as a watchman for the house of Israel.

We’ve already gone through the fact that Ezekiel did not fulfill that role in his day because Ezekiel did not personally go to all these various locations. Ezekiel did not do those things and there is no way he could have. The job of taking Ezekiel’s message to those for whom it was intended was reserved for our time and our day.

He talks about the role of the watchman.

Ezekiel 33:7, “So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel;” I went into quite a bit of that last time and the fact that Ezekiel did not go to the house of Israel in person. But his message has been preserved, and God raised up a work to go to the house of Israel. This was a commission that Mr. Herbert Armstrong very much understood. That’s why God revealed to him very, very early in the beginning of his conversion where the house of Israel was.

This was knowledge that the Sardis Church did not have and did not understand. Even though the leader of the Sardis Church—the Church that we identify as the Sardis era or stage in the progression of God’s Church described in Revelation 3:1-6—acknowledged in a letter to Mr. Herbert Armstrong (a letter that is reproduced in his autobiography) that this information (the identity of Israel) was true. But the leader refused to preach it for fear that everybody wouldn’t go along with it or accept it.

The point is that you can’t take a message to the house of Israel if you don’t know where the house of Israel is. God made plain the identity of the house of Israel. That was one of the things that He revealed to Mr. Herbert Armstrong very early in the very beginning of his conversion. This message began to be taken and proclaimed.

Verses 8-9, God says in terms of the message to the watchman, “When I say to the wicked, “O

wicked man, you shall surely die!” and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.”

I think it is important for us to realize as individuals and as a Church that we have a responsibility for which God will hold us accountable. There are things that are going to happen to this nation. It is important that we put our hearts into the accomplishment and the fulfillment of the work that God has set before us because we are ultimately responsible for warning. We are not responsible for results because we can’t control someone else’s results. This is important just in terms of the principle of recognizing responsibility.

Some people find themselves perpetually frustrated because they can’t get others to respond in the way they want them to. This can be in their families or in various circumstances of human relations. God makes it plain that we are responsible for doing our part, but we are not responsible for how someone else responds to what we have done. We can’t control that. The watchman is responsible for delivering the message, but he is not responsible for the response.

What was Ezekiel commissioned to do?

Verse 7, Ezekiel was commissioned as a watchman to the house of Israel. He was not sent to the house of Judah but Israel. Historically, Ezekiel never delivered the message to the people for whom it was intended. This was something that began to be done by Mr. Herbert Armstrong in our day, back in the 1930s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s and on up into the 80s. It is the work of God that continues right on down until now. The job of taking the message of God to the world is a job for us today because Ezekiel never delivered that message. That message was preserved. It was preserved for a warning for our time, the end time.

People are going to have a certain attitude towards this work.

Verse 30, it is described, “As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, “Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord.””

I am convinced that there are some things that have yet to happen in terms of the impact of this

work. God is going to open the appropriate doors at the appropriate time. What we have to be doing is to make sure that we are doing our part. God is going to accomplish these things. Even if He has to raise up stones to do it, He would (Luke 3:8), but He has given us the opportunity to be His instruments. If we fail to do our part, we're not going to prevent God from accomplishing what He purposed (Isaiah 46:10-11).

Revelation 3:11, we will simply have failed to heed the warning, "...that no one may take your crown." God has called us to do His work. He gives us the opportunity to have a part of it, and if we don't do it, He will get it done. But woe be to us if we don't carry out the responsibility we have.

He speaks of a time when we are going to be the talk of the land. I think there is going to come a time, prior to the on-set of the tribulation, when the message is going to really go forth in greater power, and it's going to be the talk of the land.

Ezekiel 33:31-32, "So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them."

This has partially been fulfilled. There were a lot of people who listened to Mr. Herbert Armstrong and said, 'Oh boy, I like to hear that old man; I've listened to him for 30 years.' They never did anything he said, but they liked to hear him. They liked to read what he wrote. It's like somebody singing a pleasant song and has a nice voice. They say, 'That's a nice program,' but they don't act on it. They don't do anything with it.

The time is going to come when we are going to be even more talked about. It talks about the fact that everything is going to be "abuzz." We're going to be the subject of a lot of conversation. But, for the most part, people are not really going to be doing anything. They'll be excited about it in certain ways. It will have their interest and attention but not in a way that they are going to act on it.

Verse 33, "And when this comes to pass—surely it will come—then they will know that a prophet has been among them."

That is very much the case. The time is going to come when the whole world is going to recognize that Mr. Herbert Armstrong really was

God's true servant. The basic content of the booklets that he wrote, *Who is the Beast?* and *The United States and Britain in Prophecy* were written in the 1930s. Actually, he began writing on the subject even in the 1920s. Some of those were first published in the 1930s. I have seen a copy of a 1935 magazine that had the chart on "Who is the Beast?" It was the exact same chart and layout that's in our booklet today. It was hand drawn on a mimeograph stencil.

I went through and I checked and compared it; there is only one difference. You know what it is? It's where it says the sixth head. If you will look in our modern booklet, Garibaldi's reunification of Italy culminating in Mussolini is dated from 1870 to 1945 with the collapse of Mussolini. In the 1935 magazine, it had all of that except it didn't have the date "1945." That was ten years in the future. It had "1870-19__" because we didn't know the year when the sixth head was going to end. That is the only difference. Ten years later he could fill in the year. That is the only change that's been made in the chart.

The point is that the core information of *The United States and Britain in Prophecy* was published back in the 1930s in some of the very first magazines that came out. It was information that is the heart and core of a lot of what Ezekiel has to say.

"And when this comes to pass—surely it will come—then they will know that a prophet has been among them." They are not entirely acknowledging that yet. Though, interestingly enough, as we begin the Feast of Tabernacles after sunset on October 3, that will not only see the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles, it's also going to see the beginning of the new unified Germany. They are uniting October 3. Interesting! It was a year ago at the Feast that the wall began to come down. Remember that? How much has happened in the year!

Remember a year ago they were interviewing all the experts and they were saying, 'This doesn't mean that Germany will reunify; this doesn't mean that at all. And if it does, it is far off—maybe somewhere after the year 2000 if possible—maybe 10, 12, 15, 20 years is the possibility, but most of the experts don't think it will happen at all.' A year later and it's done. Now who were the experts?

I can show you whole magazines of articles Mr. Herbert Armstrong wrote that go way back. Some of you have copies of them. Who were the experts? Well, the time is going to come when

they are going to know that God's message has been proclaimed.

In Ezekiel 34, we have an indictment to the leadership of the land.

Verses 1-10 show that those responsible for overseeing the people of Israel have been motivated by personal greed and have not properly carried out their responsibility. It says, "the shepherds of Israel." We think of that sometimes in the sense of "pastor" because the word for "shepherd" and "pastor" are the same word. But the "shepherds of Israel" can also refer in the national sense as well. Certainly, here "the shepherds of Israel" would refer to the leaders of Israel.

Ezekiel 34:31, Israel is described as the sheep of God's pasture, "'You are My flock, the flock of My pasture;'" God says, 'This is My flock, My sheep.'

The shepherds are those who are supposed to attend the sheep. God indicts the leadership of the land.

Verse 2, "... 'Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock?'" They have not given help to those who needed it.

Verse 4, "...but with force and cruelty you have ruled them."

Verses 5-6, "'So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them.'"

Verse 8, "...because there was no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock'..."

Verses 10-12, God is going to deal with the shepherds. He is going to seek out His sheep.

Verse 13, "'And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country.'"

Verses 23-24, "'I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.'"

If you go through the chapter and check the context, it is clear that the main emphasis is national Israel, God's people, nationally—Israel. His sheep, nationally, are scattered among the

nations. God is going to regather His sheep. This time He says, 'You know, the shepherds have not been faithful shepherds, but I know one I can depend on to properly shepherd My sheep because he was a good shepherd.' It's interesting the way God prepared David to be king over all of Israel in Tomorrow's World. What training did God give David before He made him king? He made him a shepherd! That's important to understand because that tells us the concept God has as far as how He wants His government administered.

David learned how to administer God's government by being a shepherd. It taught him many things. The sheep need to be protected. There was a time for action, decisiveness, for boldness. They needed to be nurtured, guided and dealt with. You don't deal with sheep in a harsh cruel way. You don't go around just knocking sheep around. There may be lions and bears that need to be knocked around. David wasn't averse to doing that (1 Samuel 17:34-36). You have to deal with sheep in one way and goats another. There's a difference.

God likens His people to sheep because sheep will follow. Goats don't have the same proclivity; goats tend to want to go their own way. They have to be dealt with a little differently. God compares His people to sheep because they are seeking to follow the Shepherd. If we're not seeking to follow the Shepherd, then there's a question raised as to whether we're God's sheep. Christ said, 'My sheep hear My voice' (John 10:3-4).

Ezekiel 34 indicts the shepherds of Israel, those who were responsible for tending God's flock. He says, 'You haven't done a good job. You haven't been faithful in tending My flock. You've been greedy and selfish and out to take care of yourself. You've allowed My sheep to be scattered. I am going to regather them and I'm going to set a shepherd over them who will take care of them.' King David, resurrected, is going to be king over all of Israel in Tomorrow's World.

Verses 23-24 clearly show who the national leader of Israel is going to be in Tomorrow's World.

Ezekiel 35:2, "'Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir and prophesy against it...'"

Verse 15, Mount Seir is a symbol of the Edomites.

Verse 3, "... 'I will stretch out my hand against you, and make you most desolate...'" Mount Seir is going to be made desolate. We find there are reasons for that as it talks about the things

that are going to happen. This describes both events of past history and, I think, events that we are going to see in the time ahead of us.

In Ezekiel 36, we focus in on events in the land of Israel when God regathers Israel.

Ezekiel 36:19, “So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds.”

Verse 24, “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land.” This is after the return of the Messiah.

Verses 25-28, “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people and I will be your God.”

This is a section that has been frequently misunderstood because most of those who claim to preach the word of God do not understand the identity of modern Israel. When they read of “Israel,” they think simply of the nation of the Jews in the Middle East—the nation that calls itself “Israel” today. Many of them focused in on this and said, ‘This prophecy has been fulfilled. God has gathered Israel out of the nations.’

“Gather you out of all countries and bring you into your own land.” They claim that the founding of the modern state of Israel was the fulfillment of that. That’s not true. That was not the regathering of the house of Israel. That was the regathering of the house of Judah. The regathering of the house of Judah is prophesied elsewhere. It’s prophesied in Zechariah 8, among other places.

The proof that Ezekiel 36 is not talking about Judah is the fact that in verses 26-28, it tells that when God brings *Israel* out of the nations and brings them back, He is going to convert them. ‘I am going to put a new heart in you and a new spirit. I am going to put My Spirit in you. I will convert you.’ Now the modern nation of the Jews is certainly not a converted nation. They don’t claim to be. Less than half of them are observant Jews; the other half are not even doing that much. We have a description here of conversion. To take these scriptures in Ezekiel 36 and try to apply it to the modern state of

Israel is to take it out of its context. That’s not true.

Verses 33-34, they will pick out certain verses like, “‘...‘ruins will be rebuilt. The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate.’” They say, ‘That’s what they are doing over in Israel now; they are going in and irrigating some of the desert area.’ They may be doing that, but this isn’t the prophecy of that. This is talking about something else.

Verse 36, “Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the Lord, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I, the Lord, have spoken it, I will do it.”

Verse 38, “Like a flock offered as holy sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem on its feast days, so shall the ruined cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they shall know that I am the Lord.” This is prophecy of yet future events.

Ezekiel 37:1, “The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones.” Here were these dry bones.

Verses 4-7, “Again He said to me. ‘Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, “O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: ‘Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.’” So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone.’”

You’ve heard the song, “the leg bone connected to the hip bone.” Well, bones came together, bone to bone—all the bones. Ezekiel sees this in a vision. He looks down and at first all he sees is like a giant graveyard. He sees all these bones lying out there, and it’s not people. It’s like you would unearth a giant graveyard. He makes a prophecy. All of a sudden, these bones are rattling and shaking; all these bones are coming together bone to bone—everyone connecting up.

Verse 8, then He says, “Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them.” All of a sudden, where had been a graveyard, now it looked like a valley of corpses. There’s no breath. Everything’s dead.

Verses 9-10, “Then He said to me, ‘Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Come from

the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.”” So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.” A great multitude, a gigantic number of people stood up alive.

Verses 11-12, “Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, “Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!” Therefore prophesy and say to them, “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.’”””

Here is a resurrection, but it is a physical resurrection to flesh and blood life. Here are people who are resurrected to physical life. They are brought up out of their graves and brought back to the land of Israel.

Verse 13, after this occurs, “““Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves.””” Here is a group of people who were not converted prior to the time of their death. These are not those who were Christ’s at His coming (1 Corinthians 15:23). They are going to know that God is God after He’s opened their graves and brought them up. Here are people who are not going to learn the truth until after the resurrection.

Verse 14, “““I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it,’ says the Lord.”””

It’s going to be the time when Judah and Israel will be joined together.

Verses 16-17, ““As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: “For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.” Then take another stick and write on it, “For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions.” Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand.””

It’s going to be a time when Judah and Israel will be joined back together. There are those who want to say the ten tribes don’t exist anymore, that they are among the Jews. Well, according to Ezekiel 37:16-17, Judah and Israel are not going to be reunited until after the resurrection. That’s not going to occur until afterwards. Now, if the resurrection has already occurred, then I think it would have made a little bit of a “splash” with all the bones of the whole house of Israel coming together and this gigantic multitude standing up in a great graveyard somewhere. I think that

would have been hard to have happened without somebody hearing it, so I don’t think that’s happened yet.

Verses 16-17 make plain when it’s going to happen.

Verse 24 makes plain that it’s the time when David is going to be king over them.

Verse 24, ““David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them.””

Ezekiel makes plain that God will resurrect to a physical life those who have not had their chance for salvation and give them a chance for salvation. The time setting is the White Throne Judgment after the Millennium.

Verses 12-13, it says, “““...I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord, ...”””

Hold your place there in Ezekiel and let’s notice Romans 11.

Romans 11:1-2, “I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew.”

Verses 25-26 (the last part of the verse), “...hardening [KJV, “blindness”] in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, ...” There’s a future day of salvation. There is a time when all Israel will be saved. Right now they are blinded. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew.

Ezekiel 37:11, “““Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!”””

‘Our hope is over with. We don’t have any hope.’ Here it describes a people for whom it, seemingly, is all over with. They are dead. They are in the grave. Their hope is lost. God says, ‘No, I am going to open your graves and bring you out of the graves. Then I am going to bring you to the land of Israel. Then I am going to let you know the truth.’

Romans 11:2, “God has not cast away His people that He foreknew.”

Verse 26, “...all Israel will be saved, ...” When you put Romans 11 together with Ezekiel 37, the event of which He is speaking is plain. And when you put that together with Revelation 20, you get the time setting.

Revelation 20:6, “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with

Him a thousand years.” Those who are in the first resurrection are blessed and holy. They are going to rule and reign with Christ for a thousand years.

Verse 5, “But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.” Those who were Christ’s at His coming are blessed and holy. They are going to be in the first resurrection. They are going to rule and reign with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead doesn’t live until after the thousand years are over. What about the rest of the dead?

Verse 12, “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life.”

Verse 13, we find that whether these people were buried in the sea or whether they were buried in graves, wherever they were, they came up. Nobody is buried somewhere that God can’t find them, even if they may be in an unmarked grave.

I think we have a few here who were on our Washington trip. While we were there, we went to Arlington Cemetery. There was row after row—thousands of graves—and one of the graves that we saw was the tomb of the “Unknown Soldier.” There is an inscription that says, “Here lies the Unknown Soldier, known but to God.” —A nameless young man who died somewhere sometime during the course of World War II or World War I or the various wars in which the nation has been involved. A young man who was unable to be identified is buried there. That’s right, but God does know.

There are millions and billions of graves that have long since been lost on the face of this earth that are known but to God. God does know and God does remember.

Verse 12, “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God [Those whose graves have been marked and preserved, for those whom monuments have been erected and their graves have been known for hundreds and maybe thousands of years, and for those whose remains have been lost and whose memory is long since gone—all of them are going to stand before God.], and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.” This is the time spoken of in Ezekiel 37.

We could go to Matthew 12:41 where Christ talked about the men of Nineveh rising in the judgment with this generation. There is going to

come a time when all the dead, small and great, are going to be judged.

Acts 10:34, “...God shows no partiality.” KJV, “...God is not a respecter of persons...” Because God tells us He is not a respecter of persons, if He is going to give all Israel a chance to be saved, then He is also going to give all mankind a chance to be saved.

Christ made that plain in Matthew 12:41 when He talked about the men of Nineveh standing in the judgment with this generation. Matthew 10:15, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah and Matthew 12:42, the queen of the South are going to rise up in the judgment with this generation—all the dead small and great. You have to put these things together with Ezekiel 37 to understand the time setting. If we just take it literally for what it says, it makes the time setting that we have very plain.

Ezekiel 38:1-2, “Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him.’”

It has been recognized by many commentators that Magog was the ancestor of the Mongol peoples, the Asiatic groupings of people. Recently, a lot of attention has been paid to the fact that the Soviet Union is comprised of many groupings of people. There are actually three branches of Russians: The Great Russians, the Little Russians and the White Russians. There is White Russia or Belorussia, as it is sometimes called. The Ukrainians will sometimes use the term “Little Russia.” Then there are those who are called Great Russia, which is Russia proper. There are actually two branches of the Great Russians: the Moscow branch and the Talalsk branch, which are designated here by Meshech and Tubal. What we have is a reference to a group of people that include many of the Russians and Mongol peoples.

Verses 3-5, “and say, “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet...’”

They are allied with them. The KJV and NKJV render it “Persia, Ethiopia and Libya.” Ethiopia and Libya are both interpretations. The names in Hebrew are simply Cush and Put. Cush frequently refers to Ethiopia. The Ethiopians are

descended from Cush. But there are two branches of Cushites: an Eastern branch and a Western branch. The context clearly shows that it refers to the Eastern branch of the Cushites and Putites.

The Eastern Cushites are in the area of Northern India. That is why you find the Hindu Kush Mountain range there. There was quite a bit of traffic between India and Egypt of ancient date. The religion of India, the sacred cow and all of this, derived from the religion of Egypt. The worship of the golden calf and all this sort of thing derived from Egypt. Even the so-called Gypsy people migrated to India from Egypt. The term “Gypsy” comes from “Egyptian.” That went back in antiquity. There were Eastern and Western Cushites. The Western Cushites are in the area of Ethiopia; the Eastern Cushites are in the area of Northern India.

Again, there is an Eastern and Western branch of Put. Most of Central and South Africa trace descent back to Put. Also, the people of Southern India trace descent back to Put. The ruling class in Southern India was called “rajput,” which literally meant “the ruler over Put.”

Persia certainly could refer to the area of Iran as some of the Persian people.

Verse 6, “Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north....” Togarmah would refer to some of the area up in Siberia. Gomer basically refers to the area of Indo-China, perhaps some of the area of Tibet and down into Korea. That area would include Gomer. What we have is clearly a conglomeration of people, basically an Asiatic alliance—a grouping that would be China, India, Indo-China and much of Russia.

We’re not the only ones who can figure out where most of these identifications are. Much of this is historical, and many of the commentators have understood some of this, as to whom some of these peoples are that we are talking about. They looked at that and said, ‘Russia and China and all that area—sounds like the communists are going to take over the whole East and are going to come and invade Israel [which they, of course, identify with the modern Jewish state].’ Then later on it talks about fire being sent on Magog, so they say, ‘There is going to be a great nuclear war and Russia is going to get defeated.’ They have tried to identify this with Armageddon and various things.

This is a great Eastern conglomerate of peoples that would include China, India and much of what is now the Soviet Union. But notice the time setting.

Verses 8-12, “‘After many days you will be visited. In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely. You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you.’ Thus says the Lord God: ‘On that day it shall come to pass that thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan: You will say, “I will go up against a land of unwallled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwells safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and have neither bars nor gates”— to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places that are again inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land.”’”

This is a time when God’s people will dwell safely. The land of Israel is called the land of unwallled villages. They are dwelling without walls, having neither bars nor gates.

I am going to tell you something; that’s not at all descriptive of modern-day state of Israel. They are certainly not a land of unwallled villages and if there is anybody who is prepared for war, they are. They’re stocked up on all the modern weapons and armaments. They are anything but an unwallled village.

The time setting is very clear. It’s talking about the time after the beginning of the Millennium—a time after Israel has been regathered from the nations and has begun to prosper. It is a time when Israel is dwelling safely and at peace in their unwallled villages. There’s no outward evidence of armaments of protection. There are not even locks on the doors.

Can you imagine not even having to put locks on the doors? No keys! The job of locksmith is going to be phased out in the early part of the Millennium. It’s not a job that can be phased out today. What if no one ever broke the eighth commandment and nobody would steal? If you lived in a society where there’s no stealing, what would you need locks for? You could leave something anywhere you wanted to, and nobody would take it because it didn’t belong to him—unless he thought you lost it and was going to bring it back to you. It is descriptive of a society that is a total contrast to our society.

Some of you grew up, as I did, in some of the rural areas in a time when we were virtually a land of unwallled villages. I remember as a kid

growing up that the lock on our front door didn't work. I don't know when my parents finally got it repaired, but I never remember it working all the time I was growing up. If somebody wanted to walk in, I guess they could have—the lock never worked. We never worried about it, never gave any thought to it. We weren't unique in that. For a lot of you, the most secure lock you had was the little hook and eye on the screen door. That was more to keep the cat and dog out.

It is a situation that is a total contrast to our society today. It is a time when Israel is regathered and the land is prospering and blooming. What we are looking at is a period after the beginning of the Millennium because when Christ comes back, the government of God is not just instantly spread over the whole earth. The first thing He is going to do is regather Israel. You have to start somewhere.

Some of the prophecies we went through back in Isaiah show that, at the very beginning, certain areas (for instance down in East Africa) are going to send up emissaries and are going to want God's government extended to them. It will. But in some of these other areas, it's going to take a little while.

Now, here's a case where some who have gone through the devastation of the events that accompany the return of Christ, two or three years into the Millennium, are going to hear about the prosperity that is beginning to take place. They are going to decide that they are going to come down and take it. They will say, 'Those people are defenseless and we are just going to come down there and get it.' The pendulum swing of human nature!

It's interesting what we have now, particularly in the Soviet Union. There was the attempt toward atheistic communism that has proven to be "the god that failed." There is now the beginning of a swing back and there may very well be some sort of an alliance with Europe. I think it's going to be interesting to view the role of the pope.

Are you aware that for the last several years, Pope John Paul talks weekly with both President Bush and President Gorbachev? He has weekly conversations with them. He talks with Mr. Gorbachev in the Russian language and with President Bush in English because he is multi-lingual. There's no need for translators. It's a one-on-one conversation; it's private phone conversations.

A year ago when all the upheaval was going on in Europe, he was on the phone for hours every day with Gorbachev discussing the situation.

There was an article in *U.S. News & World Report* that went into a little bit of the background on that. The pope played a very important role in calming the situation in Lithuania. When Gorbachev was having all the upheaval, you noticed how everything settled down in Lithuania? Remember back when it looked like Russia was almost at the point of civil war. Things kind of settled down, and you didn't hear anything about Lithuania. You know who settled it down? The pope did. You see, Lithuanians are Catholic. All he had to do was put in a call to the Catholic archbishop of Lithuania and tell him what was going to be done in Lithuania. All of a sudden, things settled down in Lithuania. There's a lot that goes on behind the scenes. It was an interesting little article in *U.S. News & World Report* several weeks ago.

The point is that now there is a swing, and I think it's going to be interesting to see the things that are going to happen in the Soviet Union. But you will see there is going to be another pendulum swing because as they come into an orbit more aligned with Western Europe, once again they are going to realize they've "been had."

Read the book of Revelation and find the ten kings who give their power to the beast. When they realize they've "been had," it says they are going to hate the whore and are going to turn on her and make her desolate. You read it in Revelation 17:16. The pendulum swings back and here are people who are embittered about the swing back. This mentality is going to lead to this invasion.

The point is finally going to get across. They are going to come face to face with the true God. The time setting is shown if you just read Ezekiel 38 and take it literally for what it says.

Ezekiel 39:2 KJV, "and I will turn you back, and leave but the sixth part of you, and will cause you to come up from the north parts, and will bring you upon the mountains of Israel..." It shows that only a sixth part of this army is going to survive the invasion. This small portion will be left to go back and bring the facts back to the "bunch" at home.

The population at the beginning of the Millennium will have been drastically reduced, but that is going to serve its purpose because most of humanity is going to be dealt with after a thousand years of preparation. The population of these various nations at the beginning of the Millennium is going to be very small, just a handful, but that's really the best way to deal

with it. It's best to start with a small nucleus to begin to build; then you have a thousand years to build it the right way and get prepared to handle the greatest population explosion in man's history. You have time to prepare.

You start with a small group. You can educate them and you can build. The families expand. The earth and its resources have time to rest, to rejuvenate and then it comes together. There are lessons that have to be learned and God allows those lessons to be learned. God has a plan and an overview. He is working toward a conclusion and there is logic and simplicity to God's plan.

Verse 12, "'For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them, in order to cleanse the land.'" It's going to be a mammoth job. The physical people of Israel are going to be left there trying to clean it up. It's going to take a long time to clean up everything. While they are out tending to all of this, they are going to be reminded of what happens if you rebel against God. It's not a really smart thing, and this will help to impress it on them.

Verses 21-24, the consequence of this, "'I will set My glory among the nations; all the nations shall see My judgment which I have executed, and My hand which I have laid on them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day forward. The Gentiles shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity; because they were unfaithful to Me, therefore I hid My face from them. I gave them into the hand of their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I have dealt with them, and hidden My face from them.'"

Verses 28-29, "'then they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their own land, and left none of them captive any longer. And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,'" says the Lord God."

Israel is going to learn this and the nations around are going to learn this. What lesson will the surviving Gentiles learn from all this? They are going to learn that the God of Israel is the true God and that Israel went into captivity because of transgressing God's laws.

Ezekiel 40—48 describe the topography of Israel after Christ returns. The time setting of the city and the temple is described.

Ezekiel 43:5-9, "The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the temple. Then I heard

Him speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me. And He said to me, 'Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. No more shall the house of Israel defile My holy name, they nor their kings, by their harlotry or with the carcasses of their kings on their high places. When they set their threshold by My threshold, and their doorpost by My doorpost, with a wall between them and Me, they defiled My Holy name by the abominations which they committed; therefore I have consumed them in My anger. Now let them put their harlotry and the carcasses of their kings far away from Me, and I will dwell in their midst forever.'"

It is a time when His throne will be there and 'I will dwell in the midst of the house of Israel forever.' It is a time when they will no more defile God's holy name. What we are looking at is a future time, a time that will only occur after the coming of the Messiah. We see the time setting for these chapters—it is a prophecy.

Let's notice that one of the problems that the commentators have is that the description of the temple in Ezekiel 40—48 differs from Solomon's temple. It is not an exact description of Solomon's temple. It's clear that Solomon's temple was not exactly like the one described here. And the temple of Zerubbabel /Herod were not exactly like this. Some of the commentators really "scratch their heads" and try to figure out which temple Ezekiel was describing. The point is that he wasn't describing any of the above. He was describing the temple that is going to be built after the return of Christ. The reason they don't have one like that is because Christ hasn't returned yet and it hasn't been built. We have to look at it in terms of the time setting.

Now there are similarities. Some of the commentators want to go back and say there are discrepancies in what Ezekiel says and in what we read back in Kings or Chronicles in terms of Solomon's temple. They are not discrepancies. Ezekiel is not describing Solomon's temple. He is describing the temple that the Messiah is going to build after His return. It's a time when, Ezekiel 43:7, the Messiah will dwell in the midst of Israel forever and His throne will be there. Ezekiel is writing at a time when Solomon's temple was on the verge of being destroyed. Ezekiel knew what Solomon's temple looked like. He wasn't trying to describe that. He was talking about something future.

Let's notice that there will be sacrifices offered and a functioning Levitical priesthood during this time.

Ezekiel 40:38-39, "There was a chamber and its entrance by the gateposts of the gateway, where they washed the burnt offering. In the vestibule of the gateway were two tables on this side and two tables on that side, on which to lay the burnt offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering."

Verses 45-46, "Then he said to me, 'This chamber which faces south is for the priests who have charge of the temple. The chamber which faces north is for the priests who have charge of the altar; these are the sons of Zadok, from the sons of Levi, who come near the Lord to minister to Him.'" These verses clearly show that there will be a functioning Levitical priesthood offering sacrifices during the Millennium. One way to understand it is that there will be ceremonies of state. Israel will be both a nation and a Church.

Today God's Church is not a civil nation. We are not a nation in the sense of a civil government. We are citizens of the Kingdom of heaven, but we are residents of many different nation states. We live under the jurisdiction of various human governments. But when the Kingdom of God is established on earth, there will need to be certain protocol, certain ceremonies of state, to orient the whole world toward Jerusalem, toward the functioning of the government. There will be certain protocol, certain pomp and circumstance, certain things that are identified with an identifiable government—the Kingdom of God. There will be certain things to orient the whole world toward the world capital at Jerusalem and the things that go on there.

The role of the Levitical priesthood and what they are going to do is certainly not to atone for sin. Jesus Christ has offered one sacrifice for sin forever. But there are certain ceremonies of state that will be performed that will serve to emphasize certain lessons and certain principles.

Today, various nations have certain ceremonies and certain protocol that is observed. If you go to London, you want to see the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace. There's certain ceremonies of state that take place that create a sense of reverence and awe and respect for the nation and for the things that the nation symbolizes. There are certain outward manifestations and ceremonies that take place that keep people oriented in that way.

This will also be in the time when the Kingdom of God will be holding sway because the Kingdom of God will be ruling over physical human beings who need to be oriented toward the one government. People will need to be oriented toward the one-world capital in Jerusalem and toward God's government. There will be a functioning priesthood that is established. There will be a functioning capital there in Jerusalem. A temple will be built that will have in it the throne on which Jesus Christ will sit (the throne of David) from which He will rule the world. There will be various things that take place. It describes certain things that will be carried out by physical human beings. We find emphasis of that.

Ezekiel 40, 41 and 42 describe the temple itself. There is a reference in various places in the book of Ezekiel to the "prince of Israel." When you go through Ezekiel, it talks about the portion that pertains to the prince. It's very clear that this is a human leader who will function under spirit beings.

Ezekiel 44:1-3, "Then He brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces toward the east, but it was shut. And the Lord said to me, 'This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the Lord God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut. As for the prince [KJV, "It is for the prince"], because he is the prince, he may sit in it to eat bread before the Lord; he shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gateway, and go out the same way.'" It goes on and talks about the things that are going to take place.

There are more descriptions here. It describes the land around about and how some of it is going to be allocated.

Ezekiel 45:4, "It shall be a holy portion of the land, belonging to the priests, the ministers of the sanctuary, who come near to minister to the Lord; it shall be a place for their houses and a holy place for the sanctuary."

Verse 7, "The prince shall have a portion on one side and the other of the holy district...."

Verses 16-17 talk about the prince of Israel and what the prince will do in terms of providing certain things for burnt offerings. Various things are going to be done in that way. You can go through the details of it.

Ezekiel 47 and 48 describe some of the layout of the land. When you go through and read of the portion for the prince and the prince's sons, it's clear that we are talking about a human leader (let's say a human heir to the throne of David), just as the human physical descendants of Levi

will be occupying a position of responsibility there. The continuation of David's physical lineage will be carrying out on a human level certain responsibilities and ceremonies of state and certain things that are allocated out. There is a restoration in the time of the Millennium of things that will enable the world to function. The world will be looking to God's government as a literal functioning government.

There are several things that we might want to note as we conclude. This is important to note.

Ezekiel 41:23-24, "The temple and the sanctuary had two doors. The doors had two panels apiece, two folding panels: two panels for one door and two panels for the other door." What it describes is doors, not the veil that had always been blocking the entrance from the Holy Place into the Holy of Holies.

Remember the veil that was torn at the death of Christ (Matthew 27:51)? The tabernacle and later the temple had a veil that cut off access to the Holy of Holies. In the Millennium, the temple will not have a veil. There's going to be a set of folding doors that are going to slide back and forth, indicating ready and easy access into the presence of God. The future temple won't have the heavy veil blocking entrance to the Holy of Holies and symbolically blocking direct access to God. Rather, there will be doors that open to give easy access. That's why a different symbol is used.

Notice something very mundane; God spells out every detail. A lot of these were regulations that the ancient priesthood operated under.

Ezekiel 44:20 KJV, "Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer [allow] their locks to grow long; they shall only poll their heads." They weren't to shave their heads like the priests of Egypt. They weren't to allow their hair to grow long, as some of the surrounding nations practiced. They were to poll their heads.

Now, if you look up that word, you find that they were to get what we would think of as simply a normal masculine haircut. The term "poll" refers to the shape of the head. There's a breed of cattle known as "polled" Herefords. The reason they are called that is because they don't have horns. You talk about a poll tax. The term "poll" means head and, in that sense, when you refer to cattle being polled, it means that there is nothing coming out from the head. That is simply the shape of the head and nothing coming out.

When it was used here in the context of the priests, it meant that the priests wore their hair short enough that it was considered polled. In other words, it was clipped. The concept was

that a man's hair was short enough that the shape of the head was evident. A woman's hair, as it describes in 1 Corinthians 11, is given for a covering. There is a more flowing, feminine, softer look to it and certainly room for a variety of styles. But the point is that it's long enough to cover something, and a man's hair is not normally long enough to cover—it's a cropped haircut. According to the Talmud, the Jews understood this to mean that the priests were required to get a haircut every 30 days. This was the specific regulation that the priests operated under. That was the way they understood that.

We live in a time where we see the artwork that shows biblical characters and they have long flowing hair coming down to their shoulders. A lot of us grew up kind of conceiving this is the way that Christ, all the apostles and people a long time ago had long flowing hair. No, it says right here that's not the way God's priesthood was. He didn't want them to look like the Egyptians and have kind of a "Yul Brynner" look; the Egyptian priesthood shaved their heads. Some of the priests of the surrounding nations wore their hair very long. God's priesthood just looked normal. All explanations aside, the bottom line was God said He wanted His priests to look normal.

The duty of the priests is made plain.

Verses 23-24, "And they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. In controversy they shall stand as judges, and judge it according to My judgments. They shall keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed meetings, and they shall hallow My Sabbaths."

The job of God's priesthood, ancient and modern, spiritual and physical, is to teach His people the difference between clean and unclean, holy and profane, what is appropriate. They are to teach the people how to make distinctions between what God approves and what He disapproves. There are various ways you could state it, but it is important if we are going to be kings and priests in Tomorrow's World. We are going to be priests in a spiritual sense. Even in the book of Leviticus, many of the things that were given anciently to the physical priesthood had to do with learning to make proper distinction between what is clean (what is appropriate and holy) and what is not.

Ezekiel 47 describes the river of living water. Christ used that symbolically to refer to the Holy Spirit (John 7:38-39).

Verses 1-12 make plain there is going to be a literal river of living water issuing from the throne of Christ. That is going to symbolize the Holy Spirit flowing out from Him to all the nations. You remember when Christ returns to the Mount of Olives, the mountain splits in two (Zechariah 14:4, 8) and a great ripped valley runs east/west and from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean.

Ezekiel 47:1, “Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east,” He saw this water that came out.

Verses 2-4, they go out and he sees this. He measures the water.

Verse 5, “Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed.”

The waters rose and, verses 6-12, there were trees on the bank. The fruit is going to be there for the healing of the nations. It describes all of this and it describes the river as it comes out.

Remember in Revelation 16:3-4, the waters over all the earth—the seas and the rivers—are going to be turned to blood and all the fish are going to die. Notice what happens when Christ comes back and this river begins to spring out.

Ezekiel 47: 8-9, “...‘This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed. And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes.’”

What is going to happen? You know, people read in Revelation, “all the water turned to blood and the fish die,” and they say, ‘How can life continue?’ Well, the way it is going to continue is a river is going to spring forth. When Christ returns and the Mount of Olives splits in two, this great ripped valley occurs. There’s going to come up a gurgling spring that is going to spread out. As this water flows, anything it touches is going to be healed and the fish are going to live. This doesn’t prove that fish have immortal souls either.

Genesis 1:20, go back and find, “...‘Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures [souls],’” The word “creature” for fish means “soul.” It says here that the fish are going to live. It doesn’t mean that the fish have an immortal soul. It just means that there is going to be a healing, a restoration of life on the

planet. Many times God does something outwardly, physically, that people can see. Particularly when He’s dealing with a nation, with a world, He does something outward, physical that they can see to teach a spiritual lesson. Just as life emanates out from the throne of God in a physical way, it is symbolic of a spiritual healing and a spiritual relief that will take place.

There are a lot of things in the book of Ezekiel. It’s a very intriguing book, a very powerful book. It’s a book that has an awful lot for us today. Hopefully, with this series, you have a little bit more of an overview of some of these prophecies.

Next Bible study, we will begin a brand new series; this will be a series on the life and letters of the Apostle Paul.