

# Lessons 75-92

- 1 Proof of the Bible Part One
- 2 Proof of the Bible Part Two
- 3 Time of Ezra and Nehemiah - Fifth Period of Canonization
- 4 How the New Testament Came Together
- 5 The Inspired Order of the Books of the Bible
- 6 Introductory Survey Approach of Studying the Bible
- 7 Genesis 1 - 3
- 8 Genesis 4 - 9 Part One
- 9 Genesis 4 - 9 Part Two
- 10 Genesis 10 - 11
- 11 Genesis 12 - 36
- 12 Genesis 37 - 50
- 13 Exodus 1 - 18
- 14 Exodus 19 - 40
- 15 Leviticus Part One
- 16 Leviticus Part Two
- 17 Numbers
- 18 Deuteronomy
- 19 Joshua
- 20 Judges
- 21 I Samuel 1 - 15 & I Chronicles 1 - 9
- 22 I Samuel 16 - 31 & I Chronicles 10
- 23 II Samuel 1 - 20 & I Chronicles 11 - 20
- 24 II Samuel 21 - 24 & I Kings 1 - 11 & I Chron. 21 - 29 & II Chron. 1 - 9
- 25 I Kings 12 - 22, II Kings 1 - 2, II Chronicles 10 - 20
- 26 II Kings 3 - 25 and II Chronicles 21 - 36
- 27 Ezra and Nehemiah
- 28 Between the Testaments
- 29 Introduction Survey of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
- 30 Matt. 1 - 4:11; Mark 1:1-13; Luke 1 - 4:13; John 1 - 2:12
- 31 Matt. 4:12 - 9:17; Mark 1:14 - 2:22; Luke 4:14 - 5:39; John 2:13 - 4:54
- 32 Matt.8,11,12,13; Mark 2:23 - 4:20; Luke 6:1 - 8:15; John 5
- 33 Matt. 8,9,10,13,14; Mark 4:21 - 6:29; Luke 8:16 - 9:9
- 34 Matt 14:13 - 17:23; Mark 6:30 - 9:32; Luke 9:10-45; John 6:1 - 7:1
- 35 Matt.17:24 - 18:35; Mark 9:33 - 10:1; Luke 9:46 - 12:59; John 7:2 - 10:21
- 36 Matt. 19; Mark 10; Luke 13 - 19:29; John 10:22 - 12:11
- 37 Matt. 20:18 - 25:13; Mark 11:1 - 13:37; Luke 19:29 - 21:38; John 12:12-50
- 38 Matthew 25:14 - 26:75; Mark 13:37 - 14:72; Luke 22:1-62; John 13:1 - 18:27
- 39 Matt. 27:1 - 28:20; Mark 15:1 - 16:20; Luke 22:66;24:53; John 18:28 - 21:25
- 40 Acts 1 - 9
- 41 Acts 10 - 17
- 42 Acts 18 - 28
- 43 General Epistles
- 44 James
- 45 I & II Peter
- 46 I, II, III John & Jude
- 47 Major Prophets - Introduction
- 48 Isaiah 1 - 14
- 49 Isaiah 15 - 35
- 50 Isaiah 36 - 49
- 51 Isaiah 50 - 66
- 52 Jeremiah 1 - 15
- 53 Jeremiah 16 - 34
- 54 Jeremiah 35 - 52
- 55 Ezekiel 1 - 16
- 56 Ezekiel 17 - 32
- 57 Ezekiel 33 - 48
- 58 Background - Apostle Paul
- 59 I & II Thessalonians
- 60 Galatians
- 61 I Corinthians
- 62 II Corinthians
- 63 Romans
- 64 Colossians & Philemon
- 65 Ephesians & Philippians
- 66 Hebrews
- 67 I Timothy & Titus
- 68 II Timothy
- 69 Battle Against First Century Heresies
- 70 Minor Prophets - Introduction
- 71 Hosea & Joel
- 72 Amos, Obediah, and Jonah
- 73 Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and
- 74 Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi
- 75 The Writings - Introduction
- 76 Psalms 1 - 41
- 77 Psalms 42 - 72
- 78 Psalms 73 - 89
- 79 Psalms 90 - 106
- 80 Psalms 107 - 150
- 81 Proverbs 1 - 9
- 82 Proverbs 10 - 22:16
- 83 Proverbs 22:17 - 31:31
- 84 Job
- 85 Song of Solomon
- 86 Ruth
- 87 Lamentations
- 88 Ecclesiastes
- 89 Esther
- 90 Daniel Part One
- 91 Daniel Part Two
- 92 Ezra, Nehemiah and I & II Chron.
- 93 Revelation - Introduction
- 94 Revelation 1 - 3
- 95 Revelation 4 - 6
- 96 Revelation 7 - 10
- 97 Revelation 11 - 13
- 98 Revelation 14 - 18
- 99 Revelation 19 - 22
- 100 Questions & Answers



Bible Study # 75  
August 27, 1991  
Mr. John Ogwyn

### The Writings Series—Introduction

This evening we want to get into a new series. I **want to give you an introduction to a series on the Writings.** The Writings is the third division of the Old Testament (the Hebrew Scriptures) as the Jews have traditionally divided them.

Jesus talked about it in the book of Luke. Notice in the very last chapter of the book of Luke.

Luke 24:44-45, “Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms [Writings] concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” Jesus Christ defined the Scriptures as consisting of the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms, or the Law, the Prophets and the Writings.

This third division, the Writings, was sometimes termed “the Psalms” because Psalms was the first book of the section and it was the longest book of the section. From the time of Ezra and Nehemiah down until today, the Jews have always preserved what they have termed the “Tripartite Division of the Old Testament” (the Hebrew Scriptures). “Tripartite” simply means three sections of it—the Law, the Prophets and the Writings.

Now the **Law** is the most basic revelation of God. It introduces God as the Creator and reveals to us God’s instruction. The word “law” (“Torah” in the Hebrew) is broader and more inclusive than what we simply think of as “law” in English. When we say “law,” we tend to think of a list of rules that are written out: you shall do this; you shall not do that. That is the law, but that’s not all there is to law. Law can consist of more than that. Law can consist of illustrations and examples. Torah is instruction.

God sometimes instructs us by examples. You read the story of certain people—we have examples that we should not follow and we have examples that we should follow. Part of the way that God instructs us in His Word is the testimonies. They are a part of the law and so are the commandments and the statutes. The law is God’s most basic revelation.

The **Prophets**, in that sense, are commentary of the law. The Prophets are based on the blessings and the curses of the law. The law says you will be blessed if you obey and cursed if you disobey.

These are the blessings and curses found in Leviticus 26—in the law. The Prophets simply tell us what happens when you obey and what happens when you disobey.

The Law is the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. They are the most basic revelation of God.

The Prophets were termed the Former and the Latter Prophets. The Former Prophets were books we would normally consider historical: Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. The Latter Prophets were the ones we normally think of as prophetic: the Major Prophets of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel and then the 12 Minor Prophets that we have just finished going through in the most recent set of Bible studies. The Major and Minor Prophets were called the Latter Prophets.

Actually, the distinction between history and prophecy is an arbitrary distinction. It simply depends on where you’re standing in the course of time.

Isaiah 57:15, God inhabits eternity. He doesn’t make the distinction between history and prophecy as we do.

Romans 4:17, He calls those things that do not exist as though they did.

Isaiah 46:10, He declares the end from the beginning. That’s a little different perspective than you and I have because we inhabit finite time (here and now). To us there is a very real distinction between history and prophecy. God does not make the same sort of distinction.

Much of what was written as prophecy that related to the first coming of Christ is not prophecy anymore; it is history. The prophecies of Christ’s first coming have been fulfilled, so in that sense, that’s history. Much of what we consider prophecy now, in a few years will be taught as history in Tomorrow’s World. The events that we are seeing shape up in Europe (that we are calling prophecy) is going to be in the history books in a few years. That will be a part of what we are teaching people as a part of history during the time period of the Millennium.

So, all of those books ultimately have a connection. They all tell the story of what happens when you obey and what happens when you disobey the law. In that sense, they form a commentary on the law. They focus in on consequences, good or bad.

The **Writings**, the final third division, are a little different. One thing that nearly all of the books of the Writings have in common is that they are poetic. There is a lot of poetry and poetic writing in this section. The book of Psalms dominates

the section. The Writings are sort of anchored on either end by lengthy books, Psalms and Chronicles.

You could divide the Writings into three sections. The **first** section would be books of poetry and wisdom: Psalms, Proverbs and Job. The **second** would be the five Festival Scrolls: Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther. Each is read at a festival season. Then the **third** section of the Writings is what would be termed the “post-exilic” books. In other words, the ones that were written after the exile—the ones that were written after Nebuchadnezzar had taken the Jews captive. Daniel, at the end of the Old Testament, sets the stage for Revelation, which concludes the New Testament and the Bible. Then Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles come at the end, telling the story of the regathering. They sort of give the wrap-up of the Old Testament from the standpoint of the priesthood and of Jerusalem. They tell the story in a different way than what has been done earlier. It is important to understand the distinction because they focus in on the story in a totally different way than Samuel and Kings.

This final section, particularly the poetic portion of the Writings, in many ways serves to amplify the law. Poetry is easier to memorize than prose because there is a rhyme, a meter. It’s easier to learn a song than it is a page of typed text. A page of typed text would be far harder to memorize than, let’s say, a song that is written out because there is a rhyme, a meter and there’s a poetic quality that makes it more easily committed to memory.

The Psalms, in that sense, were written to be committed to memory. When you commit something to memory, it is easier to meditate upon. The Psalms are written in a poetic and repetitive fashion. It’s totally different than the way that certain other sections of the Bible are written. It is written in an entirely different way. We have to understand that different portions of the Bible are written as they are for a purpose. Some things are written simply in story flow. When you read it through, you are able to get the story flow and derive information from examples and illustrations that are used.

The Psalms are written in a way that they are “food for thought.” They are things to think about. They are written in a poetic fashion, so you can more easily commit them to memory and think about them. You can meditate upon them and turn them over in your mind.

They were utilized both for the expression of the nation or the group in terms of singing praises to

God or singing songs to God. The Psalms represented the national hymnbook for Israel. It was the basis of the liturgy there in the temple as far as the Levitical choir was concerned. They certainly show the importance of music in a society and in a culture because of the fact that God inspired this entire section that can be sung. It is there both to be sung in terms of public praise and songs to God, as well as being there to be read, meditated upon and thought about by the individual.

Proverbs and Job both sort of fit into that category as well. Proverbs has much teaching that is there. The poetry of Job does not come out in most of the English translations in the way that it did in the original, but it is written in a poetic way.

Many of the Festival Scrolls—Song of Solomon, Lamentations, and Ecclesiastes—were all written in a poetic fashion. Ruth and Esther were written more in narrative fashion.

Then, the final post-exilic books were written in narrative fashion, but there is a focus that is there. One thing is that virtually every book in the Writings has a connection with royalty. Psalms primarily was written by King David; Proverbs primarily was written by Solomon, also a king. Job, we are told, was a ruler on some level in the land of Uz (Job 1:1).

Many of the Festival Scrolls had that connection. Certainly, the Song of Solomon did, of course, because Solomon was a king. Ruth sets the stage for the birth of King David. It provides a background for the family of David. It ties in that way. Lamentations is specifically written as a lament for the death of King Josiah; Ecclesiastes was written by King Solomon. Esther was a Queen over the Persian Empire.

Daniel was a prince of Judah and was the number two man in the Babylonian Empire right under Nebuchadnezzar. Ezra came back as the priest; Nehemiah came back as the royal governor governing Judah. Chronicles was written from the standpoint of the Levitical priesthood and the kings of the house of David in Jerusalem. If you go through and compare the story that Chronicles tells—by comparison to Samuel and Kings—you will find that even though the same period is covered, it’s a different story. Chronicles doesn’t focus on the things that Samuel and Kings do.

1 Chronicles focuses primarily on King David. It begins with genealogies. 1 Chronicles 1—9 deal with genealogies that set the stage; the rest of the book deals with the life of King David. When you get to the end of 1 Chronicles, you’re just

getting to the end of David's life and you have an awful lot yet to go.

2 Chronicles focuses primarily on Solomon. It basically focuses briefly on the good kings of Judah. It focuses a little bit on Asa and Jehoshaphat. It particularly focuses in on Hezekiah and Josiah. That pretty well sums up 2 Chronicles.

It focuses in on the times of great revival and the great Passovers that Hezekiah and Josiah had—the great revivals. It is a focus on God's working through the house and throne of David and the Levitical priesthood. It focuses on Jerusalem—on where God was working. It was written to finish up the Hebrew Scriptures and to answer the questions as to where God was authoritatively working because in the aftermath of that, you have three different sets of manuscripts that all claim to represent the Old Testament.

You have what the Samaritans had which is the Samaritan version of the Old Testament. You have what is called the Septuagint, which was a Greek translation found down in Egypt. You had the Masoretic text, or the Hebrew text, that the Jews had preserved. Well, if you read Chronicles, you have no question as to where you need to look. Do you look to the Greeks in Egypt? Do you look to the Samaritans? Or do you look to the Jewish community centered in Jerusalem?

Well, if you read Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles and you have any question about that, I would certainly like to know what it is because there's no way that you can read those books, understand their authority and have any question as to where you want to look for the authoritative text of the Hebrew Scriptures. It makes it plain. It was important that it be made plain because it has been a source of confusion. But those books made plain where God was working. It made plain that He wasn't working in Samaria; He was working in Jerusalem. And Jesus bore witness of that. You remember what He told the woman at the well in Samaria?

John 4:22, “You [Samaritans] worship what you do not know; we [Jews] know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.”

It's unbelievable that we have had some come along over the years (even in the Church) that have questioned that. I think of one in particular who came into a fairly high position and got all “buggy” about the fact that the Septuagint was really where you needed to look. Well, it's no wonder he got off into some of the other things he got off into when he started off there.

This section of the Bible is often overlooked. Most of the books contained here are books that maybe we don't focus on quite as much. Many who focus on the Psalms or Proverbs in the sense of sort of reading it don't fully understand some of the messages.

The book of Psalms is the longest book. It has many authors; King David composed the majority of it. There are a couple of things that I would like to show you on the Psalms. We are going to go through Psalms in a fair amount of detail.

Psalms was traditionally regarded by the Jews to be divided into five books—five books of the Psalms. It was considered one book for the sake of the Biblical canon, but it was comprised of five sections or five books of the Psalms.

The **first** section of the Psalms or Book One consists of Psalms 1—41. Go to the end of Psalm 41. Notice the ending.

Psalm 41:13, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen.”—A double “Amen.” That's the way you tell the section ended.

The **second** section of the Psalms or Book Two of Psalms is Psalms 42—72. It ends the same way.

Psalm 72:19-20, “And blessed be His glorious name forever! And let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.”

The **third** section of the Psalms or the Book Three of Psalms is Psalms 73—89.

Psalm 89:52, notice, “Blessed be the Lord forevermore! Amen and Amen.”

Psalms 1—41 is Book One. Psalms 42—72 is Book Two. Psalms 73—89 is Book Three. The **fourth** section, Psalms 90—106 is Book Four and the **fifth** section, Psalms 107-150 is Book Five. Now notice the way Book Four and Book Five end.

Psalm 106:48, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, ‘Amen!’” And then you notice, “Praise the Lord!” “Praise the Lord” is translated from a Hebrew word that's pretty commonly known. All of you know at least a couple of Hebrew words. You may not have known that you knew how to speak Hebrew, but every time you say “Amen,” you are speaking Hebrew because “Amen” is a Hebrew word. And there's another Hebrew word I suspect all of you know. “Hallelujah” is a Hebrew word, too, and literally translated it simply means “Praise you the Lord.” Verse 48 ends with “Amen, Hallelujah”—A little

variation on the double “Amen” of sections 1, 2 and 3. The end of the Psalm ends the same way. The last five Psalms, Psalms 146—150, all start with the word “Hallelujah.” They start and end with the “Hallelujah.” That’s why the last five songs of the book of Psalms are called the “Hallelujah Psalms.” The first word and the last word (in Hebrew) is “Hallelujah”—at least in the King James translation. In the King James translation, it is translated “Praise you the Lord.” “Hallelujah” is sometimes just printed out that way—“Hallelujah,” and in other cases, it is translated into English. It was there as a praise. These last five Psalms open and close with “Hallelujah.” There is a sense of completion when you get to the end of Psalm 150.

Psalm 150:6, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!” In fact, in Psalm 150, every verse contains the expression of praise, so there is that focus.

We find that the theme of “five” runs through the book of Psalms. There are five divisions of the Psalms. The five divisions in the book of Psalms were considered by the Jews to parallel the five books of Moses (the five books of the Torah) as well as the five books of the Festival Scrolls—the five books of the Megillot. The “Megillot” is another name for the Festival Scrolls. *There is a parallel between the five books of the Psalms, the five books of the Torah and the five Festival Scrolls.* Then, when we get down to the end of the book of Psalms, we find the last five Psalms are all Hallelujah Psalms. Even the number of Psalms is a multiple of five—5 times 30—150 Psalms. You find that theme of the number five running through the book of Psalms in an interesting way.

I want to briefly look at the themes of the five books of the Psalms. *Normally, the first Psalm in each book sets the stage for that particular book.* We are going to come back and spend a Bible study on each one of the five books of the Psalms. We are going to break down the book of Psalms down into five sections and spend some time going through each section of Psalms so that we can get a little better understanding.

Let’s notice briefly a little bit of an overview. Psalms 1 and 2 have traditionally been understood by the Jews to sort of set the stage for the whole book of Psalms. **Psalms 1 and 2 contain the theme for the whole book.** The material that is discussed in the book of Psalms is sort of summarized in the first two Psalms. We start out with these two little short Psalms. We find that it talks about the source of blessings.

Psalm 1:1-2, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.”

**Psalm 1 tells you that one of the major themes of the Psalms had to do with how to reap God’s blessings.**

What does it mean to be blessed? How do you derive that blessing? It has to do with focusing in on God’s law and meditating on that law. The individual who meditates on and puts into practice the law of God in his life is going to be blessed. It makes a contrast between the individual who is blessed (because his focus is on God’s law) and the individual who is not.

Verse 4, “The ungodly are not so, ....” One of the great contrasts drawn throughout the book of Psalms is the contrast between the godly and the ungodly. In a poetic fashion, over and over and over, we find the distinction drawn in the book of Psalms of the godly and the ungodly—what’s going to be the consequence, the end result of the godly and what’s going to be the end result of the ungodly. Psalm 1 sets the stage by explaining that.

**Psalm 2 focuses in on another aspect of the Psalms; many of the Psalms have to do with God stepping into history.** Many of the Psalms have prophetic implications, and this is the theme that is expressed in the second Psalm.

Psalm 2:1, “Why do the nations rage, ?...”

Verse 2 talks about God sending the Messiah, His anointed. The word “Messiah” is another Hebrew word that all of you know. It simply means “the Anointed One.” “Christ” is the term we usually use. It is simply the Greek translation of Messiah. “Christ” and “Messiah”—one is the Greek and the other is the Hebrew. We use them as titles, but they are a reference to the Anointed One—the One chosen by God as the Savior, the Messiah, the Christ.

Verse 2 talks about taking council against the Eternal and against His Anointed, against the Messiah, against the Christ. It shows God’s stepping into history and how God looks at puny man maneuvering and manipulating.

Verse 4, God laughs. He looks down and it’s so silly to see puny little man so pompously strutting around and thinking how great and how powerful he is.

The first two Psalms sort of set the stage for all of the other material that is covered in the Psalms. **The theme that runs through the book of Psalms is a poetic comparison between the godly and the ungodly and the consequences**

**of each.** We have a development and a focus on God's involvement in history. **And, in particular, His ultimate involvement; the culmination of God's involvement in history is His sending of the Messiah—both the first time and the second time.** Those are not the only times God has intervened in history, but that is the culmination (the climax) of God stepping into history. Many of God's mighty deeds and actions of His involvement in the course of human events are celebrated in the Psalms. These two Psalms sort of set the stage for the whole book.

**Then we come to the third Psalm, which sets the stage for the first section of the Psalms or Book One of Psalms. Running through this first section of Psalms is a focus on the role of Christ, particularly the role of Christ in His first coming as the Passover lamb. There is a focus on the individual person, the need of the individual for a Savior.** There is a focus on the individual.

Many of the experiences of David's life are utilized and are the background from which many of these Psalms are written. And in that way, David was a type of the Messiah. He went through many things that mirrored events that Jesus Himself would later experience. Of course, Christ ultimately came to inherit the throne of His father, David.

Now, I might just comment a little bit about the Psalms in general and about King David's role. David was a remarkable man in a number of ways. One way in which David was a particularly remarkable individual was that David was an exceptionally expressive person. He had the ability to express the wide gamut of feelings and emotions in us in an unusual and remarkable way. Very few do so or have the capacity of doing so in the way that David did. He was an individual who felt everything—the highs and the lows. He felt everything deeply. He was very poetic and a very expressive individual, and as a result, he put into written form the whole gamut of feelings and emotions we don't even know how to quite put into words.

There are times we can't even express what we are feeling. It may be a particular trial. It may be a number of things we are going through, and many times we find it very difficult to even try to put into words what it is we are feeling. We have trouble sorting those feelings out. I'll tell you, if you find yourself in that situation and you open up the book of Psalms, you generally won't have to go very far before you will find a Psalm where

David is putting into words the things that you are feeling but can't quite put into words. That's an important role the Psalms play in our own personal life because David expresses feelings and emotions that many of us have difficulty verbalizing. We have difficulty even recognizing what it is we are feeling.

But you usually don't have to get very far into the book of Psalms before you find that David has put into words—he says and expresses—what you are struggling with inside. It can be the “ups”; it can be the “downs.” It can be the joys and the ecstasy of thanksgiving, of praise, the positive and the “up” emotions. It can be fear, despair or frustration. It can be anguish at looking around and seeing life being so unfair. There is nothing you can go through and experience—everything from the joy and ecstasy of victory and deliverance, to the despair of defeat and the hurts of betrayal—and David expresses all of those. He went through a number of things. A lot of people have gone through many things, but very few people have the ability to really verbalize it.

David was a remarkable man in that he was perhaps the most expressive man. He was not only an emotional individual but also very expressive. He was able to express and verbalize that expression and was able to write it down in a poetic way. He is called in one place “the sweet psalmist of Israel” (2 Samuel 23:1). So, the whole gamut of feelings is mirrored in the book of Psalms.

The first section of Psalms is Psalms 1—41. Much of what Jesus said while He was being crucified is quoted from Psalm 22. If you read Psalm 22, you will find that much of it reminds you of statements that Jesus either quoted directly or paraphrased. Psalm 22 is descriptive of the experience of the crucifixion. It was obviously the Psalm that was running through His mind as He hung there because it expressed what He was feeling.

In like manner, I think Psalm 23 makes such a contrast with it and must have expressed the feelings that He had at the time of the resurrection. When you read Psalm 23 with that in mind, you can sort of read it with the shout of exultation and of victory. Psalm 22 ends up with “that He hath done this”; in the Hebrew, it can read “it is finished.” Psalm 23 ends up with “I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Let me just briefly comment on Psalm 3 since that is the one that sort of sets the theme for this section.

Psalm 3:1-4, notice, “Lord, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me. Many are they who say of me, ‘There is no help for him in God.’ But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head. I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill.” Psalm 3 focuses on our need for a Savior, and that really sets the stage for this first section of the Psalms.

I might also call your attention to Psalm 37 in this section. If you ever find yourself really frustrated at the unfairness of life and the unfairness of things, go to Psalm 37. You will find that David went through some experiences that focused in on the unfairness of life. One of the things you see is that David expressed a range of the negative emotions—frustration, anger, disappointment and fear—but he didn’t stop with that. He worked through them.

We all feel those things at one time or another. To deny our feelings doesn’t change them. There are times that we do feel angry. There are times we do feel frustrated or scared. There are times that we feel despairing and hopeless. There are times that we feel grief and sorrow. We face and we feel, at one time or another, all the gamut of negative emotions.

While those are places where we all find ourselves at one time or another, they are not the stopping points. They are not the way station along life’s journey where we want to stop and stay for a while. They are places we have to go through. But what is important is that we learn how to work through those feelings, not just “stuffing” them and denying them. We are to work through them and move on beyond them. We are to bring those things to resolution. We are to work through and get it into proper perspective. That’s what David does in the Psalms.

Many of the Psalms start off with an expression of frustration, anger, disappointment, hurt or any number of these feelings. But by the time you get to the end of the Psalms, he has worked through it and the matter has been resolved. As we meditate on the Psalms that are perhaps expressive of how we feel at a given point, they enable us to sort of work through it and come to a resolution.

Now the parallel from the Torah—the *first book of Psalms would parallel with the first book of the Torah*. The first book of the Torah is Genesis. *Genesis focuses on the creation and introduces man’s need for a Savior and the means by which God will provide that Savior.*

That is a theme that runs through the book of Genesis. God introduces the creation for the purpose of introducing man, for the purpose of showing how man sinned, became cut off from God and came to need a Savior. Then, as He picks up the story with the family of Abraham, He begins to work through showing how He is going to provide that Savior. There is a clearer theme of the individual and the need of individual salvation.

*The first parallel of the Festival Scrolls is the Song of Solomon. The Song of Solomon was traditionally read at the Passover/Unleavened Bread season, which is the season of the year that focuses on our need for a Savior.*

**The second section or Book Two of Psalms is Psalms 42—72. The theme shifts from personal experience of one man, to the collective experience of a nation.** We have, in that sense, the beginning of the Old Testament Church. Psalm 42 begins this section. Notice the way it opens.

Psalm 42:1-2, “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?” It is talking about the deep thirst that we have and how that deep thirst can be quenched.

You remember, Jesus explained it. He explained it to the woman at the well in Samaria (John 4:6-14). There is only one thing that will quench the deep thirst that is addressed in Psalm 42 and that is God’s Holy Spirit, rivers of living water (John 7:38-39). That is the only thing that can quench that deep thirst.

*This second book of the Psalms would parallel the second book of the Torah, Exodus, as well as the second Festival Scroll, Ruth. The second Festival Scroll was read at Pentecost. Pentecost is the story of the outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit. It is the story of God’s covenant relationship, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is the story of God calling out a Church, a congregation, a spiritual nation and the ultimate pouring out of His Spirit to provide the quenching of the thirst that is expressed in Psalm 42.*

As you go through this section, there are many portions we will come back to at a later time, but I would call your attention to Psalm 68 in this section, which the Jews have traditionally termed the “Pentecost anthem.” *The second book of the Psalms would parallel the book of Exodus, which of course tells the story of the first Pentecost there at Mount Sinai, the giving of the law, the establishment of the covenant that ultimately*



*culminates in the beginning of the New Covenant, the outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2).* It also parallels the book of Ruth, which was read at Pentecost. *The story in the book of Ruth is of an individual called out of the world that forsakes her allegiance and loyalties of her old way, embraces the God of Israel and God's truth and becomes an heir of the covenant of promise.* We have this theme that runs through the second section of the Psalms—the second book of the Psalms.

**Book Three of Psalms is Psalms 73—89. Psalm 73 has the theme of obedience and avoidance of unclean conduct.** *The third book of the Torah is the book of Leviticus.* The book of Leviticus was written for the Levites. It was instruction to the Levites—to the priesthood. What was the responsibility of the priesthood? It was to teach the nation how to be holy. *It was to instruct the nation in holiness and cleanness.* What was the consequence of the Levites and the priesthood's failure to do so? If they had done the job they should have done, the problems that came about wouldn't have come as they did because they did fail to do so. Leviticus contains in it Leviticus 26, the chapter of the blessings and the curses. Leviticus 26 is the story of what would happen if the priesthood failed to convey to the nation how to be holy. Leviticus is the third book of the Torah.

*The third book of the Festival Scrolls is Lamentations. It is a lament for what happened to the nation as a consequence of the failure of the people to practice Leviticus.* The theme of Leviticus is to be holy for God is holy (Leviticus 11:44-45). The job of the priesthood was to teach the people to discern between the holy and the profane, the clean and the unclean (Ezekiel 44:15, 23-24). It was to teach the people to make distinctions between what is appropriate and what is inappropriate, what is holy and what is profane, what is clean and what is unclean. That was their responsibility. The priesthood failed in their duty and the temple was ultimately destroyed, the priesthood was taken into captivity and Jerusalem was destroyed. The book of Lamentations is a lament about that and, in that sense, the events that it describes are prophetic of the Great Tribulation. They were a type of the Tribulation.

Interestingly, nearly the entire third book of Psalms is written by priests. Psalm 73 starts out, "A Psalm of Asaph." Now, if you go back and do a little checking on Asaph, you will find that Asaph was in charge of the Levitical singers. He was one of the priests in charge of music in the

temple. Psalms 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83—all of those are songs of Asaph.

Psalms 84, 85, 87, 88 are for the sons of Korah who were part of the Levitical choir. Nearly all of the Psalms in this section were written either for or by priests. There is a priestly theme that runs through this section that, in many ways, parallels the book of Leviticus and, certainly, there are parallels with Lamentations, the third Festival Scroll.

Psalm 73:1-2, which sets the theme for the third section, says, "Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped." He said he was getting on a slippery slope; he was slipping up. Have you ever felt like that? Have you ever felt like your connection, in terms of God and the Church, were getting on sort of a slippery ground? Have you ever felt like you weren't as firm-footed as you wish you were?

He expresses why he felt that way.

Verse 3, "For I was envious of the boastful [KJV, "foolish"], when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." He said he really got into an attitude problem because he looked at people who were putting forth no effort to obey God, and he was envious. It seemed to him those people were getting by with all kinds of things, and he saw the wicked who were prospering. Have you ever seen anybody wicked prosper? The world is filled with wicked who prosper. And it's easy, sometimes, if we are not careful, that our attitude can get askew. He described finding himself on a slippery slope. He was not as well positioned, as steady and stable, as he wished he were. But rather, he was beginning to develop an envy at what was seemingly the "easy time" that some of these people were having.

Verse 5, "They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like other men." It seems like some of the ones that are getting by the easiest are the worst. That's the way it is. Just because somebody is a crook and a shyster, doesn't mean they come down plagued with cancer, heart disease and everything else all at the same time. Sometimes they live to be 95. That's of and by itself. There are times when it may seem like they are making a lot of money.

He continues and he describes what he saw.

Verse 16, "When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me..." 'It was really bothering me. It hurt to look at all of this.'

Verse 17, "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end." Now he

begins to get it into perspective. He says he went into the sanctuary (the temple) and then he began to get it into perspective. He began to consider the end and to realize that even though they may seemingly be getting by with it now for a while, they are ultimately the ones that are going to be in the slippery places and are going to be cast down to destruction.

Verses 21-22, he then begins to feel foolish for the attitude that he was having. You can go through Psalm 73. He sets the stage. This is the point that the priesthood should have gotten across to the people. This was important and, in many ways, sums up a great deal of the perspective from which the book of Leviticus and Lamentations should be read.

We are obviously going to come back and go through each of these sections closely, so I am just skimming now for the sake of time.

**Book Four of Psalms is Psalms 90—106.** Much of this particular section of Psalms—the *fourth book of Psalms—parallels the fourth book of the Torah which is Numbers and the fourth book of the Festival Scrolls which is Ecclesiastes*. Ecclesiastes was read at the Feast of Tabernacles, which is a type of the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. **We find in this section many of the Psalms that describe the millennial conditions that will come to Israel and to all nations when God reigns on the earth.**

Psalm 90 sets the stage for that. The first Psalm in this section sets the theme.

Psalm 90:1-4, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. You turn man to destruction, and say, ‘Return, O children of men.’ For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night.”

This is the first place the expression “a thousand years” is referred to. It is a very vague sort of reference. Peter quotes and paraphrases Psalm 90:4.

2 Peter 3:8, “...with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” Peter makes it a little plainer. He says that a day is equivalent to a thousand years in God’s plan. It remains yet for the Apostle John in the book of Revelation to clearly state that the reign of the Messiah is for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4-6).

We have talked about the Millennium and used the term so often that I think many are not really

aware of the fact that, apart from the book of Revelation, you can find no clear statement that says the reign of the Messiah is going to last for a thousand years. If you had the entire Bible except for the book of Revelation, you would find no clear statement.

Now, the Jews had traditions that pointed in that direction. Peter alluded to it in 2 Peter 3. He paraphrased Psalm 90. But Psalm 90 is pretty vague. If you didn’t have what Peter said in 2 Peter 3 and if you didn’t have what John wrote in Revelation 20, you would be hard-pressed to have it really clear in your mind that the time of the Messiah’s reign is a thousand years. It’s a little vague if Psalm 90:4 was all you had to go on. Peter paraphrased it and made it a little plainer. John stated it clearly. When you read what John said and then look at what Peter said, you realize the comparison of a thousand years and a day and a seven-day week. Then you look here at Psalm 90 and you see sort of a reference that sets the stage.

Psalm 90:12, “So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” The point is that time is limited for human beings. Even the Millennium is limited. A thousand years is a limited, finite time. When God deals with human beings, He deals in terms of a finite period of time. We all have to learn to number our days. We are to make best use of the time we have. We are not to assume our days are going to go on interminably because our days do have a termination. We need to learn to number our days and to apply our hearts to wisdom. We are to use each day to the full, to focus in and to utilize each day.

Look at the parallel. *The book of Numbers dealt with Israel’s wandering in the wilderness, the time when Israel dwelt in booths (temporary dwellings) and God provided all their needs.* In Leviticus 23, when the Holy Days were outlined, one of the things that Israel was told about the Feast of Tabernacles was that they were to dwell in booths during the Feast of Tabernacles. It was a reminder of the time they dwelt in booths during the wandering in the wilderness (Leviticus 23:42-43). The book of Numbers is the story of that time period.

*Ecclesiastes is the book of the Festival Scrolls that focuses in on a lesson that has to be learned—the lesson that there is a need for something beyond the physical. It ends up with a focus on teaching us to number our days.*

Ecclesiastes 12:1, “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, ...” It ends up with the fact that we need to be responsible.

Much of the theme of this section of the Psalms deals with the time when God reigns on the earth.

Psalm 93:1, “The Lord reigns, ....”

Psalm 99:1, “The Lord reigns; ....”

Actually, Psalms 92, 95, 96, 97, 98 and 99 are all Psalms that the Jews call the “Sabbath Songs” that made up a part of the liturgy every Sabbath in the temple. And it was felt that those Psalms focused in on the millennial fulfillment of the Sabbath because they understood that the weekly Sabbath was a weekly reminder of the time of the Messiah’s reign.

**Psalm 107 begins Book Five of Psalms (107—150) and, in that sense, sums up the material from the preceding four books.** *Deuteronomy, the fifth book of the Torah, sums up what had been said before and brings it up to a people who could literally stand on the river bank and see their salvation.* They see the Promised Land. Deuteronomy is given to people who were within sight of the fulfillment and the realization of the promises.

The book of Esther was normally read in the 12<sup>th</sup> month of the Hebrew calendar, the month Adar (February/March). It was read at the celebration of Purim, which was a celebration of God’s deliverance—the story of which is told in the book of Esther. *The parallel book of Esther ends up when God had saved His people and there was great rejoicing.* We find that everybody, even a lot of the Persians, desired to be a Jew, too, because they could see the way that God was working. There is a focus on celebration of salvation in the physical sense in the book of Esther. The fifth book of the Psalms ends up with that. **It is sort of a recap of material that has been covered and ends up with the “Hallelujah” Psalms, which is clearly a focus on a celebration of God’s salvation.**

Psalm 107 sets the theme.

Psalm 107:1-2, “Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy...” It is focused on a celebration of God’s redemption and, also, there is a recap in this final fifth section of much of the previous material. In that way, there is a parallel to Deuteronomy and Esther.

There are various categories in the Psalms. Many of the Psalms are Psalms of praise. This is a major theme that runs throughout the entire book—praise to God for His great work, the deliverance of His people, His mercy, His

benefits and blessings. *Praise is a major theme that runs through the book of Psalms.*

*A second theme that runs through the book of Psalms is contrition.* The theme of suffering (both for individuals and for the nation) and the understanding that personal and national calamity is a consequence of sin. Confession, pleas of mercy and forgiveness run throughout this section. This theme of contrition (of repentance), a desire for mercy, forgiveness, our need for deliverance and restoration runs through the book. Praise is perhaps the major theme of the Psalms. Contrition is a minor theme.

*Another theme is the ethics that are taught.*

Several of the Psalms are of an instructive nature. They give instruction concerning the things that God’s people are to do and not to do. We have seen that this entire section has a lot of material packed in it. We are going to spend the next five Bible studies going through the Psalms. We are going to go through it, spending one Bible study on each one of the five books of the Psalms. The next Bible study we will cover the first 41 Psalms. We will spend a number of Bible studies on the Psalms. We will spend several on Proverbs (probably about three Bible studies on Proverbs) and then begin to pick up some speed. We will have a Bible study on each one of the five Festival Scrolls. We will have an entire Bible study for each of those books so we can spend some time and perhaps deepen our understanding of some of this section of the Bible that maybe does not get quite as much focus. There’s an awful lot that’s packed in here. It is a beautiful section of Scripture. There is a beauty, a rhythm of poetry and a depth of expression that is there. There are many, many important lessons and important principles that are illustrated. I think, as we read this section, we will find so much that can tie in and be helpful to us in our everyday Christian life.

So, with that, we will conclude our Bible study this evening.



Bible Study # 76  
September 10, 1991  
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Book One—Psalms 1—41

This evening, we want to get into the book of Psalms. As I commented last time, the Psalms are divided into five books, or five sections. **We are going to cover Book One of Psalms this evening—Psalms 1—41. We will also note the correspondence with the first book of the Law, Genesis, and the first book of the Festival Scrolls, the Song of Solomon.** One of the things we will see is that each of the sections of the Psalms has its own individuality and its own character. The first two Psalms sort of set the stage for the entire book. The third Psalm serves as an introduction to the first book of Psalms.

Psalm 1 and 2 sort of introduce the entire book. The stress of the first couple of Psalms has to do with a contrast.

**Psalm 1 starts out with a contrast between what is permanent and what is temporary, what is going to endure and last and what is going to be swept away.**

Psalm 1:1-2, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.”

What is he going to be like?

Verse 3, “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.” We have a contrast. On the one hand, we have individuals who are described as delighting in God’s law. Do we delight in God’s law? Are we enjoying Christianity or merely enduring it? Here is an individual who delights in God’s law and meditates on it. That individual is compared to a tree planted by the rivers of water. What is the significance of that sort of symbolism? Here is a tree that is planted by the rivers, so it is always going to be close to water. If a tree is planted in an area where the roots go down and it is going to be well watered, that means it is going to be a productive, enduring, growing tree. It symbolizes permanence.

Verse 4, then, on the other hand, we have the ungodly who are described like chaff, which the wind drives away. When wheat is harvested and winnowed, the chaff is separated from the grain and the chaff is simply blown away by the wind.

There is a contrast between those who are going to endure and those who are going to simply be swept away. One of the themes that run through the book of Psalms is the fact that there is a way of life that leads to permanence. There is a way of life that leads to life eternal—to that which will endure forever. And there is a way of life that those who follow it are simply going to be swept away. There is going to be a tide that simply sweeps them away, and they will no longer be around. So, here’s an important theme that runs throughout the book.

**Psalm 2 goes into another theme that runs throughout the book and it has to do with God intervening into history—God stepping into the affairs of man.**

Psalm 2:1, “Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing?” It describes the nations raging and the people plotting (KJV, “imagining”) a vain thing.

Verses 2-4, “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.’ He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision.” They are going to stand up and fight against the Lord and against His Anointed (the Messiah), the returning Jesus Christ. God sits in the heavens and laughs. God says, “That’s funny! Look at those puny little human beings running around down there. They think they are really going to do something.”

God is going to step into the affairs of man. The sureness of that, which we celebrate at the Feast of Trumpets, is testified throughout the Psalms.

We will get into this first section of the Psalms, which is termed Book One of Psalms—the first 41 Psalms.

In the introduction last Bible study, I pointed out that this first book of the Psalms parallels with the first book in the Festival Scrolls—the Song of Solomon—which was traditionally read at Passover/Unleavened Bread season. We are going to see that much of the message content is a parallel to the Passover season because this first book of the Psalms focuses in on the need for personal salvation. **Psalm 3 sets the stage for the first book of Psalms—a focus on the role of Christ, particularly on His first coming as the Passover Lamb. There is a focus throughout this section on personal salvation, the need for it and where it comes from. It comes from God.**

Psalm 3:1-5, “Lord, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up

against me. Many are they who say of me, 'There is no help for him in God.' But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head. I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill. I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me."

One of the things we are going to find, as we go through the Psalms, is that David went through a variety of circumstances and mirrored every sort of feeling and every wave of emotion. There is nothing that you can go through—no heights or depths that you can struggle with—that David did not experience. David experienced emotions from the exultation of victory, to the depths of despair and discouragement. But we see in the Psalms that David worked through and processed these feelings. He put into words things that we sometimes have a hard time expressing. Sometimes we have trouble expressing in words things we are going through. That is part of the value of the Psalms. They are written in a poetic fashion and in a way that lends them to meditation. The Psalms were written to be thought about, to be meditated upon and to be committed to memory. There are areas of the Psalms that mirror all sorts of emotions and feelings.

David wrote this third Psalm when he was fleeing from Absalom. It was a low point in his life. A lot of people were ready to desert him. You find out who your friends are, not when you are up and on top, but when you are down on the bottom. If you are on top, everybody is your friend. You can walk into a bar and say, 'The drinks are on me,' and everybody in there is your buddy. You have a room full of friends. But walk in someplace when you're "down and out." You say, 'Can anybody loan me a dollar?' You find out how quickly they can all "disappear into the woodwork."

When David was king, don't you think that everybody wanted to curry David's favor? Everybody wanted to be nice to him. Boy, David was a popular fellow. He was king. Everybody wanted to "butter him up."

When Absalom staged a coup, a lot of people thought Absalom was going to be in charge. So, everybody who had ever had anything against David, as well as those who just simply wanted to play politics, were immediately on the other side. David did not want to have to fight against his own son and he did not want Jerusalem to be destroyed—so he left. He fled. That must have been a low point for David in so many ways—all

of the feelings and emotions that he was going through.

It's sort of interesting. During the last attempted coup in the Soviet Union, since some obviously took the wrong side and some wanted to straddle the fence, they were conveniently sick. In fact, some of those got fired, too. All of a sudden, they had—what do you call it?—the "diplomatic flu." They wanted to see which side was going to win. They didn't want to come down on the wrong side. So, all of a sudden, they didn't feel so good and thought they ought to go to bed. Just as soon as the coup was over, they started feeling better and they knew which side they were on. They were on the winning side. 'Which one won? Okay, that's the one I am for.' Do you realize how often this is the case in life? That sort of illustrated it, but it can happen on a smaller scale in our lives. It happened to David.

He said, "Lord, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me." All of a sudden, here were people "popping up out of the woodwork"—people who never would have voiced displeasure with David before. But since they thought he was "down and out," they were going to kick him, too. People were saying, 'Yeah, he's done for.'

"There is no help for him in God." 'He's history; even God can't save him now.' That was not a very smart thing to say. But David at that depth, in terms of what he was going through and struggling with, recognized that God was a shield.

He pleaded with God.

Verses 7-8, "Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God! For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone; you have broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongs to the Lord. Your blessing is upon Your people. Selah" David recognized, in his depths, that salvation came from God.

Psalm 4:1, "Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me when I was in distress; have mercy on me, and hear my prayer." David understood that God is the source of help. When you are in trouble, you can go to God.

Verse 4, KJV, "Stand in awe [be impressed with God], and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still." In other words, lie there and meditate. Don't follow and practice sin; spend some time in quiet contemplation.

Verse 5, "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord." See! That's the source.

Verse 8, the result of this is, “I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.” David said he could lie down and get a good night’s sleep because he put it in God’s hands. He turned it over to Him.

Psalm 5:1, “Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation.”

Verse 3, “My voice You shall hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up.” David began his day by praying to God. Here is a good indication that starting our day in prayer is something important for us to do.

Verse 4, “For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You.” God knows who’s who and He knows what’s what. We can’t fool God. We can’t play games with God. We find that God does not take sin lightly.

Verses 5-6, “The boastful [KJV, “foolish”] shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy those who speak falsehood [deceit]; the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.” God takes deceit and hypocrisy very seriously. That’s a serious matter.

Verse 9, he talks about these individuals who are not faithful and truthful.

Psalm 6:1-2, “O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger, nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are troubled.” David goes to God and asks God to deal with him gently and mercifully. He knew that he needed God’s chastening and correction, but he asked God to please do so gently and kindly and in mercy.

Verses 4-5, “Return, O Lord, deliver me! Oh, save me for Your mercies’ sake! For in death there is no remembrance of You; in the grave who will give You thanks?”

Here’s a verse that shows the state of the dead, ‘in death there is no remembrance of God; in the grave who is going to give thanks?’ When you are dead, you are dead. David again focused in on this sort of thinking.

Before we get too far along, let me make a couple of comments on Psalm 2 because there is one thing I neglected to mention.

Verses 3-4 mention God laughing at puny man’s silly attempt to throw off God’s rule.

Psalm 2:7-9, “I will declare the decree: the Lord has said to Me, “You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break

them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.””

God gave Christ instructions as to how to rule the nations. He said, ‘I am going to give You the nations for Your inheritance. I am going to give them to You for You to rule over.’ Then God the Father proceeded to instruct Christ as to how the nations should be ruled.

In Revelation 2, we find this quoted as Jesus is speaking to the Churches.

Revelation 2:26, ““And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations...”” The Father gave Christ power over the nations, and Christ is going to give power over the nations to those who are faithful and keep His works to the end.

Verse 27, ““He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the potter’s vessels shall be broken to pieces—as I also have received from My Father...””

We are seeing that Christ is going to govern as the Father would govern. Converted Christians who are in God’s Kingdom and have been given power over the nations will govern as Christ would govern. We will govern as Christ will govern, and Christ will govern as the Father would govern. God’s rule is going to be exercised with mercy and with power.

Psalm 7:1-2, again this theme of salvation, “O Lord my God, in You I put my trust; save me from all those who persecute me; and deliver me, lest they tear me like a lion, ....” Again, there is this focus on a need for personal deliverance and salvation.

Verse 17, “I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High.”

Psalm 8:1, “O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth, You who set Your glory above the heavens!”

Verses 3-5, “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor.”

Verses 4-8, reading out of the Jewish translation, “what is man, that You are mindful of him; the son of man, that You think of him? Yet You made him but a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor, You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands, You have put all things under his feet—sheep, oxen, yes, the beasts of the field,

the fowls of the air, the fish of the sea, whatever passes through the paths of the seas.”

Hebrews 2: 6-8, this section is actually quoted, “...‘What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You made him a little lower than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.”

We find an emphasis that man is ultimately to be given rulership over all things. “You made him a little lower than the angels” in that we are mortal, physical and subject to death. But God has in mind a destiny for us that far transcends any of the angels. What is man’s place in the universe? Well, God has given man a very special place because He has made him to have dominion over all God has, over all the things God has created. Man has been made to have dominion.

Romans 8:17, “and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, ....” If we are heirs of God, then that means we are going to inherit and are going to have rulership over the things that God has made. So, man’s place in the universe is a very special place because God has made man to share life with Him as part of His Family throughout eternity and to have a relationship with God that no other sort of being can have. David understood and expressed that.

Psalms 9:1, “I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works.” He talks about the greatness of God.

Verse 7, “But the Lord shall endure forever; ....”

Verse 8, “He shall judge the world in righteousness, ....”

Verse 10, “And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; for You, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You.”

Let me comment a little bit on the expression, “those who know Your name will put their trust in You.” There have been various groups that have laid great emphasis on what they term the “sacred name.” There have been those who have even gone out from the Church, and there are other groups that have built virtually their whole religion around Psalm 9:10.

“And those who know Your name put their trust in You.” They make a big deal about what they call the “sacred name,” which is the Hebrew pronunciation of God’s name. These groups have split into about three or four different groups because they can’t agree on the pronunciation of

God’s name. There is The Assemblies of YHVH and The Assemblies of YHWH, and they have about three or four groups because they can’t agree whether it is YHVH or YHWH, etc. They wrangle about how it should be said.

The point that we should understand is: what does it mean to know God’s name? It doesn’t mean just to be able to phonetically pronounce the Hebrew. God’s name is not some sort of magic word like “Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp” or “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves” who had the magic words, “open sesame,” and it all opened up. God’s name is not some sort of magic incantation or magic word that you say the name just right and this sort of opens things up. Names have meanings. A name describes and identifies.

In the Scriptures, the names that people were given had meaning in the language that people understood what the meanings were. God’s names define and describe God. The language we use depends on our native language.

Some of these “sacred-name” groups make a big issue over the fact that the letter “J” (as it is pronounced in English) didn’t exist in the Greek or Hebrew alphabet. That’s certainly true. There are several other letters that didn’t exist and there are letters they have that we don’t have. So? You make the letter “J” and an Englishman will look at it and pronounce it as “Ja.” An Englishman will pronounce Jesus, “Jesus.” But you show it to a Spaniard, and that’s not what he gets out of it. He will say, “Hasoos.” A Frenchman will say, “Jasus.”

The point is not the phonetic pronunciation that varies from language to language. The same letter has different sounds depending on the language. The phonetic sound is just the characteristic of language. It’s not that God can’t understand you unless you have somehow learned the language. Even in the same language, some of the pronunciation changes over a period of time. You don’t have to go back and learn Hebrew as it was spoken 3,000 years ago for God to understand.

The thing about God’s names is that God’s names describe Him. God’s names tell you that He is Eternal and Almighty. God’s names tell you He is the Creator and that He is our Father. There are all sorts of descriptive terms that are characteristic of God’s name. “They who know Your name” means those who understand who God is, those who understand His character and His nature because God’s names describe Him. God’s names tell us what He’s like and that’s what it means to know His name. We are to put



our trust in Him, to understand His nature, His character, His rank and His position.

Psalm 10:1-3, “Why do You stand afar off, O Lord? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble? The wicked in his pride persecutes the poor; let them be caught in the plots which they have devised. For the wicked boasts of his heart’s desire; he blesses the greedy and renounces the Lord.” Have you ever felt like that? Have you ever wondered, “Why doesn’t God do something? Why does it seem like God is standing way off? Why is God seemingly gone way off in a time of trouble? People are doing things they should not do and they seem to be getting by with it. They are not even trying.”

Verse 4, “The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts.”

He goes through and describes this way of thinking and the problems and the things that result from it. He describes the attitude of the wicked.

Verses 16-18, “The Lord is King forever and ever; the nations have perished out of His land. Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will prepare their heart; You will cause Your ear to hear, to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may oppress no more.” David understood, even in the midst of seeing things that contradicted it, that God was going to intervene. In the midst of seeing things that shouldn’t be going on, David understood that God was going to judge.

Psalm 11:1, “In the Lord I put my trust; ?...” ‘I am going to trust in God.’

Verses 3-5, “If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord’s throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men. The Lord tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates.” God may try and test the righteous. He may test His people. He may allow us to go through trials and tests, but He will ultimately save us. God is in charge. He is in His holy temple. What can you do? Recognize that God is in charge. He knows what’s going on and while He may allow His people to be tried and tested, God is going to take note of His people.

Here is another point in David’s life.

Psalm 12:1-2, “Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases! For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men. They speak idly everyone with his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.” David looked around. It seemed like people who weren’t trying to do

what was right were multiplying and good people were in trouble and perishing. Good people were harder and harder to find and farther and farther between. David is crying out for salvation. As you go through, you find that David puts into words these feelings and things that he encountered—the trials and the tests of faith.

Verses 6-7, he worked through to realize that, “The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. You shall keep them, O Lord, You shall preserve them from this generation forever.” God’s words are pure and true.

Have you ever felt forgotten? David did.

Psalm 13:1, “How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?” Do you ever feel like that? Do you ever feel like God isn’t listening, like God was off somewhere hiding from you? David felt like that, too.

Verse 3, so he beseeches God and he says, “Consider and hear me, O Lord my God; enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death...”

Verses 5-6, “But I have trusted in Your mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because He has dealt bountifully with me.” David, again, worked through. When he started out, his focus was on how he felt forgotten and abandoned, but as he focused in on it, he realized that God was really the source of blessings and that God really had blessed him. So, by the end of the Psalm, he started to count his blessings rather than count his troubles. That’s an important part of dealing with trials. If we sit down and make a ten-page list of our troubles and about a three-line list of our blessings, our perspective is all messed up. It is important that we focus, even in the midst of our trials, on the fact that God really provides help and blessings in so many ways.

Psalm 14:1, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good.” God labels a fool anyone who can look around and see all the things God has made (the witness of creation) and can simply say that there is no God. God defines as a fool somebody who simply refuses to acknowledge the existence of God in the midst of all the witness to the contrary.

Psalm 15:1, “Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?” ‘Who’s going to be there in Your Kingdom? Who’s going to dwell there?’

Verses 2-4, “He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart; he who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend; in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the Lord; he who swears to his own hurt and does not change...” –Somebody who is a man of his word or a woman of her word, an individual who means what he says.

One of the major factors of the multiplication of lawsuits and all sorts of civil suits that we have is simply because people don’t want to do what they agreed to do. They are not willing to ‘swear to their own hurt and then not change.’ They make an agreement to do something, it gets inconvenient and they don’t want to do it anymore.

God says, ‘You make an agreement; you give your word and stick to what you say.’

Verse 5, “He who does not put out his money at usury, ....” This is not a reference to a business arrangement but to personal loans. This is a matter of making a profit off of somebody else’s troubles. It’s sort of a “loan-shark” type of an approach—if somebody’s in trouble and in dire straits, you make money off of their distress. One of the things that God does indict through the Scriptures, in terms of dealing with people, has to do with those who take advantage of somebody in trouble. Society has always had those who hover around the edges waiting to catch somebody in trouble and take advantage of them.

Verse 5, continuing, “...nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.” The way to endure (to last) is to latch on to the values that will endure.

Psalm 16:1, again a plea for salvation, “Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust.”

Verses 9-10, “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol [hell, the grave], nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” Here is a prophecy of the resurrection of Christ.

“You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” This is quoted in Acts 13:35 and is applied to Christ’s resurrection. The prophecy was made that the Messiah would not remain in the grave. He would not corrupt, decay and return to the earth, but would obviously be restored to life and would come forth as He did.

Psalm 17:8, “Keep me as the apple of Your eye; hide me under the shadow of Your wings...” The

expression “apple of your eye”—an expression that we use in English—is actually derived from the Bible. It is an expression in Hebrew, translated into English, so it is quoted as an English proverb.

Notice a reference to the resurrection.

Verse 15, “As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.” Here’s a reference to the fact that David knew he was going to wake up and he would see God’s face in righteousness.

Psalm 18:1-3, “I will love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; ....”

It describes God’s greatness. David describes God’s greatness and power. He describes God as the deliverer. ‘God is my Rock, my fortress, my deliverer and my strength.’ He is the One that we can depend on. God is the God of our salvation. He is the One we can count on. There is nothing too hard for Him. He describes these things in a very poetic way.

Verses 9-10, “He bowed the heavens also, and came down with darkness under His feet. And He rode upon a cherub, and flew; He flew upon the wings of the wind.”

Psalm 18 is a very beautiful psalm.

Verses 25-26, “With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; with a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless; with the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the devious [KJV, “froward”] You will show Yourself shrewd [KJV, “froward”].”

This term “froward” is actually translated from two different Hebrew words. When it says, “with the froward,” the Hebrew word “*iqqesh*” means “crooked” or “perverse.” A totally different word is used when it says, “You [referring to God] will show Yourself froward [Hebrew, “*pathal*”]” or “You will show Yourself a hard adversary.” With those who are crooked and perverse, God will show Himself a hard adversary. With merciful people, God will be merciful. For those who are upright, just and fair, He will deal justly and fairly. With those who are pure, He will deal purely. With those who are crooked and perverse, He is going to show Himself as a hard adversary. God is described as our source, the One to whom we can look.

Verse 31, “For who is God, except the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God?” God is the One who can be counted on.

Verse 46, “The Lord lives! Blessed be my Rock! Let the God of my salvation be exalted.”

Psalm 19:1, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” The glory, the power and the greatness of God are declared when you look up at what God has made. You can imagine David as he stood out there, particularly as a shepherd boy keeping watch over his father’s sheep in the field at night. There is something about being out of the city, out in an area that is clear or maybe up on a hill or an area where there is not a lot of light or anything around. It seems like the sky is just filled with stars.

I know it has impressed me several different times when I would drive to visit my mother who lives out in the country. We would get there late at night, step out of the car, and I would look up. It was like I had forgotten how many stars there were because you never see stars like that in Baton Rouge or Houston where we used to live. You could look up and see an odd star here and there, but there is so much diffused light that you simply don’t see many stars. Even out in the country if you have a lot of lights around, you don’t see as much. But if you get out into an area that is out away from town where there is not a lot of light around, it is just incredible. The sky is alive with stars. “The heavens declare the glory of God.” It is so impressive.

Verses 7-9, it continues and describes God’s greatness, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”

God’s Law (the Torah) is perfect, converting and restoring our lives. God’s law is perfect and it points, leads and instructs us in the direction that leads to life. God’s testimonies are sure; they make wise the simple. Testimonies are the examples and illustrations that are a source of wisdom. We may not have a lot of experience, but we can read the account of God working in the lives of people—men, women, young and old. You see the things they went through, the things they experienced and the way that God viewed it and dealt with it. It is a source of experience and makes wise the simple. God’s statutes are right; His commandments are pure. God’s law, when you give thought to it, directs you. That’s what it is there for.

Psalm 20:1-2, again, a plea for salvation, “May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble; may the name of the God of Jacob defend you; may He send you help from the sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion...”

Psalm 21:1, “The king shall have joy in Your strength, O Lord; and in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!” –Again, a focus on salvation.

Psalm 22 is a Psalm that ties in very directly with the crucifixion of Christ. We find that the first words of Psalm 22 are the words that are recorded back in Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34. They are the words that Jesus spoke as He hung there.

Psalm 22:1-2, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent.” If you read Psalm 22, you will realize that most of this is what Christ would have been meditating on. It was expressive of what He was going through.

Verses 28-29, “For the kingdom is the Lord’s, and He rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth shall eat and worship; all those who go down to the dust shall bow before Him, even he who cannot keep himself alive.” Nobody can hang on to life. When it starts ebbing away, you can’t hold on to it. You don’t have the power to keep yourself alive.

Verses 30-31, the prophecy of Christ is, “A posterity [KJV, “seed”] shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation, they will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has done this.” “He has done this.” A preferable translation would be, “It is finished.” It would be better rendered, “It has been done.”

John 19:30, it ties in with the statement that Christ quoted, “...‘It is finished!’” It is quoted in the Aramaic form of the Greek. If you were to translate it back into the language that Christ spoke, it would be almost identical to the ending of Psalm 22:31. This is undoubtedly the tie-in.

Just as Psalm 22 reflects the thoughts and feelings of what Jesus went through as His life was ebbing away (paying for your sins and mine), Psalm 23 must certainly reflect the day of the wave sheaf (the day in the aftermath of His resurrection).

Psalm 23:1, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”

Verse 3, “He restores my soul; ....” ‘He restores my life.’

Verse 6, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Psalms 22 and Psalm 23 go together in that sense. Psalm 22 reflects the sense of aloneness, of being forsaken; then the recognition that God is the source of salvation and the exultation is in Psalm 23.

Psalm 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein." The focus is that God owns everything.

Psalm 25:1-2, "To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in You; let me not be ashamed; let not my enemies triumph over me."

Verses 4-6, "Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day. Remember, O Lord, Your tender mercies and your lovingkindnesses, for they have been from of old."

Verses 8-9, "Good and upright is the Lord; therefore He teaches sinners in the way. The humble [KJV, "meek"] He guides in justice, and the humble [meek] He teaches His way." We can trust God. Again, God is the source of our salvation.

Psalm 26:1-3, "Vindicate [KJV, "Judge"] me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity. I have also trusted in the Lord; I shall not slip. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my mind and my heart. For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth." He asks God to examine him. That's what he is saying here in the first couple of verses. He wants God to really examine and look at him. God knows us from the inside out. God is the One who can show us our secret sins. God is the One who can help us to see what we don't see. David was seeking to walk before God in sincerity and truth. He trusted God and he asked God to examine him, to try him and to help him to see himself.

Psalm 27:1, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Again, this is a matter of personal salvation. "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?"

Verse 9, "Do not hide Your face from me; do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; do not leave me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation."

Verse 11, "Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies." Again, God is the source of our deliverance, our salvation.

Psalm 28:1, "To You I will cry, O Lord my Rock: Do not be silent to me, lest, if You are silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit."

Psalm 29:1-2, "Give [ascribe] unto the Lord, O you mighty ones, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; worship the Lord in the beauty [majesty] of holiness."

It describes God's power.

Verses 3-4, "The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders; the Lord is over many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty." It describes the greatness and the power of God. Much of the symbolism of Psalm 29 is like a storm, the thunder, etc. It describes the wind and the shaking of everything.

Verses 5-8, "The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars, yes, the Lord splinters the cedars of Lebanon. He makes them also skip like a calf, Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox. The voice of the Lord divides the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the Wilderness of Kadesh." Here is a description of all these things.

Verse 11, then it ends up, "The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace."

I would like to read a comment from the *Soncino Jewish Commentary* in reference to Psalm 29. "A thrilling description of a storm, a verbal symphony in which the shadowing peels of thunder reverberating around the hills is reproduced in words with realistic effect. The Hebrew poet, however, cannot rest satisfied with a word picture. His religious genius induced him to interpret the thunderclaps as the majestic voice of God. The Psalm is included in the Sabbath liturgy. It is one of the seven Sabbath songs. [Psalm 29 is the only Sabbath Psalm in this section of Psalms; the others are all in Book Four of Psalms.] Furthermore, the closing note 'peace' coming at the end of the poem of the storm is particularly apt for the day of rest which introduces a period of calm after the storm of everyday life and conflicts."

Psalm 29 is one of the seven Psalms that were read in the temple every Sabbath. For the others, go back to about Psalm 92 (the second of those), followed by 95, 96, 97, 98 and 99. Those are the seven Psalms that were traditionally recited in the temple at the beginning of the Sabbath. Other portions were gone through, but these seven were read every Sabbath. They came to be known as the seven "Sabbath Psalms."

Psalm 30:1, “I will extol You, O Lord, for You have lifted me up, and have not let my foes rejoice over me.”

Psalm 31:1-2, “In You, O Lord, I put my trust; let me never be ashamed; deliver me in Your righteousness. Bow down Your ear to me, deliver me speedily; be my rock of refuge, a fortress of defense to save me.”

Verse 5, “Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.”

Verse 15, “My times are in Your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.” –Again, a reference to salvation and a reference to trust in God for deliverance.

Psalm 32:1-2, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit is no guile.” The most blessed state to be in is the state of being forgiven.

Verse 5, “I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.’ And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.” When we do that, we can be forgiven. We don’t have to live under a cloud and a shadow.

Psalm 33:1-3, “Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful. Praise the Lord with the harp; make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy.”

It describes the greatness of God.

Verses 16-19, “No king is saved by the multitude of an army; a mighty man is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a vain hope for safety; neither shall it deliver any by its great strength. Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.”

The real outcome of wars and battles is determined by God—not by the size of the army, not by the implements and the technology and all of these things. Those are not the real determining factors. The real determining factor is the fact that, ‘the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him.’

Psalm 34:1, “I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.”

David spends a lot of time praising God. It is an important thing to understand. A very important key is brought out in Romans 1. Do you know the progression that took people away from God in the world after the flood? It is exactly the

same progression that takes young people out of the Church. Any young person who grows up in the Church and leaves the Church follows that same progression.

Romans 1:21, it says, “...although they knew God, ...” That’s the state of somebody who grows up in the Church. That was the state of all humanity when they got off the ark. Everybody—Noah, Mrs. Noah and the three little Noah’s and their wives—they all knew God. Nobody had the question, “Does God exist?” They had just gone through a pretty dramatic evidence of that.

Romans 1:21, but it says, “...[when] they knew God [that was the starting point], they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful [What happened as a result of not glorifying God and being thankful?], but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” There is a progression from light to darkness, a progression from knowing God to living in spiritual darkness. The progression starts when we cease to glorify God and to be thankful and appreciative to Him for His calling.

David spent a lot of time praising and glorifying God. That’s one of the things you find that comes out over and over in the Psalms. David stood in awe of God. He was impressed with God. He thought a lot about God. He counted his blessings. Some people only count their troubles. David had troubles, too. He mentioned those troubles and talked about those troubles. There were times when things bothered him, but he did not let that become the “end-all” and all of his focus. He glorified God and he was thankful.

I think that’s one of the most important and valuable things. If a young person growing up does not learn to appreciate and value God’s calling and truth, if he doesn’t learn to love God and to appreciate and value God’s calling and truth, then he will ultimately treat it cheaply and become vain in his imagination. That will lead to actually losing the understanding that he had at one time.

Psalm 34:2, “My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear of it and be glad.”

Verse 6, “This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.”

Verses 12-15, “Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry.” God hears those who serve Him.

Verses 17-19, “The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit [those who practice repentance]. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” God’s people may have many afflictions, but God will deliver.

Verse 22, “The Lord redeems the soul of His servants, and none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.” God is the source of salvation. He is the source of redemption.

Psalm 35:1, “Plead my cause, O Lord, with those who strive with me; ....”

Notice what David did.

Verse 13, “But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; and my prayer would return to my own heart.” How did David humble himself? He humbled himself with fasting. That’s one of the purposes of fasting. It is a means by which we humble ourselves before God and draw near to God.

Psalm 36:1, “An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes.” If God was real to people and if they were really impressed with Him, they wouldn’t do some of the things they do. It describes that.

Psalm 37 is a very important Psalm. I think it is a good one to go to and meditate on when you are having trouble.

Psalm 37:1, “Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.” Don’t get all worked up and bothered because of people who are doing what’s wrong. Why?

Verses 2-5, “For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.”

Verse 7, “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.” The point is that no matter what somebody seems to be getting by with, that’s not the permanent state of things.

It is so easy sometimes to fret because of evildoers. We get all worked up because we feel somebody is getting by with something and that’s not right. That’s not fair because maybe they are getting by with it at our expense. That always seems so unfair. If they are getting by with it at somebody else’s expense, we feel like

“that’s too bad,” but if it’s at our expense, then that becomes a matter that’s very important. What’s the joke? What’s the difference between a recession and a depression? A recession is when your neighbor has lost his job; a depression is when you have lost yours. It is a matter of perspective. We feel “that’s too bad” when it happens to our neighbor, but when it happens to us, it’s really serious. God says don’t worry about it. What’s the alternative to worrying about it?

“Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.”

What am I going to do?

Verses 7-8, “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret—it only causes harm.” Why?

Verses 9-11, “For evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; indeed, you will look diligently for his place, but it shall be no more. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”

Verse 18, “The Lord knows the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever.”

The point is that we must put it in God’s hands. We trust Him and it is ultimately going to sort out. God knows who’s who and what’s what. It is a matter of perspective. David had to work through and come to this point of realizing that the key is getting it in perspective and realizing there is a way of life that is going to last. There is a way of life that is going to endure forever because God is going to intervene and God’s salvation is coming. But just as God is going to deliver His people, there is going to come a time of reckoning to those who aren’t His people.

Psalm 38:1, “O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your wrath, nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure!”

We ask God to correct us, but we look for mercy and ask God to do so gently. That’s always an important thing to include. When we ask God for correction, ask Him to please do it very gently.

Psalm 39:1, “I said, ‘I will guard my ways, lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, while the wicked are before me.’”

David did not want to sin with his tongue. He wanted to control what he said.

Verse 6, an interesting statement is made, “‘Surely every man walks about like a shadow

[or, “every man walks in an image”] [KJV, “in a vain show”]; surely they busy themselves in vain; he heaps up riches and does not know who will gather them.”

Human nature is such that we seek to project this image, rather than to get down to the reality. In the midst of our fears and insecurities, in a matter of trying to impress one another, we walk in an image. We project this image that we try to measure up to and live up to. The point is that we need to get down to the reality and ask God to really help us to deal with things as they are and with ourselves as we really are.

Psalm 40:1, again, the theme is salvation, “I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry.” “I will wait for God.”

Verses 16-17, “Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; let such as love Your salvation say continually, ‘The Lord be magnified!’ But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God.”

Psalm 41 ends this section of the Psalms.

Psalm 41:1-2, “Blessed is he who considers the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, ....”

When we put into practice God’s way of life, it is not enough to simply darken the door of our Church or to sort of walk in and warm a seat. That’s not what impresses God. Religion is not something you put on and put off like your Sabbath suit. It is not something to be taken off, put in the closet and kept there all week, then to be taken out, dusted off and worn again on the next Sabbath. Religion is to be a way of life; it is to be the way we function.

“Blessed is he who considers the poor [This is someone who practices, in his everyday life, God’s attitude of mercy and concern.]; the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble.” The person who can look to God for help in the time of trouble is the one who is trying to live and practice God’s way day in and day out. If the only time you ever make God’s acquaintance is when you’re in trouble and you go along ignoring God all the rest of the time, then, all of a sudden, you get in a jam—it’s like, ‘Where’s God?’ We need to be looking for God and trying to practice God’s way in our day-to-day life because God takes note of that.

Verse 9 is a prophecy that is quoted in the New Testament (John 13:18) as a reference to Judas Iscariot.

Verse 13, this section ends up, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen.”

There is a reference that runs throughout the first section of the Psalms—Book One of Psalms—that is a reference to salvation, a reference to our need for God’s deliverance. This section, in focusing in on a need for salvation, focuses in on why we need salvation. We need God’s deliverance; we can’t deliver ourselves. We find ourselves in any number of problems and difficulties. We need God’s deliverance and God can be counted on. God is there. God is the One who we can look to and count on to deliver us in time of adversity.

This theme of salvation that runs through the first section of Psalms corresponds with the first book of the Festival Scrolls—Song of Solomon—that was read at the Passover season. It certainly focuses in on the theme of personal salvation.

In the book of the Law, the book of Genesis is the first book of the Law. The book of Genesis introduces what? It introduces the need for individual salvation. It introduces Adam and Eve and their sin, that God promised deliverance and salvation through the Seed of woman (that’s how God was going to accomplish salvation) and the working and development of God’s promises of the Messiah through the family of Abraham. All this is developed in the book of Genesis. So, there is this correspondence that we would note and a theme of salvation and of deliverance.

There is a tremendous amount. We have just sort of skimmed the high spots of these first 41 Psalms. These Psalms will give you something you can go through and focus in and meditate on. We realize there is a tremendous amount that God has packed into the Psalms that are there for us to meditate on, to think about, that can help us sort of get things into perspective when we’re going through difficulties and things in our lives. Next Bible study we will cover Book Two of Psalms—Psalms 42—72.





Bible Study # 77  
October 8, 1991  
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Book Two—Psalms 42—72

This evening we are continuing our focus on a survey of the Writings. We are going through the section of the Old Testament Scriptures known as the Writings and, in particular, the book of Psalms. This evening we **are focusing on Book Two of Psalms—Psalms 42—72.**

**As we move through this section, we start our focus on Israel's ruin and their problems. At the end of the section, we will then focus in on the Redeemer and the redemption that God will finally give Israel.**

**We will note that this section of the book of Psalms corresponds with the second book of the Law, Exodus, as well as the second book of the Festival Scrolls, Ruth, which was read at Pentecost.** This section of Scripture opens with a lament, much as the book of Exodus opens. The book of Exodus opens with the children of Israel crying out to God in their affliction and their need for deliverance. There is a focus on the helpless condition and the need for God to act as Redeemer and Deliverer. There is a need for God's role. Our need for God is the issue that is addressed in the beginning of the book of Exodus and here in this second section of Psalms because that sets the stage for the recognition of salvation, of redemption. You have to first recognize your need in order to recognize the importance of God's plan, God's promises and the things that God proposes to us.

Psalms 45, which is a part of this section, celebrates a royal marriage and this, in many ways, parallels the story of Ruth. Ruth has parallels because part of the symbolism of Pentecost is tied in with the institution of the Old Covenant and then of the New Covenant. Both covenants were marriage covenants. Pentecost represented the Old Covenant in Mount Sinai—a marriage covenant between God and Israel. The Jews have focused in on that and of the connection between that and the marriage of Israel to the God of the Old Testament. That analogy was given because human marriage is, in reality, a type of the relationship between Christ and the Church.

Psalms 68, which is also found in this section, is traditionally known in orthodox Jewish synagogues as the "Pentecost anthem." The Jews

have connected much of the symbolism of this particular Psalm with the revelation at Mount Sinai. The revelation at Sinai and the giving of the Ten Commandments is understood by Jewish tradition to have been on the first Pentecost that was celebrated.

That fits right in because that was the institution of the Old Covenant, just as the New Covenant was instituted on Pentecost 31 A.D. with the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit. Under the Old Covenant, the law of God was written by the finger of God on tables of stone; under the New Covenant, the law of God is written by the Spirit of God in the tables of our hearts and minds. That's really the fundamental and basic difference between the Old and the New Covenant. It is not that one is based on law and the other is based on grace.

To begin with, God's election (God's calling) of Israel is based on grace. Anytime God delivers benefits to human beings, God's grace is involved because none of us have ever earned or deserved the blessings and benefits that God bestows. That's an important aspect in understanding that the fundamental difference between the covenants has to do with the giving of God's Holy Spirit, and God's Holy Spirit is what makes possible putting the law of God into our hearts and minds.

Other Psalms that we will note in this particular section are Psalm 51 and Psalm 47. Psalm 51 is David's Psalm of repentance. Psalm 47, according to the *Soncino Jewish Commentary*, is a focus on God's universal rulership. Psalm 47 is recited in the synagogue before the sounding of the shofar (the ram's horn) on the Feast of Trumpets—a day when the liturgy dwells on the thought of God's universal sovereignty.

We will start out here in Psalm 42. It certainly ties in very directly in terms of the time of Pentecost because it opens up with a deep thirst.

Psalm 42:1-2, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." The focus at the beginning is on a deep thirst.

You can tie this in with what Jesus told the woman at the well in Samaria.

John 4:10, "Jesus answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, "Give Me a drink," you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.'"

Verse 11, she wanted to know from where this living water came.

Verses 13-14, "Jesus answered and said to her, 'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again,

but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” He told her that whoever drank of the water that came from Jacob’s well would get thirsty again, but the water that He had to offer was water that would permanently quench thirst. Now, the water that Jesus made reference to was not just a physical drink of water that would quench a physical thirst. He was talking about the Spirit of God and the deep spiritual thirst.

Psalms 42 opens with this recognition of a deep spiritual thirst, a thirst that can only be fulfilled by God, “My soul thirsts for God, the living God.”

One of the things we note here in Psalm 42 is the extent to which David had to deal with many of the feelings that all of us have to contend with at one time or another. David had to deal with depression and discouragement.

Psalm 42:3, “My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say to me, ‘Where is your God?’”

Verses 5-6, “Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? [David is verbalizing his feelings.] Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore I will remember You....”

Verse 9, “I will say to God my Rock, ‘Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?’” David was discouraged. He was really down. He recognized his need for what only God was the source of or what only God could give. He recognized that what he ultimately needed was God’s Holy Spirit. He needed the quenching of that deep spiritual thirst.

One of the purposes and part of the value of the Psalms is the fact that every gamut of human emotions—from every high to every low, up and down and all the in-betweens—all of these emotions are expressed and verbalized in the Psalms. It’s a good place to go to put into words things that we are feeling and wrestling with and the ways that God’s people are to deal with those feelings. Generally, King David worked through those feelings. He addressed them; he faced and dealt with them. David likened his need for God to a deep intense thirst.

Psalm 43:1, “Vindicate [KJV, “Judge”] me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; oh, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man!” You could certainly parallel this to

the cry right at the beginning of the book of Exodus.

Psalm 44:1-3, “We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what deeds You did in their days, in days of old: How You drove out the nations with Your hand, but them You planted; how You afflicted the peoples, and cast them out. For they did not gain possession of the land by their own sword, nor did their own arm save them; but it was your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your countenance, because You favored them.”

Israel didn’t win the Promised Land for themselves. God intervened and gave it to them. This is brought out right here in verse 3.

It’s interesting if you study a little bit of American history. When the early settlers first came to this country, the Pilgrims came to New England. There was a remarkable thing that took place over a period of time. There are two events that took place. First, there were plagues of diseases that swept the American continent, particularly the East Coast, in the 50 years prior to the arrival of the colonial settlement. The Indian population was greatly decimated as a result of this. This occurred even before any of the settlers arrived. There were some major disease epidemics that swept across and greatly lessened the population.

Second, there was a strain of bees that were introduced by the English settlers in New England that mated with the bees here. The Indians called them English hornets. And the interesting thing, it is a really remarkable parallel. These bees migrated about 50 miles west of the colonial settlement. In other words, they were always a little bit ahead in their migration across the continent. It was one of the things that cleared out a great deal of the Indian population in New England. It is a remarkable parallel (Exodus 23:28).

There was a *U. S. News & World Report* article on the subject two or three months ago. I think I may cover some of those things in a sermon at a later time because there are some very remarkable parallels in terms of how God gave the land.

When you study American History, I think one of the things you find is that our forefathers had far more in common with unconverted Jacob than they did with converted Israel. Remember when Jacob was converted, God changed his name to Israel. God made a promise to Jacob that he was going to give him the birthright blessing. But, remember, Jacob couldn’t wait for God to do it His way. He didn’t see the answer coming.

All he saw was Esau. How was God going to get rid of Esau? Since Jacob didn't see the answer, he assumed the solution was that he needed to do it. And, of course, he did it. He brought a lot of penalties, problems and complications down on his life as a result. He did it by trickery, fraud and deceit. God let him keep it because it was God's purpose to give it to him, but there were problems that he had in his later life because he didn't wait for God to give it to him. He "jumped the gun" and decided what he needed to do was sort of maneuver and manipulate and get it on his own.

There are some remarkable parallels with American history. God let us keep it because He promised it to Abraham and it was His purpose to give it to us. When you study American history and some of the dealing that we had, you recognize there's a lot of similarity with unconverted Jacob. Our ancestors had a lot more in common with unconverted Jacob than they did with converted Israel. They thought in some of the same ways and that engendered some of the resultant problems in American history.

There are many parallels in the Scriptures. God's purpose stands even when He's working through human beings who go charging off in their own direction. God is able to work it around and bring His purpose to pass, but there are lessons there for us to learn. When God makes us a promise, it's a lot better to wait and let Him do it His way, rather than decide that maybe God has forgotten or maybe He got preoccupied. So, we had better jump in, maneuver, manipulate and work it out our own way.

All of us certainly want to have more in common with converted Israel than we do with carnal, unconverted Jacob when it comes to the way we live our lives. If we don't, God may let us fall into the hands of "Uncle Laban," like He did Jacob, to get the point across that this is the way it feels to be dealt with—the way you've dealt with other people. God has ways of getting our attention and letting us realize that lesson.

Psalm 44:3 makes a point for Israel to understand that God gave them the land. It was not a matter that they get full credit. It was not because of their greatness but because God intervened.

Coming down, it talks about God's intervention and the fact that God is our source of help.

Psalm 45 is the Psalm that I mentioned earlier that is a celebration of a royal marriage.

Psalm 45:6-7, you might notice, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.

You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions." Here is one of the clearest proofs in the Old Testament of the fact that there were two members of the God Family—the Messiah and the One that we know as God the Father. This verse is quoted in Hebrews 1:8-9.

Hebrews 1:4-5, speaking of Jesus Christ, "having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did he ever say: 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You?'"

Verses 8-9, "But to the Son He says: 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom.' You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions."

Paul quotes Psalm 45:6-7 in Hebrews 1:8-9 and says very clearly that this is a reference to Jesus Christ. "Your throne O God is forever." "God, Your God has anointed You with the oil of gladness." The word "Messiah" in the Hebrew is a word that means "the Anointed One"—the One that has been chosen or anointed by God. The word "Christ" is simply our English form of a Greek word that means exactly the same thing—"the Anointed One." This is the term that is used right here. In fact, the term for "Messiah" is exactly what is used here when it says, "God has anointed You." That is actually the term that is used.

In Psalm 46, we focus in on the fact that through difficulties and calamities, God is our Protector.

Psalm 46:1-5, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling. There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn."

This is talking about the fact that 'God is our refuge and our strength' regardless of the problems that are going to come about, regardless of the calamities, difficulties, adversities, tribulation or tremendous cataclysmic events that are prophesied in the end time. It says 'God is our refuge and our strength. We don't need to fear though the earth be

removed and the mountains be carried in the midst of the sea.’ Regardless of the turmoil—all the chaos and all the things that transpire—we don’t have to worry and be filled with anxiety because God is the source of our refuge and our protection.

Psalm 47 is a celebration.

Psalm 47:1-2, “Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph! For the Lord Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth.”

Verse 3 talks about Him subduing the people.

Verses 7-8, “For God is the King of all the earth...God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne.”

Psalm 48:1, “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain.”

As we go through Psalms 46, 47 and 48, it is very clear that God is going to set up a literal government. It is not just some vague feeling in your heart; it is not flitting off to heaven somewhere.

Psalm 46:7-10, “The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Come, behold the works of the Lord, who has made desolations in the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”

Psalm 47:2, “For the Lord Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth.”

Verses 7-8, “For God is the King of all the earth; .... God reigns over the nations [heathens]; God sits on His holy throne.”

Psalm 48:1-2, “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain. Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.” –Very, very specific statements that all point to the fact of a literal reign by God on the earth from Jerusalem.

Verse 14 is a key verse to focus on and be aware of, “For this is God, our God forever and ever; He will be our guide even to death.” Or it would be best rendered, “even through death.” ‘He is our guide through death. He is our God forever and ever (for eternity) and He will guide us through death.’

There are not a lot of references in the Old Testament to the promise of eternal life. There are not a lot of clear direct references. The Sadducees did not accept the doctrine of the resurrection because they didn’t think it was

clearly taught in the five books of the law. Jesus told them it certainly was because God calls Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Matthew 22:31-32; Mark 12:26-27), and He made promises to them that are yet to be fulfilled.

Here is a statement in the Psalms that shows that God is going to be our God forever and ever. Then we would have to live forever and ever. He will guide us through death; He will be the One who brings us through.

Psalm 49:1-2, “Hear this, all you peoples; give ear, all you inhabitants of the world, both low and high, rich and poor together.”

Verses 6-10, “Those who trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him—for the redemption of their souls is costly, and it shall cease forever—that he should continue to live eternally, and not see the Pit. For he sees that wise men die; likewise the fool and the senseless person perish, and leave their wealth to others.”

The point is that it doesn’t matter how much money you have, there’s one thing that you will never be able to buy your way out of and that is death. People who have enough money can buy their way out of a lot of things. People have bought their way out of trouble and out of the army. People have bought their way out of a lot of different things and bought their way into some things such as a public office. But none of us possess the power or the wherewithal to redeem our souls from death. There’s nothing we can do to buy ourselves back from the grave or to redeem those that are close to us.

People have a desire for self-perpetuation. We desire that.

Verse 11, “Their inner thought is that their houses will continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names.”

People stick their names on things and sort of hope that somehow that’s going to perpetuate a memory of them. It doesn’t really do the trick. Sooner or later somebody else buys it out, changes the name, and then where are they? But there is that sense and that desire for self-perpetuation. We don’t like the idea that somehow we are just “snuffed out.” We cease to exist and there’s no memory or consciousness of us that remains. Our minds rebel at the fact that we just disappear like a blip on the screen and are never around again.

God has set within us a desire for something beyond the life here right now.

Ecclesiastes 3:11, "...He has put eternity in their hearts, ...." He has given us a sense of time, that sense of the future. He is ultimately the One that is the source of life beyond right now.

Psalm 49:12-15, "Nevertheless man, though in honor, does not remain; he is like the beasts that perish. This is the way of those who are foolish, and of their posterity who approve their sayings. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for He shall receive me." We can't redeem ourselves, but David understood that God would redeem us.

Verses 16-19, "Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dies he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lives he blesses himself (For men will praise you when you do well for yourself), he shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light."

It is a matter that we don't have the power to perpetuate ourselves, but there is a redemption that God offers.

Psalm 50:1, "The Mighty One, God the Lord, has spoken and called the earth from the rising of the sun to its going down."

Verse 14, "Offer to God thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High." This is an answer to the question God says up a little earlier.

Verses 11-15, "I know all the birds of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world is Mine, and all its fullness. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High. Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."

God doesn't need what we have. You don't bribe God. It's not a matter of how many sacrifices you offer. God doesn't need what you have. He doesn't need what I have. God doesn't need anything and if He did, He wouldn't have to borrow it from us.

You see some of these television preachers and you think God is on the verge of a giant liquidation sale. He's going to have to hang a going-out-of-business sign on the Pearly Gates if you don't hurry up and send in a little cash. That's not the case.

What does God want? Does God want or simply need what we have? No. You know what God

says He wants? "Offer to God thanksgiving and pay your vows to the Most High." In other words, keep your word, do what you're supposed to do. Be thankful and appreciative, and then you can call on God when you are in trouble. It's not a matter of "cutting a deal" with God or trying to bribe God by what you give. God says that it's simply a matter of being thankful to Him, being appreciative, recognizing that He's the source of everything and be thankful. Pay your vows unto the Most High. Do what you said you would do. For those of us who have been baptized, what did you say you would do? You said you would surrender your life and your will to God, that you would unconditionally surrender to God and that you wanted Jesus Christ to live His life in you.

In that sense, we made a vow to God. What God wants is for us to simply follow through on what we've said—not to have this sort of pagan idea of sort of appeasing God by giving Him something. God doesn't want what you have. God wants you; He wants me. He wants us—our lives, our hearts, our minds—not just a little bit of what we may happen to have. Everything we have, He gave it to us to begin with. It's all His.

Psalm 51 is David's Psalm of repentance, a very key Psalm.

One point that I think is important to understand and that is basic to repentance is that the natural human response, when confronted with sin, is either denial or blame it on somebody else—sort of "pass the buck." Go back to Genesis and in the first couple of accounts we have tells us that. In Genesis 4, God asked Cain, 'Where is your brother?' Cain said, 'How should I know? Am I my brother's keeper?' Did Cain know where his brother was? Well, of course, he did. His brother was where he left him. He had just knocked him in the head with a club. Cain sought to deny it. His first response was to deny it. He tried to make out like he knew nothing about it. That's human nature. That's generally what happens.

When a politician gets accused of something, the first thing he does is deny it. If the denial doesn't "wash," then he finds somebody to blame it on. That's not just unique to politicians. You and I probably have done that a time or two.

What did Adam and Eve do? In Genesis 3, God asked Adam, 'Did you eat of the fruit of the tree I told you not to?' That's just a "yes" or "no" question. All you have to do is say "yes" or "no, I didn't." Adam didn't say "yes" and he didn't say "no." He said, 'Well, now, the woman that You gave me, she took of the fruit of the tree and did eat. She gave me some and I kind of took a

little bite, also.’ He kind of tagged that onto the end. You know, “pass the buck.” Eve did the same thing. He asked Eve, ‘Is that so?’ She said, ‘Well, the serpent, he beguiled me. I was tricked. It’s not my fault.’

Those are the normal carnal reactions when we are confronted with sin. We try to deny it. We try to make excuses or try to find somebody to blame it on.

If you read Psalm 51, David did none of those things, and that is the reason he was a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22). When you go through what David had to say, there’s no mention where David said, ‘Well, God, don’t You think You’re being a little bit hard on me? After all, haven’t other people done something just as bad, and I don’t see where they got into as much trouble as I did. Why am I the one that’s getting all the “chewing out”?’ You said nothing to Bathsheba, and, after all, if she hadn’t been out there on that roof taking a bath, well, this never would have happened.’

Where’s the excuse? David didn’t blame anybody else. He didn’t blame Bathsheba. He didn’t say, ‘It was her husband’s fault. He was a lousy husband. If he hadn’t been the way he was, well, this never would have happened.’ He offered no excuses. He took responsibility, and this is a key because it goes against the grain of human nature.

When we are confronted with sin, our normal response is the response that Adam and Eve had. After all, they are our first parents and they set the pattern. That’s human nature. God doesn’t tell you how everybody responded every time they were confronted with sin, but He tells you how the first people responded because they set a pattern typical of humanity. God wants us to see. He gives us the illustration because He wants us to see that this is the way it looks and this is the way it sounds.

Psalm 51:1-5, but David said, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.”

He is not talking about the Catholic doctrine of original sin. This is a poetic expression saying, ‘I

am a sinner inside out. I’m a sinner from the beginning—that’s just a part of me.’

Verse 7, he said, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

Verses 9-10, “Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” David acknowledged his sin. He recognized that sin is ultimately against God. When we sin, there may have been another person who has been wronged by our sin, but all sin is ultimately against God.

Another thing that we notice about David is that he acknowledged his sin. He faced it and he didn’t offer excuses. But neither did David have the Catholic concept of penance. David threw himself on God’s mercy, but he stood ready to accept God’s forgiveness. Some people go around under this cloud of guilt and kind of beat themselves up. They never go beyond it.

Verses 10-13, David asked God, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.”

David said, “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation.” David didn’t want to just wallow around in some sort of pseudo-guilt for the rest of his life. He acknowledged his sin. He faced it. He went to God to deal with it. He went to God for forgiveness and for deliverance. He asked God to renew within him the joy of His salvation—to go forward.

God does not want penance; He wants repentance. You have to understand that the Catholic doctrine of penance goes back to a pagan concept where you can atone for your own sin through your own suffering. If that’s so, then why did Christ have to come and die? You could be your own savior if that were the case. It’s an important concept to understand. God isn’t interested in your penance. He is interested in your repentance; He is interested in your turning around and going the other direction.

Psalm 52:8-9, “But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever. I will praise You forever, because You have done it; and in the presence of Your saints I will wait on Your name, for it is good.”

Psalm 53:1, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” Anybody who’s come to that

conclusion, God says that's just foolish. Only a fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' It describes this particular process and way of thinking.

Psalm 54:1-2, "Save me, O God, by Your name, and vindicate me by Your strength. Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth."

Verse 4, "Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is with those who uphold my life."

In Psalm 55, David recognized that God is our Deliverer. Notice the context.

Psalm 55:1-6, "Give ear to my prayer, O God, and do not hide Yourself from my supplication. Attend to me, and hear me; I am restless in my complaint, and moan noisily, because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked; for they bring down trouble upon me, and in wrath they hate me. My heart is severely pained within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me [KJV, margin, "covered me"]. And I said, 'Oh, that I had wings like a dove! For then I would fly away and be at rest.'"

Have you ever gotten to the point that you wish you could sprout wings and fly away because you were at the end of your rope? David felt like that. "Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me." David said, 'It just covered me up. I'm just overwhelmed as a result of fear and turmoil, and I just wish I could sprout wings and fly away from it all.'

Verse 7, "'Indeed, I would wander far off, and remain in the wilderness.'" He said, 'I would get far away from here. If I could sprout wings and fly away like a dove, I would go as far out into the wilderness as I could get.'

Verse 8, "'I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.'" David said, 'I would get away from here.' Since he couldn't do that, what was he going to do?

Verses 16-17, "As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me. Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice." Since sprouting wings wasn't an alternative, what was he going to do? He said he was going to go to God. He was going to call on God and he knew that the Lord would save him. He was going to draw close to God. He would pray to God in the evening, in the morning and at noon. He was going to pray and cry aloud. He was going to really beseech God.

Here's the key and here is a part of how David worked through some of those things.

Verses 22-23, "Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved. But You, O God, shall bring them down to the pit of destruction; bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in You." God is ultimately going to deal with everybody. He says, "Cast your burden on the Lord and He shall sustain you."

When you are in the kind of condition David is talking about, the key is to turn it over to God. Go to God; draw near to God in prayer and cast your burden on Him. Turn loose of it and give it to Him.

Psalm 121:4 says, "Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." You know, there's no point for you to stay up all night worrying about something. Since God's already staying up, you might as well go to sleep because He is going to be up anyway. "He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." God is going to be up all night anyway. You might as well go to bed and get some rest. Give it to Him. 'Cast your burden on Him.' Sometimes we feel the need because we are afraid He is going to go to sleep. So, we had better stay up and worry about it because who's going to be tending to it? As though, somehow, staying up worrying, fretting and wringing our hands is going to solve it.

I understand it is hard to work through and actually put that into practice. But when you go through some of these Psalms and realize the things that David experienced and had to work through, it can be very helpful to focus in on certain ones like this when you are really bogged down with things.

Psalm 56:1-3, "Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up; fighting all day he oppresses me. My enemies would hound me all day, for there are many who fight against me, O Most High. Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You." Have you ever felt like you were surrounded? You are surrounded like Davy Crockett at the Alamo, or something, and you think you are just going to be swallowed up. David didn't say he wasn't afraid. He said, "Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You."

Verses 4-6, "In God (I will praise His word), in God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me? All day they twist my words; all their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather together, they hide, they mark my steps, when they lie in wait for my life."

They are creeping around and trying to trip us up. They are trying to twist what you say. David understood that. He knew what it was like to have people trying to gang up on him and get him in trouble. Maybe you are going through something like that on the job or have gone through this at one time or another.

David goes through and talks about that.

Verse 9, "When I cry out to You, then my enemies will turn back; this I know, because God is for me."

Verse 11, "In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

Verse 13, "For You have delivered my soul from death. Have You not delivered my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?" "I know that God will be our Deliverer."

Psalm 57:1, "Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; and in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, until these calamities have passed by." God describes Himself as a place of refuge. He is our source of refuge. It is an allusion to God's protection for His people in times of trouble, particularly in the time of the Great Tribulation when Christ said we are going to look to God and pray that we will be delivered out of that. If we are close to God, we can be.

Psalm 58 continues with some of the same things.

He talks about how the wicked and various ones are out to get him.

Psalm 59:1-2, "Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; defend me from those who rise up against me. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloodthirsty men."

Psalm 60:1, "O God, You have cast us off; You have broken us down; You have been displeased; oh, restore us again!" He is talking about the correction that God has to give.

Verses 2-4, "You have made the earth tremble; You have broken it; heal its breaches, for it is shaking. You have shown Your people hard things; You have made us drink the wine of confusion. You have given a banner to those who fear You, that it may be displayed because of the truth."

Verses 6-7, "God has spoken in His holiness: 'I will rejoice; I will divide Shechem and measure out the Valley of Succoth. Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the helmet for My head; Judah is My lawgiver.'" Here is a specific reference to certain tribes of Israel and certainly to the tribes that are going to stand out as leading nations in the Millennium.

Let's notice. Manasseh, Ephraim and Judah are specifically singled out. Gilead is a poetic term for Reuben because Reuben dwelt on the east side of the Jordan River in the land of Gilead. He basically focuses in on the French, the Americans, the British and the Jewish people as being the nations that He is going to work through in a very special way. He is certainly going to work through Israel. He will be using Israel as a tool to deal with all of the Gentile nations. Those four of the great tribes of Israel are going to be the ones that sort of stand out in that way. It's an allusion to that. The time setting is clearly referring to the time when God is setting up His Kingdom on earth.

Psalm 61:1, "Hear my cry, O God; attend to my prayer."

Psalm 62:1-2, "Truly my soul silently waits for God; from Him comes my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved."

Verses 5-6, "My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved." God is the source of our stability.

Psalm 63:1, "O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water." Here is a clear reference to our need for God. It, again, likens our need for God's Holy Spirit to a thirsty person out in a desert who really craves that water. "You are my God; early will I seek You" alludes to the fact that early in the morning is a good time to focus in on our prayer. So, start off in the morning by going to God and really drawing close to God.

Verse 6, "When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches."

The evening is also a time for prayer. But the difference is that in the evening, at the end of the day, it's a time to think back reflectively on the day. It is time for meditation. It's a time for contemplation and meditation on the events of the day and going to God for help, for forgiveness and for thanksgiving. It makes a distinction in, let's say, even the types of prayer. There is one type that is mentioned in the evening and another type mentioned in the morning. Evenings are a good time to meditate and reflect.

We miss out so much in our urban society. Most of us have occasion to be out in the country from time to time; a lot of us grew up in it. One thing always impresses me anew every time I go up to visit my mother. She lives way out in the country



and there are no city lights or anything around there. There's not much light and the lights are all turned off by very late at night. The thing that is so impressive is that when I look up at the sky, I find that I have forgotten how many stars there are. If you look up in the sky in Baton Rouge, you see a few stars and think, 'This is a beautiful night with beautiful stars.'

Some of you have been on our father-son /daughter campout out there on the levee of the Atchafalaya River where there are no lights around. When the campfire goes down, that's it. If it's a clear night, you look up and it's just incredible. It's like the sky has just exploded with stars. We live in sort of an urban environment or at least semi-urban, and there's so much diffused light around. Even in the perimeters of a semi-urban area, you really don't see the night sky as clearly as you can in a few remote areas. When you do see it, particularly in all of its glory, it just simply puts you in a frame of mind to meditate.

It's the difference between David sitting out in the field watching over the sheep by night, looking up at the sky and being just overwhelmed with the greatness and the magnitude of God, and somebody in our society who, instead of doing that, is propped up in the chair watching television impressed with the greatness and magnitude of man. It's sort of the contrast. I am not saying you shouldn't ever watch a show on television. That's not the point. I am just saying we live in a society where we tend to be removed from that.

God designed the evenings as a time to meditate and contemplate. It's just the natural order of things with all the stars and the way that God designed the evening. He designed it as a time that would be a contemplative time—a time at the close of the day when focusing in on the magnitude of God's greatness and power puts you in a meditative and contemplative frame of mind. I suspect that most of us feel that way when we have opportunity to find ourselves out like that. Most of us don't have that opportunity all that often. It's a wonderful thing to take a walk out at night and look up at the night sky. There's just a special feeling there.

David describes that a little bit here. It's something that we should take advantage of because I think that's one of the reasons why we live in such a faithless age. I really think we do and I think most of us have to acknowledge that if we think about it.

Luke 18:8, Christ made reference to it, "...when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith

on the earth?" I think one of the reasons is because we live in a society that revolves so much around what man can do. We find ourselves so impressed with man that we lose sight of God. God, somehow, seems far off and unreal, and what man can do seems awfully close and awfully impressive. It's hard for us to have the outlook and the perspective that many of the men and women of an earlier time had. We need to strive to get a perspective that helps us focus in on what's real, what's permanent and what's really important.

Psalm 64:1-3, "Hear my voice, O God, in my meditation; preserve my life from fear of the enemy. Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked, from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity, who sharpen their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows—bitter words..." Have you ever felt like people were sort of whetting their tongue like a sword? I mean they might as well have gotten out the whetstone. They were sharpening up to go after you. Well, David felt like that and he describes it in a very poetic way. It's like they got out the bow and arrow and were shooting bitter words at you.

Verse 10, David went to God realizing, "The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and trust in Him. And all the upright in heart shall glory."

Psalm 65:1, "Praise is awaiting You, O God, in Zion; and to You the vow shall be performed."

Verse 4, "Blessed is the man whom You choose, and cause to approach You [Here is a reference to the fact that God has to call; God is the One who chooses and enables us to approach Him.], that he may dwell in Your courts." Again, it's a reference to God's power and His blessing.

Psalm 66:1-2, "Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth! Sing out the honor of His name; make His praise glorious."

Verse 4, "All the earth shall worship You and sing praises to You; they shall sing praises to Your name."

Verse 7, "He rules by His power forever; His eyes observe the nations; ...."

Psalm 67:1-2, "God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us. That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations."

Psalm 68 is sometimes called the "Pentecost anthem." It is traditionally read in the synagogues on Pentecost. Many of the events here are considered as descriptive of the events of Mount Sinai.

Psalm 68:8, "The earth shook; the heavens also dropped rain at the presence of God; Sinai itself

was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.” Of course, God thundered the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai that first Pentecost day, and the mountain quaked and shook and the smoke arose (Exodus 19:16-20).

Verses 5-6, one point to notice is, “A father of the fatherless, a defender [KJV, “judge”] of widows, is God in His holy habitation. God sets the solitary in families; He brings out those who are bound into prosperity; but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.”

God views Himself as the special Protector of those who are unable to protect themselves, particularly the fatherless and the widow. There are people who like to make a prey of those who are helpless and defenseless. There are con men that make a special prey of the elderly and things of that sort. There is a special reckoning waiting. I don’t know exactly what, but God says that He considers Himself, in a very special way, as a Father to the fatherless and a judge of the widows.

I don’t want to advise you to take advantage of anybody, but your worst bet is to take advantage of the fatherless and the widow. You shouldn’t pick on anybody, but if you are going to pick on somebody, you had better pick on somebody else because you’re picking on God in a special way. One of the things that God absolutely hates is this cowardly attitude of people who would take advantage of those who are the most helpless and defenseless. That is the most cowardly and contemptible thing; God really hates that sort of attitude and mindset.

He makes a reference that, in one sense, I think is fulfilled, at least in type, in the Church. It’s going to be fulfilled in Tomorrow’s World when Christ returns and you have the survivors of the concentration camps. It says, “God sets the solitary in families.” God places those who remain in families (one here and one there). That’s the way it will be dealt with. God will set in families little children who have survived some of these terrible traumas.

Sometimes, even today, people are alone when they come into the Church or they’re the only one in their family that comes into the Church. There is a family relationship in the Church. God, in many ways, sets the solitary in families in the Church today. A lot of you came into the Church and, in some of your cases, you came in and were by yourself. It wasn’t long before other people were taking an interest in you. God put you in a family context.

Verse 18, “You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received

gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell there.”

Hold your place there. Let’s go to Ephesians and you will see that this is quoted and explained.

Ephesians 4:8, “Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.’” What is that talking about? It is talking about Jesus Christ. He “ascended on high.” Well, He ascended to heaven. He was resurrected by the power of God.

He “led captivity captive.” What is the greatest captivity of all? The greatest captivity of all is death and the grave. That’s the captivity that nobody has ever been able to escape.

People have escaped from jail or escaped from exile. Napoleon escaped from the British exile; he got away. He came back and that didn’t last too long. They exiled him again. All kinds of people have escaped from various things, but there is one captivity that nobody has ever escaped from and that’s death. That is the ultimate captivity.

That’s the captivity that Christ triumphed over because He conquered death. He “led captivity captive.” He triumphed over death when He was resurrected by the power of God.

“And gave gifts unto men” is a reference to the Holy Spirit and to the various manifestations of it—many of which are enumerated in Ephesians 4. It is a reference to the outpouring of the gifts of the Spirit that came on the Day of Pentecost and was the result of Christ ‘ascending on high.’ John 16:7, He told the disciples, “‘Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him [It] to you.’” There was going to be a special thing that would come. This is in the context of Psalm 68, the so-called “Pentecost anthem.”

Psalm 68:19, “Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, the God of our salvation!” This is a description of God’s greatness and His power.

Several references in Psalm 69 are prophetic of Jesus Christ.

Psalm 69:4, “Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; they are mighty who would destroy me, ....” This is quoted in John 15:25.

Verse 8, “I have become a stranger to my brothers, and an alien to my mother’s children...” This is quoted in John 7:5.

Verse 9, “Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.” This is quoted in John 2:17.

Verse 19, “You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonor; my adversaries are all before You.” This is referred to in Matthew 27:28-31. All these references are references of Christ.

Verse 20, “Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.” This is referred to in Matthew 26:37-39.

Verse 21, “They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” This is a reference to the crucifixion in Matthew 27:34, 48.

Verse 25, “Let their habitation be desolate; let no one dwell in their tents.” This is quoted in Acts 1:20. There is a great deal of the content of Psalm 69 that is quoted in the New Testament as prophetic of Jesus Christ and the thoughts and experiences that He had. A lot of things, if you just read it in the context, call your attention to that.

Psalm 70:1-3, “Make haste, O God, to deliver me! Make haste to help me, O Lord! Let them be ashamed and confounded who seek my life; let them be turned back and confused who desire my hurt. Let them be turned back....” This is a reference to the fact that God is our Deliverer.

Psalm 71:1-2, “In You, O Lord, I put my trust; let me never be put to shame. Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape; incline Your ear to me, and save me.” The whole theme of Psalm 71 is trusting God for deliverance.

The psalmist is pictured in his old age as still looking to God for help in the midst of trials.

Verses 17-18, “O God, You have taught me from my youth; and to this day I declare Your wondrous works. Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come.”

Verses 20-21, “You, who have shown me great and severe troubles, shall revive me again, and bring me up again from the depths of the earth. You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.” It is a reference to God’s deliverance and trusting for deliverance.

Psalm 72 is the last Psalm in this section.

Psalm 72:1-4, “Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness to the king’s Son. He will judge Your people with righteousness, and Your poor with justice. The mountains will bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor.”

As you go through, this is clearly a reference to the Millennium and to Jesus Christ’s reign.

Verses 7-8, “In His days the righteous shall flourish, and abundance of peace, until the moon is no more. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.”

Verse 11, “Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him.” This is clearly a reference to Christ.

Notice that ‘He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor.’

Verses 12-14, “For He will deliver the needy when he cries, the poor also, and him who has no helper. He will spare the poor and needy, and will save the souls of the needy. He will redeem their life from oppression and violence; and precious shall be their blood in His sight.” Do you think there’s not going to be problems in Tomorrow’s World, in the Millennium? Do you think there won’t ever be anybody who’s poor or needy or anybody that needs to be redeemed from deceit and violence—particularly in the early part of the Millennium?

The point is that when Christ comes back, He’s not just going to snap His fingers and all of a sudden the sun is shining, the birds are singing and everybody’s happy and everybody loves everybody. There are things that are going to have to be dealt with and there are real problems and real people. Progress will be made, but as long as we are dealing with physical human beings, we are going to be dealing with physical human beings and the mistakes, problems and difficulties that come up. Now, certainly, when Satan isn’t there to stir up trouble, things will be a whole lot better. As generations go by, there should be significant improvement.

Psalm 72, when taken in context, is clearly a reference to the Millennium. It is a reference to the fact that, yes, there are going to be real problems. There are things that need to be dealt with and problems that need to be addressed.

Verses 18-20, Psalm 72 ends with, “Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only does wondrous things! And blessed be His glorious name forever! And let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.”

Psalm 72 is not the last Psalm written by David in the numerical order of the Psalms. You could look at Psalm 103, for instance, and others that are said to be Psalms of David, but the first 72 Psalms constituted the original canon of the book of Psalms.

King David divided the Levites into 24 divisions [KJV, “courses”] that were to rotate their service in the temple for two weeks a year, plus the Festivals (1 Chronicles 24). With 72 Psalms, each division would sing three Psalms—3 x 24 is 72. This would enable the whole book to be rotated through in a year in terms of the liturgy.

I’ll call your attention to “The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.”

Notice what it says in little letters under Psalm 73, “A Psalm of Asaph.”

Psalm 74, “A Contemplation [KJV, “Maschil”] of Asaph.”

Psalm 75, “A Psalm of Asaph.”

Psalm 76 and Psalm 77, “A Psalm of Asaph.”

Notice that, and then let’s go back to 2 Chronicles and the time of great revival under King Hezekiah when the temple was refurbished and everything was reordered.

2 Chronicles 29:25, “Then he [Hezekiah] stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, of Gad the king’s seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for thus was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets.” He organized them into the 24 divisions that David had established. David organized them into 24 divisions because the Levite population increased and there were too many serving in the tabernacle precinct.

When Moses organized the Levites (the priests, the sons of Aaron) in the wilderness, there weren’t very many. Population increased and it finally got to where you couldn’t get them all into the tabernacle precincts. There were so many of them that you could hardly “stir them with a stick” if you tried to get them all in there and functioning. They were all getting in each other’s way.

So, David organized it. They would all perform the functions of the temple, but they would rotate them through. They organized them into 24 divisions based on family groupings. Everybody served two weeks at a time, and then they were all there for the Festival periods. Twenty-four divisions serving two weeks out of the year makes 48 weeks; then you add in the Festival periods and you finish out the rest of the year.

Hezekiah reorganized that.

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

It was at the time of King Hezekiah that the Psalms of Asaph were added to the canon. There

were other Psalms that existed, but David prepared the first 72 Psalms organized as the book of Psalms that was originally given to the Levites.

Later on, when Hezekiah reorganized things, there were additional Psalms that were added and the book of Psalms was expanded.

Several years ago, we went through a Bible study on the canonization of Scripture and how we came to have the Bible. I call your attention to that since we are here at the end of Psalm 72.

There’s an awful lot packed into the Psalms, and we are just touching on the high points. We can only hit the high points in a Bible study series like this, but I hope that it will be an incentive for you to go back and study it. Look into it and study some of these sections of Scripture more deeply because God has packed so much into this Book, the Bible. God has packed so much in there that is profitable and beneficial for all of us. Let’s take advantage of this. Hopefully this series of Bible studies won’t be a stopping point for your study of God’s Word, but it will simply be a starting point, a jumping off point to explore God’s Word even more deeply.

We will pass out the questions on the next section of the Psalms—Book Three of Psalms—Psalms 73—89. We will cover that next Bible study.

Bible Study # 78  
November 12, 1991  
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Book Three—Psalms  
73—89

This evening we **are going through Psalms 73—89, known as Book Three of Psalms.** We have noted, in our progression through the Psalms, the extent to which there is a correlation between the five books of the Psalms with the five books of the Torah (the Law), as well as with the five Festival Scrolls and the festival occasions on which those scrolls were read.

The section of the Torah that correlates with this third book of the Psalms is the book of Leviticus. The third of the Festival Scrolls is the book of Lamentations, read at the national holiday of the fast of Ab, which commemorated the destruction of the temple and the destruction of Jerusalem. It is interesting because there **is a great deal of correlation in Leviticus and Lamentations with this book of Psalms—some of which we want to note.**

Let's just note the very beginning of Psalm 73. Psalm 73 sort of sets the theme for this section of the Psalms. **We have the theme that is emphasized in each of the sections, and the first Psalm of this section tends to indicate the theme of obedience and avoidance of unclean conduct.**

Psalm 73:1, "Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart."

Before we go any further, let's think in terms of the book of Leviticus. The book of Leviticus was written to the Levites as instruction to the Levitical priesthood. What does it deal with? It is filled with instruction on holiness and cleanness. There is a very distinct correlation between cleanness and holiness. It is one that we need to understand because there are spiritual lessons and spiritual ramifications. We are told in several places in the Old Testament that the responsibility of the priesthood was to teach the people to make a distinction between the clean and the unclean, the holy and the profane.

This is what we are told in Ezekiel 44:15, 23-24 when we're told of the job of the priesthood. There are other places that mention it as well, but that's what the job of the priesthood "boils down" to. They were responsible to teach the people to distinguish between the clean and the unclean, between the holy and the profane. There was to be a distinction made.

In the book of Leviticus, we have many instructions that deal with cleanness. We have the laws of clean and unclean meat. We have numerous laws that deal with sanitation and hygiene. There are laws that deal with the contaminating effect of contagious disease and with various things of that sort. We look at it and recognize it as legislation relating to sanitation and hygiene—and, yes, it does.

If those principles were applied, particularly in many of the third-world areas that are wracked by such horrible disease problems, they would be far better off just from a purely physical, sanitary, hygienic standpoint. They would learn that you don't dump raw sewage in the streets. We sort of take that for granted, but if you were to look at certain areas of Central and South America and certain areas of Africa and Asia, you would find that what we sort of take for granted is not universally taken for granted.

There are laws relating to washing. If people touched something that died of itself, they had to go outside the camp and were unclean until evening. What it amounted to is that they had to wash their clothes and take a bath before they came back. If you had to wash your clothes and take a bath the way they did, it would take you until evening to get it tended to. It was not the simple matter as some of these things are today.

There is certainly a sanitary and hygienic point. I am not taking away from that in relating to clean and unclean meats. But when you read the way it is emphasized in the book of Leviticus, one thing that becomes apparent is that there is more than simply what is necessary for sanitation and hygienic purposes. There is an emphasis on cleanness in the physical realm that carries over to cleanness in the spiritual realm. There are spiritual lessons to be derived from physical things.

There is a specific example in Deuteronomy, but it parallels much of the legislation in Leviticus. There is the statement in Deuteronomy regarding the disposal of body wastes. People in the camp of Israel were to go outside of the camp; they were to dig a hole and bury the waste matter. It was not simply dumped some place there in the camp. Obviously, from a sanitary standpoint, this is going to solve an awful lot of disease problems. But it goes beyond that because in Deuteronomy, it gave a reason why they were to do that. It didn't say that no diseases would come among them, but it is a physical benefit.

It gives the reason in Deuteronomy as to why they were to do it.

Deuteronomy 23:14, “For the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and give your enemies over to you; therefore your camp shall be holy [You are to do this.], that He may see no unclean thing among you, and turn away from you.”

The emphasis was that God is there. God is walking up and down in the midst of the camp and God does not dwell in the midst of uncleanness. This was the emphasis. Over and over it was emphasized in the book of Leviticus that they were to be clean because they were a holy people. Now, let's understand the relationship between cleanliness and holiness.

Holiness is something that can only be imparted by God. God is holy. Where God puts and places His presence is holy. That's why the area around the burning bush was holy ground (Exodus 3:1-5). What made it holy? God was there. The Holy Place in the temple and the Holy of Holies were holy because of the proximity to God and the presence of God. The point is that God is holy and God does not dwell in the midst of uncleanness.

We see instruction on cleanness in the book of Leviticus because God was going to dwell among them and be their God. The point we have to understand is that the Levites were to teach that lesson to the people. They were to teach them to distinguish between the clean and the unclean, the holy and the profane.

Now, if God would not dwell in the midst of physical uncleanness in ancient Israel, how much less would He dwell in the midst of spiritual uncleanness in His people and His Church today? God does not dwell in the midst of uncleanness. God does not dwell in the midst of what is unclean.

There is symbolism in terms of baptism. It's not just a matter of happenstance that the ceremony of baptism is carried out the way it is. We don't ever reverse the order. We don't lay hands on people and then baptize them. We always do it the other way, following the Biblical example. There is a spiritual lesson that is taught. When you go into the waters of baptism, this is symbolic of washing away sin. First, you have to be clean. Then God will dwell within you and make you holy. You can't make yourself holy. God's presence makes you holy.

We are told to remember the Sabbath day and to keep it holy. You can't keep Sunday holy because God hasn't made it holy. You can't keep Sunday holy any more than you can keep cold water hot. If you are going to keep something, you keep it in the state that it is. You can keep

and maintain it in a particular state, but unless you have the ability to impart that state to it, then you can only keep it the way it is. You and I cannot make something holy.

God tells us that He will dwell in us. Our bodies become the temple of His Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). We become holy.

The word “saint” in both the Hebrew in the Old Testament and the Greek in the New Testament means the same thing. “Saint” simply means “a holy one.” Maybe you've never thought of yourself as a holy one. Why are you holy? What makes you holy? God's presence in us is the only thing that makes any of us holy. God's Holy Spirit imparts holiness to us. When God dwells in us through the power of His Spirit, we become set apart as holy, set apart as a saint of the Most High.

Daniel 7:18, ultimately, ““But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.””

The saints of the Most High are those made holy by God's indwelling presence. God dwells in us, and imparts His presence to us. We become a new creation at the time of baptism and the receiving of His Spirit, but God continues to renew the inward man. We are renewed and transformed by the renewing of our mind in an ongoing basis of the Christian life.

At the resurrection, there is a culmination of that process when this mortal shall put on immortality. We are a part of God's Family now, but not in the full sense that we will be because, right now, we are still human beings. We are still flesh and blood. We are still subject to death and decay. We have human nature that we have to fight, but there is a culmination to the conversion process that will occur at the resurrection.

That's when the saints of the Most High (those made holy by God) will take and possess the Kingdom. We won't have all the political chicanery. Christ is not going to run for election. It's not going to work that way. Who's going to be in charge? It is going to be Jesus Christ. He is going to take charge and give responsibility—to share with Him—to those who are the saints of the Most High. They ultimately had to learn to make a distinction between the clean and the unclean, the holy and the profane.

Psalms 73:1, “Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart.”

Psalms 51:10, David prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

Verse 7, he asked God to purge him and clean him up.

The book of Leviticus places an emphasis on cleanness as a prerequisite to holiness. Holiness and cleanness go hand-in-hand together. That carries over into conduct, then to obedience and then to avoidance of unclean conduct.

There's a great correlation of what happened when the Levites failed in their responsibility to transmit and to really impart to the people a clear sense of distinction between the holy and the profane, the clean and the unclean. What was the result? The result was the curses that were mentioned in Leviticus and the destruction of the temple.

It's interesting how God builds in things. If the Levites had faithfully taught and instructed the people in God's way, they certainly would have been blessed. After all, the people were supposed to tithe to the Levites, so the Levites would have been rewarded. God believes in being rewarded according to your work (Revelation 22:12). That is a Biblical principle. A laborer is worthy of his wages (Luke 10:7). The Levites would certainly have been rewarded with the tithe of the people.

What do you think happened when the Levites fell down on the job, became greedy and not attuned to teaching the people? The people got further and further away from God. And what is always the first thing that happens when people begin to drift away from God? They pretty quickly begin to get careless in their tithing. So, God sort of built in that. If the Levites weren't doing their job, they were going to feel the "pinch." They ultimately felt more than the "pinch" because the temple was destroyed and they were totally out of a job. In that sense, their failure to carry out their responsibility resulted in a direct punishment on them.

God built and designed the system to where those who were responsible would reap rewards or curses depending upon their faithfulness in carrying out their responsibility that He gave them. God has ways of designing in things and building it to where it works a certain way.

The book of Lamentations is a lament connected with the destruction of the temple. It has to do with why the temple was destroyed. Why was Jerusalem destroyed? —Because the people became unclean, God no longer dwelt in their midst and provided His blessing and protection. God removed His presence because of uncleanness.

When we bring it down to the spiritual level, Paul talks about that in the New Testament.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who [that] is in you, whom [which] you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." That's what He is talking about.

Hebrew 12:15, it says, "...lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled..." Do you know what "defile" means? "Defile" means "to make unclean." 'Lest any root of bitterness trouble you, and by this many become defiled or made unclean.' That's why he mentions this.

What is it that defiles? The Pharisees didn't understand. They never got beyond the physical things. They said, 'Your disciples didn't wash their hands. They are defiled; they are unclean' (Mark 7:1-5). Christ said, 'That's not really the primary problem; that's not the main point.' Christ was not saying you should go around seeing how dirty you can get your hands before you eat a meal. Obviously, I think we understand that there are principles of cleanliness and hygiene.

Verses 17-23, he was saying, 'What really defiles somebody is not a speck of dirt on your hands. It is the fact of what is on the inside; it is attitudes that come out of the mouth.'

Why does that defile?

Matthew 12:34, "...For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

What we have to do is right here in Psalm 73.

Psalm 73:1, "Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart."

This section of the Psalms deals, a great deal, with a parallel to the material in the book of Leviticus—to cleanness and holiness.

One key Psalm in this section is Psalm 89 because of its description of the Davidic covenant. It's a Psalm of faith that was written in a time of national calamity, when it appeared that all the promises of God were suddenly being made of no effect. The outward signs of God's faithfulness to His people, the temple, Jerusalem, the throne of David—all these things were apparently being cast aside and destroyed. It required faith to believe that God would fulfill His promises, even though all the physical evidence pointed to a contrary conclusion. It is not hard to believe God when you see, right before your eyes, God bringing these things out.

For instance, it takes, in that sense, a lot less faith to believe that Germany is going to emerge as the leader of the United States of Europe. I

think that requires a lot less faith in 1991 than it did in 1951. It is a lot easier to see. There are a lot of people who have never read the Bible, but just from looking at world events, it looks like Germany is sort of moving to the top. There seems to be a United States of Europe emerging. You can see that. You don't have to have read the book of Daniel or the book of Revelation to figure that out. But in 1951 when Germany was divided, lay prostrate and just helpless, there was an idea afoot that we would never, ever let them emerge as a major power. The iron boot of the Soviet Union (Stalin's troops) imposed their will on Eastern Europe and then the iron curtain. Then, West Germany was not our enemy; West Germany was our friend. Russia was our enemy. If we fought a war, we would fight with Russia. Some of you remember that Mr. Herbert Armstrong wrote an article back at that time entitled, "Will Russia Attack America?" The answer he gave was, "No." He said that. Those whose contact with this work goes back to that period and before—back in the early '50s, '60s, the time of the Cuban missile crisis—remember? When everybody answered, 'Oh, Russia and America,' this work was teaching something different.

Now, it requires less faith. When you don't see it, then it is based on faith. As things begin to emerge, it doesn't take quite the same level of faith because you can see it with your eyes and on the basis of physical analysis.

Psalm 89 reflects that. It deals with God's faithfulness to His people. God made a promise to David. We are going to see that in Psalm 89. But at the time of the destruction of the temple (at the time of King Zedekiah), the clear impression was, 'How is God going to fulfill what He said? God made a promise and yet physical evidence seemed to indicate that things aren't going the way we expected them to go.' They were going the way *God* expected them to go. You think God is sitting all shocked and surprised—kind of wringing His hands and not knowing what to do next? It's going the way God expected it to go. It may not be going the way we expected it to go. What we have to do is stay close to God, and that way we will be where He is.

Psalm 73:1-3, "Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

The psalmist deals with something we often have to deal with. Have you ever noticed that

sometimes people seem to be getting by with things? We almost slip because we become envious. We see all these people who are wicked. They aren't even trying to do what is right, and they are prospering and getting rich. And here we are struggling along trying to do what's right, and this guy is cheating on his income tax, cheating on his wife, beating the dog and everything. It seems like he is getting by with all kinds of things and he is getting rich.

It's not a matter that the wicked never prosper. Sometimes they do quite well. The attitude was an attitude of envy and sort of feeling like, 'Boy, they have it better than we do.' I have even heard people make the statement, 'Boy, if I weren't in the Church, I could be doing some of this stuff.' Yeah, if you weren't in the Church, you could go through the Great Tribulation. You might even end up in the lake of fire. Yeah, there are a lot of things that could happen if you weren't in the Church. If you don't come into the Church, there's ultimately going to be a lot of things that are going to happen.

Verses 5-9, the point is, and the psalmist went through this, "They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride serves as their necklace; violence covers them like a garment. Their eyes bulge with abundance; they have more than heart could wish. They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth."

Verse 12, "Behold, these are the ungodly, who are always at ease; they increase in riches."

Verses 13-14, he begins to say, "Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning." He said, 'I have all kinds of problems. What's the point in trying to do what's right? It seems like they're getting all the breaks.'

The psalmist expresses feelings that sometimes we have. Sometimes we look around and life is unfair. Yes, it is. It is never going to be completely fair, just and equitable in Satan's world. If we could have it fair, just and equitable, what do we need the Kingdom of God for?

Verses 16-17, but he continues, "When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me—until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end." Oh! First, he was standing around and sort of feeling sorry for himself, looking with a little bit of envy at what others were getting by with and thinking, 'It's not fair.' But then, how did he work through it?



How did he resolve it? How did he deal with that? Did he just go off, get in a bad attitude and say he would join the Philistines and work for Dagon? No! He went into the sanctuary and into the presence of God. It has to do with coming before God in prayer. When he came before God and really began to pray about it, contemplated and considered it, then he understood their end.

Verses 18-19, “Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.” He began to think about the final results and realized that they were the ones set in slippery places. They are going to be brought down to destruction as in a moment.

He talks about how he repented.

Verses 21-22, “Thus my heart was grieved, and I was vexed in my mind. I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You.”

Here, we have the progression. First, a matter of sort of casting envious glances at what the world was getting by with. That’s human nature. We can find ourselves in that situation. We begin to feel a little bit of self-pity and think how we have it so much harder than other people. Things seem to be going so well for all these people not in the Church. It doesn’t seem fair.

If that’s where we stop, then we bog down in resentment toward God, self-pity and depression. But that’s not where the psalmist stopped. He noticed those things. He had some of those feelings to wrestle with, but how did he resolve them? He went to God. He spent time on his knees. He spent time in the presence of God to get it in perspective. Then he began to look and see how it all works out. He began to focus on the end result and then he repented before God for his ungrateful attitude.

*A thankful, appreciative attitude is one of the greatest keys to spiritual growth.* An ungrateful, unappreciative attitude is fertile ground for Satan to work with because, after all, didn’t Satan have an ungrateful, unappreciative attitude? Stop and think about it. Lucifer had everything. He was one of the anointed cherubs that covered God’s throne. He was right there and had access to the very presence of God. He summed up beauty and wisdom and all sorts of power. He had everything, but he didn’t have gratitude. He wasn’t appreciative or thankful, and that is one of the greatest keys to our spiritual state.

Psalm 73 is a very important Psalm. There is a lot of food for meditation. As I mentioned before, one of the purposes of the Psalms, when we find ourselves with certain thoughts and

feelings, is to express feelings and resolution of those feelings. Therefore, it is an important place to go for meditation.

Psalm 74:1-2, “O God, why have You cast us off forever? Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture? Remember Your congregation, which You have purchased of old, . . . .”

Verse 7, “They have set fire to Your sanctuary; they have defiled the dwelling place of Your name to the ground.” Seemingly, the historical setting here would be the destruction of the temple.

This section of Psalms began to be added at the time of Hezekiah. The Psalms of Asaph began to be added. There were others added later at the time of King Josiah and, undoubtedly, others that had been written were added into the canon at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah because we find different historical context relating to it. There were poetic songs written by the sons of Asaph for performance in the temple choir. The family of Asaph was the Levitical musicians.

We find different historical contexts that are here. We see the destruction that comes. We see the national lament, which certainly ties in with correlation to the book of Lamentations.

Psalm 75:1-3, “We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks! For Your wondrous works declare that Your name is near. When I choose the proper time, I will judge uprightly. The earth and all its inhabitants are dissolved; I set up its pillars firmly.”

Verse 7, he continues, “But God is the Judge: He puts down one, and exalts another.”

Verse 10, “All the horns of the wicked I will also cut off, but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.”

We find important areas focusing in on giving thanks to God and that He is the deliverer.

Verses 6-7, notice, “For exaltation [KJV, “promotion”] comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He puts down one, and exalts another.” Promotion ultimately does not come from advancing ourselves. There have been those who have promoted and advanced themselves, but that’s not really the way that is going to solve the problems. The only lasting promotion is the promotion that Jesus Christ gives. That’s where we have to look. We are to look for the promotion that comes from God.

In Psalm 76, we have the theme of the time of Jesus Christ’s return—the time when He is going to judge the world.

Psalm 76:9, it mentions, “When God arose to judgment, to deliver all the oppressed [KJV, “meek”] of the earth.”

Verses 1-2, “In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling place in Zion.” This is talking of the time when God will be dwelling and ruling from Jerusalem. His government will be firmly established at the time when He is going to arise to judgment and save the meek of the earth.

God is our hope; He is our Savior. He is the One who will solve the problems—not the Republicans, Democrats, not this guy or that guy. The only salvation and the only real solution to the problem lie in the government that God is going to set up. It is very important that we have our focus there and recognize that it is the government of God that will bring about the results the world needs. Jesus Christ came preaching and proclaiming that.

Psalm 77 emphasizes that God is the only sure safety.

Psalm 77:1-3, “I cried out to God with my voice—to God with my voice; and He gave ear to me. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; my hand was stretched out in the night without ceasing; my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah.” It is a cry to God for help—recognizing and working through the fact that God is the Deliverer.

Psalm 78 addresses a very important theme of the history of Israel from the time of the Exodus to the time of King David.

It is emphasized over and over in Psalm 78 that Israel continually fell short of her covenant obligations. We also see God’s continual mercy and His forgiveness.

Psalm 78:1, “Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.”

Verses 4-7, “We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments...”

He established this as a testimony in Jacob; He established the account of things that are evidence, things that should be recorded, practiced and talked about, generation to generation. We learn by example and also by direct commandment and instruction. He established a testimony and appointed a law. God teaches us both by example and by illustration of what His people did and didn’t do, as well as His direct instruction and commandment. He talks about this sort of thing.

Verses 10-12, “They did not keep the covenant of God; they refused to walk in His law, and forgot His works and His wonders that He had shown them. Marvelous things He did in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.”

Verses 17-22, “But they sinned even more against Him by rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness. And they tested God in their heart by asking for the food of their fancy [KJV, “lust”]. Yes, they spoke against God: they said, ‘Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? Behold, He struck the rock, so that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? Can He provide meat for His people?’ Therefore the Lord heard this and was furious; so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel, because they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation.”

Verses 40-41, “How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert! Yes, again and again they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.”

Have you ever thought about the fact that you can limit God? The Bible talks about that. It talks about certain ones and about an attitude that was reflected. How do you limit God? What does that mean?

Let’s notice an example.

Mark 6:1-6, “Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, ‘Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?’ And they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.’ Now

He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.”

What are we told here? Is that an example?

Psalm 78:22, we are told right here, “Because they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation.”

Verse 41, “Yes, again and again they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.” They tempted God by doubting. ‘We don’t know if God’s up to it.’ –An attitude of doubt and disbelief in God’s promises. That is certainly a way that we can limit God. *We limit God’s working in us to the extent that we do not trust Him and do not believe and follow Him.* We place a limit on the extent to which God can and will work in our lives and in our heart and mind. Doubt and disbelief are the opposite of faith. Faith opens up doors. It expands the extent to which God will work through us. Disbelief (a lack of faith) imposes a limit on what God can and will do in our lives. This is an important thing.

I would call your attention to one other matter here in Psalm 78. It’s sort of interesting. Everyone has heard of “angel’s food.” You’ve heard of angel’s food cake. Is there such a thing as “angel’s food”?

Verses 24-25, it says, “had rained down manna on them to eat, and given them of the bread of heaven. Men ate angels’ food; He sent them food to the full.” Manna is referred to as “angels’ food.” What do angels eat? Well, maybe sometimes they eat manna. They don’t eat in order to sustain their life. But that is not to say there is not an enjoyment of food. We see this whole setup in Psalm 78, and it culminates in verse 70 with choosing David as the king. So, there is a development through this Psalm from the time of Moses down to the time of King David.

Psalm 79:1, “O God, the nations [KJV, “heathens”] have come into Your inheritance; Your holy temple they have defiled; they have laid Jerusalem in heaps.” Here we would clearly see an indication or reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by Nebuchadnezzar. It’s an appeal to God for deliverance. Yet God is punishing because of disobedience. But there are always those who are seeking to serve God, and they were crying out to God for mercy and for forgiveness.

Psalm 80:1-2, “Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who

dwell between the cherubim, shine forth! Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up Your strength, and come and save us!”

Here is a clear reference to God, and His role as the Shepherd of Israel. In His role as Shepherd, God is Protector of His people. He’s the One who sees that their needs are tended to and the One who will lead and rescue them. God likens His people, both nationally in terms of Israel and spiritually in terms of the Church, to being the sheep of His pasture. God compares His people to sheep and the fact that He is the Shepherd.

One of the indictments that He has in the book of Ezekiel is that the shepherds of Israel (the physical leaders) have not properly protected and watched out for His people nationally (Ezekiel 34:1-19).

Psalm 81:1-3, “Sing aloud to God our strength; make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob. Raise a song and strike the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the lute. Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, at the full moon, on our solemn feast day.” The word “trumpet” in Hebrew is “*shofar*.” Normally, there was a silver trumpet that was blown every new moon, but a different trumpet was blown for the new moon on the first day of the seventh moon (the Feast of Trumpets). It was not the silver trumpet but the ram’s horn, the blast of the shofar. The reference in Psalm 81:3 to blow the trumpet in the new moon is a reference to sounding the shofar.

KJV, “Blow the trumpet in the new moon [the Feast of Trumpets], in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.” The term “time appointed” is a reference to the full moon. The reference is to the fall festival season—to the blast of the shofar on the new moon (the Feast of Trumpets) and the time appointed (the full moon, which follows, which is the Feast of Tabernacles), our solemn feast day.

Verses 4-5, “For this is a statue for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. This He established in Joseph for a testimony, when He went throughout the land of Egypt, ....”

God prefigured His great end-time work. He ordained it in Joseph for a testimony. Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt with a message of warning of God’s impending judgment—the seven years of famine (Genesis 41). He proclaimed a message; the trumpet was blown. Joseph proclaimed a message throughout the land of Egypt—a warning of God’s impending judgment and the only way of salvation in the physical sense. The work that God did through Joseph was a testimony, an example, an illustration. God’s end-time work

based in the nations of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) was what? –To blow the trumpet! Isn't that what it says in Isaiah?

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.” The work that God did anciently, through the patriarch Joseph, was a type of what He would do in the end-time that sets the stage for the fulfillment of God's intervention in man's history, which is pictured in the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Tabernacles. A part of the job of God's work today is blowing the trumpet of alarm and of warning. We have this reference and sort of a little interesting note here in Psalm 81.

Psalm 82:1-8, “God stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among the gods. How long will you judge unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; free them from the hand of the wicked. They do not know, nor do they understand; they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are unstable. I said, ‘You are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High. But you shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.’ Arise, O God, judge the earth; for You shall inherit all nations.”

There is a play-on-words here. The Hebrew word “Elohim” is a word that in some contexts is rendered “judges” in the Old Testament. It is not the common word for judges, but in certain contexts, it is a term that can refer to human judges. Certainly, God is the ultimate Judge, but there is a play-on-words here. You have to understand that the Old Testament is interpreted by the New Testament and Jesus quoted Psalm 82:6 in John 10:34. Let's see how He quoted it. How did He translate this word?

John 10:34, “Jesus answered them, ‘Is it not written in your law, “I said, ‘You are gods’?”’” If you have a marginal reference in your Bible, this is a reference to Psalm 82:6.

Verses 35-36, “‘If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, “You are blaspheming,” because I said, “I am the Son of God’?”’”

Christ quoted this scripture to them, and they didn't know quite how to explain it or what to say. One thing to note, the Greek word here for “God” in the Greek language in John 10:34-35 is a Greek word that only means “God” and it is “Theos.” It is never used in the Greek language

as synonymous with judge. So, the Hebrew is subject to more than one understanding. Christ quoted it here, not translating it by the Greek word that means judge. You can say Christ didn't speak in Greek. No, but John wrote it down in Greek. Christ probably spoke it in Aramaic, but John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, recorded Christ's words in Greek.

The Greek New Testament gives us an insight here. This is one of the sections of the Old Testament that gives just a flash of insight into the ultimate destiny and purpose of man. It's not spelled out in great detail in the Old Testament. Even the resurrection and many of these things are not spelled out clearly in the Old Testament, but there are insights that are given. We find that it is quoted in the New Testament, and on the basis of the explanation in the New Testament, we can understand clearly what was being said in the Old Testament. The point is not what Asaph understood and meant when he wrote it down, but what God meant when He inspired it to be written down. It was certainly made clear by Jesus Christ who is the very One who inspired it—the very God of the Old Testament.

“God stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among the gods.” It could be rendered, “in the congregation of the gods.” The word “mighty” is also derived from the Hebrew word “elohim.” “He judges among the gods.” In that sense, the Hebrew word for “elohim” means “mighty judge.” It is normally used to refer to God, but is also applied in other contexts. Who are ultimately going to be the ones that are going to rule and reign as kings and priests under Jesus Christ?

Revelation 5:10, “‘and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.’”

Who is going to judge the world? Well, in 1 Corinthians 6:2 and other places, it says the saints are going to judge the world.

Daniel 7:27, “‘“Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High.”’” Jesus Christ is going to take the Kingdom and give it to the saints of the Most High.

You can say there is a reference to the responsibility of human leaders' accountability to God and the fact that God expects human judges and human leaders to deal fairly and equitably because they ultimately will give account to Him. But in the full and complete sense of Psalm 82, you have a picture of the resurrection and the instructions that will be

given to the glorified resurrected saints at the time of the resurrection—the time when God will rise and judge the earth, the time when He will inherit all nations. That’s what verse 8 says.

Psalms 82:8, “Arise, O God, judge the earth; for You shall inherit all nations.”

The context here is sort of interesting.

Psalm 83:1-3, “Do not keep silent, O God! Do not hold Your peace, and do not be still, O God! For behold, Your enemies make a tumult; and those who hate You have lifted up their head. They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, and consulted together against Your sheltered ones [KJV, “Your hidden ones”].” This could be a reference to the Church in the place of safety.

Verse 4, “They have said, ‘Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more.’” There is a nation in the Middle East that bears the name Israel. Here’s a reference to a confederation that is going to cut them off and they won’t even be remembered. They won’t be a nation any more.

Verse 5, “For they have consulted together with one consent; they form a confederacy against You...” Here’s a reference to a confederation—a combine of nations whose aim is to wipe out Israel and wipe out the name Israel.

Verses 6-8, “The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab and the Hagarites; Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assyria [Germany] also has joined with them; they have helped the children of Lot.”

If you go through these nations, you are looking at the nations in the Middle East—nations that certainly would involve places like Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, probably Turkey and some of the North African areas. Interestingly enough, the only Middle Eastern nation left out is Egypt, which is the only nation in the Middle East that signed a peace treaty with Israel. It’s sort of interesting.

They are involved with this and Assyria (Germany) has joined with them. They have come together and have put together a secret alliance, a confederation. They have taken crafty counsel. They have been deceitful about it. “They have taken crafty counsel against Your people” could refer both to the people spiritually and the people physically. They are going to cut them off.

Based on Psalm 83, I would not place great hope in the Middle East peace conference, which is not even being held in the Middle East. They

can’t hold the Middle East peace conference in the Middle East because none of the Arabs will go to Israel and they won’t invite the Jews to any of the Arab nations. They can’t even sit down at a table in the same place in the Middle East. They have to go to Spain to have a conference. They have to find a place where they all will agree to go.

Do you realize that if mapmakers in American countries are going to sell an atlas in the Arab world, they have to omit Israel from the map? When the World Almanac is sold over there, they actually glue together the pages that have Israel, and they print a special edition that leaves Israel off because, in Saudi Arabia, they won’t allow something to be sold that actually shows Israel. They won’t even show the existence of it. They have to leave a blank spot there on the map. They label it Palestine or something. If you label it Israel, you can’t sell it over there. They have a long way to go before there’s any meeting of the minds. If you won’t even admit your neighbor exists, it’s sort of hard to really work out a deal with them.

Then people say the Jews sure are uncooperative. They won’t agree to give all this back to them. Do you know why they don’t want to give back the Golan Heights? Do you know what the Golan Heights is? Do you know how many people were killed scaling the Golan Heights? Do you know what Syria did with the Golan Heights for 20 years—1947-1967?

It’s a big high spot, and they had all their guns up on top of it aimed down at Israel. They (Israel) were “sitting ducks” down there. When the ’67 War broke out, one of the first things they did was scale the Heights. They lost a lot of men doing it, but they scaled the Heights and conquered it. And Syria’s been howling for the last 20 years they want the Golan Heights back. Well, sure they do! It’s kind of hard to shoot at somebody if he’s on the hill and you are in the valley. It’s a lot easier to shoot at them if you are on the hill and he is in the valley. You look at some of it and ask, ‘Why won’t they give it back?’ –Because they remember what happened from that area for the entire time the nation existed up until they took it, and the “great humanitarian” Asaad of Syria just does not inspire tremendous confidence in Israel.

The Bible has the news ahead of time. It already tells you that they are amassing nations. That is going on behind the scenes. They ultimately are going to put an “under-the-table, behind-closed-doors” agreement together, and Germany’s going to be in with it. Nobody is

going to know about that. You and I can know. Since we can read Psalm 83 and figure out some of these things that are going to be going on, we don't have to be shocked and surprised.

Psalm 84 focuses on the desire to be in God's presence.

Psalm 84:10, "For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness." There is a literal application to the temple of old, but the real application looks forward to dwelling with God in His Kingdom. That's what it is talking about.

Verses 1-2, "How lovely is Your tabernacle, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." –A desire to be in the presence of God.

Psalm 85:1-4, "Lord, You have been favorable to Your land; You have brought back the captivity of Jacob. You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin. Selah You have taken away all Your wrath; You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger. Restore us, O God of our salvation, and cause Your anger toward us to cease." This was very likely written at the time the captives were returning from Babylon under Zerubbabel. The very likely time for the composition of this was a time when God was bringing His people back.

Psalm 86 is a Psalm of David inserted into this section. It's not part of the original canon of David's Psalms, but one that he had written that was added in later. It's on looking to God for mercy and preservation.

Psalm 87:1-3, "His foundation is in the holy mountain. The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God!" This is a description of Zion as the city of God. It's certainly a reference to Jerusalem, but "Zion," in many passages, is often used figuratively to refer to the Church. The Church is the inhabitant of the New Jerusalem. So, there is a very definite tie-in.

Psalm 88:1-6, "O Lord, God of my salvation, I have cried out day and night before You. Let my prayer come before You; incline Your ear to my cry. For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to the grave. I am counted with those who go down to the pit; I am like a man who has no strength, adrift among the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom You remember no more, and who are cut off from Your hand. You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the depths."

Verses 10-12, "Will You work wonders for the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise You? Selah Shall Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave? Or Your faithfulness in the place of destruction? Shall Your wonders be known in the dark? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?"

Here is a reference to the state of the dead. It's described as the land of forgetfulness. It's described as a time when there is an absence of consciousness and, certainly, a reference to the fact that the psalmist didn't think he was going up to heaven when he died. It is very clear that he didn't think he was going to go flitting off to heaven, but rather the dead are dead.

He asks the question, "Shall the dead arise and praise You?" 'Is the time going to come when the dead will rise and praise You?' Other parts of the Bible certainly answer that in the affirmative. The reference is to seeking God.

Psalm 89 is a Psalm that refers to and centers on the covenant with David.

Psalm 89:1-7, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, 'Mercy shall be built up forever; Your faithfulness You shall establish in the very heavens.' I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: "Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations." Selah And the heavens will praise Your wonders, O Lord; Your faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. For who in the heavens can be compared to the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the Lord? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence by all those who are around Him."

Verses 28-37, "My mercy I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall stand firm with him. His seed also I will make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his sons forsake My law and do not walk in My judgments, if they break My statutes and do not keep My commandments, then I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail. My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: his seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me; it shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky.' Selah"

God had made this promise; the psalmist quotes it. He reminds God of the promise that had been made concerning the throne of David. If the descendants of David who occupied his throne sinned or if they departed from God, God would deal with them and punish them, but He would not forsake them. He would chasten them if necessary, but He would not remove His lovingkindness from them. He would not deal with the house of David as He dealt with the house of Saul.

He made a promise, “My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips.” God had promised that David’s throne would endure to all generations.

The issue of faith was when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem, Zedekiah was taken captive, his sons were slain, Jerusalem and the temple were burned and the nation went into captivity. At that point, faith in God’s promise is tried and tested. How can we depend on and trust God when it seems like everything is falling apart? Well, that’s when we have to trust God the most. God showed them that He made a covenant with David.

“I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: ‘Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations.’” The throne of David is going to endure in every generation.

You want to know the story? This sets the stage for the booklet, *What’s Ahead for America and Britain*. At the time of the destruction of the temple, there was a transfer of the throne of David from the Middle East to Ireland by the prophet Jeremiah. From the things that occurred at that time, God continued His promise. It certainly took faith to understand that because they hadn’t anticipated that it was going to work that way. There is an enigmatic reference in verses 24-25 that we can see a little more clearly now—things that they didn’t see back at that time.

Verses 24-25, “‘But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him, and in My name his horn shall be exalted. Also I will set his hand over the sea, and his right hand over the rivers.’”

“I will set his hand over the sea.” What does that mean? Well, the British Isles, where the throne was transferred, certainly is set in the sea. It’s one of those things that at the time it was written, the full sense of it wasn’t appreciated. We can look at it from a different perspective now. In retrospect, we can see that was not just a poetic statement. God literally fulfilled that; He literally did that.

We see that the setting of this writing is around the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the death of Zedekiah. The first part of the Psalm is a rehearsal and gives the promises God made. God made these promises to David, and they are absolute. Toward the conclusion, the writer focuses in on how events seem to contradict God’s word. The throne disappeared from common view. Then, finally, at the end, he reiterates his faith in God and God’s promises.

Verses 50-52, “Remember, Lord, the reproach of Your servants—how I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the many peoples, with which Your enemies have reproached, O Lord, with which they have reproached the footsteps of Your anointed. Blessed be the Lord forevermore! Amen and Amen.” A reiteration, ‘Yes, there has been reproach, but God is going to remember and blessed be God.’ The psalmist who wrote this at the time, very likely did not fully understand how God was going to fulfill His promise. He just believed that God would. Sometimes we find ourselves in a situation where God makes a promise and we look at it and say, ‘We don’t see how God is going to do that. How can God fulfill that?’ We don’t see how that can work out. It’s not necessary for me to understand how God is going to do everything. What’s necessary is for me to trust Him to do what He says.

What was the commercial? The old Greyhound Bus commercial, “Sit back and leave the driving to us.” That’s sort of what we need to do in our lives—sit back and leave the driving to God. We don’t have to know how God is going to do everything He says He will do. That’s where faith comes in. It’s a matter of believing, trusting and depending on God, recognizing our dependence on God, and recognizing that God will do what He says. God can be depended upon.

Human leaders make promises. We generally find that there is nothing as stale and empty as election promises the day after election. All of a sudden, their memory sort of “jams up.” They don’t quite remember that. They begin to “crawlfish” (go backwards).

God’s not that way. When God tells you something, you can “take it to the bank.” That’s the way it is. God’s not like human beings who make promises to sort of ingratiate themselves or try to maneuver and manipulate and then don’t fulfill it. In some cases, they may be sincere and are just not able to fulfill it. In other cases, they never meant to fulfill it to begin with. They just said it because they thought it would be popular.

God never does that. Neither of those criteria fits God. If God tells you He will do something, He can do it. He's not like human leaders who have limits. I think sometimes there are those who do make sincere promises and, yet, are unable to put them into practice. Too many other things come in or they lack the power. Well, God doesn't lack the power. He can put into effect what He said. In other cases, they make promises that they never intend to keep. God doesn't do that either. If God tells you something, He means it. That really is a focus on the basis of faith, and that has much to do with our relationship with God.

Hopefully, this evening we got a little bit of an overview of this section of the Psalms and many things that relate to Book Three of Psalms. There is a tremendous amount that God has packed in there.

Next Bible study we will be covering the fourth section of the Psalms, Book Four of Psalms—Psalms 90—106.



Bible Study # 79  
November 26, 1991  
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Book Four—Psalms 90—  
106

This evening we are **getting into the section of the Psalms that is termed Book Four of Psalms**. We have been going through and studying the fact that, traditionally, the book of Psalms has been divided into five sections by the Jews, and that there is a correspondence to two other sections of Scripture that also have five components—the five Books of Moses or the five Books of the Law (Exodus, Genesis, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) and also the five so-called Festival Scrolls or Megillot, which was the term the Jews used. The Festival Scrolls consist of Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther.

As we go through, we will notice there is a correspondence and, particularly, in the fourth section of Psalms, there is a lot of correspondence. The fourth book of the Law is the book of Numbers and the fourth book of the Festival Scrolls is the book of Ecclesiastes. We **will note some interesting correlation in Numbers and Ecclesiastes as we go through this section of the Psalms this evening**.

The book of Numbers is the book that describes Israel's 40 years of wandering in the wilderness prior to the time that they entered into God's rest.

Leviticus 23:42-43, ““You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”” Israel was told that dwelling in booths during the Feast of Tabernacle was to remind them—it was reminiscent—of the time that they dwelt in booths (temporary dwellings) during the period in the wilderness.

The book of Ecclesiastes was traditionally read at the Feast of Tabernacles and it clearly shows that the physical, no matter how great, no matter how much, cannot permanently satisfy. There is a need for something beyond that.

This very lesson is alluded to in this section of the Psalms. **We find in this section many of the Psalms that describe the millennial conditions that will come to Israel and to all nations when God reigns on the earth**. We will note some of that. This section of the Psalms,

beginning with Psalm 90, is a section that has many parallels with the account of Israel's wandering in the wilderness.

The time that Israel was in the wilderness, that 40-year period, was a period of temporary circumstances. They were going through the wilderness in a progression over a 40-year period. God was very directly governing. Their needs were provided and their circumstances were provided. He provided their food with manna. He provided their water with water gushing out of a rock. He overshadowed them with a cloud to protect them from the scorching desert heat. He even performed a miracle to where their clothes and shoes did not wear out. It was a time of God's very direct government. When you go through, you find that God was continually intervening. He was governing in a very direct and a very real way.

There are certain parallels to that time in the future. It was a time of temporary status and that was emphasized by the fact that they were dwelling in booths. They were looking forward to and anticipating a time of entering into God's rest.

The phrase “into God's rest” is used in the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua and Judges. It is used in Psalm 95 and Paul quotes it back in Hebrews 3 and 4. Consider that you have been on a 40-year hike where you walk for a few miles and pitch a tent. You stay there for a day or maybe two or three days or a week, and then you pick up the tent and move on and go a little further. If you spent 40 years doing that, when the time comes that you are able to cross a river and enter into a land, put away your tent, settle down in a house and live there never having to move again, you would, certainly, consider that rest. It was a state of permanence and peace. It was a state of having a fixed, permanent place. Prior to that time, circumstances were changeable. So, there is that parallel.

That analogy is drawn on quite a bit in this section of the Psalms because Paul draws on that analogy and develops it in Hebrews 3 and 4. In fact, he quotes from Psalm 95, which is right in this section. Then he amplifies and expounds the spiritual implications of that. We will look at it in a few minutes. We have recognition that entering into God's rest means much more than just the historical account of Israel crossing the Jordan River and finally living in a fixed dwelling place, rather than marching through the wilderness setting up tents every few days.

Paul quotes it in Hebrews 3 and 4 showing that it was merely a type of what God has in store for

His people. When we enter into the Kingdom of God, we enter into God's rest. That's the real rest that God has for His people. The Promised Land was merely a type because it was a temporary rest.

The Sabbath is used and illustrated as a weekly reminder of that rest. We are going to look at a tie-in between the weekly Sabbath and what it symbolizes. It symbolizes the time of Christ's thousand-year reign on the earth—the Millennium.

We are going to look at the Feast of Tabernacles in the book of Ecclesiastes. We are going to look at the story of Numbers. It all dovetails together right in this particular section.

We start out in Psalm 90. **This Psalm sets the theme for the entire section of the book—God is our ultimate source of rest.**

Psalm 90:1, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.” God is our ultimate place of rest.

Psalm 37:7, “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; ....” God is the ultimate source of rest.

Ecclesiastes is a book of restlessness; it is a restless book. It shows that all the greatest physical blessings and benefits you can have still do not constitute fulfillment and satisfaction. None of us can ever “top” King Solomon. You can go through and read what he did. None of us can ever do that. The whole world is caught up in this materialistic binge. People think that if they could just have more, they would be satisfied. They want more and more and more and more and they are never satisfied. Solomon writes and he says he had it all, and it's just striving after wind. He had it and just was not satisfied. You see, only the spiritual ultimately satisfies. That's a lesson that those who are physical, even during the thousand-year reign of Christ, will have to understand.

The Millennium is not the ultimate. Physical abundance and prosperity during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ on this earth is not the ultimate. Physical prosperity and abundance that human beings will have is not the ultimate. Being a part of the Kingdom of God, being born into the Family of God—that is the ultimate! The ultimate is sharing life with God as a part of His Family into eternity. The ultimate is not being human with all the abundance that humans can have. That's not the ultimate. *Being God is the ultimate.* It is important to understand. We see that brought out. The concept develops that there is something beyond the physical and that is ultimately being a part of the very Family of God—the Kingdom of God.

Psalm 90:1-2, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.” There's a focus on God and His eternity, His greatness, His power and that He is our ultimate dwelling place. He is our rest.

Verse 4, “For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night.” As we read through Psalm 90, we may just sort of read over this verse. I want to call your attention to it because if we go back to 2 Peter 3:8, Peter paraphrases Psalm 90:4, but he gets something out of it that's maybe a little more than what you and I would get out of it. If all we had was Psalm 90:4, you and I probably wouldn't get a whole lot out of that. But we have two other places in the New Testament that quote this verse.

It's important to understand that the New Testament interprets the Old Testament. Sometimes we read over something and we don't necessarily see a lot of significance to it. But when we look in the New Testament, we find that God inspired a deeper significance to be brought out when the same verse is quoted in the New Testament.

Peter addresses the subject in 2 Peter 3.

2 Peter 3:3-4, “knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.’”

Verse 5, they are willingly ignorant of the fact that God has stepped into history and intervened as He did in the days of the flood.

Verses 8-9, “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, ....” When he says, “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day,” that last phrase, “a thousand years is as one day” is quoted from Psalm 90:4, “a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday.”

Peter quotes this phrase, “a thousand years as one day,” but he gets a lot more out of it than just that. He says, “one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” Therefore, Peter concludes, “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years” and he quotes it in the context of explaining that God has a time plan. He introduces the subject that there will be

scoffers saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? We see no evidence. Everything's just going like it always has. There have always been ups and downs. There are cycles, but things just go on. Why, we don't believe that God *really* is going to step into history; that's just old "fear religion." We don't believe that. God's gone way off somewhere.'

Peter says, 'Don't kid yourself and don't be ignorant that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day. God is not slack concerning His promises.' In other words, God is not indifferent. He's not careless. He's not lackadaisical. God has a time plan; He's going to do it on schedule. In His schedule, we find a day is analogous to a thousand years.

We have used the term "Millennium" so much, that many times we really are not aware that you never find in the Old Testament the period of the Messiah's rule defined as a thousand years. Did you realize that all the prophecies in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Zechariah or any of the other prophets never define the Messiah's rule as a thousand years? Do you realize that you can go through all of those and never find it stated that the Messiah will rule for a thousand years? Christ didn't mention that in Matthew 24 or Luke 21. That is never defined until you get to Revelation 20. Do you realize that? The first place in the Bible it says that Christ will rule for a thousand years—the very first place—is Revelation 20. If you didn't have Revelation in the Bible, you wouldn't know for sure how long the Messiah's rule is. You couldn't point to a specific chapter and verse that said how long.

The reference to a thousand years is used three times. Each time it is further clarified. Psalm 90:4 is the first place. If all we had were the Psalms, we would read over 90:4 and wouldn't think a whole lot of it. It is just sort of a nice poetic expression. But Peter quotes it in 2 Peter and says there is a little more to it than that. He says a day represents a thousand years in God's plan. God is not careless or slack concerning His promises. He is going to do what He said, but He is on a time schedule. Then, when John comes along in the book of Revelation, he clearly defines that after the return of Christ, His reign is a thousand years.

Revelation 20:1-2, "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bounds him for a

thousand years." That's the first place it clearly defines it.

Verse 4, "And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. ...they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."

Verse 6, we are told, "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."

Verse 5, "But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished."

John clearly defines that a thousand-year period in Revelation 20. It is not defined before, but there are some insights that we get from Psalm 90 and 2 Peter 3 that adds to what John said. John clearly defines the time of the Messiah is a thousand years. Psalm 90 and 2 Peter 3 bring out the emphasis that a thousand years is analogous to a day in God's plan. Now, the final day in God's plan is a thousand-year day. That will be the time of the Messiah. If God has a time plan that's laid out in days, the final day is the time of the Messiah and it is a thousand-year day.

God established the analogy of His time plan in Genesis 1 when He created the heavens and the earth. In six days the creation was accomplished, and the seventh day He rested and was refreshed. Why did God take seven days? Did God work as hard as He could, just rushed through it putting out all the effort He could, and it took him six days? Finally, He was finished and He was so exhausted, He sat down and rested for a whole day. Is that what happened? No, it took six days because God chose for it to take six days. God could have done it in six minutes if He had wanted. It wasn't that God went as fast as He could and that was all He could do. It wasn't that it was God's best effort. God chose to accomplish it in six 24-hour periods of time and then to set aside the seventh 24-hour period of time to sanctify it and make it holy. God was establishing a pattern.

He established the pattern of the week, which He gave to Adam—to mankind. The first six days are to accomplish work and effort. God says, 'The seventh day is Mine.' Now, if a thousand years represents a day in God's plan, and the seventh and final thousand-year period is His, well, that's just like the week. The final day is God's and it is preceded by six days. So, if the final thousand-year day belongs to God, we are left with the very obvious implication that final thousand-year day, which belongs to God, will be preceded by six thousand-year days, which

are given to man to accomplish his endeavors. We have a very clear implication of this, and it ties in with the Sabbath. It's interesting to note, and I think we should note, that Psalm 90:4 is the first place that makes reference to the thousand years.

We are going to see, as we come on down a little further, that God makes reference in Psalm 90 to the temporary nature of man. He makes reference to the fact that, basically, about 70 years is the lifespan.

Psalm 90:10, "The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, ...." Now, we've come a long way and we've made great progress. We spend 15 percent of the national budget or gross national product on medical care. The average age has finally reached up into the 70s, and some live on up into the 80s. So, man has made great progress and basically landed on Psalm 90:10. Basically, people live into their 70s, and some with a little hardier constitution make it into their 80s. But it is still very temporary. Time flies away, and the older someone gets, the more conscious we are of how quickly time has passed.

Verse 12, it says, "So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

Moses was the one who wrote Psalm 90 and he lived to be 120. Whether we live into our 70s, 80s or even 90s or beyond, the point is it still has an end. None of us come into the world with a little certificate saying that you are guaranteed 69 years, 11 months, 10 days, 3 hours and 10 minutes. Nobody comes along with a guarantee of an exact length of time; none of us know.

The point is: "So teach us to number our days." 'Teach us to recognize our time is finite; it is limited.' I don't know how many days I have ahead. I do know how many I have in my past. They are gone and I can never reclaim them. It is a very vital lesson. We are to be conscious that our time is finite, that our time is limited. "Teach us to number our days"—to realize they are limited. What do we do with that? Do we sit around and be depressed? No. 'We apply our hearts to wisdom.' God says, 'Your time is limited. Make the best use of it. Use it wisely.' God has a plan that stretches on beyond our limited, finite time. We have limited time here and we need to gain a heart of wisdom. We need to recognize it's limited and make good use of it—not just assume we will always have certain opportunities ahead of us.

Psalm 91:1, "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." This seems to be an

implication of God's people dwelling in a place of protection. It clearly refers to those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High, those who dwell in a place that God has for them.

You can compare it to Revelation 12:14, where it talks about the Church 'being taken on the wings of a great eagle into her place in the wilderness to be nourished there by God for a time and times and a half time.' God will intervene and protect. Here it talks about those 'who dwell in the secret place of the Most High, who abide under His shadow.' God protects them.

Verses 2-3, "I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.' Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence." It talks about all the calamities and the catastrophic events going on. Yet, in that midst, God is delivering and protecting His people and the way He will do that is a very beautiful description.

Notice right under the heading of Psalm 92, you have a little title written in small letters, "A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath Day." This is a part of the original text. In the Jewish translation, it is listed as the first verse. It is put in as a title in most of our English translations. Obviously, any Psalm or any part of the Bible would certainly be appropriate for the Sabbath, but here was a specific Psalm that was set apart as a Sabbath song. God says this Psalm is specifically for the Sabbath. We know from history that this was one of the seven Psalms that the Levitical choir chanted every Friday evening as the Sabbath began. This is one of the Psalms that was used in the liturgy there in the temple. Let's notice what this Psalm teaches us, since it is specifically for the Sabbath.

Psalm 92:1-3, "It is good to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; to declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night, on an instrument of ten strings, on the lute, and on the harp, with harmonious sound." The first three verses focus on the importance of coming before God in worship. It talks about the use of music in worship. It says that it is good and appropriate to come before God for praises and thanksgiving. This focuses clearly on the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of public worship. It is a day to assemble before God and to give praise and thanks to Him. This is the first thing we learn about the Sabbath from this Psalm for the Sabbath.

Verses 4-5, the next thing we are told, "For You, Lord, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands. O Lord, how great are Your works! Your thoughts

are very deep.” The next thing we are given insight into has to do with God’s great works. The Sabbath is a memorial of creation. The Sabbath was established at creation. God labored and did great works for six days and rested on the Sabbath.

The first thing we focus on in this Psalm is the importance of public worship. The next thing is on the great works that God has done. God is the Creator and He has made us glad through His works. How great are His works. We focus on the fact that the Sabbath is a memorial of creation. It is a time to reflect on the greatness of God’s power and on the great creation that He has made.

Now, notice something else.

Verses 6-7, “A senseless man does not know, nor does a fool understand this. When the wicked spring up like grass and when all the workers of iniquity flourish, it is that they may be destroyed forever.” Where did he get this? We can identify the first part of this verse, “the wicked spring up like grass and when all the workers of iniquity flourish.”

You know how grass just seems to grow up everywhere. If you want grass to grow, don’t try to put in a lawn—plant a garden. If I am trying to get grass to grow on my lawn, I have trouble and I have bare spots, but if I plant a garden, grass just seems to spring up everywhere. I have to put forth effort to try to get that grass out. He talks about how the wicked spring up as the grass. They just seem to pop up all over; they flourish. He said he saw and understood what a lot of people didn’t. He understood that they were going to be destroyed forever.

Verses 8-15, “But You, Lord, are on high forevermore. For behold, Your enemies, O Lord, for behold, Your enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. But my horn You have exalted like a wild ox [KJV, “unicorn”]; I have been anointed with fresh oil. My eye also has seen my desire on my enemies; my ears hear my desire on the wicked who rise up against me. The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”

Beginning with verse 6 to the end of the chapter, there is a focus on the time of the Millennium, of Christ’s rule. Even though the wicked are springing up like the grass right now, the

Millennium is a time when they are going to be destroyed; it is a time when God’s enemies will perish.

Verse 10, KJV, it is a time when, “But my horn shall You exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil.”

Here is a reference to the Messiah. A horn is used in Biblical symbolism as a symbol of a king or a government. Remember in Daniel and Revelation, the ten horns symbolized ten kings or ten kingdoms. The horn that is described here is the horn of a unicorn. Now, what is unusual about the horn of a unicorn? Well, a unicorn has only one, not two horns like a cow, a sheep or a goat, not many like the prongs of a deer’s antlers—there is one. If His government is going to be exalted like the horn of a unicorn, that means there is going to be one government and one King—not two, not many. There’s going to be one King. The term for anointed is a reference to the Messiah. The word “Messiah” in Hebrew means “the Anointed One.” It refers to the government of the Messiah being exalted. There will be one King.

The enemies of God will be destroyed. The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, like a cedar. The wicked are likened to the grass. Grass grows up very quickly. But have you ever noticed that if you have a few dry days go by in the summer, it doesn’t take too many days before the yard begins to turn brown and die. There’s no staying power. But a tree has staying power and it endures. The wicked pop up all over the place like the grass, but they will wither and die. The righteous will flourish like a tree. They’ll continue to bring forth fruit.

Psalm 92 focuses in on: 1) the importance of public worship—the Sabbath is a day for public worship, a day of assembling to praise God and give thanks to Him, 2) the creation—the Sabbath is a memorial of creation, and 3) a weekly reminder of hope—it is a reminder of the time when Christ’s government will rule on the earth. The establishment of the government of God on this earth is just as sure as the setting of Friday’s sun. You can count on the fact that the sun is going to set on Friday; the sixth day of the week is going to come to an end and the seventh day is going to start. That’s how certain it is that the six thousand-year days God has given man are going to end. The sun is going to set on man’s world, and God’s world will begin.

There are places in the book of Isaiah that certainly likens the time of the Messiah to a Sabbath.

Isaiah 14:7, “The whole earth is at rest and quiet; ....”

Isaiah 14:1, notice, “For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will still choose Israel, and settle them in their own land.” When is He going to do that? That’s going to be when Christ comes back, right?

Verses 3-5, “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, that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say: ‘How the oppressor has ceased, the golden city ceased! The Lord has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers...’”

You can tie this in, prophetically, with Revelation 18—the fall of Babylon the Great. It is a time when God will give His people rest from sorrow, fear and bondage. It is the culmination after God has destroyed Babylon.

Isaiah 14:7, in fact, we are told, “‘The whole earth is at rest and quiet; they break forth into singing.’”

If you go through Isaiah 14, it is very clear that God likens the time of the Messiah’s rule to a Sabbath. He compares it to a Sabbath, a time of rest. When you understand that a thousand years is as a day and the time of the Messiah’s rule is a thousand-year day of rest, then you understand that is preceded by six thousand years of labor and effort.

Psalm 92 is a Psalm for the Sabbath that focuses on public worship, creation and the time of the Messiah’s rule. Here was a Psalm that was specifically designated for the Sabbath. There is a lot packed into Psalm 92.

Psalm 93 focuses on God’s throne being established and His reign.

Psalm 94:1, “O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongs—O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth!” God is the One to whom vengeance belongs. We don’t have to avenge ourselves. God is going to intervene and He will judge the world in righteousness. He knows how to properly combine judgment with mercy. He can do it in a perfect balance and in a way that none of us can.

Verses 11-12, “The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are futile. Blessed is the man whom You instruct [KJV, “chasten”], O Lord, and teach out of Your law...” ‘Blessed is the man whom God chastens.’ Happy (or blessed) is someone God corrects and teaches out of His law.

Verse 13, “that You may give him rest from the days of adversity, ....” The reason God corrects,

chastens and teaches us out of His law is so He may give us rest from the days of adversity. God wants to train and teach us. When God chastens and corrects, He does so in love and in mercy. It leads to being blessed and being happy because God corrects us to teach us the principles of His law. God always does what He does in proper balance and does it because He does love us.

Psalm 95:1-2, “O come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.”

I would like to call your attention to the fact that there are seven Psalms specifically set aside for the Sabbath. These seven Psalms were a part of the Sabbath liturgy every single Sabbath in the temple. Psalms 29, 92, 95, 96, 97, 98 and 99 were a part of every Sabbath’s liturgy. They had a special significance and, certainly, they had a special significance to the Jewish community.

I emphasize that because in Psalm 95, we are going to notice that there are verses Paul quotes. He spends two whole chapters in the book of Hebrews expounding these verses. When Paul wrote the book of Hebrews, he was writing it to whom? He was writing it to Hebrews, to people who were familiar with the temple.

If we want to understand what Paul said in Hebrews 3 and 4, if we want to get out of it what the people who first read it got out of it, then we have to sort of put ourselves in their mindset. Paul was writing to people who were familiar with the temple and what the Levites did, people who were familiar with the Old Testament. Paul quotes a portion of Psalm 95, and when any observant Jew of the first century heard a few verses of that quoted, he immediately, in his mind, identified it with the Sabbath because that was recited every Sabbath as part of the Sabbath’s liturgy.

With that in mind, let’s notice what the Psalm says. Then we are going to turn back briefly to Hebrews 3 and 4 and see how Paul used it.

Psalm 95:7-11, “For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice: ‘Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, and as in the day of trial in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me; they proved Me, though they saw My work. For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said, “It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.” So I swore in My wrath, “They shall not enter My rest.”’”

The book of the Law, which is paralleled in this fourth book of the Psalms, is Numbers. The whole story of the entire book of Numbers is summarized in the verses 8 and 10-11: “Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, and as in the day of trial in the wilderness.” “For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said, “It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.” So I swore in My wrath, “They shall not enter My rest.””

Hold your place. Turn back to Deuteronomy 12 and notice what God said about His rest. Notice what Moses told the Israelites right at the end of his life and right before they crossed the Jordan River.

Deuteronomy 12:9-10, “for as yet you have not come to the rest and the inheritance which the Lord your God is giving you. But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and when He gives you rest from all your enemies around about, so that you dwell in safety...” They were expecting to cross the Jordan River and enter into rest. Right? Remember that? That’s the setting of the use of “rest.”

“So I swore in My wrath, “They shall not enter My rest.””

Hold your place on Psalm 95 and let’s go back to Hebrews 3 and 4.

Hebrews 3:7-11, “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, “They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.”’ So I swore in My wrath, “They shall not enter My rest.”” Paul is quoting Psalm 95.

Now let’s see what he says. He begins to expound it.

Verses 12-13, “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

Verses 15-19, “while it is said: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.’ For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So

we see that they could not enter because of unbelief.”

Hebrews 4:1-4, “Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: ‘So I swore in My wrath, “They shall not enter My rest,”’ although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: ‘And God rested on the seventh day from all His works’...”

Paul now says that entering into God’s rest is a symbolism that goes all the way back to creation when God worked six days and rested on the seventh. He spoke of people entering into rest. The Sabbath is a type of God’s rest. Israel of old, those who didn’t enter into His rest crossing the Jordan, those who died in the wilderness were those who didn’t believe. Paul is applying this to Christians.

Verses 6-7, “Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David [This quotes from Psalm 95; Paul attributes Psalm 95 to having been written by David.], ‘Today,’ after such a long time, as it has been said: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.’”

Verse 8, “For if Joshua [KJV, “Jesus”]...” The term here is a reference to Joshua. Joshua is the Hebrew form and Jesus is the Greek form of the same word. We normally use Jesus (the Greek form) to apply to Jesus the Messiah. We make that distinction in English, but we should be aware that His name in the Hebrew was the same name as Joshua, of the book of Joshua. One is the Greek form and the other is the Hebrew form. The reference in Hebrews 4:8 is to Joshua, the one who led the Israelites across the Jordan River.

Verse 8, “For if Joshua had given them rest [if crossing the Jordan River and settling down was all God was talking about], then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.”

Later, in Psalm 95, he wouldn’t still be talking about entering into God’s rest if all that had been done was done and over with 400 years earlier when Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan River. ‘If Joshua had given them rest, he wouldn’t afterward have spoken of another day.’

Verse 9, “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.” Something you don’t get from reading the English is that all the way through Hebrews 3 and 4 the word for “rest” has been the same word, “*katapausis*,” in the Greek language, which just means “rest.” But in verse 9, the word “rest” is a totally different word in the Greek. It’s not a word that you have to be a great Greek scholar to figure out. The word in verse 9 that is translated “rest” is the word “*sabbatismos*.” You don’t have to be a Greek scholar to figure out that must have something to do with the Sabbath. It does; it literally means “a Sabbath keeping.”

Verses 9-10, “There remains therefore a rest [Sabbath keeping] for the people of God. For he who has entered [or is entering] His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.” If you are entering into God’s rest, of which the Sabbath is a type, you’ve ceased from your own works as God did from His. How did God cease from His works? He ceased on the Sabbath. If you are entering into God’s rest, of which the Sabbath is a type, then you are resting on the Sabbath, too. And you realize that God’s rest is a lot more than what Joshua led the Israelites into. God’s rest was a type of entering into the Kingdom of God.

Psalms 95, which was read every Sabbath and Paul quotes in Hebrews 3 and 4, ties in with Sabbath keeping. Now, who says Paul did away with keeping the Sabbath? Boy, I tell you, when you just take it for what it says—you read Hebrews 4 and go back and read the book of Acts—it’s very clear that Paul kept the Sabbath and taught the Sabbath.

There is a lot packed into Psalm 95. The analogy of ancient Israel entering into the Promised Land as a temporary physical rest was a type of our ultimately entering into the eternal rest of God’s Kingdom. The Sabbath is a type of that rest. It is a weekly reminder of the hope that lies within us. It is the seventh day, after six days of labor, just as the millennial rest is a thousand years of rest that God will give to the world after six thousand years of effort and labor. We find that theme throughout the other Sabbath Psalms (Psalms 96, 97, 98, 99)—the theme of the establishment of the government of God and the reign of the Messiah runs through these chapters.

Psalm 96:1, “Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! Sing to the Lord, all the earth.”

Verses 3-4, “Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples. For the Lord is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.”

Verses 9-10, “Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth. Say among the nations, ‘The Lord reigns; ....’”

—The time when God is going to reign over all nations.

Psalm 97:1, “The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; !...”

Psalm 98:1-2, “Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory. The Lord has made known His salvation; His righteousness He has openly shown in the sight of the nations.”

Verse 9, “For He is coming to judge the earth. With righteousness He shall judge the world, and the peoples with equity.”

Psalm 99:1-2, “The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble! He dwells between the cherubim; let the earth be moved! The Lord is great in Zion, and He is high above all the peoples.” We have a theme of God’s government running through all these Sabbath Psalms. The Sabbath looks forward to the time when God’s government will hold sway over all the earth.

Psalm 100:1-2, “Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing.” This is why we open the Sabbath services with songs. We are told to make a joyful noise to the Lord and to come before His presence with singing. God appreciates music. Based on this and other verses, we open the services with singing. That portion of the service should be taken seriously. It is important to God. It is a focus.

Verses 3-4, “Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.”

Psalm 101:1, “I will sing of mercy and justice; to You, O Lord, I will sing praises.”

There is a clear reference in Psalm 102 to a contrast of the temporary state and the lack of power of the psalmist, compared with the greatness of God’s power and His eternal existence.

Psalm 102:1-2, “Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come to You. Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble; ....”

Verse 8, “My enemies reproach me all day long, ....”

Verses 11-14, “My days are like a shadow that lengthens [KJV, “like a shadow that declines”], and I wither away like grass. But You, O Lord, shall endure forever, and the remembrance of



your name to all generations. You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, has come. For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and show favor to her dust.”

Remember years ago when the work first became involved in the archeological excavation in Jerusalem and the City of David. Mr. Herbert Armstrong used to talk quite a bit about it. For many, many years we were involved there. Well, on several occasions, he made reference to Psalm 102:14, the reference to Jerusalem and the importance of Jerusalem in that context.

It goes on and it talks about the nations ultimately fearing God’s name.

Verses 15-16, “So the nations shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth Your glory. For the Lord shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory.” He’s going to rebuild Jerusalem. He’s going to build it up.

Verse 18, we have reference that this is written down for the generation to come.

There is a clear reference in Psalm 102 to a contrast of the temporary state and lack of power of the psalmist, compared with the greatness of God’s power and His eternal existence.

Verses 3-5, “For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned like a hearth. My heart is stricken and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread. Because of the sound of my groaning my bones cling to my skin.” –Very descriptive of the temporary nature of the psalmist.

Verse 12, “But You, Oh Lord, shall endure forever, and the remembrance of Your name to all generations.”

Verse 11, that’s contrasted with, “My days are like a shadow that lengthens [KJV, “a shadow that declines”], and I wither away like grass.”

“A shadow that declines.” If you’ve ever seen a sundial, which was a time measurement in that day, that’s what happens. The shadow declines. It comes down and you can tell the time. The day is drawing to a close; you can tell because of the way the shadow declines on the sundial. It comes down to the period indicating the day is almost over. What the psalmist says is, ‘My time is short. But You, O Lord, endure forever.’

Verses 25-26, “Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; ...” –A contrast between man’s finiteness and God’s infinite power and greatness.

Psalm 103:1-3, “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His

benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases...” One of the greatest physical benefits God gives to His people is the benefit of healing. Certainly, the greatest benefit is a spiritual benefit—the benefit of being forgiven of our sins and therefore being reconciled with God and having the opportunity to share life with Him in His Family.

We are temporary; in that sense, healing is a temporary benefit. But it is a very, very important benefit. It’s a great blessing that God allows us to partake of, that is made possible through Christ’s sacrifice.

1 Peter 2:24, we are told (referring to Christ), “...by whose stripes you were healed.”

That is not talking about some arbitrary distinction in His sacrifice, but the fact that there certainly is a role of healing that is there. It is through Christ’s sacrifice that we have access to God. You can’t be a partaker of God’s promises if you don’t have access to Him. Christ’s sacrifice makes possible our access to God.

Psalm 103:2-3, it says, “...and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases...”

It continues and shows God’s mercy, His greatness, His patience and all of the things God does for His people.

Verses 10-14, “He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.”

God understands that we are very, very temporary. He deals with us in mercy, compassion and tenderness just like a human parent would do toward his own little child. Any of us who are parents know how tender they are and how protective we feel toward our little tiny children. God feels that way toward us. He is willing and desirous to forgive us and to be merciful to us. He desires to extend benefits to us.

Psalm 104:1-6, “Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty, who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, who stretch out the heavens like a curtain. He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters, who makes the clouds His chariot, who walks on the wings of the wind, who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire. You who laid the

foundations of the earth, so that it should not be moved forever, You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.”

This is a very beautiful poetic description of God as the Creator. God’s greatness is conveyed. There is a poetic imagery in the first few verses of Psalm 104. God is the Creator. He is the One who made everything. He made all of the forces of nature that are so great, so powerful and so awesome. The God that we serve stands ready to forgive us, to heal us and to help us. That God is the One who did it all. Yet, for all the great things that He’s done, He’s ready to hear our prayers. He’s ready to be merciful, tender and kind to us just as a parent with his child.

There is reference to the renewal of the earth that describes creation week.

Verse 30, “You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth.”

The creation described in Genesis 1:1-2 is a renewal of the face of the earth.

Genesis 1:1-2, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; ...” We have always explained that in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, but the earth became without form. It became void and empty. It became chaotic and confused as a result of Satan’s rebellion (Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28). Then God stepped in and in six days refashioned and reformed the face of the earth. It’s referred to in Psalm 104:30 when it refers to God renewing the face of the earth. The creation of Genesis 1—the creation of creation week—was a renewal.

There was a world prior to Adam—a world that was destroyed as a result of Satan’s rebellion or Lucifer’s rebellion when he became Satan. God then renewed the face of the earth. God formed the world for man and then formed man. Man, or humanity, is the family of Adam and had its beginning when God created Adam.

Psalm 105 provides us an overview of Israel’s history. We pick up the story with the call of Abraham and follow it down to the Exodus.

Psalm 105:1-5, “Oh, give thanks to the Lord! Call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples. Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; talk of all His wondrous works. Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord. Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face evermore. Remember His marvelous works which He has done, ...”

Verses 8-12, “He has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant which He

made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac, and confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel for an everlasting covenant, saying, ‘To you I will give the land of Canaan as the allotment of your inheritance, when they were but few in number, indeed very few, and strangers in it.’”

Verses 14-15, He talks about how He protected and watched over them.

Verse 17, “He sent a man before them—Joseph—who was sold as a slave.”

Verses 23-24, “Israel also came into Egypt, and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. And He increased His people greatly, and made them stronger than their enemies.”

Verse 25, the Egyptians came to hate the Israelites.

Verse 26, “He sent Moses His servant, and Aaron whom He had chosen.”

Verses 27-35, he mentions the various plagues that were sent by God.

Verse 36, “He also destroyed all the firstborn in their land, ...”

Verse 37, He brought His people out.

Verse 38, “Egypt was glad when they departed, for the fear of them had fallen upon them.”

Verse 40, “...and satisfied them with the bread of heaven.” –A reference to manna.

Verse 41, He provided them with water.

Verses 42-45, “For He remembered His holy promise, and Abraham His servant. He brought out His people with joy, His chosen ones with gladness. He gave them the lands of the Gentiles, and they inherited the labor of the nations, that they might observe His statutes and keep His laws. Praise the Lord!”

God brought Israel out to observe His laws and to be a special people to Him. Psalm 105 gives sort of an overview of Israel’s history. We notice that Psalms 105 and 106 certainly tie in with the parallel of the book of Numbers, which tells the story of Israel in the wilderness.

Psalm 106 continues the theme. It describes the theme of Israel’s wandering in the wilderness in greater detail. It is, in many ways, a poetic summary of the events of the book of Numbers and the book of Judges.

Psalm 106:3, “Blessed are those who keep justice, and he who does righteousness at all times!”

Verses 7-11, “Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; they did not remember the multitude of Your mercies, but rebelled by the sea—the Red Sea. Nevertheless He saved them for His name’s sake, that He might make His mighty power known. He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it dried up; so He

led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. He saved them from the hand of him who hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. The waters covered their enemies; there was not one of them left.”

Yet, what did they do?

Verses 13-15, “They soon forgot His works; they did not wait for His counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tested God in the desert. And He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul.”

Sometimes God gives people their way, but there are consequences that come when He does.

Verses 16-22, “When they envied Moses in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the Lord, the earth opened up and swallowed Dathan, and covered the faction of Abiram. A fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked. They made a calf in Horeb, and worshiped the molded image. Thus they changed their glory into the image of an ox that eats grass. They forgot God their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt, wondrous works in the land of Ham, awesome things by the Red Sea.”

Verses 24-40, “Then they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe His word, but murmured in their tents, and did not heed the voice of the Lord. Therefore He lifted up His hand in an oath against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness, to overthrow their descendants among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands. They joined themselves also to Baal of Peor, and ate sacrifices made to the dead. Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds, and the plague broke out among them. Then Phinehas stood up and intervened, and so the plague was stopped. And that was accounted to him for righteousness to all generations forevermore. They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses on account of them; because they rebelled against His Spirit, so that he spoke rashly with his lips. They did not destroy the peoples, concerning whom the Lord had commanded them, but they mingled with the Gentiles and learned their works; they served their idols, which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with blood. Thus they were defiled by their own works, and played the harlot by their own deeds. Therefore the wrath of the Lord was kindled against His people, so that He abhorred His own inheritance.”

What do we find? We find a poetic summary of the book of Numbers.

They ceased to be thankful and appreciative for what God had done. When people cease to be thankful and appreciative for what God has done, they begin to take it for granted and get in a murmuring, complaining, griping, faultfinding attitude and they are setting themselves up for trouble. That’s what happened to Israel of old. Instead of valuing and being thankful for what God was giving them and for their deliverance, they looked around and everything wasn’t convenient. As soon as things didn’t go their way, they griped, murmured, complained and bellyached. They didn’t trust God.

The only ones who will enter into God’s rest are those who believe God. How can you enter into God’s rest if you don’t believe Him? The generation that came out didn’t enter in because they didn’t believe. That’s why, when the spies came back (you know the stories of giants in the land), the people’s hearts melted (Numbers 13—14). They didn’t want to go into the Promised Land because they really didn’t believe God’s promises. If you believe God’s promises, then you are ready to go where God leads. There’s an awful lot that we can learn because there is a parallel to the Christian life and to entering into God’s rest which ultimately is the Kingdom of God.

We see this summary in Psalms 105 and 106. We see that when Israel came into the land, they mingled and began to lose their identity. It’s important to maintain our identity. We certainly need to maintain our identity spiritually. That is very important. Israel of old began to lose sight of that.

Verses 43-48, in spite of all the things that they did, “Many times He delivered them; but they rebelled against Him by their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless He regarded their affliction, when He heard their cry; and for their sake He remembered His covenant, and relented according to the multitude of His mercies. He also made them to be pitied by all those who carried them away captive. Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the Gentiles, to give thanks to Your holy name, and to triumph in Your praise. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, ‘Amen!’ Praise the Lord [KJV, “Hallelujah”]!” “Praise the Lord” is just the translation from the Hebrew phrase “Hallelujah.”

We see that there’s an awful lot in this section of the Psalms—a section that focuses in on the

example of God's people ultimately sharing in God's rest and being a part of His Family.

We've seen, this evening, that this section of the Psalms has a great deal of parallel with the story of the book of Numbers. Numbers is the story of how God dealt with His people in the wilderness, how He took care of them under His government, how He dealt with them and brought them through and ultimately set the stage for their entering into the Promised Land. We see why some did not. We see the reference that during the Feast of Tabernacles, we are reminded of the fact that we are still in a temporary status, on the verge of entering into the Promised Land, as Israel of old.

When we go through this section of the Psalms, we are focused on what's temporary and what's permanent. Man is temporary; God is permanent. What's physical is temporary; what God has is eternal. Entering into God's rest is the answer and the solution. This is very amply brought out. There is a focus on the establishment of God's government that God will share with His Family.

We are concluded with this section of Psalms. Next Bible study we will cover the last section—Book Five—Psalms 107—150.

Bible Study # 80  
December 10, 1991  
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Book Five—Psalms 107—150

This evening we are in the final section of Psalms. We have been going through the book of Psalms and have focused on the fact that there are five divisions of the book of Psalms, as the Jews have traditionally reckoned it. This evening we are in the section that is termed **Book Five of Psalms—Psalms 107—150, which is the concluding portion of the book of Psalms.**

One of the things we have noted in this section of Bible studies is the fact that there is a correlation between the material in each of these books of Psalms with two other sets of five books—the five books of the Law (the Torah) or the five books of Moses and then the five Festival Scrolls called the Megillot by the Jews, which were traditionally read during various festival commemorative seasons.

We are in the final fifth section or book of the Psalms and that would correspond with the fifth book of the Law, which would be the book of Deuteronomy. It would also correspond with the fifth book of the Festival Scroll, which is the book of Esther. Now, what possible correlation or connection is there between the book of Esther, the book of Deuteronomy and this final fifth section of the Psalms? We **will note the correspondence of Deuteronomy and Esther with Book Five of Psalms.**

The Jews traditionally read the book of Esther during Purim. Purim is not one of God's Holy Days; it is a national holiday that commemorates an event that is described in the book of Esther. Remember the story? The Persian king had issued a decree that all the Jews were to be executed. He gave permission that on a certain day they were all to be killed. The book of Esther is the story of how God delivered His people through Esther. The celebration that takes place at the end of the book is a celebration of God's deliverance. It comes out very clearly in Esther that God is our Deliverer and the One who worked circumstances. Esther was read during Purim, which was a national festival of celebration of God's deliverance and God's salvation in the physical sense.

The book of Deuteronomy is a summing up—a restatement of the law—as Israel stood on the brink of crossing the Jordan River and entering into the Promised Land. They were on the verge

of entering into God's promises and of entering into God's rest. Moses died at the end of the book. Joshua then prepared to lead them across the Jordan River. "Deuteronomy" means "the second law." It is a restatement of the law. It reiterates the fact that obedience is the key to blessings. As the people were being prepared to cross into the Promised Land and to receive God's blessings, they were reminded of the need to obey. Blessings and obedience go together, just as curses and disobedience go together.

**The emphasis of this section of the Psalms is a section on praise to God and praise to God as our Deliverer. Yet much of this section focuses on obedience to God and on the benefits and blessings that God bestows upon His people.** We'll find this theme of praise running very noticeably through this entire section.

We have commented before how the first Psalm of each section sorts of sets the theme.

Psalm 107:1-3, "Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south." This section opens with giving praise and thanks to God for what He has done. It pictures the redeemed of the Lord and praise to God.

The rest of Psalm 107 looks back. You can almost read it with the idea that you are standing at the end of the Millennium, on the brink of eternity, looking back at what God has done to deliver His people—how He has brought them to Himself, how God has done and accomplished this, how He has established His reign on the earth and how He brought His people back. It is praise to God for what He has done in setting up His government and delivering His people. In that way, there is certainly a lot of correlation to these other things that we have talked about.

In this section of the Psalms, there are several Psalms that merit special attention. One is Psalm 119, which is the longest Psalm in the entire book of Psalms and the longest chapter in the entirety of the Bible.

Psalm 119 is very interesting in several ways. In most of your Bibles, if you will look at Psalm 119, you will notice something very unusual. In my Bible, right under the title Psalm 119, there is an unusual little mark (sort of a little squiggle) and next to it says, "Aleph." Then, if you come down eight verses—between verses eight and nine—there's another little squiggle and it says, "Beth." If you continue down eight more verses, between verses 16 and 17, there is another little

squiggle and it says, “Gimel.” There’s “Daleth,” “He,” “Waw,” “Zayin,” and you can just continue down. What you will find is that every eight verses you have another one of these peculiar little marks with a strange word by the side of it. What you are looking at is the Hebrew alphabet.

Why did they print the Hebrew alphabet here in this Psalm? It is to point out something. We can’t see it in the English, but if we were reading it in Hebrew, there is something that would stand out very unusual in this Psalm. The first word in the first eight verses begins with “A” or “Aleph.” In the next eight verses, the first word in each verse begins with “B” or “Beth,” as it is called in the Hebrew. In the next eight verses, the first word begins with “G”; the next eight verses begin with “D.”

You might just notice; I will point out something to you. Notice the first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet are “Aleph” and “Beth.” What do we call it? We call it the “alphabet.” That’s where it comes from.

The Greeks adopted their alphabet from the Phoenicians, who got it from the Israelites. The indication is that the Phoenicians picked it up during the time of King Solomon when they were handling the shipping for King Solomon. The Greeks got it from them, and so the Greek letters had similar names. “Alpha” and “Beta” are the first two letters in the Greek alphabet, which are just various spellings of the first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, “Aleph” and “Beth.” It comes all the way down to English today because we talk about our “A-B-C’s”—our Aleph Beths or our alphabet. Every time you talk about the alphabet, you are really going back to Hebrew. It’s just one of those little sidelights.

This is a very unusual Psalm. It is a poem. It is called an “acrostic,” which means that every letter of the alphabet is used. If you go through, you’ll find that there are 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. I won’t go through each one of them. You will notice that there’s eight verses attached to each one—that comes out to 176 verses in all.

That’s sort of a remarkable thing. How would you like to write a poem where you have 22 sections of eight verses each and in each one of those sections, the first word of each verse begins with the same letter? Most of us would have trouble coming up with eight words that started with some of the letters. How would you like to come up with eight words that started with “x” in English? It’s an unusual way of doing it, and it stands out because it is the only

section like that in the Bible. It’s what’s called a “perfect acrostic.” There are several that are partial acrostics. It’s very difficult to do, where you use every single letter all the way through.

There are very simple ways—like in little children’s primers that would start out with “‘a’ is for ‘apple’; ‘b’ is for ‘bat’; ‘c’ is for ‘cat’” and this sort of thing. That’s a very simple sort of an acrostic where you go through and see it done. Sometimes you see it done for advertising. They will have a word spelled down with words spelled out horizontally from each letter. Well, that’s an acrostic.

Here, you have the entire alphabet written down, and then verses written across from that—only you have eight verses with “a,” eight with “b,” eight with “c,” coming down that way. The significance of that was a sense of perfection and completion because the entire alphabet was used. The sense of it was that God’s perfect law is being praised because Psalm 119 is really a Psalm of praise to God’s law. It focuses in on how wonderful, perfect and complete God’s law is. It focuses on the greatness of the law that God has designed and put together. It’s as though the entire Hebrew language and alphabet were completely used in saying everything there was to say about it in a poetic way. We will come back and look at some things in Psalm 119. It is interesting to note that.

In the next 15 Psalms, beginning with Psalm 120 through Psalm 134, you will notice right under each of those Psalms it says, KJV, “A Song of Degrees”; NKJV, “A Song of Ascent.” You will notice there are 15 of them that are called “Songs of Degrees.” What is that talking about?

One indication is that there is a Jewish tradition as to why there are 15 Psalms called “Psalms of Degrees” and where that comes from.

Isaiah 38:1-2, “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.”’ Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord...”

Verse 3, he really besought God.

Verses 5-8, God told him, “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.’” And this is the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing which He has spoken: ‘Behold, I will bring the shadow on

the sundial, which has gone down with the sun on the sundial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward.’ So the sun returned ten degrees on the dial by which it has gone down.”

Verse 9, in the aftermath of that, we are told, “This is the writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick and had recovered from his sickness...”

Verse 20, he writes in the latter part of the chapter, “The Lord was ready to save me; therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments all the days of our life, in the house of the Lord.” In the aftermath of his healing and God’s deliverance, Hezekiah ordained some songs (Psalms) as a tribute to God that were sung by the Levitical choir in the house of the Lord. There were 15 years added to Hezekiah’s life. The sun went backward the equivalent of ten degrees on the sundial. Here we have 15 Psalms—Psalm 120 through Psalm 134—called “Songs of Ascents” (KJV, “Songs of Degrees”).

Let me just call your attention to something. Notice that Psalms 120 and 121 say, “A Song of Ascents [Degrees].” Psalm 122 says, “A Song of Degrees of David.” Now keep count. We come down to Psalm 123, “A Song of Degrees” and Psalm 124, “A Song of Degrees of David.” Psalms 125 and 126 are both “Songs of Degrees.” Psalm 127 is “A Song of Degrees for Solomon.” So, here’s the third one that has an author’s name given to it. Psalms 128, 129 and 130 are just “Songs of Degrees.” Psalm 131 is “A Song of Degrees of David”—this is the fourth one that has an author’s name to it. Psalm 132 is just “A Song of Degrees.” Psalm 133 is “A Song of Degrees of David”—that’s the fifth one that has an author’s name to it. Psalm 134 is just “A Song of Degrees.”

What you find, if you count it, is that ten of those “Songs of Degrees” are anonymous and five have authors that are given—four by David and one by Solomon. You have 15 Psalms—ten of which don’t give the author’s name; they are just called “Songs of Degrees.” Then you have five more that are added that bring it up to 15.

Jewish tradition holds that Hezekiah wrote those ten, and there were 15 of them in honor of the fact that there were 15 years that God added to his life. They are called “Songs of Degrees” because it commemorated the fact that the sundial went backward ten degrees as a miraculous sign of what God was going to do. Hezekiah wrote ten songs, one for each degree. Then there were five more Psalms that had previously been written but not added to the

canon. There were five Psalms that had been written either by David or Solomon that he added in to bring the total up to 15. These were added at the time of King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah as a celebration of God’s deliverance.

It’s sort of an interesting thing. These 15 Psalms were traditionally sung by the Jews on their way up to Jerusalem prior to the Feast. If you started with the evening that began the Feast of Trumpets and you take one a day for each song, you come up to Psalm 134 on the evening that begins the Feast of Tabernacles. We know from Jewish history that, in later years, the Levitical choir did that in the temple. There were 15 steps that led down into the inner court. They did this during that 15-day period leading up to the Feast of Tabernacles. They moved down a step every night and culminated with Psalm 134 on the evening that began the Feast of Tabernacles, which they sang on the evening that began the Feast. It’s sort of interesting if you read Psalm 134 and think of it in those terms.

Psalm 134:1-3, “Behold, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who by night stand in the house of the Lord! Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord. The Lord who made heaven and earth bless you from Zion!” That’s sort of an interesting opening to the Feast of Tabernacles.

This section of the Psalms and the entire book of Psalms end with five Psalms that are called the five “Hallelujah Psalms.” They are called that because the first word in each of these last five Psalms is “Hallelujah.” In most of our English Bibles, it is translated “Praise the Lord!”

Psalm 146:1, you will notice, “Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!” The word “Hallelujah” is a Hebrew word and translated into English means “Praise the Lord.” Sometimes we hear the word or we have used the word “Hallelujah” in that way. In some cases, it’s just rendered that way in the Bible. It’s rendered as a phrase, which is just the Hebrew word. Or if it is translated, it literally means “Praise the Lord.”

There are a couple of Hebrew words that most of us have used over the years and never thought anything about; we probably didn’t even realize we were speaking Hebrew. There’s one Hebrew word that you and I say probably every day—“Amen.” It is a Hebrew word that literally means “let it be so.” It is the root word of the word that’s translated “faith” in the Old Testament and is sort of an affirmation of what is said.

This section of the Psalms and the whole book of Psalms end up with the five Hallelujah Psalms. You see this number five that runs through the book of Psalms. Here it ends up with five Psalms that are the Hallelujah Psalms. The thing you notice about each of these Psalms is that “Hallelujah” is the first word and also the last word. In each of these last five Psalms, the first word is “Hallelujah” and the last word is “Hallelujah.” That’s a good reason for calling them the “Hallelujah Psalms.”

Psalms 150 begins and ends up with, “Praise the Lord!”

Psalms 150: 1, “Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty firmament!”

Verse 6, it builds up and finally, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!” There is that sense of climax.

The book of Psalms is a poetic book; that’s the nature of Psalms. There are several things that we might look at. I would call your attention to phrases and things that are in the book of Psalms that we may not have commented on before.

You’ll find that many of the Psalms have a title to them. Most of those say “A Psalm of David.” Some are directed to “The Chief Musician.” Many say, “A Psalm of Asaph” or “A Psalm for Asaph.”

Asaph was the chief of the Levitical musicians in the time of King David. The Levitical musicians were descendants of Asaph’s family. Asaph, evidently, played a major role under King David in originally organizing and putting together much of the book of Psalms. His descendants were the section of Levites that were the professional choir that sang in the temple. So, when you see the word “Asaph” in there, it is a reference to the chief of the Levitical musicians.

As you go through, you will notice in Psalms 4, 5 and 6, for instance, that it uses a rather unusual term. Psalm 4, KJV, says, “To the Chief Musician on Neginoth, ....” The spelling is a slight variation in Psalm 5, “To the Chief Musician upon Nehiloth. ....” Psalm 6 says, “To the Chief Musician on Neginoth....” We could go through, but you will find that phrase used in various places.

The question comes up: What do these terms mean? Some commentators connect it with some sort of musical notation that had meaning to the Levitical choir and that doesn’t necessarily have a meaning to us. The term “Neginoth” in Hebrew literally means “smiting.” Some have sort of connected that with reference for some sort of percussion instrument that was used in its

performance. There is, in most of the Psalms that use this term, a theme that has to do with deliverance from personal smiting and trouble. It may simply be a play on words, referring both to some sort of musical percussion instrument and may very well make reference to some of the subject matter. If it refers to a musical instrument, it would obviously be some sort of a percussion instrument, just by the meaning of the word.

Psalms 8, KJV, other terms are used, for instance, “To the chief Musician upon Gittith, ....” If you check, you will find that term is used a fair amount of times later on in the book of Psalms. That term is used in various places. Psalms 81 and 84, for instance, use it. There are various places. It’s literally a reference to winepresses, and it is thought of as a poetic term that relates to the subject matter of the autumn Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles, of course, was a time of the grape harvest, a time when the winepresses were running and wine was being made.

In ancient times when the grapes were harvested, you either made wine or you made raisins. The fresh grapes didn’t last very long. They come off the vine and you eat some of them fresh—but what are you going to have through the remainder of the year?

Sometimes people ask if it was wine or grape juice Christ took at the Passover. Well, I’ll tell you what. You go out, get some grapes, press them out and make some juice. Set it up and see how long it stays grape juice. If you don’t put it in the refrigerator, freeze it or don’t give modern processing to it, you will find out how long you have grape juice. You may have wine or vinegar, but you are not going to have grape juice for too long because it simply won’t keep as grape juice.

So, that’s why it’s silly for some of the Baptists and different ones that want to claim maybe Christ took grape juice at the Passover. How did you keep it? You don’t harvest grapes in the spring; you harvest them in the fall. There was no such thing as grape juice in the spring until “Welch’s” came along. They didn’t go to the store and buy a bottle of Welch’s. They didn’t have pasteurization where they processed and pasteurized it. They didn’t get out a can of frozen concentrate and make it up. They didn’t have those things. Frankly, a lot of you remember when you didn’t have those things either. It hasn’t been that many years ago since some of those things came along.



There is a symbolism that the word “winepresses” ties in with the Feast of Tabernacles. God uses it in a symbolic sense, referring to His punishment of the wicked. He talks about, in that sense, treading out the grapes of wrath. He talks about the wicked, in that sense, being treading out. He draws the analogy to that back in the book of Revelation.

We find in the Psalms that the term “Gittith” is a poetic term. You’ll find that generally the subject matter is related to the fall festival season.

There are others. We will pick up one more that is used. I don’t want to get too bogged down on that, but I think it’s good to note because there are a lot of these strange-sounding words in the titles and a lot of times we wonder what they mean.

Psalm 32, KJV, says, “A Psalm of David, Maschil.” You’ll find that term used a number of places. Psalm 42, KJV, Psalm 52, KJV, and various other places use it. That’s a term that seems to relate to understanding or public instruction.

You find that some of the Psalms make reference in the title to “Korah.” It actually relates to the sons of Korah. Psalms 47, 48 and 49 are Psalms for the sons of Korah. The sons of Korah were Levitical musicians. This was one branch of the Levites who were musicians. These were notations that had reference either to the Psalm as it was used in public worship in the temple or in terms of the musicians who prepared it and used it. We won’t try to get all of these terms, but just in noting a few, it may help to figure out some of the others as well.

Let’s get on into this section a little more. We already noticed a little bit of the theme of Psalm 107; it is a Psalm of praise to God for His mercy and His redemptive power.

Psalm 107:1-2, “Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy...” In a lot of ways, it’s praising God right at the beginning of the Millennium.

Verse 3, “And gathered out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.”

Verse 6, “Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses.”

It talks about the punishments that came on those that had disobeyed God.

Psalm 108 is, again, a Psalm of praise to God.

Psalm 109:1, “Do not keep silent, O God of my praise!”

Verse 8, there’s an interesting statement, “Let his days be few, and let another take his office [or take his charge].” We would tend to just read over that. But if you go back to Acts 1:20, you will find that Peter quoted it there and applied it to Judas. Psalm 109 is written in the sense of David being a type of Christ.

Verses 3-8, “They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause. In return for my love they are my accusers, but I give myself to prayer. Thus they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love. Set a wicked man over him, and let an accuser stand at his right hand. When he is judged, let him be found guilty, and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few, and let another take his office.” Here’s a reference to one who was a betrayer.

Acts 1:20, Peter quotes it, “‘For it is written in the book of Psalms: “Let his habitation be desolate, and let no one live in it; ....””

That’s taken from Psalm 69.

Psalm 69:25, “Let their habitation be desolate; let no one dwell in their tents.”

Acts 1:20, “...and, “Let another take his office [bishopric].””

This is quoted out of Psalm 109.

Psalm 109:8, “...and let another take his office.”

Peter quotes this Psalm and applies it to Judas Iscariot. He used that as a basis of saying that a replacement apostle needed to be chosen to round out the number to 12.

Now, you and I may not have known this if all we had was the book of Psalms. We probably would have never figured that out. But the point is that we understand the Old Testament by the New Testament. The New Testament provides a proper understanding and interpretation of the Old. There are many things that we could never understand completely without what the New Testament adds.

Psalms 110:1, an interesting example, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” What is being talked about here?

If you just hold your place there, notice back in Matthew 22, Jesus quoted this part.

Verse 15, the Pharisees were trying to challenge Christ and trip Him up.

Matthew 22:41-43, “While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, ‘What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?’ They said to Him, ‘The Son of David.’ He said to them, ‘How then does David in the Spirit call Him “Lord,” saying...”

Christ said, 'You fellows have a lot of questions for Me; I have one for you. Whose Son is the Messiah? Who is the Messiah a descendant of?' And they said, 'He'd be the Son of David, a descendant of David.' And He said, 'That's interesting. How is it that David in the Spirit calls Him "Lord"? If He is David's Son, why does David speaking under inspiration call Him "Lord"?' Then He makes reference to the book of Psalms—He quotes Psalm 110:1.

Verses 44-45, ""The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool'"? 'If David then calls Him "Lord," how is He his Son?'" It was sort of a trick question for them. They couldn't answer. Since they were trying to trip Him up, He just asked them a question that He knew they couldn't answer. Jesus Christ quoted it.

Verse 46, we are told, "And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore." They quit asking Him questions. That was His way of doing this.

You might notice that a lot of Psalm 110 is a reference to Christ.

Psalm 110:4, ""The Lord has sworn and will not relent, You are a Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."" This is quoted in the book of Hebrews 7:21.

Psalm 111 is a very interesting Psalm.

Psalm 111:9, "...holy and awesome [KJV, "reverend"] is His name." That is one of the reasons we don't use the title "reverend" in God's Church. We don't refer to the ministry by the title "reverend" because we are told that 'holy and reverend is His name.' That's God's name. "Reverend" means "worthy of worship." I am not worthy of worship; neither was Mr. Herbert Armstrong or any human being. God is worthy of worship; He is reverend and holy. We don't use that title because it says 'holy and reverend is His name.'

Verse 10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever." That's an important thing. The starting point for wisdom is to stand in awe of God.

The world doesn't have a lot of wisdom because the world's starting point is that people are impressed with themselves. The starting point for most of the intellectuals of this world is that they are impressed with themselves and how much they know. They think they are pretty smart; as a result, they will wind up coming up with some pretty stupid philosophies and pretty stupid answers.

'The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God'—really standing in awe of God and being impressed with God. If you start out impressed with God, it's amazing how everything else falls into place. You can figure out a lot of things if you realize how great God is and how small we are by comparison. It has to do with setting our whole worldview.

It says, "A good understanding have all who do His commandments." Do you want to understand? You have to act on what you know. It's interesting. When God began to work with Mr. Herbert Armstrong, when God began to open his mind, the first thing was the understanding of the Sabbath. The Sabbath and the Holy Days was the test. Once Mr. Herbert Armstrong showed he was willing to start doing that, his mind was opened to other things.

It's interesting. Right there at the beginning, the beginning was the Sabbath and the Holy days; the next had to do with the identity of Israel, which unlocked Bible prophecy and the Old Testament. Within a fairly short time—within a matter of months—he began to understand the overview of the prophetic outline and the identity of who is the beast. Those were things he began to understand early on. But he never would have understood some of those things if he hadn't started obeying God.

"A good understanding have all those who do His commandments." Mr. Herbert Armstrong used to mention the fact that he and his wife kept the Holy Days for seven years before they understood what the days meant. If he had waited to understand what they meant before he did it, he would never have understood. See, "a good understanding have all they that do His commandments."

If you want to grow in understanding, act on what you know. Start where you are and do what you see God says to do. You may not understand all the "whys," but if we're yielded to God, we don't have to understand all the "whys." The fact that God said it should be enough. I don't have to evaluate whether it's a good idea or not. If God said, 'Do it'—that's sufficient. And if I do it, sooner or later I'm going to come to understand.

The world wants to put themselves in the seat of being the judges. They don't see what difference it makes. The point is not whether *I* see what difference it makes; the point is: Does *God* say it makes a difference to Him? If it makes a difference to Him, whether or not I see what difference it makes is irrelevant. The point is: God said it; I start doing it. And you know what?

The longer you do it, the more you understand about it and the clearer it becomes. I think most of you can look at that in your own life and see that you have grown in understanding after you started acting on the things you saw. It's like God will lead us as long as we follow, but if you quit following, then all of a sudden, you don't continue to understand more and more. This is a key thing here in Psalm 111.

Psalm 112:1, again, a Psalm of praise, "Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in His commandments."

Verse 5, "A good man deals graciously and lends; he will guide his affairs with discretion." A good man is going to be kind and generous, but he's also going to use good judgment in guiding his affairs.

Verse 7, he's going to trust God.

Psalm 113 is, again, a Psalm of praise to God.

Psalm 113:4, "The Lord is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens." He's the One that can be looked to.

Psalm 114:1-2, "When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, Judah became His sanctuary, and Israel His dominion." This is a Psalm of praise to God for the great things that He did.

Psalm 115 talks about how really insane it is for people to make idols and to trust in those idols.

Psalm 115:2-8, "Why should the Gentiles say, 'Where now is their God?' But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; eyes they have, but they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear; noses they have, but they do not smell; they have hands, but they do not handle; feet they have, but they do not walk; nor do they mutter through their throat. Those who make them are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them."

It is absolutely futile. What's the use? What's the point? You have some statue sitting up there; it can't move, talk, see or do anything—and here's somebody bowing down and praying to it.

Verse 9, the point is, "O Israel, trust in the Lord; He is their help and their shield." We are to trust in the Eternal. We are to trust in God who dwells in heaven, and He delivers.

Verse 16, "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the earth He has given to the children of men."

It's interesting how people always want to get "ahead of the game." We are told that as the sons of God, we ultimately are going to inherit all things. We'll inherit the universe. It talks about

that in Revelation 21:7. But you know, 'the heavens are God's, the earth He has given to the children of men.' But, of course, what do people want to do? We have made a mess out of the earth. We have polluted it. We have gotten it dirty and made a "wreck" out of so much. Now man wants to conquer outer space. That surely makes a lot of sense; we can't take care of what we have.

God's principle is to start where you are. Learn to take care of what you have. Then, when you're faithful with a little, you will be given rulership over much. Man makes a mess out of what he has and then wants to quickly move on to something else. We are going to find that is something that is not for man at this time. That is something that we ultimately can have a part in on into the Millennium. But right now, the earth is what we have and what God has given us to take care of.

Psalm 116:1, "I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplications."

Psalm 117:1, "Oh, praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!"

Psalm 118:1, "Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! Because His mercy endures forever." It is, again, a Psalm of praise and rejoicing.

Verses 22-23, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes." You will find this is quoted in Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17, Acts 4:11 and Ephesians 2:20. This particular verse is quoted in a variety of places in the New Testament. The book of Psalms is heavily quoted in the New Testament.

Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible. We have already talked about that. It is praising God's law. You will find that there are seven different terms that are used.

Psalm 119:1, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord!" It talks about the law of the Lord.

Verse 2, "Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart!" The second term is testimonies.

Verse 4, "You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently." Precepts—that's a little bit different.

Verse 5, "Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!" Statutes is the fourth term.

Verse 6, "Then I would not be ashamed, when I look into all Your commandments." The fifth term is commandments.

Verse 7, “I will praise You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgment.” Judgment is a sixth term.

Verses 9, “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.”

Verse 11, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.”

We read of God’s law, His testimonies, His precepts, His statutes, His commandments, His judgment and the seventh term, His word. There is a lot of overlap between these terms. There are certain differences. Perhaps at a later time I may give a sermon on God’s law and go through a little bit of the differences between these terms. There’s a lot of overlap. Some of it is more poetic, but there are some differences.

The term “Law” or “Torah” includes the testimonies, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments; it includes everything. The term “the Word of God” includes everything God says. His testimonies relate more to accounts or illustrations.

Some people operate on the basis that if you can’t show them a verse that says, “thou shall do so-and-so,” then they are not going to do it. They don’t see why they can’t. We should all understand that the Bible isn’t written that way. God does give commandments where He says, “thou shall” and “thou shall not,” but that’s not the only way God speaks to us.

When you go through and read the story of Abraham, that’s part of the testimonies. When you read the story of David, that’s a part of the testimonies. You see the way God worked. You see the things they did; you see what they should have done and what they shouldn’t have done. You get God’s evaluation of it. We should learn from that. If God had wanted to simply give us a list of 375 things to do and not to do, He could have written the Bible that way—where it was just a few pages long and a list of 375 rules. That’s not the way God wrote it.

Matthew 4:4, Jesus said, “...“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”” We need to study the Bible from the standpoint of trying to see how God views things. We are not to have an attitude of, “Unless you can show me God says right here, ‘thou shalt not do such and such,’...” God deals with a lot of things in principle. That’s what’s known as having the mind of Christ. There are illustrations and specifics. There are commandments that are given that certainly summarize. There are statutes that have more to do with civil matters. There are many different things. There are judgments that may apply to

specific circumstances. There are a lot of different things that come out.

Psalms 119 deals with all of that. It talks about the various aspects of God’s law and how God’s law is for our good. We think of law as simply a list of rules. That’s a mistake because the word for “law” in Hebrew was the word “Torah” which means “instruction.” The term “God’s law” includes rules, but it also includes testimonies and other things. It is an overall term that refers to God’s instructions. God’s instructions are what we should want and what we are looking for.

Verse 97, “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.” In God’s law, there’s an orientation toward God’s instruction.

Verse 105, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

Verse 142, it’s very clear that God’s law is eternal because we are told, “Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is truth.”

Verse 172, “...for all Your commandments are righteousness.” If God’s righteousness is everlasting and all His commandments are righteousness, then that sounds like the law is going to be around forever.

Verses 151-152, “You are near, O Lord, and all Your commandments are truth. Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever.”

Verse 160, “The entirety of Your word is truth [KJV, “Your word is true from the beginning”], and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.” We see that God’s law is intended to be around for a long, long time.

The next 15 Psalms—Psalms 120—134—are the Songs of Degrees. We have already commented about that.

Psalms 122:1-2, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord.’ Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!” This is a theme that certainly focuses in on when God’s people are going to go up to Jerusalem in peace in the beginning of the Millennium.

Verses 3-4, “Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together, where the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, to the Testimony of Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord.”

Psalms 123:1, “Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens.”

Psalms 126 describes God bringing the captives back after the return of Jesus Christ.

Psalms 126:1-4, “When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, we were like those who dream.

Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, 'The Lord has done great things for them.' The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad. Bring back our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the South."

Psalm 127:1-2, "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He gives His beloved sleep."

If God is not behind it, it's futile. If God is not involved in what we are doing, then it is an exercise in futility. It's an important point, KJV, "Unless the Lord builds the house, the weary builders toil in vain." Whether it's our lives or family or anything that we are doing, if God is not involved in it, then no matter how hard you work and no matter how much effort you put into it, there's never going to be anything permanent out of it. If you are trying to do something that is going to last, you don't leave God out. You don't leave God out and you don't put God in last. God has to be the starting point.

Psalm 133:1, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" It shows how that is important and precious in God's sight.

In Psalm 135, we find a Psalm of praise to God for all the great things that He has done—the things He's done in ages past—the work of creation, His intervention for His people in times of need. Some of the great things that God has done are detailed out in Psalm 135. It is a hymn of praise to God.

Psalm 136:1, "Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever." Again, it's a continuation of the same sort of thing as in Psalm 135.

Psalm 137 is a little different. It is written in the context of the Babylonian captivity. It is a reference to God's people in the Babylonian captivity looking to God as their Deliverer and the fact that even on into the Millennium, God's people, whom He's redeemed and brought back, will look to God. They will look back on the captivity and the things that God has brought them out of.

Psalm 138:1-2, "I will praise You with my whole heart; before the gods I will sing praises to You. I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; for You have magnified Your word above all your name."

Verse 6, "Though the Lord is on high, yet He regards the lowly; but the proud He knows from afar." That's an important concept to realize. In this world, if you want to gain access to somebody important, you better have a lot of money. You better have great power if you want to get in to see the governor. If you are a multi-millionaire, you can get right in. If you have enough money, your phone calls can get right through, even to the President of the United States. But if you or I were to try that, we would be doing well to get the secretary's secretary. That's just the way the world is structured.

But what we have to realize is that though you and I may not have direct access to all the great and mighty and powerful of this world, we do have direct access to the very headquarters of the Universe. KJV, "Though the Lord be high, yet has He respect unto the lowly; but the proud He knows afar off." The way to gain access to God is to be lowly, to be humble. Come before God, have an attitude of humility and we can have direct access to Him.

Verse 8, there is another important point that's brought out, "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me; Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever; do not forsake the works of Your hands." It's not what you can make out of yourself or what I can make out of myself; it's what God can make out of us as we yield to Him. "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me." To the extent that we will surrender our life and our will to Him, He will perfect that which concerns us. He will take it and develop it. He will make us what we could never make ourselves. In that sense, to the extent that we get out of the way, we let God work. His mercy endures forever and He won't forsake the work of His own hands. We are the work of His hands. He is in the process of making us, not only physically in His image but spiritually.

Psalm 139:1-6, "O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it."

He is saying, 'God knows me better than I know myself. He knows everything about me. He knows when I rise up and when I sit down.'

Verses 7-12, 'Where am I going to go away from Him? There's no place I can go that He is not

going to find me. Even the darkness can't hide me from Him.' He goes on and describes that. He shows how God can see us in the remotest of places.

Verses 23-24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." He's asking God to search him, examine him, to help him to see himself. God knows everything about me; He knows me better than I know myself. 'Search me, try me, see if there's anything that shouldn't be there.' We have to go to God for spiritual insight into ourselves. One of the hardest things for any of us to do as human beings is to be completely honest with and about ourselves.

What are we told?

Jeremiah 17:9, "'The heart is deceitful above all things. ?...'" First and foremost, the primary ingredient of human nature is that we kid ourselves. It's hard to be really honest with or even about myself. But God knows. He sees us in the dark, in the daylight, when we rise up and sit down.

The psalmist (David) asks God, 'Help me to see myself. Search me and try me. Help me to understand, to see and to perceive, what You see.'

Psalm 140 is a prayer for deliverance and preservation.

Psalm 140:13, "Surely the righteous shall give thanks to Your name; the upright shall dwell in Your presence."

Psalm 141:1-2, "Lord, I cry out to You; make haste to me! Give ear to my voice when I cry out to You. Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." Incense is used to symbolize the prayers of the saints. Revelation 5:8 states that specifically. He draws the analogy of prayer being likened to incense.

Verse 3, he makes an interesting statement, "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips." What does that mean? He's asking God to post an armed guard right at his lips to not let anything get out that shouldn't. I'll tell you what. We would be an awful lot better off if some people had that attitude.

Verse 4, "Do not incline my heart to any evil things, to practice wicked works with men who work iniquity; and do not let me eat of their delicacies." 'Don't let me have an attitude of wanting to collect gossip and standing around to eat of their dainties.' They have this little juicy tidbit, this little morsel of gossip. 'Hey, did you hear what "so-and-so" did?' That's the normal

human reaction. The ears perk up, 'Oh, really! I can't believe it.'

David recognized that was something that really should not be. He says, 'What I want to do is let my prayer come out—let my prayer come before you as incense and please set a guard at the door of my mouth so that no wicked words escape. I don't want things to come out that shouldn't. I don't want to take in all these little delectable morsels from people about wicked things. I don't want my heart and mind to be that way.'

Psalm 142:1, "I cry out to the Lord with my voice; with my voice to the Lord I make my supplication."

Verse 5, "I cried out to You, O Lord: I said, 'You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.'"

Psalm 143:1, "Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear to my supplications!"

Psalm 144:1, "Blessed be the Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle..."

Psalm 145:1, "I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever."

Verses 7-9, "They shall utter the memory of Your great goodness, and shall sing of Your righteousness. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy. The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works." God is compassionate and merciful. His tender mercies are over all His works.

It's interesting. I will point out here that over the years, in certain countries, there have been many sports that are, let's say, cruel sports or "blood sports," as they are called. I'm not making reference to hunting but, let's say, to everything from bullfighting, cock fighting, dog fighting, bull baiting and all sorts of things like that. A lot of those things have sort of fallen into disrepute.

Jews, who have been devout, have never engaged in that sort of thing. Their basis for refusing to involve themselves in things like this—things that involve sort of a slow torturous death to animals—has been this verse. The verse that they quote is Psalm 145.

"The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works." That verse is their basis of why not to be involved in, let's say, sports of cruelty. Here's an example that they extrapolate out of this verse. Now you can't point to a verse that says, "Thou shall not" and come up with something like that. But here's a principle that's stated, "The Lord is good to all." Now, obviously, God created certain animals to be

consumed, but if you go back to the law and the instructions that were given to the priests and the Levites, a slaughter was quick. It was not something that was slow and torturous. It didn't involve cruelty. Of course, there were certain animals that were created to be eaten, but there's a difference between slaughtering an animal to eat and putting two animals together and watching them "go for it" and goad until finally one of them kills the other. It's just sort of a little aside. It's maybe a minor point, but I think it is just a little bit of insight into the character and nature of God.

The point is that when we read the Bible, we want to read it from a standpoint of trying to understand how God thinks so that we can learn to think that way, too. We should not read the Bible trying to spiritualize everything away. We should not read the Bible from a modern lawyer's standpoint, sort of looking for loopholes—'Awh, He didn't say you couldn't do this at this time, so I'll do it.'

The point is that God gives us an overview. He gives us principles that relate to the way He thinks and, if we have a converted mind, then we are trying to find the principles. We are trying to understand how He thinks because we want to learn to think that way, too. He's gracious. He's full of compassion. He's slow to anger. He's of great mercy. Those are the characteristics that should characterize us. If we're not gracious, if we lack any compassion, if we're quick to anger, if we have very little mercy, well, when we read this, we need to realize that here are some areas that we need to work on.

Psalm 145:18-20, "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them. The Lord preserves all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy."

Psalm 147:3-4, "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name." Now that's an incredible thing. God can count all the stars, and the number of stars is infinite to man's reckoning. Man can't count how many there are; God knows the number. There is a specific number. I don't know how many, but God does. One of these days you and I can find out. Not only does He know how many there are, He remembers all their names. You talk about memory; now that's memory!

1 John 3:2, the encouraging point is, "...it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we

know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

When Christ comes back in glory, we are going to be like Him. Our glorified body is going to be just like His. We are going to be like God. We are going to be a part of His Family. Maybe you and I forget an awful lot of things that we try to learn right now, but the time is going to come, in a few years, when we are going to be like Him. That means we are going to have the kind of mind that's able, not only to count how many stars there are, but also to remember all their names. The things you read, study and try to remember—if you have trouble remembering it all—in a few years, it will come right back and you will have no trouble. It's a little bit of insight into the greatness of God's mind and God's greatness.

Psalm 147:11, "The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy." We have already commented on these final "Hallelujah" Psalms—Psalms 146, 147, 148, 149 and 150.

Notice how Psalm 150 climaxes.

Psalm 150:1-6, "Praise the Lord [Hallelujah]! Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty firmament! Praise Him for His mighty acts; praise Him according to His excellent greatness! Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; praise Him with the lute and harp! Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes! Praise Him with loud cymbals; praise Him with high-sounding cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord [Hallelujah]!"

There is a poetic climax that focuses in on the use of music in the worship of God and the fact that it plays a very important role. We should realize that's part of the importance of music. There's nothing that has a greater impact upon the mood and the emotions of human beings than music. Certainly, an atmosphere of awe and majesty can be created through music, just as negative moods and emotions can be created.

Music was something that was used in a very special way in ancient Israel. God considered it important enough that a portion of the Levites were a professional orchestra and a professional choir. That was what they did. They were supported, of course, by the tithes of the people, but they were a professional orchestra and a professional choir. God obviously considered music and its impact on the people as an important part of worshipping Him and an important part of what was important in society.

The whole book of Psalms is a poetic book. It is a book that was set to music and sung. It is a book that is suited for meditation and for memorization. It is poetic, yet, it has a tremendous amount of content and “meat” packed into it that all of us can, hopefully, get more out of as we study it and realize the role and impact that God designed it to have.

We can just sort of feel some of this, here in Psalm 150, as we imagine the Levitical choir performing this number—the sense of awe, majesty and worship that was created in the proper use of music.

There are various proper moods to be created with music. There are, certainly, celebration and festive occasions, as well as for worship and for other things.

We have now concluded the book of Psalms. We are going to continue this series of the Writings by going right on into the book of Proverbs. The next Bible study we will cover the first portion of the book of Proverbs—the first nine chapters.



Bible Study # 81  
December 24, 1991  
Mr. John Ogwyn

### The Writings Series—Proverbs 1—9

Well, we have finally finished up the Psalms and **are getting into the book of Proverbs this evening**. The English title “Proverbs” is a pretty good translation of the Hebrew word that is the title of this book. The word in Hebrew is derived from the Hebrew word “*mashal*,” which literally means “rule.” The sense of the title in Hebrew is “words to rule or govern your life with.” It’s pretty much the sense of the English word “proverbs.” It is a short statement, or summing up, that is a good rule for life. That is the meaning of the word in Hebrew.

The book of Proverbs was written over quite a lengthy period of time. King Solomon compiled the majority of the Proverbs. But there is a record in the book of Proverbs that certain other portions were compiled by the men of King Hezekiah and by various other unnamed wise men.

The book of Proverbs can be divided into **seven sections**. If we look briefly, I think we will see that these seven sections are fairly clear.

The **first section** of Proverbs is a very short section. It is simply the first six verses, which is the introduction. It gives the title and the purpose of the book.

Proverbs 1:1-6, “The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion—a wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel, to understand a proverb and an enigma, the words of the wise and their riddles [KJV, “dark sayings”].” This is sort of a summary of the purpose of the book. The first section gives the introduction, the title and the purpose of the book.

The **second section** begins with Proverbs 1:7 and continues through Proverbs 9:18 (the last verse of chapter 9). Beginning in Proverbs 1:7, we begin to get into the Proverbs themselves.

Proverbs 1:7, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” This section, the second section of Proverbs, is basically a discourse on understanding and wisdom. If you

read through, you will notice the first nine chapters are more of a lengthy discourse and there is some story flow to it.

The **third section** begins in Proverbs 10:1.

Proverbs 10:1, we are told, “The proverbs of Solomon: ....”

When you get into chapter 10, you have, in many cases, these short, one-verse statements. It starts out clearly setting out that this is a special section because the first part of Proverbs 10:1 says, “The proverbs of Solomon” and then goes through the third section, which is really the **first body** of Proverbs by King Solomon. We start out in Proverbs 10:1 and go all the way down through chapter 22:16. This is the first body of Proverbs written by Solomon.

The **fourth section** is the **second body** of Proverbs. This is from Proverbs 22:17 down through the end of Proverbs 24:34. This body of Proverbs is labeled as “the words of the wise.”

Proverbs 22:17, “Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge.”

Proverbs 10:1, we are told, “The proverbs of Solomon: ....” When we get down to this second body of Proverbs, these come from a miscellaneous number of sources that were copied out. They were not proverbs that originated with Solomon, though they may very well have been proverbs that he wrote and were included in, but he attributes them as the sayings of the wise.

The **fifth section** is the **third body** of Proverbs. We find this section begins in Proverbs 25:1 and comes down through the end of chapter 29—chapters 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29.

Proverbs 25:1, “These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied...” Here is a section of Proverbs that Solomon had written, yet, had not been included in the original book of Proverbs as Solomon had left it. They were other proverbs of Solomon that now, at a later period of history, the men of Hezekiah copied out and added in. It is a third body of Proverbs—again, proverbs in the sense of short, succinct statements.

You’ll remember that once we got through the introduction of the first six verses, then nearly the whole first nine chapters were a lengthy discourse, not the little short quick statements that are made throughout the rest of the book. We’ve come through these three bodies of Proverbs.

Now the **sixth section**, Proverbs 30, is what is called “the words of Agur.”

Proverbs 30:1, “The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, his utterance. This man declared to Ithiel—to Ithiel and Ucal...” It doesn’t say who Agur was. There have been some who have speculated that it was maybe some sort of a title that could have even applied to Solomon, but it doesn’t say that. It is attributed to Agur in this way.

The **seventh section** is Proverbs 31.

Proverbs 31:1, it’s labeled, “The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him...” Here in Proverbs 31 is the account of the virtuous woman. This is basically what a mother taught her son to look for in a wife and what is of real value.

We find that we have these seven sections. As we go through, we find that each has its own area.

Proverbs is written as a combination—on the one hand, a discourse, and on the other, what was called an “aphorism.” “Aphorism” means “a concise statement of a principle,” a short, pointed sentence making a moral point. One of the things about proverbs is that so much of it can be summed up in one or two verses. It is a very short, concise statement and then moves on to a totally different subject. Most of Proverbs are written this way. This short, concise statement that is summed up in just a sentence or so is called an aphorism. Most of these employ a parallelism.

Let me give you an example. **There are different kinds of parallels.** There’s what is called “**synonymous parallels.**”

Proverbs 14:19, for instance, “The evil will bow before the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.” **Now, that’s sort of two different ways of saying exactly the same thing.** That’s what’s called a synonymous parallel.

What is parallelism and what is the purpose? It’s a poetic device used to emphasize the point that’s being made. The Proverbs are written in a poetic way. They are written in a way that sums up a moral point in just a few words. One of the main ways this is made is through parallelism. There’s a parallel that’s drawn that serve to emphasize. Sometimes it’s a synonymous parallel.

Proverbs 18:7, another example of a synonymous parallel is, “A fool’s mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.” This is synonymous. It sort of restates the same thing. It is synonymous in its parallel. It states the same thing in slightly different words.

Now, there is a second example or type of parallelism called “**antithetic parallelism.**”

**That means that the second clause presents a contrast to the first clause.**

Proverbs 13:25, an example of that is, “The righteous eats to the satisfying of his soul, but the stomach of the wicked shall be in want.” Here’s a contrast that’s made. It’s not saying the same thing. The first part of the verse talks about the righteous; the second part talks about the wicked. The first part talks about the righteous having plenty and the second is about the wicked being without. There is a contrast. The parallelism is of opposites or of contrasts.

Proverbs 17:22, “A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.” There is a contrast here. It serves as a matter of emphasis but through contrast.

A third kind of parallel is what is called “**synthetic parallel.**” **This means that the second clause continues the thought of the first.**

Proverbs 19:11, “The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and it is to his glory to overlook a transgression.” Here, you see that the second clause is not an exact; it’s not saying the same thing as the first. It’s not synonymous and doesn’t make a contrast. It does something else—it continues the development of that thought. “The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and it is to his glory to overlook a transgression.” It further develops the thought.

Proverbs 20:13, another example of that would be, “Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty; open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with bread.” It further develops the thought of the first.

A fourth kind of parallel is a “**parallel of comparison.**”

Proverbs 10:26, for instance, “As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to those who send him.” That’s a comparison. It’s not saying exactly the same thing. It’s not a contrast. It’s not further developing it. It is a comparison. **It is taking two things and compares them.**

Now, what does vinegar do? “Vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes.” Well, drink a good mouthful of vinegar and see what it does. It puts your teeth on edge. If you get in an area that’s real smoky, what does it do? The smoke irritates your eyes. “Vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes.” What do they have in common? Well, they put you on edge; they are irritants. “So is the sluggard to those that send him.” You send somebody lazy to do a job and he just “pokes” along. What happens? Notice how your patience just wears down. I know that’s never happened to some, but it’s happened

to the rest of us. This type of Proverb makes a comparison. It uses a description and then it compares it to something. It's a poetic device, but it sort of brings it out. That's what a comparison does.

Proverbs 25:11, another example, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." Here's a comparison. A word fitly spoken is not apples of gold, but it says it is *like* apples of gold. So, on the one hand, you have something really beautiful, precious and valuable. That's the way a word fitly spoken is—the right word at the right time. It's a beautiful thing. It's valuable. There is a comparison that is brought out.

There are different kinds of parallels that are drawn, but one of the things that is common to virtually all the Proverbs is that they use the device of parallelism. They make a parallel. It may be a synonymous parallel where you just restate the same thing in different words. It may be a contrast in parallel where you state one thing and then state sort of the opposite; you make a contrast between two opposite things. It may be a synthetic, a blending parallel where the second clause just continues and develops the thought of the first. Or it may be a comparison parallel where you compare one thing to something else and you parallel it that way.

This is most, or all, of what are called the three bodies of Proverbs. The first body by King Solomon (chapters 10-22) is sort of the heart and core of the book. The second body of Proverbs is Proverbs 22:17 through 24:34. They are called "the words of the wise." They were miscellaneous proverbs copied out. And then the third body of Proverbs (Proverbs 25 through 29) is proverbs of Solomon copied out by the men of Hezekiah. All of those use that type of development.

A key word in the book of Proverbs is the word wisdom. This is, really, one of the main terms used. It comes from a word in the Hebrew language that relates to sound judgment. It's a combination of knowledge, understanding and action that are all intertwined, all sort of put together.

Knowledge is a matter of knowing facts. Take, for example, somebody who's gone to college. He's just fresh out with a degree and has a lot of facts, a lot of information. He has a brand new job he's just started. He's never had to put those facts to practical application. But boy, he's taken all kinds of tests and he knew the right answers. He has knowledge.

After he's worked on the job for a while, he may begin to develop a little understanding as to how you apply that knowledge to practical everyday situations. When he comes fresh out of school, he may have a lot of knowledge but doesn't have a whole lot of understanding. In fact, you can have some people out there who never had that level of education and knowledge, but they have understanding because they have dealt in the practical area of it—of how to make some of these things work. Understanding goes beyond knowledge.

Wisdom combines knowledge and understanding. It adds in a little extra ingredient. On the one hand, you can have somebody who comes out of school with a lot of knowledge; he knows a lot of facts. After he's worked for a while, he has some practical experience. He begins to understand how to apply those facts in practical situations. Then over a period of time, he develops wisdom as to how to do it, when to do it and how to put the whole thing together. It's not only knowing what to do and understanding how to apply it, but also when to apply and how to go about putting it into practice. He has the wisdom that comes with putting the whole thing together.

Wisdom is a very important concept in the book of Proverbs. It combines knowledge and understanding and goes beyond the two.

Another key word in the book of Proverbs is the word instruction. The word "instruction" comes from the Hebrew word "*nuwcar*." It could mean "discipline" because instructions have to do with discipline. Instructions are the means by which our life is disciplined and guided. Proverbs emphasizes the importance of instruction and discipline in our lives. It emphasizes the importance of gaining wisdom. This is really strongly emphasized.

As we come back to the beginning of Proverbs, we notice the purpose of Proverbs to begin with.

Proverbs 1:2, "to know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding..." The starting point is: Why is the book of Proverbs in the Bible? It is so that we can come to have wisdom, plus instruction and discipline in our lives.

Verses 2-4, "to know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion..."

There are some things that come out with age and experience. One of the purposes of Proverbs

is that it was specifically written to give help to young people. It's an important book for all of us. I don't think there are any of us who are so wise that we can't gain something from Proverbs. But it has particular value for young people because they haven't yet had the amount of lessons of life's experience. Just living life will teach you some of the lessons in Proverbs.

The problem is that if you haven't come to understand some of those things until the end of your life, then you have missed out on a lot of years when you could have done them and been better off. You don't want to end up your life full of regrets saying, 'If I'd known this or that.' Some things we are going to learn by experience, but there's a lot that we can have the "edge" on.

It's written, here, that one of its purposes is to give prudence (KJV, "subtlety") to the simple. The Jewish version translates it "shrewdness," a safeguard against being misled. There's a certain naïve quality to someone who is young and lacks experience in life. There's a certain amount of gullibility that comes in. Proverbs has as its purpose to help young people to not be quite so gullible and to guide toward knowledge and discretion.

Verse 5 shows that, "a wise man will hear and increase learning, ..." A wise man is not a know-it-all. Somebody who thinks he knows everything is somebody who doesn't really know a whole lot because somebody who doesn't think that he has anything left to learn just shows how much he has left to learn. It's like he doesn't even know what he doesn't know. A wise person is somebody who goes through life desiring to continue learning. We can all continue to learn as long as we are alive and think, 'All this we can learn.'

It continues and we are told the starting point for true wisdom.

Verse 7, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." The beginning of wisdom—the starting point—starts with the fear of the Lord. This doesn't mean being scared of God. It's talking about a deep reverence for God. It's the only starting point. If you separate God from knowledge, knowledge becomes an instrument of destruction instead of construction. Look at so much of what we've built up. You know our problems in the world today are not because of a lack of knowledge. We have the ability to blast ourselves off the planet several times over.

"The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." We see that we need to start out really reverencing

God. Mr. Herbert Armstrong wanted to have it inscribed on the cornerstone of Ambassador Hall (the main classroom building), "The Word of God is the Foundation of Knowledge." Knowledge that isn't based on God's Word isn't knowledge. That doesn't say that the Bible contains all knowledge, but it is the foundation on which all other knowledge must be able to stand. The Bible is not written to tell us everything we need to know about the subject of geology, archeology, biology or whatever it may be, but it gives us basic principles. If you lay those aside, you can't understand the rest of it. The Bible deals in principles with every issue and everything.

Verse 8, "My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother..." *The key advice (sort of a starting point) in Proverbs focuses on the need of young people to heed their parents' teaching and instruction.* That's an important part. 'Listen to the instruction and discipline of your father; don't forsake the law of your mother.'

That's sort of like a sign I saw the other day, this "takeoff" to young people: "You better hurry up and do all this stuff while you still know all the answers because as you get a little older, you are going to realize how much you don't know." Sometimes it's rather hard to tell somebody who is maybe about 16 years of age that they don't know quite as much as they think they do. Most of us who have been parents and had children about that age realize that there is a point in a young person's life where they are amazed at how much they know and how little you know. As they get a little older, their perspective sort of changes.

Mr. Herbert Armstrong and others have made statements something to that effect. Mr. Armstrong said he left home and was amazed at how much his father learned from the time he was age 16 and the time he was age 25. It was amazing how his father went from being one of the dumbest men around, to being the smartest man he ever knew. It was a matter of perspective that came in.

A starting point—a focus in something that is important—is, 'Young people hear the instruction of your father, forsake not the law of your mother.' Realize that there is a level of experience and a level of just life that has been lived. That's really important and something that young people can really profit from in taking advantage of the things that their parents have learned and gone through.

Verse 9, “for they [wisdom, instruction, law] will be graceful ornaments on your head, and chains about your neck.”

Verse 10, it warns, “My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.”

There are two things that it focuses on beginning in Proverbs 1:9 coming down through chapter 2. *It focuses on discretion and understanding.* Discretion and understanding, we are told, will protect a young person from the corrupting influence of the wrong kind of people. It will protect them from men who are corrupt and have upside down values—in other words, those who are lawless or criminally inclined—and immoral, loose women.

There are two areas that young men are warned about. One is getting tangled up with the wrong kind of men—people who are dishonest. This could be involving yourself in everything from the wrong kind of business dealings to just a wild bunch of people who are headed for trouble. *There are two things that young men need to be warned about. First, stay away from the wrong kind of men*—the kind of men who are dishonest, corrupt or wild, men who are not honest and law abiding. Keep away from that bunch because they are going to get you into trouble. *Second, young men need to be warned to stay away from immoral, loose women* because they will get you into trouble, too. That is very much brought out as we come down in Proverbs 1 and 2.

Proverbs 2:1-7, “My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; ...”

Verse 11, “discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep [KJV, “preserve”] you...” This expression of being discreet—of knowing when to do what—has to do with a certain careful, cautious approach. Understanding or discernment is being able to distinguish between what is appropriate and what is not. These things will preserve you.

Verse 12, “to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things...” —In other words, things that are upside down, things that are contrary to what’s true.

Verses 14-15, “who rejoice in doing evil, and delight in the perversity of the wicked; whose ways are crooked, and who are devious in their paths...” You have men who are dishonest, people whose ways are upside down. You may get entangled with the wrong crowd, but knowledge, discretion and understanding will deliver you. It will keep you away from men who are dishonest, men who are not honorable in their intent and in their behavior.

Verses 16-17, “To deliver you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words, who forsakes the companion of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God.” This is someone who is not faithful to her marriage vows and who has turned aside from the teachings of morality that she received.

Verses 18-21, “For her house leads down to death, and her paths to the dead; none who go to her return, nor do they regain the paths of life—so you may walk in the way of goodness, and keep to the paths of righteousness. For the upright will dwell in the land, and the blameless will remain in it...” There’s an emphasis, here, on discretion, understanding, and protecting young people from corrupting influences.

Can we afford to trust in our own feelings?

Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” In what can you trust? For some people, their trust and confidence is in the way they feel. The guide for their life is just their feelings, their emotions—I don’t feel like “this” or “that.” I tell you what, there are times I may not feel like getting up in the morning, and many times you don’t feel like getting up in the morning. There are some people who just go through life and, if they don’t feel like it, they don’t do it. But for those people, life doesn’t seem to go too well for them. Life doesn’t always feel good; doing what we should do doesn’t always feel good, but it is what we need to do.

It says, here, in what we are to put our trust—“Trust in the Lord with all your heart.” What is going to guide you? ‘Don’t lean to your own understanding’—the way it seems to me. If what God tells me is different from what I have come up with on my own, who am I going to trust? God says, ‘No, don’t do this. It’s going to hurt you.’ And my buddy over here says, ‘Yeah, go ahead and try it. It won’t hurt.’ Now, in whom do I have the most confidence?

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways

acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.” If you really want God to lead and guide you, He will.

Verse 7, “Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil.” That’s a starting point.

The first key to prosperity that the book of Proverbs gives is right here.

Verses 9-10, “Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.” A starting point for getting ahead is putting God first. There are many principles in the book of Proverbs about getting ahead and prospering. There are many principles and we will notice some of them as we go through. *But the starting point is putting God first; honor Him with the firstfruits.*

Verses 11-12, we are told, “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction; for whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.” God corrects His children. Many times circumstances and various things are there to instruct and to chasten us.

Verses 13-16, “Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding; for her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her. Length of days is in her right hand, in her left hand riches and honor.”

It is talking about wisdom and the importance of wisdom. Wisdom, we are told, is more precious than rubies. Wisdom has greater value than all sorts of money and material things because there are a lot of people who have money, but they lack the wisdom to properly live and enjoy life.

Verses 17-18, “Her [speaking of wisdom] ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her.” Wisdom is something that leads to a happy and successful life. It is far more than just an accumulation of money. There are a lot of people who have accumulated a lot of money who have been awfully big failures. They have lived miserable, unhappy lives and have seen a lot of tragedy. Some of the people the world would see as being the most successful have been miserable and have committed suicide.

Look at someone like Elvis Presley or Marilyn Monroe. You would think they had the things that everybody thinks would make them happy.

They had fame and fortune. Elvis Presley didn’t have to worry about enough money to buy what he wanted. He lived in a fabulous mansion. He was famous, popular and all kinds of things. How many people thought Marilyn Monroe was pretty and glamorous? She had all sorts of people after her attention.

You can think of different people, different entertainers—people that on the surface had what most people think, ‘If I had that, I’d be happy. If I was famous, popular, beautiful, rich and people liked me, oh, that would be wonderful.’ There were people that had some of those things, and, yet, you read about their lives in their latter years and they were miserable. They were miserable and unhappy. There’s a lot more to happiness. What they lacked—and what so many people lack—is not money and some of these things; it’s the wisdom of how to properly relate to God and to our fellowman and to be able to live a productive, serving life that involves and is based on wisdom.

We see the value of wisdom that’s laid out. It’s more precious than any price tag you could put on it. It continues to stress the importance of wisdom through chapter 3.

Verses 21-23, “My son, let them not depart from your eyes—keep sound wisdom and discretion; so they will be life to your soul and grace to your neck. Then you will walk safely in your way, and your foot will not stumble.” It describes the way we walk through life directed by wisdom.

Proverbs 4:1-7, “Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, and give attention to know understanding; for I give you good doctrine: do not forsake my law. When I was my father’s son, tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, he also taught me, and said to me: ‘Let your heart retain my words; keep my commands, and live. Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will keep you. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.’”

Again, this emphasizes wisdom and acquiring wisdom. We are told wisdom is the principal thing. In that sense, focus on getting wisdom—pursue it. Wisdom ultimately comes from God. Who is the wisest Being in the entire universe? God is! The source of wisdom is God. We can go to God for wisdom of what to do, how to do it and when to do it. Wisdom involves all of those things—the knowledge of what, the understanding of how, and the wisdom that puts

*the two of those together with when.* What's appropriate, how it fits in and when it fits in.

Verses 14-16, "Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on. For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; and their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall." Unless they get into something, they just can't get a good night's rest. It says don't get tangled up in that.

Verse 19, "The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble."

Verse 24, "Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you." We are told to put away the deceitful mouth and the perverse lips—in other words, lies, falsification of the truth and evil slanderous words. Get rid of the things that we say that are hurtful, harmful and false, things that are going to stir up and create trouble.

Proverbs 5:1-6, "My son, pay attention to my wisdom; lend your ear to my understanding, that you may preserve discretion, and that your lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps lay hold of hell. Lest you ponder her path of life—her ways are unstable; you do not know them."

Verses 8-11, "Remove your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your honor to others, and your years to the cruel one; lest aliens be filled with your wealth, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner; and you mourn at last, when your flesh and your body are consumed..."

As you go through, it gives very practical things and describes, in a poetic way, instructions to a young man to stay away from loose, immoral women. It talks about how they may seem so sweet and pretty and "this" and "that," but in the end, she is bitter as wormwood and sharp as a two-edged sword. The end of it is bitter, and it's going to hurt.

"Remove your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house." Get away. Don't even get close. Stay away from this kind of person.

What are the consequences if you don't? "Lest you give your honor to others [One of the things that will happen is that you'll harm your reputation; it will hurt your reputation.], and your years to the cruel one." A lot of people have become entangled in unhappy, miserable

marriages. They've become entangled in things, and some of the years that should have been their young and happy years, they have been tangled up with some real hurt and real pain.

"Lest aliens be filled with your wealth, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner." One of the consequences, when people get tangled up in immorality, is that they may have children out of wedlock, which winds up being costly or they wind up marrying and divorcing. Strangers ultimately are filled with their wealth. They are working, and it's all going out—everything from child support payments to whatever.

There are several problems. One is about reputation. It also talks about the years of young adulthood (the 20s and 30s). Instead of years of pleasantness and happiness, it is years that you are in a cruel, unhappy situation. It talks about economic problems.

"And you mourn at last, when your flesh and your body are consumed." Venereal disease is not a new thing. It was around in Solomon's day. It's talking about diseases you can get. AIDS, of course, is quite well known at this point in time, but there have been all sorts of different ones around. When some of these things happen, then you will regret it.

Verse 15, the point is, "Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well." That's not talking about the fact that you shouldn't ask somebody for a drink of water if you're at a neighbor's house. It is a poetic description of the fact that a husband and wife should enjoy one another and be faithful to one another. That's what it's talking about.

Verses 15-17, "Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well. Should your fountains be disperse abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be only your own, and not for strangers with you." This is talking about your children.

Verse 18, "Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth." This is a very poetic description of the importance of being faithful—one man and one woman loving one another, saving themselves for one another, and being faithful to one another. It's a very important point.

We see that verses 3-4 make the contrast—how an immoral woman might appear beautiful and desirable, but the end result is very bitter and very painful.

Verse 15 says a man should find contentment with his lawful wife and not get tangled up pursuing others. This is a very important section.

Have you noticed? When he starts talking about wisdom, what does he start talking about?

If you go through this section of Proverbs, you will find that most of Proverbs 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, when he is focusing on wisdom, he spends an awful lot of time talking about money and sex. Those have been the things that have been the downfall for an awful lot of people. They've become tangled up in dishonest schemes and things that were not honest and honorable.

We have some big "high rollers" who are spending their time in jail right now. I think Charles Keating just got released from jail today. He was the one that was behind some of the big savings and loan crisis. He got several congressmen and senators who had been catching a little heat, too.

On the one hand, people get tangled up in things that they shouldn't, in terms of money. Another thing has to do with morality and the distinction there. These are areas that really tie into wisdom. In chapters 4 and 5, we saw the emphasis on sex. Now in chapter 6 we get back to money again.

Proverbs 6:1-2, "My son, if you become surety for your friend, if you have shaken hands in pledge for a stranger, you are snared by the words of your own mouth; you are taken by the words of your mouth."

Verse 3, you better go humble yourself and see if you can get out of it. This is talking about people who are quick to obligate themselves for someone else's debt—being surety and co-signing. Boy, you can get yourself into a heap of trouble there.

Verses 6-9, "Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest. How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep?"

We are talking about money and management. Go to the ant. Learn something from the ant. What ways of the ant can you consider to be wise? Well, the ant does what it is supposed to do, when it is supposed to do it. There's not another little ant out there cracking a whip saying, 'Hurry up.' They don't have a guide, an overseer or ruler. There's not one little ant that's making the other little ants do it. Ants, by nature, do what they are supposed to do. They provide their food in the summer and gather their food in the harvest. They take advantage of the opportunity. When are you going to gather your food? —After it is all rotted? It's pointing out the ant as an example of diligence.

There were warnings earlier about avoiding the person who is dishonest and corrupt and about entangling ourselves in things. Now, it says there are some wise things to do. One is to be diligent. Look at the ant. The ant does what it is supposed to do, when it is supposed to do it, and it takes advantage of and uses opportunity. That's an important lesson of managing our affairs. That's what the ant is doing. It is taking advantage of opportunity. When the opportunity presents itself, use it because opportunity is here and then it's gone. Opportunity doesn't just stay.

Verse 9 is talking about the person who is lazy and just kind of lies around. They never get up and do what they are supposed to do.

Verses 10-11, "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep—so shall your poverty come on you like a robber, and your need like an armed man." It says that if you're lazy and just lie around and you don't get up and work and do what you should do, you are going to find yourself caught by surprise with a lot of problems.

Verses 16-19, "These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren."

Here are things that God absolutely hates. It focuses in on an attitude of pride. We can convey outwardly the way we think and feel inwardly. It starts out by talking about a proud look. A proud look is reflective of a proud heart. God hates that. He hates a lying tongue—somebody that's dishonest, corrupt and harms and hurts innocent people. God hates "a heart that devises wicked imagination [plans]"—up to things they shouldn't be. He "who sows discord among brethren" is something God hates. God does not value and appreciate discord. He values harmony. We should desire to live in peace. We are not to go out and try to stir up trouble and get people mad at one another. We are not to spread rumors and gossip that serve to agitate and stir up people to where we turn people against one another. That's not God's way.

Psalms 133:1, he says, "...how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" One of the things God hates is sowing discord among brethren—stirring people up and spreading things that hurt and separate and cause problems.

Proverbs 6:20-23, "My son, keep your father's command, and do not forsake the law of your



mother. Bind them continually upon your heart; tie them around your neck. When you roam, they will lead you; when you sleep, they will keep you; and when you awake, they will speak with you. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life..." It illuminates the way we should travel through life.

Verses 24-29, "to keep you from the evil woman, from the flattering tongue of a seductress. Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, nor let her allure you with her eyelids. For by means of a harlot a man is reduced to a crust of bread; and an adulteress will prey upon his precious life. Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; whoever touches her shall not be innocent."

Verse 32, "Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he who does so destroys his own soul." It's talking about the problems and consequences that result. These are some very important principles that are brought out. It says he who "commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding." He's not considering the end result of his conduct, which is the destruction of everything that's really important. That's a lack of understanding because if you really think it through, you realize that it just doesn't make sense. It's just not something that is going to be good.

Proverbs 7:1-7, "My son, keep my words, and treasure my commands within you. Keep my commands and live, and my law as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister,' and call understanding your nearest kin, that they may keep you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words. For at the window of my house I looked through my lattice, and saw among the simple, I perceived among the youths, a young man devoid of understanding..."

Here's a young man who is not too bright, walking down the street. It describes this in a poetic fashion.

Verses 8-18, "passing along the street near her corner; and he took the path to her house in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night. And there a woman met him, with the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart. She was loud and rebellious, her feet would not stay at home. At times she was outside, at times in the open square, lurking at every corner. So she caught him and kissed him; with an impudent face she

said to him: 'I have peace offerings with me; today I have paid my vows. So I came out to meet you, diligently to seek your face, and I have found you. I have spread my bed with tapestry, colored coverings of Egyptian linen. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with love.'"

Verses 21-22, "With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, with her flattering lips she seduced him. Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks..." It's talking about the problems that come. A harlot is pictured, this immoral woman.

Notice several things about her. One, she is described with the attire of a harlot, "And there a woman met him, with the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart." She is described as dressing in a seductive way, dressing in a way that does not reflect decency and modesty.

Sometimes you drive down the street in certain areas of town and see somebody standing there. You don't have to give a whole lot of guesses as to what their trade is; it's pretty obvious just by the way they are dressed. Unfortunately, sometimes this sort of appearance gets copied and shouldn't be. We should be conscious of that and teach our young girls to be conscious of that. You don't want to look like a streetwalker. You just don't! That is nothing that is good and nothing that is to be copied.

Yet, there's certain ways of looking, ways of dress and appearance that just sort of stands out that way. It describes that she does not reflect decency and modesty in the way that she dresses and grooms herself.

Then it says she is "loud and rebellious [stubborn]." She is pictured as dressing in a seductive way and is loud, wild, rebellious and stubborn. She's a "gad-about." She's the very opposite of the picture of a godly woman. In Proverbs 7:9-11, you see this picture.

1 Peter 3:2-6, now compare that with, "when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your beauty be that outward adorning of arranging the hair, of wearing gold, or of putting on fine apparel; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible ornament of a gently and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, ...." The very opposite is described here.

Titus 2:3-5, “the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”

That’s quite a contrast to someone who has on the attire of a harlot, is loud and stubborn, out running the streets and never staying home. It’s sort of like this fiasco—this soap opera—that was played out on television by way of a trial down in Florida several weeks ago. You remember the one involving Senator Kennedy’s nephew and this woman that he picked up at a bar. I don’t have to know all the details, but I can just tell you this—you won’t find the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 hanging out in a bar at two or three o’clock in the morning, picking up some strange man and going home with him. That’s just not where you go to look if you are looking for the virtuous woman. Of course, she wasn’t looking for the virtuous man either. They each sort of found what they were looking for, and then somewhere along the line, a disagreement set in.

There are places that you just don’t go if you are not looking for trouble. You don’t have to be the smartest fellow to ever “come down the pipe” to figure out the caliber of people that hang around in these places at some sort of oddball hour. Nobody is up to any good when they are out hanging around some joint, boozing it up in the wee hours of the morning. There’s just nothing constructive and good going on. Decent people are home in bed. The ones that are hanging around the bars are looking for trouble and chances are they are going to find it. It may not be the trouble they wanted, but that’s just the way it is. There’s a lot of grief and trouble that comes.

If we are where we need to be, doing what we should do, we can save ourselves a lot of grief. I daresay both of them probably look back on that and have cause to regret what they got into that night. I suspect Kennedy’s nephew and the woman each paid a heavy price in some of those ways. That’s an example that’s gotten a lot of publicity because it involves someone who’s a well-known public figure. But believe me, that kind of thing happens on a regular basis involving people that aren’t famous, so it never really makes the news. That kind of thing happens and it happens a lot.

People’s lives are messed up and unhappy and that’s one of the things Proverbs says. Proverbs is advice to young people, ‘Hey, that’s not a smart thing to do. That’s not going to make you happy. That’s not going to lead to real satisfaction in life. It’s going to lead to a lot of grief and a lot of pain.’

Proverbs 7:22, the end result for the young man who goes that path, “Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks...” They don’t know what they are getting into until they are there. An ox isn’t very smart. He goes right into the slaughter pen and doesn’t know what is going on until it’s too late. A cow is just not an animal that has a lot of foresight. That’s what it is comparing here. It’s comparing a lack of foresight. People get into something and don’t realize what they are into until it’s too late to get out. It says that this kind of young man just sort of gets into something and doesn’t figure out what’s going to happen until it’s too late.

Verse 23, “till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, he did not know it would take his life.” It’s talking about something going into a trap. It’s making the comparison that when people get into this kind of mess, they didn’t sit down and think it through.

I don’t think that William Kennedy Smith sat down and thought, ‘What I really would like is to find myself in court (dragged out for weeks and months), have all this negative publicity and go through the trauma of all this stuff.’ It was a matter that he didn’t think. And his uncle, who should have had at least a little bit of experience, should have helped him think. He didn’t think either. I’m sure they all have had a chance to do a little more thinking. Now, whether they have learned anything from it or not, I don’t know. But again, they are not unique. We know about them because they are famous. They have a famous name, so their picture is plastered all over the paper. But all kinds of people, just common everyday people, have done some of the same dumb things and have wound up with a lot of problems, a lot of pain, heartache and hurt as a result of some of these things. So, it’s a warning.

Proverbs 8:1-3, “Does not wisdom cry out, and understanding lift up her voice? She takes her stand on the top of the high hill, beside the way, where the paths meet. She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city, at the entrance of the doors...”

Verse 13, “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the

perverse mouth I hate.” What is the fear of God? ‘The fear of God is to hate evil.’ If you really stand in awe and reverence of God, if you are really impressed with God, then you hate evil. It’s sort of a contrast. If we are impressed with God, we hate evil because evil is the opposite of what God is. If I am impressed with someone, I want to be like him; the things that are the opposite of him, I hate. ‘The fear of God is to hate evil.’ To really stand in awe of God, we hate evil.

It specifically mentions pride, arrogance, the evil way and a perverse mouth. A perverse mouth means a mouth that is full of a lot of evil, ugly and dishonest things. We don’t like that.

It speaks of wisdom. In some of these cases, wisdom is personified; wisdom is described as though it were a person. It goes through and talks about the importance and the beauty of wisdom.

Verses 33-36, “Hear instruction [wisdom] and be wise, and do not disdain it. Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favor from the Lord; but he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; all those who hate me love death.”

It’s speaking of wisdom. If you find wisdom, you find life and obtain favor with the Lord. If you sin against wisdom, you are just hurting and wronging yourself and really loving death. When you find wisdom, it’s like finding life. It leads to good results here and now and on into the future.

Proverbs 9:1, “Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars...”

Verses 4-6, “‘whoever is simple, let him turn in here!’ As for him who lacks understanding, she says to him, ‘Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine which I have mixed. Forsake foolishness and live, and go in the way of understanding.’” It’s inviting the young person and says, ‘Come in, sit down and eat with me.’ This is speaking of wisdom. “Forsake foolishness and live.”

Verses 7-9, “He who reproves a scoffer gets shame for himself, and he who rebukes a wicked man gets himself a blemish [KJV, “blot”]. Do not reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you; rebuke a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.”

We see quite a contrast here. If you correct or give instruction to the scorner or the wicked person, they just get mad. They don’t like you telling them that they are wrong. So, on the one

hand, we have people who get mad over any sort of correction or instruction. Boy, you have a blot in their book. They have it in for you now. If you don’t agree with them on everything or if you point out and show them where they are wrong, they have it in for you.

Now that’s quite a contrast because if you rebuke a wise man, he will love you. Why? –Because he appreciates the fact that he’s now smarter than he was before. If I am a wise man and you tell me something I didn’t know, I am going to appreciate that. I am glad you told me because now I know more than I did. The guy who is the “know-it-all,” you can’t tell them anything. You try to tell them something and they just get mad. That’s no way to be. If you give instruction to a wise man, he will be yet wiser. He’s going to appreciate it. A wise person appreciates the value of learning. He knows that he doesn’t know it all.

In Proverbs 8:35, God says ‘if you find wisdom, you find life and obtain favor of the Lord.’ That’s something to desire and have. We have to desire to grow in that. There’s quite a contrast between correcting a wise person and correcting a foolish person.

Proverbs 9:13-18, “A foolish woman is clamorous; she is simple, and knows nothing. For she sits at the door of her house, on a seat by the highest places of the city, to call to those who pass by, who go straight on their way: ‘Whoever is simple, let him turn in here’; and as for him who lacks understanding, she says to him, ‘Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.’ But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of hell.”

So, there’s a contrast. There’s an allure; there’s an attractiveness to the forbidden—“Stolen waters are sweet.” Illicit sex and other things—“to enjoy the passing [temporary] pleasure of sin” (Hebrew 11:25). There’s a certain allure, a certain attraction to these things that are forbidden, but the end result of that lifestyle is total destruction. There’s nothing good that is going to come from that sort of thing.

It’s interesting. The things that Solomon really focuses in on are wisdom, knowledge and understanding. He focuses on the importance of a young person gaining knowledge and wisdom. What are the things that he talks about? He talks about how important it is to listen and be receptive to correction and instruction—starting with your parents. Parents have experience of life, plus there’s nobody a young person is going to have in his life that loves him and cares about

his future more than the parents. Here's somebody who has experience in life and who has your best interest at heart.

This section emphasizes listening and being receptive to correction and instruction. It emphasizes having a thirst for knowledge, for learning and growing in what you know. There are many warnings and many descriptions about the contrast between moral and immoral behavior and where it leads. This is one of the most important things for young people to be warned about. Then there's a lot of instruction about handling finances and material things, starting off with honoring God with the firstfruits—putting God first. Then it goes through and talks about getting tangled up with people who are crooked and dishonest and how they are going to come to no good. We are told to be diligent. Go to the ant. Learn how to think, to be wise by being careful, working hard and doing what you should do, when you should do it.

There are several basic things that have to do with life and the way that we handle life. There is an emphasis on wisdom, how we gain it and—what God has put in this important section in the book of Proverbs (these first nine chapters)—how to apply it in our lives.

Hopefully, in this particular section of Proverbs that we have gone through this evening, you have gotten a little bit of insight into some of the things that are really important. Proverbs is a good section to go over, study and talk about with our children. Sometimes it helps to get another translation. Perhaps a simple English translation sort of helps us to really get out of these proverbs what God has packed in because there's an awful lot of life and experience that is packed into this section.

Next time we are going to cover more of Proverbs beginning with chapter 10 through most of chapter 22.

Bible Study # 82  
January 28, 1992  
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Proverbs 10—22:16

We are going through this series on the Writings and, particularly, here in the book of Proverbs. This evening we **are covering Proverbs 10 through 22:16, the central and main section of the book.**

As we started in the book of Proverbs, we found that the first nine chapters constitute a preface to the central and main section of the book. One of the things we noticed, as we went through the beginning part, is that most of the first nine chapters are in more of a discourse style. It's a little different than what we normally think of as a Proverb. A Proverb is usually a short one-sentence, concise, pithy statement that sort of sums up information. It makes a very concise, pithy statement usually by drawing some sort of contrast or comparison. The proverbs in this section are primarily proverbs as we normally think of them.

Proverbs 10:1, it opens, "The proverbs of Solomon: ...."

We noted at the beginning that the book of Proverbs divides into seven sections. The introduction, the first few verses, is the first section. The second section is a discourse on wisdom. Then the third section opens in Proverbs 10:1, "The proverbs of Solomon: ...."

There are three bodies of Proverbs. This third section (Proverbs 10 through 22:16) is the first body of Proverbs.

Proverbs 22:17, "Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, ..." That begins the second body of Proverbs and continues down until the end of chapter 24.

We pick up the third body of Proverbs in Proverbs 25:1, "These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied..." There were two bodies of Proverbs that were proverbs of Solomon, and there was a collection of sayings of the wise ones (the *sophreim*), the wise men of Israel. Solomon wrote the bulk of it. Some of them were collections of other wise sayings. Then a couple of centuries later, in the time of Hezekiah, there were proverbs of Solomon that had not been included in the book, that the men of Hezekiah copied out and added to the book of Proverbs. You wind up with these three bodies of Proverbs that we would describe as the third, fourth and fifth sections of the book.

The sixth sections would be chapter 30, the prophecy of Agur, and the seventh section, chapter 31, the prophecy of Lemuel, which is what we primarily term the discourse on the virtuous woman.

**We are going through what is called the first body of Proverbs this evening.** They are concise statements that express wise rules of conduct. There are warnings and lessons drawn from experience and there is moral reflection. There's no particular systematic order or logical sequence that is followed because, like the very phases of human life for which they offer guidance, the proverbs are of a miscellaneous character. They are arranged in miscellaneous order—just as we go through life and encounter experiences in miscellaneous order.

The book of Proverbs was not so much directed at the wise that could appreciate the loftier motives of virtuous conduct, but at the simple that needed the lesson that, in that sense, honesty is the best policy. Many times the practical aspect of life is brought out here.

Proverbs 10:3, "The Lord will not allow the righteous soul to famish, but He casts away the desire of the wicked." We have a contrast between what God doesn't allow and what He does.

Verse 4, "He who deals with a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes one rich."

Verse 5, "He who gathers in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame."

If you look right here, there are three keys to prosperity that are brought out. 'God does not allow the soul of the righteous to famish.' *The first key to prosperity is righteousness.* That's one of the reasons we have economic problems as a nation. The solution to our economic problems is right here in Proverbs 10:3, 4 and 5. We can sit down and write President Bush a letter and tell him what he didn't include in his state of the union address. We could tell him what would solve all of the economic problems; the first thing is righteousness. We don't have a whole lot of that in this country, do we? That's a problem. Righteousness is the first key to prosperity.

"He who deals with a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich." *The second key to prosperity is diligence—not being careless, not being lazy, but diligent.* Diligence carries the connotation of not only of hard work but also of being careful. Being slack, in a sense, means carelessness. It goes beyond somebody

who is lazy. It's somebody who is just careless with what they do. They are sloppy in their workmanship. So, you have righteousness and diligence.

*Verse 5 brings out the third key and that is taking advantage of opportunity.* "He who gathers in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame." If you gather in the summer, you are a wise son. Why? –Because that is when the crops are coming in. If you are sleeping through the harvest, if you don't take advantage of the opportunity when it presents itself, it will pass.

Any farmer knows that you harvest when the crop's "coming in." You can't say, 'I don't feel like it this week; I'll wait till next week.' You're not going to eat—plainly and simply. The crop passes its peak. It begins to decay and deteriorate and the opportunity is no longer there. Any farmer knows you pick it when it's there. You have to go get it when it's ready.

That's a lesson of life and it applies to everyone. You don't have to be a farmer for that to work for you. You have to take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves because they don't continue forever. Here you have three keys. If you look at it, you would say that this would explain a lot of problems in terms of the American economics: 1) a lack of righteousness, 2) a lack of diligent workmanship and 3) not taking advantage of opportunity, not having an entrepreneurial spirit, not stepping out and seizing the moment.

It's amazing and very simple. It's buried right here. Really, what you have is important keys to life. It certainly would make a vast difference in this country if just these three keys were applied. There's an awful lot that is packed in here, an awful lot of wisdom. Solomon wrote it 3,000 years ago; here we are 3,000 years later and still haven't figured out things that we have access to right here.

Verse 8, "The wise in heart will receive commands, but a prating fool [KJV margin, "a fool of lips"] will fall." One characteristic of someone who is wise is that they will listen. A fool is just mouthing off. He's sounding off and is going to fall flat on his face. Nobody can tell him anything. He never stops talking long enough to listen. "The wise in heart will receive commands." They will listen. You can give them instruction. Someone who is wise is not a "know-it-all."

When you run into someone who thinks he knows everything, the one thing you can be sure of is he doesn't. One of the things he doesn't

know is that he doesn't know everything. Someone like that is headed for trouble. We can all save ourselves a lot of trouble if we listen to what somebody else has to say.

Let's notice some admonitions about the tongue. Verse 11, "The mouth of the righteous is a well of life, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked." We see some things, right here, about the use of the tongue—things that we should and shouldn't say.

Verse 12, "Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins."

Verse 13, "Wisdom is found on the lips of him who has understanding, but a rod is for the back of him who is devoid of understanding."

Verse 18, "Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool."

Verse 19, "In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise."

Verse 20, "The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is worth little."

Verse 21, "The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of wisdom."

Verse 31, "The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue will be cut out."

Verse 32, "The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked what is perverse."

There are several basic admonitions about the tongue. There is an awful lot packed in here about the tongue.

Proverbs 11:1, "A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is His delight." God is concerned with fairness and equity in our relationships and dealings and certainly in our business dealings. God is concerned that we deal with one another in a fair and equitable way.

Verse 4, "Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death."

When the day of God's wrath comes, when the day of the Lord comes, we read in Isaiah (Isaiah 2:18-21) about people casting their gold to the moles and the bats because it is not able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath.

"Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death." That's the key. We have to get our priorities straight.

Verse 13, "A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter."

There's a time to hold our peace. Some people just go around telling everything they know and a lot they don't know. Someone who is of a faithful spirit, has some integrity and is a faithful

friend is not going to spread a lot of rumors and gossip.

We have some things about wise counsel.

Verse 14, “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.” It shows the wisdom of a multitude of wise counsel. In Proverbs 12:5, it shows the importance of the source of the counsel. It is not just counsel; it is wise counsel.

Proverbs 12:5, “The thoughts of the righteous are right, but the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.” You don’t want the counsel of the wicked. “In the multitude of counselors there is safety,” but you want wise counselors and right counselors. When it says, “in the multitude of counselors there is safety,” that is talking about the fact that you get input from several different people, and different ones are going to notice different things. You can gain some insight.

This verse can sometimes be misapplied by people who go from one person to another, sort of telling their side of the story until they get the story right, and then finds someone who will agree with him. That’s not what it means to have a multitude of counselors. Normally, with the context of a multitude of counselors, you have several that you are talking to at the same time. They are all aware of the same information and there’s room for an interchange of information. There are insights that different ones have and they stimulate one another.

Proverbs 11:15, “He who is surety for a stranger will suffer for it, but one who hates being surety is secure.” It’s talking about somebody obligating themselves for other’s debts.

Verse 16, “A gracious woman retains honor, but ruthless men retain riches.”

Verse 17, “The merciful man does good for his own soul, but he who is cruel troubles his own flesh.”

Proverbs 12:10, “A righteous man regards the life of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.” Mercy and kindness are attributes of character. “A righteous man regards the life of his animal”—he is not going to mistreat even a dumb animal. It reveals something about the character of a person. When you find somebody who has a streak of cruelty in them—if they are cruel and uncaring and mistreat a dog or a horse or something like that—they will turn around and mistreat people, too. They have that lack of any sense of responsibility or have that lack of kindness. “A righteous man regards the life of his animal.” He is going to make sure that it’s taken care of. He will make sure that it is fed and watered and is

not going to mistreat it. That is, in one sense, a minor point, but it is sort of an interesting observation in terms of human character.

There are a number of things that we find concerning the use of the tongue.

Verse 13, “The wicked is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous will come through trouble.”

Verse 15, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.” This is an important point. It would make a good Bible study to go through the book of Proverbs and look up the word “fool” in a concordance. Then go through every place in Proverbs that mentions “fool” to see what one is because that’s a good list of things not to be. One characteristic of a fool is that he is right in his own eyes; you can never tell him anything.

“He who heeds counsel is wise.” Over and over, Proverbs emphasizes the importance of this principle. “Right in his own eyes”—this know-it-all-mentality or this sort of thing where somebody isolates himself and has his own mind made up and won’t listen to anybody else. “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.” –A very important principle.

Verse 17, “He who speaks truth declares righteousness, but a false witness, deceit.”

Verse 18, “There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health.”

Verse 19, “The truthful lip shall be established forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment.” We see a contrast here.

Proverbs 13:3, “He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.” We find that there is a way that the tongue can be used that is of value and leads to life and a wrong use that leads to destruction.

We also see a lot of keys in Proverbs 12 and 13. In fact, let’s notice, and we will find **seven keys to sound financial management** given in Proverbs 12 and 13.

Proverbs 12:11, “He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread, but he who follows frivolity [KJV, “vain persons”] is devoid of understanding.” The first thing we see is working steadily at a job contrasted to following after the “high rollers”—people who have some sort of get-rich-quick scheme. The first key to prosperity is just **working hard and steadily**. “He who follows frivolity [vain persons] is devoid of understanding.” You always have somebody coming down, and he has some big

get-rich-quick scheme. Well, if he was going to get rich that quick, why hasn't he already done it? Why isn't he living on easy street?

This reminds me. I believe it was in the parking lot at Wal-Mart. We came back to the car and there were these cards that were up on the windshield. They were trying to interest you to call this telephone number. It said, "Would you like to earn \$10,000 a month?" The way the card was written out, they had the number to fill in. It was a cheaply produced thing to begin with. This sort of disreputable-looking guy was going around the parking lot and was sticking these cards on the windshields. Obviously, he wasn't earning \$10,000 a month or anything close to it. He probably hadn't earned \$10,000 in the last year. He was doing this instead of just sticking with something and being productive.

Proverbs 12:24, "The hand of the diligent will rule, but the slothful will be put to forced labor." A second key is **diligence**—working steadily at a sensible job and being diligent.

Verse 27, "The slothful man does not roast what he took in hunting, but diligence is man's precious possession." It warns us about being wasteful. It shows the importance of **utilizing what you have and not letting it waste**. So, here's the third key.

Proverbs 13:4, the fourth key is, "The soul of a sluggard desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich." Here we have a contrast between a lazy dreamer and a **diligent doer**. Some people always have these big ideas, but they never really get down to it.

Verse 11, the fifth key is, "Wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished, but he who gathers by labor will increase." It's sort of another way of saying, "**easy come; easy go**." It's the way we go about it.

Verse 18, "Poverty and shame will come to him who disdains correction, but he who regards reproof will be honored." A very important sixth key to success is **taking correction and instruction**.

Verse 23, the seventh key is, "Much food is in the fallow ground of the poor, and for lack of justice there is waste [KJV, "is destroyed for want of judgment"]." —**Waste and lack of good management skills**. Lack of judgment is often a major cause of poverty. It's not that there wasn't anything, but it's destroyed for lack of judgment. The analogy would be like a farmer who has a pretty good harvest but doesn't properly store it. He was careless and it rotted and decayed. He didn't get out and pull out the bad ones, so pretty soon the decay spread through the whole pile.

The whole bunch of potatoes or apples or whatever, began to decay because he was not diligent in the way that he did it. It was destroyed for lack of judgment.

We see a number of basic, very commonsense principles: working steadily at an occupation, being diligent, utilizing what you have, not letting it waste, not being a lazy dreamer, being a diligent doer, not having an "easy-come, easy-go" approach, being able to take correction and instruction, being careful and managing well, trying to use good judgment with what we have. Let's notice a couple of verses in Proverbs 13 that make an interesting contrast.

Proverbs 13:12, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life."

Verse 19, "A desire accomplished is sweet to the soul, but it is an abomination to fools to depart from evil."

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick" is quite a contrast with "a desire accomplished is sweet to the soul." Frustration is perhaps the greatest cause and ultimately the root of a lot of anger, rage and depression, as well. At the root of those, you usually find frustration.

Frustration is the opposite of what is described in, "a desire accomplished is sweet to the soul." People can waste their energies on things that they don't have control over. People can waste a lot of time, effort and energy on trying to change somebody else. They get their hopes up, and those hopes keep getting dashed down. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." Your hope has to be based on reality; otherwise, you are setting yourself up to stay upset and heartsick all the time.

This is something that often happens. For instance, this is part of the emotional and psychological toll that is taken in an alcoholic family. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." Promises are made over and over. 'I won't do it again; next time will be different.' There's no solid basis for having that hope. Unrealistic hopes are gotten up and they are continually deferred—they are continually put off. Hope is deferred.

The key is: "a desire accomplished is sweet to the soul." We have to set our goals. We have to focus our energy and our attention on the things we can do something about—not dissipate our energy and our effort in things we don't have control over. If you have no control over it, it doesn't matter how hard you strain and how much effort you put out, you can't do it. There's a great deal of peace that comes from



recognizing and accepting our limits and turning it over to God because in turning loose of the things that we don't have power over and concentrating our energy and our effort on what we do have some power over, then we can have the desire accomplished. We can set a goal and achieve it; that's sweet to the soul.

Verse 20, "He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed." The people we associate with and whom we spend our time with is a matter of importance. But you can carry it down to entertainment—the television shows we watch and the books we read—because, in that sense, it is something we are spending time (sometimes hours) with. Being a constant companion of fools (the things that we spend our time taking into our mind) will affect us in a negative way. "He who walks with wise men will be wise."

Verse 24, there is an important principle on childrearing, "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly [KJV, "early"]." This is an important principle.

Proverbs 14:1, "Every wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands." A woman, by her actions, has the ability to contribute very, very much to the strength and stability of the home or to pluck it down and tear it up. There's an awful lot that can be done. This is a big part of the difference between a wise woman and a foolish woman.

Verse 7, "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when you do not perceive in him the lips of knowledge." When you figure out that somebody has nothing of value to contribute, don't hang around with that person because the company we keep ultimately is pretty important. That is a principle that's been recognized for a long time. The company we keep is of a great deal of importance because it rubs off on us and affects us.

Verse 9, what is a fool? One of the definitions is given here, "Fools mock at sin, but among the upright there is favor." In other words, a fool is someone who takes sin lightly, who considers sin a joke. God says that's a fool—somebody that has an attitude that treats sin as a joke. God says that person is a fool.

Verse 12, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." There are a lot of things that seem right. We can't afford to follow our own feelings. "There is a way which seems right to a man." A lot of times people get themselves into problems because they follow the way that seems right to them. If you can't

follow the way that seems right to you, then what can you follow? You follow the way that God defines as right.

There's an old country song, "How can something that feels so right be so wrong." Well, the way that it can be wrong is because "there's a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." That's how something can feel right and be wrong. It's a matter of what we are going to follow.

Everybody follows something. We follow our own feelings and emotions, the opinions of other people around us, the crowd or we follow God's Word. Everybody follows something, and the only sure guide is the Word of God because God knows. If you follow God, He's not going to mess you up. He just won't do that, but we can.

Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" The heart is deceitful. We kid ourselves. That's what it means. The primary ingredient of human nature is self-deceit. We get tangled up in things and it's hard to be honest with ourselves about what we are doing or why we are doing it.

Have you ever noticed that if you really want to do something, you can find a thousand reasons as to why it's a good idea; if you don't want to do something, you can find all kind of excuses as to why you can't, why you shouldn't and why it probably won't work. We start out, but just because of our feelings, we don't want to go.

I was talking with someone on the Sabbath and they mentioned not having been here the previous week. They said, "Well, every time I started to go outside it was raining." Yes, it was. I noticed that when I left on the way over to services and I noticed it all the way back home. Yes, I noticed the same thing. It surely was. The point is that if you want to do something, you do it. You find a way to do it. You get an umbrella or if you don't have an umbrella, you put a newspaper over your head. If you don't do that, well, just get wet and you'll probably dry off. You are not sugar or salt and you probably are not going to melt right there in the driveway. If there was something that you really wanted to do, would a little bit of rain keep you from doing it?

The point is that we kid ourselves a lot of times about our motives. We kid ourselves about what we are doing and why we are doing it. It's an important principle to realize that, "There's a way that seems right to a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death."

Proverbs 14:23, "In all labor there is profit, but idle chatter leads only to poverty." You have

been around people who are always sounding off about what they are going to do. They have these great plans and are going to do this or that, but they never do any of them. “In all labor there is profit.” If you just find a job and stick to it, you can make some headway. But do you spend all your time standing around talking about this big deal, that big deal and this other thing? You have all these big plans, but you never actually do anything. It doesn’t matter what you specifically do in terms of a job. “In all labor there’s profit.” If you just get out there and work, you can make a living doing a whole lot of things. But you are not going to make a living just standing around shooting your mouth off about all these big plans and big ideas that never get off the drawing board.

Verse 26, “In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge.” It’s sort of an interesting tie in—“a place of refuge [a place of safety]...” and, “In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence.”

Verse 27, “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to avoid the snares of death.”

Verse 29, “He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive [KJV, “of hasty spirit”] exalts folly.” If you go “flying off the handle,” losing your temper, you are just heading for trouble. If you are slow to wrath and just hold your temper, you are showing some understanding.

Verse 30, “A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones.” It can make a big difference.

Verse 31, “He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, but he who honors Him has mercy on the needy.” If we are really conscious of the fact that we are accountable to God, then it’s going to carry through in the way we treat our neighbor. You are not going to take advantage of somebody because you can. If we really have the fear of God, we understand that we are accountable for what we do. It doesn’t matter how much power we have; if we have the fear of God, we realize that we are accountable for what we do and the way we treat everybody and everything. There is a sense of responsibility and accountability; we are not going to take advantage of somebody. We wouldn’t cheat somebody or mistreat somebody because we know that we ultimately are accountable to God.

Verse 34, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” This is a very important concept that this nation needs to understand and doesn’t. Righteousness is what

exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. That’s the situation that we find that is so rampant in our society.

Proverbs 15:1, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” That is a very important key to avoiding strife and contention.

Verse 13, “A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.”

Proverbs 16:2, “All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirits.” People think that their ways are clean in their own eyes. People get really defensive about what they are doing and defend that, but God weighs the spirits.

Verse 3, “Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established.”

Verse 6, “In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity [KJV, “By mercy and truth iniquity is purged”]; and by the fear of the Lord one departs from evil.” That’s the way to get rid of sin.

A lot of times, the fear of the Lord is what gets people started. I remember back when I came into the Church—and I think a lot of you do, too, (particularly, years ago)—sometimes the thing that got us motivated to start keeping the Sabbath or to start doing some of these things was we read some of those booklets on prophecy. We saw some of those graphic drawings that Basil Wolverton had in some of those things. It scared us to death, and we thought we had better hurry up and do something. Well, ‘by the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil.’ What usually gets us started is that we are scared not to get started. Now, that doesn’t mean that it totally remains your motive. Many times, if there wasn’t a little bit of a healthy fear, we never would have actually gotten around to doing it because it’s often inconvenient.

Verse 24, “Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.” Honey tastes good and it’s good for you. It’s not only a little bit of advice about diet, but it’s compared to what we say—“Pleasant words.” When we say something nice to somebody, it’s pleasant to them to receive it, and it does them good. It’s helpful.

Verse 25, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” God thought this was so important that He put it twice in the book of Proverbs. That’s important! We just got through reading it in Proverbs 14:12. If God thinks something is very important, He repeats it. It wasn’t because He stutters and it wasn’t because He was absentminded and forgot

He had just inspired it a couple of pages ago. If He repeats it (I figure God doesn't repeat a whole lot of things.), it must be because He wants to emphasize it.

Verse 31, "The silver-haired [KJV, "hoary head"] is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness." The term "hoary" is derived from an old English word that means "white." That's where we get the term "hoarfrost." White hair, in other words, is a sign of age. "White hair is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness."—Somebody who has the white hair of age and experience and is doing what he should do.

"If it is found in the way of righteousness"—if they are living and setting an example of a godly way of life—it is a "crown of glory," and that's something that should be honored. It points them out as an individual who's lived life and has experience; that's something to honor. Now, when somebody has lived a full life and they still haven't gotten their act together, then that's not much of a crown of glory. If somebody has the mark of age and experience and still hasn't learned anything, that's not a crown of glory. It's important that as we get older, we should learn and grow in wisdom.

Verse 32, "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city." Self-control is pointed out as being something that is of vital importance. To really control oneself is one of the hardest things. Strong self-control is brought out here. If you can rule your own spirit, you're better than he that takes a city. If you can control yourself, that is a harder job and it takes greater effort.

Proverbs 17:10, "Reproof is more effective for a wise man than a hundred blows on a fool." Part of the difference between a wise man and a fool is a wise man is not a "know-it-all;" he's someone to whom you can tell something. One word of correction, one admonition is going to enter into his heart. He's going to take it and think about it more than if you took out a fool, tied him to a post and gave him 100 lashes. He wouldn't get the point as much as just giving a wise man an admonition. One thing that we can use to help us determine how wise we are, as opposed to how foolish we are, is how easily will we learn a lesson? How stubborn are we about correction? To what extent do we get the point and are we tuned-in to it?

Verse 12, "Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs, rather than a fool in his folly." If you meet a bear robbed of her whelps, at least you can predict what she's going to do. It's not going to

be good, but it's predictable. There's no telling what a fool is going to do. At least, with a bear, she's mad and you had better try and get out of her way. So, you're better off meeting the bear that's all riled up, rather than a fool in his folly because there's just an element of unpredictability there.

Verse 17, we are told about a friend, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." "A friend loves at all times." That's really the definition of a real friend. It's not hard to have friends during the good times. The prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) got the money and left home. He showed up there, and it was sort of like, "All the drinks are on me." He had a lot of friends. Everybody in the bar was his buddy. But when he ran out of money and was "hard up" and "down-and-out," where were those friends? Where were his old drinking buddies? They were nowhere around.

It's interesting. He found out, when it was all said and done, the one friend he had was his father. His father was the one who loved him at all times. He was the one he didn't think understood him. He left home and thought he knew it all. If there was one person who didn't understand him, he knew it was his dad.

Probably, in his estimation at that time, he thought his dad was one of the dumbest people that he had ever met. 'This old guy is so "out of it" and I just can't even stand to stay around here any longer. I am going to go into town and, boy, I have all these friends and buddies.' He thought he knew all about friendship and he thought he didn't have anything in common with his dad. He never thought of his dad as being his friend. But you know, a friend loves at all times. When he was "down-and-out" and nobody else wanted him, who was it that received him back with open arms? Who was the friend that loved him at all times? This is an important lesson!

When things are going well for you, you'll find there are a lot of people who want to be your buddy; they want to be your friend. If you are "on the way up," you'll find people want to hang onto your coattails; they like that. But your real friends are the ones who are your friends regardless. They are not your friends because you are in power, because you have money or because you are in a position to do something for them. It's a vast difference.

"A friend loves at all times." How do you have friends like that?

Proverbs 18:24, well, "A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." A friend loves

at all times, and a man that has friends must show himself friendly. If we want to have that sort of relationship with others, if we want others to be a true friend to us, we have to be a true friend.

Proverbs 17:28, “Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.” He’s better off if he will just keep his mouth shut. Then nobody will know he’s a fool, and that, at least, will have its advantages.

Proverbs 18:2, “A fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart.” Verse 4 is an interesting statement, “The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters; the wellspring of wisdom is a flowing brook.”

Verse 6, “A fool’s lips enter into contention, and his mouth calls for blows.”

Verse 7, “A fool’s mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.” One of the things we are told about a fool is that he desires to do all the talking. He would much rather talk than listen. He’s always arguing and disputing; his mouth is what brings about his destruction. That’s one of the things there. ‘He has no delight in understanding but in expressing his own heart.’

Ever notice that you tend to learn more when you listen than when you talk? That’s an amazing thing, but I guess if we think about it, we will realize it may be one of the reasons God gave us two ears and one mouth. He didn’t give us two mouths and one ear. Maybe we should do more listening than talking. But a fool has no delight in understanding; he’s not interested in learning something new. He only wants to just “blat” out whatever he’s thinking, expressing his own heart. That’s an important key.

Verse 13, “He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him.” Boy, you have an opinion and haven’t even heard all of the facts.

Verse 17, “The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him.” We shouldn’t jump to conclusions. We need to hear both sides of something before we arrive at a conclusion. Have you ever noticed how someone comes and tells you his side of the story and you think, ‘How in the world could somebody have so mistreated him? Boy, that’s terrible!’ Then, somehow, when you hear the other person’s story you realize, maybe it wasn’t quite as one-sided as it sounded.

Kids are great at that. One of them comes running into the house and, oh, he’s mad and upset at what his brother did. He tells you his

side of the story and it sounds terrible, but when you hear the other side of the story, you realize that there was more to it. The first one didn’t tell you everything. He told you the part that made him look good. That’s human nature. It’s not just three and four-year-old kids who do that; 30, 40, 50 and 60-year-old adults do it, too. We tend to emphasize the facts that favor us and de-emphasize the facts that don’t.

It reminds me of this comedy routine I heard a number of years ago. These two men had a dispute between them and had gone to an arbitrator. One had cut a deal with the arbitrator. He came in there and told his side of the story; the arbitrator (a lawyer) was sitting there listening to it. The first fellow came and told his story. When he had finished, the arbitrator started to hammer down the gavel and give the verdict. The second one said, ‘Wait a minute, you haven’t heard my side yet.’ The arbitrator said, ‘No, look, I have been an arbitrator for a long time, and one thing I have learned is it’s too confusing if you hear both sides of the story. I never have trouble making up my mind if I just hear one side, but I always find it’s confusing to hear both sides of the story. It’s a lot easier to make the decision when you just hear one side.’

That sort of exaggerates a point, but it’s a point we can all find ourselves in sometimes—siding on something when we don’t know all the facts. We don’t have to have an opinion on everything. A lot of times you hear about something and you think, ‘Why in the world would they do that?’ Did you ever hear decisions, perhaps some administrative decision that was done at headquarters—they did this or that. You think, ‘Why in the world would they have done a thing like that?’ It’s possible—I understand it is remote—that they have known something that you and I didn’t know. It’s possible they might have had a little more information that we didn’t have. What we have to realize is that we don’t have to have an opinion on every single thing because we don’t have all the facts. It’s just an important concept.

Over and over, the importance of the tongue is emphasized.

Verse 21, we are told, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.” The tongue is a matter of vast importance.

Proverbs 19:17, “He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given.” If you have an attitude of mercy and

compassion and you are willing to help people, God takes note of that and blesses you for that.

The book of Proverbs contains warnings on both sides. It warns us not to be foolish. It talks about the foolishness of co-signing a note with someone or doing things like that. It warns us not to be foolish with our resources and obligate ourselves for something that can really impair our ability to provide and function. But on the other hand, it warns us not to go to the other extreme and have this attitude of selfishness. We need to have an attitude of kindness and willingness to share.

When it comes to lending something, if you can't afford to make a gift of it, you had better not lend it. In my experience, it has been a gift an awful lot of the time. I made it a loan and wound up having to make it a gift because they never paid it back. That's an important principle to understand. If you can afford to write it off, then go ahead and lend it. But if you can't afford to lose it, you'd better not lend it because the odds are, more times than not, you are not going to get it back. If you can afford to write it off, if you are in a position to do that, well, great. Then if you get it back, it's sort of lagniappe, but you are not crippled if you don't.

God wants you to be kind. He wants you to be merciful and generous, but He wants you to use wisdom with it and not impair the ability to provide for yourself or your family. So, there's a balance.

Verse 18, "Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction [KJV, "let not your soul spare for his crying"]." The point he is making, in terms of childrearing, is that the chastisement needs to start early. "Chasten your son while there is hope." You don't wait until the child is almost grown before you begin to tighten down. The earlier you start, the better it is. You start chastening them while there's hope. "Let not your soul spare for his crying." It's not talking about doing some sort of long-term damage to somebody.

I have seen people who thought they were spanking their kids. They would just sort of touch them and the kid would start screaming and crying—so you'd better not touch him again. You haven't done anything with that except make a bad situation worse. All you did was make him mad. That's not effective childrearing. There are many principles here.

Proverbs 20:1, "Wine is a mocker, intoxicating drink arouses brawling, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise." It tells us not to allow ourselves to be deceived about the misuse of

alcohol because it will make a fool out of us if we do. Other scriptures certainly show that there is a right use of alcohol.

Alcohol can be used in a variety of ways. It can be used and misused. The scriptures show several uses of alcohol. It shows it is used in a religious sense. It is used in the context of the offerings in ancient Israel and in the context of the Passover in the New Testament time. It is used in a religious sense and for medical purposes.

Paul told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake (1 Timothy 5:23). It is used internally for medical purposes to aid digestion; it is used externally as an antiseptic. It's what the Good Samaritan poured on the wounds (Luke 10:34). It is an extremely effective disinfectant of external wounds. Frankly, there is probably nothing any better. The natural wine has just about the right amount of alcohol content in it to disinfect the germs and won't prickle the skin. And it won't leave a scar either. So, it has uses that way. It's used as a food or as a beverage in the context of a meal, particularly at a banquet or something of that sort. It aids in the digestion of rich food. It can contribute to a festive atmosphere and it is used in the context of an occasion like that.

But when it is misused as a mind-altering chemical, when somebody is just going off, pouring down the booze and tarrying long at it, they simply are not using it appropriately. They are misusing it. They are using it to try to change the way they feel—to alter their consciousness. It will make a fool out of you. If they are deceived by what it can and will do to them, they are going to have trouble.

Verse 3, "It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel [KJV, "but every fool will be meddling"]." It's an honor to cease from strife and try to settle something peacefully, but every fool will be meddling. That's one thing you can count on from a fool. He is going to meddle in all kinds of things and, sure enough, he is going to have trouble.

Verse 4, "The sluggard will not plow because of winter; therefore he will beg during the harvest and have nothing." It's talking about getting the field ready for planting in the early spring. He will say, 'It's too cold! The weather is bad and I don't want to get out into it.' He doesn't get his field prepared and doesn't get his crop planted early enough. Come harvest, his crop didn't make, and then he is hard up and begging. He doesn't have anything. A characteristic of a lazy

person is that he looks for excuses not to do what he should do. Sometimes you have to get out and plow when it's cold. You have to do what you have to do, and sometimes it's not pleasant. That, again, is an important concept.

Verse 5, "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out." In counsel, real intentions are like deep water. The analogy is like an old well. When you talk about deep water, we sort of miss the analogy today. I think a lot of us remember the kind of wells where you unwind the pulley and the rope goes down deep into the well. Then you have to pull it up. It takes some effort and patience to draw water out of a deep well. That's what it says here.

In counsel, the real intentions and what a person really is thinking—the deep and real thoughts and the real intents in the heart—is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out. It's going to take time and patience. If you really want to know what a person is thinking, you have to spend some time with them. It takes patience and effort to draw out what's really deep down inside, rather than just superficially.

Verse 11, "Even a child is known by his deeds, by whether what he does is pure and right."

Verse 18, "Every purpose is established by counsel; by wise counsel wage war." KJV, "...with good advice make war." In other words, if you are going to go out for a project, you better get some good advice and good opinions. There are people who have expertise in a variety of areas. Desire that input.

Proverbs 21:2, "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts." People go charging off and their ways are right in their own eyes, but God looks down deep inside.

Verse 5, "The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty." Being careful, diligent, consistent and persistent leads to plenty. Sometimes somebody gets in a hurry and goes off at half cock. That can create a problem. The principle is that if you don't have time to do it right, how are you going to find time to do it over again?

Verse 17, "He who loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich." If you are out partying and doing all sorts of things like that, spending it all as fast as you get it, you will never get ahead. Some people just waste away everything they make on all sorts of luxuries and pleasures and "poof"—it's gone.

They can't pass by something and not try to buy it. They will never get ahead.

Verse 23, "Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles."

Controlling what we say will keep us out of trouble more than virtually anything else. That's an important thing. Guard your mouth and tongue and you'll keep yourself out of an awful lot of trouble.

Verse 31, "The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is of the Lord." That simply means that you can make all the preparations you want, but God's help and God's blessing is ultimately what is necessary to establish it. "The horse is prepared for the day of battle." You can prepare the horse all you want, but real safety is going to come from God. That's something we have to realize. It's not a matter that we shouldn't make preparations, but we need to understand that there are limits to what we can do.

Proverbs 22:1, "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold." A good name is of value. Our reputation is something that's more precious than anything money can buy. We should give thought and consideration to our reputation—to the way we conduct ourselves.

Verse 6, an important principle of childrearing, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Early training is a great key to future character.

Verse 7, "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender." That's a truism. It's what some have sort of used as the term "the golden rule"—he who has the gold makes the rules.

"The borrower is servant to the lender." We are finding that and we are going to find it far more in this nation. Who's been financing our spending spree? Who's been financing our massive debt for the last few years? Primarily, it's been the Japanese. Japanese banks have been buying up American bonds. They have been paying for our spending spree. "The borrower is servant to the lender." We have a major deficit from year to year. We are in a situation where the only way we can keep going is if we're selling bonds. We are going deeper and deeper into debt. We are going to find that, eventually, some of the lenders are going to come in and are going to call the shots because they have control. We haven't begun to really realize some of what's going to happen when the Japanese and the Europeans begin to do some of these things.

Verse 8, “He who sows iniquity will reap sorrow [KJV, “vanity”], and the rod of his anger will fail.” This is a very important principle. We ultimately are going to reap what we sow.

Verse 10, “Cast out the scoffer [KJV, “scorner”], and contention will leave; yes, strife and reproach will cease.” Here’s an important principle of dealing with problems. If you have a troublemaker, he needs to be gotten rid of. Things will settle down when you do.

A lot of times, even in groups, we’ve had situations and circumstances where somebody was a scorner. A scorner is not somebody who makes a mistake; a scorner is somebody who has contempt for the rules and lacks respect for the institution and for what it stands. When you tolerate somebody like that and you let them stay around, it’s just going to be strife and contention. If you have somebody who has that sort of an attitude, the best thing to do is to get rid of him. Isolate him. Get rid of him and then everything settles down. Everybody will make a mistake from time to time, but if you have respect for the institution and respect for the rules, then all it takes is a little bit of correction and it’s all back on track.

Verse 13, “The slothful man says, ‘There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!’” Boy, you talk about looking for excuses.

Verse 15, “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it far from him.” –This sort of immaturity that is there. Foolishness is just bound up, and it takes some discipline and correction because, otherwise, there are just problems.

Verse 16, “He who oppresses the poor to increase his riches, and he who gives to the rich, will surely come to poverty.” God says that if you take advantage of people to get ahead, it’s going to come back to haunt you. God will see to that.

We come to the end of this first body of Proverbs. Proverbs 22:17 begins what is termed “the words of the wise ones.” Proverbs 22:17 down to the end of chapter 24, we have about two and one-half chapters of Proverbs that were collected as “the words of the sopherim.”

We will conclude here this evening. There’s an awful lot packed into the book of Proverbs. We could only hit the high spots this evening. Hopefully, you have gained some insight into some of these things. We have hit a number of proverbs. We will conclude the book of Proverbs next Bible study.





Bible Study # 83  
February 4, 1992  
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Proverbs 22:17—31:31

This evening we **are going to conclude the book of Proverbs. We are going to survey the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh sections of Proverbs.** We've been going through this series of Proverbs. One of the things that we noted early in the book of Proverbs was the fact that the book divides itself into seven sections.

The first section is just the first few verses—verses 1-6; that's the introduction. Verse 7 through the first nine chapters makes up the second section, which is basically a discourse on wisdom. In chapter 10, we get into the third section of Proverbs and into the part that are proverbs as we normally think of them.

When we think of a proverb, we usually think of a short, pithy, concise statement that sums up a point of truth that uses comparison or contrast. It's sort of a one-sentence summation. Beginning in chapter 10, we get into that sort of proverb. Most of the first nine chapters were a discourse on wisdom. It dealt with the subject of wisdom; it developed the subject in a little different way. Then you notice an abrupt change once you get into Proverbs 10. The subject matter seems to change, in many cases, from verse to verse. It is sort of a random sampling of principles that are given and tailor-made to be thought about and considered. We have that beginning in chapter 10 down through chapter 22:16, which is really the first body of Proverbs—the proverbs of Solomon that were included.

Beginning in chapter 22:17, which we are going to begin this evening, is the fourth section of Proverbs and the second body of actual Proverbs. There are three bodies of Proverbs. Beginning in chapter 10:1 down through chapter 22:16 is the first body of Proverbs. It is a collection of proverbs of Solomon. The second body begins in chapter 22:17 and runs through the end of chapter 24.

Proverbs 22:17, it starts out, "Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise [or, hear the words of the wise ones], and apply your heart to my knowledge..." This fourth section consists of what is termed "the words of the wise ones." That runs for several chapters.

Then, chapter 25 is a third body or collection of Proverbs.

Proverbs 25:1, we are told, "These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah

king of Judah copied..." Here's a third component or third body of Proverbs that were added considerably later; they were added at the time of King Hezekiah in the end of the eighth century B.C. (Solomon had made his compilation toward the close of the tenth century B.C.) It was about 200 years later when these proverbs were copied out by the men of Hezekiah and added. They, again, are proverbs pretty much in the manner of the others. This would be our fifth section.

The sixth and seventh sections of the book are the final two chapters.

Proverbs 30:1 tells us, "The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, his utterance [KJV, "the prophecy"]..."

Proverbs 31:1, "The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him..." It contains the account of the virtuous woman. Each of those would be other components. We have seven sections.

We are going to begin our study this evening with chapter 22:17, with this second body of Proverbs and the fourth section of the book—the section that is the words of the wise ones.

Proverbs 22:17-21, as we pick up the story, we are told, "Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge; for it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you; let them all be fixed upon your lips, so that your trust may be in the Lord; I have instructed you today, even you. Have I not written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge, that I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth, that you may answer words of truth to those who send to you?" These things are to provide us the words of truth.

Verses 22-23, "Do not rob the poor because he is poor, nor oppress the afflicted at the gate; for the Lord will plead their cause, and plunder the soul of those who plunder them." As we begin to focus in on God's law, here's a point about the fact that you don't take advantage of those who are unable to defend themselves because God will take note of it.

Verses 24-25, "Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul." We are admonished that if we hang around and make associations with those who are quick-tempered, it is going to lead us into trouble. If you get entangled with somebody who is very hotheaded and quick to lose his temper, you are going to wind up in trouble. If you keep company with somebody like that, they are going

to get into some bad situations, and if you are there with them, that's where you'll be, too.

We will note some of the specific proverbs that stand out. There is a warning about becoming surety for someone else's debts. This is a warning that is given throughout the book of Proverbs.

Verses 26-27, "Do not be one of those who shakes hands in a pledge, one of those who is surety for debts; if you have nothing with which to pay, why should he take away your bed from under you?"

There's an interesting contrast that is given. Over and over, Proverbs admonishes in two areas and there is a balance. It's hard for human beings to get the balance. Proverbs admonishes us to be kind, generous and not to take advantage of someone who is poor, but, on the other hand, it admonishes us to be wise in our business dealings and not to set ourselves up for a lot of trouble by co-signing notes and "going out on a limb" financially, obligating ourselves in this way. The admonition, on the one hand, is to help those who are needy and, on the other hand, to be wise in your own affairs and to not make foolish decisions.

Specifically, the example it uses several times has to do with co-signing notes for someone. We get a balance out of it. We need to see that there is a balance. God wants us to be kind and considerate. He certainly doesn't want us to take advantage of someone and He wants us to have an attitude of giving, sharing and trying to help those who are needy. But He, along with that, wants us to use wisdom and not to be foolish. Sometimes people have meant well, but they have done things that were not wise business decisions. Sometimes they have obligated themselves for things that wound up really costing them money they couldn't afford. So, there's a balance and Proverbs brings out the balance. That's why it deals with both of these subjects.

Proverbs 23 has a warning in the first few verses.

Proverbs 23:1-3, "When you sit down to eat with a ruler, consider carefully what is before you; and put a knife to your throat if you are a man given to appetite. Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food." In other words, be careful of the favors of the ruler, knowing there may be more to it than meets the eye.

Verses 4-5, "Do not overwork to be rich; because of your own understanding, cease! Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches

certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle toward heaven."

The point is that if you set your eyes on getting rich, it will lead you into entanglements that are a source of trouble. It describes this in these first five verses. If you are with someone who is a ruler, someone who is powerful and influential, "put a knife to your throat." Don't get greedy. If you are in someone's company who is like that, if you are there with someone who is powerful and rich, don't get greedy and start thinking about what you are going to be able to get out of this situation. Don't start out being anxious of what he has and "butter him up" to get some of it. You might end up getting entangled in things that you have no intention of doing. The warning is that if you set your eyes on being rich, riches sometimes have ways of making themselves wings and flying away.

There are principles in Proverbs that deal with prosperity. God is not against prosperity. He wants people to prosper and tells us how to do it in a right and balanced way—in a way that focuses on righteousness and a spirit of kindness, generosity, justice and mercy. The spiritual principles are emphasized. Honor God with the firstfruits of our substance; those things are emphasized (Proverbs 3:9). Also emphasized is the importance of diligence, working hard, being productive, not being lazy, not having to have somebody constantly stand over us and supervise, but to be a self-starter, to seize the initiative and opportunity. There are many principles. There are principles of being a careful manager and not wasting.

There are many principles that deal with how to get ahead financially. God is not against that. He doesn't desire to see us in terrible straits. He gives us many practical admonitions. But He warns us not to set that as our priorities to where our life revolves around the acquisition of material things. Those warnings are particularly needed in Proverbs because there are so many admonitions in Proverbs on practical ways to get ahead. Proverbs is filled with principles and terms of handling day-to-day practical life situations, but it also contains many admonitions about having our priorities straight because that's a big part of it. When our priorities get mixed up, then everything else has ways of going down the drain. If you keep your priorities straight and you follow what it says in Proverbs, there are some very, very positive things we can have.

Verses 6-7, "Do not eat the bread of a miser [KJV, "him that has an evil eye"], nor desire his delicacies; for as he thinks in his heart, so is he.

‘Eat and drink!’ he says to you, but his heart is not with you.” It’s a warning about somebody who is out to entangle you. He is putting forward a “front,” but he is entangling you in things that really are going to mess you up. He has bad intentions. ‘As a person thinks in his heart, so is he.’ That’s the thing to realize.

Verse 9, “Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of your words.” One of the characteristics of a fool is that he is not open to correction. You can’t tell him anything. He has a “know-it-all” attitude.

A really good source of study in Proverbs is to go through the book and just look up the word “fool.” Go through and find everything it says about a fool; find all the characteristics of a fool. Or, look up “wise man” and go through and find all the characteristics of a wise man. It would make an excellent Bible study because it gives us quite a contrast—some things to sort of lay out and see what kind of contrast it is.

Verses 13-14, “Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell.” What is this talking about? Obviously, it is talking about punishment or correction. The term “rod” is something that needs to be understood. It is not talking about some kind of big stick that is capable of giving some sort of permanent damage. The very term means “something that is flexible,” like a switch. The rod is like a small switch or something of that sort, something that, by definition, is flexible. We are not talking about a club. “Do not withhold correction.”

The point of it is you don’t just put off and “drag your feet” in giving correction to your child. Spanking is not going to kill him. If you use a switch on him, that’s not going to kill him, but it can deliver him from destruction. In other words, if you give a child the correction, teaching and the upbringing that he needs when he is young, then you can save him from a lot of trouble and destruction by doing that.

Verse 17, “Do not let your heart envy sinners, but in the fear of the Lord continue all day long...” Sometimes there is a tendency to look at people who are “getting by with it.” If we are not careful, we can sort of think that it seems like they get by with all this stuff. We can think, ‘If we weren’t in the Church, look at all the money we could make over here. Look at all the things that we could do.’

God says, ‘Don’t let your heart envy sinners.’ Don’t look at that sort of thing, but stand in awe of God all day long. We can get into a delusion

that there would be advantages if we were not a part of the household of faith—that somehow there’s an advantage to that. God says, ‘Get your priorities straight. Really stand in awe of God.’ “The fear of the Lord” means “being in deep awe of and reverence for God.”

Verse 18, “for surely there is a hereafter [latter end] [KJV, “an end”], and your hope [KJV, “expectation”] will not be cut off.”

Verses 20-21, he continues and says, “Do not mix with winebibbers, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags.” Don’t run with the people that are out really boozing it up, the real “party animals.” Don’t run with that crowd because they are headed for trouble. If you run with that crowd, you’re going to do that, too.

Verse 23, there’s an interesting point, “Buy the truth, and do not sell it, ...”

This is the explanation as to why the magazine goes out free of charge. Mr. Herbert Armstrong read that proverb back in 1927 and came to that conclusion as he was aspiring to publish a magazine on the basis of this verse. Whenever he started publishing a magazine (which he wanted to do), it must be given free. That’s why the magazine has never been sold. That was a conclusion that Mr. Herbert Armstrong came to based on Proverbs 23:23. This is for your information as to why that is the case. Many groups, then and now, have traditionally sold various religious literatures, but he felt, based on that verse, that the truth was not something that should be sold.

There are warnings about immorality.

Verses 27-28, “For a harlot is a deep pit, and a seductress is a narrow well. She also lies in wait as for a victim, and increases the unfaithful among men.” This is a warning of immorality. If you get tangled up in immorality, it’s like getting caught in something that is hard to get out of.

Verses 29-35, “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things. Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: ‘They have struck me, but I was not hurt; they have beaten me, but I did not

feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?”

If you want a poetic description of alcoholism, I don't know of any better one than this one. Who has trouble? What are the consequences? He has woe, sorrow, contentions and complaints. He has trouble. He has strife, problems and grief. He has things wrong with him that he doesn't even know where it came from. Those who linger long at the wine have “wounds without cause” and they have “redness of eyes.”

Some prohibitionist groups quote this section and say alcohol is a terrible sin. The misuse of alcohol is being dealt with here—those who linger long at the wine. The scriptures show various proper uses of alcohol. There are legitimate uses. But what it's talking about here is lingering long. In other words, it is talking about over indulgence. It's talking about misuse—they start early and go late. They are looking for it.

Verse 31 describes longingly looking at and desiring this. It's describing someone who is preoccupied with alcohol. The warning is that if you are obsessed and preoccupied with alcohol, you are dealing with something that will turn around and bite you like a snake. It will lead you into all kinds of things. It will get you tangled up in all sorts of situations.

“Your heart will utter perverse things.” Anybody who has ever been around an alcoholic knows, “Your heart will utter perverse things.” All kinds of things come out. They say just horrible things. It describes a hangover, “You'll be as he that lies down in the midst of the sea.”

Now some of you went on the fishing trip a little while back, and this is what it's talking about. What they felt out there is what you are going to feel like the morning after. You might as well be seasick. It's like you were trying to take a nap on top of the mast of the boat because you are going to be dizzy.

It's describing a hangover. You'll wake up and you'll realize they have beaten you and you have not felt it. You wake up, look at yourself and say, ‘Someone must have beaten me with a stick,’ but you don't remember a thing.

Then the final thing and that proves the insanity of alcoholism. What's the conclusion that he comes to at the end of it?

“When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?” He says, ‘I think I need another drink. I may seek it yet again.’ That's the insanity aspect of the obsession and the addiction. Here is something you go through. It does all these things to you, and the conclusion you come to is,

‘I think I better go get a drink.’ And here it goes again. I think it is one of the most succinct summaries of the consequences of alcoholism. It focuses in on the insanity of the addiction part. After all of these things, a person is drawn back to get some more. That tells you that something is wrong because that is not a logical thing to do if you go through something like this. I have known people who have gone on some of these fishing trips, and they have come off of them saying they are never going to get on a boat again. Here it describes this, and I think it is a very interesting description.

Proverbs 24:1-2, “Do not be envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them; for their heart devises violence, and their lips talk of troublemaking.”

Verse 10, “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.”

Let's look at this. It's a way of saying the statement, “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” This is the general thought that's coming through. I think the admonition here can certainly be applied to people in any time of extremity and any time of difficulty. That is when it really comes to what we are made out of and what our intentions are. This is certainly an important focus for God's Church and God's work in this end time.

It increasingly seems that just as Satan has attempted to fracture the world around us (we have seen in Eastern Europe and around the world the fracturing and the subdividing that is going on), we have encountered some of that even in the Church in recent years. There are various ones who have become discouraged about various things; they get preoccupied and sort of pull off to themselves. It says here, “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.”

Verses 11, “Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter.”

You know, we have a job to do—“Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter.” If we divert our energies and our efforts from doing the work that God has set before us and get entangled in strife among and between ourselves, God is going to hold us responsible. We have a job to do. We have the job of carrying God's message to the world. If we let ourselves get sidetracked, it dissipates our energies on internal strife and arguments, as some have, making mountains out of molehills. They have allowed their energies to be dissipated into areas of internal strife instead

of focusing in on the work that we have to do. You know, God is going to take note of that.

Verse 12, “If you say, ‘Surely we did not know this,’ does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? [Isn’t God, who’s taking note, going to notice that?] He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render each man according to his deeds?” It’s very important to keep our focus like it should be. It’s very sad; many of us know people who have sort of gotten sidetracked and off track—some of these various ones or self-appointed leaders.

I think this is a section of Scripture that should have particular meaning for us. God does not want us to lose sight of the big picture and to dissipate our energy into all sorts of internal bickering and strife. We have to keep our focus on the things that are important and on the work God has called us to do.

Realize that whatever problems may be, that’s where our faith that Jesus Christ is the living head of the Church comes in. We either believe that Christ is in charge or we don’t. If we don’t, then why are we here? And if we do, why are we worried? I think that’s sort of the way we go through it. We don’t want to allow our energies to be dissipated and lost in various internal strife and struggles and miss the point. This is an important area.

Verse 16, “For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again, but the wicked shall fall by calamity.” If at first you don’t succeed, try and try again. God didn’t say that if you’re righteous, everything you try will succeed the first time off. “A righteous man falls seven times.” You just have to keep trying.

There is an interesting story in Scottish and English history. It’s almost an exact parallel of this. There is the story of King Robert the Bruce of Scotland who was leading a war of Scottish independence back in the early Middle Ages. The English armies had defeated him on six different occasions. He really came to the “end of his rope.”

He was in hiding in a little abandoned cottage that he had in the remote area of Scotland. Much of his army was scattered. He was discouraged and considered giving up and going into exile. As he was lying there feeling like “throwing in the towel,” he looked up and there was a spider building its web. The spider was trying to jump across to catch a beam to affix its web. He noticed the spider jump and miss the beam. It worked its way back up and then tried it again. He noticed that. It really began to get his attention because the spider kept trying. Finally,

it got all the way up to six times, which kind of struck him because the spider had tried and struck out six times—and he had, too.

He was watching and wondering when the spider was going to quit. The spider kept trying and the seventh time the spider made it. He took heart from that and considered that might be some sort of sign. Anyway, he figured that he should at least put forth as much effort as a spider. He went out and regathered his troops. In that final time, he was successful in his endeavor. The point is that many times we don’t always succeed when we first try, but you just have to keep going and keep at it.

Verses 17-18, “Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; lest the Lord see it, and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him.” You’re standing there gloating because somebody else is “getting it.” God may look down at you and figure that maybe that isn’t what He wants to do after all. You let God deal with him. We shouldn’t have this sort of gloating.

Verse 19, “Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the wicked...” It’s a matter of putting some of these things in God’s hands and trusting Him.

Verse 27, “Prepare your outside work, make it fit for yourself in the field; and afterward build your house.” This simply stresses the importance of being economically sound before marriage—the need of getting things ready and being ready to provide before you build your house and before you establish yourself that way.

Verses 30-34 are a description of the lazy person who doesn’t take care of what they have and allows it to get all overgrown and falling apart. It’s a consequence of this lazy, slothful attitude. In Proverbs 25, we go into the third body of Proverbs.

Proverbs 25:1-2, “These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied: It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.”

God reveals in the Bible a foundation of knowledge, but there are many things that God doesn’t reveal. There are many things that God has hidden in the creation. It’s the glory of God to conceal a matter and the glory of kings to search out a matter. It’s an honor to seek out the secrets of creation—the laws of physics, things of astronomy and all of the things that God has designed. God doesn’t reveal all of that information. God reveals essential knowledge in

the Bible and gives man a mind and the ability to pursue, discover and to gain insight into the way He works and the way He designed and put things together.

Verse 3, “As the heavens for height and the earth for depth, so the heart of kings is unsearchable.” Whether we’re talking about the depths of the earth and oceans (the studies of geology), all the way up to the heavens for heights (astronomy) or the hearts of kings (the studying into people, human nature and psychology, what makes people tick, why are people the way they are), there’s an awful lot that is waiting to be discovered. It’s the honor of kings to search out a matter.

Verses 9-10, “Debate your case with your neighbor himself, and do not disclose the secret to another; lest he who hears it expose your shame, and your reputation be ruined.” If you have a problem with somebody or an issue comes up, deal with it with the person who is involved.

Verse 11, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.” A word fitly spoken is a very beautiful and precious thing—the right word at the right time.

Verse 17, “Seldom set foot in your neighbor’s house, lest he become weary of you and hate you.” It’s just a matter of practical common sense. Don’t wear out your welcome. You need moderation in all things. You can wear out your welcome by just always being somewhere until you become a pest with it. It’s a matter that we want to be careful and not overdo a good thing.

Sometimes people begin to be a nuisance. Some contact is good, but even with friends or with neighbors you can get to where you monopolize someone’s time. After a while, they begin to resent it, even though they originally enjoyed your company and friendship. But if you’re calling them up every day and talking for three or four hours a day, it’s not going to be long before that begins to get old. If you do that on a regular basis, you begin to wear out your welcome.

Verse 28, “Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls.” It is simply saying that a lack of self-control in an individual is compared to a city that’s broken into; the walls are breached. You’re opening up yourself to serious trouble. A wall is there as a protection. It’s saying that someone who has lost his self-control is defenseless. He’s just wide open to attack and to trouble.

Proverbs 26:1, “As snow in summer and rain in harvest, so honor is not fitting for a fool.” It’s not appropriate. It is sort of out of place.

Verse 2, “Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow, so a curse without cause shall not alight.” This is simply saying that things are a matter of cause and effect. Generally, there are reasons if there are problems.

I think this is one area that is an important principle in our childrearing. It is an important principle in teaching children because the immature mind does not really connect cause and effect. They see effects and they see causes, but they lack the life experiences to always see how the two connect. In working with our children, point out certain things that they see and that they obviously don’t want in their future. Point out how this came about.

Some people go through life feeling like everything that happened to them is just some sort of big cosmic accident or as though there is a roll of the dice. Some people are happy and successful and other people are miserable and go through eight marriages like Liz Taylor.

“Like a flitting sparrow.” There is a reason for it. If you see a bird, how did it get there? Well, it flew. It followed a certain path and it brought it here. If there are problems or consequences in life, there are reasons. There are things that brought them here. If we don’t understand what they are, then we are doomed to keep repeating certain things because we never recognize them for what they are. It’s something for all of us to learn, and I think it is also an important principle to stress to our children to help them to understand.

Verse 4, “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him.”

Verse 5, “Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.” That is making a contrast. It shows that there are times to speak and there are times to keep silent. You don’t answer and get into an argument with someone and wind up looking just like him because you’re sounding like him. On the other hand, there is a time to speak. Somebody feels like they have made the ultimate comment. There are times that you need to say something, but you want the wisdom to distinguish when it is inappropriate and when it is appropriate.

In the Gospels, we find the way that Christ dealt with situations. There were things He simply didn’t address and other times when things were brought out. It shows the way He dealt with the Pharisees and those who came to Him; many were not asking their questions sincerely.

Verse 8, “Like one who binds a stone in a sling is he who gives honor to a fool.” Now what do you think is going to happen if you tie the stone in a sling shot, pull it back and shoot it? What do you think happens? It shoots forward; then it comes back. And guess who it hits? Now the slings they used were generally slung around. But if you tie it in and sling it around, then when you turn it loose, instead of the rock flying out, the weight of the rock brings it back around and hits you in the head.

“He who gives honor to a fool.” If you’re dealing with somebody who is really a fool and you are trying to exalt this person, it is going to backfire on you. It’s going to come back and hit you in the face. That’s just the way it is.

Verse 9, “Like a thorn that goes into the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of fools.” I guess you could say he just doesn’t get the point. This is talking about someone who is so out of it that he doesn’t ever notice the thorn until after he sobers up. This is sort of the principle; he just doesn’t get the point.

Verse 11, another characteristic of a fool is, “As a dog returns to his own vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.” He keeps making the same mistakes over and over again. He doesn’t learn from experience.

Verse 12, “Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” There is not a whole lot of hope for a fool. Here is a guy who is wise in his own eyes—a “know-it-all,” the kind of person that you can’t tell him anything; he knows it all. God says a fool is going to learn quicker than this fellow. When you see all the things it says about a fool, the odds are the fool is not going to learn very quickly.

We are looking at a poetic description of another set of characteristics that we don’t want to have.

Verse 13, “The slothful man says, ‘There is a lion in the road! A fierce lion is in the streets!’” We are looking at excuses. If someone is lazy and doesn’t want to do something, he will find a thousand excuses.

Verse 14, “As a door turns on its hinges, so does the slothful turn on his bed.” You can just see this old creaky door going back and forth, back and forth. You can just sort of imagine this old lazy fellow lying over there in bed and you can just hear the bed creak. All he’s doing is pulling the cover up over his head when the daylight comes. He’s just turning back and forth.

Verse 15, “The slothful man buries his hand in the bowl; it wearies him to bring it back to his mouth.” He’s just so lazy he hardly wants to go

to the trouble to lift his food from his plate—a poetic, humorous description to make a point. Humor serves to exaggerate certain points. It’s for the purpose of illustrating some foible. This is what it is describing. Have you ever known someone who was so lazy and trifling, it was like he almost begrudged the work that it took him to have to lift the food all the way from the plate to his mouth? He really didn’t want to do anything.

Verse 16, “The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly.” He has more excuses as to why he can’t do something than seven people who can come up with good solid reasons. I mean, whatever you have, he has excuses you have never thought about as to why he can’t do this and why he can’t do that. Some people go through life looking for excuses as to why they can’t do something. I have always found that if you really want to do something, you usually find a way to do it; if you don’t want to do it, you can find a thousand reasons as to why you can’t. It’s too hard; I can’t go; it’s too difficult. It’s amazing how that works.

Verses 18-19, “Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, ‘I was only joking!’” ‘It’s a joke! It’s a joke!’ What happens when somebody casts firebrands? Well, they start a fire don’t they? They can catch the house on fire or the city on fire. It says, ‘So is the man that deceives his neighbor and then says, “Oh, it’s a joke. I’m just kidding. Can’t you take a joke?”’

A lot of times people use that as a cover-up when they have said or done things that they didn’t have any business saying or doing. They get something started and then they try to get out of it by saying, ‘I was just kidding.’ It’s sort of like the fellow who casts a firebrand. He started a fire and now there’s trouble going. We have to think those things through.

There are several things here about what gossip will do and how it keeps trouble stirred up.

Verse 20, “Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases.” It’s amazing how the gossip quits and trouble settles down. It says, “Where there is no wood the fire goes out.” One way to get the fire to stop is to quit feeding it. The fire goes out; it burns itself out. The way strife and trouble is stopped in a community or group of people is when gossip quits, but as long as people are gossiping and saying things, you have trouble.

Verse 21, “As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife.” It feeds the flames.

Proverbs 27:1, “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.”

Verse 2, “Let another man praise you and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.”

Verse 5, “Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed.”

Verse 6, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” This is saying that it is not a mark of true friendship to withhold the truth. Sometimes a real friend is someone who will tell you the truth.

Moffat translates it as, “Better a frank word of reproof than the love that will not speak.” It’s not a mark of true friendship to withhold reproof. It doesn’t mean we go around trying to fix everybody, straighten out all our friends and give them a long list of what’s wrong with them. It just means that there is a time to speak. There’s a time when it is appropriate to say something. What a real friend tells you is faithful. He tells you because he cares. He tells you the truth.

“But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” Someone who does not have your best interest at heart will tell you all kinds of nice things. He’s just up to something. Someone who’s really your friend may tell you something and it may hurt a little bit, but he has your best interest at heart. It’s a lot more valuable than somebody who really doesn’t care about you and is just saying what they think you want to hear.

Verse 12, “A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself; the simple pass on and are punished.” This is simply saying that a prudent man—somebody who is wise—is going to look and think ahead. We don’t just rush on through life. Some people, in handling their affairs, don’t think ahead.

Look at some of the economic problems we’ve had. One of the difficulties that hit this area of the country, the areas (Louisiana and Texas) that were very heavily tied in with the oil and gas industry, was that they overextended themselves. Back when the oil and gas prices were going up, up, up, there were a lot of companies and individuals that dangerously overextended themselves. They operated on the premise that it’s going to get bigger and better forever. There were a lot of companies that went bankrupt when the price came down because they operated on a very foolish assumption that what goes up, will just keep going up forever. I have always noticed

that if I throw something up in the air, sooner or later it comes back down.

“A prudent man foresees the evil and he hides himself.” He looks ahead to problems. He doesn’t just leave himself wide open. “The simple pass on and they are punished.” They are oblivious to the fact of difficulties coming around the corner, and they get hit square in the face with it. A prudent man thinks ahead and realizes difficulties and adversities that are potentially coming and makes provision. He looks ahead and he’s not going to overextend himself. He’s not going to get way out on the end of the limb. It’s an important principle.

Verse 17, “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.” It’s talking about the fact that we can learn from one another. There is a sharpening quality that can take place in a good friendly discussion. We can learn from one another.

Verse 20, “Hell and Destruction are never full [The grave and destruction are never full; there are always continuing cycles.]; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.” Aspirations continue to rise. If someone was out on a cold rainy night and didn’t have a place to live or stay, he’d be sitting out there wishing he had some place that was warm and dry—some place out of the way. He’d just give anything for a place out of the way. If he got a place, how long would it be before he started looking around, noticing what a dump it was and thinking he wished he had a little nicer place? A guy who’s been hungry and hasn’t had anything to eat for two days is thinking he wished he could get some food. After he’s been eating for a while, he begins to notice the soup surely is bland; there’s no salt or pepper in it and they’ve watered it down. He wished he had a decent meal. Perspectives change. When we meet one level of need, we begin to look around and notice what we don’t have. “The eyes of man are never satisfied.” People are always looking for more.

Proverbs 28:1, “The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion.” The real key to freedom from fear is obedience to God.

Proverbs 14:26, we are told, “In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, ....” So, the real key to freedom from fear is obedience to God.

Proverbs 28:13, “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.” That’s certainly the case in our dealings with God, and, frankly, that usually works much better with people, too. If you try to cover it up, sooner or later it’s going to



come out, and then you really are going to be in trouble. If you face up to it, admit it and you've turned around and gone the other way, you will far more likely have mercy than to just lie, cover it up and let it come out later.

Verse 19, "He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows frivolity [KJV, "vain persons"] [or, "vain pursuits"] will have poverty enough!" If you have a worthwhile occupation and stick to it, persevere and be diligent with it, you can gradually get ahead. If you are always chasing the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, you are just going to have poverty.

Verse 20, "A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished." Someone who is in a hurry to get rich quick is going to cut corners and do things that are not going to leave them unpunished.

Verse 21, "To show partiality is not good, because for a piece of bread a man will transgress."—To treat people unfairly or mistreat someone. Someone who is unfair and unscrupulous in his dealings with people will take advantage of people for just a little bit. He will transgress; he will cheat anybody when it is to his advantage. It's a character flaw. When you see someone who deals with other people that way in business, just realize he will do it to you, too, if it is ever to his advantage and he gets the chance. It is an important principle.

Verse 22, "A man with an evil eye hastens after riches, and does not consider that poverty will come upon him." In other words, honest labor and hard work is the way to success—not some get-rich-quick scheme.

There are many admonitions in Proverbs about working hard and being diligent.

Proverbs 12:24, "The hand of the diligent will rule, ...." But there are also warnings about becoming materialistic. God wants us to get ahead, but He doesn't want us to become so materialistic that our life sort of revolves around material things; it leads to trouble.

Proverbs 28:26, "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but whoever walks wisely will be delivered." "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool."

Jeremiah 17:9, what does God tell us, "The heart is deceitful above all things, ?..." We kid ourselves.

Jeremiah 10:23, we are told, "...it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps." To whom should we look? We look to God. People just

follow their own feelings and whims, rather than looking to God and what He says.

Proverbs 28:27, "He who gives to the poor will not lack, but he who hides his eyes will have many curses." Someone who has kindness, a willingness to share and is generous will be provided for. God will take care of them. God takes note of that.

Proverbs 29:1, "He who is often reproved, and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."—An important principle. If we continually resent and resist correction, one of these days destruction is going to come like a "bolt out of the blue" and there won't be any more opportunities. It's a very important principle if we won't learn our lesson the easy way.

Another Proverb, Proverbs 17:10, talks about how a word of reproof enters more into the heart of a wise man than a hundred stripes into the back of a fool. A wise person is going to learn more from a few words than a fool is going to learn from a beating. This is one of the real keys to learning lessons—whether or not we learn from life's experiences. If someone won't learn the easy way, sooner or later it's going to come on him, and then there won't be any way out. That's sad, but there comes a time where you can get into some things you can't get out of. Life can come crashing down around you. There are people who have lost businesses, fortunes, marriages, families and children. There are people who have lost all sorts of things.

In Proverbs 29:1, they basically are told and they are warned. Various things came up and all the signs were there. People told them you had better do this or that. They wouldn't listen. One day it all came down on top of them and there wasn't any getting out of it.

Proverbs 29:2, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man rules, the people groan." The way of God produces positive results.

Verse 15, "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother."

Verse 18, "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but happy is he who keeps the law." KJV, "Where there is no vision, the people perish: ...."

Verse 25, "The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe."

Proverbs 30, the sixth section of the book, is the words (prophecy) of Agur. Agur goes through all of these comparisons, these categories of four.

Proverbs 30:11, for instance, “There is a generation [there is a kind of person] that curses its father, and does not bless its mother.” There are people who are negative, critical and faultfinding.

Verse 12, there are others, “There is a generation [there is a kind of people] that is pure in its own eyes, yet is not washed from its filthiness.” They have this attitude of a self-righteous approach. Here they are going along and they don’t see where they are doing anything wrong. They don’t get the point.

Verse 13, there are others, “There is a generation [there is a kind of people]—oh, how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up.” There’s a kind of person that is just very self-centered and sort of arrogant. They always have to be the center of attention. Sometimes someone like that is entertaining for a while, but there’s shallowness there because they always have to be the center of things.

Verse 14, there’s another kind of person, “There is a generation whose teeth are like swords, and whose fangs are like knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.” Boy, they just go plowing through like a bulldozer, totally oblivious of the feelings of others. They may get things done, but, man, the human debris they leave in their wake.

There are all kinds of people. It’s sort of an interesting one-sentence summation of some of these. It goes through many different things.

Verses 24-28, “There are four things which are little on the earth, but they are exceedingly wise: the ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their food in the summer; the rock badger [KJV, “conies”] are a feeble folk, yet they make their homes in the crags; the locusts have no king, yet they all advance in ranks; the spider skillfully grasps with its hands, and it is in kings’ palaces.”

Take note of four things that are very insignificant and, yet, they epitomize some of the greatest qualities of wisdom.

The ants are pretty insignificant little creatures. They are not all that strong and mighty. What can you learn from the ant? The ants prepare ahead. They practice the principle of being prepared. They take advantage of opportunities when they have them; they are prepared. They are pretty insignificant little insects, but that is a tremendous principle of wisdom—taking advantage of the opportunities you have, seizing the day, seizing the opportunity and being prepared.

“The rock badgers are but feeble folk.” They are little tiny animals that make their houses in the rocks—a strong foundation. What they build on has a rock-solid foundation. They are pretty insignificant little animals, but they dwell in a secure place.

Locusts are pretty insignificant little insects, but they are organized. They all go forth by bands. They exemplify organization and structure. It’s not confusion and strife.

The spider works hard and is diligent. Again, it’s a little insignificant creature, but you’ll find it up in the corner in the kings’ palaces. There’s no place you’ll look that you won’t find a spider somewhere. It singles out these little things and there’s a lot of food for meditation here. All these little groups of four are enumerated—food for thought.

Proverbs 31 is the seventh section—the words of Lemuel.

Proverbs 31:1, “The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him...” Most of it focuses in on the subject of what is called “the virtuous woman.”

Verse 10, “Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies.” We live in a society that measures worth and value by the wrong things. If you want to find out what we value in society, look at the pay scale. It wouldn’t take you too long to look at the pay scale and figure that we value being entertained far more than being taught. Compare what we pay our entertainers to what we pay our teachers and the status that’s given to each. We have certain values that we attach to things in our society, and a lot of these values are distorted.

A lot of women have been made to feel that their value depends on the size of a paycheck they bring home. You can find that Madonna had the highest income of any other woman in the United States last year. Well, does that make her of greater worth and value? God says, “Who can find a virtuous woman? Her worth is far above rubies.” God says virtue is what has value. That’s what God attaches value to. It’s not the size of the paycheck you bring in. It’s not external experience. It’s not all the things that the world attaches value to. God tells us what really has value—a virtuous woman has value that far exceeds rubies.

Verse 11, “The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain.” One of the primary points that is made, one of the things about her, is that ‘her husband safely trusts in her.’ The physical work that she does has a price, but the character and the attitude she exemplifies

is the real contribution that she makes to the family—that's the one that's above any price. The work she does of cooking, cleaning and all these things is not what's above the price of rubies. You can go out and hire that to be done. That's not the most valuable contribution. The contribution beyond assigning a price tag to is character and the virtuous attitude that is exemplified. That is of far greater value to a family than any price tag that can be given. A virtuous woman makes a great contribution to the family.

Realize that the family is the foundation, the building block of the society. If you want to understand what's happening to our society, you have to look at what's happening to our families. I don't think that the value of a woman's contribution can be overestimated. God says it can't. It's priceless. It's above rubies. There's a tremendous thing that it goes into here.

"The heart of her husband does safely trust in her." He doesn't have to worry because there's confidence, respect and trust. She's productive and does all these things. She is concerned about taking care of her responsibilities with her family.

Verse 26, "She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness."

Verse 27, "She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness."

Verse 28, "Her children rise up and call her blessed [or it could be rendered, "will make her happy"]; her husband also, and he praises her..."

There is going to come an appreciation. 'Her children rise up and make her happy.' Part of the problem with what a woman does as her kids are growing up, during so many of the years she's doing it, it gets discouraging. A lot of the appreciation and feedback doesn't come until years later.

That gets discouraging sometimes because who appreciates it? Oh, sometimes a "fit" may come upon a kid, and they may say, 'Thank you.' But generally you have to get older in life before you look back and really appreciate what was done. Most of us can see that. This is what it's talking about. Her children will rise up and call her blessed. It's talking about a later time of life.

I think it's important to realize that some things you reap later. It's like seeds that you plant. You won't reap the harvest for a long time, but you will reap it. "Her children will rise up and call her blessed." They will make her happy; they will respond in that way.

Verses 29-31, "'many daughters have done well, but you excel them all.' Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates."

Let her have credit for what she does. There is ultimately a public recognition of private virtue that is brought out here.

We have obviously just been able to skim the surface on some of these things. I hope this has whet your appetite for Proverbs and for the things that we can go to and study in greater depth and detail at a later time.

We are going to cover the book of Job next Bible study. We will go through a summary of the book of Job at the next Bible study. Obviously, in this series of studies, it is a survey and we are only hitting the high spots. But I hope that we do so in a way that would sort of whet your appetite to go back and really delve into some of the things that we lack the time and the opportunity in this setting to really dwell on in detail.



Bible Study # 84  
February 11, 1992  
Mr. John Ogwyn

### The Writings Series—Job

**We are getting into the book of Job this evening.** Job is a very interesting book. There are an awful lot of things that are in there, a lot of insight that is given.

Before we get into the details of the book, we might look briefly at the setting of the book of Job. There isn't a specific date that is assigned to Job. Clearly, Job was written during the patriarchal period. We would date it after the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and prior to the time of Moses. How do we get a date like that? Let me show you a couple of ways that we do that. The clearest way is the identity of Job's friends.

Job 2:11, we find Job's friends mentioned, "Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite."

Eliphaz the Temanite is fairly easily identified. If you go back to Genesis 36:10, it gives you the names of Esau's sons, and one of his sons was Eliphaz. We find that the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam and Kenaz. Teman was the grandson of Esau and the son of Eliphaz. So, this would tie in here.

Bildad the Shuhite—by the way, that does not mean that he was the shortest man in the Bible, as is the joke. The Shuhites were descendants of Shuah who was a son of Abraham by the way of Keturah. Keturah was the wife that Abraham married after Sarah's death. In Genesis 25:1, it talks about Abraham marrying Keturah.

Genesis 25:2, the sons of Abraham by Keturah are mentioned, "...Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah."

You've heard that Job was the greatest man in the land of Uz (Job 1:1). Abraham had two nephews. They were the sons of his brother, Nahor. Two of his nephews were Huz (Uz) and Buz.

Genesis 22:20-21, "...Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: Huz [Uz] his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram..." Who was Uz? He was the brother of Buz. If you ever have twins, here are a couple of good names. They would be sort of original. There are not a whole lot of Uz's and Buz's running around.

The point is that while we can't identify right down to the exact one, it's pretty clear whom we are talking about. When we look at Job and his friends, we are talking about the extended family of Abraham. We're talking about either descendants through Abraham's grandson, Esau, or we are looking at descendants through Abraham's second wife, Keturah, or some nephews of Abraham and their families.

We are looking at the extended family of Abraham who dwelt in that general area of the old land of Edom and down in what would be the border area between modern Israel-Jordan-Saudi Arabia. If you look at a map and look where those areas begin to converge, that is the general area where these events took place—the old area of Edomia. We can pretty well deduce these things directly from the book. There are some Jewish translations that also confirm this.

The Septuagint translation was a Greek translation of the Old Testament made a couple of hundred years prior to Christ. As an overall translation, it's not very accurate or reliable; some of it is a little better than others. But there are two things that it does. One, it gives us a record of some traditions. It gives us some traditional understandings or interpretations that were available prior to the time of Christ in the Jewish community because some parts of the Septuagint are almost a parallel rather than direct translation. It gives you a way that they understood it or a way that some segments of the Jewish community understood it.

The other thing is, in some cases, there are scribal additions and things like that added to it. The book of Job actually has a couple of extra verses added in the original inspired text. They give you the idea of what, at least a section of the Jewish community a couple of hundred years prior to Christ, was believed about it. Those two additional verses make reference to the fact of Job being connected with the family of Esau.

Moses, according to Jewish tradition, is responsible for the book of Job, in the sense that it became a part of the Hebrew canon. Where did Moses come across the book? The events that transpired, undoubtedly, took place during the time of Israel's captivity in Egypt or perhaps during the early part of the period Israel was in Egypt.

How did Moses come to have it and how did it come to be a part of the Bible? Well, I think the logical explanation would be that he received a copy of the book from his father-in-law. You remember Jethro (Reuel), his father-in-law, was the priest of Midian. The Midianites were

descendants of Abraham through Keturah, so they were of the same general people as the Israelites. They also preserved the knowledge, at least for a time, of the true God. The title “Reuel” literally means “the friend of God.” The “el” ending, of course, is the name that is used to refer to God in the Hebrew language. It would certainly indicate that he continued the worship that was practiced in the family of Abraham.

We find a little mention of Jethro in the book of Exodus. There are no indications whatsoever that he was an idolater or, in any way, not in harmony with what God was doing through Moses.

The individuals involved in the book of Job would probably have been a part of that extended family of Abraham. Job was, undoubtedly, dead by the time Moses was there in the desert. The book that he wrote of his experiences in this account was something that was known and preserved in that portion of the family of Abraham. I think both the logic and what we can deduce directly from Scripture, together with the tradition that the Jews have preserved, would lead us to see or to understand that explanation of it.

There was a direct succession to the birthright. God worked only peripherally through some of the other families descended from Abraham. It shows us that even though some were not in the direct line of promise, in the sense of what God was doing directly through the lineal descendants of Abraham, nevertheless, there were individuals in the family who availed themselves of the knowledge of God and sought God. God was very much involved with them in that context.

Job 1:1, “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.” Job was in the land of Uz. Now, we have already seen who Uz was. He was the brother of Buz. Job was in this area that bordered the Sinai portion of the old area of Edomia, the land of Edom.

Verses 2-3, “And seven sons and three daughters were born to him. Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East.”

We’re told that he was a man of great wealth and influence, a man of note in this area. He was the most noted and remarkable man in this entire area. He was a man who feared God. He stood in absolute reverence and awe of God. He was a

person who hated evil and sought to avoid it. He had a sizable family of seven sons and three daughters. He was wealthy and possessed quite a number of sheep, camels, oxen and donkeys. He was the greatest of all the men of the East. The term “people [KJV, margin, “sons”] of the East” refers to the area from east of Jerusalem over toward the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. Job was one of the wealthiest and most noted men in this whole area.

Verse 6, “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.”

We find that Satan came before God. We are given little bits of insight into certain things including a little bit of insight into the workings of God in heaven. There was a time when the angels were to appear before God and Satan came among them.

The angels are referred to as the “sons of God.” The term “sons of God” is used in several contexts: (1) it is used to refer to angels, (2) in Genesis 4, it is a title that the descendants of Cain applied to themselves, (3) it is a title that is applied in a spiritual sense to Christians, and (4) it is a term that is applied in a physical sense to Adam in the genealogy given in Luke.

Luke 3:38, “...Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.” –In the sense that the only parent Adam had was God. There are various uses of the term, and we have to discern the use of it from the context. This is one of the contexts, and it uses the term to refer to angels in the sense that angels, by creation, are sons of God—though not in the spiritual sense that Christians are, either now or at the time when we are changed into spirit in the resurrection.

Job 1:6, “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.” Satan came among them.

Verse 7, “And the Lord said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ So Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.’”

God, at this point, called his attention to something. Note that God is the one who called the devil’s attention to Job. Satan didn’t bring up the topic of Job; God did.

Verse 8, “Then the Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?’” God said, ‘Have you noticed what a remarkable individual he is? There is no one like him.’ Satan was quick to have a comeback.

Verse 9, “So Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing?’” Satan said, ‘Does he fear You for nothing?’

Verse 10, ‘Well, I guess he does. You pay him well enough. Yeah, sure he fears You. You pay him well enough. You’ve made a hedge about him, about his house and everything that he has. Of course it’s in his best interest.’

Satan operated under the theory that the only reason a person does something is because of what they stand to gain out of it. The fact that you could do something on the basis of love and loyalty or that you can have a commitment on the basis of love and loyalty never entered into the mind of Satan. The only reason he could see that you would be loyal and give allegiance to someone or something was because you stood to gain something out of it.

Satan said, ‘Well, yeah, You protect him. Of course he fears You. You have him on the payroll. You have everything hedged about; nothing happens to him. Of course he does. It is in his economic self-interest to fear You. He has all the motives in the world to do it. That’s why he does it.’

The devil’s attitude is that the only reason people do something is because of what they are going to get out of it. The idea that you would do something out of a sense of loyalty, allegiance and love—no, he couldn’t relate to those motives. It had to be a selfish motive. It had to be a motive of self-interest—not the fact that your interests could rise above yourself and you could do something not because of what you were getting out of it. This is one aspect that we often have not focused on in the book of Job.

There were lessons that Job had to learn, but there are also lessons for us to learn in the book of Job. That was something for the devil to learn. There was a point that God was proving to the devil. The devil was convinced that nobody, no being, would ever have complete loyalty and allegiance to God based on love.

Verse 11, “But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!”

God told him, ‘You think the only reason Job does what he does is because I protect him because he’s blessed and all his property is protected. I don’t believe that, Satan. I don’t think that’s why Job serves Me. You think it is? I’ll tell you what; I will remove the hedge. You’re right; I have protected Job. I’ve watched over him. But that’s not why Job is serving Me and I will prove it to you. I’ll just remove the hedge and you do what you will to him.’

Verse 12, “So the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person.’ Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.” ‘I will not restrain your power except that you can’t touch him.’

We are told that Satan went out from the presence of the Lord. We get the impression that when the devil has something bad to do, he doesn’t waste time doing it.

You read the story and Job is out here.

Verses 14-15, “and a messenger came to Job and said, ‘The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, when the Sabeans raided them and took them away—indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’”

Verse 16, “While he was still speaking, !...” You get the time flow here? We are not talking about something that drags out over weeks, but we are talking about a matter of about 15 minutes time. He gets the news from several different messengers that everything he has is gone, including his family.

In each case you find, “While he was still speaking,” another one showed up. You’d have to say that the devil did not waste time. When he had something bad to do, he was so happy to do it that he just didn’t lose a moment.

Verse 16, “While he was still speaking, !...”

Verse 17, “While he was still speaking, !...”

Verse 18, “While he was still speaking, ...”

Verses 20-22, when this was finished, “Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.’ In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.” The KJV margin renders it, “nor attributed folly to God.” He did not blame God foolishly or charge God foolishly. His loyalty or allegiance to God didn’t waver.

Job 2:1, “Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord.”

We are not told how often the angels come to present themselves before God. Some commentators have speculated that this may have been once a year. In this case, this situation of Job having lost his property and everything may have dragged on for a year before the events of chapter 2 happened. Maybe it wasn’t that long. I don’t know; there’s no particular evidence.

To my knowledge, this is the only area of Scripture that clearly shows that there are designated times when all the angels are summoned to appear before God. Evidently, there is a regular basis on which all the angels come before God and Satan is compelled to appear. One of the things we understand here is that the devil's power is limited. He can only do as God allows. God places limits and Satan cannot go beyond those limits.

God, again, called his attention to Job.

Verse 3, "Then the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause.'" "There was no reason for it. But you wanted to do it, so I allowed you to do it. It's been done and have you noticed? Go ahead and admit it Satan—you were wrong. You said that if I took away what he had, he would curse Me to My face. That's not right; it didn't happen, did it?"

Now the devil, never being one to admit an error, didn't say, 'You're right and I was wrong.' No, that's not what he said.

Verse 4, he said, "So Satan answered the Lord and said, 'Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life.'" "No, I'll tell You what; You didn't let me touch him."

Verse 5, "But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" There was no admission that maybe he had miscalculated Job. No, he was convinced. He felt that the only reason someone does something is because of his own self-interest or because of what he is getting out of it.

Verse 6, "So the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life.'" "You can do anything you want except kill him."

Verse 7, "Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head." You get the idea? Again, when Satan has a chance to do something bad to somebody, it isn't a halfway measure. He didn't cause a few of Job's oxen or donkeys to run off or get killed; he didn't cause one of his children to die. When he had a chance to do it, he did it all the way. And when he was given permission to smite Job, he went quickly. Job didn't get just a boil; he was covered with boils from the bottom of his feet to the top of his head. So, again, the devil likes to deal out trouble.

Well, Job was pretty miserable with something like that. He wound up sitting in an ash heap. How do you get relief when you are covered with boils all over? Where are you going to sit down and be comfortable?

Verse 8, Job wound up sitting in an ash heap and scraping himself with a piece of broken pottery. It was a pretty miserable sort of existence.

Verse 9, "Then his wife said to him, '...'" You know, it's interesting. Satan killed everybody else connected with Job, but he didn't do anything to Mrs. Job. Verse 9 may explain the reason.

Verse 9, continuing, the only contribution we read from her is, "... 'Do you still hold to your integrity? Curse God and die!'" "Why don't you just go ahead, curse God and get it over with?" Hopefully, she learned her lesson. We are given no indication that when Job had his family renewed at the end of the book, he was given a new wife. So, perhaps, she learned some lessons out of all this, too. She was not contributing to Job's benefit at this point. She was frustrated and said to just get it over with.

Verse 10, "But he said to her, 'You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?' In all this Job did not sin with his lips." "Job did not sin with his lips" is worded a little differently than Job 1:22.

Job 1:22, he says, "In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong."

Job 2:10, Job may have thought some things. He may have had to wrestle with some thoughts, but he didn't say anything he shouldn't have said. He did not do what the devil said he would do.

The devil, by this point, has already been proven wrong twice. It reiterates at the end of each of these incidents that Job did not sin with his lips. He did not charge God with wrong, which was exactly what the devil said he would do. God makes it plain that the devil was wrong—that he totally misread Job.

Now, Job had three friends that heard of this, and it mentions them. I've mentioned already that we can identify them with the extended family of Abraham. Bildad is probably a descendant of Abraham through Keturah; Eliphaz the Temanite is probably the great grandson of Esau. Some of the generations of Esau's family were fairly close. It is even perhaps the son of Esau who's mentioned there. We don't know where this term "Temanite" comes from, although it became a reference to an area of the country and to some of the descendants of Eliphaz, the son of Esau.



Verses 11-13, these three friends came down. They made an appointment to meet together to comfort Job. They were just overwhelmed when they saw Job and the condition he was in. Job was so filled with his grief and discouragement that he just didn't feel like saying anything. They sat there with him. They sat there a week.

Job 3:1, "After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth." He didn't curse God.

Verse 3, what he said was he wished he had never been born. If this was where he was going to end up, he wished that the day he was born would perish from the calendar—that the day didn't exist.

Of course, the book of Job is one of the poetic books, along with Psalms and Proverbs. It is written in poetry. It is not just straight prose. Poetry is written differently than prose. In poetry, there is a repetition for the sake of emphasis. The use of language is different. You can't read the book of Job, just strictly, as you would an account in 1 Samuel because it is written in an expressive and a poetic fashion. Job describes his frustration and discouragement and wishes he were dead. If that was the state in which he had to come, he was wishing he had never been born.

Verses 25-26, "For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me. I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, for trouble comes." One little bit of insight we gain from verse 25 is that Job evidently had been worried; he had been concerned somewhat about the loss of physical things. This was something that had been on his mind; he evidently had spent some time wondering about that and was a little bit worried about something happening. Then, sure enough, it did.

Now the friends begin to speak. Each of these friends has two discourses. Eliphaz the Temanite is the first one who begins to speak. We are told in the book of Jeremiah that the Temanites were noted for their wisdom (Jeremiah 49:7). They were noted in this way. He came to some conclusions. Notice what he said.

Job 4:7, "Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off?"

Verse 8, "Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same." Eliphaz certainly had an "encouraging" way of getting his point across. He said, 'One thing I've seen in life is people always get what they have coming. One thing you can mark down is people

get what they have coming to them. They plow iniquity and sow trouble [wickedness]; they are going to reap the same.' Eliphaz goes through and makes his point.

There are some interesting things that Eliphaz says.

Job 5:17, "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty." This part is true because it's quoted later in the book of Proverbs and requoted in the book of Hebrews. There are some points that Eliphaz made that were valid, but the fundamental point that Eliphaz made was, 'Look, you have all these problems and there has to be a reason for it.'

I'll tell you what; I've seen situations where sometimes I wondered if some people in the Church had ever read the book of Job. I've seen people have problems—be in long-term sickness or go through some other really serious trial—and some of their friends showed up and almost quoted Eliphaz verbatim. They would say, 'You know you must have really done something for God to punish you that way.' I just sort of marveled when I heard that. They must have never read the book of Job because God wasn't really happy with Eliphaz and with Eliphaz's conclusion.

God wasn't really happy with that. In fact, when you read the end of the book, you read that God was definitely less than happy with what Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar had to say. They took it upon themselves to speak for God. God hadn't appointed them to do the speaking. They were putting words in God's mouth; that's a serious business.

James 3:1, "...let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment." It's just been incredible to me through the years, how quickly some people in the Church were to come up with some great pronouncement, 'Well, I think you should just leave him. You should just divorce. You should do so-and-so.' Or, 'You must have really done something terrible for that to happen to you.' Off the top of their heads, they came up with some great pronouncement.

It evidently never dawned on them that they were putting themselves in the position of being a teacher of the will of God. Unless God had directly revealed His will to them, that's something they really should be very careful of, realizing that God is going to scrutinize what they say. If we start advising someone, we had better be sure that what we are saying is really what God would say and not something that pops

off the top of our heads because that is serious business. That's what Eliphaz was doing.

Well, Job was upset by what Eliphaz had to say because Job knew that there was no great specific sin. Eliphaz sort of took the idea that Job was at the center of the cause. 'You look good on the outside, but there has to be something you're doing that we don't know about. You wouldn't have all these problems if there wasn't something. God is trying to tell you something. Tell us what you have been doing. You've been running around on your wife, right? Been cheating people, right? Whatever it is, tell me.' This was his concept and this was a false concept.

Job is really depressed and frustrated. Here is a situation that has probably hung on for over a year—maybe not the illness part of it, but his total losses of everything of value to him including his family and now the loss of his health. We're looking at events that have dragged on for, probably, over a year since these things started happening. Job is discouraged, in pain and is miserable. He just doesn't understand why. Here, his friend who came to comfort him, ends up accusing him of having done some terrible thing. Job really gets pretty defensive. He goes through some of that in Job 6.

Job 7:1, "Is there not a time of hard service for man on earth? Are not his days also like the days of a hired man?" In other words, a hired day laborer's days are long and hard. Normally, it was for farm work. You hired a day laborer during times of harvest and threshing—in times when there was a lot of hard work and long hours and you needed some extra hands. He sort of got paid the minimum wage of the day. He was just a day laborer, so his days were long and hard. When Job refers to "the days of a hired man," that is what he means. We have a limited time on earth and our days can, sometimes, also be long and hard.

Verse 2, "Like a servant who earnestly desires the shade, and like a hired man who eagerly looks for his wages..." In other words, the servant earnestly desires the shade. He is looking forward to seeing quitting time. He's anxious to see the time when the sun sets and it is time to quit working. The hired man is anxious to get what he was working for.

Verse 3, "so I have been allotted months of futility, and wearisome nights have been appointed to me." It just goes on and on and on. Job is depressed. He just wishes it was over.

Verse 17, "What is man, that You should magnify him, that You should set Your heart on him..."

Bildad begins to answer.

Job 8:6, "if you were pure and upright, surely now He would awake for you, and prosper your rightful habitation."

Verse 20, "Behold, God will not cast away the blameless, nor will He uphold the evildoers." Bildad sort of takes the same "tact" Eliphaz did. He said, 'If you were really as good as what you seem to think, God would be stepping in to take care of things. He's not going to cast away someone who's pleasing Him. He's not going to help evildoers and He's not going to cast away someone with whom he's pleased.' Again, a very distorted perspective.

Job's response is like in Job 6:24-25, where he says, "Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; cause me to understand wherein I have erred. How forceful are right words! But what does your arguing prove?" Job is saying, 'You are just going around and around and arguing. If I have a problem, show me what it is. Show me where I am wrong.' Now Eliphaz couldn't do that and neither could Bildad. They didn't see the problem, but they assumed that there had to be something.

Job continues to speak. He just doesn't know what to do. Again, he is frustrated.

Job 10:1-2, "My soul loathes my life; I will give free course to my complaint, I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God, "Do not condemn me; show me why You contend with me.""

Job wonders why God is doing this to him. Sometimes things happen and we know that it is a matter of cause and effect. Someone is "ripping" down the road, and a policeman comes up behind him with red lights flashing on his car. He doesn't need to ask why God is doing this to him. That's not a matter of God doing something to him. He did it to himself and, generally, he knows that. But there are times things happen that aren't that way. We come through some great trial or situations that just "come out of the blue." It can be financial reverses; it can be sickness; it can be death; it can be some very traumatic situation—and you don't know why it happened. Of course, our desire is to know why. Why? We don't always know why.

Zophar answered. Zophar had a really "encouraging" thought.

Job 11:6 (last part), "...Know therefore that God exacts from you less than your iniquity deserves." Zophar is really an "encouraging"

sort. He says, 'You're getting off light. I don't know what you did, but it must have really been bad. God is not hitting you nearly as hard as what you probably deserve.'

Job 13:13-16, "Hold your peace with me, and let me speak, then let come on me what may! Why do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my hands? Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him. He also shall be my salvation, for a hypocrite could not come before Him."

Job, in the midst of his grief, trouble, frustration and sorrow, still said, "though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." He didn't understand why. He couldn't fathom what was going on. He wished he could talk to God face to face and see what this was all about. But he knew that God was right and he would trust Him, although He slay him.

It's easy to go through, sometimes, and say Job didn't seem in a really good attitude when he said this or that. Well, I tell you what—I think Job set a remarkable example in terms of endurance and faith. Job never did what the devil thought he would do. He never became bitter against God. He was depressed and in the depths of despair some of the times. There were times that he wished he had never been born, but he inevitably kept coming back to the message of faith.

Job 14:1, "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble." Job said this.

Verse 2, "He comes forth like a flower and fades away; he flees like a shadow and does not continue." That's a poetic description, but it's a very beautiful description of human life. Job understood this. What we have to understand is that this human life is not the ultimate.

The emphasis in recent decades (I think we could certainly trace back for 20 years or slightly over that and, increasingly, in the 70s) was sort of dubbed the "me" decade. That was the emphasis then, and it continued on. As we sort of look back at some of the periods, the 80s was the decade of "greed." There has been this increasing emphasis of what's called "self-fulfillment." It's based on the idea that everyone is entitled to be happy here and now, and we have a right to that.

Happiness is a blessing and it's a benefit.

Job understood that, "Man who is born of woman is of a few days and full of trouble. [We are temporary, and there are a lot of problems.] He comes forth like a flower and fades away; he flees like a shadow and does not continue."

Verses 3-9, "And do You open Your eyes on such a one, and bring me to judgment with Yourself? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one! Since his days are determined, the number of his months is with You; You have appointed his limits, so that he cannot pass. Look away from him that he may rest, till like a hired man he finishes his day. For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its tender shoots will not cease. Though its root may grow old in the earth, and its stump may die in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bud and bring forth branches like a plant." You've seen that. You cut down a tree and little sprouts begin to come back up.

Verse 10, "But man dies and is laid away; indeed he breathes his last and where is he?" It doesn't happen when a person dies. There's a physical part of the continuing cycle of life. A tree dies and you can still have a little life left in the old root and a new sprout comes up. But that doesn't happen with a human being; man dies and he wastes away. He breathes his last and where is he?

Verse 12, "so man lies down and does not rise. Till the heavens are no more, they will not awake nor be roused from their sleep."

Verses 13-15, "Oh, that You would hide me in the grave, that You would conceal me until Your wrath is past, that You would appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my change comes. You shall call, and I will answer You; You shall desire the work of Your hands."

Job understood that there was to be a resurrection. Job looked beyond this life.

1 Corinthians 15:19, Paul says, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable." That's what he says in the resurrection chapter. If your only hope for justice and happiness is here and now, you are in trouble because we live in an unjust world. Oh, there may be certain things—we can certainly have certain benefits and sometimes things work out well—but basically we live in an unjust world.

We live in a world that is the devil's world. There are inequities that are going to be until the Kingdom of God is established and the will of God is carried out on earth with the same alacrity that the angels carry it out in heaven. God's will isn't carried out that way on the earth. God can accomplish His will by intervening. Human beings aren't anxious to carry out God's will as the angels are. We live in an unjust world. We live in a world that is filled with pain, sorrow,

trouble and difficulty. That's the world we live in and we are surrounded by it.

Because of the blessings of Abraham, we live in the area of the world that has had the greatest benefits and blessings. We tend to take that for granted. We just do. Some of you can remember back. The things that we have, even on a physical level, there's no comparison. Some of you sitting here remember when you got indoor plumbing, electric lights and some of these things. We are not that far removed. That's not ancient history. Even those among us who don't consider ourselves at all wealthy, live with a level of comfort that some of the wealthiest people didn't have too many years ago.

You know, 100 years ago, I don't care how much money you had, if you lived in Baton Rouge in the summertime, you just sweated. You had no air conditioning. I don't care if you owned the biggest plantation on the Mississippi River; you just sat there and were hot. You could fan yourself or get somebody else to fan you, but you couldn't turn on the air conditioning.

Now, that's a really simple little thing and there are so many things. We live in an age where we have so much. We have so much more than the vast majority of human beings on the face of this earth. But as a nation we haven't appreciated it. We're not grateful for it, and as a nation we are in the process of losing it. Anybody who thinks God is not breaking the pride of our power and removing the blessings of the birthright from us hasn't read Leviticus and hasn't looked at the news lately because that's reality. I think we understand that.

Job had the message of faith and the message of the resurrection.

Job 19:25-27, "'For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!'"

Now, you'd have to say that Job evidenced faith. In the midst of his despair, despondency and grief, he kept coming back to the fact that he knew there's something beyond this and his hope and confidence rested in his Redeemer. He knew that his Redeemer lived, and in the latter days, His feet shall stand upon the earth.

Now, I would also point out to you that the clearest teaching of the resurrection in the Old Testament is in the book of Job and the book of Daniel. The Old Testament really doesn't talk very much about the resurrection and very, very little about the promise of eternal life. You could

go through and you'd have to really do a little searching and extrapolating to try to find really clear proof scriptures. Yes, I understand the principle is there in certain things, but when you start looking for a really clear proof scripture, you are going to find that you are going to be pretty well confined to the book of Job or the book of Daniel. There wouldn't be a whole lot elsewhere.

Job understood that the time of the resurrection was the time when He, the Redeemer, would stand on the earth.

The statement, "in my flesh I shall see God" is really not the literal translation. I will read it out of the Jewish translation. Job says, "As for me I know that my Redeemer lives and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth and when, after my skin is destroyed, then without my flesh I shall see God." In other words, he is not going to see God in the flesh; he is going to see God as a spirit-born Son of God in the resurrection. Job clearly understood some things about the resurrection. Some things that are here, we don't find clearly stated elsewhere.

Job expressed how everybody has turned against him.

Verses 16-20, "'I call my servant, but he gives no answer; I beg him with my mouth. My breath is offensive to my wife, and I am repulsive to the children of my own body. Even young children despise me; I arise, and they speak against me. All my close friends abhor me, and those whom I love have turned against me. My bone clings to my skin and to my flesh, and I have escaped by the skin of my teeth.'"

Have you ever wondered where that expression came from? Have you heard about someone escaping by "the skin of my teeth"? The skin of your teeth is pretty thin. You don't have a whole lot of skin on your teeth. That's where that expression comes from. It comes out of the Bible. It's a poetic expression from the book of Job. Job describes that not only had he lost everything, he had lost everybody. "And those whom I love have turned against me."

Verses 21-23, he says, "'Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has struck me! Why do you persecute me as God does, and are not satisfied with my flesh? Oh, that my words were written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book!'" That wish got fulfilled. We are reading that.

Job was really feeling pretty miserable. He wanted a little pity and a little sympathy, but all he was getting was his friends "ganging up" on him. Job not only understood about the

resurrection to eternal life, but Job 21:30 shows that he understood about the third resurrection to the lake of fire.

Job 21:30, ““For the wicked are reserved for the day of doom; they shall be brought out on the day of wrath.”” Job understood some things about the resurrection.

As we continue on down, Eliphaz seeks to retort in Job 22.

Job 23:2, Job answers, ““Even today my complaint is bitter; . . .””

Verses 11-12, ““My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside. I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.””

Job says, ‘It’s not because I have departed from the truth; it’s not because I have departed from God’s ways. That’s not why these things are happening to me.’

Job 25:4, well, Bildad answers briefly, ““How then can man be righteous before God? Or how can he be pure who is born of a woman?””

Job answers again in Job 26. He describes a little bit about God—about God’s power and God’s creation.

Job 26:6, ““Sheol is naked before Him, and Destruction has no covering.”” Nothing is hidden from God.

Verse 7, ““He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing.”” This statement and others like it are among those that demonstrate the authority of the Bible and the scientific accuracy of the Bible. The Bible was a book way ahead of its time.

The Greeks were supposed to be the founders of so much of western civilization and noted for their insight and their scientific knowledge. A good 400 or 500 or maybe even 700 years after the time Job wrote these words, the Greeks’ poets Homer and Hesiod were writing that the earth was held up on the shoulders of Atlas. That was the greatest Greek scientific theory of the day, a good 600 or 700 years after Job had written these words, “He hangs the earth on nothing.” That’s a pretty good description.

The Chinese figured out that it was on the back of a giant turtle. I don’t know what they thought the turtle was standing on. I’ve always wondered. The Greeks thought Atlas was holding the earth on his shoulders. Job, writing hundreds of years earlier said, “God hangs the earth on nothing.”

Isaiah, in Isaiah 40:22, talked about the “circle” or the “sphere” of the earth more than 2,000

years before Columbus proved to the Europeans that the earth was round rather than flat.

The point is that the Bible is a book way ahead of its time. The Bible doesn’t give us all scientific information, but when the Bible speaks about matters of science, it gives us insight and information that was way, way ahead of any of the theories of any of the cultures of other people around. The Bible is the inspired word of God.

Job did not see his problem.

Job 27:6, ““My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me as long as I live.”” He said he didn’t see where he had done anything wrong. Now, Job did have a certain problem that we are going to see a little later. Job did have some problems with self-righteousness. There were some things that he did not see.

We sometimes focus on that to the exclusion of the fact that Job was a man who was devoted to God. His loyalty, his allegiance, his devotion to God was constant. Job loved God. He was devoted to God. He was prepared to trust God and to trust what God was doing, all the way to the grave. Job looked for fulfillment beyond this life. That didn’t mean that he enjoyed suffering in this life, but Job understood the real answer and the real solution. He understood this life—we’re here and we are gone.

This life can be very difficult, but Job looked on beyond. He had a loyalty, devotion and allegiance to God that the devil never comprehended. Job was not simply motivated by what he stood to get. Job loved God. He was devoted to God and desired to serve God. But Job did not really see himself properly in relationship to God—in terms of how great God was by comparison to Job.

One of the things, in terms of scientific information, that’s sort of interesting—he talks about God and what God does.

Job 28:24-25, ““For He looks to the ends of the earth, and sees under the whole heavens, to establish a weight for the wind, and mete out the waters by measure.”” The Amplified Bible renders this as, “he gave to the wind weight or pressure.” You know, air pressure was not even understood or discovered until the modern era. People didn’t think air had any weight, but, of course, we know that it does. It’s what we call “air pressure.” Job understood that. God gave him insight and God makes reference here that this was the case.

Verse 26, ““When He made a law for the rain, and a path for the thunderbolt...”” Job understood that these were connected.

You can go through chapter 29. We get a little bit of insight into some of the power and prestige that Job had. He talks about the contrast between all that he had in chapter 29 and all that he had lost in chapter 30.

In Job 31, he describes how good he had been.

Job 31:1, “I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?” He said he just decided that he was not going to look and lust.

Verses 2-11, “For what is the allotment of God from above, and the inheritance of the Almighty from on high? Is it not destruction for the wicked, and disaster for the workers of iniquity? Does He not see my ways, and count all my steps? If I have walked with falsehood, or if my foot has hastened to deceit, let me be weighed in a just balance, that God may know my integrity. If my step has turned from the way, or my heart walked after my eyes, or if any spot adheres to my hands, then let me sow, and another eat; yes, let my harvest be rooted out. If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or if I have lurked at my neighbor’s door, then let my wife grind for another, and let others bow down over her. For that would be wickedness; yes, it would be iniquity worthy of judgment.”

He said this was a heinous crime; it was an iniquity. Job understood the law of God. He said he had not done anything.

Verse 33, “if I have covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom...” Job said, ‘I haven’t covered up my transgressions as Adam had.’

Verse 40, “...The words of Job are ended.” Finally, the words of Job are ended.

Job 32:1, “So these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.” See! This was the problem. Job was righteous in his own eyes.

Verse 2, “Then the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was aroused against Job; ...” Now, you can go back and find out who Ram was. We already know who Uz was. He was the brother of Buz. So, this was who Elihu was. Elihu hadn’t said anything. He evidently showed up later after the other fellows. He was a little younger than the rest of them and had just been sitting there listening.

Verse 2, continuing, he listened to all of this and, “...his wrath was aroused because he [Job] justified himself rather than God.”

Verse 3, “Also against his three friends his wrath was aroused, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job.” He was upset at the three friends because they had found no

answer and, yet, had condemned Job. They didn’t know why, but they were sure that it was all Job’s fault. Elihu had a “bone to pick” with both of them. He told them, ‘You don’t know what you are talking about. And as for you, Job, you’ve put a focus on how good you are and you really haven’t taken note of God. You don’t see yourself in proper relationship with God.’

Verse 8, he talks about the spirit in man.

Job 33:12-13, he goes through and says, “Look, in this you are not righteous. I will answer you, for God is greater than man. Why do you contend with Him? For He does not give an accounting of any of His words.” He said, ‘God doesn’t have to explain to us why He does what He does.’ God doesn’t always have to give us an explanation. There are “whys” we will never know until the resurrection. That’s just the way it is. That’s where a certain amount of trust and faith has to come in. Sometimes we understand; sometimes we don’t.

Job 34:12, he continues, “Surely God will never do wickedly, nor will the Almighty pervert justice.”

Job 35:1-6, Elihu said, “Moreover Elihu answered and said: ‘Do you think this is right? Do you say, “My righteousness is more than God’s”? For you say, “What advantage will it be to You? What profit shall I have, more than if I had sinned?” I will answer you, and your companions with you. Look to the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds which are higher than you. If you sin, what do you accomplish against Him? Or, if your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to Him?’” He said, ‘Look up there; God is up in heaven. All the things you do, you’re not going to harm God by it. You can’t get up there and cause Him a problem.’

Verses 7-8, “If you are righteous, what do you give Him? Or what does He receive from your hand? Your wickedness affects a man such as you, and your righteousness a son of man.” You’re not doing damage to God. You’re not helping God; you’re not hurting God. Elihu tells them God is not moved by the kind of motives that all of them are assigning to Him. God is neither hurt nor helped by what you are doing.

Job 36:3, he continues, “I will fetch my knowledge from afar; I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.”

Job 38:1-4, when Elihu finished, “Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: ‘Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. Where were you when I laid the foundation

of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding.”

Verses 6-7, “To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

God begins to talk to Job. He wanted Job to see the perspective of God’s greatness and man’s insignificance because the cure for self-righteousness is when we ultimately see ourselves in proper relationship with God. We see how great God is and our own comparative insignificance.

There’s an interesting poetic description given in Job 38. It’s written in a poetic fashion, but if you note what’s actually being said, the analogy being drawn is a very interesting one.

Verses 12-14, “Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place, that it might take hold of the ends of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it? It takes on form like clay under a seal, and stands out like a garment.” It’s talking about the morning dawning, the day coming forth and how, as the day spreads across the earth, the wicked are shaken out.

John 3:19, John tells us, “...men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” Most wickedness is going on at night.

You read in the paper about Baton Rouge being the murder capital. When you read the time of day that most of these things happen, more of them happen late at night or in the wee hours of the morning than happen in broad daylight. That’s just part of human nature. People like to do their wickedness late at night.

He says, “Have you commanded the morning since your days began?” Where does the morning come from? Then He talks of how the wicked are shaken out of the earth as the daylight spreads across it.

Verse 14 describes the earth as ‘taking on form like clay under a seal’ when the daylight comes. The analogy is that they had a cylinder seal—a carved stone or engraved metal seal. Generally, an engraved stone seal—a cylinder—is round. What happened is the seal was rolled across the clay and the seal spread from one end to the other as the seal rolled across. It is a poetic description of how the daylight came. The sun is like the seal and, in a sense, the earth is like the clay. It rolls around the seal and as it rolls around the seal, the inscription spreads from one end of the clay to the other. It comes gradually because we are on a round earth rotating around the sun. The daylight starts in one part and it spreads all

the way around. You have to think about it a little bit to picture what’s being said. Again, this is just a little insight in terms of an accurate description.

God talks about all that He had done and the greatness that He had accomplished. Job began to really see himself and to realize his self-righteousness. All that he had done, by comparison to God and God’s power and God’s greatness, Job was a lot further down the line than he had ever seen himself. Job had always felt there wasn’t quite as much difference between God’s righteousness and his own righteousness. Now he begins to see.

Job 42:1-6, “Then Job answered the Lord and said: ‘I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. You asked, “Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?” Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, “I will question you, and you shall answer Me.” I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.’” Job really came to see himself.

Job’s problem was not what the devil thought. The devil ascribed wrong motives to Job. The devil ascribed to Job selfish, self-centered motives. He said Job was just simply in it for what he could get, the same as everybody else. God said, ‘That is not why Job is here. Job doesn’t serve Me because of what he’s getting; Job serves Me because his loyalty, allegiance, devotion and love is centered on Me.’ The devil didn’t believe that, but that was right. Job was devoted to God.

But Job also had some lessons to learn. His problems weren’t what his friends thought. There was no great obvious sin. Job was not some “closet” sinner who was doing all sorts of wicked things that were being covered up, but Job did have a problem. God wanted Job to see himself and his own righteousness and to see that it was God’s righteousness that he needed. Job didn’t really see himself, but, now, he did see himself.

Verses 7-10, “And so it was, after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, that the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, ‘My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has. Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will

accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly; because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.’ So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the Lord commanded them; for the Lord had accepted Job. And the Lord restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.”

Now, I think a lot of times we read over that and we don’t consider the significance. God dealt with Job, but these events didn’t happen just as quickly as we are reading it. God dealt with Job, and Job really came to a deep personal realization of God and the realization of God’s power and his own powerlessness. But he didn’t instantly get all his camels and sheep back. He continued in the state that he was. Spiritually, he was much better. Physically, he was still in a mess.

A period of time went by. The friends had evidently left. God revealed to them that they had better go down where Job was. They thought Job had had it rough, but when He was through with them, they were going to be in worse shape than Job, so they had better get down there and get right with God.

I suspect they got in a pretty big hurry to get down there. They had to gather up the bullocks and sheep and come down to where Job was. They performed these sacrifices. God said for them to do this, and when Job prayed for them, He would remove their iniquity. Job prayed for his friends. Job had to be willing to forgive. He couldn’t nurse a grudge against these guys, ‘When I was down, you guys kicked me. You just added to my misery.’ Job could not hold resentment.

It’s interesting. When Job prayed for his friends, that’s when God lifted the cloud. I think there is a very important lesson of how important it is that we forgive. Resentment and bitterness are things which we can’t hold on to. Job could not afford to hold a grudge against his friends and he didn’t. That was the final test.

We read it and it’s easy. But I tell you what. If you’re in a situation where you’re down and going through a real trial that drags on a year or two, and the people you thought were your best friends—all they are doing is adding to your misery—then one of the things you’d probably not instantly feel like doing is praying for God to be merciful to them and really meaning it. It’s easy; we can read through this in an hour and a half Bible study, but Job lived through it for a period of time. I don’t know exactly how long

the book of Job covers, perhaps 18 months or so—but I tell you, it’s a long time.

At this point everything turned around for him. God blessed him.

Verse 12, “Now the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; . . .”

God doubled the things that He had given him (v. 10) and blessed him with more children (v. 13).

Verses 16-17, “After this Job lived one hundred forty years...So Job died, old and full of days.” He lived a long time after that period. God doubled everything, in terms of Job. This is speculation, but Job may have been 70 at the time this happened. We know God added 140 more years. In terms of wealth, God doubled and gave him twice as much as he had before. He replaced the children. It’s just a matter of speculation, but I think it’s very possible that he may have given him twice as many years ahead as he had behind. Regardless of that comparison, he certainly was old and full of days because he lived for another 140 years. If he had been just one year old, he’d still have been old and full of days. He was well on up in years.

Again, we would date it to the patriarchal period—perhaps contemporary with the end of Jacob’s life and the sons of Jacob. There is a lot of insight that we are given here in the book of Job. The book of Job has a lot of insight into God’s nature and character. It has insights with God’s dealings with man and our relationship with God. There are lessons that we should learn, even in our dealings with one another. There are lessons in our relationship with God. There is recognition of the importance of loyalty and devotion that Job expressed. There are a lot of expressions of faith.

Job 13:15, ““Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.””

Job 19:25, ““For I know that my Redeemer lives, . . .””

Job 14:14, ““If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my change comes.””

There are many very important expressions here in the book of Job. It is a very powerful and very important book. We have just had a chance to skim through it this evening. Hopefully, this can be a steppingstone to further deeper personal study.

Next Bible study we will start into the five Festival Scrolls—the first of which is the Song of Solomon.



Bible Study # 85  
February 25, 1992  
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Song of Solomon

This evening we **are continuing this series on the Writings, but we are getting into another part of the Writings—the Festival Scrolls.** Again, these are books that we don't tend to go through very frequently. I don't think the Song of Solomon tends to be one of the books that is most frequently heard or quoted from in sermons and Bible studies. Yet, it is a very important part of the Bible and there is a very important lesson that is to be learned from it.

We have covered the Psalms, Proverbs and Job in the traditional Jewish order. The next five books (the part of the Writings we are in now) are the books that are called the Megillot or the Festival Scrolls. This is because these five books were traditionally read at certain festival occasions.

The Song of Solomon was the first of these five: Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther. We will be going through each of those books in the next five Bible studies (counting this evening).

These books were traditionally read in the temple, and later in the synagogues, during the various festival seasons. Song of Solomon was traditionally read during the Days of Unleavened Bread—normally on the Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Ruth was traditionally read at Pentecost. Lamentations was read at a festival that was held in the summer in the fifth month of the sacred year—the month of Ab. It is a month that would normally correspond with our July/August (last of July/first of August). The ninth of Ab was the date. It was the commemoration of Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the temple. After the destruction of the temple, it became a national day of fasting that the Jews took upon themselves. It is sort of like Thanksgiving in reverse. It was a day of lament.

The ironic thing is that 600 plus years later, when Titus and the Romans destroyed the temple, they destroyed it on the anniversary of Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the temple. The two times the temple was destroyed, it was destroyed on the same day—the ninth of Ab. So, they had an additional reason to fast.

Even later history in 1492, the decree that expelled all of the Jews from Spain (which was a major center of Jewish settlement) was issued on

the ninth of Ab. It was just a matter of weeks before Columbus sailed to discover America. All their property was confiscated and they were expelled. So, this date has played a significant role in Jewish history. The book of Lamentations was read on that date.

Ecclesiastes was normally read on the Sabbath during the Feast of Tabernacles. And then Esther was read at Purim, which is a national holiday that commemorates the deliverance of the Jews from Persia. It is normally read in the 12<sup>th</sup> month of the sacred year, which would correspond with February/March. We're approaching Purim. It should be right around this time. I would have to check the calendar and do a little calculation to figure out exactly when.

The point is that these books were traditionally read on these occasions. When properly understood, each of these books explains significance to these occasions—significance that has very direct implication for us today. We are going to see that as we go through. I am not going to comment on the others any further this evening.

This evening we **are focusing on the Song of Solomon, which was traditionally read at the Days of Unleavened Bread.** At first thought, that may seem an odd book to read during the Days of Unleavened Bread. In fact, a lot of times people have had trouble understanding the significance of the Song of Solomon. Some of the Rabbis around the time of Christ and after, who were somewhat embarrassed by the plain language of Song of Solomon, decided it was an allegory—it was the story of God and Israel. Many of the early Catholic fathers were similarly embarrassed by the plainness of the book and finally decided it was an allegory about Christ and the Church. But the one thing they were all convinced of was that it certainly didn't mean what it said—they found this rather embarrassing and didn't see why something like that should be in the Bible.

If you understood it from the standpoint of the Days of Unleavened Bread, what is the purpose? What do the Days of Unleavened Bread teach us? We are reminded of the importance of putting sin out of our lives. The message of the Days of Unleavened Bread is not a totally negative message. It is not just a matter of getting rid of the leavening. It is not the seven days of not having bread at all; it is the seven days of unleavened bread. We make a replacement. We get rid of the leavening and we eat unleavened bread. So many times the emphasis on putting away sin can come across as

a negative matter. I think, particularly for the young people, sometimes it is a negative matter, and they feel that somehow they are missing out by putting away sin.

The story of the Song of Solomon provides the other part of the story. The reality is there is nothing that is worth having—nothing that is good or beneficial to us—that God commands us to put away.

This particular book describes and shows the joy that is available to a young couple who have remained chaste and saved themselves for one another for marriage. The joy that they are able to have is something that even Solomon, with all of his wealth and women, couldn't have. It is simply not available in a harem, and that's made plain in this book.

It is a beautiful story. It describes the trials of a beautiful peasant maiden from Shulam. One day as she was tending the family vineyard, she was seen by the servants of Solomon as they passed by; she was drafted to be a part of Solomon's harem. When the king beholds her, he falls violently in love with her and tries to woo her with blandishments and enticements. During all of this, she remains faithful to her shepherd lover and pines away for her absent fiancé.

Now, when the king is finally convinced of the constancy of her love for the shepherd, he dismisses her from his presence and allows her to return home with the shepherd. The story ends on a triumphant note, with her and the shepherd returning to her mother's house. She has proved that love is capable of heroic endurance.

Let me read a quote from the *Soncino Jewish Commentary*—a quote from the introduction to the Song of Solomon, “The tale she tells to their assembled friends makes a strong protest against the luxury and vice of the court and pays testimony to the beauty and dignity of pure love and fidelity.”

I will be going through the Song of Solomon in the *Jewish Publications Society* translation (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/jps/>), and utilizing the *Soncino Jewish Commentary*. There are many different ways that I have seen of presenting this book. Of all the ones that I have seen, the one that seems to respect the clear and plain meaning of the text the best is the one that is laid out here in the *Soncino*.

There are all sorts of allegorical interpretations and all sorts of things that come in, but this is ultimately a beautiful love story. There are lessons that we can learn, but I think one of the greatest and most important things is, as this book was read every year during the Days of

Unleavened Bread, people in general and young people in particular were reminded of the fact that there are benefits and blessings that are in store when you do it God's way.

Putting away sin doesn't mean missing out on all the fun. Putting away sin doesn't mean having this sort of miserable life where you never have any fun or never get to do anything. That's not where God's way leads. There are benefits and depths of happiness and joy that come from doing it God's way that can never be duplicated any other way—and that's an important lesson to learn for the Days of Unleavened Bread. Putting away sin is not God's punishment for us.

Song of Solomon 1:1, “The song of songs, which is Solomon's.” The term “song of songs” is a superlative. It means the best or the choicest of Solomon's songs. We are told in 1 Kings 4:32 that Solomon wrote 1,005 songs and this is the best that he wrote. This is the choicest of the songs. It is the epitome of the songs that Solomon wrote.

Many of the rabbis and early Catholic fathers were really perplexed in how this wound up in the Bible. They couldn't figure out why this should be a part of the Bible. Solomon wrote 1,005 songs, and this song is the only one that God picked out to be put into the Bible. So, it should tell us that there is something that is important here.

It starts out with the words of the young lady who is referred to as the Shulamite. What we have here are words that she is speaking to her absent shepherd lover.

You have to realize that different parts of the Bible are written in different ways. The way you read the book of Acts or the book of 1 Samuel is totally different than something such as the Song of Solomon, which was written in a poetic verse. In many ways, it was written to be performed with a chorus and with characters. It is not written as a prose account. It's not written in the detailed historical way as the book of Acts, for instance, or the books of Kings, Chronicles or Judges. It is written as a poem or as a song. It is written almost like a little play—a musical production that involves different ones singing their part. You have to sort of put yourself in that opening. It's as though the curtain opens and the Shulamite is standing there and she is singing.

Verses 2-4, “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—for your love is better than wine. Your ointments have a goodly fragrance; your name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the maidens love you. Draw me, we will run after you; the king has brought me into his

chambers; we will be glad and rejoice in you; we will find your love more fragrant than wine! Sincerely do they love you.”

As we go on through, this tells the story of what happened to her. The story that is set out is that she was tending the vineyard and had been conscripted by Solomon’s retinue. Solomon had various palaces and at certain times of the year, he moved from area to area. That was not uncommon in that area.

If you wanted to be cool in the summer, you didn’t turn on the air-conditioning. They didn’t have any. They had a summer palace, which was normally located up in the mountains at a higher elevation where the temperature was cooler. It was not uncommon that the court would move several times in a year. There would be this great panoply and parade and you could see the dust off in the distance. The horsemen and the chariots would come and Solomon would finally come in this big contraption in which he moved. Then would come this gigantic retinue that moved when the court was transferred from palace to palace. So, this is sort of the story.

She is standing here musing this and she is expressing this. This is after she has been taken. The king has brought her into his chambers. Perhaps this is being spoken as a soliloquy as she is sort of musing or speaking to herself. Most likely the ladies of the harem would be close by and hear this.

Verses 5-6, she makes the statement, “I am black [The word that is rendered “black” is a word that literally means “ruddy” or “sunburned.”], but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, that I am swarthy, that the sun has tanned me; my mother’s sons were incensed against me, they made me keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.”

In other words, she hasn’t pampered herself. She is comparing herself to the pampered ladies of Solomon’s court. She has been outdoors and is tanned. For some of them, all they did all day long was sit around and pamper themselves. They rubbed on various ointments, oils and all sorts of things. She, from an early age, had been helping on the farm by working out-of-doors. She is tan and ruddy from the sun. She is, in a sense, comparing herself to these pampered ladies of Solomon’s court.

Verse 7, “Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, where you feed, where you make your flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that veils herself beside the flocks of your companions?”

Note here that she is addressing her absent shepherd lover. She asks the question, ‘Where are you feeding your flock? Where do you make your flock to rest at noon?’ When she thinks in terms of meeting her fiancé, it is not sneaking off in the dark of night.

Even the commentary brings that out. It says: “Being modest, she says at noon—not like the wanton ladies of the court who seek their lovers at night because they are up to things they shouldn’t be.”

Verse 8, at this point there is a chorus from the women there in the court—the harem. They respond, “If you know not, O you fairest among women, go your way forth by the footsteps of the flock and feed your kids, beside the shepherds’ tents.”

At this point, Solomon comes in and begins to speak to her.

Verses 9-10, “I have compared you, O my love, to a steed in Pharaoh’s chariots. Your cheeks are comely as circlets, your neck with beads.”

You have to understand that some of the comparisons don’t always come down; some of it is cultural. If you were trying to woo some girl and you told her she looked like a horse, she probably wouldn’t take it as a compliment. ‘When I look at you I think of a horse,’ wouldn’t be something that you would necessarily want to tell your wife or your fiancé. She probably wouldn’t appreciate that. But this was a culture where, when they thought of horses, they thought of beauty and the graceful movements. It was not an insult or a put-down.

Verses 12-13, she responds, “While the king sat at his table, my spikenard sent forth its fragrance. My beloved is unto me as a bag of myrrh, that lies betwixt my breasts.”

Solomon is sitting there, and even while the king is sitting there and speaking, her thoughts wander to her shepherd lover, her fiancé. He’s described like a perfume bag that sends forth a smell that wafts out and you can follow it. She is not being attracted to, or won over, by Solomon in the same way. She is being drawn to the one to whom she pledged herself and desires to marry.

Solomon continues and tries to flatter her.

Verse 15, “Behold, you are fair, my love; behold, you are fair; your eyes are as doves.”

Ignoring Solomon’s flattery, she responds. She mentally addresses her absent lover.

Verses 16-17, she describes, “Behold, you are fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant; also our couch is leafy. The beams of our houses are cedars, and our panels are cypresses.”

Verses 16 and 17, her allusion is to the out-of-doors. Her mind hearkens back to the shepherd lover, the fiancé from whom she has been taken away. She thinks about the out-of-doors. Solomon has all these things to impress her and she says, “the beams of our houses are cedars and our panels are cypresses.” She’s thinking of the cedar trees under which they rest and shelter during the heat of the day. The word “houses” is plural and has certain significance. In other words, we have not one place but many in the forest glades.

Song of Solomon 2:1, “I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.” A rose of Sharon or a lily of the valley is a common wildflower. She is not comparing herself to one of the pampered hothouse plants of Solomon’s harem but to a common wildflower. She says, ‘I am just like a common wildflower.’

Verse 2, Solomon responds, “As a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.”

Verses 3-6, she continues, “As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. Under its shadow I delighted to sit, and its fruit was sweet to my taste. He has brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me is love. ‘Stay me with dainties, refresh me with apples; for I am lovesick.’ Let his left hand be under my head, and his right hand embrace me.”

We come to this refrain, which marks the end of the section.

Verse 7, “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles, and by the hinds of the field, that you awaken not, nor stir up love, until it please.” This is repeated as a chorus several times in the book. We will see that this ends a section.

We opened with this scene. She is here and begins to speak. The chorus answers her. Then Solomon, in his attempt to flatter, answers her. But her heart, her mind and her thoughts are going back to this absent shepherd lover, to the fiancé whom she loves. The first section concludes with the failure of the king and his court ladies to persuade the peasant girl to be disloyal to her lover.

Verse 8 begins a new section. The scene is no longer Jerusalem but a royal residence in the country. It is probably in the north of Palestine from which the lovers hail. Again, the speakers are the Shulamite and the daughters of Jerusalem.

This section is devoted to an account of how one spring morning her shepherd came and invited her to join him in the field. To prevent this

meeting, her brothers transferred her to work in the vineyard, from which she has then been taken by force to the royal court. She finds consolation in the certainty that her lover would seek her. His approach is traced until he reaches the wall of the building in which she is confined. Peering through the lattice window, he fails to see her and pleads for the sound of her voice. To reply, she sings to him selections of the vineyard song. In the next verse, she addresses him in rapturous language. Then fearing for his safety, she exhorts him to depart until the shadows flee away and they can meet again.

It opens up in verse 8 as she is anticipating the fact that he is coming to rescue her. The scene opens up as she anticipates his coming.

Verses 8-9, “Hark! my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young hart; behold, he stands behind our wall, he looks in through the windows, he peers through the lattice.”

Verse 10-12, “My beloved spoke, and said unto me: [Then it quotes what he said as he has finally come here and has found where she is; he has come and approached the section of the palace where the harem is located.] ‘Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard [That would more properly be, “the voice of the turtledove”—you don’t normally hear the voice of a turtle.] in our land...’” – “The time of singing is come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.”

Verses 13-14, “the fig-tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines in blossom give forth their fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. O my dove, that are in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff, let me see your countenance, let me hear your voice; for sweet is your voice, and your countenance is comely.”

Verses 15-17, then she responds, “Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vineyards; for our vineyards are in blossom.’ My beloved is mine, and I am his, that feeds among the lilies. Until the day breathe [breaks], and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be you like a gazelle or a young hart upon the mountain of spices.”

In other words, ‘Flee away until evening, until the day breaks and the shadows flee away. Go until sunset, until it gets dark.’ She is afraid he is going to get caught and get into trouble there.

Song of Solomon 3:1, “By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him,

but I found him not.” Disappointed at the nonappearance of her lover with the coming of night, her sleep is troubled. She has feverish dreams and finally decides to go in search for him.

Verses 2-4, “I will rise now, and go about the city, in the streets and in the broad ways, I will seek him whom my soul loves.’ I sought him, but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: ‘Saw you him whom my soul loves?’ Scarce had I passed from them, when I found him whom my soul loves: I held him, and would not let him go, until I brought him into my mother’s house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.”

Verse 5, we then, again, conclude this section with, “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles, and by the hinds of the field, that you awaken not, nor stir up love, until it please.” This refrain marks the end of the second section.

She describes her dream.

In chapter 3:1, her fiancé had not reappeared that evening and in her dreams, she was fitful and seeking to find him. Notice what she wanted to do when she found him. What she anticipated doing was bringing him into her mother’s house, bringing him home to her family. This was not something that involved her sneaking around away from her family. The evidence was that he was her acknowledged lover of whom her mother approved. The section ends with verse 5.

The third section begins in verse 6. This is Solomon’s appearance at Shulam. It is a graphic description of the arrival of the king and all the pomp and ceremony.

Verses 6-7, “Who is this that comes up out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant? Behold, it is the litter of Solomon; threescore mighty men are about it, of the mighty men of Israel.”

Solomon had this giant litter that he traveled with that was carried. It took 60 men that were all around it to carry it. It was like a coach that was carried on poles that you’ve perhaps seen pictures of. There were four poles coming out, two in front and two in the back, and 15 big, strong men on each pole carrying it. You can imagine what this thing was like. The litter of Solomon, 60 mighty men of the mighty men of Israel, is about it.

Verses 8-9, “They all handle the sword, and are expert in war; every man has his sword upon his thigh, because of dread in the night. King Solomon made himself a palanquin of the wood

of Lebanon.” This is a covered litter. It’s like a couch long enough for the rider to recline. It’s covered with a canopy and resting on pillars at four corners. It has curtains hung around to exclude the sun. It has a door, sometimes of latticework, on each side. He had this thing made of the wood of Lebanon.

Verse 10, “He made the pillars thereof of silver, the top thereof of gold, the seat of it of purple, the inside thereof being inlaid with love, from the daughters of Jerusalem.” It was sort of like a portable bedroom on which Solomon was transported around. Here comes this procession—Solomon is coming up from Jerusalem to Shulam.

Verse 11, “Go forth, O you daughters of Zion, and gaze upon King Solomon, even upon the crown wherewith his mother had crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of gladness of his heart.”

We have this descriptive inset in verses 6-11 of Solomon’s appearance at Shulam.

Song of Solomon 4 begins the statement of the shepherd, who is addressing his beloved after the arrival of this retinue.

Song of Solomon 4:1, “Behold, you are fair, my love; behold, you are fair; your eyes are as doves behind your veil; your hair is as a flock of goats, that trail down upon Mount Gilead.”

Again, you get the description of all the comparisons. We’re talking about rural, agricultural society and some of the comparisons don’t come down. They lose a little something in transitions to our urban society. If you tell your wife or your fiancé that she has hair like a goat, she may not necessarily know that it’s a compliment. The description is like a flock of goats that are coming down the mountain and their hair is glossy and sleek and the sun reflects from it. He describes all these various things.

Verses 2-12, “Your teeth are like a flock of ewes all shaped alike, which are come up from the washing; whereof all are paired, and none fails among them. Your lips are like a thread of scarlet, and your mouth is comely; your temples are like a pomegranate split open behind your veil. Your neck is like the tower of David built with turrets, whereon there hang a thousand shields, all the armour of the mighty men. Your two breasts are like two fawns that are twins of a gazelle, which feed among the lilies. Until the day breathe [breaks], and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense. You are all fair, my love; and there is no spot in you. Come with me from Lebanon, my bride, with me from Lebanon;

look from the top of Amana, from the top of Senir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards. You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride; you have ravished my heart with one of your eyes, with one bead of your necklace. How fair is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine! And the smell of your ointments than all manner of spices! Your lips, O my bride, drop honey—honey and milk are under your tongue; and the smell of your garments is like the smell of Lebanon. A garden shut up is my sister, my bride; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.”

This is an allusion to something. The beauty of his beloved conjures up in his ardor a garden splendid in color and fertility, but it is a garden secluded to all, except its lawful possessor. She's chaste and modest. Just as gardens are walled in to prevent the intrusion of strangers, he describes her as a garden shut up, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. She's not wide open to strangers, but she is chaste and modest.

Verse 15, “You are a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and flowing streams from Lebanon.”

Verse 16, she responds, “Awake, O north wind; and come, you south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his precious fruits.”

Song of Solomon 5:1, the shepherd responds, “I am come into my garden, my sister, my bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice, I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.” –An invitation to a wedding feast.

Verse 2 is a description of her dream; a day of excitement is followed by troubled dreams, “I sleep, but my heart wakes [In other words, she's dreaming and this is what she dreams.]; Hark! my beloved knocks: ‘Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, my locks with the drops of the night.’”

Verses 3-6, she responds, “I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them? My beloved put his hand by the hole of the door, and my heart was moved for him. I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with flowing myrrh, upon the handles of the bar. I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had turned away, and was gone.”

She goes to sleep and in her dream she sees the action that has passed. Solomon and his retinue

have arrived with all of the pomp and ceremony and all the commotion that has been caused.

In the meantime, the shepherd has come and has found her. They have some time there and he goes into this ardent reiteration of his love for her and of his desire to take her away as his wife. She desires that; she desires to come away with him. She calls upon the wind to blow them away together, but then he has to leave and she goes to bed. She wakes up and addresses him. She takes her time coming and opening the door. When she opens the door, he is gone.

Verses 6-7, in her dream, “I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had turned away, and was gone. My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. The watchmen that go about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my mantle from me.”

Verse 8, then she speaks, “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, what will you tell him? That I am lovesick.”

The daughters of Jerusalem, which is the chorus, respond.

Verse 9, “‘What is your beloved more than another beloved, O you fairest among women? What is your beloved more than another beloved, that you do so adjure us?’” They say, ‘What's so special about him?’

She responds in song to the daughters of Jerusalem as to what's so special.

Verses 10-16, she says, “‘My beloved is white and ruddy, pre-eminent above ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are curled, and black as a raven. His eyes are like doves beside the water-brooks; washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as banks of sweet herbs; his lips are as lilies, dropping with flowing myrrh. His hands are as rods of gold set with beryl; his body is as polished ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold; his aspect is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.’”

Song of Solomon 6:1, the daughters of Jerusalem respond, “‘Where is your beloved gone, O you fairest among women? Where has your beloved turned, that we may seek him with you?’”

She then responds. She is perhaps jealous of the interest that has been aroused in her beloved. She offers an evasive reply.

Verses 2-3, “‘My beloved is gone down to his garden, to the bed of spices, to feed in the

gardens, and to gather lilies. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine, that feeds among the lilies.”

The rest of the chapter seems to recount another futile attempt on the part of the infatuated Solomon to win her love for him. Of course, unfortunately for him, the wrong moment is chosen because she has just made another passionate declaration of her love to the shepherd—a love that is stronger than death. The king extols her physical beauty and endorses the words of the court ladies who had sung her charms.

Verses 4-6, Solomon opens up, “You are beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners. Turn away your eyes from me, for they have overcome me. Your hair is as a flock of goats, that trail down from Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of ewes, which are come up from the washing; whereof all are paired, and none fail among them.”

Verses 9-10, “My dove, my undefiled, is but one; she is the only one of her mother; she is the choice one of her that bore her. The daughters saw her, and called her happy; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her. Who is she that looks forth as the dawn, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners?”

She recalls what she was doing on the faithful day when she was so praised and made her attempt to run away. She begins to describe what had happened. She reminisces here.

She interrupts her royal suitor.

Verses 11-12, she says, “I went down into the garden of nuts, to look at the green plants of the valley, to see whether the vine budded, and the pomegranates were in flower. Before I was aware, my soul set me upon the chariots of my princely people.”

In effect, she says, ‘Have I been going out to meet the king and to lure him to myself? When I was tending the vines and seeing what nuts and fruits were ripe in my garden, I was taken and brought to the court. Let him release me now that I may return home.’

Nuts grow very plentifully in the northern part of Palestine, which was where Solomon had his summer palace. She said, ‘I was engaged in this task and before I was aware, the servants of the king carried me away. Before I realized it, I found myself here at the court.’

Song of Solomon 7:1, “Return, return, O Shulamite; Return, return, that we may look

upon you. What will you see in the Shulamite? As it were a dance of two companies.”

(You may have trouble following it because the numbering of the verses in the Jewish translation is one verse off from the NKJV.)

In Song of Solomon 7, Solomon responds. Realizing that his attempts have failed, he implores her not to flee from his presence but to allow his eyes to feast upon her beauty.

Verse 2, “How beautiful are your steps in sandals, O prince's daughter!” He goes on and describes her beauty.

Verse 6, he concludes, “...the king is held captive in the tresses thereof.”—Speaking of her hair.

Verse 7, “How fair and how pleasant are you, O love, for delights!” He finishes this statement.

What we have here is Solomon's final attempt to entice her and to keep her there.

Verse 11, the Shulamite begins to speak; she responds, “I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.”

She openly rejects the kings' wooing. None can separate her from her only beloved.

At this point, she addresses the shepherd who now reappears

Verse 12, “Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages.” She addresses him and urges their departure from the palace to their former meeting places in the fields. Thrilled at the thought of her impending homecoming, she envisages the familiar scene. She is eager to be home again. She implores him, ‘Let's hurry away.’

Verses 13-14, “Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see whether the vine has budded, whether the vine-blossom be opened, and the pomegranates be in flower; there will I give you my love. The mandrakes give forth fragrance, and at our doors are all manner of precious fruits, new and old, which I have laid up before you, O my beloved.”

Song of Solomon 8:1-3, it continues, “O that you were as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! When I should find you without, I would kiss you; yea, and none would despise me. I would lead you, and bring you into my mother's house, that you might instruct me; I would cause you to drink of spiced wine, of the juice of my pomegranate. His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me.”

Verse 4, then the section ends, “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem: Why should you awaken, or stir up love, until it please?” Again, there is this refrain that ends in chapter 8:4 that

marks the end of another section. The section ends here with verse 4.

In Song of Solomon 8:5, we have the concluding part. We now see her return. The villagers see the lovers approaching and their curiosity is whetted. Every familiar scene they pass brings back sweet memories of former meeting places.

Song of Solomon 8:5-7, “Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? Under the apple-tree I awaken you; there your mother was in travail with you; there was she in travail and brought you forth. Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave; the flashes thereof are flashes of fire, a very flame of the Lord. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, he would utterly be contemned.”

Now her brothers speak.

Verses 8-9, “We have a little sister, and she has no breasts; what shall we do for our sister in the day she shall be spoken for? If she be a wall, we will build upon her a turret of silver; and if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.”

This is the statement her brothers made. The last seven verses record her reminisces and triumphs. She reminds her brothers how unnecessary their fear had been for her chastity when beset by temptation.

At an early age, when she was young and not mature, they made the statement, “What shall we do for our sister in the day she shall be spoken for?”—At the time of her marriage.

“If she be a wall”—a wall is there to protect from intrusion or intruders and to keep out strangers. So, if she is figuratively a wall, if she remains a virgin, “we will build upon her a turret of silver.” They say, ‘We will give her many gifts. We will be very generous at the time of her wedding.’

“And if she be a door”—you know, a door revolves on its hinges. Somebody knocks and it’s opened. So, it’s a poetic contrast between one who remains chaste, as opposed to someone who was just wide open. The brothers’ statement had contrasted—if she is chaste we will provide well for her, but if she is a door (figuratively speaking, a loose woman), “we will enclose her with boards of cedar.” It is barricaded to prevent a door from being broken into.

She responds, reminding her brothers about their concern for her years earlier.

Verse 10, “I am a wall [She says, ‘I have retained my chastity and now I am grown and am

mature.'], and my breasts like the towers thereof; then was I in his eyes as one that found peace.”

Verses 11-13, the shepherd is speaking, “Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he gave over the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof brought in a thousand pieces of silver. My vineyard, which is mine, is before me; you, O Solomon, shall have the thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof, two hundred. You that dwell in the gardens, the companions hearken for your voice: ‘Cause me to hear it.’”

The shepherd makes a contrast between what Solomon has and what he has. He says, “Solomon had a vineyard in Baal-hamon.” Baal Hamon is a site near Jerusalem. It literally means “owner of a multitude.” It’s a description of Solomon’s harem. He is described as owner of a multitude. “You, O Solomon, shall have the thousand.” He says, ‘You keep your thousand because, “My vineyard, which is mine, is before me.”’ He is speaking of his bride. He says, ‘You, Solomon, you keep your thousand.’

Verse 14, then she says, “Make haste, my beloved, and be you like a gazelle or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.”—The conclusion of the story.

As we go through, we see a contrast. Solomon saw in this Shulamite girl something that he didn’t find in his harem. There was something special about her. Yes, there was. What he found was virtue and constancy. That’s so totally different than the flattering, flaunting attitude of the harem and all of the things that Solomon had gathered around him.

Solomon spent his life in a quest for happiness and fulfillment. For all that he gathered to himself, he really missed out on an awful lot. The only woman that he ever found, that came close to the ideal that his mother had taught him about in Proverbs 31, wouldn’t have him “on a bet.” She was faithful to someone else. She was looking to someone who really loved her and not someone who was simply infatuated for the moment.

We will go back through and hit the high points with some of the questions and bring out a few things. We noted that the title is a superlative. It describes her in 1:5-7 as being ruddy or sunburned because of the outdoor work of keeping the vineyard that her brothers had insisted she perform.

Her response to Solomon’s blandishments is recorded in 1:12-13. Even while the king sat at his table speaking, her thoughts were wandering to her shepherd fiancé. She compares herself in



2:1 to a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valley—a common wildflower. The seasonal setting of the book, according to verses 12-13, is springtime. It is the seasonal setting of the Days of Unleavened Bread. It describes it as a time when the flowers appear on the earth and the time of singing is come. The trees are budding out. It is the time that our attention is turned to new life, to new beginnings, to a fresh start. It is certainly the time that is the romantic time—the beauty and everything all around—springtime.

We saw the refrain—used in 2:7, 3:5 and 8:4—that marks the end of a section. It is used three different times in the book. It is like Act 1 and Act 2 is over; it represents a scene change.

In Song of Solomon 3:4, where did she desire to take her fiancé once the two of them were reunited? Well, she desired to take him back to her mother's house. It didn't involve some sort of clandestine thing, away from parental approval.

The last half of chapter 3 (beginning in verse 6) describes the coming of Solomon with his retinue to the royal residence in North Israel. It describes all the glory and grandeur of which Solomon makes his entrances and exits.

In chapter 4:8, the shepherd desires his bride to flee from Lebanon with him and to escape the clutches of Solomon and the royal harem.

We have already commented on verse 12. She describes herself as a shut-up garden, a spring sealed up. This was the reference that we find back at the end of the book. Her brothers made the comment of the allusion to a wall, a garden sealed up, referring to her. She was chaste. She had retained her chastity.

In chapter 5, we have the dream that she had as she wandered the streets looking for her fiancé and was unable to find him.

Song of Solomon 7:10, notice the NKJV where he says, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me." This is a reference to the relationship that is described and their faithfulness toward one another. The numbering of the verses in the Jewish translation is one verse off from the NKJV. The Jewish translation I am reading from is verse 11, but in the NKJV, it is verse 10 of chapter 7.

The story ends in chapter 8. We have already noted that her brothers had promised when she was a young girl that if she remained chaste and a virgin, they would help her and provide a large dowry. If she proved loose (in other words, a door opening to every passerby), they would deal with her sternly. She reminds them of their

promise, the dowry that they had promised and the fact that she had remained a virgin.

The comparison that we have drawn in 8:11-12 is that Solomon had his vineyard (his harem), which he shared with others. The shepherd ends on the note of stating that his wife is his alone, and he has something that even Solomon doesn't have.

Verses 12-13, "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me; thou, O Solomon, shall have the thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred. You that dwell in the gardens, the companions hearken for your voice: 'Cause me to hear it.'"

He is asking for her response. He declares his love, faithfulness and commitment to her.

Verse 14, her response—her "I do"—is to call him and to say, "Make haste, my beloved, and be you like to a gazelle or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices." The barriers are no longer there.

It ends up as a very beautiful story—a story of the joy that a young couple can have when they have saved themselves for marriage to one another. It is far, far superior to the pleasures of a dissolute Solomon. There was something that Solomon could never have or could never take part in because Solomon, by the choices he made, certainly cut himself off from the simple pleasures. Solomon had his harem, his thousand women. He had his wealth, greatness and his grandeur, but what he didn't have was one woman who loved him with all her heart and who was really faithful to him. Solomon never had a happy marriage. He had all the women that he could ever imagine, but the only one that he finally found was loved and committed to her fiancé.

In fact, there's an interesting allusion in the book of Ecclesiastes where Solomon makes reference, in Ecclesiastes 7:28, to not being able to find the woman that he was looking for among a thousand. The problem was that he was looking in the wrong places because the women that Solomon surrounded himself with—the women who were a part of his court and harem—were not the people that reflected the kind of virtue, constancy, love and depth of commitment that we find in the Shulamite girl in the Song of Solomon.

We have a story that is a story of love. It is a story of commitment and a story of heroic endurance during very trying circumstances. It is the story of an attempt to attract and to draw away someone. Yet, it was unsuccessful because

there was a depth of commitment that is described in very beautiful and poetic language.

The Song of Solomon is a song that celebrates the commitment and constancy of young love that is based on a moral foundation, on a foundation of God's law. God is not against young people. God is not against love; God designed love. God designed marriage. God designed our first parents. God created and established the institution of marriage. God designed the attraction that men and women should have and feel for one another. That's not something that sort of sneaked in or evolved. God designed that. I think one of the greatest of all physical blessings is the blessing of a happy marriage. Yet, sin so often mars the situation.

We have a beautiful story, a story that young people were to be reminded of every year. Every spring there was a reminder of the importance of constancy, commitment, of doing it God's way: waiting and saving themselves for the right time, resisting the blandishments, the allurements, and the enticements of the world, resisting all the glitter and glamour that was out there to attract and entice them. They say, 'There's something worth waiting for.' There *is* something worth waiting for.

It is a book, when put in the context of the Days of Unleavened Bread, which paints a very beautiful story—a very beautiful story that Solomon could only write and sing about. He could never experience it because of the situation in which he found himself. Solomon didn't follow his own advice. He gave terrific advice to his son in the book of Proverbs. Solomon was not one who really followed all of his own advice. The book of Ecclesiastes bears that out.

I think Song of Solomon is a very beautiful story, a beautiful poetic story that is brought out. It clearly shows that God is not against young people; He's not against love. God is very much for that.

There is a way of doing it that leads to happiness and there is a way that leads to sorrow. Even in the context of the Days of Unleavened Bread and the messages that are related to removing and getting rid of sin, we should be reminded of the fact that what God has in mind to replace sin is the joy of doing it His way. That is certainly something worth waiting for and worth desiring.

The next Bible study, we will be going through the book of Ruth. Each of these five Festival Scrolls is a book that is relatively short. They are poetic and very descriptive of some things that can be very helpful and very important for us to learn and to understand.

Bible Study # 86  
March 10, 1992  
Mr. John Ogwyn

### The Writings Series—Ruth

This evening we are **getting into the second of the five Festival Scrolls—the books we commented on last time.** Having gone through the Song of Solomon, this evening we are **getting into the book of Ruth.**

The book of Ruth is a part of what is called the Megillot or Festival Scrolls. Traditionally, the Jews read it at Pentecost. To briefly summarize, it is the story of a Gentile maiden that voluntarily forsook her own nation and her own gods and became a part of the commonwealth of Israel.

We will note, a little later, the way in which Ephesians 2 is very helpful as a New Testament parallel, explaining some of the spiritual implications of this book—its significance for Pentecost and for the Church. Through her marriage with Boaz, Ruth became an heir of the promises to Abraham. She was the ancestor of King David and, therefore, of the Messiah. The story of Ruth typifies the story of a Christian coming out of the world and offers parallels to the marriage of Christ to the Church.

In the actual account, it is a very beautiful, touching love story. According to tradition, Boaz was well advanced in years. In fact, some traditions say that he may have been upwards of about 80 years old. We will notice Ruth 3:10 as an indication of that. Boaz made reference to this.

Ruth 3:10, “Then he [Boaz] said, ‘Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich.’” The reference was that he was not young and evidently was well up in years. Undoubtedly, he was a widower by this time in his life. It’s interesting because there is a direct relationship in the life of Boaz with the period that covers a great deal of the period of Judges.

According to Matthew 1:5, Boaz’s mother was Rahab. Boaz’s life paralleled or covered many of the early periods of the book of Judges. Undoubtedly, he saw qualities in Ruth that must have reminded him of his mother Rahab and her example. You may note in Hebrew 11:31 that Rahab is listed in the men and women of faith.

Boaz fulfills, in this account in the book of Ruth, the role of a kinsman redeemer, which is certainly a type of the role of Jesus Christ.

Let me give you a bit of background. I am going to read portions of the *Soncino Jewish Commentary* on the book of Ruth. It gives some background that can be helpful and beneficial.

They make reference, “The book of Ruth is prescribed for reading as part of the liturgy on Pentecost, the festival commemorating the revelation on Mount Sinai. The connection between the book and the festival is two-fold. The festival, as its name Feast of Firstfruits indicates, is primarily a harvest festival, and the harvest figures prominently in the area. The revelation [that is, God’s revelation on Sinai] marked, as it were, the formal acceptance by Israel of that religion and law of life, which were later to prove so irresistibly attractive to the heathen damsel from Moab. The bearing of the story on the festival is the moral one, which teaches that the Torah, the Law of God, can only be acquired by those who tread the road of hardship.”

It’s sort of an interesting point that even the Jews get out of this.

They go on to make the comment, “Unbiased scholars are almost unanimous in agreeing upon the historical accuracy of the facts presented in the book. Who can doubt them or why would they have been invented? There would surely be little point in inventing a foreign ancestry for the greatest and most dearly loved king of Israel.”

The time setting in the book is during the period of the Judges. As I mentioned, Boaz was the son of Rahab. That is mentioned specifically in Matthew where we have the genealogy.

Matthew 1:5-6, we are told, “Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king.”

We take note here that we have several very long generations in this family that come down in much of the period of the Judges. We find that the period of the Judges was a very turbulent time—a time when, as you go through the book of Judges, it’s the bloodiest book in the entire Bible. The reason is summarized in the last verse of the book.

Judges 21:25, “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” In other words, people simply pursued their own selfish will, and the result was anarchy, confusion and every sort of problem and difficulty. It was a turbulent time, and God dealt with the people. There were punishments that were sent. This provides the setting, the background, of the book of Ruth.

Jewish tradition credits the authorship of the book of Ruth to Samuel. Samuel’s literary works

also include the books bearing his own name, as well as the book of Judges. It's not something that can be absolutely proven, but there's no reason to doubt it. That is the historic tradition that the Jews have maintained.

The commentary continues, and I think it's sort of an interesting summary in terms of their understanding. The commentary says, "What was the writer's aim and purpose in giving the book to the world? Jewish opinion declined to believe that his motive was that of mere entertainment. That's not why it was written. The books of the Torah are not in the habit of telling stories devoid of inner value. Yet the book contains no legal enactment, no decision on the questions of ritual or prohibition. What purpose then does it serve? Well, there are several things that they have gotten out of it. One is to teach us how great is the reward of those who perform deeds of kindness. The hallowing of the family is another distinct purpose in the Bible. The beautiful example, which this narrative provides of the elevating influence of domestic affection, entitled it, if nothing else did, to a place in the canon. Who can lay down the book after reading and not feel that still another of its objects is to set us upon the straight road from which we must not turn either to the right or to the left, lest we meet the fate that befell Elimelech...There's yet another purpose, a genealogical one, and on this point there's a general consensus of opinion, namely to trace the pedigree of David."

Another interesting comment that is brought out says, "It bears remarkable testimony to the meaning of the phrase 'religion and life.' It is in the words of a Gentile admirer, a monument to that ethical code, which could bring to perfection in the true Israelite, such heartfelt piety and self-sacrificing disposition as in a sense to attract and to be an example to others around."

Ruth 1:1-2, we find as we open, "Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion—Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there." Bethlehem is the ancestral home of King David and the birthplace of the Messiah.

"Ephrathites" is sometimes confused with "Ephraimites," and that is not the situation. The Ephrathites traced their descent from Ephrath,

the wife of Caleb, who is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 2:19. This is to sort of clarify. It was a subgroup of the Jewish nation.

The period of the Judges was a turbulent time. There were various plagues, difficulties and problems that were sent by God upon the nation as a form of correction.

Here we come to a situation where the response of Elimelech and his family was to simply leave and go to Moab. They continued there.

Verses 3-5, "Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years. Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband." Naomi was left with only her daughters-in-law.

Verse 6, she decided that she would return from Moab back to the land of Judah. Word had gotten back that the famine had broken in Judah and the situation had improved.

She did not wish to remain there in Moab. Consider the difficulty of being the only person trying to worship God in a completely pagan setting as the Moabites were. It was one thing as long as her husband and her two grown sons were alive, but now she was left with these two Moabite daughters-in-law. Naomi wanted to go back to her own people.

The daughters-in-law had outwardly conformed to the practiced religion of the household. When they married into the family, they took upon themselves to practice the religion of Judah, but now their husbands were dead, and Naomi felt that she wanted to be back with her own people. That was where she needed to be. She was going to go back and the daughters-in-law were going to go with her.

Verse 7, "...they went on the way to return to the land of Judah."

Verses 8-9, "And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, 'Go, return each to her mother's house. The Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband.' Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept."

She did not want to encourage them to leave Moab and come to Judah. She felt that they would be doing it sort of in the emotion of the moment after the recent death of their husbands and that a little while later they would regret it. By leaving Moab and going back to Bethlehem, they would sever the connection and the ties to

their own family. Because she recognized that this could create long-term problems, she encouraged them to go back, to return.

Verse 10, they both responded, "...‘Surely, we will return with you to your people.’"

Verses 11-13, "But Naomi said, 'Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn back, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons, would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me!'"

Naomi was telling them, 'Look, there's no way I can be of any benefit to you. I'm too old to remarry, and if I weren't and had a husband right now, it would be looking at years in the future before I could even possibly have grown sons. I have nothing to give you. I can't provide for you. You need a husband to take care of you and to provide for you. So, you need to go back to your family, to your people.'

Verses 14-15, "Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. And she said, 'Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; ...'" That is a very significant part of it. Orpah, at this point, went back to her people. When she went back to her people, she went back to her old culture. She went back to the old way of living. She went back into the world.

Verse 16, "But Ruth said: 'Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.'" There certainly is a lot of parallel here to the calling of the individual Christian.

Most of the world's churches do everything they can to entice you to come down and join. They tell you how easy it's going to be and all you have to do is give your hand to the preacher and you are going to be saved. They tell you it's so simple and you have to do it right now. They will use various techniques. Any of you who have had a background in the Baptist Church, like I did, can remember some of the altar calls. They would play "Just as I Am" and would keep playing and replaying it, trying to get somebody to come down.

Notice the total contrast here. Naomi was not trying to entice them. Rather, she said, 'There are going to be difficulties and adversities. You'd better count the cost. You're looking at a very serious matter.'

With Orpah, it was simply the emotion of the moment. She had an emotional attachment to her mother-in-law and was devastated by the recent death of her husband. Her first inclination was to go, but there was no depth to her commitment. With a little bit of encouragement to return, she did. In reality, she was not prepared to forsake her old way of life. It held out something of an attraction to her.

Ruth, on the other hand, wanted to go with Naomi, not because she expected Naomi to get her a husband, but because she desired to follow the way of life she had seen in the household of Naomi. She was attracted to God's ways, to God's law. She could see that there was something of substance there that she had never had. There was depth to her commitment.

The *Soncino Commentary* makes an interesting comment, "She [Orpah] is one, in a sad series, of those not far from the Kingdom of God who needed but a little more resolution at the critical moment, and for want of it, shut themselves out from the covenant and sank back to a world which they had half-renounced."

There is a lot of parallel if you think in terms of this book being read at Pentecost and in terms of what Pentecost symbolizes. There are many spiritual lessons that can be gleaned from this story. It is a story of events that transpired, but the events that transpired served to illustrate through the lives of different people different approaches, different attitudes and different results that people experience in their life as a result of what they did.

Verse 17, Ruth went on to say, "Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me."

Interestingly enough, Ruth's name in the Hebrew language is derived from a root word that means "friendship." Ruth certainly typifies, in her life and in her example, this matter of friendship.

Verse 18, "When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her." Once she realized her commitment was serious and there was depth to it, she didn't try to discourage her. It was not that she didn't want her to go. She didn't want her to make that trip, get down there, be dissatisfied and wind up as a misfit in Judah. There certainly could be difficulties in the circumstance.

Verse 19, “Now the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem. And it happened, when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was excited because of them; and the women said, ‘Is this Naomi?’”

Even though she had only been gone a little over ten years, those ten years had greatly aged her. She was hardly recognized by people when she came back.

Verse 20, “So she said to them, ‘Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara [“Naomi” means “sweetness” in Hebrew; “Mara” means “bitterness.”], for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.’”

Verse 21, “‘I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?’” Having left at an earlier time with her husband and her two sons, now she has returned alone, other than her daughter-in-law.

Verse 22, “So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. Now they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.”

The barley harvest began during the Days of Unleavened Bread. It began with the wave sheaf being cut during the Days of Unleavened Bread. The barley harvest continued for a period of 50 days—from the time of the wave sheaf offering being cut, up until what we call the Day of Pentecost, more commonly called the Feast of Firstfruits or the Feast of Weeks in the Old Testament.

Another connection that this book has to the Feast of Pentecost is that the events in it all occurred during the time of the firstfruit harvest. We understand and have focused before on the fact that God used the physical harvest in the land of Israel as a type of the spiritual harvest. God is engaged in a great spiritual harvest. He uses various examples and illustrations that draw comparisons to that. The physical harvest season of ancient Israel served to illustrate God’s plan. God’s Holy Days are organized around that plan. Pentecost, originally, was the day on which the covenant was made with Israel at Mount Sinai. It was the time that marked the conclusion of the barley harvest. It was an occasion that celebrated the harvest of the firstfruits.

God is in the process of calling firstfruits out of the world. There were two harvests in ancient Israel. One was the early harvest, the firstfruits harvest. The other was the great harvest in the fall, the primary harvest. God uses that as an

illustration of His plan of salvation. There is an early harvest, a calling of spiritual firstfruits, to be followed by the great spiritual ingathering ultimately typified by the Feast of Tabernacles, the festival that celebrated the great gathering in of the physical harvest.

Pentecost celebrates the calling of the spiritual firstfruits and also is the commemoration of the covenant that God made with Israel. Later, of course, it was on the Day of Pentecost in 31 A.D. that is recorded in Acts 2 that God began to make the New Covenant and the pouring out of His Spirit.

The most significant difference between the Old and the New Covenant is that under the Old Covenant, the law of God was written with the finger of God on tables of stone. We are told that the Spirit of God wrote the New Covenant on the tablets of our hearts and minds (Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrew 8:10). It is internalized. There is a great deal of illustration in this book that we can tie in with God’s calling of His people—the calling of a spiritual firstfruits, the calling of a Church.

Ruth had returned with Naomi. They were here in Bethlehem; it was the beginning of the barley harvest during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Interestingly, they came out of sin at the Days of Unleavened Bread. That was the timing. They left Moab and returned into the land of Israel. It’s sort of an interesting parallel. It is not a parallel that’s dwelt on here, but it’s an interesting parallel that they left that area behind and returned during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

I think there is another thing to note as we go through this. When you read the book of Judges, you read of all the turmoil, strife, warfare, bloodshed and all of the horrible sins that were being committed. It is important to realize that there were individuals who were quietly obeying God. Even in the midst of the worst turmoil, they were quietly going about their business. Naomi was, Ruth was, and Boaz clearly was a godly man. Even in the midst of problems, there are those with whom God is dealing. There are times when things are going better and times when things are going worse, but there are individuals who keep their eyes on God and continue to serve God. There are individuals who keep their eyes on man and their life has this sort of up and down to it because they are following people rather than following God.

That’s an important factor. If you were following people and were looking at some of the strife and problems going on (even the corruption in some of the judgeships that was going on

as you read in the book of Judges), there wouldn't be a whole lot to inspire confidence. The individuals who really were spiritually successful looked beyond human beings; they saw God. That's an important lesson for all of God's people.

Ruth 2:1-3, "And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech; his name was Boaz. So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, 'Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor.' And she said to her, 'Go, my daughter.' Then she left, and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech." She didn't go out and intentionally try to do that.

Verses 4-5, "Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, 'The Lord be with you!' And they answered him, 'The Lord bless you!' Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, 'Whose young woman is this?'" He saw this young woman out there with whom he was not acquainted. Evidently there was something about her bearing and the way that she conducted herself that impressed him, and he wanted to know who she was.

Verses 6-9, "So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, 'It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.'" So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house.' Then Boaz said to Ruth, 'You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn.'" "

Boaz was very impressed. He had undoubtedly heard of the situation of Naomi's return and this young lady who had returned from Moab with her—her young daughter-in-law who had been recently widowed. He had heard she had come back and had a commitment to serving the God of Israel.

Now, again, knowing Boaz's background, it must have had special significance to him. He must have thought back to his own mother and how she had forsaken her background, how she

had stepped out in faith to believe and trust the God of Israel and to cast her lot with the people of God and not with the people of Jericho. I am sure that the story had special significance to him when he heard it in terms of what it reminded him.

He wants to take special note of her and to look after her. He wants to make sure that she is provided for and he gives strict instructions. You notice that human nature is not a whole lot different now than it was then. He said, "Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you?"

Some think that sexual harassment has only been invented in the last few years. There have been problems with people saying and doing things out of line and inappropriate as long as there have been human beings on the earth. Boaz took note of that and figured, particularly as she was a foreigner, that some of the young men might be tempted to get "fresh" with her or to say things and display inappropriate conduct. He called them over and gave them a stern warning that they had better leave her alone and had better not do anything out of line. He told her that she would be safe there—no one would bother her.

We find that there were a number of qualities that Ruth evidenced in a remarkable way. She was a young woman of great loyalty and determination. She was a person of great humility and evidenced great respect. She evidences that in many ways. She evidences characteristics that we, as the firstfruit harvest of God, certainly need to evidence.

Verses 10-12, "Then she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said to him, 'Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?' And Boaz answered and said to her, 'It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.'" "

When we leave the world, when we turn our backs on the old way, when we turn our backs on the society that has molded and shaped us, when we turn our backs on the world and come into the Church, we are coming to take refuge under the wings of the God of Israel. The symbolism is: If you've ever seen chickens in a barnyard, you have seen how a mother hen will gather her little chicks under her wings as a means of

protection. If a chicken hawk is circling up in the sky, she will run around fluffing, trying to get the little chickens to come and gather up under her wings. She is protective and that's the means of extending protection. That's the picture that is given here.

As a man of God, Boaz took his responsibility seriously. Boaz was also a man of substance and property. He took seriously his responsibility to show kindness and to do good as the opportunity presented itself. Clearly, he was a man who lived his religion. There are people who claim a religion, but there's a difference between those who claim a religion and those who live their religion. There's a lot of difference between the two.

One of the things that I think also comes out in the book of Ruth is the fact that Ruth was attracted to the example that she saw. Ruth's exposure to the truth had been in the lives of individuals who were practicing it. That's an important part. We are to be lights to the world (Matthew 5:14-16) and to seek to set an example of someone who is putting into practice the things that we claim to believe.

Verses 13-16, "Then she said, 'Let me find favor in your sight, my lord; for you have comforted me, and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants.' Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, 'Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.' So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched grain to her, and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back. And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, 'Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. Also let some grain from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her.'"

Boaz had seen her working hard. The crews were diligent and they were trying to gather up everything. Boaz saw her working hard and, evidently, it appeared to him that she had to work awfully hard and was getting awfully little. You sort of get the idea that he was already beginning to "tumble." He was really deeply impressed with this young woman and desired to make things easier for her.

It's interesting, even in the context of gleaning, God's system is a matter of helping people, but it is a system of helping people to help themselves. God lays great emphasis on the fact that kindness and charity were to be shown by His people, but He did not produce a situation that would simply create a welfare mentality in ancient Israel. The

system that was established by God was a system that allowed people to be productive and to maintain their self-respect. It was to help others help themselves. Gleaning was available at the harvest. Those who were poor, widowed or fatherless were allowed to come in after the reapers and to pick up what was dropped. In fact, there were even specific instructions in the law that they were not to harvest the corners of their fields. In other words, they sort of made a circle on it. When the reapers went through they didn't harvest the corners. They left that out. They put themselves in a position to do that.

To show how the mentality of people has changed, I remember a number of years ago when I was a pastor in south Texas. Down in the Rio Grande Valley is an area that produces a great deal of the nation's fresh fruits, vegetables and citrus; a lot of your winter vegetable crop comes from the Rio Grande Valley. There were some farmers down there who switched over to mechanical harvesters. One of the characteristics of the mechanical harvester was there were things that were left behind because they tended to pick up what was uniform as they went through the fields.

Whether the individuals had read it in the Bible or not, I don't know—perhaps they had. There were a couple of the big farmers down there who let the word out that after the mechanical pickers had gone through, the local residents would be free to come in and get anything that remained. They allowed a certain amount of time—I forget how much time they allowed—then they would come back in and plow up the field. But there was a certain time period that they opened up the field. They announced that anybody was welcomed who wanted to come in and pick what was left after the harvest was completed. They got very, very few takers, and that is one of the most poverty-stricken areas of the country. It's sort of a sad commentary on human nature in a situation like that. Very, very few people actually availed themselves of going in and doing that.

That's unfortunate because God's way is to help the needy. God wants us to show kindness and mercy. That's an important part of God's character and nature. To be selfish, self-centered and greedy is certainly not characteristic of God. God's system of helping people was a system that allowed them to maintain some dignity. It was a system that allowed them to be productive, to maintain a healthy self-respect and to do something in a constructive manner. It's an unfortunate situation that these principles haven't been utilized.



Verse 19, “And her mother-in-law said to her, ‘Where have you gleaned today? And where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you.’ So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, ‘The man’s name with whom I worked today is Boaz.’”

When she saw the quantity of grain brought back, Naomi realized that somebody had given some special favor to Ruth because there was no way that she would have normally, in just one day’s gleaning, brought back this amount of barley. That wouldn’t have been very likely, so Naomi was impressed with that and wanted to know where she had gleaned. Ruth told her it was Boaz.

Verses 20-23, “Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, ‘Blessed be he of the Lord, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!’ And Naomi said to her, ‘The man is a relative of ours, one of our near kinsmen.’ Then Ruth the Moabitess said, ‘He also said to me, “You shall stay close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.”’ And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, ‘It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, and that people do not meet you in any other field.’ So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz, to glean until the end of barley harvest and wheat harvest; and she dwelt with her mother-in-law.”

The barley harvest started first. That began during the Days of Unleavened Bread and continued on along. The wheat harvest came in during that seven-week period between the wave sheaf and Pentecost. The barley harvest took several weeks and then the wheat harvest began. Wheat comes in a little later than barley, so it was a very short difference. We are looking at a seven-week period, the period between the wave sheaf and Pentecost.

Naomi took note of the fact that God had smiled on her. She had come back very discouraged. She was feeling like God had somehow deserted her because she has had all these problems. This can be a typical human reaction when we encounter a number of problems or things go wrong for us, as it had for Naomi. She had lost her husband and her two children. She had started out at an earlier time as the wife of a relatively prosperous man and wound up pretty well destitute, returning back to family property. She was on up in years and her health was such that she was really concerned as to how she would even be able to provide for herself.

One of the things that we see is that first appearances aren’t always the reality. Sometimes

we look at things and we think, ‘Well, where’s God? Has God forgotten?’ God hasn’t forgotten! God was working out a great plan and a great purpose. How many times must Naomi have asked the question, ‘Why? Why Lord?’ Well, things began to sort of look up about this time.

Ruth 3:1-3, “Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, ‘My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, is he not our kinsman? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.’”

Naomi was playing a little bit of the matchmaker here. She had observed the way things had gone along and evidently knew that Boaz had taken more than just a casual interest in Ruth. She knew that Ruth certainly had a great affection, fondness and deep respect for Boaz. She decided that maybe she was going to have to step in on the matter.

We will note a little later the responsibilities of the kinsman redeemer. In Scripture, the kinsman redeemer had several responsibilities. One was that he was responsible for taking care of the widow and orphan children of his kinsman. If he was single, he would marry the widow and the child would inherit the father’s land and property. If a relative fell on hard times and had to sell the family property or was sold into slavery for debt, the kinsman redeemer was responsible to redeem that individual—to buy him back. He was responsible to prosecute crimes that involved his near kinsman. It was a responsibility that in many ways typified the role of Jesus Christ.

Naomi had already figured out that Ruth was attracted to Boaz and that Boaz was very much impressed with and attracted to Ruth, but she decided he was never going to propose because there was too much age difference. He was going to be self-conscious about that and figure that she’s better off with somebody young, so he wasn’t going to do it. Since her line of thought was that she didn’t think Ruth could find a better husband than Boaz, she needed to play matchmaker.

They were winnowing barley that evening at the threshing floor. Winnowing was separating the grain from the chaff. Normally, a threshing floor would be up on a hilltop where there would normally be a good breeze. They also used winnowing fans. After the grains had been

threshed, it was beaten to separate it, but the chaff and the grain were all intermingled. They would throw it up in the air and the breeze would blow from the winnowing fan. The chaff was light and it would blow away; the grain would settle back down. We do that in a much more sophisticated mechanized way today with some of the big harvesting equipment. It was much more of a slow tedious operation at this particular time.

She told Ruth to clean up and to go down to the threshing floor.

Verse 4, “Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do.” Ruth trusted Naomi. She knew that Naomi would not get her into trouble.

Verse 5, “And she said to her, ‘All that you say to me I will do.’” She told her that she would do it.

Verses 6-8, “So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her. And after Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down. Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet.”

You can imagine! This must have been quite a shock. All of a sudden, he wakes up in the middle of the night, he looks, and here’s a woman down at his feet. Now that would be a rather startling thing.

Verse 9, “And he said, ‘Who are you?’ So she answered, ‘I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing [KJV, “spread therefore your skirt over your handmaid”], for you are a near kinsman.” To spread the skirt or the garment was an outward symbol of taking her under his protection. In effect, Ruth proposed to him; that is what it amounts to. It doesn’t say it was leap year, but she nevertheless proposed to him. Naomi had told her to do that.

Verse 10, Boaz’s response was, “Then he said, ‘Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich.’”

He was impressed with her. After getting to know her, he felt that she certainly would have no trouble attracting a husband. He was deeply impressed with the kind of young woman that she was. He was deeply touched by the fact that

she would desire to marry him. He had felt that was something that was not, let’s say, practical. It was not an issue that he would have pushed because he felt like, perhaps, it would have been unfair to put her on the spot. One of the things we see, just in that example, is that real love is self-sacrificing. It is not selfish. If Boaz had been a selfish individual—if his relationship and attachment to Ruth had been one of selfishness and lust—then he certainly would have taken the initiative. But rather, though he did love her, he was not selfish. He was selfless and did not try to push the claim.

Verses 11-13, he told her, “And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you a virtuous woman. Now it is true that I am your near kinsman; however, there is a kinsman nearer than I. Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be that if he will perform the duty of a near kinsman for you—good; let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you, as the Lord lives! Lie down until morning.”

He was prepared to put it in God’s hands. He knew that this other individual had first right to the property and to exercise the responsibilities of a near kinsman.

Verse 14, “So she lay at his feet until morning, and she arose before one could recognize another. Then he said, ‘Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.’” He didn’t want anything that would cast any shadow on her reputation. Again, that is indicative of someone who really loves, cares and respects someone and would not wish anything to tarnish that person’s reputation. Boaz was certainly concerned about Ruth in that way.

Verses 15-18, “Also he said, ‘Bring the shawl that is on you and hold it.’ And when she held it, he measured six ephahs of barley, and laid it on her. Then she went into the city. So when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, ‘Is that you, my daughter?’ Then she told her all that the man had done for her. And she said, ‘These six ephahs of barley he gave me; for he said to me, “Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.”’ Then she said, ‘Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day.’”

Naomi knew that Boaz was not going to procrastinate on this. She knew he was going to go immediately because she had already figured the attachment that was there.

Ruth 4:1, “Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the near kinsman of whom Boaz had spoken came by. So Boaz said, ‘Come aside, friend, sit down here.’ So he came aside and sat down.” You might note that this other near kinsman is not named. His name was actually blotted out of the genealogy. So, he goes down in history as old “what’s-his-name,” KJV, “such a one,” NKJV margin, “so and so.” His name was blotted out because of his selfishness. Boaz probably knew the character of the man. There would be legal requirements to be fulfilled and there was going to be property obtained in this process as well.

Verses 2-4, “And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, ‘Sit down here.’ So they sat down. Then he said to the near kinsman, ‘Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, sold the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. And I thought to inform you, saying, ‘Buy it back in the presence of the inhabitants and the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am next after you [Boaz his eyes lit up at that; he figured he was going to get a nice piece of land really cheap.]’” And he said, ‘I will redeem it.’”

Verse 5, “Then Boaz said, ‘On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy it from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead on his inheritance.’” Now that kind of cast a different light on it. On learning that the transaction would include marriage with Ruth and its attendant responsibilities, he withdrew. The property would not be in the kinsman’s name. It would be in the name of the widow whom he was to marry, and if that was going to entangle the property, well, that was a little different story. He wasn’t sure he wanted to do that.

Verse 6, the kinsman says, on second thought, that he could not redeem it for himself lest he ruin his own inheritance. ‘You go ahead; I can’t redeem it.’

Verse 7, “Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging, to confirm anything: one man took off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was an attestation in Israel.” That was the legal insignia of a formal indication of contract.

Verses 8-13, “Therefore the near kinsman said to Boaz, ‘Buy it for yourself.’ So he took off his sandal. And Boaz said to the elders and to all the people, ‘You are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech’s and all that was

Chilion’s and Mahlon’s, from the hand of Naomi. Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to raise up the name of the dead on his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from the gate of his place. You are witnesses this day.’ And all the people who were at the gate, and the elders, said, ‘We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the Lord will give you from this young woman.’ So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son.”

One other factor: Ruth had been married for ten years and had not had any children. The indication is that God performed a miracle in allowing her to conceive and bear a child; God stepped in and gave her a child.

Verses 14-17, “Then the women said to Naomi, ‘Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a near kinsman; and may his name be famous in Israel! And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him.’ Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him. Also the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, ‘There is a son born to Naomi.’ And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.”

Then it goes into the genealogy of Perez, one of the sons of Judah.

Verses 18-22, “Now this is the genealogy of Perez: Perez begot Hezron; Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab; Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon; Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed; Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.” The book culminates with the birth of King David, the royal line through whom the Messiah ultimately would come.

Let me go back to Ephesians because I would like to call your attention to it.

Ephesians 2:1, “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins...” That’s all of us.

Verses 2-5, “in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,

among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ...

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

Now, this is certainly a description of Ruth. Though the Moabites were descendants of Lot (who was Abraham's nephew) and they were a kindred people, they were outside God's covenant relationship. They were Gentiles. A Gentile includes all ethnic groups except the descendants of Jacob. Every other ethnic group is lumped together as Gentiles. It just means those who are not descendants of Jacob. This was Ruth's situation.

Here is the parallel that is brought out. It certainly applies to us, in terms of our calling into God's Church, whether or not we are of the physical descendants of Israel (Jacob). The New Covenant is with spiritual Israel. So, regardless of whether we are physically Gentile or Israelite, unless we become a part of spiritual Israel, we have no inheritance in the Kingdom of God. The new birth that Jesus Christ spoke of in John 3 is one that does not have its origin in the flesh. It's not those who are born of the flesh or of the will of the flesh. It's not those whose birth is from below that are entitled to inherit the Kingdom of God. If the only claim we have is our earthly physical birth (our birth from below), it won't do us any good because the only birth that will enable us to inherit the Kingdom of God is a birth from above—a birth that is not generated by the will of flesh and blood but is generated by God Himself.

Verses 12-14, "that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us..."

Verses 19-20, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone..."

In Ephesians, it's talking about the Church—the relationship that we have and the opportunity that we have as God's people.

The book of Ruth is an account of a physical story that certainly illustrates a number of spiritual principles. We can, in that way, compare Ruth to the individual Christian who forsakes the world and follows after the way of God. Ultimately, of course, the Church is to marry Christ. Ruth married Boaz who was a prince of Israel of the line through which the Messiah would come. He was of that royal line of Judah through whom the Messiah would come. Ruth received an inheritance through marriage. In that sense, we are told that the Church will marry Jesus Christ. Our relationship is a relationship through marriage, if you will. There's a very distinct spiritual parallel to the book.

It is certainly a very beautiful love story and is a story of true love. It is a story that illustrates their loyalty and commitment. It is a story of the selflessness and the willingness to put the other person and the interest of the other person first.

There are many lessons that can be gleaned out of the book of Ruth. It is, on the surface, a very beautiful love story and that certainly is an important thing. God is the Author of the relationship between a man and a woman. God is the Author of the family. God is the Author of the love relationship. That's something that animals don't have. Animals reproduce—they mate—but there is not a commitment and a loving relationship. You don't see that with cattle, horses, dogs or cats. God designed that for human beings, and certain books of the Bible illustrate what a beautiful thing it is when it is done right.

This is a book that certainly illustrates the loyalty, commitment and selflessness that is a part of true love. It certainly illustrates the importance of taking care of our responsibilities—of being kind, considerate and willing to help, give and share.

It also teaches spiritual lessons and parallels with the relationship of the Church and Christ that can be applied to the spiritual meaning of Pentecost. There's an awful lot in the little short book of Ruth, which is a book that is not all that

frequently quoted and gone to. But there is a tremendous amount that is packed in there.

The next Bible study, we will be covering the book of Lamentations. Again, it is one of those smaller books that we tend not to go to very often. Yet, again, I think we will see that there is an awful lot that God has inspired to be packed in there for our benefit—that can be there for our growth and our edification.



Bible Study # 87  
March 24, 1992  
Mr. John Ogwyn

### The Writings Series—Lamentations

This evening we **are covering Lamentations, the third of the five books of the Megillot or the Festival Scrolls.** Again, it seems that it is not frequently gone through. Yet, there is quite a bit of information in it, as I think we will take note of this evening.

The book of Lamentations is traditionally read by the Jews on the Fast of Ab. Ab is the fifth month of the sacred calendar. It comes in the summer and corresponds with our latter July/early August. The Jews have observed the ninth day of the fifth month for over 2,500 years as a national day of fasting.

According to Jewish tradition, there are five calamitous events corresponding to the five chapters of the book of Lamentations, which happened on the ninth day of the fifth month. According to tradition, there are five things that occurred.

One was the return of the 12 spies and the decree of 40 years of wandering in consequence of the rebellion of the people. That event is not dated specifically in the book of Numbers, but Jewish tradition holds that it was on the ninth day of the fifth month.

It is clearly dated from Scripture that the destruction of the first temple by Nebuchadnezzar took place on the ninth day of the fifth month. That is the second of the five calamitous events.

The third is the destruction of the second temple by the Romans in 70 A.D. Incredibly enough, both Herod's temple and Solomon's temple were destroyed on the same day, the ninth day of the fifth month, over 600 years apart in time. The Romans destroyed Herod's temple on the anniversary of the destruction of Solomon's temple.

The fourth event that the Jews take note of was the taking of Bether (a Jewish holdout, a community) by the Romans under Hadrian when 580,000 were slain. This is a Roman destruction a number of years after the destruction of the temple.

Then what is called the fifth event is the plowing of Zion like a plowed field in fulfillment of Jeremiah 26:18 and Micah 3:12. Again, the Romans did this at a later time, trying to ensure that no vestige of Jewish settlement in the Jewish

community remained. There is a prophecy in Jeremiah 26.

Jeremiah 26:18, “Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spoke to all the people of Judah, saying, “Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest.’”” This is also mentioned in the book of Micah. Micah is quoted here in Jeremiah.

Micah 3:12, the original statement was, “‘Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest.’” This is destruction of Jerusalem that the Romans brought about at a later time.

Jewish tradition focuses in on those five calamitous events that certainly focus in on problems that they were having. They read significance into the fact of the five chapters of the book of Lamentations.

The five chapters of Lamentations form what would be called a “modified acrostic.” If you remember, an acrostic is a type of poetry in the Hebrew language where each verse, or set of verses, begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet in alphabetical order. The best example of that and the easiest to follow is Psalm 119.

If you look at Psalm 119 in your Bible, you will notice that before the first set of verses there is a funny little mark; beside the mark it says “Aleph.” Then you come down and you have “Beth,” “Gimel,” “Daleth,” “He,” “Waw,” “Zayin,” “Heth.” It comes down through the Hebrew alphabet with eight verses that are assigned to each of the alphabets in the Hebrew language. The first eight verses begin with “A”; the second eight verses begin with “B,” coming down through Psalm 119. It's easy to follow because, normally, even our English Bibles have it broken with the insignias of the Hebrew alphabet. That's what is called a “perfect acrostic” because every letter of the alphabet is used. All 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet are used in order and nothing is out of place.

The book of Lamentations is what is called a “modified acrostic” because it uses that general format, but it is not perfectly developed as in Psalm 119. The first couple of chapters of Lamentations consist of 22 verses and each of those verses is arranged in acrostic fashion. Chapter 3 consists of 66 verses (3 x 22), which are arranged in a triad of verses for each letter of

the Hebrew alphabet. In chapter 3, the first three verses begin with “A”; the second three verses begin with “B,” and it comes down that way. Chapter 4 goes back to the 22 verses—again, in an acrostic. Chapter 5 of Lamentations consists of 22 verses, but each verse does not begin with a different letter of the alphabet. It has the same number of verses but does not follow that same alphabetical arrangement. The book of Lamentations is a modified acrostic. Anything of that sort has a certain mark of completion or perfection. The book of Lamentations, while on the one hand, shows the evidence of complete and total destruction, yet, because the focus is on destruction, there is not the complete perfection that we find in Psalm 119, which is in praise of God’s perfect law.

Now, we know about the book of Lamentations and we know who wrote it. We are told very specifically in 2 Chronicles 35.

2 Chronicles 35:1, “Now Josiah kept a Passover to the Lord in Jerusalem, . . .”

Verses 18-19, “There had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of Samuel the prophet; and none of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as Josiah kept, with the priests and the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah this Passover was kept.”

Verse 20, then we are told, “After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by the Euphrates; and Josiah went out against him.”

Verse 23, “And the archers shot King Josiah; and the king said to his servants, ‘Take me away, for I am severely wounded.’”

Verses 24-25, we are told, “. . . So he died, and was buried in one of the tombs of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. Jeremiah also lamented for Josiah. And to this day all the singing men and the singing women speak of Josiah in their lamentations. They made it a custom [KJV, “ordinance”] in Israel; and indeed they are written in the Laments [KJV, “Lamentations”].”

We are told that Jeremiah lamented for Josiah, and this was something that was sung all the way down to the time when Chronicles was written—to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. It had been made an ordinance, or a law, in Israel and was written in the Lamentations.

Where do we find the Lamentations? Well, when you turn to the book of Lamentations, the full title (KJV) of it is, “The Lamentations of

Jeremiah.” We have the setting here in the book of Chronicles.

2 Chronicles 34:1-3, you remember the story, “Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images.”

Verse 14, “Now when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the Lord, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the Lord given by Moses.”

Verse 16, “So Shaphan carried the book to the king, . . .”

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

Verse 24, God’s response to Josiah is, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah. . . .’”

Verses 27-28, “‘because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you,’ says the Lord. ‘Surely I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place and its inhabitants.’”

At the time of Josiah, there was a great reform movement in Judah. It was the last of the great reforms. Josiah grew up under the tutelage of Hilkiah the priest.

Jeremiah 1:1, you read, “The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests. . .” Jeremiah’s father was Hilkiah, the same Hilkiah the priest that brought up Josiah (2 Chronicles 34:9; 2 Kings 22:1-8). There was a close personal connection. Jeremiah and Josiah basically grew up together. They were very close in age. Josiah was perhaps two or three years older than Jeremiah. They grew up together under the tutelage and the guidance of Jeremiah’s father who was God’s priest in those days. When Josiah came of age (at age 20), he began to assume full authority of his kingship. There had



been a council of regency prior to that time. Josiah began a reform movement that was the most zealous reform period that Judah had ever experienced.

The temple had fallen into disrepair to the point that the Book of the Law had been lost. It had been years and years since anybody had read the Bible. As the temple was cleaned, the Book of the Law was found where it had been hidden. It had been hidden away to protect it at an earlier time during the period of idolatrous kings; it had been lost. When they came in and thoroughly cleansed the temple, the Book of the Law was rediscovered and it was read to Josiah. It was read, and this would specifically refer to the blessings and curses found in the book of Deuteronomy. Josiah knew that they were “off track,” but he hadn’t realized how badly. When all the curses of the books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus were read, then they realized the dire straits they were in. God had mercy and He said, ‘As long as Josiah lives I will not bring these curses on the nation. But once he is dead all these things are going to happen because the nation has forsaken Me.’

Well, when Josiah died, it was more than just the lament for a righteous king. There was the realization that the only thing that stood between the nation and total destruction and calamity was King Josiah. The prophecy had been made years before that once Josiah was dead, all of these things would come about.

In the aftermath of the death of Josiah, Jeremiah wrote this lament. It was written in poetic fashion. It was written to be sung and is chanted in the synagogues, sort of like a funeral dirge. It was a prophecy of the destruction that was going to come upon the nation.

The destruction that came upon Jerusalem in the time of Nebuchadnezzar is the original fulfillment of this book. The destruction that came upon Jerusalem at the time of Nebuchadnezzar was a type of the even more total destruction that came upon Jerusalem in 70 A.D. at the hands of the Romans. Jesus spoke of that destruction in Matthew 24, Luke 21 and Mark 13. Jesus spoke of that destruction and prophesied of it, but He made it very clear, in Matthew 24 and the other accounts, that the destruction that was going to come upon Jerusalem was, in itself, merely a type of the Great Tribulation that was going to come upon Israel. The Great Tribulation that was going to come is the time of Jacob’s trouble (Jeremiah 30:7). It was going to come at the end of the age, setting the stage for His return.

It has implications for us. The events that are described in the book of Lamentations have had literal fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and the Romans. But when you put it together with Matthew 24, the book of Lamentations looks way down to the time yet future. It is, in reality, a prophecy of the Great Tribulation. It is a prophecy of the events that are going to occur to this nation in just a matter of a few years. The destruction that came upon Jerusalem was a type; Jerusalem is used over and over as a type to prophetically represent the entire nation of Israel. Jerusalem was the only capital that all the 12 tribes had and acknowledged. Jerusalem ultimately will be the capital of all 12 tribes in Tomorrow’s World. The things that happened to Jerusalem were a type.

Matthew 24 makes it plain if you look at what Jesus responded to.

Matthew 24:3, “...the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?’”

The question that the disciples specifically asked in Matthew 24 was, ‘What is going to herald the coming of the Messiah in power and glory? What is going to herald the end of this age?’ Jesus then began to answer and speak the words of Matthew 24 predicated on that question—the question of what events would herald His return. What events would herald the end of this age? Of course, the events that occurred to Jerusalem at the hand of the Romans were merely a type and were representative of the kinds of things that will come about.

Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book X, Chapter 5, verse 1 tells us, specifically, that Jeremiah composed the book of Lamentations upon the death of Josiah, the last righteous king of Judah. When the premature death of Josiah came, it was not only for this beloved king that lamentation was made but also for the calamities that had been prophesied to befall the nation after his death.

The prophecies of Lamentations look forward to the Great Tribulation, of which earlier calamities on the Jews were merely a type of what ultimately will happen to all of Israel. All of Israel ultimately will lament their sins and will be able to reap God’s mercy, His forgiveness and His restoration. The book of Lamentations in the Hebrew Bible is entitled “Qiyah,” which literally means, “How?” That is the first word of the book.

Lamentations 1:1, KJV, “How does the city sit solitary, that was full of people! How is she become as a widow! She that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary [a slave]!”

The book of Lamentations opens with the question, “How?” That is the name by which the Jews have customarily called it.

As we open, it clearly sets the stage that is descriptive of what happened to Jerusalem, but it is also descriptive of what is going to be the state of our nation in just a matter of years. It’s hard for us to realize as we look around at the seeming peace and security. We look around at the level of material prosperity we have, and it’s hard for the reality to really “come home” to us that we are living on borrowed time in this country. The events that are described in the pages of this Book (the Bible) are going to occur. Then it’s going to be, ‘How? How has all this happened?’

Verse 1, “...who was great among the nations! The princess among the provinces has become a slave!” The nation that was at the top, how has it become the bottom? Of course, the answer to that “How?” is exactly what’s described here.

We have lost sight of the fact that the blessings that we have and experience are the results of God’s blessing and benefit. The blessings that God has given our people are because of the obedience of Abraham and the promises that God made to him.

When you go back and read the prophecies of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, it is very apparent that we are living in those days and some of those very things are coming about. It was brought out that we would go from being the lender to becoming the borrower (Deuteronomy 28:44). We have experienced, in just a few years, being the world’s greatest creditor nation to now becoming the world’s greatest debtor nation. We find ourselves increasingly in trouble and increasingly sick. The prophecies bring out that we are sick from the head to the foot (Isaiah 1:5-6). We are sick from the top to the bottom, and it’s not something that just getting a new congress or a new president is going to solve because our problems ultimately are spiritual problems. They are problems of a lack of morality and a lack of the things that are necessary.

So, how has she become a slave?

Verse 2, “She weeps bitterly in the night, her tears are on her cheeks; among all her lovers she has none to comfort her. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they have become

her enemies.” That is what we are going to find. Those nations that we think we have bought—our friends, our great allies, Germany and Japan, the nations of Europe, Russia—“All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they have become her enemies.”

Verses 3-6, “Judah has gone into captivity, under affliction and hard servitude; she dwells among the nations, she finds no rest; all her persecutors overtake her in dire straits. The roads to Zion mourn because no one comes to the set feasts. All her gates are desolate; her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness. Her adversaries have become the master; her enemies prosper; for the Lord has afflicted her because of the multitude of her transgressions. Her children have gone into captivity before the enemy. And from the daughter of Zion all her splendor has departed. Her princes have become like deer that find no pasture, that flee without strength before the pursuer.”

Verse 8, “Jerusalem has sinned grievously, therefore she has become vile.”

God describes the events that are going to come about. He describes the calamities that are going to occur.

We are told, “the Lord has afflicted her because of the multitude of her transgressions.” There’s a reason why these things are going to occur.

Galatians 6:7, it says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”

Proverbs 14:34, we are told, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” This is what we find in our nation and in our people.

Lamentations 1:8-11, “Jerusalem has sinned grievously, therefore she has become vile. All who honored her despise her because they have seen her nakedness; yes, she sighs and turns away. Her uncleanness is in her skirts; she did not consider her destiny; therefore her collapse was awesome; she had no comforter. ‘O Lord, behold my affliction, for the enemy has magnified himself!’ The adversary has spread his hand over all her pleasant things; for she has seen the nations enter her sanctuary...All her people sigh, they seek bread; they have given their valuables for food to restore life. ‘See, O Lord, and consider, for I am scorned.’”

It seems very farfetched in this land to believe the time is going to come when we are going to experience food shortages or when we are going to experience the things it describes here.

“All her people sigh, they seek bread; they have given their valuables for food.” We are going to

experience that. We are going to see the time when people are going to be desperate for food in this land. Hopefully, we won't see a whole lot of that because if we are faithful to God, God does promise that He will take the Philadelphia Church to a place that we term "a place of safety," a place of protection.

Revelation 12:14, "But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent."—A place to be nourished and shielded from the onslaught of the Great Tribulation.

Let's notice a little bit about how we refer the events of this book to the Tribulation. This book clearly deals with events of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C. and later the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D. But there are real implications for the future Tribulation; this is made plain in several places.

To begin with, let's look in Jeremiah 30:7-8 and see why we would attach some of these prophesies.

Jeremiah 30:7-8, "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. For it shall come to pass in the day," says the Lord of hosts, "that I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them."

Notice, "that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble." Here is a time of incomparable trouble, a time called "the time of Jacob's trouble."

Matthew 24:21, let's notice, "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."

Now, Jeremiah 30:7 talked about the fact that it was a time of incomparable trouble. You can't have two times of worst trouble than ever.

Jeremiah 30:7, yet, "that day is great, so that none is like it."

Matthew 24:21 says it is a time of, "...great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be." If you have a day that is so terrible that there's none like it, and you have a day that's spoken of as being a terrible time such as has never been since the beginning of the world, then you are obviously speaking of the same period. You can't have two times that are both worse than anything else. Luke 21 deals with the same matter.

Luke 21:20-23, "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people."

We, again, have reference to the same time period. When you go through the book of Lamentations, it is clear that the description describes the same thing—this time of complete destruction. It describes this time of incomparable difficulty and adversity.

We continue in Lamentations.

Lamentations 1:14-22, "The yoke of my transgressions was bound; they were woven together by His hands, and thrust upon my neck. He made my strength fail; the Lord delivered me into the hands of those whom I am not able to withstand. The Lord has trampled underfoot all my mighty men in my midst; He has called an assembly against me to crush my young men; the Lord trampled as in a winepress the virgin daughter of Judah. For these things I weep; my eye, my eye overflows with water; because the comforter, who should restore my life, is far from me. My children are desolate because the enemy prevailed. Zion spreads out her hands, but there is no one to comfort her; the Lord has commanded concerning Jacob that those around him become his adversaries; Jerusalem has become an unclean thing among them. 'The Lord is righteous, for I rebelled against His commandment. Hear now, all peoples, and behold my sorrow; my virgins and my young men have gone into captivity. I called for my lovers [I called my allies], but they deceived me; my priests and my elders breathed their last in the city, while they sought food to restore their life. See, O Lord, that I am in distress; my soul is troubled; my heart is overturned within me, for I have been very rebellious. Outside the sword bereaves, at home it is like death. They have heard that I sigh, with no one to comfort me. All my enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that You have done it. Bring on the day that You have announced [proclaimed], that they may become like me. Let all their wickedness come before You, and do to them as You have done to me for all my transgressions; for my sighs are many, and my heart is faint."

It describes the destruction and calamity. Clearly, Jerusalem represents all of Israel. It faces captivity because of serious sins and rebellion against God's law.

Verse 5, "the Lord has afflicted her because of the multitude of her transgression."

Verse 8, "Jerusalem has sinned grievously, ...."

Verse 18, "The Lord is righteous, for I rebelled against His commandment." The calamities and the captivity are because of the serious sins and rebellion against God's law.

As we look at Lamentations 1:20, we find that there are not only going to be those who die as victims in warfare, but those not involved in the warfare will face starvation and disease epidemics.

Lamentations 1:20, "See, O Lord, that I am in distress; my soul is troubled [KJV, "inwards burn"]; my heart is overturned within me, for I have been very rebellious. Outside the sword bereaves, at home it is like death." There is warfare abroad and death, famine and disease at home. There are many afflictions and many difficulties. Clearly, the prophecies reach beyond simply Jerusalem.

Lamentations 2:3, "He has cut off in fierce anger every horn of Israel; He has drawn back His right hand from before the enemy. He has blazed against Jacob like a flaming fire which devours all around." It says, "He has cut off in fierce anger all the horn of Israel." "Horn" is used as symbolic of a king, a nation or a kingdom. Here, we find not merely the horn of Judah but the horn of Israel.

Again, chapter 2 opens with "How?"

Lamentations 2:1-3, "How the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in His anger! He cast down from heaven to the earth the beauty of Israel, and did not remember His footstool in the day of His anger. The Lord has swallowed up and has not pitied all the inhabitants of Jacob. He has thrown down in His wrath the strongholds of the daughters of Judah; He has brought them down to the ground; He has profaned the kingdom and its princes. He has cut off in fierce anger every horn of Israel; He has drawn back His right hand from before the enemy. He has blazed against Jacob like a flaming fire which devours all around."

This perhaps describes the destruction of even nuclear and atomic weapons that burn like a flaming fire.

Verses 5-6, "The Lord was like an enemy. He has swallowed up Israel, He has swallowed up all her palaces; He has destroyed her strongholds, and has increased mourning and

lamentation in the daughter of Judah. He has done violence to His tabernacle, as if it were a garden; He has destroyed His place of assembly; the Lord has caused the appointed feast and Sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion. In His burning indignation He has spurned the king and the priest."

It describes the calamity and affliction that is going to come and how God has caused Israel to be swallowed up.

Verse 6, KJV, "And He has violently taken away His tabernacle, as if it were of a garden: ...." The marginal rendering for "tabernacle" is "hedge." "He has violently taken away His hedge, as if it were of a garden."

In ancient times, hedges were often used as walls to enclose gardens. Thorn hedges were planted and trimmed. They grew and made a very formidable wall because they were difficult to penetrate and kept out creatures that would come in to destroy the garden. In effect, what God is saying is that He is going to remove the hedge that He's set about our nation. We have been hedged about like a choice garden. I don't think we realize the extent to which that has been the case.

We have never experienced full-scale warfare in terms of foreign nations on our soil. When you look around the world and see the extent to which warfare has been fought on the territory of various nations—when you look throughout Europe, Africa and the world—you realize we have been protected from that here in this country. It's been as though there were a hedge about us and Britain in the same way.

There's not been a successful landing on the British Isles in almost 1,000 years—since William the Conqueror in 1066, which was actually a migration of Israelites. Since that time, there has never been an enemy landing that had any success there in the British Isles. They've not experienced that sort of invasion. The Spanish tried it with the Spanish Armada and was destroyed off the coast. Napoleon tried it and he couldn't do it. The Kaiser tried it in World War I; Hitler tried it in World War II.

God has set a hedge about our people. We have not experienced the kind of things that other nations have, but God says He is going to remove the hedge. He is going to remove the protection that has been set about us; He is going to remove that protective wall. The events that are going to occur are going to make the ears tingle of whoever hears it (Jeremiah 19:3).

It continues in chapter 2 speaking of "How?"

Verse 8, “The Lord has purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion.”

Verse 10, “The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground and keep silence; they throw dust on their heads....”

Verse 12, “They say to their mothers, ‘Where is grain and wine?’ As they swoon like the wounded in the streets of the city, as their life is poured out in their mothers’ bosom.” It describes the famine and calamities that are going to come. It talks of little children wasting away.

Verses 13-14, “How shall I console [margin, “bear witness to”] you? To what shall I liken you, O daughter of Jerusalem? What shall I compare with you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For your ruin is spread wide as the sea; who can heal you? Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not uncovered your iniquity, to bring back your captives, but have envisioned for you false prophecies and delusions.”

The false prophets haven’t told the truth. They haven’t uncovered the iniquity. Our land is filled with false prophets—individuals who appoint themselves to proclaim and announce to the nation—but they haven’t uncovered the iniquity, the lawlessness and the sin. They haven’t focused on the real problems.

Verse 19, “...Lift your hands toward Him for the life of your young children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street.”

Verse 22, “You have invited as to a feast day the terrors that surround me. In the day of the Lord’s anger there was no refugee or survivor. Those whom I have borne and brought up My enemies have destroyed.”

We find the prophets of Israel have not correctly analyzed the cause of the nation’s problems. They haven’t given solutions; they have held out false hopes and answers. We, again, see the destruction that is talked about, “the day of the Lord’s anger.” God is going to allow this nation to suffer the consequences. He’s going to allow us to reap what we’ve sown.

Galatians 6:7, the scripture says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” That is very much the case.

Lamentations 3:1-2, “I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. He has led me and made me walk in darkness and not in light.”

Verses 6-8, “He has set me in dark places like the dead of long ago. He has hedged me in so that I cannot get out; He has made my chain heavy. Even when I cry and shout, He shuts out

my prayer.” He is speaking of the state the nation gets into.

Verses 14-15, “I have become the ridicule of all my people, and their taunting song all the day. He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drink wormwood.”

Verse 17, “You have moved my soul far from peace; I have forgotten prosperity.” The nation is going to experience some of those things. God’s mercy is what will protect us from even further total destruction.

Verses 18-20, “And I said, ‘My strength and my hope have perished from the Lord.’ Remember my affliction and roaming, the wormwood and the gall. My soul still remembers and sinks within me.”

Verse 22 describes, “Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.”

It is because of God’s mercy that we aren’t consumed. God’s mercy is all that’s going to stand between our nation and total, complete destruction. He is going to allow that destruction but is going to save a remnant. It describes, in poetic fashion, the calamities that are going to come.

Verses 23-27, “They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I hope in Him!’ The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth.”

It is speaking of the fact that there are lessons that are going to be learned; there is discipline that is going to have to be brought on this nation. God ultimately is our portion. He’s the One who is going to be there to deliver us. All these destructions that are described are things that are just almost beyond the limit of what we can imagine.

Lamentations 2:20 even makes reference to cannibalism. That sounds horrible, but if you read Josephus’ account, “The Siege of Jerusalem,” you find that there were things like that happening in the final days of the siege of Jerusalem. There were people who were reduced to that level of depravity. Jesus made it very plain in Matthew 24 and Luke 21 that the events that are going to occur at the very time of the end are going to far supersede even the events that occurred in Josephus’ day and time. When God corrects, God corrects in love and in mercy. Even when God removes His hedge and allows Satan’s wrath to be poured out in the Great

Tribulation and God Himself pours out His wrath in the Day of the Lord, God's punishment and chastening is motivated by God's love. If God didn't love our people, if God didn't love and care for us, He would not deal in the way that He does to bring our people to repentance. It makes it very plain here in Lamentations 3.

Beginning in verse 30, we notice one or two verses that even could have a reference to Christ and His crucifixion.

Verses 30-36, "Let him give his cheek to the one who strikes him, and be full of reproach. For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. To crush under His feet all the prisoners of the earth, to turn aside the justice due a man before the face of the Most High, or subvert a man in his cause—the Lord does not approve."

God does not desire to see calamity, affliction and terrible things. God desires our good.

Verse 40, "Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the Lord..." This is what we have to do.

Verses 41-43, "let us lift our hearts and hands to God in heaven. We have transgressed and rebelled; You have not pardoned. You have covered Yourself with anger and pursued us; You have slain and not pitied."

Verses 45-47, "You have made us an offscouring and refuse in the midst of the peoples. All our enemies have opened their mouths against us. Fear and a snare have come upon us, desolation and destruction."

Verses 55-59, "I called on Your name, O Lord, from the lowest pit. You have heard my voice: 'Do not hide Your ear from my sighing, from my cry for help.' You drew near on the day I called on You, and said, 'Do not fear!' O Lord, You have pleaded the case for my soul; You have redeemed my life. O Lord, You have seen how I am wronged; judge my case."

Verse 64, "Repay them, O Lord, according to the work of their hands." God is going to deal with the events that are going to occur. There are going to be punishments that are going to come because of disobedience, but God ultimately is going to deal with the nations that have punished and mistreated Israel.

Lamentations 4 opens with this lament:

Lamentations 4:1-2, "How the gold has become dim! How changed the fine gold! The stones of the sanctuary are scattered at the head of every street. The precious sons of Zion, valuable as

fine gold, how they are regarded as clay pots, the work of the hands of the potter!"

It describes a time when physical wealth will be regarded as worthless because of its inability to deliver from the Great Tribulation. Read some of the prophecies where it talks about how people will lament and mourn and how the gold and the silver will be cast to the moles and the bats and go into the caves (Isaiah 2:20). People put their trust and confidence in so many of these things. People put their trust and their confidence in physical things to deliver them. They are going to find that those physical things are not the answer. Unless we are looking to God, unless God is our Deliverer and the One whom we are counting on, we are going to find ourselves in a situation where we can't deliver ourselves. We are not going to be able to buy our way out.

James 5:1-3, "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days."

Until the time of modern nuclear warfare and radioactivity, it was hard to understand James 5:3. Gold doesn't rust as we normally think of it.

James 5:3, KJV, but it says, "Your gold and your silver is cankered; the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire." This is talking about becoming contaminated by radioactivity and then describes the consequences—it will burn like fire. There are going to be people who have heaped up gold and think they have really prepared. They are going to find that their pile of gold becomes radioactive and will burn right through them. "Your riches are corrupted." These things are not going to deliver in the day of God's wrath.

It's important to understand that there's only one way that is going to bring us through the events and the calamities of the years ahead, and that involves being close to God.

Lamentations 4:4-6, "The tongue of the infant clings to the roof of its mouth for thirst; the young children ask for bread, but no one breaks it for them. Those who ate delicacies are desolate in the streets; those who were brought up in scarlet embrace ash heaps. The punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment, with no hand to help her!"

God says, “the iniquity of the daughter of My people,” speaking of the remnant. “The daughter of My people” is a reference to the last generation. “The punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of My people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom.” Are we concerned about some of these things?

Why, just a matter of a couple of weeks ago, our “esteemed” governor issued an executive order making sure that all the sodomites have full protection here in the state of Louisiana, saying that’s not grounds for any sort of termination of employment or anything of that sort. It was very quietly put into operation through an executive order. Increasingly, as a nation, we view that and say, ‘One lifestyle is just as good as another. Who is to say that this is wrong?’ Well, we are going to find out.

God says Sodom was overthrown as in a moment. We have a lot less excuse than Sodom and Gomorrah. There’s scarcely a home in this nation that doesn’t have a Bible somewhere in it. We have gone so far from any Biblical standard of morality that it’s as though we’ve lost sight that there’s such a thing as right or wrong. God makes plain, these events are going to come and the calamities are going to come. The punishment that God is going to visit on Israel is going to be greater than the punishment on Sodom, and what He rendered on Sodom was pretty great.

Verse 10, it describes the destruction, “The hands of the compassionate women have cooked their own children; they became food for them in the destruction of the daughter of my people.” Horrible things!

Verses 11-12, “The Lord has fulfilled His fury, He has poured out His fierce anger. He kindled a fire in Zion, and it has devoured its foundations. The kings of the earth, and all inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem...” It’s going to be just amazing to people that we are going to be conquered and overthrown.

Verses 13-16, “because of the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed in her midst the blood of the just. They wandered blind in the streets; they have defiled themselves with blood, so that no one would touch their garments. They cried out to them, ‘Go away, unclean! Go away, go away, do not touch us!’ When they fled and wandered, those among the nations said, ‘They shall no longer dwell here.’ The face of the Lord scattered them; He no longer regards them. The people do

not respect the priests nor show favor to the elders.”

Verses 19-20, “Our pursuers were swifter than the eagles of the heavens. They pursued us on the mountains and lay in wait for us in the wilderness. The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was caught in their pits, of whom we said, ‘Under his shadow we shall live among the nations.’”

Verse 22, “The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; He will no longer send you into captivity. He will punish your iniquity, O daughter of Edom; He will uncover your sins!” Again, there is a focus on what God is going to do. God doesn’t get pleasure out of punishing people.

Lamentations 3:33 says, “For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.” God doesn’t enjoy it. God does not delight in those things at all.

In some ways, Lamentations 5 is sort of a prayer that ends the book.

Lamentations 5:1-2, “Remember, O Lord, what has come upon us; look, and behold our reproach! Our inheritance has been turned over to aliens, and our houses to foreigners.”

It talks about the fact of our people Israel becoming dispossessed in their own land. ‘Our inheritance is turned over to aliens [strangers].’ Increasingly we are seeing this as we see the influx of peoples pouring in. We see the fact that much of our national wealth is bought up by various peoples—the Japanese, the Arabs and various ones.

Verses 2-4, “Our inheritance [that we received from God] has been turned over to aliens, and our houses to foreigners. We have become orphans and waifs, our mothers are like widows. We pay for the water we drink, and our wood comes at a price.” We are going to find that we are going to undergo rationing—everything from fuel to water. We are going to find that these things become increasingly dear and things become increasingly difficult.

Chapter 5 describes the famine and captivity that are characteristic at the time of the Great Tribulation. We will see it as we go through more of chapter 5.

Verses 5-8, “They pursue at our heels; we labor and have no rest. We have given our hand to the Egyptians and the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread. Our fathers have sinned and are no more, but we bear their iniquities. Servants rule over us; there is none to deliver us from their hand.”

It talks about the whole social structure turned upside down, the fact that our forefathers have

sinned and we are reaping the consequences. There are consequences that come, and we are reaping the consequences for the sins of those who have gone before—those who have not properly looked to God and put to practice His laws in their lives. The nation is experiencing the consequence.

Verses 9-12, “We get our bread at the risk of our lives, because of the sword in the wilderness. Our skin is hot as an oven, because of the fever of famine. They ravished the women in Zion, the maidens in the cities of Judah. Princes were hung up by their hands, and elders were not respected.”

It describes the rape, the pillage and the destruction that is going to come.

Verses 13-16, “Young men ground at the millstones; boys staggered under loads of wood. The elders have ceased gathering at the gate, and the young men from their music. The joy of our heart has ceased; our dance has turned into mourning. The crown has fallen from our head. Woe to us, for we have sinned!” These things are going to come to pass.

Verses 19-22, “You, O Lord, remain forever; Your throne from generation to generation. Why do You forget us forever, and forsake us for so long a time? Turn us back to You, O Lord, and we will be restored; renew our days as of old, unless You have utterly rejected us, and are very angry with us!”

Note here, at the end, it focuses on God’s power and mercy and our need to be protected, to be brought back and brought to repentance.

It says, “You, O Lord, remain forever; Your throne from generation to generation.” God is there. When our people find themselves at the very bottom, when they find themselves cut off from God, when they find themselves languishing in the concentration camps of the future, they are going to begin to take up this lament. They are going to begin to look to God and to seek God.

Isaiah 27:13, we read, “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.”

God ultimately is going to deliver our people; but there is going to be a tremendous lament. There are going to be tremendous and terrible problems and calamities that come upon our nation and upon our people.

The book of Lamentations sets the stage. Jeremiah wrote this lament at the time of

Josiah’s death. It was a direct prophecy of the events that were going to transpire over the next few years in Judah and in Jerusalem. It was a book that set the stage and a prophecy of the events of 70 A.D.—the destruction of Jerusalem. Yet, when you go through Matthew 24, it’s very, very evident that the events of 70 A.D. are merely a type of a far greater destruction. It is far greater because it will occur on a far greater scale. These things are going to come to pass. We have lived in a land that has been so blessed. We have really had an artificial isolation and prosperity. We have not had to experience so many of the things that other nations and other peoples have experienced.

The book of Lamentations is a poetic book. It puts the events in poetic fashion. It focuses on and looks forward to the terrible calamities that are going to occur. These things aren’t pleasant to think about. People like to put it out of their minds and forget about that. We have to understand that one-third of the Bible is prophecy and many of these prophecies focus in on the events of our time and on out ahead. God gives us these warnings. Some of these warnings ultimately are going to be focused on by the entire nation. People don’t want to hear this message. They don’t want to hear these things, but God is going to bring it to pass.

There’s a tremendous amount that is packed in here. God inspired Jeremiah to write these things and inspired it to be preserved for us. God ultimately is the source of mercy. There are going to be calamities that are going to occur. It is not because God is cruel. The Tribulation really represents Satan’s wrath. The Tribulation is made possible because God removes the hedge from around our people. What happens, in effect, is that God says, ‘You don’t appreciate the protection that I have given you. You don’t want Me; you don’t want My ways; you don’t want My protection. Fine! I will remove those things and you will be on your own.’ This means, of course, that just as when God removed the hedge around Job, he was wide open to the attack of Satan. So, when God removes the hedge around our nation and our people, we will be wide open to the attack that Satan will stir up.

The Beast power is arising right now; even as we speak this evening, there are events that are going on in Europe. Incredible events! Events that just a matter of a few years ago, seemed so far off and so remote. We are sitting on the threshold of the culminations of so many of these events that the Bible focuses upon.



Hopefully, as we had a chance to go through and to look a little bit at the book of Lamentations, we can realize that there really is a tremendous amount that God has packed in there. There are events that have a great deal of significance for us today and represents things upon which we need to focus. Some of these things are unpleasant. We don't like to focus on things that are unpleasant. But these things are there for a warning. They are there for an admonition.

Acts 10:34, "...God shows no partiality." (KJV, "God is no respecter of persons.") If we don't learn the lesson of the things that God has inspired to be recorded, we ultimately will reap the consequences that come.

Next Bible study we will go through the book of Ecclesiastes, the fourth of the five Festival Scrolls.



Bible Study # 88  
May 12, 1992  
Mr. John Ogwyn

### The Writings Series—Ecclesiastes

We are progressing through our series this evening. We have most recently been going through that section of the Old Testament known as the Writings, which is the third division of the Old Testament scriptures. That section is primarily poetic. The book of Psalms is the longest and the primary book in that section. The section also includes Proverbs and Job as other books that have a poetic cast to them. Then there is this particular group of five books called by the Jews, the Megillot or the Festival Scrolls. These five little books (Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentation, Ecclesiastes and Esther) were traditionally read at various festival occasions in ancient Israel.

This is the section of the Writings we have been going through most recently. We have gone through Song of Solomon, Ruth and Lamentations. Now we **are up to the fourth of the five Festival Scrolls, the book of Ecclesiastes**. There's only a little bit remaining in this section. Once we finish Ecclesiastes and Esther, then the only portion of the Writings left is the books of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1 and 2 Chronicles. We have already covered Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1 and 2 Chronicles when we went through the historical books of the Old Testament. We will take a very brief look in those four books from a little different standpoint than we went into before. We will take a brief look at them in one Bible study because we have already gone through them in depth a number of months ago.

Once we finish up Ecclesiastes and Esther, we will have finished the five Festival Scrolls. We will then go through the book of Daniel. After Daniel we will take one Bible study to look at Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles, just to sort of round off, since we have been going through this as a specific section. That will conclude our study of every book in the Bible except the book of Revelation, which we will go into afterward. We are going to spend seven Bible studies on the book of Revelation. We will go into some depth into that.

Some books we have covered a little more quickly; some books we have gone into more detail. The books of the Bible are written in different ways, and we have to understand that when we study them. Some books are written in

a poetic fashion, and, as a result, there is a great deal of repetition. They deal with topics in a little different way. Others are written as a straightforward narrative account, as in the case of many of the historical books. Some are written where there is a great deal of exposition of particular theological subjects. In Paul's epistles, for instance, there is a great deal of exposition of topics—as distinct from the Gospel accounts where we have the story of what Christ did and, yes, the story of what He said. There's exposition there, too. In some of the prophetic books, we get into more symbolism that is directed.

We are going to cover Daniel in two Bible studies. We will get an overview of Daniel, but when we go through Revelation in much detail, we will have to go back to the prophetic sections of Daniel. So, to avoid being repetitious, when we cover Daniel, we will concentrate on the areas that are not repeated so heavily in Revelation. Then when we cover Revelation, we will go back in more detail to earlier chapters of Daniel. We will find, as we go through it, several chapters of Daniel form the backdrop to understanding the book of Revelation. It gives you a little bit of an idea as to what will have occurred.

We will have covered every single book of the Bible. Since some of you have been here all through that time, you will have had the opportunity to go through in a detailed, systematic way, every single book of the Bible. But since none of us will have learned everything there is to know about the Bible, we will still need to go back to the Bible. We will find there is plenty more to study in the Bible, but at least we will have had an overview of all of the books.

This evening we are getting into the book of Ecclesiastes. As I have mentioned, it is the fourth of the five Festival Scrolls. It was and is traditionally read to this day in Orthodox synagogues at the Feast of Tabernacles. Normally it would be read on the weekly Sabbath that comes during the Feast of Tabernacles. At first glance, it may strike us as a rather odd book to read during that particular period because the Feast of Tabernacles is a festive time. It is a time that looks forward to and pictures the time of the millennial reign of Jesus Christ on the earth—the time when the Kingdom of God will hold sway over all the earth. We might think of certain prophetic passages that would tie in to that meaning.

The book of Ecclesiastes is a book that, at first glance, strikes many people as being sort of negative and pessimistic. Even some commentators have wondered over the years how a book like this got into the Bible. Well, it got into the Bible because God wanted it there, and it stayed in the Bible because God wanted it there. Perhaps as we go through this evening, we will understand a little more clearly the message that God wants us to have. This book describes living life to the full from a physical standpoint. There were no desires unmet. Yet, after all of that, there is a certain feeling of emptiness and futility when all is said and done. Solomon's reign was, in many ways, a type of the Millennium.

We refer to certain things as being a type of something else. We refer to that in prophecy. To be a type of something means to be a forerunner and in certain ways picture a later, greater event or a later, greater person. For instance, in certain passages made in the Psalms, we find that in certain ways David was a type of Christ, a type of the Messiah. That simply means that there were certain things about him that were typical of or referred to the Messiah. That's why so many passages of the Psalms that David wrote, which reflects experiences and feelings that he had, are actually quoted in the New Testament by Jesus Christ Himself to apply to and to be descriptive of the Messiah. Many events that occurred in history are used in the Bible as a type of some future event. In other words, it illustrates on a small scale, some later, greater event. We say that Solomon's reign was a type of the Millennium. Let's understand what that means.

1 Kings 4:20-21, "Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and rejoicing. So Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life."

Verses 24-25, "For he had dominion over all the region on this side of the River [referring to the Euphrates River] from Tiphshah even to Gaza, namely over all the kings on this side of the River; and he had peace on every side all around him. And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as Beersheba, all the days of Solomon."

We are told that the nation dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree.

Now let's turn back to the prophets.

Micah 4:1, "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 peoples shall flow to it." It is talking about the government of God. "Mountain" is used symbolically in the Scriptures to refer to a government. 'The mountain [government] of the house of the Lord will be established.'

Verses 2-4, "Many nations 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 the law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; 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 any more. But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken."

The phrase, "But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid," is used three times in the Bible: 1 Kings 4:25, Micah 4:4 and in Zechariah 3:10.

Zechariah 3:10, ""In that day," says the Lord of hosts, "Everyone will invite his neighbor under his vine and under his fig tree."""

The statement in Micah 4:4 is almost an exact repetition of the statement in 1 Kings 4:25. That is descriptive of a time of peace, safety, security and prosperity.

Right now, if we look around the world, we see great unrest. We see tremendous amounts of ethnic strife and conflict all over the world, whether it is internal problems in this nation or whether it's the world's problems. Right now, the nation of Yugoslavia has really ceased to be a nation. It is split into four small sub-groups. I may be mistaken, but I doubt if there are any of us in this room that could actually tell the difference between a Slovene, a Croat, a Serb or a Bosnian. Maybe you could, but I don't really think that I could at first glance or anything. They existed together as the nation of Yugoslavia for much of the mid-portion of this century. Now they have split into various warring factions. That is just one tiny example. You find it all over the world. We've seen the breakup of the Soviet Union into 15 constituent republics, and some of these constituent republics are in the process of further dividing. You can go to Africa, Asia or anywhere you want on the face of the earth, and we see ethnic

strife and warring. Of course, there have always been conflicts that have existed.

What is it that everyone wants? What's all the strife about? Well, basically, what it comes down to is that what everybody wants is to be able to dwell safely, every man 'under his own vine and under his own fig tree.' Everybody wants his little spot where nobody can come in and intimidate him and threaten to take it away from him. Everybody has a yearning. That is the basis of all these nationalistic yearnings. People desire their own spot where they are not going to have to worry about some larger, stronger neighbor coming in and deciding to annex their spot and take it away from them, chop down their fig tree, steal all the grapes off their vines and leave them there beaten to a pulp. That has so often been descriptive of our history.

God uses that symbolism to describe Tomorrow's World, a time when every nation will have its spot. It will have its place under the sun. It is a time when all people will be able to sit under their own vine and their own fig tree—which by the way, shows that the millennial period is not going to be a time of communism or socialism. It doesn't say that every man will sit under the communal vine and the communal fig tree. It says 'every man will sit under his own vine and his own fig tree.'

The eighth commandment that enjoins us not to steal, presupposes private property. There's nothing wrong with private property. Again, there is a yearning that people have to have their own stuff. There's nothing wrong with that, as long as greed doesn't motivate them to try to steal their neighbor's spot and annex it to theirs. God is the One who divides to the nations their inheritance.

Deuteronomy 32:8-9, we are told, "'when the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance.'" And He will do so once again.

What we have is a description of a time in the history of Israel when the nation, for a brief period, existed in peace and in harmony. The phrase that is used is a phrase that is typical of the way the whole world will be under the reign of Jesus Christ.

Solomon's name is derived from the Hebrew word "Shalom," which means "peace." In that sense, Solomon's reign was a type of the

millennial reign of Jesus Christ. It was a time of abundance, peace and prosperity—at least, during a brief period of that reign when people were able to dwell in the land in safety, free from incursions and threats of invasion and things of this sort. We have a reign that was a type of the Millennium.

In many ways, the book of Ecclesiastes explains the difference between the Millennium and the Kingdom of God. There is a difference. "Millennium" is a word that simply means "a thousand years." It comes from the Latin. By definition, a thousand years is a limited, finite period of time. It has a beginning and it has an end. But the Kingdom of God is eternal; it will go on and stretch out into eternity. We are told of the Messiah's reign.

Luke 1:33, "'And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His reign there will be no end.'"

Isaiah 9:7, "'Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, ....'"

So, we are looking out into eternity and to infinity. The Millennium has a limitation. The Millennium is that time when the Kingdom of God rules over physical human beings and over the earth for the period of a thousand years. It has its beginning at the return of Jesus Christ and its conclusion at the time when Satan is released and allowed to go forth to deceive the nations for a very short duration, just prior to the White Throne Judgment period (Revelation 20:7-8).

The Feast of Tabernacles looks forward to and pictures the Millennium. It reminds us of that period in God's plan, and it is a time when we are enjoying the fruits of our labor. God commands us to set back a portion of our income to utilize at the Feast. It is a time when the ancient Israelites were enjoying the fruits of their labor in great abundance. They were being reminded that there was a greater, ultimate reality because when you are enjoying everything physical to the full, there is still something on beyond that. Everything physical, by its very nature, is temporary.

I don't care how great a meal you eat, how big the steak is or how delicious the food was, it's just a matter of a few hours until you are hungry again. It's temporary. You may be full and may think you won't ever be able to eat again. Well, in a few hours you'll be hungry and you will want to eat again. No matter what it is, it may be great, but no matter how thrilling or exciting, it's temporary. There is nothing wrong with enjoying something physical, as long as it's done in the

right way. The point is that by its nature, it is temporary.

The book of Ecclesiastes is written from the perspective of a lifetime of experience and experiment. After trying every possible way to achieve self-fulfillment, Solomon came to the conclusion that no humanly devised scheme will produce lasting results. The modern “self-actualizers,” the “me-generation” and all the theorists who advocate these various things could save themselves a lot of pain by simply reading and heeding the message of Ecclesiastes because the ultimate conclusion is that only God’s way works. That’s the conclusion of the whole matter that Solomon arrives at by the end of the book.

God inspired that he record his experience in poetic fashion as an example for us. Let’s look through this particular book and note the various things that we find here.

Let’s look at the first chapter in the *Jewish Publication Society Bible*—JPS.

Ecclesiastes 1:1, “The words of the Koheleth, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.” The Hebrew term “Koheleth” is translated “preacher” in the KJV and NKJV. Various translations may render it a little differently. The Hebrew term “Koheleth” is the way the Jewish translation transliterates it into an English spelling. It simply means “a speaker in an assembly.” The word “preacher” would be one rendering of it. This is a reference to Solomon.

This speaker is described as ‘the son of David, the king of Jerusalem.’ Which king in Jerusalem was the son of David? Well, Solomon. Was Solomon a teacher in an assembly? Well, he certainly was a wise man. We are told that people came from all over the known world to hear Solomon’s wisdom. He was celebrated for his collection of Proverbs, for his teaching and for all the knowledge and wisdom that came from him (1 Kings 4:29-34). Here, he is writing in that context.

Verse 2, “‘Vanity of vanities,’ says Koheleth; ‘vanity of vanities, all is vanity.’” What is that reference to? The word that is translated “vanity” is a word in the Hebrew language that literally means “breath.” In other words, it is something that lacks substance. The term “vanity of vanities” is a superlative in Hebrew, like “holy of holies” or “song of songs.” It is the superlative in Hebrew, the ultimate. When he says, “vanity of vanities, all is vanity,” the statement is being made right off that there is a pervasive emptiness and a pervasive sense of futility that comes when “things” are pursued.

Verses 3-4, “What profit has man of all his labor wherein he labors under the sun? One generation passes away, and another generation comes; and the earth abides forever.” The earth goes on and on, but there is a temporary finite nature to man. No matter what you do, one generation passes and another generation comes along. There is a transitory character to human life.

He says, “What profit has man of all his labor?” The word “profit” in Hebrew means basically what our word “profit” means in English. It is used ten times in the book of Ecclesiastes and not anywhere else in the Bible. This is the only place that this particular word is used. The literal meaning of the word is “a surplus” and “a balance sheet.” It’s basically the same as what our English word “profit” means. The point is: What is the profit? When you figure up the accounts at the end and tally it all up, what is the profit? What is the surplus that a man has of all his labor? What does he have left over? Well, he’s not going to be here. He perishes; he passes away. “One generation passes away and another generation comes.” There is a transitory character to human life.

Verse 5, “The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to his place where he arose.” You look back and, sure enough, it comes up the same place the next day.

Verses 6-7, “The wind goes toward the south, and turns about unto the north; it turns about continually in its circuit, and the wind returns again to its circuit. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place from where the rivers go, there they go again.”

It just goes on that way. The Mississippi has been running down into the Gulf for centuries and millennia, but it doesn’t empty out and the Gulf doesn’t fill up. It’s amazing how that works. The river just keeps flowing on. Thousands of years go by and the river just keeps coming.

Verses 9-10, “That which has been is that which shall be, and that which has been done is that which shall be done; and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said: ‘See, this is new’?—it has been already, in the ages which were before us.”

This simply shows that there is a repetitive effect to life. There is a cyclical effect to life in the physical realm. There are cycles that nature follows—the rain cycles, the wind cycles, the patterns of the weather, the seasons, the rotation of the earth on its axis and its revolution around the sun. There are patterns and there are cycles. We also find it in terms of human conduct.

Now, he doesn't mean that every technology that could ever be invented had been invented. When he says there's nothing new under the sun, the reference is not to the fact that automobiles existed before the flood or something like that. That's not what it's talking about. It is simply the fact that there is really no particular change to what people do. The motivating force behind virtually every technological revolution man has come up with has been inspired by the military. This has always been the driving force. There have been peaceful spin-offs, but whether it was the development of the bow and arrow, the advancement in bow and arrow technology in development of the long bow, the crossbow and various things that were developed through the Middle Ages, it was to give armies one "step up" on the opposing army. There were various developments in the technology of the bow and arrow, which can be great if you are a bow hunter, but it was developed to give armies a "step up" on the opposing army.

It's the same thing with aviation. Aviation was sort of a novelty prior to World War I. The greatest boost to aviation was when government money was put into it in World War I. If we could figure out a way to do this a little better, well, we would be able to drop bombs down on top of our enemies. A lot of money was put into aviation during World War I. It went from a novelty to being something that served an important use. The same thing happened. There was another big jump during World War II with advancement of various other kinds of technology.

In other words, human nature has remained the same. It's what man does with the opportunities that he has. There is predictability to human nature. That's part of the basis of prophecy. You put the same people in the same situation, and they basically do the same thing over and over and over again.

We see that there are historical cycles. We see it in economics. What it amounts to is one generation forgets the lessons learned by the previous generation. We find ourselves in economic problems today, just a generation down the road from the depression. The generation that grew up during the depression and learned the economic lessons of the depression have to a great extent been replaced by the generation that "cut his teeth" on post-World War II prosperity. So, we go back and do the same thing. You see over and over and over certain repetitive cycles. We see that and Solomon brings that out here. There is nothing

really new or novel when it comes to human nature and the way that people respond.

Verses 12-15, "I Koheleth have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven; it is a sore task that God has given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and striving after wind. That which is crooked cannot be made straight; and that which is wanting [lacking] cannot be numbered." He applied himself to know wisdom.

Verses 16-18, "I spoke with my own heart, saying: 'Lo, I have gotten great wisdom, more also than all that were before me over Jerusalem'; yea, my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly—I perceived that this also is striving after wind. For in much wisdom is much vexation; and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow."

The possession of wisdom, of and by itself, merely serves to reveal more realistically the imperfections of the current world order and increases one's weariness and unhappiness. If you clearly saw and understood everything that's going on in the world scene today, apart from an understanding of God and His revelation, there would be an awful lot of despair. In that sense, "ignorance is bliss" to a lot of people. The reason they get along as well as they do is because they really don't understand how bad things are.

The point is that there is something beyond that represents God's revelation of the fact that He is going to step into history. There is a hope that we have, but that hope is not anchored onto the fact that man is going to fix it all for himself. What we find with human history is a repetition of the cycles, but we find that as man's technology increases, those cycles can be even more destructive. The wars that are fought are increasingly destructive. The American War Between the States (1861-1865) is often referred to as the first modern war, and the casualties of all other wars that had been fought by American soldiers were dwarfed. In fact, if you combine the casualties (North and South), the number of casualties equals more than the sum total of all American military casualties in all of the other wars from the Revolution through Viet Nam.

It was called the first modern war because it involved destruction and carnage on a scale that had never been possible before then. Technology had increased. With the old muzzle-loading

guns, you fired once and you had to stop and reload. That slowed down killing. When the repeating rifle came on the scene, it made it more efficient. You could kill your neighbor more quickly and could kill more of your neighbors. There were various other things that were invented during that time.

Well, just a matter of a generation later, World War I (1914-1918) was fought. It was just about 50-some-odd years later when World War I broke out. The technology changes that had taken place meant that World War I, in terms of the European Continent, far dwarfed what had happened on the American Continent 50 years before. American casualties weren't as much, but it devastated Europe with casualties running into the multiple millions. It was called the Great War, the war to end all wars. Just a matter of 21 years later, World War II (1939-1945) broke out. World War II far dwarfed World War I, and the casualties were far, far higher. It ran into the multiple tens of millions by the time you take in all the casualties that took place there. We have found that the cycles of human nature are the same, but man's technology has allowed it to be far more destructive. A World War III would be far, far more destructive than any of the previous wars of this century.

The nature of man has remained unchanged and that's why, 'that which is done is what will be done.' The nature of man remains the same as when Cain picked up a stick and killed Abel. What's changed? The only thing that's changed is that now the modern-day Cain has learned how to project the "stick" from thousands of miles away. He has improved his technology, but it's the same attitude and the same spirit. It was a little more primitive for Cain; he had to reach down and pick up the club and knock his brother in the head. Now he can be 10,000 miles away, push a button and our modern-day "stick" (we call it a missile) shoots up, goes across and lands and blows up.

So, what's changed? He says that the possession of more wisdom—just seeing clearly how bad things are—doesn't fix everything. That doesn't make you happy. You recognize how difficult it is to actually bring about any sort of real permanent change. That was emptiness. He says maybe pursuing knowledge and an education is the ultimate; maybe that's the way to happiness and fulfillment. He pursued those things and he said all he got was frustrated. He saw these things and realized how puny man really is and how little he can really affect and change things on the earth. "What is crooked cannot be made

straight" (v. 15). Things go on and there are cycles that are to be followed. Just pursuing an education wasn't the ultimate. Solomon tried everything.

Ecclesiastes 2:1 NKJV, "I said in my heart, 'Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure'; but surely this also was vanity." He thought, 'What about having a good time?' He became a party animal. So, he pursued some of that and what did this accomplish?

Verses 3-14, "I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives. I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made myself waterpools from which to water the growing trees of the grove. I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all kinds. So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my reward from all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun. Then I turned myself to consider wisdom and madness and folly; for what can the man do who succeeds the king?—only what he has already done. Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I myself perceived that the same event happens to them all."

He said he finally figured out that what happens to the fool is going to happen to him. He said, 'We are both going to die. So, am I really that much better off?'

Solomon pursued everything. Where does satisfaction and fulfillment come from? Does it come in the pursuit of knowledge? He did that. Does it come in just partying and having a good time? He did that. Does it come in setting great goals, achieving, accomplishing, and building



things, construction projects or all sorts of pursuits? He said he pursued those things. He practiced those things, and he was making money. He put his heart into various things, and it all turned out empty. Oh, there was excitement and thrill at the time, but when it was over, when he had achieved, when he had accomplished whatever it was he had done, he finally “had it.” He looked around and said, ‘Is this all there is to it?’ There was still an empty spot.

Solomon set out to perform an experiment, to arrive at the purpose of life, to learn what produced real satisfaction. We find the consequence.

Verse 17, “Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was grievous unto me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind.” He became depressed. He said, ‘What’s the point of it all? I am going to die and I’ll be gone. Whatever I’ve done will be left for somebody else to tear up or to enjoy or do whatever they are going to do with it. I’m just here for a short time and I’ve “knocked myself out” doing all this and I’m gone.’

There’s still something more. There was this sense of futility.

Verses 18-19, “Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I have toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity.” He began to look at that.

Verse 22, “For what has man for all his labor, and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun?” ‘What do you get for it all?’

Verse 23, “For all his days are sorrowful, and his work grievous; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity.” He thinks about it and he worries about it.

Verse 24, “There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God.”

We see, here, in verse 24, that to derive pleasure from your work and to enjoy the material rewards produced from it is the peak of human satisfaction. That is from the hand of God. There is nothing better, humanly, than to enjoy the reward and the benefits of what you’ve done and accomplished, to derive pleasure from your work and your labor.

That’s fine, but is there anything beyond that?

Ecclesiastes 3:1-3, “To everything there is a season, a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up...”

So, there is a time. There is the sense of the cycle of life—the ups, the downs, joys, sorrows, birth and death. There are cycles that are descriptive of life on this planet under the sun. “To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heavens.” There is a time and place.

Verses 9-13, “What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts (KJV, “set the world in their heart”), except that no one can find out the work that God does from the beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God.”

Verse 11, KJV, let’s note there is sort of an interesting term, “He has made every thing beautiful in His time: also He has set the world in their heart, ....” Now, what does that mean? The Hebrew word that is translated “the world” is the Hebrew word “*olam*.” It is not a word that refers to the physical earth. It really doesn’t refer to society as such. It is the word that is used in Hebrew to refer to the future, to forever or to eternity.

Ecclesiastes 1:4, for instance, it is the word that is used when it says, “one generation passes away, another generation comes; but the earth abides forever.” The literal translation of the Hebrew “but the earth abides forever” is the word “*olam*.”

Back in Ecclesiastes 3:11, I will read the comment out of the *Soncino Jewish Commentary*, “The Hebrew word ‘*olam*’ is interpreted as ‘eternity.’ This is the signification that it has in the Bible. God has endowed man with a sense of the future. He knows that he is more than a creature of the day, and this consciousness is the cause of his dissatisfaction with the transitory experiences which take place within the span of his lifetime.”

Man has set within him a sense of the future, a sense of eternity. This is something that animals do not possess. Animals don’t have that. They are purely creatures of the moment. They are experiencing their excitement, anticipation, joy,

sorrow; whatever they are experiencing, they are experiencing the moment. They have no sense of the future, of a time that existed before they were or a time that will be beyond their life. They have no concept of time, of the future, of eternity. That is one of the things that is characteristically human that is not shared by any other physical creatures. “God has set eternity in our hearts.” He has set within us a sense of the future, a sense of that which stretches out beyond us, both into the past and into the future. That makes us, all the more, desire to have something that stretches beyond the right here and right now.

He looks and he says, ‘There is a time for everything. What is the profit? What is the surplus? What is gained with all the things that are done?’ He looked at what God has given to man to be exercised therewith. Everything has its own beauty. We have a sense of the future, a sense of eternity in our heart, and, yet, we can’t find out everything that God has done from the beginning to the end.

Verses 12-13, “I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God.” Derive benefit from it.

Verse 14, “I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever.” What God does is forever; what man does is temporary.

Verse 16, “Moreover I saw under the sun: in the place of judgment, wickedness was there; and in the place of righteousness, iniquity was there.” Justice is very inequitably carried out—again, characteristic of human society.

Isaiah 32:1, the prophet Isaiah tells us, “Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice.” That is the time of Christ’s millennial reign. Right now, in the world, we find that often other factors are considered. It’s not just a matter of right or wrong, guilt or innocence. Justice hinges on so many technicalities, political factors and various things. There is an adversarial relationship that exists. Each side is not trying to simply discover the truth. They are trying to accentuate the things that make them look good and to obscure, hide and dispute the facts that make the other side look good. We find that there are many things that are not as they should be.

Ecclesiastes 3:17, Solomon said, “I said in my heart, ‘God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, ....’” What is the answer to injustice and iniquity? –The realization that there is a time of reckoning coming. There are a lot of judges that

you might be able to pay off, but I’ll tell you One you can’t—God Almighty. A lot of judges can be corrupted, a lot of bribes can be passed, but there is a Judgment Day that nobody is going to buy his way out of. They are not going to be able to come up with some slick lawyer and get pass that One. It won’t work; ‘the righteous and the wicked God will judge.’

Verse 17 continuing, “...for there shall be a time there for every purpose and for every work.” There is an accountability that is coming.

Verse 18, “I said in my heart, ‘Concerning the estate of the sons of men, God tests them, that they may see that they themselves are like beasts.’” We are temporary.

Verses 19-22, “For what happens to the sons of men also happens to beasts; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over beast, for all is vanity. All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust. Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the beast, which goes down to the earth? So I perceived that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his heritage. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?”

We are told, right here, that there’s a cessation of consciousness after death. “As one dies, so does the other,” and they “all go to one place.” In other words, we will return to the dust; we return to the ground.

Ecclesiastes 4:1, “Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun: And look! The tears of the oppressed, but they have no comforter—on the side of their oppressors there was power, but they had no comforter.” He looked at the injustice, inequity and the people that were cheated and taken advantage of. As he looked at so many of these things, he just despaired.

Verse 2, “Therefore I praised the dead who are already dead, more than the living that are still alive.” This is terrible! You look and see these things.

Verse 4, “Again, I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is envied by his neighbor. This also is vanity and a grasping for the wind.” The basic motivation for success is often envy and jealousy—somebody trying to get “one up” on his neighbor. He said, ‘I considered this labor, this excelling in works.’ So often, it’s just a man’s rivalry with his neighbor, and this is empty. Where does that lead? You’re just in a rat race where you’re just racing. The problem is, in

a rat race, the rats win. This is the sort of thing we find in a society that has gotten its priorities distorted. One extreme is people who are just pursuing rivalry with their neighbor and always trying to get “one up” on their neighbor. This is vanity and striving after wind.

Now, there is another extreme.

Verse 5, “The fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh.” He just sits there and doesn’t do anything. He just wastes away. That’s not a solution. That’s not a wise approach either. To be out pursuing success to the point that our whole life is consumed with trying to beat somebody else and being number one, that is vanity. And it’s foolish to sit on the sidelines and do nothing.

Verse 6, “Better is a handful with quietness than both hands full, together with toil and grasping for the wind.” The balance is neither both hands full nor both hands empty. It is a balanced approach, “a handful with quietness.” You’re working and you’re productive, but you’re able to enjoy the fruits of your labor.

There are some people who pursue success and they never have a chance to enjoy the fruits of their labor. They keel over with a heart attack at age 50 or whatever it is. Somebody else has the fruits of their labor because they worked 16 hours a day and never stopped to enjoy life. There is a balance. Yes, “whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.” We will find that emphasized a little bit later. Yeah, sure, be productive, but don’t be in some race trying to beat everybody else, motivated by jealousy and envy. Nor sit on the sidelines and be lazy and do nothing. There is a balance.

Verses 7-11, “Then I returned, and saw vanity under the sun: there is one alone, without companion: he has neither son nor brother. Yet there is no end to all his labors, nor is his eye satisfied with riches. But he never asks, ‘For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good?’ This also is vanity and a grave misfortune. Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone?”

On the one hand, somebody is isolated. He labors by himself and pursues all these things but has no one to share it with. There is the fact that two together are much better. If one falls, the other can help him up. That’s a beautiful description of the way a relationship should be

between a husband and a wife. You find this description, and you might contrast it with one back in the book of Galatians, which I think gives a contrast in terms of what God intended a family relationship to be and what, all too often, it is.

Galatians 5:15, “But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” If you fight and devour one another, you will be consumed one of another. That is descriptive of situations that so often exist in families. People tear one another down; in tearing one another down, they are really tearing themselves down. In biting and devouring their mate, they are consuming themselves as well. That’s a very sad and tragic description that we find so often.

It says two are better than one; if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow. That’s the way it should be. When one is down, the other is there to help him up. We all have our times when we are down. That’s what is intended. Here is a description of two who are helping, encouraging and lifting up one another. It makes quite a contrast.

Ecclesiastes 4:12, “Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” This is a poetic description of the family. It describes the benefits of a united family. A threefold cord is not soon broken. This is a poetic description of not only the husband and wife but also the child that is the issue of the union.

Ecclesiastes 5:1, “Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil.” “Guard your foot when you go to the house of God. Be more ready to listen, to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools.”

Verse 2, “Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few.”

Verses 4-6, “When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed. It is better not to vow than to vow and not pay. Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands?”

The point is that the “sacrifice of fools” has to do with rash promises made to God. The point is to not be rash with your mouth. It’s better to listen. When you come into the house of God, you

come before God. It's better to listen to what God has to say than it is to make all sorts of rash promises that you don't keep. It is important. God takes broken promises seriously. The "sacrifice of fools" is a hasty promise or vow to God.

Hebrew 13:15, there is a reference where it says, "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." Our words, "the sacrifice of praise," are likened to the sacrifices. Here, there is a reference to hasty vows and promises to God that wind up not being fulfilled. God takes that seriously. When we make a vow, God expects us to keep our vows, to pay our vows. That's one of the reasons marriage is so important and to be taken so seriously because marriage ultimately involves a vow before God. We speak of marriage vows. That's not something to be taken lightly. The commitment we make at baptism is a vow and, again, should not be taken lightly. God takes these things seriously.

Ecclesiastes 5:12, "The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep." That's simply saying that when someone gets out and works hard, he is able to get a good night's sleep, but someone whose whole intent is on trying to accumulate more is probably so worried about it, he can't sleep. Again, Solomon focuses on these things.

Ecclesiastes 6:1-2, "There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men: a man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor, so that he lacks nothing for himself of all he desires; yet God does not give him power to eat of it, but a foreigner consumes it. This is vanity, and it is an evil affliction." Here, he focuses on an individual working hard and accumulating wealth, yet, he is never able to enjoy the fruits of his labor. That, again, is an evil and a tragedy that he focuses on.

We better pick up speed a little bit.

Ecclesiastes 7:1, "A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth." Why is the day of one's death better than the day of one's birth? Perhaps the best way to express it or to give a parallel verse is what Paul said in 2 Timothy.

2 Timothy 4:7-8, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me

only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

In other words, Paul wrote at the end of his life and he says, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race and I know that there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness.' When a child is born, you don't know what the future holds for them. You don't know whether they will be wise or foolish, righteous or wicked, rich or poor or anything that will be about them. You know what you hope, desire and pray for, but there is a completion here.

In Ecclesiastes 7:2, Solomon talks about 'going to the house of mourning.' In other words, it is good to contemplate on the temporary nature of life. There is a sobering aspect to realize that human life doesn't go on forever. We had better order our lives in a way that takes into account that our lives are temporary and are going to end. We better live them in such a way that we are prepared.

We come down a little further.

Ecclesiastes 7:16-17, "Do not be overly righteous, nor be overly wise: why should you destroy yourself? Do not be overly wicked, nor be foolish: why should you die before your time?" These are verses that some find difficult to understand. When he says, "Do not be overly righteous," he is referring to an attitude of self-righteousness. The description is of an attitude, not a fact. There is no way you can be too righteous in the literal sense. Jesus Christ was perfect, but He was not righteous over much. The Pharisees were righteous over much. They were perfect in their own eyes; they were self-righteous. Jesus Christ was righteous. He was the law of God personified.

Psalms 119:172, "...for all Your commandments are righteousness." Jesus Christ personified that, but He didn't have the self-righteous attitude of the Pharisees. They had this attitude of looking down on others.

Ecclesiastes 8:6-8, "because for every matter there is a time and judgment, though the misery of man increases greatly. For he does not know what will happen; so who can tell him when it will occur? No one has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, and no one has power in the day of death. There is no discharge in that war, and wickedness will not deliver those who are given to it."

In ancient times, it was very possible for a person to buy himself out of serving in a war. Even up through the time of the American Civil War or War Between the States, it was possible in the North, when the draft was instituted, to

hire someone to take your place. Many wealthy individuals hired someone to take their place in the war, and that was perfectly legal. There was a legal means of dodging the draft. If you were drafted, you just paid someone to take your place. That was eliminated after the Civil War, but that has been practiced in a lot of societies and still is in a lot of ways. We have just been subtler with it. You don't just come out and ask, 'What do you charge if I hire you to take my place?' We are a little subtler with it now. That's what is being "played on" here. When he says, "There is no discharge in that war," he is speaking of death. No man has power over the spirit to retain his spirit in the day of death. You don't buy your way out of that one. When the time comes for you to die, it doesn't matter how rich you are, how poor you are, how righteous you are or how wicked you are. It doesn't matter anything. You are going to die when the time comes for you to die. You can't buy your way out of it; you can't get out of it.

Verse 11, "Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." If you want an explanation as to why we have so much of an upsurge in crime, you might just study Ecclesiastes 8:11. It says, "Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily."

What was it? A day or two ago, they executed some guy in Florida who had raped and murdered a teenager 15 years earlier. I mean, it's almost like rolling the dice when you commit a crime. Oh, sure, there are a handful of people who are executed, but none of them are executed speedily. Punishment is not executed speedily. Things drag on for years and sort of lose their deterrent effect. It's like shooting dice. Maybe you'll get in trouble, but then maybe you'll get out of it. It says, 'Because the sentence is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.' People figure they can get by with it. The carnal human nature sort of weighs the odds, and if they think they have a pretty good chance and can get by with it, if they think they can "beat it," they do it.

Verses 12-13, "Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he does not fear before God." He says you can look at it and think there are people who are getting by with it,

but sooner or later there is a day of reckoning coming. There is a Day of Judgment.

Ecclesiastes 9:2, "Everything occurs alike to all: . . ." This is referring to death.

Verse 5, "For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten." Death is a cessation of consciousness. Verse 10, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going." We should be wholehearted. We should do what we can and do it all the way. This is brought out here in this verse.

Verses 11-12, "I returned and saw under the sun that—the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all. For man also does not know his time: like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men are snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them."

The point here is the fact that no matter what you do by way of preparation, you cannot totally guarantee the results. Things happen; sometimes time and chance happen. It's sort of like a bird being caught in a snare or fishes snared in a net. Sometimes things happen and you are in the wrong place at the wrong time.

I don't think the truck driver in Los Angeles was beaten up because he was the most wicked truck driver in all of Los Angeles. God didn't look down and say He was going to teach this guy a lesson because he was the wickedest person in Los Angeles. I don't know anything about him, but I don't think he was singled out for some special divine wrath. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time. He had probably driven through there any number of times before. I don't know whether he will again or not, but other truck drivers will. The point is that time and chance happen to all men. Sometimes a person may just simply be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Things happen, like a bird caught in a snare.

That's not saying you shouldn't do or prepare for anything. It says, "The race is not to the swift." That doesn't mean to sit down and you'll be the guy who wins. It just means that no matter what you do, there are factors that are beyond our control. Man is limited. You can do all that you can do, but there are still factors that are beyond our control. We have to understand that. We prepare and try to use wisdom. We try to be

careful and safe. We try to do the things that we should do and be responsible persons, but we realize that those things cannot guarantee success. There is something on beyond that, and that's God's blessing and protection. Sometimes time and chance can happen to anyone. You're just in the wrong place at the wrong time. He brings that out here.

Ecclesiastes 10:1, "Dead flies putrefy the perfumer's ointment, and cause it to give off a foul odor; so does a little folly to one respected for wisdom and honor." Something dies and decays; it can spoil some beautiful oil or perfume. Something crawls up in there and dies and sort of spoils it. The same thing is true—a little bit of folly can ruin a reputation for someone who has a good reputation. One dumb stunt and it can really mess them up.

Verses 5-6, "There is an evil I have seen under the sun, as an error proceeding from the ruler: folly is set in great dignity [exalted positions], while the rich sit in a lowly place." This goes back to the rulers—individuals who are incompetent and untrustworthy are being put in positions of responsibility. This is a tragic thing. Things get turned upside down. People that should be at the bottom, wind up at the top; some that should be at the top, wind up at the bottom. 'This is an evil that I see.' One of the problems of human government is that human beings get "taken in" by other human beings. They get flattered and appealed to in various ways and are impressed by the wrong things.

If God had allowed Samuel to pick the king, he would have picked Jesse's oldest son. You remember, 1 Samuel 16, when God sent Samuel to anoint one of Jesse's sons king over Israel? He brought in the oldest son. When Samuel saw him, immediately he knew this must be the one. 'He's the one. I'll make him king right now.' He was impressed with him. They ran through the list of sons and then, finally, brought in David who was sort of the runt of the litter. His father hadn't even bothered to bring him in from the field. That was the one God chose.

1 Samuel 16:7, "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature...For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'" Things that impress people are not the things that impress God. That's one of the reasons we find folly set in exalted positions. Too many times people are impressed with the wrong things. In the Kingdom of God, that will not be the problem.

The right people will be in the right places. Nobody's going to "pull one over" on God.

Ecclesiastes 11:1, "Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days." In other words, this is simply another way of saying that eventually you are going to reap what you sow. What you send out is eventually what you are going to get back. It's a matter of life that things have a way of coming back at us.

Verse 4, "He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap." There is such a thing as being overly cautious. You can be so worried about something going wrong that it holds you back. 'No, better not plant today. I think it is a little too windy to scatter the seed.' The time to plant will pass you by. Or, you look and say, 'There are clouds up there. It might rain. I better not get to harvesting.' Yes, we need to use wisdom. If it's about ready to pour down raining, that's not the time that you want to get out and cut your hay. But there is such a thing as being overly cautious. That's an extreme that is warned about.

Verses 9-10, "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow [vexation] from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh, for childhood and youth are vanity." They are temporary. They are passing. They are transitory. They are like a breath.

When you are young, it's hard to believe that your young years pass that quickly, but it does. Just ask someone who is even a few years older than you how quickly those high school years go by—how quickly some of those times go by. That's what it is saying here. Rejoice in your youth; have a good time, but understand that you are accountable for what you know. You are responsible for what you know, whether you are young or old.

"Remove sorrow from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh." Childhood and youth are temporary. They are going to pass. Don't get into something that is going to foul up your life. That's what it is saying. Don't do something dumb that you are going to have to live with the consequences for the rest of your life. Those young years are here today and gone so, so quickly. They are gone. There are some things you can do that you have to live with the consequences. It says to rejoice in your youth.

Ecclesiastes 12:1, “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth...” The time to think about God is not when you are old. The time to start thinking about God is when you are young, when you have your life before you. You see, there’s nothing God tells you to do that’s going to hurt you and mess you up. There’s nothing God tells you to do that’s going to be to your detriment. There’s nothing God tells you not to do that you are going to be better off having done. So, think about God when you are young. That’s the time to start being mindful of God and His ways.

Verses 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are a very poetic description of old age. You might look it up in various translations. It is a very poetic description of old age. It is, of course, a poetic book and describes it that way.

Verses 7-12, “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it. ‘Vanity of vanities,’ says the Preacher [JPS, “Koheleth”]; ‘all is vanity.’ And moreover, because the Preacher [Koheleth] was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs. The Preacher [Koheleth] sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright—words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd. And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is weariness to the flesh.”

You can pursue all sorts of learning and books. There are thousands and millions of books, books that deal with all sorts of things as to the key to getting ahead in life.

Verse 13, but the real conclusion of the whole matter is, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” The word “duty” is in italics (KJV), which means the translators put it in thinking it clarified it, but really, just as it is written is the simplest thing. “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole man.” This is what life is all about.

Verse 14, “For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil.” The best way is ultimately God’s way. This is the only way that leads to real fulfillment. As you look at life and you pursue any of the things that physical life holds out, if that’s all there is, there’s a sense of emptiness and futility. There are injustices,

inequities and all sorts of things that lead to frustration. The answer is that there is something that lies beyond the right here and right now, the purely human and purely physical.

God’s way is the way that leads to the ultimate and greatest sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. That is the only way that any of us can really be satisfied, happy and productive in life in the long run.

The book of Ecclesiastes has an awful lot that is a source of wisdom. It is a source of a perspective on life and one that can be of aid and benefit to all of us. Certainly, it ties in with the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles is the Feast of Temporary Dwellings—the realization that there is something beyond the physical, something beyond even the physical things and blessings that will be poured out during the reign of Jesus Christ on the earth.

The book of Ecclesiastes is the fourth of the five Festival Scrolls.

Next Bible study we will go through the book of Esther, which is the fifth and final of the five Festival Scrolls.





Bible Study # 89  
May 26, 1992  
Mr. John Ogwyn

### The Writings Series—Esther

This evening we are here at **Esther, the fifth and final book of this five-book section called the Megillot**. The Megillot is that five-book section called the Festival Scrolls by the Jews. Of course, it was a portion of the Writings section. Traditionally, the Old Testament was divided as the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms (Writings)—the three traditional divisions of the Old Testament as preserved by the Jews.

Jesus Himself referred to that in the book of Luke where He made reference to what constituted the Old Testament.

Luke 24:44-45, “Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.”

Jesus clearly defined the Scriptures of the Old Testament as consisting of the Law, the Prophets and the Writings, or Psalms as it is sometimes termed. This means there’s no room for the apocryphal books. Jesus Christ defined the Scriptures for us here. We know they consist of the three traditional divisions preserved by the Jews since antiquity.

The first five books of the Bible are called the Book of the Law. The final of these three sections—the section of Psalms or the Writings—consisted of the book of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, then the five Festival Scrolls which we have been going through—Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and now this evening, Esther. The remaining portion of the Writings (the Psalms division), are the books of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles.

We covered Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles in a little greater depth when we went through the historical books of the Old Testament. Since we are taking this section (the Writings) as the Jews preserved it, we will have one Bible study to include those so we can wrap it up. We will cover Esther this evening. Esther is the final of the five Festival Scrolls. Then we will cover the book of Daniel the next couple of Bible studies.

The book of Esther is the fifth of the five Festival Scrolls. They are called Festival Scrolls because traditionally they were read at festival periods. Song of Solomon was read on the

Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread; Ruth was read on Pentecost. Lamentations was read on a national day of fasting called the Fast of Ab on the ninth day of the fifth month of the Hebrew calendar. It commemorates the destruction of the temple. Ecclesiastes was read on the Sabbath during the Feast of Tabernacles. Esther was read on another national day called Purim. We will understand about Purim this evening because we will notice it as we read through this book.

The setting of the book of Esther is during the captivity of the Jews during the Persian period.

If you remember, the kingdom was united. They had their first king with King Saul. He was replaced with David, a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). Under David and his son Solomon, the kingdom of Israel and Judah was united. At Solomon’s death the kingdom split. The northern ten tribes elected their own king, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, while the southern kingdom of Judah (with its capital at Jerusalem) clung to its loyalty to the house of David in the person of Solomon’s son, Rehoboam. These two nations (the two kingdoms) continued down over the course of the next 200 years.

About 200 years later (around 721-718 B.C.), the Assyrians invaded and carried the northern kingdom captive. The southern kingdom continued on for over 100 years. It was later on, beginning in 604 B.C., almost 120 years later, that Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (another king/another kingdom) invaded the southern kingdom of Judah and began the process of captivity that culminated in 587 B.C. with the destruction of the temple. The Jews were forcibly removed from Jerusalem and Judea to Babylon, and the area of Judea laid waste.

Almost 50 years later, as we will read the story in Daniel, the Medes and the Persians entered into Babylon and overthrew the Babylonians; they possessed the kingdom. The Jews continued in captivity, first under the rule of the Babylonians and now under the rule of the Persians. Several years later, beginning about 535 B.C., the Persian king issued a decree that allowed the Jews to begin to return to Jerusalem under Zerrubabel.

We have the story in Ezra and Nehemiah of the return of some of the Jews back to Judea and Jerusalem to rebuild the city and the temple. A very sizable percentage of the Jews remained in the areas where the Babylonians transported them. They remained in the area of Babylon, but they were now under the rule of the Persians.

The book of Esther is set during this Persian period. It is set during the reign of the king that is known in classical history as Xerxes. He is called Ahasuerus in the book of Esther. That is the term by which he is called here.

This is in the latter part of the fifth century B.C. This would be approximately contemporary with the story of Ezra and Nehemiah. The story of Ezra and Nehemiah tells what was happening to the Jewish community in Judea. The book of Esther tells what was happening around the same time to the Jewish community in Babylon and in the areas of Persia where, actually, more Jews lived than in Judea. This provides the setting.

It tells the story of the attempted destruction of the nation of the Jews by their traditional enemies. We find that the one who was the instigator of this destruction was a man known as Haman the Agagite. If you will look it up, you will find that Agag was an ancient king of the Amalekites. In fact, there is sort of an interesting point about it that we will notice as we go through. Haman was responsible for stirring up an attempt to destroy the Jews.

This book is, as I mentioned, traditionally read on the Feast of Purim, which is a national holiday authorized in the book of Esther. It is similar to our Thanksgiving Day.

The book of Esther is unique in that it is the only book in the Bible that does not mention the name of God. God's name does not appear in this particular book; it is the only book that way. Now, certainly, in the story of the book, the intervention of God to deliver His people is very evident. The divine name is omitted for a very important reason. It is omitted so there is no confusion over the fact that Purim, which is established as a holiday in the conclusion of the book, is not a holy day proclaimed by God. It is a national holiday authorized by the Jewish community, but in no way is it to be confused with a holy day given sanctity by God.

The king, as I mentioned, is identified as King Xerxes who reigned from 485-464 B.C. The story in the book, beginning with Esther 2:16, tells the story of what happened after the disastrous Greek campaign that Xerxes carried out from 480-479 B.C. Xerxes took an army of one million men, which was the largest army assembled in ancient times, and he set out to conquer Greece.

He was going to cross the area called the Hellespont, that area that divides Asia from Europe. If you look at a map, you'll see how Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) comes out and is divided from the Greek peninsula. The Black

Sea is up above; the Mediterranean is down below. The area called the Dardanelle (that strait of water that connects the Black Sea to the Mediterranean) divides the Turkish peninsula (the Asia Minor peninsula) from Greece and the European mainland. Xerxes took this gigantic army and came to the area called the Hellespont, which was the area that was the closest distance across. He was going to march this gigantic army across into Greece and was going to teach the Greeks a lesson. It turned out to be one of the greatest debacles that occurred.

Xerxes was the kind of fellow that you could never tell him anything. Maybe you've known one or two people like that in your lifetime. You can't tell them anything. Xerxes was sort of that way. He had the idea that what he was going to do was take boats and latch these boats together to make one giant pontoon bridge over which he was going to march his army. Well, that seemed like a good idea, except that when he put the things together, a storm came up. The boats crashed against each other and a number of them sunk. They had a big fiasco and couldn't get the troops across. It was not nearly as he had anticipated.

It gives you an idea as to what a perfectly "sane and balanced" individual he was. His response was that he was going to punish the sea by giving it 100 lashes. He lined up soldiers with whips to whip the sea. That would really inspire confidence. You see a "crackpot" like this and realize he is in charge. It really "inspires confidence." Needless to say, he never successfully got very far into Greece.

He was the father of the King Artaxerxes who is mentioned in Ezra 7:1; he is the one who issued the decree that allowed for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the walls of Jerusalem. Xerxes is shown in secular history by the Greek historian Herodotus, as well as the Biblical account in the book of Esther. He is shown as a very vain and capricious monarch, and he was anything but an ideal husband.

In this book, we are going to take note that God sometimes allows His servants to find themselves in very disagreeable circumstances. If He chooses not to deliver them out of it, He will give them the help to endure it. Many times He uses those circumstances to accomplish His own purpose.

We pick up the story in Esther. According to tradition, Esther was written by Mordecai, the older cousin of Esther.

Esther 1:1, "Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus [referring to Xerxes] (this was the

Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia, over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces)...” He reigned over a tremendous empire.

Verses 2-3, “in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the citadel, that in the third year of his reign he made a feast for all his officials and servants—the powers of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the princes of the provinces being before him...” Everybody was there.

Verse 4, “when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty for many days, one hundred and eighty days in all.”

They had this big “blowout.” It lasted 180 days. Now, if you think you’ve been to a party, Xerxes really knew how to throw a party.

Verse 5, “And when these days were completed, the king made a feast lasting seven days for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to small, in the court of the garden of the king’s palace.” This was the finale.

Verse 6, “There were white and blue linen curtains fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on silver rods and marble pillars; and the couches were of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble.” It was really decked out.

Verse 7, “And they served drinks in golden vessels, each vessel being different from the other, with royal wine in abundance, according to the generosity of the king.”

To give you an idea, I would like to call your attention to one thing: “In the third year of his reign he made a feast to all his officials and servants.” The Jewish commentary brings out that the literal translation of the Hebrew word “feast” would be “a drinking.” The accent was more on the drinking than on the eating. I’m sure they had plenty of food, but what they really had was plenty of booze. So, they had “a drinking.” He knew how to have a real party. It doesn’t say if he had any crawfish or not, but he very well might have. He had plenty of other stuff.

Verse 8, “In accordance with the law, the drinking was not compulsory; for so the king had ordered all the officers of his household, that they should do according to each man’s pleasure.” They weren’t drinking toasts. They were just quaffing it down as quickly as they could. It was sort of “name your poison.” You could have whatever you wanted, and they kept giving it to you.

Verse 10, “On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, ...” You can

believe it! Here, this is a seven-day drunk. His heart is merry with wine; he’s really loaded and so are all his buddies. They have really been “tying one on” for a while.

Verses 10-11, continuing, “...he commanded... , seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus, to bring Queen Vashti before the king wearing her royal crown, in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials, for she was beautiful to behold.”

Verse 12, “But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s command... ; therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned within him.” Some commentators say that the sense of the words “to bring Queen Vashti before the king wearing her crown royal” meant that was *all* she was going to have on. He was going to make a great display out of her. I don’t know whether that was the case or not. The point was that he wanted her to come and she didn’t want to come. Evidently, they both had enough to drink that the results were not good. She wouldn’t come and he was mad.

Verse 13, “Then the king said to the wise men...”

Verse 14, it lists all of them.

Verse 15, “What shall we do to Queen Vashti, according to law, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus?...” He said, ‘She has not done what I told her to do.’

You have to get the picture. He and his buddies have been “boozing it up” for the last week. You can imagine the state they are in. He calls for the queen; she will not come because she is in the other court with all the women, and they have been “boozing it up,” too (v. 9). She will not come. They have a real setto here. He wants her to come and she will not. So, he gets his buddies around and he asks them, ‘What do you think we should do?’

Verse 16, they say, “...‘Queen Vashti has not only wronged the king, but also all the princes, and all the people who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus.’” They say, ‘She’s done wrong, not only to you King, but to all the rest of us.’ You can just see them all nodding their heads, “Yes.” They are agreeing to that; they’ll drink to that.

Verse 17, “For the queen’s behavior will become known to all women, so that they will despise their husbands in their eyes, when they report, “King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in before him, but she did not come.”” They say that if word of this becomes known, all women are going to start ignoring what their husbands tell them to do.

They are going to say, ‘The king commanded the queen to come and she wouldn’t do it; so, we don’t have to do what you say either.’

They said, ‘What you need to do is to put forth a royal commandment.’

Verses 19-21, “‘If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go out from him, and let it be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it will not be altered, that Vashti shall come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she. When the king’s decree which he will make is proclaimed throughout all his empire (for it is great), all wives will honor their husbands, both great and small.’ And the reply pleased the king....” He thought that sounded like a good idea; that would show her.

Verse 22, “Then he sent letters to all the king’s provinces, ...that each man should be master in his own house, ....” They were really going to tell it like it is.

You have to sort of get the picture in your mind. This guy is all “boozed up.” He’s sitting in the bar complaining about the way his wife treated him. He asks his buddies (who have been drinking along with him) what he should do about it. That’s sort of the picture of it. You can imagine the way this thing comes out. The only thing is that this is the king.

Now, the Medes and the Persians had a particular law because they worshiped the king as god incarnate. Since one of the things about God is that God doesn’t make mistakes, the law of the Medes and the Persians could never be reversed. You could never change the law. It was permanent. If you changed or repealed the law, you were admitting that the previous law had been a mistake. Now if the king doesn’t make mistakes, how can you change, repeal or replace the law with something else. You couldn’t do that because then you are saying that the king made a mistake, and since the king never makes a mistake, the law of the Medes and the Persians meant that something was never changed.

You get the idea? If you have ever met somebody that was never wrong and you never could tell him anything—meet Xerxes. We are introduced to him, and the first thing we see is that the guy clearly has some problems. He evidently has a drinking problem and that seems to have played a big role here. Another thing that we find is that he is an individual who wants what he wants. When he has been drinking for a while, well, that is going to make that situation even worse.

Esther 2:1, “After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus subsided, he remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what had been decreed against her.” Now he’s feeling badly about it, as so often happens. A guy gets drunk; he really sounds off and does all this stuff. Afterwards he starts feeling remorse. Here, he is missing Vashti. He liked Vashti and he was missing her. Well, you can imagine; the guys that had advised him to get rid of her began to get a little nervous about this time. They are thinking that he is going to lie around here and mope around. He will start missing her. He is going to look for somebody to blame, and they are the guys who are going to be in trouble. He is going to say that they talked him into it. It’s their fault—“Off with your heads!” They could see “the handwriting on the wall.” So, they said they had a good idea.

Verse 2, “Then the king’s servants who attended him said: ‘Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king...’” They said, ‘Let’s have a beauty contest. Let’s pick out the prettiest girl in the whole empire and give her to you for a new queen.’ Well, the king could see some merit to that idea. He thought maybe that wasn’t too bad an idea.

Verses 3-4, “and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather all the beautiful young virgins to Shushan the citadel, into the women’s quarters, .... Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti.’ This thing pleased the king, and he did so.” He said, ‘That’s a good idea.’ They were trying to come up with a good idea to keep the king’s mind off of something else.

We are introduced to a little bit of background. As we go on, we are introduced to something else that is going on in Shushan, which was the capital of the Persian Empire.

Verses 5-7, “Now in Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimel, the son of Kish, a Benjamite. Kish had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. And Mordecai had brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle’s daughter [his first cousin], for she had neither father nor mother [She was evidently considerably younger than he, so he had brought her up; she was an orphan, and he had brought her up, taking care of her.]. The young woman was lovely and beautiful.

When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.”

Verse 8, “So it was, when the king’s command and decree were heard, and when many young women were gathered at Shushan ... Esther also was taken to the king’s palace, ....”

Now, let’s look at something here for a moment. Can you imagine what Esther must have felt like? The soldiers showed up, knocked at the door and said, ‘You are coming with us.’ Can you imagine what Mordecai must have felt like? Obviously, this was not the kind of marriage that Mordecai had ever had in mind for Esther when she was growing up. Certainly, it was not the kind of marriage that Esther had ever had in mind for herself. This must have seemed like a horrible, terrible calamity. How could God allow something like this to happen? That’s the question that goes through our minds when things happen that just don’t seem like it should be that way.

There are a couple lessons that are important that we learn from this book. Sometimes God allows things to happen to His people. He allows circumstances to occur that you and I would say, ‘Well, that’s not good. Why would this happen?’ God doesn’t guarantee that we go through life with no bumps, hurts, cuts and scrapes. There’s no guarantee that sometimes we won’t find ourselves in difficult and adverse circumstances. This certainly happened to Esther.

The other thing is that God can work in circumstances that look horrible and impossible, where it looks as though, ‘What good can come of this?’ God can work in circumstances and accomplish His own purpose in ways that you and I could never imagine. We can’t second-guess God.

God worked in the circumstance; God used circumstances.

Verse 8, continuing, “...Esther also was taken to the king’s palace, into the care of Hegai [the eunuch] the custodian of the women.”

Verse 9, “Now the young woman pleased him [He was very impressed with her.], and she obtained his favor; so he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance. Then seven choice maidservants were provided for her from the king’s palace, ....”

Verse 9, I’ll read the commentary, “He speedily gave her portions as a mark of favor. He lost no time in beginning the necessary preparations. ‘Portions’ were not cosmetics but rather special foods that were part of the preparation. The Hebrew word is the same as that for ‘portions’ of food in chapter 9:19-22. Each candidate had the

right to be given seven women attendants. Esther was given maidens suitable to her exceptional charm.”

Verse 9, continuing, “...and he moved her and her maidservants to the best place in the house of the women.”

Verse 10, “Esther had not revealed her people or kindred, for Mordecai had charged her not to reveal it.” He was concerned about her. He knew that there was a lot of animosity directed at the Jews and he had counseled her that she should not let it be known ahead of time as to who she was.

Verse 11, “And every day Mordecai paced in front of the court of the women’s quarters, to learn of Esther’s welfare and what was happening to her.” He was worried; he was concerned. Every day he would come and try to get news.

Verses 12-13, “Each young woman’s turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months’ preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women. Thus prepared, each young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women’s quarters to the king’s palace.”

She could pick out whatever she wanted to wear.

Verse 14, “In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king’s eunuch who kept the concubines. She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name.”

They were waiting their turn.

Verse 15, “Now when the turn of Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter [Mordecai had raised her.], to go in to the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the king’s eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised. And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her.”

Instead of relying on her own judgment to pick out what to wear, she asked the king’s eunuch, who was in charge, what he thought would be the most appropriate. He picked out for her what was appropriate.

Verse 16, “So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.” This was right after the great debacle in Greece. After he had the original

fiasco with Vashti, he then went on a great military campaign, and that was a fiasco. It was decided the best thing to do was to keep the king out of the battlefield. They didn't need his strategy on the battlefield. What they needed to do was occupy him in the harem—keep him busy there and let the rest of them run the country. This was sort of the solution. He consoled himself with Esther. He was attracted to Esther.

Verses 17-18, “The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. Then the king made a great feast, the Feast of Esther, for all his officials and servants; and he proclaimed a holiday in the provinces and gave gifts according to the generosity of a king.”

Verse 20, “Now Esther had not yet revealed her kindred and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her, for Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up by him.” She listened to his advice.

Verse 21, “In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king's gate, ....” He was sitting there by the palace. Mordecai spent time every day at the gate of the king's palace waiting for word of Esther. He just very much desired to find out what was going on and what was happening to her.

Verse 21, continuing, “...two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.” He overheard two of the king's chamberlains who were mad and were plotting to murder the king.

Verse 22, “So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name.” When he knew it, he got word to Esther, and Esther got word to the king in Mordecai's name.

Verse 23, “And when an inquiry [investigation] was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.”

Esther 3:1-2, “After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above the princes who were with him. And all the king's servants who were within the king's gate bowed and paid homage to Haman, for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage.”

Agag was the king of the Amalekites. If you read the story back in 1 Samuel 15:3-9, Saul was supposed to destroy the Amalekites, and if you remember, he spared Agag and his family. You know, “Old sins cast long shadows.” If you don't do what God says, things can come back to haunt you. Saul didn't see what difference it made. He was going to do some of what God said and also some other things. There would have been no Agagites if Saul had done what God had told him to do way back in the time of the prophet Samuel, but, as so many times, people want to improve on God's instructions. God says something and they don't see what difference it makes, so they want to do it some other way.

Well, here was Haman the Agagite. He was parading by and everybody was bowing down, “licking the dust.” Mordecai didn't do that. He didn't bow down or prostrate himself. Evidently, Haman claimed divine honors for himself. He was a religious as well as a political leader. He was the great Pontifex Maximus of the Babylonian mystery religion, and everyone was doing him obeisance. Mordecai wouldn't bow down.

Verse 3, “Then the king's servants who were within the king's gate said to Mordecai, ‘Why do you transgress the king's command?’” ‘Why don't you do this?’

Verse 4, “Now it happened, when they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them, that they told it to Haman, to see whether Mordecai's words would stand; for Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew.” They kept telling him, ‘You better bow down.’ He wouldn't listen. So, one of them eventually decided to point out to Haman that Mordecai the Jew wasn't bowing down.

Verse 5, “When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath.” Oh, it just ruined his whole day—the fact that this guy wouldn't bow down in the dust. It made him so mad.

Verse 6, “But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai.” He figured Mordecai, by himself, wasn't worth the trouble it would take. So, he decided what he was going to do—he would destroy all the Jews. He didn't like Jews anyway. It would be a good excuse. He would just destroy all the Jews.

Verse 7, “In the first month, which is the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, the lot), before Haman to

determine the day and the month, until it fell on the twelfth month, which is the month Adar.”

In Hebrew, the “im” ending in Purim is plural. “Pur” is the singular. They didn’t shoot dice; they rolled a die—one. Basically, they rolled this lot before Haman from day to day, from month to month, to pick out the lucky day and the lucky month. They came up with a month (the twelfth month); then they came up with a day that was going to be the good time or the auspicious time. Verses 8-11, “Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, ‘There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people’s, and they do not keep the king’s laws. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain. If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring it into the king’s treasuries.’ So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, enemy of the Jews. And the king said to Haman, ‘The money and the people are given to you, to do with them as seems good to you.’”

The king said, ‘You keep your silver. You want to do this, just go ahead.’

The ring contained the signet seal. This was the mark of authenticity. Even today, if you get ready to promulgate an official document, it often has to be notarized. The notary seals it. He puts that stamp on there. The notary seal is that mark of genuineness or authenticity. The king had a special signet ring, and there was only one like it. It was the means by which authenticity of a decree was established. A decree was written, hot wax was put on it, and the king’s ring was pressed into it. This was the seal of genuineness. Here, the king took off the ring and gave it to Haman and said, ‘Write a decree and do it.’ You get the idea the king was a very capricious sort of fellow. If he liked you, he pretty well gave you carte blanche to do what you wanted. If he didn’t like you, he would cut off your head. We will see that a little later, too.

Verse 12, “Then the king’s scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and a decree was written according to all that Haman commanded— .... In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written [They wrote a letter.], and sealed with the king’s signet ring.”

Verse 13, “And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women [That should

pretty well take in everything.], in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to plunder their possessions.”

Verse 14, “A copy of the document was to be issued as law in every province, being published for all people, that they should be ready for that day.”

Verse 15, we are told, “...So the king and Haman sat down to drink [This was one of the king’s favorite pastimes; he figured this was something that deserved a good drink.], but the city of Shushan was perplexed.” It was a mystery to them how some crazy thing like this comes out.

Esther 4:1, “When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth....” He was ready to fast, pray and mourn.

Verses 2-5, “He went as far as the square in front of the king’s gate, for no one might enter the king’s gate clothed with sackcloth. And in every province where the king’s command and decree arrived, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. So Esther’s maids and eunuchs came and told her, and the queen was deeply distressed. Then she sent garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him, but he would not accept them. Then Esther called Hathach, one of the king’s eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai, to learn what and why this was.”

She wanted to find out what was going on. She didn’t know.

Verses 6-8, “So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square that was in front of the king’s gate. And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king’s treasuries to destroy the Jews. He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at Shushan, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and that he might command her to go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people.”

Word was brought back to Esther and she then sent a message to Mordecai.

Verses 10-11, “Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai: ‘All the king’s servants and the people of the king’s provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not

been called, he has but one law: put all to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days.” It had been a month since she had seen him.

Now, imagine living with a man given to such fits of temper and rage. You never know what mood you are going to find him in. If you walk in unbidden, he’ll chop your head off. Sometimes we make the statement of someone, ‘Boy, he really bit my head off.’ Well, we don’t mean it literally; we mean it figuratively. Esther meant it literally. She said, ‘He has a guard posted, and if I walk in there, the guard’s job is to cut off the head of anybody that walks in unless the king specifically says not to. I don’t know what kind of mood this guy’s in. I haven’t seen him for a month.’

You kind of get the idea that we don’t have the ideal marriage described here. That’s a little bit of an understatement. Esther was not in a really enviable situation. Yes, she was the queen and yes, she had great comfort, money and luxury available to her. But what she never experienced in this life was a close, happy marriage with a husband that she could completely trust and with whom she could really share her life—though he, evidently, had a regard for Esther. That was remarkable, but he was not the kind of individual who was ever going to make a very outstanding husband.

She was concerned. She didn’t want to go to the king. She sent word back to Mordecai and said she couldn’t do that. Mordecai then sent an answer back to her.

Verse 13, “Then Mordecai told them to answer Esther: ‘Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews.’” He said, ‘You don’t think that you are going to escape, do you? Do you think you are going to be the only Jew that’s going to escape this thing? Even though he doesn’t know that you are a Jew, don’t think that you can stand by idly in a time of crisis like this and escape it.’

Verse 14, “‘For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place [God will work out something else.], but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?’”

Mordecai said to her, ‘You and I have wondered many times why God allowed you to be taken and brought to the king’s harem. Maybe this is why you are there. You are in the right place at the right time. Maybe that’s why God allowed

that. You have a responsibility. You can’t just think of yourself. If you don’t take advantage of the opportunity God has given you, God will do something; He will work out something else, but you will not escape.’

Verse 15, Esther then sent an answer back to Mordecai. She said, ‘Okay.’

Verse 16, “‘Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!’”

She had to fast for three days and get all her friends to fast with her—three days of fasting and prayer—to get up the courage to walk into the room where he was. You have to realize that’s sort of an extreme situation—this terrorized kind of outbursts.

Esther 5:1-3, “Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king’s palace, across from the king’s house, while the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance of the house. So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, that she found favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand [Of course, God worked that out; God put him in a good mood.]. Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter. And the king said to her, ‘What do you wish Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you—up to half of the kingdom!’”

Now get the idea. Here’s this fellow. I mean he may chop off your head; he may give you half his kingdom! It just sort of depends on the mood he’s in. Now, how’s that for a mood swing? If he’s happy, he’s very happy; if he’s mad, he is very mad. How would you like to live with a character like that? It’s not a good situation.

What we have to realize is that many of God’s people—I guess most of God’s people—have certainly lived in far less than ideal circumstances. We all have less than ideal circumstances in some facets of our lives. Certainly, many of God’s servants through the centuries have had blessings in certain areas and others have had blessings in other areas.

Well, Esther obtained favor and the king said, ‘What do you want? I will give you anything you want.’ Esther said, ‘I do have a request.’

Verse 4-6, “So Esther answered, ‘If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him.’ Then the king said, ‘Bring Haman quickly, that he may do



as Esther has said.’ So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared. At the banquet of wine [She knew what he liked and what to give him to get him in a good mood.] the king said to Esther, ‘What is your petition? It shall be granted you. What is your request, up to half my kingdom? It shall be done!’”

He knew that she didn’t just walk in there and risk her life to invite him to dinner, but that was the only request she made. ‘I’ve prepared a special meal and I wish you and Haman would come and enjoy this meal with me.’ He wasn’t just loaded with brains, but he was able to figure out that she didn’t walk in there just to invite him to eat.

Verses 7-8, she, again, said this to him, “...‘My petition and request is this: if I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, then let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said.’”

She said, ‘You know what I would really like is for you and Haman to come back to dinner again tomorrow.’ Again, he knew there had to be a little more to it than this, but he agreed.

Verses 9-13, “So Haman went out that day joyful and with a glad heart; but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king’s gate, and that he did not stand or tremble before him, he was filled with indignation against Mordecai. Nevertheless Haman restrained himself and went home, and he sent and called for his friends and his wife Zeresh. Then Haman told them of his great riches, the multitude of his children, all the ways in which the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and servants of the king. Moreover Haman said, ‘Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am again invited by her, along with the king. Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.’”

Haman said, ‘The Queen didn’t let anybody come into the banquet except the king and me, and I’m invited back again tomorrow. None of this makes any difference as long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting there in the king’s gate. Boy, it makes me mad. It just ruins my whole day. It “rains on my parade” when I see this guy sitting there.’

Verse 14, “Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, ‘Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high, ....’” That’s about 75 feet high. We are not talking about a little gallows; we’re

talking about a seven-story office building. ‘Build a gallows that is really a gallows! When he gets hung on this thing, he’s going to know he’s been hung.’

Verse 14, continuing, “...and in the morning suggest to the king that Mordecai be hanged on it; then go merrily with the king to the banquet.’ And the thing pleased Haman; so he had the gallows made.” He thought that was a wonderful idea. That just made his whole day to go out and hang someone.

God does have a sense of humor. Notice the timing on this.

Esther 6:1, “That night the king could not sleep. So one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.” It just so happened that night the king couldn’t sleep; he tossed and he turned. He figured anything that dry and dull was bound to put him to sleep. He ordered them to bring in the book of the Chronicles and read it to him. So, they open it up and start reading.

Verse 2, “And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s eunuchs, the doorkeepers who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.” The part they read just happened to be the story of Mordecai telling him of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s eunuchs, and how they were going to assassinate the king. That just happened to be the spot where the Chronicles fell open.

Verse 3, they were reading that story to him, and the king pipes up and says, ‘By the way, what did we ever do for Mordecai? He saved my life. What did I ever do for him?’ They said, ‘Nothing. You never got around to doing anything, King. Nothing has been done.’

Verse 4, “And the king said, ‘Who is in the court?’ Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king’s palace to suggest that the king hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.” It just so happened that Haman had come to request the king’s permission to hang Mordecai on the gallows. This was not a good time to bring up the subject of hanging Mordecai. Can you just see why the king couldn’t sleep that night? God could have worked it out in other ways, but God has a sense of humor and He allowed this. It just so happened that very night they were reading about Mordecai, and the king got stirred up to do something. Haman was there and was coming in to request to hang Mordecai.

Verse 5, “The king’s servants said to him, ‘Haman is there, standing in the court.’ And the

king said, 'Let him come in.'" 'That's just the fellow I want to see. Bring him in here.'

Verse 6, "So Haman came in, and the king asked him, 'What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor ['Got any good ideas?']?' Now Haman thought in his heart, 'Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?'" Haman thought, 'It must be me that he has in mind.' Haman said, 'I have some good ideas if you want to honor somebody.'

Verses 7-9, "And Haman answered the king, 'For the man whom the king delights to honor, let a royal robe be brought which the king has worn, and a horse on which the king has ridden, which has a royal crest placed on its head. Then let this robe and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that he may array the man whom the king delights to honor. Then parade him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him: "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!"'"

Haman was really laying it on thick. Boy, he was thinking of all the things he would enjoy doing. He was a really vain sort of a fellow, pretty arrogant and impressed with his own importance. He said everything he could think of.

Verse 10, "Then the king said to Haman, 'Hasten, take the robe and the horse, as you have suggested, and do so for Mordecai the Jew who sits within the king's gate. Leave nothing undone of all that you have spoken.'" The king said to Haman, 'Those are good ideas. I want you to take the apparel and the horse and everything you've said. I want you to do it for Mordecai the Jew. You know the guy. He's the one that sits in my gate every day. And make sure you follow these instructions to the "T."'

Can you imagine Haman's face? This was not a good time to bring up the subject of hanging Mordecai. Haman was not the brightest guy in the world, but he did figure out that "discretion was the better part of valor." It was not going to be to his advantage to mention to the king why he had come.

Verse 11, "So Haman took the robe and the horse, arrayed Mordecai and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him [Haman was the guy that had to go before him.], 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!'"

Verse 12, "Afterward Mordecai went back to the king's gate. But Haman hastened to his house, mourning and with his head covered." Oh, it just ruined his whole day.

Verse 13, he told his wife and all his friends the things that had happened. Some of his buddies said, "...If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him but will surely fall before him."

Verse 14, "While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs came, and hastened to bring Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared."

Esther 7:1-2, "So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther. And on the second day, at the banquet of wine, the king again said to Esther, 'What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request, up to half my kingdom? It shall be done!'" By this time he was sort of mellowed out—let's put it that way.

Verse 3, "Then Esther the queen answered and said, 'If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request.'" She said, 'Please don't kill me.'

Verse 4, "For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king's loss."

Boy, this really stirred up the king. What she did was sort of fall down before him and say, 'Please spare my life. Please spare my life and that of my family.' Well, he didn't realize she was a Jew. None of this had ever dawned on him. By this time he was really feeling warm and sort of "glowy." He had a little "buzz" on and was feeling really happy with Esther and visions of sugarplums dancing in his head. He was ready to do anything but kill her. So, when she falls down, and says, 'Please don't kill me,' he gets pretty stirred up.

Verse 5, "Then King Ahasuerus answered and said to Queen Esther, 'Who is he, and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing?'" He said, 'Where is he that dares presume in his heart to kill my wife?'

Verse 6, "And Esther said, 'The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!' So Haman was terrified before the king and queen." You can imagine; all of a sudden, he went from having a big smirk on his face, to his knees knocking. Well, the king jumped up.

Verse 7, "Then the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine and went into the palace garden; but Haman stood before Queen Esther, pleading for his life, for he saw that evil was

determined against him by the king.” He was being a little bit perceptive. He began to pick up on the fact that, ‘You know, I think my days are numbered.’

Verse 8, “When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine [The king had stormed out of the room, out into the garden—this had really taken him by shock and surprise, and he was trying to collect his wits. He walked around for a few minutes and came back in.], Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, ‘Will he also assault the queen while I am in the house?’”

Esther was reclining on a couch and Haman had fallen down there on the couch, where he was begging. When the king came in, he asked if he was going to force the queen right before him in the house. Boy, he was really stirred up. ‘What are you trying to do?’

Verse 8, continuing, it says, “...As the word left the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face.” You can just see these old guards standing by there. They didn’t need any further instructions. They knew Haman’s “goose was cooked.” About that time, they just pulled the sack down on his head and started taking him away. They didn’t need detailed instructions.

Verse 9, then one of the eunuchs (These guys were always trying to ingratiate themselves.) “piped up,” “Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, ‘Look! The gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king’s behalf, is standing at the house of Haman.’ Then the king said, ‘Hang him on it!’” The eunuch said, ‘That new gallows was built out there—that big 75-foot gallows—you can see it from the palace. Did you know that Haman built that to hang Mordecai? You remember Mordecai? He’s the fellow who saved your life.’

This shows you a little something about politics—and it hasn’t changed. When somebody is on the way up, everybody is his friend. When somebody is on the way down, they all gang up to kick him under another rung further down the ladder. When Haman was riding high, none of these eunuchs went to the king and asked if he thought it was right that Haman was building the gallows out there to hang Mordecai. ‘Mordecai hasn’t done anything.’ You think anybody spoke up for Mordecai? No, they didn’t care what happened to Mordecai. They were “battering up” to Haman because they figured Haman was the “number one” man. They wanted to be on Haman’s good side. Now they saw (They could

put two and two together.) these guys dragging Haman out and knew what was going to happen to him. They wanted to make themselves look good. Immediately, they jumped in and said, ‘Let me tell you something else about him. He built that gallows out there to hang Mordecai. Mordecai’s the guy that saved your life from that assassination coup.’ The king said to hang Haman on it.

Verse 10, “So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.” There are some lessons here in human nature. It hasn’t changed. Politics is still the same. People will seek to ingratiate themselves to the individual who is in power. So often, as soon as somebody falls out of favor and somebody else comes into favor, they immediately switch positions. We have a lot of politicians who have to read the opinion polls in the morning to find out what they are for and against. They don’t know. They have to find out which way everybody is going—‘I’m their leader. I need to run around and get in front of them, but I have to find out which way they are going.’ There’s no leadership there and very little courage. It’s the same thing—human nature!

Esther 8:1, “On that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her.” Esther told the king that Mordecai was her cousin who had raised her.

Verse 2, “So the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai; and Esther appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman.” Boy, can things ever turn around! There’s a lesson of faith here. Don’t look at things and judge them by physical circumstances. Just a matter of a few days earlier, you would have looked at the situation and said, ‘There’s no way. Haman is firmly entrenched. He is an avowed enemy of the Jews, and there’s no way. How in the world can things turn around?’ In a day’s time, the situation had totally reversed.

One point we need to understand: As we look at adversities and difficulties, we sometimes see things heading the wrong direction. We look at it and ask, ‘How can this be? Why would God allow that? It’s going this way and I don’t see how anything can change it.’ Well, when we say there’s nothing that can change it, we are leaving God out of the picture. *God can change it.* When God gets ready, He can act, oh, so swiftly and work out a scenario that you and I would never in 1,000 years dream up. God has ways of doing

it. He can work in circumstances. It's a very important lesson of faith. Just because I don't see how God's going to do it, how does that limit God? The fact that I can't figure it out—what does that prove? That just proves that I can't figure it out. It doesn't prove God can't figure it out. God has already figured it out. The fact that I can't figure it out just proves, 'as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways' (Isaiah 55:9).

Verses 3-8, "Now Esther spoke again to the king, fell down at his feet, and implored him with tears to counteract the evil plot of Haman the Agagite, and the scheme which he had devised against the Jews. And the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king, and said, 'If it pleases the king, and if I have found favor in his sight and the thing seem right to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, ... which he wrote to annihilate the Jews who are in all the king's provinces. For how can I endure to see the evil that will come to my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?' Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, 'Indeed, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows because he tried to lay his hand on the Jews. You yourselves write a decree for the Jews, as you please, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's signet ring; for a letter which is written in the king's name and sealed with the king's signet ring no one can revoke.'"

Verse 9, "So the king's scribes were called at that time, in the third month, which is the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third day; ...." They had to get together to figure this out. They had to reverse the decree without reversing the decree. They couldn't just ride out and say, 'This was a crackpot idea from start to finish. The king must have really been "bombed" out of his mind when he allowed something like that to go through, so we reverse it.' Well, they couldn't say something like that. That would make the king look bad. It would make him look like he was wrong, and if there was one thing the king could never be, that was wrong. So, they had to get together and figure out how to reverse the decree without reversing the decree.

Verse 9, continuing, what they did, "...and it was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded, to the Jews, the satraps, the governors, and the princes of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred and twenty-seven provinces in all, to every province in its own

script, to every people in their own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language." They wrote out commands concerning the Jews, and this was sent out to the governors and the princes of the provinces, which stretched from India to Ethiopia. You realize the Persian Empire was a vast empire that stretched all the way from India to Ethiopia, 127 provinces. Everyone got the decree in his own language.

Verse 10, this was written in the king's name.

Verses 11-14, "By these letters the king permitted the Jews who were in every city to gather together and protect their lives—to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the forces of any people or province that would assault them, both little children and women, and to plunder their possessions, on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar. A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province and published to all people, so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. Then the couriers who rode on royal horses went out, hastened and pressed on by the king's command. And the decree was issued...."

They couldn't reverse the decree that said, 'On this day, the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month the Jews are fair game.' But they issued another decree and said, 'On the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month the Jews can get together and defend themselves. We told you earlier that you could kill a Jew on that day. Well, that's fine, but the Jews have permission to band together and defend themselves against the attackers on that day.'

Verses 16-17, we are told, "The Jews had light and gladness, joy and honor. And in every province and city, wherever the king's command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday. Then many of the peoples of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them."

Again, what happened? They realized the Jews could defend themselves, and the king's soldiers were going to be standing there to make sure that they were well defended. You didn't want to be perceived as being against the Jews. The Jews were in good favor now because it was realized that the queen and the prime minister were Jews. So, all of a sudden, these people that the day before were ready to go out and steal the Jews' property, now they were trying to "buddy up" to them and say that they have always liked Jews. 'Yeah, I really like you people. I wish you would kind of tell me a little bit about things. I'd like to

find out a little bit about your religion. I've really been giving a little thought to that.'

It's human nature. People look to see which way the wind's blowing. They want to find out and get on the winning side. This was the case. Well, the Jews realized when this second decree was issued that things were looking very positive.

Esther 9:1-3, "Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day, the time came for the king's command and his decree to be executed. On the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, the opposite occurred, in that the Jews themselves overpowered those who hated them. The Jews gathered together in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm. And no one could withstand them, because fear of them fell upon all people. And all the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and all those doing the king's work, helped the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them."

They knew which side their "bread was buttered" on. All of a sudden, the same politicians who were ready to kill all the Jews and confiscate their property, now that Mordecai was the Prime Minister, they said, 'We really like Jews. I tell you what—we surely are going to help these Jews. We are not going to let anything happen to them.'

Verses 4-6, "For Mordecai was great in the king's palace, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces; for this man Mordecai became increasingly prominent. Thus the Jews defeated all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, with slaughter and destruction, and did what they pleased with those who hated them. And in Shushan the citadel the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men."

Verses 7-10, it goes through and mentions the various ones.

Verse 10, "...but they did not lay a hand on the plunder."

Verse 11, "On that day the number of those who were killed in Shushan the citadel was brought to the king." Word was brought to the king.

Verse 12, "And the king said to Queen Esther, 'The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the citadel, and the ten sons of Haman. What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Now what is your petition? It shall be granted to you. Or what is your further request? It shall be done.'"

Verse 13, she said, 'Let us have tomorrow to finish this up.' The sons of Haman who had been

in collaboration on the whole thing were hanged on the gallows.

Verses 14-32, "So the king commanded this to be done; the decree was issued.... And the Jews who were in Shushan gathered together again on the fourteenth day of the month Adar and killed three hundred men at Shushan; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder. The remainder of the Jews in the king's provinces gathered together and protected their lives, had rest from their enemies, and killed seventy-five thousand of their enemies; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder. This was on the thirteenth day of the month Adar. And on the fourteenth day of the month they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness. But the Jews who were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day, as well as on the fourteenth day; and on the fifteenth day of the month they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. Therefore the Jews of the villages who dwelt in the unwalled towns celebrated the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a day of gladness and feasting, as a holiday, and for sending presents to one another. And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar, as the days on which the Jews had rest from their enemies, as the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them, and from mourning to a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor. So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun, as Mordecai had written to them, because Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to annihilate them, and had cast Pur (that is, the lot), to consume them and destroy them; but when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters that this wicked plot which Haman had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. So they called these days Purim, after the name Pur. Therefore, because of all the words of this letter, and what they had seen concerning this matter, and what had happened to them, the Jews established and imposed it upon themselves and their descendants and all who should join them, that without fail they should celebrate these two days every year, according to the written instructions and according to the prescribed time, that these days should be remembered and kept

throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city, that these days of Purim should not fail to be observed among the Jews, and that the memory of them should not perish among their descendants. Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim. And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews, to the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, with words of peace and truth, to confirm these days of Purim at their appointed time, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had prescribed for them, and as they had decreed for themselves and their descendants concerning matters of their fasting and lamenting. So the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book.”

An official proclamation was made proclaiming a day of festivity and rejoicing, a national day of thanksgiving to God.

Very carefully, the name of God is omitted in this section because, while the decree was issued, it was something that applied to the Jews. It was a national day of festivity; it was a national day of deliverance. It was not something that was to be confused with a holy day ordained by God. So, very carefully, there’s no mention that God decreed or commanded it, but, rather, it originated with Esther and Mordecai.

Esther 10:2-3, we are told, “Now all the acts of his power and his might, and the account of the greatness of Mordecai, to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? For Mordecai the Jew was second to King Ahasuerus, and was great among the Jews and well received by the multitude of his brethren, seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his kindred.” We have a conclusion here.

As we go through, there are several things that are brought out that we might look at. Haman had cast lots to pick out the lucky day—what he thought was going to be his lucky day and the Jews unlucky day—the 13<sup>th</sup> of the 12<sup>th</sup> month. You know, in various pagan superstitions, the number 13 always equated with being unlucky. Haman thought that 13 was going to be unlucky for the Jews. Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> didn’t turn out as unlucky for God’s people as it turned out unlucky for Haman. Of course, there is a lesson there. When you are up to “no good,” things have a way of coming back on you. Haman chose the day by casting of lots.

God is our deliverer. He chooses to effect deliverance in a way that we would never anticipate. He sometimes allows His people to go through difficult situations in order to accomplish His purpose.

The book of Esther is, in many ways, a book of faith and deliverance. It anticipates the time when all people everywhere ultimately are going to want to join themselves to God’s people. It anticipates and celebrates God’s deliverance of His people. It is a story that certainly ends up with great festivity and rejoicing.

The book of Ecclesiastes was read at the Feast of Tabernacles. What comes afterwards? –The Last Great Day. Then we have the part of God’s plan that represents the new heavens and the new earth; a time when the wicked are destroyed in the Lake of Fire, and all of God’s people are delivered into the glories of the Kingdom of God.

The final Psalm is a song of praise to God. The book of Esther ends that way. It ends with the destruction of the wicked and the deliverance and final salvation of the people of God. It ends with rejoicing and festivities, a celebration of their deliverance.

We commented earlier that the five books of the Psalms correlate and parallel the five books of the Megillot and these five festival occasions.

Psalm 150:1-6, the final Psalm, “Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty firmament! Praise Him for His mighty acts; praise Him according to His excellent greatness! Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; praise Him with the lute and harp! Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes! Praise Him with loud cymbals; praise Him with high sounding cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!”

It ends on a very festive note of celebration and deliverance.

The book of Esther ends on a festive note of celebration and deliverance. It concludes with the destruction of the wicked and the celebration that God’s people have on their deliverance. That is ultimately the way God’s whole plan ends, isn’t it? So, there is a parallel, even of the two national days. Lamentations is prophetic of the Great Tribulation, and Esther celebrates God’s deliverance of His people. It focuses in on what will be the ultimate destruction of the wicked and the deliverance of His people. That’s the message of the book of Esther—the message that God ultimately will intervene, destroy the wicked and save and deliver His people. That is

the ultimate conclusion of the matter. God is going to see that that occurs. The book of Esther is a reminder of that and celebrates that. The celebration of Purim normally occurs about a month prior to the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread.

I think with that we are pretty well to the conclusion of the book of Esther.

As I mentioned, we will go into the book of Daniel next time. This is the next book in this section of the Writings. We will spend two Bible studies on Daniel. Then, when we get into the book of Revelation, we will come back to certain of the prophetic portions of Daniel. We will take a couple of Bible studies on the book of Daniel and then we will have a concluding Bible study on Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles to wrap up this section. Three more Bible studies and we will have concluded this portion. The book of Revelation will be all that's left.

We will have spent time going through, step by step, every book of the Bible. There's plenty in the Bible to go back to, so we are not at the end of everything there is to study. Hopefully, you will have a little bit of an overview and will have had the opportunity to have gone through and heard commented upon every section in God's Word.





Bible Study # 90  
June 9, 1992  
Mr. John Ogwyn

### The Writings Series—Daniel—Part 1

**We are getting into the book of Daniel this evening.** Daniel is one of the books of what is called the postexilic books. That is, it was written after the exile of the Jews from Jerusalem.

Daniel's name literally translated means "God has judged" or "God is Judge." That meaning certainly accords quite well with the message of the book. The book has to do with God's judgment on the Gentile kingdoms.

In common with the other books in this Writings section, it was written both by royalty and about royalty. That's one comment I think I have not made about the Writings series. The book of Psalms was written mostly by King David. King Solomon wrote Proverbs. Job, who was called the greatest man in the East, in terms of power and possessions, would certainly be of the rank of a king or a prince. When you look at the Megillot, Song of Solomon was written by King Solomon and Ruth was written about the royal lineage and climaxed with the birth of King David. The book of Lamentations is the lament for King Josiah. King Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes. The book of Esther was written about Queen Esther. There is a connection of royalty that goes through.

Daniel was written by a man who rose to prominence in the Babylonian Empire and became the number two man of the empire directly under the king. It was certainly written about royalty, and it was written in an entirely different style than the prophetic books.

Generally, we would tend to think of Daniel as being part of the Prophets, but Daniel was not included in the Major and Minor Prophets in the traditional Jewish order. There are several reasons for that. Daniel has the distinction of being one of those books that was written outside of the Holy Land. It was not primarily concerned with Israel in terms of its content. The style of it is different.

If you go through the Prophets, over and over the style there is 'that the word of the Lord came to "so-and-so" the prophet in this year or that year.' That is the method or style used as you go through all of the three Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel) and the 12 Minor Prophets.

That is not what you see in the book of Daniel. There is a totally different style. In its prophetic sense, the prophetic material is almost all involved in the interpretation of dreams, and we find that it is of a different style.

Daniel is the book of the Old Testament that most directly corresponds with the book of Revelation of the New Testament. The book of Daniel and the book of Revelation correspond. In the Jewish order, the Writings are the third and final division. If Daniel were the end of the Old Testament (if that's where it stopped), it would certainly correspond with Revelation in the New Testament.

The books that had to come after Daniel had to close out the story of the exile. When you read the book of Daniel, you have the background of the story of what happened in Babylon during the time of the captivity. You have the story from the time the Jews were taken from Jerusalem and throughout the whole 70-year period of captivity. That story is told in the book of Daniel. It was a first-person account. Daniel was there; he was on the scene.

In the book of Esther, we have the story of what transpired even later after many of the Jews had returned to Judea. It was the story of what transpired in the Jewish community that had remained behind and what was by that time the Persian Empire. Daniel and Esther both told the story of the Jews in exile.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah pick up the story with the Jewish community that returned from exile. After the captivity, the Jewish community was split. There were those who remained in exile and those who returned to the Promised Land. Ezra and Nehemiah tell the story of the return. When you put those together with Daniel and with Esther, you have the story of the postexilic period.

Chronicles, as we will see, comes back and sums up the whole story from beginning to end—from the beginning of the Old Testament period with Adam right on down to the Jews being allowed to return. It ends on that note. We will notice that a little later in the Bible study on Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles.

The book of Daniel is a very important book because it sets the stage. You cannot understand the book of Revelation without the book of Daniel. We will see, as we go through Revelation, how much of what John states in Revelation is a quotation and an expansion of material given in Daniel.

The authenticity of Daniel has been greatly disputed by the critics. There's a reason why

they want to dispute the book of Daniel. They want to dispute the book specifically because of the detailed prophecies contained in the book of Daniel. The longest, most detailed prophecy in the entirety of the Bible is Daniel 11. (I will give you a two-page handout that will take you verse by verse through Daniel 11 that you can use for your own Bible study.)

[The handout is included with Bible Study # 91.]

Do you see the problem with that? If Daniel was written when Daniel says it was written, which is in the period of the sixth century B.C., then you have detailed prophecies that run right on down to who married whom, who got mad at whom and all this going back and forth between the king of the North and the king of the South (the Ptolemys down in Egypt and the Seleucids up in Syria). You have a detailed account of all this strife and all these things that cover a period of about 400 years or so. How could a human being have known every “in and out” on down?

Clearly, you can follow prophecies in Daniel 11 in great detail down to about 165 or 164 B.C. This is why many of the critics try to assign the book of Daniel to the period of the Maccabees after all of the events of Daniel 11 had happened. To recognize that it was written when it says it was written, you have to acknowledge God’s hand in it being written.

The critics run into some problems on that because the book of Daniel stands proven by the very details that the critics in past years sought to use to disapprove it. Daniel mentions people such as Belshazzar and Darius the Mede. Those individuals were not mentioned in secular sources. The only accounts that came down in terms of book form were those written by the Greek historians—primarily Herodotus and a few other Greek historians. There were details that they didn’t mention. Of course, they were Greeks and were writing the history of Babylon and Persia from a Greek standpoint. They had records available to them that we don’t have today. They told the story and there were details they left out. The histories that were written in Babylon and Persia had not survived.

In the last couple of decades, archaeology has made great strides. They uncovered some of the histories that were written by the Babylonians and the Persians and some of the monuments that they erected. And guess what? The very details that the critics had said proved the book of Daniel was a “pious fraud” actually confirmed the book. That is a contradiction in terms. How can you be pious and perpetuate a fraud? But that

was what the critics called Daniel. The very details that they used to “prove their point” that it was not authentic are the very things that have confirmed the book. Here were people that had long since been lost to history. When they dug up some of the material in Babylon and Persia, what did they find but records of Belshazzar and of Darius the Mede!

We will go into the story in the book of Daniel. Remember Belshazzar promised Daniel that if he would interpret the handwriting on the wall, he would make him the third ruler in the kingdom (Daniel 5:7). That was his promise of reward. ‘If you can tell me what this means, I’ll make you the third ruler in the kingdom.’ Why did he say the third ruler in the kingdom? –Because he, himself, was the second man in the kingdom. He was reigning as king in Babylon but was associated on the throne with his father, Nabonidus, who was elsewhere. He was the one who was actually holding court in Babylon. He was like a co-king with his father and had actually sort of worn the crown. This was a detail of history that the Greeks had not recorded. It wasn’t understood or confirmed by secular history until, let’s say, in the last 15 years. But Daniel records that. The very details that the critics said proved that Daniel was a fraud, in reality, confirmed it. You had details—at the time, the critics thought Daniel was written 400 years after the fact—which had long since been lost to history.

Think about it; let’s use a little common sense. Four hundred years would be 1592. How easily do you think you could forge a document that you claim had been written in 1592? You include in all kinds of details, and you’re writing a firsthand account as though you were there at the court of the king of France. You are recording details of all the “ins and outs” of things that were going on. How accurate a history do you think you could concoct from something like that? It wouldn’t be very much. Realize that we have a lot greater access to written records and the preservation of historical material from 400 years ago to today than they had from 400 years back then.

With the printing press and things like that, you have multiple copies of books. Back then, when you had books, you had, maybe, one or two copies. In some cases, that was all there ever was because they had to be hand copied. So, there were not many copies of a lot of the records. If it got lost, the whole thing got lost. Even today, for books that were printed hundreds of years ago, there were at least a few thousand copies that

were printed. An awful lot can be destroyed and still have bits and pieces that remain.

The point is that the idea of being able to forge a document is ridiculous. To put it in our terms, can you come along and forge a document that you claim was written by somebody on the spot 400 years ago? How are you going to have it accepted by the whole nation and give it great religious authority? Well, it would be like trying to come up with an extra paragraph of the constitution—slipping it in and fooling everybody that it was a part of the original thing all along. It's ridiculous! Some of the crazy theories these critics come up with. You wonder how in the world they can do it.

The whole point is that they have an innate prejudice against the fact of a real God—a God who steps into history and intervenes. Sometimes, they come up with something that contains incontrovertible proof of that; then boy, they have to try and explain that away. There are many other things. There are details—names of people, specific information of the Babylonian court, all kinds of information and internal details—that prove that Daniel was written as stated in the book.

Another proof that Daniel was written as stated in the book is the proof of language. The book of Daniel is written partially in Hebrew and partially in Aramaic. Aramaic is a similar language to Hebrew in that it is a kindred language—perhaps in the way that French and Spanish are kindred languages. There is a certain similarity. If you read one well, there's a lot you can figure out in reading the other.

There were two different Aramaic dialects. The Aramaic used in the book of Daniel is what's called the Imperial Aramaic dialect. It was the Aramaic dialect of the Persian court in the fifth and sixth centuries—not the so-called Western Aramaic dialect, which was extant in Palestine centuries later. Western Aramaic was the common language extant in the time of Christ and for two or three centuries prior to that in Palestine.

The Aramaic used in the book of Daniel is not the common Aramaic of Palestine. It is what's called the Imperial Aramaic dialect. There are Persian technical terms that are used in the book that have fallen out of use in the language in the later periods. Persian names for things changed over the years. You may think back of old expressions that perhaps your grandmother or grandfather used that you never hear anymore. You will occasionally run across it and it will remind you, 'I haven't heard that expression for

years and years.' Expressions and names go out of fashion. If 100 or 200 years go by, nobody even recognizes them anymore. They just simply cease to be used, and that occurs over a period of time.

When the Jews were living in Persia, they picked up names for things that they would use even in their own language. In the case where two languages exist together, you sometimes pick up names of items from the people of the other language. It's just like certain terms or expressions that have come into the French language that's used in South Louisiana. Over the years they picked up or borrowed terminology, and this sort of trading goes on. Again, this is another proof that Daniel was written at the Persian period because it used terminology that several hundred years later was no longer in use at all. There are many things that certainly authenticate the book of Daniel.

There is a tremendous amount that's packed into the book of Daniel. Let's get directly into Daniel. We pick up the story.

Daniel 1:1-2, "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar..."—The land of Babylon. This was in 604 B.C.; this was the original Babylonian invasion.

Verse 3, "Then the king [King Nebuchadnezzar] instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children [teenagers] of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles..." These could have been young people from perhaps 10-12 years of age up to perhaps 14 or 15. They were young enough that it was felt that they still had several years of education left and could be utilized by the Babylonians.

Verse 4, they brought those who were healthy and seemed to be well educated and had good abilities. They brought the ones that they felt had potential in terms of the Babylonian Empire.

Verse 5, it was appointed that they should live in an area annexed to the palace. They would live in the general palace compound and eat of the food from the king's table. Eventually, after several years of education, they would be brought and examined before the king and be utilized. The Babylonians were on the lookout for talent.

Verse 6, "Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and

Azariah.” There were four specific ones who were singled out. Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are better known to us by their Babylonian names Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. Those are the names that we are most familiar with; those are the Hebrew and the Babylonian names.

Verse 7, it goes through and gives the Babylonian names that each of them was given.

Verse 8, “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.”

Why did Daniel want to avoid these things? Well, undoubtedly, part of the reason was because a lot of the food the king ate was unclean. Even what wasn’t unclean had been, in most cases, sacrificed to idols. This was the case with the wine. Daniel could see that this was not right.

Think about it. We are not told exactly how old Daniel was, but he was a teenager. He had been brought up in Jerusalem. He had been brought up learning God’s law. He knew right from wrong. He and his friends were brought to Babylon. This enemy army came in, besieged and captured the city. They took the king and they took many of the young people, the children of the leading people in Jerusalem. They are brought back to Babylon. It’s a very intimidating situation. Now they are confronted with all these things. What are they going to do?

“But Daniel purposed in his heart.” He had to make a decision at that point in his life whether or not he was going to do what he knew was right. You know, Dad and Mom weren’t there looking now. In fact, Dad and Mom may have been dead. We are not told exactly who his parents were, other than that he would have been of the royal seed of the nobility or the princes of Judah. Very possibly they may have been dead. If they weren’t, they certainly weren’t there at the palace in Babylon to know what he was doing. Here he was, removed away from all of this and, now, he was on the spot. What was he going to do? He made up his mind that he was going to do what he knew was right. He talked with these three friends of his, and they decided that they were going to obey God.

Verse 9, we are told, “Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and good will of the chief of the eunuchs.” Obviously, Daniel had conducted himself in such a way that won the affection and respect of this man who was in charge. He had behaved himself in an

appropriate way and this person wanted to do him a favor, but he was scared. He wouldn’t mind doing him a favor, but he didn’t want to get in trouble. The king was sending in his good food; he labeled it “delicacies.” It was the richest, junkiest food of the day.

Verse 10, he said, ‘This is good stuff. You’re going to pass up all this, and when the king sees you, you’re not going to look healthy. You’re going to look weak and sickly. He’s going to find out I haven’t been giving you all this good stuff he’s sending over here, and then I’m going to get in trouble.’

Verses 11-13, then Daniel said, ‘Look, let’s make a deal. The king’s not going to call us in anytime soon. Just give us ten days. Give us fruit and vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then examine us and see who looks the healthiest.’

Well, you can guess what happened. After the siege of Jerusalem and all these things, most of them came there, and what did they start doing? They started gorging themselves on all the junk food—the refined flour and sugar—all of the rich pastries and even some of the unclean delicacies they had never been allowed to taste before. What do you think happened? Well, by the time they finished gorging themselves on that for a week and a half, they were all sick. Probably half of them had colds. You can imagine the situation.

Daniel and his friends had been on a really strict healthy diet. They had been drinking a lot of water and eating a lot of fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Sure enough, when the man in charge came in to look at them, ‘Hey, how about that! You guys look healthy and you seem to feel good. These others over here are sluggish and look kind of “green around the gills.”’ So, he said he would give them permission to continue to eat this way. They took a strong stand when they were confronted with compromise. What was the result? God blessed them. You know, God takes note of our efforts. God takes note, and God appreciates our efforts and our sincerity. When we step out and try to do something because we know it’s right, God has ways of working things out.

Verse 17, “As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom [God gave them insight and perception that made them stand out above everybody else there.]; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.” God took note of these young men and He blessed them.

Of course, eventually this period of time ended, and they were to be brought in and examined before the king.

Verses 18-19, “Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king.” God made them stand out above all these fellows. The king talked with them, quizzed them, asked questions, held discussions and these four clearly stood out. The king was much more impressed with them than he was with any of the others.

Verse 20, “And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them [the more he talked to them], he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm.” He was impressed with these young fellows. They were perhaps 20 years of age by this time. The king thought these guys had more “on the ball.” They were ten times smarter than all these advisors he had over here. You see—God can work things out. God’s law and truth are a source of wisdom.

Daniel 2:1-2, “Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him. Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.” He called them in and he said, ‘I want you to tell me my dream and the interpretation.’

Verse 4, they said, “...Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation.”

You find that a lot of these kings were rather quick to “fly off the handle.”

Verse 5, ““But the king answered and said to the Chaldeans, ‘My decision is firm [KJV, “The thing is gone from me.”]: if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap.’” The king said, ‘The thing is gone from me. I want to know what it is. If you don’t tell me, I am going to chop you up in little pieces.’

Verse 6, ““However, if you tell the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts, rewards, and great honor. Therefore tell me the dream and its interpretation.’”

Verses 7-8, they said, ‘You tell us what you dreamed and we will tell you the interpretation.’ The king was suspicious of them.

Verse 9, ““if you do not make known the dream to me, there is only one decree for you! For you have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the time [situation] has changed. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me [declare to me] its interpretation.’” The king said, ‘If I tell you the dream, you will make up some kind of meaning for it. But if you really have insight, if you really know, if God is really revealing these things to you, then you will know what I dreamed. You tell me what I dreamed, and then tell me what it meant.’ And they said, ‘We can’t do that.’

Verse 10, “The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, ‘There is not a man on earth who can tell the king’s matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean.’”

They answered, ‘Nobody can tell you what you dreamed. If you tell us what you dreamed, we have an interpretation for you. We just have to know what you dreamed.’ Well, the king wasn’t stupid. He was in some ways, but he was able to figure out a few things. He decided that these guys could make up something. They went on back and forth and they were scared. They were really sweating, but they knew better than to make up some dream because he would know that it wasn’t the dream that he had dreamed. Then they really would be in trouble, so they kept trying to stall for time.

Verse 12, “For this reason the king was angry and very furious, and gave a command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.” ‘They are all a bunch of frauds. Since they are all fakes, I might as well chop off the heads of all of them.’ He was fed up with this.

Verses 13-19, “So the decree went out, and they began killing the wise men; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them. Then with counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king’s guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon; he answered and said to Arioch the king’s captain, ‘Why is the decree from the king so urgent?’ Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel. So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation. Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. Then the secret was

revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.”

Daniel went back to his friends and said, ‘Let’s pray about it and God will show us.’ Daniel evidenced a tremendous amount of faith here. He was put in a situation where he was completely dependent upon God. Time and time again, what did Daniel do? He spent a lot of time in prayer.

Verses 20-21, “Daniel answered and said: ‘Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.’”

Verse 24, then he went to the captain of the king’s guard and he said not to destroy the wise men of Babylon. ‘Bring me in before the king and I will tell the king what he wants to know.’

Verses 25-28, “Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king, and said thus to him, ‘I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known to the king the interpretation.’ The king answered and said to Daniel, ... ‘Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?’ Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, ‘The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, ....”

Notice Daniel didn’t claim credit. He didn’t say, ‘Yes, king, I really am quite a bit wiser than all these other wise men, and I have insight into this.’ Daniel didn’t claim any credit.

Verse 28, continuing, he said, “...there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days.” It’s concerning what will be in the latter days; Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was a dream that relates to the end time.

As we go through, we have the dream that Daniel had described to Nebuchadnezzar.

Verses 31-38, “You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image’s head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was

found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; ... — you are this head of gold.”

The Babylonian kingdom, symbolized by Nebuchadnezzar who was its king, was this head of gold.

Verse 39, “But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours [It won’t have quite the brilliance and luster that you have.]; .... Now, we know from history that the empire of the Medes and the Persians conquered Babylon in 539 B.C.

Verse 39, continuing, “...then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.” A third kingdom would come along. The kingdom of Alexander the Great, the Greco-Macedonian Empire, conquered the Persians in 331 B.C.

Verse 40, it continues, “And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, ....” Well, the Roman Empire emerged and by 31 A.D. had swallowed up all the pieces of the old Greek Empire. The Roman Empire continued down. About 300 years later, it divided into the Eastern Roman Empire and the Western Roman Empire; it continued down to modern times through various revivals and resurrections.

It’s interesting to realize that at the beginning of this century, there were two titles in Europe used by European royalty that traced their origin back to Caesar. The word “Kaiser” is the German form of “Caesar.” Actually, the Latin pronunciation of “Caesar” is “Kaiser.” We use the Anglicized pronunciation, but even the Latin pronunciation would have been “Kaiser.” The Germans simply spelled it out to duplicate that pronunciation. “Kaiser” is the German form of Caesar; the Russian “Czar” or “Tsar” meant “Caesar.” The Russian Czars traced their title back through the Eastern Roman emperors. The Eastern Roman Empire, with its capital at Constantinople, continued down until the 1400s before the Turks finally conquered it. The niece of the last Eastern Roman emperor married the Grand Duke of Moskove and he took the title “Caesar” after Constantinople fell. The successors of the Eastern Roman Empire were the Greek-Slavic Orthodox realm of eastern and portions of central Europe that were the Greek-Slavic Orthodox areas. The various Orthodox

churches acknowledged the supremacy of the patriarch at Constantinople.

If you have ever seen Russian writing, you realize that the Russian alphabet is derived from Greek, as opposed to the alphabets in Western Europe, which derived from the Latin.

The successors of the eastern realm came down through the Greek-Slavic Orthodox areas of Eastern Europe and the Latin-Germanic Catholic realm in the west came down through the Holy Roman emperors. All that was centered in the west comes all the way down—and finally you have ten toes.

Verses 41-42, we are told that these ten toes represent ten kings.

Verse 44, ““And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; ...”

We trace it clearly. Daniel 2 runs from ancient Babylon all the way down to the time ahead of us when Jesus Christ is going to return and set up the Kingdom of God. These ten toes represent the final ten kings—this ten-nation union that is going to be smashed by Jesus Christ at His return.

All of the things that have been happening in Europe, these are things Mr. Herbert Armstrong was talking about 30, 40, 50 years ago and more. We have one or two here who have been associated with the work and have magazines and heard the broadcasts going way back to the time right after World War II. If you talk to anybody who has been around the Church for years, they will tell you they were not surprised at the events that happened when the Berlin Wall fell and when Germany reunited. Nobody who has been around the Church for years was surprised or shocked because we heard those things years ago. I heard Mr. Herbert Armstrong talking about it way back in the 60s, and I've read articles that he's written. I've talked to others who heard him say it in the 50s and in the 40s. The reason he said it was because he read Daniel 2 and other places that we will go through.

Verse 48, we find that the king was very impressed and put Daniel over the province of Babylon.

Daniel 3 shows the extent to which Nebuchadnezzar generally did not get the point.

Verse 1, as he got to thinking about this, he decided that he would build a big 90-foot tall image of gold, set it up in the plain of Dura and everybody would worship it. I'm sure he made the thing to look like himself. It started out with a head that looked like him and came on down.

He was going to build this thing. Daniel had told him about this dream, and he said this “image business” gave him a good idea.

Verses 3-6, he put up this image and all the leaders were gathered together. They were going to strike up the band and play, and when everybody heard the music, they were all supposed to bow down to the image. Nebuchadnezzar said, ‘Anybody that doesn't want to worship my new image, we are going to throw them into a fiery furnace.’

Daniel 3:7, “...when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.”

Verse 10, ““You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image...” ‘You made a decree and said that when you strike up the band, you want everybody to fall down.’

Verse 12, ““There are certain Jews... : Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; .... They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.” They evidently decided not to go after Daniel at this point. I guess they figured that Daniel had a little too much “stroke.” They would get his friends and then go for him next—a typical political move.

Verse 13, “Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king.”

Verses 14-15, he said, ‘I've heard a report that you don't serve my gods and you're not worshiping my image. I tell you what, I am going to give you another chance because I am a nice guy. I have the band right over here. I'm going to give the maestro the nod and the band is going to strike up. All you fellows have to do is fall down and worship and everybody's happy.’

Nebuchadnezzar went on and made a very foolish statement at the end of this.

Verse 15, ““...But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?””

The king said, ‘If you don't, I'm going to throw you into the fiery furnace. I don't care which God you worship; He can't get you out of that.’ That was not a smart statement.

Verse 16, ““...we have no need to answer you in this matter.”” They answered, ‘You don't need to

give us time to think this over. We want to tell you something.’

Verse 17, “...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king.” They said, ‘Do you want to know which God can do this? Well, we want you to know our God can do it. He can deliver us and He’s going to deliver us out of your hands. He can deliver us from this fiery furnace.’

Verse 18, “...let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image....”

Verse 19, “Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed....” Boy, he was mad. He commanded that they heat the furnace seven times hotter. He wanted them to really crank up the heat.

Verse 20, “And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning furnace.”

Verse 21, they bound them up and threw them in.

Verses 24-26, “Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, ‘Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?’ They answered and said to the king, ‘True, O king.’ ‘Look!’ he answered, ‘I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.’ Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, ‘Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here.’” You better believe he was really asking nicely this time. They came out.

Verse 27, “...and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.”

Verse 28, “Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, ‘Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, !...’”

Verse 29, “Therefore I made a decree [he liked to make decrees] that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; ....” This was Nebuchadnezzar’s famous and favorite punishment. Every time he got mad, he threatened to cut you up in little pieces—unless he threatened to throw you into the fiery furnace.

So, now, he was “gung ho.” He gave them a promotion. You find out what an emotional sort that old Nebuchadnezzar was.

Then in chapter 4 there is actually a chapter of the Bible that King Nebuchadnezzar himself wrote.

Daniel 4:1-2, it starts out, “Nebuchadnezzar the king, to all peoples, nations and languages that dwell in all the earth: peace be multiplied to you. I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me.” Oh, so he learned a little bit. You had better believe it!

He had this dream. He tells the story, and I am going to summarize it for the sake of time.

Verses 5-14, he saw this tree in the dream; it was a great tree. All the birds and the beasts lodged in it and it grew strong. Then a holy one gave the signal from heaven to cut down the tree.

Verses 14-17, “He cried aloud and said thus: “Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, and the birds from its branches. Nevertheless leave the stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth. Let his heart be changed from that of a man, let him be given the heart of an animal, and let seven times pass over him. This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.””

Verses 18-19, Daniel came in and talked to Nebuchadnezzar about it. Daniel was astonished when he heard it. It really bothered him because he had developed affection and a liking for the king.

Verses 20-22, Daniel told him that he represented the tree.

Verses 24-26, the upshot of the vision was that the king was going to lose his sanity. His kingdom would be taken from him. He would roam the fields for seven years like an animal—stark raving mad. At the end of those seven years, he would return to his kingdom.

Then he gave the king some advice.

Verse 27, “Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous [You need to repent.], and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity.””



He told him, 'If you will really try to straighten out and do what you should do, maybe this won't happen anytime soon.' You better believe he walked softly for a while. It scared him to death. A day went by; a week and a month went by and nothing happened. The carnal mind begins to forget some of these things. It begins to fade; it doesn't seem very real. Sure enough, about a year later, he was strutting around up there in the palace.

Verse 30, "The king spoke, saying, 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?'" 'Look at what I've done and how great I am.'

Verse 31, "While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you!'"

Verses 32-33, he went absolutely insane and wound up living like an animal for seven years.

Verse 34, "And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: ...." He came back and issued this decree that was an acknowledgement of the supremacy of God.

There are prophetic implications to chapter 4. I will not go entirely into it right now. I gave a sermon on this during the Feast of Trumpets 1989. You might want to go back to that because as we are going to see when we get into the handwriting on the wall (Daniel 5), God lays out the appointed time (Daniel 8:19).

[A transcript of the 1989 Feast of Trumpets sermon, "Babylon," is included with Bible Study # 91.]

"Seven times" (vv. 16, 32) can be seven literal times. It can be seven literal years or seven prophetic times. What Nebuchadnezzar went through was typified by what happened with the fall of Babylon. These seven prophetic times translate out into 2,520 years that passed over until the final form of Babylon could once again begin to emerge. You might want to go back on some of that.

It's no accident at all that the events that happened—the communist block began unraveling with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the communist regime—all centered around the Festival period of 1989. It all centered at the beginning of the Feast of Trumpets, and you can tie in those specific events. Go back and look at the exact dates, and it was just "bang, bang, bang." We sat and

watched those things during the Feast of Tabernacles. Every night some of these things were occurring—2,520 years from the fall of Babylon. Babylon fell on the Feast of Trumpets 539 B.C. Twenty-five hundred and twenty years later brings you to the Feast of Trumpets 1982.

What occurred at that time was a reversal of policy in Germany. Overnight the coalition party that had formed an alliance with the Social Democrats announced they were pulling out of the alliance and they brought the Christian Democrats, which is the official Roman Catholic political party in Germany. Politics in Europe do not have separation of church and state. There is an official Catholic party (Christian Democrats) in most of those nations. That's why they use the term. It was formed by the bishops after World War II.

The Christian Democrat Party was brought to power as a result of the switch on the evening that began the Feast of Trumpets 1982. Two weeks later, it took power on the evening that began the Feast of Tabernacles in 1982. Exactly seven years to the day (seven literal times from that), the Berlin Wall fell and the whole situation in Eastern Europe came together.

Some of you who were at the Feast of Tabernacles in Biloxi in 1979 heard those things. Those things were gone through and laid out. We were told exactly what was going to happen; sure enough, it came out just exactly that way. I know I have preached on this at various times. It's a matter that is laid out in advance. We will get into some of that a little bit later. If I don't pick up speed, we are going to be bogging down here. Daniel 4 tells the story of the lessons that the Most High rules in the affairs of men. God sets over nations whomsoever He will (vv. 17, 32). God has a master plan; God overrides history.

Daniel 5 tells the story of Nebuchadnezzar's grandson who had not learned that lesson. Belshazzar made a great feast. They were really boozing it up in there.

Daniel 5:1, "Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand." It wasn't just a little tiny wine glass; he was really "belting" it down.

Verse 2, "...Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them." These were sacred vessels.

Verse 4, "They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and

stone.” If they were toasting each one of these gods, by the time they got down to the god of stone, you can believe they were pretty well “crooked.” They started out with the gods of gold. They all had to drink to the gods of gold. Then they drank to the gods of silver. By the time they got down to the gods of stone and wood, nobody cared what they were drinking to. They were really going to it.

Verses 5-6, “In the same hour the fingers of a man’s hand appeared and wrote opposite the lamp stand on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king’s countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosed [KJV, “the joints of his loins were loosed.”] ....”

Now that’s an interesting expression. It means that he had a very embarrassing accident about that point. It just absolutely scared the “daylights” out of him, and, as I said, he had a very embarrassing accident about that time. “And his knees knocked against each other.” He must have been rubbing his eyes and wondering if he was having the D.T.’s [Delirium Tremens] or seeing pink elephants. What he saw was this hand that appeared out of nowhere that started writing. It just absolutely frightened him to death.

Verse 7, “The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spoke, saying to the wise men of Babylon, ‘Whosoever reads this writing, and tells me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck; and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.’”

He was the second ruler of the kingdom. This account doesn’t mention his father Nabonidus because he was several hundred miles away with another army and didn’t figure in at this point in time. Belshazzar had been here for a couple of years as the regent in Babylon.

Verses 8-9, the king’s wise men couldn’t explain what it meant and he was greatly troubled.

Verse 10, the queen came in.

Verse 11, she said, “‘There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him; and King Nebuchadnezzar your father—your father the king—made him chief of the magicians, ....’” He was greatly thought of and he was able to interpret many things for Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 12, “‘...let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation.’”

Verses 13-15, Daniel was brought in. Belshazzar tries to “lay it on thick.”

Verse 16, “‘And I have heard of you, that you can give interpretations and explain enigmas. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.’”

Verse 17, “‘Then Daniel answered, and said before the king, ‘Let your gifts be for yourself, ....’” He knew that his gifts were going to do him no good.

Verse 18, “‘O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor.’”

Verse 20, “‘But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed....’”

Verses 21-22, “‘Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses. But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this.’”

‘You remember this; you were a child when these events were going on. You remember this, but it hasn’t changed your conduct. You have this contemptible attitude toward the God of heaven.’

Verse 23, “‘And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house [temple] before you, ....’” They brought in the sacred vessels.

Verses 24-25, “‘Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written. And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN [KJV, “PERES”].’” In the Chaldean language, these were words that were units of measurement. The mina, the shekel and the peres were units of measurement. The problem wasn’t that they didn’t recognize the words. It’s like you had something that was suddenly written on the wall that said, ‘pounds, pounds, tons and ounces.’ What does that mean? You recognize the words, but the statement doesn’t make sense. ‘Feet, feet, inches and yards.’ I know what an inch is and I know what a foot and a yard is, but that’s nonsense. It doesn’t mean anything. It wasn’t that they didn’t know what a mina, shekel or peres was, but it didn’t mean anything. It was a meaningless expression. They knew that it had

to mean something, but they couldn't figure it out.

Verses 26-28, he said, "This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."

Verses 30-31, "That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. And Daruis the Mede, received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old."

Babylon had been besieged by the Persians for a period of time. The Babylonians thought they were invincible; they didn't think that Babylon could be conquered. The walls of Babylon were tremendous. They were so thick that there was like a highway that ran around the top. They could literally have chariots races on it. There was no way to break through; you could batter on it for a year. They thought it was impossible. No way! They had all the food they wanted. They had water. They had an impregnable wall. There was nothing the Persians could do. They were feasting and thought they were invulnerable—they weren't!

You know what the Persians did? They dug a trench. The Euphrates River flowed right through Babylon. There was a guard that came down into the water so you couldn't come through with boats or anything like that. The Persians dug a diversionary canal away from Babylon that connected the Euphrates River with a small tributary. That night they broke the earthen dam and diverted the water of the Euphrates. Within a very short time, the water level started dropping when they broke the dam loose back several miles away. All of a sudden, the water was diverted and it began to drop. When it dropped far enough, they moved their army into the muddy river channel underneath the wall. While Babylon was boozing it up, all of a sudden, the army was on the inside rather than out, and in one night's time, Babylon fell.

People boast and they think, 'We have it made and we have security.' I tell you what, when God is ready for something to happen, it can happen so quickly that it just makes you shake your head. That is a very important lesson.

This MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN is interesting. "MENE" has to do with numbers. We are told that this is something that has to do with numbers that are weights and they are to be divided. "MENE" is derived from "mina," which is a unit of measuring weight. "TEKEL" is the alternate spelling of "shekel," another unit of

weight. "UPHARSIN" means "and peres." The "u" or the "v" in the Hebrew language is the "and." "Peres" is yet another unit of weight.

There are 50 shekels in a MENE and 25 shekels in a peres. There are 126 shekels of weight altogether counting the one shekel. When you divide them into their smallest unit of weight, which is the "gerah," you find a reference to that back in Leviticus 27.

Leviticus 27:25, "And all your valuations shall be according to the shekel of the sanctuary: twenty gerahs to the shekel."

There are 50 shekels in a mina and 25 shekels in a peres. If you have mina and mina, add that and you have 100 shekels. Add the one shekel, the shekel (or tekell) itself, and that's 101. Add the 25 shekels that are the peres and you come up with 126. We are told 20 gerahs to the shekel. To divide it down, take these numbers that are weights and divide them down to the smallest number. Then you multiply the 20 x 126 and you come out with 2,520.

Daniel 5:27, Babylon was weighed and found wanting. It remained in abeyance. Again, you come back to this 2,520-year period—the seven times.

MENE	=	50 shekels	=	1,000 gerahs
MENE	=	50 shekels	=	1,000 gerahs
TEKEL	=	1 shekels	=	20 gerahs
PERES	=	<u>25 shekels</u>	=	<u>500 gerahs</u>
		126 shekels		<b>2,520 gerahs</b>
		<u>x 20 gerahs</u>		
				<b>2,520 gerahs</b>

Revelation 12:14 defines times, time and half a time (three and one-half years). Revelation 11:2-3 defines that as 42 months (three and one-half years) or 1,260 days (three and one-half years). Seven times is twice three and one-half years. Twice 1,260 is 2,520. So, seven times comes out to 2,520 prophetic days (or years—Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6, a day for a year). Mene, mene, shekel and peres—if you take those numbers that are weights and divide them down to the smallest denominator, they add up to a total of 2,520. Again, you have this interesting number that comes out. Babylon was weighed, found wanting and remained in abeyance for this period after it fell to the Medes and the Persians on this evening in 539 B.C.

Cyrus was the king over the entire Medo-Persian Empire. Darius the Mede was the number-two man that was set as king of Babylon. Cyrus did not enter Babylon, but he masterminded the siege. Once he saw what was occurring, he took

a large part of the army and went elsewhere. This was the fall of the capital, but all the battles weren't over. The battle with Nabonidus, who was the king of the Babylonian Empire, took place a little later. Cyrus took his army to go after Nabonidus and allowed Darius the Mede to come in as the king or regent in Babylon.

Daniel 6:1-2, "It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom; and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one [KJV, "of whom Daniel was first"], ...."

Word must have gotten out very quickly about what Daniel had done. He was very impressed and set Daniel in positions of power.

Verses 4-5, people were jealous of him. They figured they couldn't find anything to accuse Daniel of except in areas pertaining to his worship of God.

Verses 7-9, they talked Darius into making this crazy decree that nobody could pray to anybody except him for a month. They made the decree.

Sure enough, they found Daniel kept doing what he was always doing.

Verse 10, "...And in the upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days." He didn't make a big public show about it, but he went to his house and knelt down and prayed. So, sure, they were spying on him. They went and told the king he violated the decree.

King Darius had a little more humility than Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 14, "And the king, when he heard these words, was greatly displeased with himself [It just really upset him that he could have been so stupid as to do something like that.], and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him."

But remember the law of the Medes and Persians? Once a decree had been issued, it couldn't be reversed. The king kept trying to figure a way to get Daniel out of this and he couldn't.

Verse 16, so Darius told him, "...Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you." So, even Darius evidenced some faith.

He was ashamed of himself for having done something like this. He had allowed himself to be flattered and his ego "button" pushed to where he did something like this. He told Daniel he believed that the God that he served would deliver him. He knew how diligent he was and believed God would deliver him.

Verse 18, in fact, the king passed the night fasting. He wasn't able to sleep. He just worried and was just sick all night about what he had done. He certainly showed a little more humble attitude than many of the kings we have run into.

Verses 19-20, "Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, 'Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?'" And Daniel said, 'Yes!'

Verses 22-23, "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; .... Then the king was exceedingly glad for him, ...."

Verse 24, "And the king gave the command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions— ...."

We find that by this time, the lions had worked up a good appetite. The angel had shut their mouth. These old lions—can you imagine? Here are these lions. They had dinner right in front of them and their stomachs were growling and churning away, but they couldn't get their mouths open. They must have been pretty frustrated by the time those other guys were thrown down in there. The angel left and then the lions helped themselves.

Verses 25-27, Darius wrote a decree.

He was impressed.

Verse 28, "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian." Daniel was given great favor.

We go through in sort of the story flow of the book.

Now, as we come to Daniel 7, we have a vision that Daniel had in the first year of Belshazzar.

Verses 1-7, he saw four great creatures: a lion, a bear, a leopard that had four heads and a fourth great dreadful beast.

Daniel 7:17-18, "Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever." We have this sequence.

Remember, you had the gold, silver, brass and the iron. Here, you have the lion, the bear, the leopard and this terrible creature with iron teeth. It ends up with God taking the kingdom. Again, we have this same sequence. We will go more into that in the book of Revelation.

Verses 19-20, “Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; and about the ten horns that were on its head, and about the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows.”

Verse 25, we are told, ““He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.”” You will find this reference to either seven times or to half that duration that figures very prominently prophetically.

Just to call your attention to something, go back to Revelation 11.

Revelation 11:2, “...And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.” Now, how long is 42 months? Thirty-six months is three years; six more makes 42—that’s three and one-half years.

Verse 3, then notice, “And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”

In verse 2, we find 42 months and in verse 3, it talks about 1,260 days. Now, if you take a 30-day month and multiply 30 x 42, that’s 1,260. Forty-two 30-day months is 1,260 days.

Revelation 12:6, continue down, “Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.”

Verse 14, continue down, “But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, ...” One thousand two hundred sixty days, 42 months or time, times and a half a time—these are equated right here in Revelation 11 and 12. It’s not just me reaching up in the air and pulling out some numbers. The Bible uses those numbers and clearly defines 1,260 days, 42 months, time, times and a half a time, and three and one-half years. You double it and you have seven years. When you double 1,260 days, you have 2,520 days. So, certain of these numbers have significance.

I can see one number that has significance is the *time*. There’s no way I can do justice to the rest

of the book of Daniel if we quit by 8:30. I tell you what we’ll do. We are going to finish up the book of Daniel next time. I’ll make a two-part lesson out of Daniel.

Let me go on a little further here in Chapter 7. There’s still a lot of material here.

In Daniel 7:3-5, Daniel sees these four creatures coming up out of the sea. He sees one like a lion; he sees one like a bear. This bear has three ribs in its mouth.

Daniel 7:6, “After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.”

Verses 7-9, “After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words. I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; ...”

He talks about the Kingdom of God being established.

Verses 12-13, “As for the rest of the beasts [referring to the ten kings], they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven!”

Daniel uses the term “One like the Son of Man” or “One like the Son of God” several times. Do you know why he uses that term? Though Jesus Christ eternally co-existed with the Father, until He became flesh and was born of the virgin, Mary, He was not the Son of God. He became the Son of God. He was God—the Logos or the Word. There was a relationship between the Ones that we know as the Father and the Son, but they did not have a Father-Son relationship until the One that we know as Jesus Christ—the Word—became flesh. This is prior to Christ’s incarnation as a human being. Daniel can only describe Him as “One like the Son of Man” or “Son of God.” That was what He was going to be, and that is the appropriate term that we use, but that exact relationship had not yet been defined because this was several hundred years prior to that event in history.

Verse 13, continuing, "...One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him."

Verse 14, "Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed."

Verse 15, Daniel didn't understand what this meant.

Verse 17, he was told that these four great beasts are kings or kingdoms that will arise.

Verse 18, "But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever."

Verses 19-20, he was really curious about this fourth beast and about the ten horns.

Verses 21-22, "I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom."

Verse 23-24, "Thus he said: 'The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth [If you remember the image, this would be the legs of iron; this is the Roman Empire.], which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces. The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them [Or, 'in the same way.' Not 'after them' chronologically but 'in like manner as they arise' coming up out of this empire. There will be these successor states to the Roman Empire and this little one pops up—it is, in some ways, a successor and in other ways, it is not.]; he shall be different from the first ones, and shall subdue three kings.'"

Verse 25, "He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law [Here we have what, in reality, is a religious authority trying to change the law of God, trying to change the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday, trying to change the Holy Days to pagan holidays.]. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time."

Verses 26-27, "But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever. Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given

to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him."

The Roman Empire fell. After it collapsed in 476 A.D., there were three quick successor kingdoms that established themselves there in Italy and in portions of the Empire: the Vandals, the Heruli and the Ostrogoths. We will go into a little bit more about them next time.

The little horn (vv. 8, 24-25) is a reference to the papacy. The bishop of Rome was responsible for soliciting Justinian, the emperor of the east, to come in and to overthrow the Vandals, Heruli, and the Ostrogoths. Justinian came in to conquer those kingdoms and to establish what is called in history, "The Imperial Restoration," which was established in 554 A.D.

When Rome collapsed in 476 A.D., the Vandals, the Heruli and the Ostrogoths successfully came in and took over. Justinian was solicited out of the east several decades later. Finally, in 554 A.D., he came in and overthrew them. We will pick up the story there next time.

You have the handout material on Daniel. We will come back and pick it up and go through more details on Daniel 11.

There is an awful lot of material packed into the book of Daniel. There are, certainly, principles relating to Christian living and to handling ourselves in various circumstances. There is the history of the people of God during this period after the exile. There is also the background of a tremendous amount of prophecy that sets the tone for what's happening in the world today. Why do we see what's happening on the world scene? What we see are events of tremendous significance. There are events going on right now in Central Europe, down in the Balkans. There are a lot of things that tie in and are setting the stage for the final emergence of a great power in Europe.

In Daniel 2:33, 41, the final ten kings are composed partly of iron and partly of miry clay (KJV) or potter's clay. This term "miry clay" could also be rendered "ceramic." If you take something that is composed of iron and miry clay, it doesn't stick together well. You can take something of iron and ceramic and depending on how you paint it, and it can look all the same. But you know what? If you smote it with something hard, you know what would happen? —All the ceramic would shatter.

What you have in Europe right now, on the one hand, is the Germanic realm. Of course, Germany is the successor of the Iron Kingdom. Remember what the highest decoration that the

Germans gave? –The Iron Cross! Everybody else gave gold medals. The Germans had the Iron Cross. On the one hand, you have hardness and regimentation. But what do you have in the Central European areas? What do you have in the Balkans? What do you have in the old communist regime, the old successor states of the Eastern Empire? You have something that can fracture a thousand different ways. That's what it is doing right now. Eventually, it's going to be put together, but it has that potential to fracture. There's always been that fractious tendency in the eastern realm. You can go back and look at ancient Greece. Greece was never a nation. It was composed of about 50 different city-states that were always squabbling among one another. There was always that fractious tendency.

If you look at the Orthodox realm as opposed to the Catholic realm, the Orthodox realm is split. You have Serbian-Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox and all these various Orthodox groups that are technically in communion with one another, but they fracture and sub-divide. They have always had the fractious tendency in the Greek realm. The Balkans keep dividing down. They keep dividing some of these countries down and down and down.

The word "Balkans" comes from a word that means "mountain." It is a very mountainous, rugged area. You had all these little isolated groups, and everybody spoke a little bit different dialects. Until modern times, it was hard to get over the mountains. Every little group sort of thought they were similar, but there were differences. It was difficult to even rule because it was such a rugged area.

There's always been that fractious tendency that they've had. That's why, when it's likened to a mixture of iron and miry clay, it's likened to something that won't stick together. When you smite it, the iron reverberates and the ceramic shatters. Now, when God smites it, the whole thing is going to shatter. Eventually, it's going to shatter internally. It won't last very long. We will go into that when we get to Revelation. We see the stage being set. You see these fractures that are spreading through Eastern Europe and all these nations are sub-dividing. Yugoslavia has already fallen apart. Czechoslovakia is about to fall apart right now between the Czechs and the Slovaks. They are going to divide it up. It keeps dividing and subdividing in those areas.

We will stop there and pick it up next time.





Bible Study # 91  
June 23, 1992  
Mr. John Ogwyn  
(Handout and Sermon at end)

### The Writings Series—Daniel—Part 2

We are continuing in the book of Daniel. I want to come back a little bit to some material that we have touched on a little earlier. We are going to have a chance to pick up a few details that we had skimmed over.

Daniel is organized in terms of subject matter. As you go through the book, it does not strictly follow chronological development. You will notice that many of the chapters in Daniel are dated in terms of when the prophecy came. One of the things that you note is that Daniel dates some of the chapters later on in the book as having been received at times earlier than some of the previous chapters. Now there are reasons for that.

He starts out and sort of follows the chronological order up to chapter 3. Chapters 4 and 5 are interesting because they are many years apart. Many of the events recorded in chapters 6 through 12 certainly occurred prior to some of what is here in chapter 5. Daniel 4 and 5 are back to back, not because they chronologically follow one another, but because there is a point that God is making in terms of the lesson. Chapter 4 records a lesson that Nebuchadnezzar learned.

Daniel 4:17, this lesson centered around the fact that, as it is brought out, “...in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.””

In Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar had this vision of this great gigantic tree that was cut down and severed, but it was not uprooted. The stump was left. It was bound (KJV, “banded”) with iron and bronze, and seven times, prophetically, were to pass over the stump of this tree (vv. 10-26). Then the obvious implication was that it would begin to bud and put forth life once again.

There is sort of an interesting statement recorded in the book of Job.

Job 14:7-9, “For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its tender shoots will not cease. Though its root may grow old in the earth, and its stump may die in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bud and bring forth branches like a plant.”” The point is that a tree can be cut down, nothing but the

stump is left and you can have new life that can spring up from those roots.

There was a rather remarkable tree that I noticed that way. I think it was on that stretch of Highway 90 between Beaumont and Dayton, Texas. There was a house on the side of the road and a tree in the yard had been cut down. The original tree had grown up and it had been cut down. Two shoots had come up later; one out of one side and one out of the other side. By this time, they had grown up considerably and it was a very odd-looking tree. It was almost like a built-in seat where the original trunk was. You could see that the trunk was much thicker, but two shoots had come up and it had grown to where it was now putting out shade.

We have, here in Daniel 4, this big tree that was cut down. The tree was symbolic of Nebuchadnezzar who personified the Babylonian Empire. He was the first king of what is called in history the Neo-Babylonian Empire—the empire that began to be put together. Nebuchadnezzar became king about three years prior to the conquest of Judah in 604 B.C.

What Nebuchadnezzar saw in chapter 4—the tree being cut down—symbolized him being cut off. Yet, specific instructions were given that the stump was to be left in the ground. It was not to be uprooted or cut out. The stump was there and it was to be banded with iron and bronze. Nebuchadnezzar lost his mind and his kingdom.

A period of seven literal years went by. Nebuchadnezzar learned a lesson. When he assumed control of his kingdom again, he had learned a lesson. He had learned, as a result of those seven years of his kingdom being in abeyance—as far as he was concerned—that God rules in the affairs of men.

We pick up the story in chapter 5 a number of years later with Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson Belshazzar. In fact, we would date the seven years of Nebuchadnezzar’s insanity from 569 to 562 B.C. When we pick up the story of Belshazzar, this is dated in 539 B.C. So, about 23 years had transpired between the end of chapter 4 and the beginning of chapter 5. Nebuchadnezzar had been dead for many years by this time.

We pick it up in chapter 5. Nebuchadnezzar’s son, Nabonidus, became king several years later. Nabonidus associated Belshazzar with him on the throne as co-ruler. Warfare had broken out. Nabonidus took a great army and had now been gone from Babylon for a period of a couple of years. Belshazzar was left as the ruler in

Babylon, as his father Nabonidus was leading the army that had gone out to deal with the Persians. Babylon is under siege, but in their own mind, Belshazzar and his advisors are absolutely convinced that Babylon is impregnable—that Babylon can never be broken into. So, they have a party to show the absolute contempt in which they hold the Persian army. Cyrus the Great and his army have been encamped outside of Babylon for a period of months. Belshazzar held them in contempt and thought there was no way that they were going to get into Babylon.

On this evening of the new moon in the fall of the year 539 B.C. (that was none other than the Feast of Trumpets), Belshazzar had this big drunken party. After they had been drinking for a while, he called for the sacred vessels, which had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem, to be brought in. In effect, he was showing that, ‘Look, none of the other gods have been able to deliver their people from the mighty hand of Babylon. Babylon’s gods [kings] are great over all.’ To show his disdain, he brought out these sacred vessels that would have normally been shown respect because they were considered sacred to God.

He was in there and they were drinking toasts and really boozing it up. You remember the story of the handwriting on the wall; the handwriting was interpreted.

Daniel 5:26-28, ““This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”” It was going to occur.

Now, Belshazzar had not learned the lessons that his grandfather had learned 23 years before—the fact that God rules over men. The nation had an opportunity to learn through lessons given to its first king. Nebuchadnezzar may have learned certain lessons, but, certainly, the nation as a whole and, certainly, his grandson, Belshazzar, who was sitting on the throne of Babylon, had not profited at all. We have these two chapters in a position together showing the contrast.

As we touched on last time, one of the interesting things is the use of the term “seven times” in prophecy. We noted, as we went back to the book of Revelation, that there are three synonymous terms that are used in Revelation 11 and 12: 42 months, 1,260 days and time, times and half a time.

Revelation 11:2, we find, “...they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.””

Verse 3, “...two witnesses...will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days....””

Revelation 12:6, if you come down, “Then the woman fled into the wilderness, ... one thousand two hundred and sixty days.”

Verse 14, “But the woman was given two wings... , that she might fly into the wilderness ... , where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, ....”

Now, 42 months is three and one-half years. Forty-two 30-day months is 1,260 days. Take 1,260 and divide it by 30 and that will come out to 42. Forty-two 30-day months is 1,260 days. Time, times and half a time is representative of three and one-half years or 42 months or 1,260 days.

I will just call to your attention that we find in the book of Ezekiel and other places, the principle of a day for a year.

Ezekiel 4:6, ““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.””

Numbers 14:34, you will find that same statement, ““According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection.””” The principle of a day for a year is utilized in prophecy. Seven times would be twice as much as time, times and half a time. Three and one-half doubled is seven. So, 1,260 years—or 1,260 days—doubled is 2,520.

We see that aspect in Daniel 4. Nebuchadnezzar went through insanity for a literal period of seven years. Babylon was without a king for a literal period of seven years. In effect, it was under the regency of Daniel and his friends and others, perhaps of the family. Babylon was without a king. The empire was sort of on hold for this period. Nebuchadnezzar personified that empire. He was not around for those seven years. He came back and he had learned a lesson, but his kingdom had not learned a lesson; his family had not learned a lesson.

Now, we see the reference of the stump being banded seven times. That’s what we were told in Daniel 4:14-16. The stump was to be left and seven times were to pass.

When we came down to Daniel 5, we saw the handwriting on the wall. We commented that MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN were numbers that were weights—the mina, the shekel and the peres. Just to mention, the “u” or the “v” in Hebrew as it is here in “upharsin” is just the conjunction “and.” That’s why I say peres rather

than upharsin. The name of the weight was peres. "Upharsin" means "and peres." These are simply alternate spellings. They are known by the more common Hebrew names. The mene, shekel and upharsin are the Chaldean names.

There were 50 shekels in a mina and 25 shekels in a peres. They were to be added. These are numbers (that are weights) that are to be divided. We noted that you are going to divide this down (just like in terms of math), going for the lowest common denominator. If you add something up this way, you would have to use the smallest number.

Mina is mentioned twice. The shekel is the smallest of the numbers that are mentioned here. There would be 50 shekels in one mina and 50 shekels in a second mina—that would be 100. The shekel itself would be one more—101. Then there are 25 shekels to the peres—that would be 25 more shekels. That would all add up to 126.

Now what is the significance of that?

Leviticus 27:25, "And all your valuation shall be according to the shekel of the sanctuary: twenty gerahs to the shekel."

The smallest unit of measurement was the gerah, and there are 20 gerahs to the shekel. We see that the numbers that were given in the handwriting on the wall added up to 126 shekels. If you divide it down to the smallest, there are 20 gerahs to the shekel. If you multiply 20 x 126, you would come up with 2,520. Here's the interesting thing. In chapters 4 and 5 you have these same numbers—2,520. They are given in two different ways, but you come out with the same thing. You have two totally different ways of arriving at it, but it comes out to exactly the same thing.

That evening was the fall of Babylon. Babylon fell.

Daniel 4:25; 5:21, the point is, "...the Most High rules in the kingdom [affairs] of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses." God sets over nations whomever He chooses. That's an important lesson to learn. It has implications for us.

There are those who become upset, in terms of the Church, and have concluded that since Christ is unable to govern, they had better take over. You know, if God sets over nations whomever He chooses, how much more does He set over the Church whomever He chooses?

God governs in the affairs of nations. That doesn't mean that since God governs in the affairs of nations that the best man for the job is always there—the best man for the job in the sense of what job God wants accomplished. No,

Daniel 4:17 makes plain that, in terms of nations and governments of this world, sometimes the lowest (basest) of men are the ones that are set there, and God allows that.

Acts 17:26, "...[God] has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation..." God has a great plan and a great purpose. He puts individuals into positions that will carry out that purpose. Sometimes there are various lessons to be learned. God has done that even in the nations of the world where He's not nearly as involved as He is right in His own Church. Clearly, we have to understand and realize that God is the One who is in charge and to Whom we look.

We have this 2,520-year period that clearly refers to the time, as it is mentioned in Daniel 4, when the stump is banded. No new growth can come out of the stump; it's got a cap on it. It can't be broken through and no new growth is going to come until the band is broken or cut asunder. Then, you don't have a full-grown tree that pops up overnight, but new growth begins to come.

Revelation 18:2, the end-time empire is called, "BABYLON THE GREAT." It's not called Rome the Great or Greece or Persia the Great—it's called BABYLON THE GREAT. It's a restoration of something on a little different scale. It's of wider range than what had come before.

Both Daniel 4 and 5 indicate the 2,520 years in different ways but come to the same conclusion. Two thousand five hundred twenty years would elapse during which all the attempts at putting Babylon together again would be doomed to failure. It's very interesting in the way some of these things have worked out and the things that we see shaping up right now.

I want to go back and pick up a little of that in chapter 4 and 5. We commented on chapter 6.

I might mention that Darius the Mede was the ruler of the Medes who were tributary to Cyrus. Originally the Medes had been the dominant part of the empire. Cyrus the Great was the heir to both the Median and Persian Empire; he united them together. His mother was a princess of the Medes. She was the daughter of the king of the Medes; his father was the king of Persia. The Medes had been the dominant power until Cyrus came on the scene and changed the configuration around. Darius the Mede was an older man. He was a prince of the Medes who were associated with Cyrus.

Daniel 5:31, "And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old."

Evidently, when Cyrus saw that the situation in Babylon was over and the matter was resolved, he did not bother to enter into Babylon that night. He left Darius with a part of the army to come in, take and rule Babylon. Cyrus took the larger portion of the army and quickly went elsewhere. He was on his way to meet Nabonidus to defeat him and completely overthrow the Babylonian Empire. Cyrus did not return to Babylon for a few years. We read of Cyrus besieging Babylon and, yet, we read of Darius the Mede being the king entering in. Darius was serving under Cyrus, but he was the one who was actually there in Babylon. It was about two or three years before Cyrus returned.

Daniel 7:1, “In the first year of Belshazzar....” Now this goes back earlier than chapter 5, but it is added in at this later point. Chapters 7 and 8 deal with things during the reign of Belshazzar. God, in His organization of the book of Daniel, wanted chapters 4 and 5 back-to-back for clear emphasis of the 2,520 years. Also, the emphasis of the lesson Nebuchadnezzar learned and Belshazzar didn’t learn were clearly shown in a position with one another.

Now, we pick up some of the events in the story that happened earlier.

Verses 3-7, Daniel saw four creatures coming up out of the sea, each different from one another: the lion with an eagle’s wings, the bear that had three ribs in its mouth, the leopard that had four wings and four heads and, then, a fourth great dreadful beast.

You can look at Daniel 7 and Daniel 2 together. You remember the great image in Daniel 2:31-40—the head of gold, the chest of silver, the thighs of bronze and the legs of iron. Again, you had four kingdoms that were illustrated. Daniel explained to Nebuchadnezzar that he and the Babylonian Empire over which he ruled were represented by the head of gold. After him, another kingdom would arise. There were four kingdoms. Here, again, in Daniel 7:3-7, we have these four creatures.

Daniel 7:17, we’re told, ““Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth.””

The **lion** represented the first one; that would have to be Babylon, the starting point.

Verse 4, it’s the only one that was mentioned that, “The first was like a lion, and had eagle’s wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man’s heart was given to it.”

God uses the analogy of wild creatures (animals of the jungle) to describe these great world-ruling Gentile empires. The reason He uses that analogy is because that was the way they acted. The “law of the jungle” is that whoever is the biggest and strongest, eats and devours the others—and this is the way these empires and kingdoms have conducted themselves. The only exception is brought out. It mentions the lion had a man’s heart given to it and stood on its feet. Nebuchadnezzar went through his period of insanity and there was a change. He came back with a little different attitude. That is very evident in Daniel 4, but that’s the only one. That lesson was lost on everyone else. Nebuchadnezzar personally learned a lesson, but others didn’t learn from his lesson. It’s had to be repeated.

Verse 5, the **bear** is the second kingdom. It represented the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians. It’s pictured as having three ribs in its mouth. It is told to arise and devour much flesh. The three ribs represent the three kingdoms that were swallowed up by the Medes and the Persians when they established their empire. The significance would be that they swallowed up the kingdoms of Lydia, Babylon and Egypt.

Verse 6, the **leopard** is pictured as having four wings and four heads. The empire that swallowed up the Medes and the Persians was the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great, but it had a very short duration. His empire, as a unified empire, lasted ten years—actually less than that because he finished his conquest at the beginning of the tenth year. Alexander died and his empire split and divided. Four of his generals ultimately came out with portions of his empire. Seleucus ruled the portion that would be modern-day Syria coming across to Iraq. Let’s say that modern-day Iraq and Syria would be the portion Seleucus ruled. Coming down into Egypt, Ptolemy, one of Alexander’s generals, took that part. Lysimachus, who was the third general, ruled ancient Asia Minor, the area up in what is now a portion of modern-day Turkey. Cassander, the fourth general, ruled over the area that basically would be modern-day Greece and coming up into some of the Balkan area.

There was a splintering of Alexander’s empire. It splintered into four basic divisions, all of which were Greek speaking, Greek culture and Greek language. It was a continuation of what Alexander had started, but it splintered. They were unable to hold it all together. It’s what’s known in history as the Hellenistic period because it was the period of Greek dominance. It

was the dominance of Greek language and culture that set the stage for the New Testament period.

Verse 7, then there was a fourth **beast**, dreadful and terrible. It was something that was really so beyond all these others that there wasn't even an animal that was used to signify it. It's pictured as having great iron teeth. It swallowed up and devoured everything else. It picked up all the rest. It was the fourth. And, of course, the Roman Empire did that. It swallowed up the remains of each of the four divisions of Alexander's empire.

A lot of people have heard the story of Mark Anthony and Cleopatra. Cleopatra was a direct descendant of Ptolemy. She was the last Greek ruler of Egypt. She committed suicide when Julius Caesar's nephew Octavian, better known in history as Augustus Caesar, defeated her army. In 31 B.C., the battle of Actium marked the complete triumph of the Roman Empire and the complete devouring of what was left of Alexander's old empire.

Verses 7-8, this beast is pictured as having ten horns; among these horns, a little horn pops up and causes the first three horns to be plucked up by the roots. When the Roman Empire fell in the historical date of 476 A.D., the Vandals overran Rome and established a kingdom. Basically, three groups came in and vied for the supremacy in the Roman Empire. They are known historically as the Vandals, the Heruli and the Ostrogoths. From a historical standpoint, those would be the first three successors of the Roman Empire.

In 554 A.D. at the behest of the bishop of Rome, Justinian the Great, who was the ruler in Constantinople (the Eastern Empire), brought in an army and defeated the Vandals, the Heruli, and the Ostrogoths over a period of several years and caused their kingdom to be completely plucked up and ended. In 554 A.D., what was called the Imperial Restoration was proclaimed. This was another successor to the Roman Empire but this time at the behest of the bishop of Rome.

The first three, the Vandals, Heruli and Ostrogoths, though each of them nominally professed Christianity, were a different brand of heresy than the case of the bishop of Rome. There was quite a controversy.

We find here, in Daniel 7, this continuation that comes down and culminates in the return of Jesus Christ.

Verses 20-21, the little horn, we are told, "...the other horn which came up, before which three

fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows. I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them..."

He was not counted among the ten. But one of the successors of the Roman Empire was none other than the papacy itself. The papacy took much of its imperial trappings from the old Roman Empire. In the fading of the Roman Empire, the papacy achieved its greatest power and prestige. It's described, "whose appearance was greater than his fellows." Even though it was by comparison a little horn, it outlasted any of the rest of them. It's been around for a whole lot longer. It spoke great swelling things—great pronouncements and great claims were made. It was responsible for persecution against the true Church (against the saints), the inquisitions and such.

Verse 22, it endures until the Ancient of Days establishes His Kingdom.

Verse 25, we are told, "“He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law.””

Who claims to have changed the Sabbath? Who claims the authority to change the Sabbath? The very calendar we use is called the Gregorian calendar. It takes its name from Pope Gregory because he changed the old Julian calendar that was promulgated by Julius Caesar. "Change times and laws." Well, we changed sunset to sunset—time was measured in terms of a day from sunset to sunset. Based on a papal decree in the early Middle Ages, that was changed to midnight. The day of rest was changed from the Sabbath to Sunday. The whole configuration of things was changed. Here we see that authority brought out.

Daniel 8:1-3, "In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me—to me, Daniel—after the one that appeared to me the first time. I saw in the vision, and it so happened while I was looking, that I was in Shushan, the citadel...and I saw in the vision that I was by the River Ulai. Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last."

This was a peculiar looking ram. This ram has two horns and one of them seems like it is growing. It pops up a little later and gets bigger. You probably have never seen a ram that you

just stand there and watch his horns grow. You've seen rams that had horns, but Daniel saw this ram and, all of a sudden, he saw these horns start growing. One came up first; then another one came up a little later and it was taller. This was a peculiar-looking ram.

Verse 4, "I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no beast could withstand him; ..."

Verse 5, "And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes." Now this was a peculiar-looking goat. It didn't have two horns; it had one.

Verses 6-7, "Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power. And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him [the ram just sort of withered down], but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand."

Verse 8, "Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven." Now, this must have been awfully peculiar. All of a sudden, the big horn got broken off and then four little horns sprouted out.

Verses 9-10, "And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land [a reference to the land of Israel]. And it grew up to the host of heaven [or "to the people of God"]; and it cast down some of the host [some of God's people] and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them."

Verses 11-12, "He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered."

Verse 14, "And he said to me, 'For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.'" Daniel couldn't figure out what all this was about. Well, we don't have to just guess.

Verses 20-22, notice what he says, "The ram which you saw, having the two horns—they are the kings of Media and Persia. And the male goat

is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king. As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power."

The two horns are a very clear description of the empire of the Medes and the Persians. It spread out. The Medes represented the first horn. Even though the Persians came on the scene a little later, they became the dominant portion of the empire. Then the Greeks, characterized by this male goat, came forth and conquered and smashed the empire of the Medes and the Persians. This was represented by the one great horn—its first king, Alexander the Great. When he was cut off, four kings took his place, but none of them exercised a level of power he did. Here is a very clear explanation. When you put Daniel 8 together with Daniel 7 and Daniel 2, it is very clear who the succession of empires has to be.

Verses 23-25, "And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king shall arise, having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes [KJV, "dark sentences"]. His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; he shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people. Through his cunning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without human hand."

Here is something that obviously stretches down to the end time. There is a final king that is going to arise that is described as a king of fierce countenance. This is clearly the individual that is personified in the book of Revelation called "the beast" because he is the one that is going to stand up against the Prince of princes (referring to Christ) and will be broken without hand.

Remember in Daniel 2:34, we saw "the stone cut without hands" that's going to smash the image on its toes. Well, he (the beast) will be broken without human hand. In other words, it will be of supernatural origin.

There's a reference in verses 11-14 that the daily sacrifice would be taken away. I am going to come back here in just a moment to comment on that a little further. I want to go on here.

Daniel 9:1, "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..." He was the uncle of Cyrus the Great. Cyrus

made him king over the Chaldeans while he went elsewhere.

Verse 2, Daniel says, “in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books [or perhaps better rendered, “I understood by letters”], the numbers of the years specified by the word of the Lord, given through Jeremiah the prophet, ....”

Daniel had been studying the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was an older contemporary of Daniel. The scroll had been taken from Jerusalem to Babylon along with all the other treasures of the temple. That’s the way the Bible was preserved during that period.

Verse 2, continuing, “...that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.” Daniel had been studying this 70-year prophecy in the book of Jeremiah. He didn’t understand what it meant. He, perhaps, even corresponded with Jeremiah about it. He had been fasting and seeking God, trying to understand where that fit in.

Verses 3-19 have his prayer of contrition to God. Verses 20-23, Gabriel the angel appeared to him in this prayer and begins to give him some information.

Verses 24-25, “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; ....”

Seven weeks and 62 weeks are 69 weeks. There’s a reason why this distinction is made.

But notice, “from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem.” This was the decree that was issued by Artaxerxes I. The record of it is given in Ezra 7 and the date in history is 457 B.C.

Now, here’s something the critics really have trouble with. You see, no matter how late they try to put the book of Daniel, you can’t put the book of Daniel after the New Testament because there are copies of it that are that old. So, you can’t put it that late. This really gives the critics a problem.

What does it say? “From the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there will be sixty-nine weeks.” Let’s just look. How many days in a week? –Seven. Everybody agrees on that. Seventy weeks is how many days? –Well, 490

days. So, 69 weeks would be seven days less than that—483 days. Now, do a little math. We have 69 weeks, which equals 483 days. We have already seen a day for a year. You have 483 years from the going forth of the decree to restore and to build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince. The decree was issued in 457 B.C.

Now, just do a little subtraction: 457 from 483. Well, if your math is correct, you will come out with an answer of 26. You add one to that and you have 27 A.D. Why do you add one? You’re going from B.C. to A.D. You are going from 457 B.C. and going forward 483 years. There’s no such thing as the year zero. The year 1 B.C. is followed by the year 1 A.D. There was no such year as the year zero. When you take those numbers and go through from B.C. to A.D. this way, you have to add a year to compensate for the fact that there was no year zero. You can work it out on a chart or do it however you want to if you have trouble following this, but if you start with 457 B.C. and come forward 483 years, you come out to 27 A.D. The significance of 27 A.D. is that this was the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus Christ. That’s dated in the Gospel account. I’ll give you the exact reference here.

Luke 3:1, “Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, ...” It goes through all the different things.

Verses 2-3, “Annas and Caiaphas being high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching...” This was in the spring of 27 A.D.

Verses 21-23, then as we have described here, we find Jesus’ appearance, coming to be baptized of John and the beginning of his public ministry. The point is that the beginning of Christ’s public ministry was in 27 A.D., exactly when prophesied.

Now, here’s a 70-week prophecy. Sixty-nine weeks were going to elapse from the going forth of the decree until the coming of the Messiah.

Daniel 9:25, we’re told that, “...the street shall be built again [in Jerusalem], and the wall, even in troublesome times.” What it amounted to was that the decree went forth in 457 B.C. There was a period of 49 years during which the rebuilding took place and was finished by 408 B.C. That was the first seven weeks. Sixty-two weeks later, we are told, brings us down to the full 69—the Messiah would come.

Verse 26, “And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and

the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city [referring to Jerusalem] and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.”

Verse 27, “Then he shall confirm a covenant [Christ the Messiah confirmed the New Covenant] with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, ....” We are told Christ was going to be cut off in the middle of a week. A ministry of one week (or seven years) was prophesied, but He was cut off in the midst of this. “In the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.” His ministry lasted three and one-half years; then He was crucified.

Verse 24 tells us, “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, ....” When Christ died, the need for sacrifices and oblations ceased.

Now, the clear implications of Daniel 9 are interesting, in that Christ was cut off in the middle of the 70<sup>th</sup> week. There are three and one-half years of a ministry yet to be completed. I think that when you put it together with everything else, this clearly will be what occurs in the first three and one-half years of the Millennium, the completion of His ministry to Israel. I might go into a lot of detail on that at some time. He was cut off in the middle of that 70<sup>th</sup> week. The result was that the Romans ultimately came in a few years later and destroyed Jerusalem, the Temple and the whole works.

In Daniel 10:1-7, a little later after Cyrus had come back from war, Daniel sees another vision. He is praying to God and the angel appears to him. We have a little bit of insight brought out here, a little bit of insight into what goes on in the spirit realm.

Verse 9, Daniel heard this voice.

Daniel 10:11, “And he said to me, ‘O Daniel, man greatly beloved, ....’”

Verse 12, “Then he said to me, ‘Do not fear, Daniel, ....’” ‘I have been sent to help you.’

Verse 13, “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.”

The reference is to the fact that the unseen power behind the throne in many of the governments of this world is nothing other than Satan and his demons. Here was Gabriel, who having been withstood by a great demon spirit, very possibly even Satan himself, was the real power behind the throne of Persia. Michael was sent by God to assist him, and Gabriel came to reveal this information to Daniel.

Daniel 11:2-5, “And now I will tell you the truth: Behold, three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than them all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece. Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these. Then the king of the South shall become strong, as well as one of his princes; and he shall gain power over him and have dominion. His dominion shall be a great dominion.”

Daniel 11 is the most detailed prophecy in the Bible. I gave you a handout that is a reference for Daniel 11. [Daniel 11 reference is included at end of this Bible study.] If you note, it is a verse-by-verse commentary.

“Three more kings will rise in Persia.” The point is made that there were actually 12 kings of Persia after Cyrus, but there were only three that were historically significant or important: Cambyses, Darius and Xerxes. The fourth is actually Xerxes (we have to count Cyrus to get the four). He is the first important king and is the one who led the attack on Greece in 480 B.C. That set the stage for the resentment and antagonism that ultimately resulted in a mighty king (Alexander the Great) who united the Greeks, came in and conquered the Persians.

Verse 4 describes that after Alexander’s death in 323 B.C., his empire was divided among his four leading generals.

Verse 5 refers to a king of the South. Alexander’s empire split in four divisions. There were ultimately two that proved significant in terms of Jerusalem. There was a king of the North and a king of the South—south of Jerusalem was the Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt and north of Jerusalem was the Seleucid kingdom of Babylon. There were problems back and forth and Jerusalem was in the middle.



We have recorded in Daniel 11 detailed squabbling back and forth as the kings of the North (the Seleucids) and the kings of the South (the Ptolemys) were going back and forth trying to dominate the area and dominate one another. I am not going to go through every detail of Daniel 11 because you have it in handout form and for the sake of time, I will let you go through it as you follow down sort of by marriage and by year all the way down.

Verse 29, we pick it up, ““At the appointed time he [Antiochus] shall return....” About this time, we are down to Antiochus who was the Seleucid king of the North. He was known in history as Antiochus Epiphanes. That was the name by which he called himself. “Epiphanes” in Greek means “of the glorious appearing.” He had a pretty favorable impression of himself.

Verses 29-30, ““At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter. For ships from Cyprus [a reference to the Roman fleet] shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, ....” He came down and was going to “whip up” on the king of Egypt, but the Roman fleet sided with the Egyptians. They weren’t going to let him conquer Egypt; they made him surrender. He had to go back, and he was in a pretty bad attitude when he did. So, he started back through Jerusalem.

Verse 30, continuing, “...and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage. So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.” He came back through and cut a deal with the apostate Jews giving them special favor.

Verse 31, ““And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.”” On the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Kislev (which is the tenth month) in 168 B.C., Antiochus stopped the daily sacrifices at the temple. He offered a pig on the altar. He established a statue of Jupiter Olympus in the Holy Place. This is called “the abomination of desolation.” This led to desolation or destruction in Jerusalem. There was a death penalty that was pronounced on the Jews who sought to practice the religion of the Bible. Of course, there were many who tried to jump over. You always have people that look around and whatever side is winning, they try to side with it. There are people who don’t have deep convictions of their own; they are simply playing politics and trying to come out on top. God has a way of dealing with people like that.

When Antiochus came in and tried to put a stop to the religion of God, defiled the temple, offered a pig on the altar and set up this idol, you had Jews who came over and tried to side with him. Oh, yes, they were going to “buddy-up” to him. They wanted to be on the inside track.

Any time an invader has come in, there always have been those who would collaborate. You can look at any period of history—World War II or any other period—you’ve always had those who will sell out the cause that they supposedly believed in. They sell out because they want to be on the winning side.

Here were those who wanted to be on the winning side. The problem is that sometimes the side that looks like it is winning, won’t win when it’s all over with. If you want to be on the winning side, the side you better pick is God’s side because that’s the side that’s going to win—God’s side. It may appear to be coming out on the bottom end for a while, but the end of the story is that God’s side is the one that’s going to win. Here are these who sought to do this.

“Place there the abomination of desolation.”

Verse 32, ““Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.”” This certainly speaks, in type, of the Maccabee revolt that was led by the priest Mattathias that succeeded in driving out the Syrians and cleansing the temple.

Earlier in Daniel 8:11-14, we read of the daily sacrifices being taken away and these 2,300 days. The word “days” is not the word that is rendered “days” elsewhere in the Old Testament. It is not the normal Hebrew word for “day.” Literally, what it says is, “for two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings.” –2,300 evenings and mornings. The King James translators rendered that as “days,” but if you look at the context of Daniel 8, it is a reference to the sacrifices.

Sacrifices were offered every evening and every morning. There were two sacrifices a day—one in the evening and one in the morning. If we are talking about 2,300 evenings and mornings, then you really are only talking about 1,150 days because you have an evening and a morning for every day. If you had 2,300 evenings and mornings, you are looking at 1,150 days. The interesting thing is that from the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Kislev (the day the sacrifices were taken away and the abomination set up), if you come forward until the purging of the temple and the rededication of the altar by the Maccabees three years later, it was exactly 2,300 sacrifices that

were missed. There were 2,300 sacrifices that were not offered. That's the real key to it.

In the book of I Maccabees (which is not a part of Scripture but a contemporary historical account), it gives the date. If you work it out on a calendar, that's the way it comes out. There may be some sort of end-time correspondence to it, but there was clearly a fulfillment of this abomination that makes desolate, holding sway for this period of time.

In Daniel 11, we've gone through a very detailed blow-by-blow account of the events that occurred in the Middle East during, sort of, the time between the Testaments, down to the time that the altar was desecrated and then was restored. We sort of summarized in a verse and began to jump down to the very end time—the time of the end as mentioned in verse 40, “At the time of the end....”

The summary of the history of the people of God is given.

Daniel 11:33-35, “And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering. Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue. And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purge them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time.”

We have a summation. We pick it up here and come all the way down, summing up centuries in just a couple of verses.

There is a parallel in the events that occurred. Clearly, there was historically an abomination, which was the desecration of the Holy Place. It was the taking away of the daily sacrifices and the desecration that led to destruction of Jerusalem. Historically, the abomination of desolation that Daniel describes occurred with Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 B.C.

Matthew 24:15-16, Jesus said, “Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place’ (whoever reads, let him understand), ‘then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.’”

Christ spoke of a time yet future—a time that He speaks of in answer to the disciples’ question about what will be the sign of His coming and the end of the age (v. 3). He spoke of a future abomination of desolation.

Luke 21:20, Luke makes reference to this, “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near.”

Verse 24, “And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”

Mark 13:14, there's also a reference, “But when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not’ (let the reader understand), ‘then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.’” Clearly, the abomination that Daniel spoke of has significance for the end time.

Daniel 11:40-42, as we come down we are told, “At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon. He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape.”

Verse 44, “But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many.”

Daniel 12:11, we are told, “And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.”

Clearly, the abomination that makes desolate is associated with the daily sacrifice being stopped. Right now, daily sacrifices are not going on, which means, of course, that there will have to be at least the reconsecration of an altar. It doesn't mean a full temple has to be built. Sacrifices were offered in the book of Ezra. In Ezra 3:3-6, it makes plain that an altar was consecrated and work on the temple was begun. Sacrifices were begun a long time before the temple was ever completed.

We have a summation in Daniel 12. Daniel asks the question, “How long?”

Verse 6, “...‘How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?’”

Verse 7 (latter part), he was told that this time of trouble, “...it shall be for a time, times and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished.” In other words, these 1,260 days are three and one-half years when the Church has its power scattered.

Revelation 12:14 shows that the Philadelphia era, or phase, of God's Church is in her place of protection in the wilderness and no longer

actively pursuing doing a work and carrying it out in a powerful way.

Daniel 12:8, Daniel wanted to know what would be the end.

Verse 9, he was told, "...Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." It didn't say that it would never be understood. It was written down to be understood, but it could not be understood until the end time—until this age, this time, this century.

Verse 10, "Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand."

Psalm 111:10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments." The wise are going to be those who fear God and keep His commandments. They will be able to understand when the end time was to come.

Daniel 12:11-13, "And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days." We can make a little sense of this. What is it that we are told?

Daniel 12:1, "At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince [the great archangel] who stands watch over the sons of your people [the children of Israel]; ...." Michael, as an angelic being, is the one that God gave responsibility for the nation of Israel.

Verse 1, continuing, "...and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation [He's talking about the Great Tribulation.], even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book."

Verses 2-3, then it concludes, "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever." What are we told? We are told that this is going to end up when? —At the time of the resurrection when those that sleep awaken.

Verse 13, Daniel is told, "...go your way till the end; for you shall rest [You are going to die; you

are going to lie in the grave.], and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days."

He gave him two sections of days—1,290 and 1,335 days. The clear implication of verse 13 is that all these days end at the same point—the resurrection, the return of Jesus Christ. You go back out three and one-half years or 1,260 days. One thousand two hundred ninety days is 30 days prior to that—that's an extra month, something that starts a month before. Then the 1,335 days is a month and a half even earlier. We are clearly told that the 1,290 days not only ends with the return of Christ, but it begins with the taking away of the daily sacrifice. That's made plain in verse 11. We are not told what event begins the 1,335 days. We are just told, "Blessed is he who waits" for this whole time.

I am going to go into some of these things in sermons and Bible studies in Revelation.

Luke 21:20, I think one aspect of it, when you tie it in, Jesus said, "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near." He didn't say, 'When you see Jerusalem being bombarded with armies.' Look, if you are in a city and it's being shelled—like Sarajevo in Yugoslavia and in Bosnia right now—you don't need somebody to come in and say, 'I think the desolation of this place is pretty near.' Everybody knows that. You can look around and the whole place is falling apart.

Earlier we saw this individual—the beast power—an individual who will seek to obtain the kingdom by flatteries and how he will do that. He will enter in and will attempt to do some of these things in an underhanded way. When Jerusalem is encompassed with armies, it is not going to appear to everybody else that the desolation thereof is near.

We have Christ's warning in Luke 21 and we will know. I think it's very likely that this extra 45 days mentioned here is a time period prior to the onset of hostilities and the taking away of the sacrifices, during which God's Church will have time to flee and relocate. That's partly speculation, but if you put the whole thing together, I think it certainly fits. I realize that a lot of this is a little bit complex. We are going to come back. As we go through the book of Revelation, we are going to pick up more of this. You might go through and check over parts of it. I think the handout material on Daniel 11 will give you the information that will tie in with a more detailed explanation of that.

There are no questions to be passed out on the final Bible study in the Writings series. Next

Bible study will be Ezra, Nehemiah and  
Chronicles.

## BIBLE STUDY HANDOUT

### References for Daniel 11

- v. 2 While there were actually 12 kings of Persia after Cyrus, there were only three important ones. They were Cambyses, Darius, and Xerxes. The fourth king referred to is Xerxes (i.e., the fourth important king—counting Cyrus as the first). He led an attack on Greece about 480 B.C.
- v. 3 The mighty king refers to Alexander the Great who led the Greek armies in the conquest of Persia.
- v. 4 After Alexander's death in 323 B.C. his empire ultimately was divided among his four leading generals—Ptolemy, who got Egypt; Seleucus, who got Syria and Babylon; Lysimachus, who got Asia Minor; and Cassander who got Greece and Macedonia.
- v. 5 Ptolemy I, the king of the South (Egypt), was a very strong king, but in 312 B.C., one of his top generals, Seleucus, took advantage of Ptolemy's involvement in a war to take Syria and Babylon for his own empire.
- v. 6 After several decades of intermittent fighting between the Ptolemys and the Seleucids, a peace was finally achieved in 252 B.C. when Antiochus II put away his wife, Laodice, and married Bernice, the daughter of Egyptian king Ptolemy II. In 247 B.C., Ptolemy II died and Antiochus divorced Bernice and took back Laodice. Laodice proceeded to murder both Antiochus and Bernice and secure the Syrian throne for her son, Seleucus II.
- v. 7 Bernice's brother, Ptolemy III of Egypt, invaded and plundered Syria in 245 B.C. to avenge his sister.
- v. 8 Seleucus II died in 226 B.C.; Ptolemy III, in 222 B.C.
- v. 10 Seleucus III and Antiochus III, sons of Seleucus II, both warred against Egypt, and in 218 B.C., Antiochus III conquered part of Egypt's empire, including Palestine.
- v. 11 In 212 B.C., Ptolemy retook Palestine from Syria.
- v. 12 Ptolemy IV made a speedy peace treaty and soon dissipated the fruits of his victory in a wanton life style.
- v. 13 In 205 B.C., after Ptolemy IV had died and was succeeded by his infant son, Ptolemy V, Antiochus launched a successful war during which he wrested Palestine from the Egyptians
- v. 14 Apostate Jews sought to aid Antiochus in his war against Egypt.
- vv. 15-16 Antiochus took Sidon, beat Egypt in Palestine, and in 198 B.C., annexed Palestine to Syria.
- v. 17 Antiochus arranged for his daughter, Cleopatra, to marry Ptolemy V, thinking in this way to gain Egypt for himself. This backfired because Cleopatra sided with her husband against her father.

- v. 18 Antiochus then turned his attention to try to conquer the islands and coasts of Asia Minor. The Romans, under Scipio, defeated him at the Battle of Magnesia in 187 B.C.
- v. 19 Antiochus then tried to recover his dissipated wealth by sacking the temple of Belus, during which he was killed.
- v. 20 Antiochus' successor, Seleucus IV, was murdered after 11 years by Heliodorus, a tax collector he had put over getting revenue for the kingdom. Heliodorus was later driven out.
- v. 21 Seleucus didn't leave an heir, so his brother, Antiochus Epiphanes—having obtained the favor of a neighboring king—succeeded in driving out Heliodorus and taking the kingdom.
- v. 22 Antiochus attempted to replace the Jewish high priest with one of his own choice.
- vv. 23-24 Though only a few were with him, Antiochus prospered and invaded Galilee and Lower Egypt. Though his fathers had favored the Jews, he hated them.
- vv. 25-26 Antiochus launched an invasion of Egypt in which he met with great success—partly because Ptolemy Philometor was betrayed by his own officers in 171 B.C.
- v. 27 At a banquet in 174 B.C., Antiochus pretended to ally himself with Ptolemy against his younger brother, Euregetes II. Both were trying to deceive one another.
- v. 28 On his way back to Syria from Egypt, he passed through Palestine and desecrated the temple in 168 B.C. He slaughtered 80,000 Jews.
- vv. 29-30 Antiochus returned to Egypt, but the Roman fleet sided with the Egyptians and made him surrender. On his way back through Jerusalem, he extended special favors to apostate Jews.
- v. 31 On 15 Kislev 168 B.C., Antiochus stopped the daily sacrifice at the temple and offered a hog on the altar. A statue of Jupiter Olympus was set up in the Holy Place. This is a type of the future Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Jesus Christ in Matthew 24.
- v. 32 This speaks in type of the Maccabee revolt led by the priest Matthias, which ultimately succeeded in driving out the Syrians and cleansing the temple.
- vv. 32-35 This begins to skip ahead to the end time and provides a 2,000-year capsule history of the Church of God. The remainder of the chapter is dealing with the end-time fulfillment of prophecies.

Sermon—Feast of Trumpets  
September 30, 1989  
Mr. John Ogwyn

### Babylon

Last night was an anniversary. It was, in fact, the 2,527<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of Babylon. You may not initially see what that has to do with Trumpets, but in many ways, what we are celebrating today ties in very directly with an event that occurred 2,527 years ago last night. In many ways, the events that we are celebrating today are events that will culminate in the fall of Babylon the Great and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. These events that we are celebrating were, in many ways, prefigured by an event that happened so many hundred years ago.

I would like for us to more clearly understand the prophetic implication of the fall of ancient Babylon to see what it portends for us today and to understand it in light of this Feast of Trumpets. I would like for us to more clearly understand where we stand at this critical juncture in the course of human events—in the course of the events that are prophesied right in the pages of our own Bible.

Let's start out by setting the prophetic stage. You may wonder, where would you start to set the prophetic stage? To set the stage of events that have transpired, we would begin with Genesis 11. Genesis 11 begins the story of mankind's attempt to build his own civilization and government apart from God after the flood.

In Genesis 11, we have the story of the attempt of mankind, under the leadership of Nimrod, to build the Tower of Babel. This was the beginning of the city of Babylon. This is the tower from which Babylon takes its name. Babylon had its beginnings a little over 100 years after the flood—just a little over 100 years after God had wiped out humanity off the face of the earth and spared only the family of Noah.

The family had increased and, now, there was an individual prepared to stir up and lead mankind in a rebellious effort to establish their own government, society and civilization. There was the attempt of mankind—all branches of the human family—working together, but the problem is that when everybody works together apart from the direction, leading and inspiration of God, His Spirit and His laws, the results are catastrophic.

Mankind attempted to do something under the leadership of Nimrod—the Tower of Babel, the

beginning of Babylon. It was cut short because God stepped in and intervened.

Genesis 11:6-7, “And the Lord said, “Indeed the people are one and they have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.””

God confused their language and, verse 8, the nations were forced to scatter out on the face of the earth as God intended. At that point, we are introduced to Babylon; we are introduced to the Tower of Babel.

Now, as we come down historically, we pick up the story of Babylon in the book of Daniel.

God scattered the empire that Nimrod sought to build 100 years after the flood. God scattered the empire that Nimrod sought to build centered around the Tower of Babel. Centuries passed. A civilization continued to grow and thrive there in the plains of Shinar, the area centered around ancient Babylon.

As we pick up the story in the book of Daniel, we find an empire that began to come together centered around ancient Babylon. It became the first of four world-ruling empires.

In Daniel 2, we have the story of a great image that Nebuchadnezzar saw. He had a very troubling dream. In this dream, he saw a great image. It was an unusual image because the head was of gold, the shoulders and the chest were of silver, the thighs were of bronze, the legs were of iron and the feet were of iron and clay. Now this was an unusual mixture. Normally, when you see a great statue or image, the whole thing is made of the same thing, but in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he saw this gigantic image set upon a plain, and it was made of different things. At different points, the composition of the image changed. Then, most puzzling of all, he saw a stone cut without hands (a stone of supernatural origin), and it came down and smashed this image on its toes. When it smashed the image on its toes, it didn't just crack the toes off—the whole image turned to dust and the wind blew it away. The stone became a great mountain until it filled the whole earth.

If you had been Nebuchadnezzar and you had awakened from something like that, you'd be scratching your head, too, wondering, ‘What in the world is this?’ Maybe you would have thought it was something you ate the night before.

Nebuchadnezzar sensed that this dream had important implications. It was at this point that Daniel was brought to Nebuchadnezzar's attention.

Verses 28-30, Daniel was given wisdom by God to reveal to Nebuchadnezzar the meaning of the dream.

Daniel began to interpret the dream for him. He spoke to Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 2:37, “You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory...” He said, ‘You are a great ruler, a great emperor. You rule over many nations. You rule not simply Babylon but a great empire of many nations put together under your rule.’

Verse 38, “...you are this head of gold.” This head of gold represents the Babylonian Empire and was personified by Nebuchadnezzar as its king.

Verse 39, “But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.” “Another kingdom inferior to yours,” symbolized by the silver, was the empire of the Medes and the Persians that succeeded Babylon. Then he said, “A third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.” This was historically the Greco-Macedonian Empire of Alexander the Great that swallowed up the Medes and the Persians.

Verse 40, “And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters all things; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others.” The Roman Empire succeeded and swallowed up all of those that continued through.

Verses 41-44, these two legs all the way down to the end and the ten toes at the bottom represent what is extant at the time when the God of heaven will set up a kingdom—in other words, the time immediately ahead of us.

What we have in Daniel 2 is the outline of history from the time of ancient Nebuchadnezzar (600 years before Christ) all the way out to the time immediately ahead of us. We have a summary of over 2,500 years of the history of this world that continues right on out to the years immediately ahead of us when the God of heaven is going to intervene and set up a Kingdom.

So, we are introduced to Babylon once again. Babylon is the fountainhead from which this world's civilization springs. It had its origin with Nimrod and the Tower of Babel, and, here, we

see it personified with Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire.

As we continue through the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar had another dream. This was a most troubling dream.

Daniel 4:4-5, “I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace. I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.” He saw something that concerned him very much. He began to explain what he saw.

Verse 10, “These were the visions of my head while on my bed: I was looking, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great.” It was a very impressive tree; it was tall.

Verses 11-12, “The tree grew and became strong; its height reached to the heavens, and it could be seen to the ends of all the earth. Its leaves were lovely, its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, the birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it.” There were many leaves and a lot of fruit. It was a bountiful and very impressive tree. The beasts had shade under it, and there were nests in it.

Verses 13-15, “I saw in the visions of my head while on my bed, and there was a watcher [an angel], a holy one, coming down from heaven. He cried aloud and said thus: “Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, and the birds from its branches. Nevertheless leave the stump and roots in the earth [Don't uproot it; don't dig out the stump. Cut it down, cut off the branches, scatter it away, but leave the stump and the roots in the earth.], bound with a band of iron and bronze, ....” ‘Put a cap on this stump to protect it, bind it and leave it there.’

Verse 16, “...and let seven times pass over him.” Seven times would pass over it.

Nebuchadnezzar was troubled; he was wondering what this was.

Verses 20-22, he was told that the tree was symbolic of him and of the Babylonian Empire.

Nebuchadnezzar went through a very remarkable personal experience. God warned him, through Daniel, as to what this portended for him personally.

Verses 23-25, “An inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, “Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts of the



field, till seven times pass over him”; this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: they shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.”

He was impressed for a short period of time, but as months went by and nothing happened, he lapsed back into his old attitude.

Verses 28-33, one night when he least expected it and was standing there surveying the great Babylon that existed, all puffed up in his pride and vanity as to what he had accomplished, he was struck with insanity, and for seven years he roamed the fields like a wild animal.

Verses 34-36, at the end of those seven years, his sanity returned and he was restored to his kingdom. He continued to rule Babylon for several years until his death.

Nebuchadnezzar went through an experience that had implications and significance, not simply for him personally, but for Babylon and for the civilization that Babylon was symbolic of. We are going to come back to that in just a moment. Nebuchadnezzar went through an event that taught him a lesson. His successors did not learn that lesson. Nebuchadnezzar was a different man when he came out of this experience.

Several years passed. We come to the next chapter, Daniel 5.

Daniel 5 is not in chronological order. It is in the order of subject matter. It is put next to Daniel 4. It is the last event of Belshazzar. Belshazzar was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. He was the son of Nabonidus who was the king, or the emperor, of the Babylonian Empire. He had associated his son Belshazzar with him on the throne as co-ruler. At the time that Daniel 5 records these events, Nabonidus was elsewhere in the empire with an army. Belshazzar was sitting on the throne and holding sway in Babylon.

In Daniel 5, we pick up the story of an event that actually took place on the Feast of Trumpets 539 B.C. The dating of that event is attested to in many historical documents. It is one of the most well-documented occurrences of the ancient world in terms of when it occurred. You have to understand that Babylon was, to all intents and purposes, impregnable. Babylon appeared to be the city that was impossible to conquer.

Herodotus, the Greek historian, gives us the dimensions and the information of Babylon. The

walls of Babylon were 335 feet high. Do you realize how high that is? That is as tall as a 33-story building. The walls were 85 feet wide. There was literally a racetrack for chariots that ran around the top of the walls of Babylon. There were 100 bronze gates and the Euphrates River flowed through the middle. Babylon was impregnable. The Babylonians were absolutely certain there was no way to conquer Babylon.

The armies of the Medes and the Persians were besieging Babylon and sought to besiege it. Belshazzar thought so lightly of that and treated it as such a trivial matter that he had a great feast. He had a big party, and as was often the case, these parties turned into a regular drinking bout, as we find here.

Daniel 5:1-2, “Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them.”

They were sitting there really boozing it up. He began to feel pretty good and was really going to impress all of these various high-ranking rulers of the Babylonian Empire. They were sitting there, laughing and mocking this vast army of Persians that was gathered around to besiege Babylon. How ridiculous it is that anyone could think that mighty Babylon could fall. After he had boozed it up for a while, he began to feel pretty good. He said, ‘Let’s get the sacred vessels from the temple in Jerusalem in here and we will drink another toast to that because our gods [the gods of Babylon] are above all the other gods.’ They brought in the vessels from the temple and they began to drink and to booze it up out of the sacred vessels that God had commanded Solomon to make for the temple.

Verse 4, we are told, “They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone.” I’m sure they drank a toast to each of them individually. By the time they got through with all of them, you can believe they had gone through quite a bit.

About this time they were well lubricated. They were really in the process of “tying one on” and they got sobered up. If you want the absolute world’s record for how quickly somebody can be sobered up, read the next verse. They were sitting there just really enjoying the party.

Verse 5, “In the same hour the fingers of a man’s hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand

on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." Here was this hand that just appeared out of nowhere and began to write in great letters on the wall.

Verse 6, "Then the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened...." KJV, "joints of his loins were loosed." If you look that up, you will find that is a rather poetic description of an "accident" that the king suffered about that time; he had a rather unfortunate accident. That's what it means when it says, "the joints of his loins were loosed." You talk about scared! I don't know about scared straight, but he was scared sober or at least about as sober as he could get, drunk as he was.

Verse 6, continuing, "...and his knees knocked against each other." He wasn't feeling nearly so great and powerful. He wasn't feeling so important and so impressive. Something had thrown cold water all over the party. The party was over.

Verse 7, "The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers, ...." The king said, 'Bring somebody in here. Get all the wise men in here and tell me what this means.' Well, none of them knew.

Verses 10-12, the queen (she was the queen mother) told him, 'In the days of your grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, there was a man in high esteem by Nebuchadnezzar, one of the Jewish captives who was the interpreter of the secrets of God. If you bring him in here, he undoubtedly will be able to tell you what this means.'

Verses 13-17, Daniel was brought in before the king and he read the writing.

Verse 25, "'And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.'"

This phrase may be meaningless to us as reference, but the words themselves were not unknown words. It is a form of the term "mina, shekel and peres." These were weights or units of measurements. The shekel was a standard unit of measurement. There were 50 minas to one shekel. The peres was half of a mina, so there were 25 peres to the shekel. That's all well and good. If you saw something written on the wall that said, "pounds, pounds, ounces and tons," you may know the words are units of measurements and units of weight, but the words joined together that way would be absolutely meaningless to you. That's the way it was to them. The words were not some nonsense words. They were words that were known in the

Hebrew, the Aramaic and the Babylonian language. They were units of measurements with which these people were familiar, but these words appearing there didn't make sense. What was the significance?

Verses 26-28, Daniel told him, "'This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.'"

Verse 30, "That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain." That night! What he thought was impossible occurred.

Cyrus the Great of Persia had directed that the Persian troops would dig a canal to divert the Euphrates River. That night, as the party drew on, they burst the dike and began to drain off the flow of the Euphrates River as it was going through Babylon. The height of the River went down, down, down until finally they were able to put the army in the riverbed, march under the great iron gates of Babylon and emerge on the other side. Babylon fell in one night. Belshazzar was slaughtered.

Let's look a little bit. Obviously, Belshazzar had not learned the lesson that the Most High rules in the affairs of men (Daniel 4:25; Daniel 5:21). This is the lesson that God had impressed on Nebuchadnezzar. We have the story in Daniel 4 followed by the events of Daniel 5. There are other events that are recounted in the book of Daniel that chronologically come in between these two events, but these chapters are back-to-back because they tell a continuing story.

What happened to Nebuchadnezzar was symbolic for Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was cut off. The tree symbolized him. In reality, it symbolized the Babylonian Empire. It was cut off and was banded by a band of iron and bronze. The stump was left. The roots were left in the ground. The tree was cut down. How long would the dry stump and roots be left in the ground? It said, "seven times must pass over him" (Daniel 4:16). What is a "time" in a prophetic sense?

Let's notice, very briefly, how the Bible defines its own terms. Turn back to Revelation 11. I want to illustrate the point of how long is "seven times." Let's notice some things that are used synonymously.

Revelation 11:2, "...And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months."

Verse 3, "'And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand

two hundred and sixty days, ....” We saw 42 months and 1,260 days. Let’s go down.

Revelation 12:6, “Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.”

Verse 14, go down a little further, “But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, ....”

Let’s notice here. We have several terms and they are used interchangeably. Forty-two months is how long? –Three and one-half years. Thirty-six months is three years; six more months make 42. So, three and one-half years is 42 months. One thousand two hundred sixty days is 42 30-day months. You can multiply it out if you don’t trust my math. One thousand two hundred sixty days equals three and one-half years. “Time, times and half a time” is a prophetic term to refer to three and one-half years, 1,260 days or 42 months.

Daniel 4:16, we read, “...and let seven times pass over him.”

Verses 14-15, the tree was cut down, the stump was bound [banded] with iron and the roots in the ground remained. Seven times would pass over it. Seven is twice as much as three and one-half. Time, times and a half time is three and one-half years. If that’s 1,260 days, then how many days is seven times? Add it up. Take 1,260 and double it. That comes out to 2,520. Two thousand five hundred twenty days is the equivalent (demonstrated right here) for seven times or 2,520 days would pass over it.

From a prophetic standpoint, God utilizes the symbolism of a day for a year when it comes to Bible prophecy.

Numbers 14:34, for instance, ““According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year; namely forty years, ....””

Ezekiel 4:6, basically the same statement is made, ““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.”” In terms of prophetic implications, a day for a year is utilized prophetically.

Two thousand five hundred twenty days is the seven prophetic times that were to pass over this stump from the time the tree was cut down and the stump was bound with iron and bronze. Seven times—2,520 prophetic days or 2,520

years—was to pass over this stump. It was banded with iron.

Let’s look a little further. We saw the handwriting on the wall, “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.” Let’s look at that a little further. We see the significance. They are numbers that are weights which are to be divided. The literal meaning of the word “peres” is “divide.” It was a term that meant a “division” or “half”—numbers that were weights and were to be divided. The shekel was the basic unit. There were 50 shekels to the mina and 25 shekels to the peres.

Let’s add up here. We want to find out how many shekels we have here. Mina, the first one, that’s 50. If you add up, you have 50 minas; then you have another mina, so you have 50 more—that’s 100. The shekel is one shekel, that’s one. And then you have 25 shekels to the peres. You have 50, 50, 1 and 25—or 126. Now what is that? Let’s go back to Leviticus 27 and notice something.

Leviticus 27:25, ““And all your valuations shall be according to the shekel of the sanctuary: twenty gerahs to the shekel.”” The gerah is a smaller unit than the shekel. The shekel was the basic unit. The mina was worth 50 of them. The peres was worth half that many; it was worth 25. So, there were 126 shekels represented here. If you took these numbers that were weights and you divide them down to the smallest unit, we are told in verse 25 that, “the valuations are to be made according to the shekel of the sanctuary and there are twenty gerahs to the shekel.” If you had 126 shekels, how many gerahs would that be? Multiply 126 x 20. You notice something? Do you know what you come up to? You come up to 2,520.

MENE	= 50 shekels = 1,000 gerahs
MENE	= 50 shekels = 1,000 gerahs
TEKEL	= 1 shekels = 20 gerahs
PERES	= <u>25 shekels</u> = <u>500 gerahs</u>
	126 shekels <b>2,520</b> gerahs
	<u>x 20 gerahs</u>
	<b>2,520</b> gerahs

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. The seven prophetic times—2,520 prophetic days or 2,520 years—was to pass over this tree after it was cut down. The stump was left banded with iron and bronze.

Now, we come to the time when Babylon was going to fall. We come to the night of the fall of Babylon—the Feast of Trumpets 539 B.C.—the handwriting on the wall because the kingdom

had not learned the lesson that the king had learned. So, it fell. It was weighed in the balances and found wanting. Its days were numbered and it was divided to the Medes and the Persians. Babylon fell. Prophetically, there were 2,520 years that had to pass.

If you want to do a little more math, start with 539 B.C., come forward 2,520 years and you will find that brings you to the Feast of Trumpets 1982. That was exactly 2,520 years later. If you calculate it out and come out one year off from that, you have to add in one year because there was no such thing as the year zero. The year 1 B.C. was followed by the year 1 A.D. There was no such thing as a year zero. If you go through and calculate that up, you're off from just using regular math. The Feast of Trumpets 1982 is the date you come out to.

What is the significance of the Feast of Trumpets 1982? That was exactly seven years ago. We are seven years down the road from the time that those seven prophetic times were up. When the seven times were up, the band of iron and bronze that bound the stump was clipped.

Notice what Job has to tell us.

Job 14:7-9, “‘For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its tender shoots will not cease. Though its root may grow old in the earth, and its stump may die in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bud and bring forth branches like a plant.’”

The tree was cut down. The roots were left in the ground and they grew old. The stump was bound with a band of iron and bronze. Seven times or 2,520 years passed over from the time Babylon was cut down until the band was clipped. What happens when the band is clipped? As Job expresses it, ‘through the scent of water it will bud, and it will bring forth branches like a plant.’ The tree begins to grow again.

The tree is Babylon. The final world-ruling kingdom that is described in the book of Revelation and other places is not called Persia the Great or Greece the Great or Rome the Great. That final world-ruling empire that Jesus Christ is going to smash when He returns is called **BABYLON THE GREAT**.

Seven years ago from last night, an event occurred in Germany that was without precedent in post-war Germany. There was an abrupt switch. There had been an alliance governing Germany for a number of years. It was an alliance of the Socialist Party and the Centralist Free Democratic Party. Together they had governed Germany for a number of years. Unexpectedly (as it were “out of the blue”), that

night the Free Democrats decided to pull out of the coalition and the Chancellor of Germany was shocked by losing a vote of confidence in his own Parliament. This was on the evening that began the Feast of Trumpets seven years ago. Fourteen days later on the evening that began the Feast of Tabernacles (seven years ago), a new Chancellor was sworn in—the present Chancellor. A new government, the Christian Democratic Party, which is the official Roman Catholic Party in West Germany, came in.

We think in terms of separation of church and state. We need to understand that is not the situation in Europe. There are, in many cases, officially designated religious parties. The Christian Democratic Party, which exists in Germany, Italy, Spain and several European nations, is the official Roman Catholic political party. It was established as such in the aftermath of World War II. There is not the concept of a division of church and state there. In many cases, there are relationships that exist between church and state.

Very surprisingly, there was a remarkable governmental change that came about. The new government that took office began a series of decisions that have had implications in terms of the events that have occurred with the European Economic Community with the decisions to move forward.

Now, lost again in the events of the time, there was a matter of a few days later (right after the Feast of Tabernacles 1982), just as the band on the stump had been prophetically clipped, Pope John Paul traveled to Spain. He spent ten days traveling through Spain, speaking and conducting mass meetings. On the tenth day of his trip to Spain, he made a speech on the unity of Europe. He made, in that speech, a remarkable statement, and I want to quote it for you.

He said, “I, the Bishop of Rome and pastor of the universal church, issue to you, Europe, a cry. Give life to your roots. Give life to your roots.” A number of remarkable events occurred.

Let's step back. We're seven years downstream from the loosening of the band. Let's step back. Let's look and assess briefly the events that have transpired in Eastern Europe.

Pope John Paul was elected, or chosen, as Pope on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles 1978.

You remember the story? Pope Paul VI died and was succeeded by an Italian prelate who took the name, John Paul I. This man held office for just over one month and, shockingly, died. Everybody was caught by surprise. The College of Cardinals had to come back into session. On

the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles 1978, for the first time in 455 years, a non-Italian was elected as Pope—Pope John Paul II.

A few months later, on the Pentecost weekend of 1979, he made a trip to Poland. Not only was he a non-Italian Pope, he was a Pope from behind the Iron Curtain.

You have to understand that in the aftermath of World War II, when the Russian boot was planted on the nations of Eastern Europe and the attempt was made to wipe out religion, there was a disheartenment and disillusionment that settled. There were attempts to revolt. Poland made its attempt. Hungary made its attempt in 1956; Czechoslovakia, in 1968. At the time, Russian tanks rolled in and put a stop to that foolishness in a matter of a few days.

It took Stalin three and one-half years, from the close of World War II in the fall of 1945 to the spring of 1949, to consolidate his hold on Eastern Europe. By the spring of 1949, the Iron Curtain, as it was called, had rung down on Eastern Europe. By that time, all of the nations of Eastern Europe had communist governments. There was a three and one-half-year period from the close of World War II until Stalin was able to completely impose a communist government on all the nations that were east of the line where his troops had stopped in 1945 in the defeat of Hitler's Reich.

In 1949 the Iron Curtain came down on Eastern Europe. They imposed Soviet communist domination and attempted to wipe out the impact of religion. There was a disheartenment and a disillusionment that had spread. The attitude was, 'It's useless to resist; God has abandoned us.'

You have to understand, to realize, how exciting it was to the people behind the Iron Curtain when a Polish Pope was chosen. That was something that was remarkable, something no one expected. A few months later on the Pentecost weekend of 1979, he returned to Poland. He set in motion events that by the Feast of Tabernacles 1980 (a little over a year later), there was widespread labor unrest. In almost 40 years, the first independent labor union behind the Iron Curtain came to prominence. Solidarity was recognized legally right after the Feast of Tabernacles 1980. Things continued to rock along. There was the threat of Russian intervention and Soviet troops. Events began to unfold on the Last Great Day of 1982—the Last Great Day of the Feast. Just a matter of three weeks after the band on the stump had been clipped, the government of Poland sought to

reimpose complete communist rule. Solidarity was outlawed and Lech Walesa was put in jail. Seven years from that event, Poland had a noncommunist Prime Minister. Seven years! Those seven years have seen events that have begun to unfold, and we are now seeing the crumbling of what has existed behind the Iron Curtain.

Let's understand a little bit of the post-war world. For many centuries in Europe, there were empires. The world was dominated by empires that ruled over many nations, many languages and tongues. This was the common story.

Beginning with the events of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic period (at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century/beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century), the influence of nationalism began to spread, first to Europe and then out to the world. At the beginning of World War I, there were three great multi-national empires that ruled over many different nationalities and language groups in Europe. The Ottoman Empire ruled from Turkey. They ruled over a large grouping of the Middle East and the Balkan parts of Europe. The Austro-Hungarian Empire ruled over much of Central Europe, and the Russian Empire ruled over a great deal of Central Europe as well as the whole Russian Empire on into Asia.

There were three great multi-national empires that dominated Central and Eastern Europe. The nations of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, portions of Romania, Austria, Hungary and various portions that were spun off to other nations were all created in the aftermath of World War I from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The same thing happened with the breaking of the Ottoman Empire. The Russian Empire changed. The Communist Revolution overthrew the Tsar, but the Empire remained mostly intact. A few nations were pried loose. Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were pried loose, but they only stayed loose for a very short time. By 1939, Stalin made a pact with Hitler. He moved back in and he took them back. The nationalism that was set loose at the time of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic period began to spread and filter out throughout Europe and elsewhere throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It flamed up in World War I and even more so in the aftermath of World War II. The flames of nationalism had swept around the world.

We're now seeing that ingredient of nationalism taking root inside Russia, the only multi-national empire left in Europe. There are many, many different language groups and constituent groups conquered over a period of several hundred years

that were forged into the Russian Empire. These people have never looked upon themselves as Russians. They were subject to the Russian Empire, first to the Tsar and later to the Communists, but now the flames of nationalism have been fanned.

We have come to the end of 40 years. We have come to the end of a period of trial and testing. "Forty," as used in the Bible, is significant of "trial and testing." After the establishment of the post-war world, we are now seeing a destabilization take place in Eastern Europe.

Let's go on; let's understand. We looked at Babylon the Great. We saw the image of Daniel 2. We saw the head of gold, the shoulders of silver, the thighs of bronze—Babylon, Persia, Greece. We come down to the Roman Empire symbolized by two legs of iron that culminated in ten toes.

Now, understand something remarkable about the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire is symbolized by two legs. We have always commented on the fact that this is significant because the Roman Empire was split into the Eastern Roman Empire and the Western Roman Empire. Remember your history? It took place in the third century A.D. under Diocletian the Roman Emperor. He split the empire for administrative purposes. A matter of a few decades later, Emperor Constantine, who was the emperor that made Catholicism the official religion of the Roman Empire, made the split final. Rome was made the capital of the Western Empire and the ancient city of Byzantium was made capital of the Eastern Empire. Constantine, being the "humble" sort, changed its name to Constantinople. You'd never guess where he came up with a name like that. The empire was so vast, communication and transportation being what they were, it was impossible to administer from one city. The empire was officially split to an Eastern and a Western branch, the two legs.

When we have followed the story of the revivals of the Roman Empire, we have only followed the revivals of the Western leg. In our studies of prophecy, we have only followed the story of the Western leg. The reason is because that is what is prophetically significant as we are told in Revelation 13 and 17, where we see the Beast pictured in the various revivals.

In Revelation 17, we see that there were seven revivals pictured as seven heads on a beast on which the woman rode. The Catholic Church only dominated the revivals of the Roman Empire that took place in the West. We know the Roman Empire in history as the Holy Roman

Empire or, as it was officially styled during the Middle Ages, the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. That was its official title. It took in most of central Europe. It took in Germany, Italy and a vast portion of Europe. The revivals that centered on Rome and were dominated from Rome were the only part that was the successors of the Western branch of the Roman Empire.

What is the obvious implication when we come down to the final resurrection of the empire that is symbolized by the two feet and the ten toes? The obvious implication is that the final resurrection involves putting the empire back together again. You have five toes on each foot and you have one foot attached to each leg. Have you ever seen somebody where they had two feet attached to one leg and no feet attached to the other leg? That would be a rather unusual looking image—an image where you had two feet, but all ten toes are on one foot and no toes on the other foot. No, the obvious implication is that when you get at the end, we have two feet and ten toes. The final ten toes symbolize the final revival of the empire. We have not only the successors that come through the Western Empire, but we see, at the end, the East comes back together.

Many don't recognize that. Just as there was a continuation of the Western Empire, there was also a continuation of the Eastern Empire. Rome fell. The Western Empire came to an end in 476 A.D., one of the important dates you probably had to memorize years ago in World History. The Roman Empire was revived in 554 A.D. There was the Imperial Restoration under Justinian, the restoration under Charlemagne, the restoration under Otto in the 900s, then the Hapsburgs in the late Middle Ages and under Napoleon. Finally, it collapsed in 1814. From the Imperial Restoration, for 1,260 years, we follow through these revivals of the Holy Roman Empire. Mussolini attempted to revive it once more. It was a feeble sixth resurrection that culminated in the Rome-Berlin Axis that plunged the world into World War II. There is a seventh resurrection yet to occur. That seventh resurrection is the two feet, the ten toes.

What happened to the Eastern Empire while all these resurrections centered or dominated by Rome were going on in the West? What was happening in the East? Well, the Eastern Roman Empire, known in history as the Byzantine Empire, continued down through the period of the Middle Ages until 1453 when the Turks conquered Byzantium (or Constantinople). The Turks conquered it, and the Byzantine Empire

(the Eastern Roman Empire) fell just a matter of 40 years before Columbus discovered America. The Eastern Roman Empire, under the rule of Emperor Constantine XIII, fell in 1453.

That's not the end of the story because there was, a matter of several hundred miles away, an obscure little Grand Duke by the name of Ivan III. He ruled over a small territory centered around a village of wooden buildings. The buildings were of logs. It was not a very impressive city and it was not a very impressive state. This little Grand Deutsche (that's what it was termed) was the Grand Deutsche of Moskove. It is the name from which Moscow comes. It was a very small, little state centered around the area of Moscow, ruled by the Grand Duke Ivan III. Ivan III came to the throne in the 1450s. In 1472, he married Sophia who was the daughter of the last emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire. When he married her, he took the title of "Tsar." That's the title the Russian rulers were known as, "Tsar." If you spell it out in English, it looks like "Caesar." Well, it is the Russian word for Caesar.

Moscow was then termed "the third Rome" because they viewed Rome originally, then it was transferred to Constantinople and then to Moscow.

Ivan began a process of conquest that spread out and within a matter of 100 years, gave life to the great Russian state, the Russian Empire. He was the beginning. He became known as Ivan the Great. He began the conquest that began the Russian Empire. He was the first Russian ruler to take the title "Tsar." He viewed himself as the successor to the Byzantine Empire.

Let's go back 1,000 years to 990 A.D. Next year they are going to be celebrating the establishment of Christianity in Russia. Gorbachev is going to Rome to make arrangements for it. The Pope is going to go to Moscow in 1990 to celebrate the 1,000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of Christianity in Russia. Gorbachev is going to Rome to visit the Pope in a matter of a few weeks. Part of what they are going to be arranging is the trip that the Pope is going to make to Russia to commemorate the 1,000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of Christianity in Russia. Christianity was established in Russia in 990 A.D.

There was a split that took place. Sixty-four years later, in 1054 A.D., what was called the "great schism" took place, which was the split between the Roman Catholic Church and the

Greek Orthodox Church. The Greek Orthodox Church was headquartered in Constantinople and the Roman Catholic Church in Rome. The Russians were Orthodox. They followed Constantinople and the Tsar. When the Grand Duke of Moscow took the title "Tsar," he viewed himself as the protector of the Orthodox Church.

In Europe, you had two rulers with the title "Caesar," coming all the way down to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In German, they didn't call themselves "emperors." That is the English term. Their term was "Kaiser," the German spelling of "Caesar." There were two rulers in Europe for hundreds and hundreds of years. From the time of Rome, all the way down to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were two rulers in Europe who used the title "Caesar" and viewed themselves as the rightful heirs of the throne of Caesar.

The Kaisers, who ruled the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, traced their claim to the title back through all of the various resurrections of the Holy Roman Empire all the way back to Rome. The Caesars, or the Tsars, who ruled in Moscow traced their claim back through Constantinople to the Eastern Empire. You had two legs of the empire that came down. One was a German-Latin dominated Western European leg of the succession of the empire that came down. It was Catholic. That is the leg whose history is foretold in prophecy.

But there was also an Eastern leg, the Slavic leg, the successor of Constantinople and the successor of the Eastern Roman Empire that came down that was personified by the Russian rulers.

We come down and find that what we term Eastern Europe is not really Eastern Europe. It is Middle Europe because Europe goes all the way into Russia. It goes all the way to the Ural Mountains. If you look at a continental map of Europe, the nations we call Eastern Europe—Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia—call themselves Middle Europe. All these nations that we think of as Eastern Europe, that's not the term that they use for themselves. The Germans do not refer to those nations as Eastern Europe but as Middle Europe. Western Europe is the German-Latin end and Eastern Europe is the Russian-Slavic end. Middle Europe is in between, and that is the area that the Russians and the Germans have fought over for hundreds of years.

Most of the time, those nations haven't even existed on the map. They have been ruled either by the Germans or the Russians. That's why it was no new thing when Hitler and Stalin drew

a line in 1939 and all the nations of Eastern Europe disappeared from the map. Hitler took part of them and Stalin took part of them. The Germans and the Russians have been doing this for centuries. You can trace it back. Poland existed on the map for 21 years, from 1918 until 1939. That was the length of its existence as an independent country. The Tsar of Russia and the ruler of Germany had divided it up between themselves way back in the 1700s. That has been the story.

What we're seeing in Eastern Europe is an unfolding. Logically, when you come down, you have the two legs, and you come to the final two feet and to the ten toes. The obvious implication is you have Western toes and Eastern toes—toes that come out of the Western world and toes that come out of the Eastern realm.

Let's look, very briefly, at the book of Ezekiel. We've kind of set the stage for some of this. I am going to try to summarize and conclude very quickly.

In Ezekiel 27, we find the description of the final great world economic combine. Notice what it says.

Ezekiel 27:12, “Tarshish was your merchant because of your many luxury goods.” We have explained that the ships of Tarshish refer prophetically to Japan and the Japanese fleet. Verse 25, “The ships of Tarshish....”

Verses 12-13, “Tarshish was your merchant because of your many luxury goods.... Javan, Tubal, and Meshech were your traders.” Meshech and Tubal very specifically refers to Russia. Meshech is the name from which Moscow is derived; it refers to the Moscow branch of the Great Russians. Tubal refers to the Tubalsk, the Eastern and Western branches of the Great Russian people. There are three peoples called Russians: what are termed Great Russia, White Russia and Little Russia. The Little Russians are the Ukrainians; the White Russians are the Belarusians (Belorussia); and the Great Russians are Russia itself. There are two branches of Russia centered at Moscow and Tubalsk. We find, “Javan, Tubal and Meshech were your traders.”

Verse 14, “Those from the house of Togarmah [referring to the area of Siberia and East Asia] traded for your wares....”

Verse 15, “The men of Dedan were your traders; ....”

Verse 17, “Judah and the land of Israel were your traders. They traded for your merchandise wheat of Minnith, millet, honey, oil and balm.”

It talks about the Middle Eastern nations. It talks about all those various things.

Verse 25, “The ships of Tarshish were carriers of your merchandise.”

Verses 26-32, it then talks about destruction that is going to come and the wailing for the destruction of the city.

You can read Ezekiel 27 at your leisure. Go through and read Ezekiel 27. Then go back and read Revelation 18. You will find that many of the expressions and descriptive phrases John gives in Revelation 18 of the fall of Babylon the Great are exact quotations that are lifted out of Ezekiel 27.

Babylon the Great is a great world economic combine. It is a world economic order that is going to arise in Europe. What we are seeing in Eastern Europe, the band has been clipped and the tree is beginning to sprout and bud. It is beginning to grow and it is going to make a great tree to fill all the earth. It is going to include all kinds of people in it. It is going to include the nations that we have viewed as behind the Iron Curtain. It is going to include nations all over the world. It will be a great worldwide economic combine. That is the description that is described.

We come to Revelation 18; it talks about, verses 3 and 15, all nations have been made rich. It is seemingly giving the world prosperity.

Then we find that there is a crisis that occurs in the Middle East that threatens the collapse of the worldwide economic order. The United States and Britain are involved in that. There is a rededicated altar that is set up in Israel, a holy place where sacrifices are to be made. There is a crisis that is precipitated in the Middle East that draws in the United States and Britain and threatens a collapse of a worldwide economic order.

Revelation 17:12-13, in response to the crisis, we find, “And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority [KJV, “power”] for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.”

There are going to be ten nations (ten rulers) in Europe, representing both Eastern and Western Europe that will collectively combine and voluntarily relinquish power to a super leader for the purpose of sending in an army to resolve the problem—as they see it—to resolve the threat of peace and prosperity. They move very quickly into the Middle East and occupy the land of Israel, and they move in very swiftly and



occupy the United States and Britain—the Anglo-Saxon nations. The problem with the ten-nation combine, that very quickly comes together and emerges out of this great worldwide economic order, is that they are composed of iron and clay. These ten nations (rulers) that give their power to the beast are composed of iron and clay.

As you go through Revelation 17 and Revelation 13, there are not only economic implications, but there are religious implications. There is a worldwide unity that appears on the surface. ‘Peace, peace!’ they say. They come together to put a stop to this threat to peace, as they view it. Daniel tells us that these ten nations, these ten toes, these two feet, are composed of iron and clay. They are a mixture that will not stay mixed. It is partly strong and partly brittle. It will not endure. It only lasts for a short time because there is a disillusionment that comes. First, they are disillusioned with the religious leader and that causes these nations to turn on him. That brings things to a crisis. Revelation 9 describes the breakup of this worldwide economic combine. Once again history repeats itself.

Napoleon and the Tsar of Russia were allies, and Napoleon “stabbed him in the back” because he didn’t trust him. Hitler and Stalin were allies, and Hitler “stabbed him in the back” because he didn’t trust him. We are going to find, once again, the West and the East are going to be allies, but the Germans aren’t going to trust the Russians.

Revelation 9:1-12, the first woe describes the Western European attack on the Soviet Union. They will preempt and, once again, do the same thing. They haven’t learned. Hitler didn’t learn from Napoleon, and the future ruler is not going to have learned from Hitler.

We have two woes unleashed. We have the first woe, Western Europe attacking Russia; then, verses 13-21, the counter attack is described as the second woe. This worldwide trade combine breaks into war and into catastrophe that brings us to the point that all life on this planet would be annihilated except for the fact that the God of Heaven is going to set up a Kingdom.

What did Daniel see at the end of Daniel 2? What did Daniel describe? This Stone of supernatural origin smashed the image on its toes. The ten toes and the image were smashed into dust. Daniel said this symbolizes the fact that the God of Heaven is going to set up a Kingdom.

Daniel 2:44-45, “‘And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which

shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this.’”

Genesis 11 and the story of the Tower of Babel are followed by Genesis 12. What is that story? That is the story of a man God called out of Babylon, a man by the name of Abraham. Genesis 11:31, Abraham lived in Ur of the Chaldeans. Ur was a neighboring city to Babylon, a part of the land of Babylonia.

Genesis 12:1, God called a man out of Babylon to go out to a land that He would afterward show him.

Verse 4, we’re told that Abraham departed.

We are told in Hebrews 11 that Abraham departed.

Hebrews 11:8-10, “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would afterward receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

Abraham turned his back on the civilization that man sought to build, the civilization that was described and personified in the Tower of Babel. The Tower of Babel represented man’s attempt to build and unify a one-world empire and a unified one-world government. Abraham turned his back on that. He left and went to where God showed him because Abraham ‘looked for a city that has foundations, whose maker and builder is God.’

The story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 is followed by the story of Abraham in Genesis 12. There are implications for us today.

Revelation 18:2, referring to Babylon, we are told, “...‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, !...’”

Verse 4, the word for us is, “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.’” Just as God called Abraham to come out of Babylon, we, also, are called to come out of and turn our backs on spiritual Babylon.

We are living through the events that are mentioned in the pages of our Bible. The band has been clipped and the tree is sprouting and growing. As we are living through these events in the days, weeks, months and years immediately ahead of us, there is a warning that Jesus Christ gave to His Church in our time and in our day.

Brethren, if we are where we think we are in prophecy, what Jesus said in Matthew 24:42-51 applies very directly to us. The warnings that John gave to the Church in Revelation 3 apply very directly to us. If we are where we think we are in prophecy, these things apply to us.

Revelation 3:6, “He who has an ear, let him hear....”

Matthew 24:42, Jesus said, “Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.”

Verse 44, “...be ready....”

Verses 45-48, “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming...’”

He says, ‘It’s way off! Oh, it’s a long ways off! I have time to do a lot of things.’ That evil servant shall say, “My master delays his coming.”

Verse 49, the result of thinking that it is way off is, “...[he] begins to eat and drink with the drunkards...”

We find discord and animosity inside the Body. We find a worldly life style. We find they begin to eat and drink with the drunken. They begin to blend in, fit in and be part and parcel of this world.

Verses 50-51, Jesus said, “the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” That’s a very important warning for us today.

Roman 13:11-12, the Apostle Paul writes, “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent; the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.”

“The night is far spent; the day is at hand.”

Hebrews 10:37-39, the Apostle Paul tells us further, “For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.”

Brethren, it is high time for us to awake out of sleep. The warning to God’s Church in the end time is the tendency to go to sleep, the tendency to go to sleep at the switch. Right before the time comes, the tendency is to begin to drift off to sleep and to be lulled into a spirit of spiritual slumber. Some are going to begin to smite their fellow servants. Others are going to begin to eat and drink with the drunken. That is the warning that is given to our time, our day and our people. That’s the warning that Jesus gave to His disciples.

We are told that it is time to wake up. God warns His people in the end time. He says, ‘WAKE UP! The night is far spent; the day is at hand.’

Revelation 18:4, He warns, “...‘Come out of her, My people, ....’ Come out of Babylon. Leave the world behind. Don’t drag it into the Church with you. Leave the world behind. We are told to be busily “so doing.”

Matthew 24:46, “Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.” Doing the work of God.

“He who is coming will come and will not tarry.”

Brethren, do you realize what it means? The time is literally really going to come when *the air is going to be split with the blast of the trumpet* and the dead in Christ are going to rise up (1 Thessalonians 4:16), *and Jesus Christ is going to return to this earth*. He that shall come will come and will not tarry. That time is really going to come—it really, really is. It’s in the time ahead of us. We are, right now, living in the times that the prophets foresaw. We can’t set the exact day or hour. God has reserved those things into His own hand (Acts 1:7), but he is indeed blind who cannot look at the outline of what the Scriptures say, what we see on the world scene and what we see shaping up. The warning is going out. Are we going to wake up? Are we going to come out of Babylon? Are we going to be prepared, ready and so doing? –Because, “He who is coming will come and will not tarry!”

Bible Study # 92  
July 14, 1992  
Mr. John Ogwyn

The Writings Series—Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 & 2 Chronicles

This evening we **are wrapping up the Old Testament**. We are right at the very conclusion of the Old Testament, wrapping up this section of the Writings. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah, as well as Chronicles, have already been covered in one form when we went through an earlier Bible study on the historical survey of the Old Testament. However, I want to cover these books this evening in a little different way because these were the books that marked the conclusion of the third section of the Old Testament, the Writings section.

These books are what are called “postexilic.” That just means “after the exile.” The exile was one of the major events in the history of God’s dealing with ancient Israel. It was certainly a major event in the history of the Jewish people. Basically, they would rank the Exodus and then the exile in terms of the major events that define them.

The exile was the captivity that Nebuchadnezzar brought about. He invaded Jerusalem and Judea in 604 B.C. He took some of the leaders and some of the young princes of the children of the noble families back to Babylon as hostages. He took some captives and exacted a heavy penalty or tribute—a yearly tax that was to be paid. Things went along for several years. Then, when he decided that the king of Judah that he had left on the throne wasn’t paying up as much tax as he should or as frequently as he should, he came back in 596 B.C. and put Zedekiah on the throne. In general, he did some other things. He finally came in, completely destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and took the whole nation into captivity in 587 B.C. That concluded the independent Jewish nation.

The book of Daniel tells the story of the entire period that Judah was under the Babylonian domination. Daniel was in that original captivity of 604 B.C. His time as an individual of note in the Babylonian Empire went all the way down to 539 B.C. when Babylon fell and the Medes and the Persians took over. It then extended for several years on into the time of the Medes and the Persians.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah were always reckoned as one book—they were simply two sections of one book. They did not appear

separate in any Hebrew manuscript up until about 1500 A.D. Ezra and Nehemiah tell the story of the restoration of God’s people after the exile.

The book of Daniel tells the story of the fall of Babylon in 539 B.C. We saw that the night of the “handwriting on the wall,” the army of the Medes and the Persians came in under Darius the Mede. Then a few years later, Cyrus himself came back and took the throne of Babylon, after having defeated all the armies elsewhere. He came back and ensconced himself there. Cyrus was the one who issued a decree that allowed the Jews to begin to return to Jerusalem. A period of almost 70 years had gone by. The Jews had been in exile since Nebuchadnezzar’s original invasion.

Cyrus issued a decree. When he issues that decree is where it opens it up in Ezra. Ezra 1 is the story of Cyrus issuing a decree. When he issued a decree, a man of the royal house, whose name was Zerubbabel, was appointed as the Persian governor for Judah. He was authorized to lead a delegation of Jews—those who wished to go—to lead them back and to rebuild the cities and rebuild Jerusalem. Accompanying him were a number of people, including the man who was to be the high priest upon the return to Jerusalem—a man by the name of Joshua. Zerubbabel and Joshua came back, led the delegation back out of Babylon and began the restoration. One of the things that they immediately did, of course, was the physical rebuilding; they laid and dedicated an altar and began work on the temple.

The book of Ezra carries us down through the completion of the work that Zerubbabel did. Then, we skip a period of time—in the neighborhood of just about 60 years—from the end of the story of Zerubbabel’s completion of the temple until the time that Ezra himself returned from Babylon. The gap is right there in the book of Ezra. In that gap, there is nothing in the book of Ezra that tells us exactly what happened. The only book of the Bible that fills in the middle of that gap is the book of Esther. The book of Esther gives the gap of the story, but the story is given elsewhere. Ezra himself came back several years later. He came back as a priest. Then Nehemiah was allowed to come back about ten years later. He came back as the new Persian governor.

Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries. The book of Ezra covers a duration of about 80 years. The book of Ezra starts prior to Ezra’s lifetime. It tells the story of the original return under

Zerubbabel. Then there is a gap of about 60 years, and it picks up the story with Ezra's return.

If you go through the story, as told in Samuel and Kings, and compare it with Chronicles—I and 2 Chronicles provide a parallel account of the accounts that are given in 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings—you find that Chronicles tells the story from a totally different viewpoint. When we went through it in the historical outline of the Old Testament, we went through sort of a harmonized version of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles. We went through the historical flow and through whichever book that had relevant material.

But if you were to just read the story flow, 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings run through consecutively telling the story. 1 Samuel starts with the end of the Judges period—the time of Eli and Samuel—and comes all the way down through Saul and King David. Then, we pick up the story with Solomon and come all the way through the events of all the kings of Israel and Judah, which takes us down through the end of 2 Kings.

When you read the story in Chronicles, you are reading of the same period, but it's written in a totally different way. Chronicles does not try to repeat; it's not merely a repetition of what you can read elsewhere. Since it was written for a specific reason, a specific purpose, it highlights different information.

First, if you look at it, Chronicles has genealogies and then picks up the story of the kings. It tells you everything it has to say about King Saul in a few verses and spends the rest of the entire book of 1 Chronicles on the reign of King David. About two-thirds of 1 Chronicles is spent on the reign of King David. The first ten chapters of 2 Chronicles are spent on the reign of Solomon, and then everybody else is jammed into the next 26 chapters. We find, even then, that only a few kings are picked out and a great deal of attention is given to them. Most of the others are summarized in a matter of a few verses.

Second, Chronicles tells the story from a standpoint of what was going on in Judah and Jerusalem and virtually omits any information on what was happening in Israel, except as it had connection or relevance to what was going on in Jerusalem. Kings, on the other hand, tells the story in a much more evenhanded way.

Why was Chronicles written in that way? Why was the story retold from a different vantage point? One thing we have to understand is that

Satan goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). Satan has always—in the past, the present and the future—wanted to destroy God's work and God's people. I don't think that's any great revelation to any of you. I suspect all of you knew that and heard that before. We all know that. God inspired this material to be preserved for us because it gives us insight. When we find ourselves in similar circumstances, we know how to handle it.

1 Corinthians 10:11, Paul tells us, "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come." The things of the Old Testament are written down as examples for us. They are written down as examples for our admonition.

Verse 13, he also tells us, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; ..." The point is that any problem we find, anything we encounter in our lives, anything we encounter as God's people today, similar type things have been encountered by God's people in the past. One of the reasons for the stories and examples in the Old Testament is so we can look through and see how God's people handled and responded to these matters. That's an important key to being able to handle it properly. We find Satan has always wanted to destroy God's people, and when the Jews came back under Zerubbabel, Satan was prepared. He had adversaries stirred up, but notice the way he went about it.

Let's start in Ezra. In Ezra 1 and 2, we have the story of Cyrus allowing the Jews to return; we have the list of those who were going to be coming back.

In Ezra 3, we find the altar was rededicated and the Feast of Tabernacles was kept.

Now notice, as they began to work, what happened.

Ezra 4:1-3, "Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the descendants of the captivity were building the temple of the Lord God of Israel, they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers' houses, and said to them, 'Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do; and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.' But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the fathers' houses of Israel said to them, 'You may do nothing with us to build a house for our God; but we alone will build to the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us.'"

Notice, we are told that these were the adversaries, these were the enemies. What was their first attempt? You know, the devil has a couple of different tactics. One, he will try and “weasel” in from the inside; if he can’t “weasel” in and destroy something from the inside, then he will attack it from the outside. If he can’t destroy it from the outside, he will try to “weasel” in from the inside. When you go down through the story of the people of God through the centuries, that’s what you find. The devil is either trying to get in on the inside, “weasel” in and destroy it from within or he’s trying to attack it and harm it from without. No, he’s not particular; whichever way will work is fine with him.

The first thing he did—these fellows came and said, ‘Hey, you know, look, let’s all join up together. We all worship the same God; we’re all going to the same place. We will just all kind of pitch in and do this thing.’ Zerubbabel said, ‘No, we won’t. Guess again. You have nothing whatsoever to do with us and what we are doing.’

Now, who were these people? They were the Samaritans. Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles are the books that conclude the Old Testament; they end the Old Testament and set the stage for the New Testament. The Samaritans play a very important role, and their role is made plain when you read Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles. It is plain where God is working and where God is not working. Now, that is helpful because when we come into the New Testament, we are going to read some things about these Samaritans. We are going to find that they played a very key role in establishing a great false church that purports to be the Christian church. The origin of these Samaritans was given back in 2 Kings 17. You remember?

Samaria was originally the capital of Northern Israel. Omri, who was one of the kings of Northern Israel, was the father of Ahab. The city of Samaria was founded and built under Omri’s dynasty, which consisted of himself for a number of years, then his son Ahab (who is perhaps better known), and then their successors. Samaria was the capital of Northern Israel. Northern Israel, about 200 years after Solomon’s death and its establishment as an independent kingdom, was invaded by the Assyrians and taken into captivity. When the king of Assyria took them, he settled them in an area up between the Black and the Caspian Seas, and he brought in other people. He brought in Babylonians and

settled them in the area, in the cities of Northern Israel, the cities centering there in Samaria.

2 Kings 17:6, this story is told, “In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.” This was because of their sins. They had disobeyed God and had not heeded what God had said.

Verse 23, we are told, “until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, to this day.” Up until the time that Isaiah wrote this, that was the way it was.

Verse 24, “Then the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath and from Sepharvaim [These were all suburbs around the city of Babylon.], and he placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities.” So, here’s a different group of people. One of the Israelite priests was sent back to teach them.

Verses 27-28, “Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, ‘Send there one of the priests whom you brought from there; let him go and dwell there, and let him teach them the rituals of the God of the land.’ Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the Lord.”

We find the king of Assyria sent one of the Israelite priests back to be in the area. He taught them how they should fear the Lord. Now, don’t you know these priests of Northern Israel did a good job; these were the ones that Jeroboam had made priests.

1 Kings 12:31, “He made shrines on the high places, and made priests from every class [KJV, “lowest”] of people, who were not of the sons of Levi.”

Remember, those were some of the lowest people. He had made them priests—people who were not Levites. Jeroboam had instituted the golden calf and all of this. That’s what Israel had been doing ever since. So, don’t you know, one of these priests was going to do a really good job of really teaching them how to serve God.

2 Kings 17:29, notice what it says, “However, every nation continued to make gods of its own [used their own idols], and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, ...”

Verses 30-31, it then names off what they did.

Verse 32, KJV, says, “So they feared the Lord, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, ....”

Verse 33, KJV, “They feared the Lord, and served their own gods, ....” Now, that is a key statement.

Verse 34, “To this day they continue practicing the former rituals; they do not fear the Lord, nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances, or the law and commandment which the Lord had commanded the children of Jacob, whom He named Israel...” It says they don’t really fear God; they don’t really keep His statutes or His laws or His commandments. They are not really obeying God.

Verse 41, “So these nations feared the Lord, yet served their carved images; also their children, and their children’s children, have continued doing as their fathers did, even to this day.” That’s the origin of the Samaritans. This is the group of people that showed up when Zerubbabel came back, and said, ‘We worship your God just like you do. We are all in this thing together. We are all going to the same place. Let us help. We will help build the temple. We’ll just all get together.’

They didn’t really worship God. They used God’s name, and this is the key to understanding the Samaritans and their contribution. Frankly, when you look at the Catholic Church, what you see is just “baptized” paganism. The Protestants have just taken it and perhaps refined some rough edges, but they are just “chips off the old block,” too. Their holidays and their basic customs derive from “Big Mama” all the way back to Babylon.

Well, what do they do? They use the name of God; they use the name of Christ. They use the name of various people in the Bible; they use biblical-sounding terminology. They use the names of “saints” out of the Bible, and they keep on following the same old pagan stuff they have always followed. They had their various idols—the god of this, that, and the other. But now, instead of being the “god” of travel, well, he’s the “patron saint” of travel. Instead of being the “god” of this, well, he’s the “patron saint” of it. They just changed the name and kept doing the same thing. The only change was changing the name. Just sprinkle a little water on it—this statute was “this” and now it’s “that.” They kept doing the same thing. It’s incredible.

I don’t know if any of you have actually been to St. Peter’s Cathedral. If you’ve ever seen pictures of St. Peter’s Cathedral, you will notice right there in the great courtyard this giant

obelisk that sticks up there that you see in all the pictures. Do you realize what that was? That was actually transported from Egypt. It was the temple of the sun god at Heliopolis in Egypt. It was one of the great feats of the ancient world. They actually transported that thing across miles of North Africa, loaded it on barges, brought it across the Mediterranean and brought it up there at St. Peter’s courtyard. They wanted the real thing. It’s the most pagan thing you can get—the center and absolute symbol of ancient pagan sun worship. Heliopolis, which means “the city of the sun,” was the center of the worship of the sun god in Egypt. They took it and set it up right there at St. Peter’s. I don’t want to get off into that or into some of the symbolism. The point is that the Samaritans played a very important part and this has always been the Samaritan approach.

In Ezra and Nehemiah, we have the story of Satan’s attempt to undermine the work of God. We have the story in Ezra and Nehemiah and the restoration of God’s work. The nation had gone into captivity with the Babylonians and, now, the work was being restored. The work of God in that day consisted of building a literal temple and preparing the way for Christ’s first coming. Christ was going to come to His own (John 1:11); there was to be an identifiable group. That was necessary.

There were a number of important things to be done that set the stage for the New Testament. First, the Old Testament Scriptures had to be put in final form and preserved. Part of the work of God was the preservation of the Scriptures because that’s part of the very foundation of the Church. That’s what points to Jesus and identifies Jesus as the Messiah. So, it was important that the Scriptures be preserved. If the Scriptures are going to be preserved, you have to know where to look to find them. The knowledge of the truth had to be preserved.

Second, an identifiable people of God had to be preserved to serve as a nucleus around which God’s Church would be built. When Paul went throughout the Roman Empire and preached—even in the Gentile cities—do you know where he always went first to preach? He went into the synagogues because that was where the converted Jews, as well as the Gentiles who attended synagogue services, were. Gentiles did not convert to Judaism but would attend synagogue services and hear the law read.

Why was it necessary to start there? –Because you started with people who knew the law—people who were familiar with the Sabbath, the

Holy Days, clean and unclean meats, and all of these things. They were familiar with the Scriptures. They were familiar with the Bible. You had a nucleus of people that were familiar with the Scriptures and familiar with the law. Then, as others who were not familiar with those things were converted, they were added to the group. They were added to the nucleus where certain customs and practices were already being done. That was simply the way that God chose to build His Church. These things had to be preserved.

This is what we find. Satan tried to subvert by entangling the work of God with people who were not serving God. They were just practicing the same old paganism, but they had cleaned it up a little bit. These Samaritans continued to practice the same old Babylonian religion but called it by the name of YHVH, the God of Israel. Instead of calling their idol Baal or Marduk or whatever, they called him YHVH. They used the name of God and Biblical-sounding terminology to apply to the paganism they had been practicing. That was what the Samaritans did.

That's one of the reasons it's called the Babylonian Mystery religion. The thing was so mixed up and so mysterious that you couldn't figure out one thing from another. The first thing they did—they tried to subvert; they tried to come in from within. It has always been a major problem of the people of God to preserve their distinct identity and not to lose that identity by simply becoming absorbed with the world and the society around them. When God's people lose their identity, then they are quickly on the way to ceasing to be the people of God. So, the Samaritans tried to subvert it this way.

Zerubbabel rebuffed them and said, 'No, you don't have anything to do with this.' Notice what they did. Did they really want to help build the temple? Notice.

Ezra 4:4, "Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building..." They stirred up trouble, spread gossip and rumors and, just in general, were a source of trouble.

They also went to court. I tell you—read verse 5 and down the rest of the chapter and it sort of sounds like 1979.

Verse 5, "and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia." They wrote an accusation. They went to court and literally got a court order from the court of the Persian king that was a cease and

desist order that said 'you have to stop until we investigate this matter.'

They wrote an accusation.

Verse 6, "Now in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem."

Verse 12, they said, "Let it be known to the king that the Jews who came up from you have come to us at Jerusalem, and are building the rebellious and evil city, and are finishing its walls and repairing the foundations." It's amazing how you can make something sound bad. How are you going to build a city if you don't set up (finish) the walls and join (repair) the foundation? But the way they were telling it, it sounds sinister, 'They are setting up the walls of that place and are building the foundations.' That's what they came back for! That was no secret. They said they were building the rebellious and evil city.

Then they made an accusation.

Verse 13, "Let it now be known to the king that, if this city is built and the walls completed, they will not pay tax, tribute, or custom, and the king's treasury will be diminished." They said, 'You know why they are building that city? They are going to build the walls and then they are going to quit paying their taxes.'

That wasn't true, but you can accuse anybody of anything. They hired counselors (attorneys, lawyers) and they went to court. They said, 'We are worried about the king and don't want to see the king lose any money.' They were just being good helpful citizens. You can hardly read some of these verses with a straight face.

We have an order that was issued.

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

Verse 23, "...they went up in haste to Jerusalem against the Jews, and by force of arms made them cease." They sent in troops and stopped the work. They took the work of God under receivership, if you will. It is a remarkable parallel to what we experienced in 1979, which just shows that the devil is not really original.

The reason why there are so many parallels is because he does the same thing over and over again. Human nature is the same and the devil is the same. He has the same objectives and uses a lot of the same tactics. He tried to subvert, discourage and stir up adversaries and enemies. The work of God ceased.

Ezra 5:1, "Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in

the name of the God of Israel, who was over them.” Haggai and Zechariah were stirred up as prophets and told Zerubbabel that he needed to get back to building—and so he did.

Verse 2, “So Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them.” They got back to building, and it went back to court. Finally, the issue was fought out in court.

Ezra 6:1-3, “Then King Darius issued a decree, and a search was made in the archives, where the treasures were stored in Babylon. And at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of Media, a scroll was found, and in it a record was written thus: In the first year of King Cyrus, King Cyrus issued a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem: ‘Let the house be rebuilt, the place where they offered sacrifices; and let the foundation of it be firmly laid, its height sixty cubits and its width sixty cubits...’”

Darius made a search of the records and found the decree that Cyrus had issued allowing the temple to be rebuilt. Finally, the court case was won.

Verses 14-16, the temple was finished and rededicated. So, we go through this struggle with the Samaritans.

In Ezra 7, we pick up the story about 60 years later with Ezra the priest returning.

Ezra 7:10, “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.” He was given authority by the king to return and was allowed to take something back that had evidently not been taken back earlier.

Verse 14, “And whereas you are being sent by the king and his seven counselors to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, with regard to the Law of your God which is in your hand...”

Ezra brought back the official temple scrolls of the Law from Babylon. He was given authority by the Persian king to go back and inquire of the state of the nation and to take the Law back with him. Ezra was allowed to go back.

We find that he came down and he came into Judah.

Ezra 9:2, when he got to Jerusalem, he was informed, “For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, so that the holy seed is intermingled with the people of those lands. Indeed, the hand of the leaders [princes] and rulers has been foremost in this trespass.”

When you go through and find problems among the people of God, you very rarely find problems in the congregation if you don’t find problems in the leadership. When you find a righteous king of Israel or Judah, you find the people pretty well doing what they should do. When you find a wicked king, you find the people doing what they should not do. When you find a righteous judge that God had raised up, you find people pretty well responding to that. When you find a lack of righteous leadership and a bad example being set, you find people not doing what they should do, at least as a general thing.

Here, we find ‘the hand of the leaders and the rulers had been foremost in this trespass.’ What we have now come to is that the very identity of the people of God was threatened. They were on the verge of losing their identity—in terms of culture, religion, language and as a separate ethnic group—in every area. If this had gone on, within another couple of generations they would have simply lost their identity and been absorbed into the general mix of the Middle Eastern population. There wouldn’t have been a separate identity. There wouldn’t have been a Bible preserved and an identifiable people who would have remained.

Ezra was very concerned. He was astonished by what he saw and the state of things. Ezra called the people together. He called the nation together and told them that they needed to enter into a covenant.

Ezra 10:3, “Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the counsel of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.” They made a covenant to put away all of these foreign wives. There had to be a distinction. The nation was at the point of losing its identity.

Verses 5-7, “Then Ezra arose, and made the leaders of the priests, the Levites, and all Israel swear an oath that they would do according to this word. So they swore an oath. Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib; and when he came there, he ate no bread and drank no water, for he mourned because of the guilt of those from the captivity. And they issued a proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the descendants of the captivity, that they must gather at Jerusalem.”

It then goes into this covenant that they made.

Now we skip down about 12 years. We pick up the story in Nehemiah 1. Nehemiah goes to the



king of Persia and requests the job of governor. Ezra was not governor. He had certain civil authority, but primarily he was a priest and had the authority to teach and bring back the Law. Perhaps, Nehemiah had been in communication with Ezra and maybe others. He knew what was going on and was very concerned about it. Things really hadn't changed a whole lot; we are going to see why they hadn't changed.

Nehemiah 2:5, Nehemiah went to the king of Persia, Artaxerxes, and asked for the job of governor in Judah.

Verse 6, he was given the job and was allowed to return with full governmental authority.

Nehemiah 3 describes how he came in and began to oversee the repair of Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 4:1-3, "But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews. And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, 'What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish—stones that are burned?' Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, 'Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall.'"

Tobiah the Ammonite was with him and Tobiah was making fun of it. He said a fox could jump over that wall.

Verse 6, Nehemiah said, "So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work."

We find that Sanballat, Tobiah and all of these others created trouble.

Verses 8-9, "and all of them conspired together to come and attack Jerusalem and create confusion. Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night."

When Nehemiah came back, he found the work was in shambles. The tendency of people is to lose their zeal and their enthusiasm. When they came back under Zerubbabel, they were all charged to do the work; they were excited. They were coming back to Jerusalem. They were going to rebuild the temple and they were really going to get back on the right track.

There have been a lot of revivals and ups and downs of God's people through the centuries. That's a part of the story. And boy, they were all charged and were really going to get back on track. Difficulties came and time went on, and you know what happened. It's hard for people to

maintain excitement and enthusiasm. They got sidetracked. They got absorbed in their businesses, building their own houses and doing their own thing. After a while, interest was diverted. When trouble came up and the work was interfered with, interest was diverted. Then God raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, and Zerubbabel finished the temple. Then, again, they got off track.

Sixty years went by. By the time Ezra got there, they were intermarrying with the people of the land; their religious practices were affected. It was a mess. Ezra preached and the people promised they were going to do better. They were all charged, but it didn't last.

Nehemiah came back; the wall was still in shambles and all sorts of things. He said, 'The first thing we are going to do is get this thing cleaned up and get it into shape.' Immediately, the Samaritans were the source of the problem. They were stirring things up again. They did everything they could think of. They conspired and tried to discourage the people. They spread gossip and rumors and made accusations and threats.

Nehemiah was a remarkable character. Read through the story of Nehemiah. God has worked through different types of people and people of different personalities. The time that we are looking at here was a crisis period. It was a period when the very identity of the people of God could have been lost. It was one of those crucial periods in history. Nehemiah was a strong leader. I mean, he was the kind of guy that you would not want to cross. You can read the book and find out what happened to the ones that did. Nehemiah was a remarkable individual in that way.

Every leader that God has worked through hasn't necessarily been as forceful and determined as Nehemiah, at least in the sense that Nehemiah was going to get it done. It was going to be done a certain way, and he was not going to tolerate any deviation from it. A man of that caliber, a man of that sort of temperament, was really needed because if someone had taken a softer approach than Nehemiah, it wouldn't have "stuck." It was everything Nehemiah could do to set things back on the right track.

Certain things remind you of other things. Any time I read the book of Nehemiah and about some of the things where Nehemiah sort of "scorched the hair off" of them with some of the things that he said, it sort of takes me back a few years. It sort of reminds me of a few sermons that I heard Mr. Herbert Armstrong give in Big

Sandy when he sort of rattled the metal building there. There are a few of you who remember some of those things.

When I go through and think of Nehemiah, I think Nehemiah must have sort of been like that. Nehemiah had a way of really throwing the fear of God into the people. He was facing a monumental task. They prayed to God, got busy and built. Nehemiah went to God about it, but they guarded this thing. You talk about working! Verse 18, “Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet was beside me.” The Samaritans said they would disrupt the work. Nehemiah said, “We are going to build this thing. We are going to camp out here; we are going to work around the clock.”

Verse 23, “So neither I, my brethren, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me took off our clothes, except that everyone took them off for washing.”

“None of us even took off our clothes except to change in order to wash what we had on. There is no rest. We sleep in our clothes; we have our sword by our side. The guy who was to sound the trumpet of alarm was next to me and we kept this thing under surveillance around the clock.”

Nehemiah was the kind of guy that you weren’t going to scare; you weren’t going to discourage him. You talk about determined; you talk about a fellow that you didn’t want to rile up. There were a couple of things you weren’t going to do to Nehemiah: you weren’t going to scare Nehemiah and you weren’t going to discourage him. Nehemiah understood where the real help came from. It came from God.

Verses 19-21, “Then I said to the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people, ‘The work is great and extensive, and we are separated far from one another on the wall. Therefore, wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.’ So we labored in the work, and half of the men held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared.”

In Nehemiah 10:29-39, we find that the people were brought together to renew the covenant and they were reminded not to intermarry with the people around, with other nations. They were commanded to strictly observe the Sabbath. They were told to bring in the tithes and the offerings and all these things were done.

In Nehemiah 13, Nehemiah was gone for a little while. When he came back to Jerusalem (v. 6), he found that things had fallen in disrepair while he was gone. These people really didn’t have a whole lot of heart to obey.

Nehemiah 13:15-17, “In those days I saw in Judah some people treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them about the day on which they were selling provisions. Men of Tyre dwelt there also, who brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and sold them on the Sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, ‘What evil thing is this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day?’”

Verses 19-20, “...I commanded the gates to be shut, and charged that they must not be opened till after the Sabbath. Then I posted some of my servants at the gates, so that no burdens would be brought in on the Sabbath day. Now the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares lodged outside Jerusalem once or twice.” Here were people that hadn’t really gotten the big picture, yet. They sort of got on the outskirts.

Verse 21, “So I warned them, and said to them, ‘Why do you spend the night around the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you [He wasn’t talking about ordaining any of them either.].!’ From that time on they came no more on the Sabbath.”

He came down there and said, ‘I thought I told you guys to “get.” If I see you here again, I am going to turn you every which way but loose.’ They didn’t come back.

Verses 23-26, “In those days I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people. So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, ‘You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin.’”

Here is a key.

Verse 28, “And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite; therefore I drove him from me.” Now, you wonder why there was so much problem of getting this thing straightened out. The high priest’s grandson was married to the daughter of the leader of the Samaritans. That

was why they had never really been able to get the situation straightened out, up until then. People knew what was going on and they said, 'Why should we do so and so? The high priest's grandson is married to old Sanballat's daughter.' Nehemiah said he had enough, 'You've had enough time to do something about this.' So, he chased him out.

Now what happened? Josephus tells us that Sanballat then built a rival temple on Mt. Gerizim up in Samaria and made this grandson of Eliashib (whose name was Manasseh) the high priest of the Samaritans.

Let me just call your attention to the statement in John 4. When Jesus confronted the woman at the well in Samaria, do you remember what she said?

John 4:20, "'Our fathers worshiped on this mountain [Mt. Gerizim], and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.'" Why were the Samaritans worshiping in Mt. Gerizim? –Because that's where old Sanballat had built the temple and that's where the apostate priest had gone.

Verse 22, Jesus said, "'You [Samaritans] worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.'" Jesus made it very plain where you look to find the work of God. It's preserved in Jerusalem (Romans 3:1-2). It was preserved in the Jewish community, not by the Samaritans. You don't look to Samaria to find the inspired text of the Bible. You don't look to Samaria to find the pattern for what you should do. You don't look to Samaria; you look to Jerusalem. You don't look to the Samaritans; you look to the Jews. It was very apparent where God was working and where God's work was centered. It was centered in Jerusalem.

The story of Ezra and Nehemiah is the story of revival and decline—God's Old Testament Church getting off track and getting put back on track. As soon as somebody wasn't looking, they were getting off again—on and off and on and off. God had a work to be done. He had to set the stage for the New Testament period and the coming of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. The problems that were extant, in terms of the Samaritan community, are clearly identified.

Now, let's just look very briefly at **1 Chronicles**.

1 Chronicles 1-9 deal with genealogy.

Chapter 10 tells the story of King Saul.

1 Chronicles 11:1, 3, "Then all Israel came together to David at Hebron, .... Then they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the Lord by Samuel."

Verse 4, "And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, ...."

Verse 5, "...Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David)."

He made this the capital.

Verse 9, "Then David went on and became great, and the Lord of hosts was with him."

1 Chronicles 11-29 all deal with David.

Chapter 11 tells how he became king and Jerusalem was made the capital.

Chapter 12 goes on and tells a little bit about the things that David did as king.

Chapter 13 tells about bringing the ark to Jerusalem.

Chapter 14 tells more of David's greatness as king.

Chapter 15 tells the story of how the ark was brought in.

Chapter 16 goes on and discusses more information about the ark being brought into Jerusalem and shows that this was the headquarters of the work of God.

Chapter 17 tells about David wanting to build the temple.

As you come on down through Chronicles, chapter 22 tells how plans were made for the building of the temple.

Chapter 23 gives more details of these plans.

Chapters 24 and 25, David sets and reorganizes the priests and the Levites; songs are written and added to the canon of Scripture.

Chapter 28 tells how Solomon was given the pattern of the house.

Chapter 29 tells more details about the building of the temple.

1 Chronicles focuses on King David's reign and primarily focuses on the part that had to do with building the temple.

**2 Chronicles** starts with the reign of King Solomon. The first nine chapters deal with Solomon and the building of the temple.

2 Chronicles 1:1, "Now Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and the Lord his God was with him and exalted him exceedingly." It talks about all the grandeur connected with Solomon.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 tell about the building of the temple.

Chapter 5 talks about the building of the temple and about the Ark of the Covenant being brought into the temple.

Chapter 6 tells about the temple and God's covenant with Solomon.

Chapter 7 tells about Solomon's prayer and the dedication of the temple.

Chapter 8 tells about Solomon's palace.

Chapter 9 tells about the Queen of Sheba. Chapters 10, 11 and 12 tell the story of the split between Israel and Judah and what transpired. Then we go through the story of the ups and downs, the revivals and the declines. Chapters 14, 15 and 16, we look at the story of Asa, the story of the revival and the renewal of the covenant on Pentecost. Chapters 17, 18, 19 and 20, we have the story of Jehoshaphat, a righteous king who was setting judges and was trying to turn the people to obey God and to teach the law. Chapters 22, 23 and 24 tell of a remarkable occasion. It tells the story of the royal family of Judah. One of Jehoshaphat's sons married the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and it tells the problems that were created. This is the only time that Samaria and Northern Israel get mentioned, and it was in a negative context. Jezebel and Ahab's daughter Athaliah married Jehoshaphat's son and there was trouble. When Athaliah's husband and her son died, she ultimately made herself "king"; she tried to kill all her kids and grandkids. She was a "chip-off-the-old-block" in terms of her mother. One of her little grandchildren, a little one-year old grandson, Joash, was hidden in the temple. Six years later he was brought out and crowned king. He was made king and she was executed. Chapter 26 tells of King Uzziah who tried to appropriate to himself the dignity of the priesthood. Chapters 29, 30, 31 and 32, we have the story of King Hezekiah, one of the great periods of revival in Judah. It was a time when the very existence of the nation was threatened from without by Assyrian invasion and how Hezekiah sought God. God hearkened, intervened and wiped out the Assyrian army. It tells about the expansion of the canon of Scripture in 2 Chronicles 32:32. It tells how Hezekiah sought to repair the temple and rediscovered the Law. It tells about the great Passover that was held and how he was involved in all this sort of thing. In chapter 33, we have the story of Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, and his problems. Chapters 34 and 35 tell about the great revival under Josiah. In 2 Chronicles 34:15, it tells about the rediscovery of the Book of the Law and the revival that took place as the people turned back to God. Chapter 36 summarizes everything else that happened. It ends up with the captivity and then the fact that Cyrus, King of Persia, allowed the Jews to return. 2 Chronicles 36:23 ends with permission to return, to "go up!"

Even though Samuel and Kings were already a part of the canon, Chronicles was written to tell the story from an entirely different outlook. It tells the story from a priestly outlook. It deals almost entirely with the history of the southern kingdom, the Kingdom of Judah. It deals with the house of David. The emphasis is on Jerusalem as God's headquarters and the place where God has set His name. The focus is on David, Solomon, the temple and the periods of revival in Judah. It is setting the stage for the New Testament. It is focusing in on what we need to know when we come to the New Testament period. We got a little glimpse of it in John 4 when we found the contrast between the Jews and the Samaritans.

When you come down a little further to Acts 8, you read that Philip went to Samaria to preach. You find that there was a certain man there who was the religious leader of all the Samaritans. His name was Simon, Simon the Sorcerer, known in secular history as Simon Magus. "Magus" is simply the Greek word for "sorcerer" or "magician." That's where we get our word "magician."

We are told in Acts 8:9-11, that all of the Samaritans from the greatest to the least gave heed to Simon the Sorcerer. He was an individual that was looked to by all of them, wherever they might be, regardless of their station in life. We are told that he, for a long time, had bewitched them with sorcery. He was an individual who worked great false miracles and lying wonders. We are told that Simon was acknowledged by the Samaritans as being the great power of God. They viewed him as the religious leader, the great power of God. They looked to him; they venerated him as their religious leader.

Verses 12-13, we are told that when Philip came and preached and many of the Samaritans were baptized, Simon himself was baptized. But it's very apparent that all Simon did was get wet because a little bit later when Peter and John came down, Simon was very impressed with what they did.

Verse 18, he called Peter aside and offered to give him money. He offered to buy a position of leadership—to pay him. He wanted an apostleship. He wanted the power that Peter had and the position and rank that Peter had. He offered to buy it.

Acts 8:20-21, KJV, Peter said, "...Your money perish with you, .... You have neither part nor lot in this matter: ...." Now, the expressions "part" and "lot" are only used one other place.

It's used in Acts 1:24-26 to refer to Matthias being chosen by *lot* to have *part* of the apostleship of the Twelve to take Judas' place. It was a play on words. Peter is quoting Acts 1:24-26 from Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8 as a prophecy of Judas and what would happen. It's used in Acts 1, and Peter uses the same play on words when he tells Simon "you have neither part nor lot in this matter."

Acts 8:23, he told Simon, "'For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.'" 'You are bound and wrapped up in lawlessness, iniquity and in transgression of the law; you are bitter.'

We find, 20 years later, Paul is writing in 2 Thessalonians.

2 Thessalonians 2:7, he says, "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; ..." The mystery of lawlessness was already at work less than 20 years after Peter's encounter with Simon of Samaria.

There were two dispersions; there were two Diasporas in the ancient world. One was the dispersion of the Jews throughout the Middle Eastern areas and into Europe. But there was another dispersion that had taken place during the days of Alexander the Great—a dispersion of the Samaritan community. There were sizable colonies of the Samaritans, particularly in Alexandria, Egypt and Rome, Italy. Simon, we are told, was acknowledged by all of the Samaritans, from the greatest to the least, as the great power of God.

What we have is the story of the beginning of two different churches that, for a while, gave the outward appearance of being one. Paul recognized and wrote to the Thessalonians that the mystery of iniquity was already at work. The mystery religion that taught lawlessness and turned grace into license was already at work less than 20 years after that.

Jude 3, Jude had to write to the Church and exhort them to, "...contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." By the time Jude was writing in the late 60's A.D., it was already getting to the point that you had to look for and be careful to find 'the faith once delivered' because there was a counterfeit gospel. Another gospel was being preached—a false gospel—a gospel that was simply a message about the person of Christ but ignoring the message of the Kingdom that He brought. It was a message that turned grace into license to sin. It de-emphasized and played-down the law until, by the end of the century, the law was being outwardly and openly discarded.

The mystery of iniquity grew up around the nucleus of the Samaritan community in Rome and Alexandria, just as the Church of God grew up around the Jewish community as a nucleus, and then other cities of the Roman Empire. Simon and the Samaritans had always tried to take what looked like the best things going that any other religion had to offer and just sort of mix it in with what they had. They watered it down and made it easy. People didn't really have to do very much. The stage was set.

The postexilic books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles are put at the end of the Old Testament to tell the story of the conflict between the people of God and the adversary of God's work. They are there to tell the story of how Satan sought to undermine the work of God. They are there to tell the story of how God's work was preserved and to make plain where God was working and where you should look for the authoritative canon of Scripture. You are not to look off somewhere, here or there, but you should look to the official Jewish community in Jerusalem.

John 4:22, Jesus said salvation was of the Jews. They are the ones who had retained and preserved the knowledge necessary for salvation, not with the Samaritans.

John 4:22, Jesus told the woman at the well, "'You [Samaritans] worship what you do not know [You don't even know what you are talking about.]; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.'"

Romans 3:1-2, the Jewish community preserved the authoritative Word of God and that is where you look to find the Bible. The stage was set for the New Testament work of God. The end of the Old Testament made it plain to God's people in the first century of the New Testament where you should look to find the work that God was doing.

The Old Testament is filled with the stories of the ups and downs of the work of God and of the people of God. God has chosen to work through human beings; He raised up people and He raised up a work. Time goes on; people die and another generation comes along. There are very vital and important lessons. That's why these examples are recorded for us. Human nature hasn't changed; the pulls of human nature are the same. There may be specifics that change, in terms of what the specific issue is at a given point in time, but the principles remain the same. There is the importance of God's people retaining and preserving their identity—the importance of retaining a complete allegiance

and devotion to God, of not being enticed by the world around us and the attempts that Satan will make either to subvert God's work from within or to attack it and destroy it from without.

The one thing you can be assured of is that the devil is never going to let God's work alone. He is either going to be doing one or the other, but he's not just going to go out and leave it alone. You go through the Scriptures and find over and over this continual thing. God is allowing that because that's a trial and a test on God's people.

Are we, when the work is being attacked from without, going to show courage and the dedication to look to God, to trust God and to serve God in the midst of external persecution and difficulty? When the work is being attacked and the devil is attempting to subvert it and destroy it from within—either through gossip, rumor and accusation or through compromise as occurred in the days of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah—what are we going to do? Are we going to keep our eyes on God's law? Are we going to be careful and do what we should do?

These things were preserved for God's people. The thing we can be assured of is that we go through some of these things over and over. We have to keep our orientation where it should be—to serve God, to put God first and to realize that God has a plan and a purpose. We can't afford to get derailed from the track that God wants His people going down. As you go through the story, you find over and over that those were the issues.

When God concluded the Old Testament, He concluded it in the Writings section, with books that had a timeless message for the people of God. That set the stage for the New Testament with information that was important for God's people to understand at the time when Jesus came as the Messiah and the New Testament Church was raised up and established.

With that, we have concluded the Old Testament. We have concluded the section of the Writings. We will get into the book of Revelation next Bible study.