

FACING THE FUTURE WITHOUT FEAR

**THE BIBLE REVEALS WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN IN THE LAST DAYS.
ARE YOU READY TO READ BETWEEN THE LINES?**

When we consider that at least one-quarter of God's written word is predictive prophesy, notes Derek Prince, we are drawn to its pages with a new vision and a great anticipation.

Through grounded, scholarly, optimistic and personal insights, this trusted Bible teacher will help you gain new understanding about what to expect as time draws to a close.

Even though God's 'secret things' remain hidden, believers can study and act on the 'revealed things' as He makes them known.

Discover how acting on these assures our preservation and ultimate victory – and allows the church to complete our mission to bring about the final sign of the end.

*This study by international Bible teacher Derek Prince, is compiled from an audio series from the
'Derek Prince, Legacy Radio' series and is compiled here in a text format by Albert Chipps.*

FACING THE FUTURE

Study No. 1 – SECRET THINGS AND REVEALED THINGS



Throughout human history men have always sought to know what the future holds. Traditionally they've sought this knowledge in ways that go beyond what man can discover merely by reason or his senses. Ways such as astrology, oracles, fortune telling and various forms of mysticism. Man's attempts to attain knowledge of the future in these ways have proved elusive and deceptive. In more recent times, man has also sought this kind of knowledge of the future in more sophisticated and scientific ways, studies and surveys have been made by experts in various fields. In recent decades the help of computers has been extensively invoked. The published results of such studies as these have often proved thought provoking and helpful. Nevertheless, there are many unknown contingencies which no human mind or system can foresee and which could radically effect the course of on-going events. For this reason, none of these studies can be accepted as fully reliable.

There remains a third source to which we may look for insight into the future. This third source is the Bible. And it is to the Bible to which we will be looking for that insight to the future. Will see in this study that the Bible definitely offers light to those who study it and obey it. It makes many such claims. We'll look at only one such claim in Psalm 119:105, where the psalmist says to the lord,

"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."

God's word provides light for our feet and a light for our path. In other words, it always shows us where to put the next step. It may not always show a long way ahead but we are never left to walk in darkness. What a tremendous blessing that is! I hope you really appreciate that, that if you really study and obey your bible, you'll never be left walking in darkness.

God, in the Bible, specifically claims to foretell the future and He is the only one who can see us safely *through* the future.

Then again in Isaiah 46:9-10, ***'Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.'***

There's a very clear claim, God says right from the beginning, 'I know what the end will be and I declare it and I have a purpose revealed in My word and that purpose will stand. It will work out the way I have said it will be'

That's very clear, specific language. Furthermore, God, in the Bible, rejects the claim of other sources of information for the future such as astrologers, fortune-tellers and so on, of whom there were multitudes in biblical days, just as there are today. This is what the Lord says about these alternative sources of information in Isaiah 44:24-26,

"This is what the Lord says, "your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the Lord, the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens, who spreads out the earth by myself, who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, [or fortune-tellers] who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense, who carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the predictions of his messengers,"

There's the contrast, when God's servants predict, God stands behind it and sees that it happens. When other people from other sources make predictions, God says He'll turn them upside down and make them look foolish.

Look at Isaiah 46:10 again, it's so emphatic: ***"... I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.'"*** That's almighty God speaking. He created the heavens, He created the earth, He created man and He's in full control of all that He created.

The Bible not merely *claims* to predict the future but more important than that, it has a record of proven correctness over many centuries. There are many, many things in the Bible which were predicted long before they ever happened and which have taken place exactly as the Bible said they would. There are so many areas of biblical prophecy but we're going to look at just two themes.

1. THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST.

The Bible predicted every significant event of the life of Jesus in its prophesy in the Old Testament in accurate detail. Concerning each one of which it says, 'it happened that the scripture might be fulfilled'. You see, not merely does the Bible predict but in a certain sense it has 'control' over what's going to happen.

Here are eighteen specific events in the life of Jesus predicted in the Bible:

1. His birth of a virgin.
2. His birth at Bethlehem.
3. His flight into Egypt.
4. His dwelling at Nazareth.
5. His being anointed by the Holy Spirit.
6. His ministry at Galilee.
7. His healing of the sick.
8. The rejection of His teaching and miracles by the Jews.
9. His use of parables.
10. His being betrayed by a friend.
11. His being forsaken by His disciples.
12. His being hated without a cause.
13. His being condemned with criminals.
14. His garments being parted and divided by lot.
15. His being offered vinegar for His thirst.
16. His body being pierced without His bones being broken.
17. His being buried in a rich man's tomb.
18. His rising from the dead on the third day.

So there are eighteen points in which the Bible was correct concerning the life of Jesus.

2. THE NATION OF ISRAEL

The prophecies of Israel are far too numerous to list. Suffice it to say that the Bible has accurately predicted the course of Israel's history for past 3500 years! Here are seven specific aspects of Israel's history, all of which were predicted in the Bible:

1. Israel's conquest in the land of Canaan.
2. The destruction of both the first and the second temple.
3. Israel's exile in Babylon and their return from Babylon.
4. Their subsequent dispersal as exiles among all nations.
5. Their persecutions and sufferings during their dispersal.
6. The preservation of a remnant in spite of all attempts to destroy them.
7. Their re-gathering from all nations to a restored state in the land of Israel.

The predictions in the Bible concerning Israel and Jesus are only two out of many examples of predictions made by the Bible thousands of years ago that have been and are still being accurately fulfilled in every detail.

In the light of the Bible's proven record of correct prediction, it's both logical and practical to examine other important predictions of the Bible which relate to events that are still in the future. This is what I'll be doing in this study on 'facing the future'

Remember, if we study and obey the Bible, we do not need to walk in darkness.

What I'm going to be looking at is the kind of attitude with which we should face the future. You see, in many different circumstances, the attitude with which we approach a given situation has a lot to do with what we experience in the given situation and this is definitely true with our attitude toward the future. It will have a lot to do with what we actually experience as the future unfolds. I want to say that the Bible gives us solid grounds for facing the future as optimists and not as pessimists. When we look out in the light of the Bible on the human scene today, we can say, 'the glass of history is half full, not half empty' By which I mean, that we can say, 'the purposes of God, clearly predicted in the Bible, have been fulfilled up to this point, therefore we can be confident that the ones that are not yet fulfilled will be fulfilled' – the glass is being filled up - it's not being emptied out!

Many who do not have that viewpoint look out on the human situation today and they're pessimists. They say, 'time is running out, resources are running out, the population explosion is on us, we're not going to have enough food, the atmosphere is being polluted' They've got all sorts of attitudes which really amount to saying, 'the glass is half empty' But from my point of view, being a student of the Bible, and believing it, when I look at the scene in the world today, I can praise the Lord and say, 'the glass is half full!' God's purposes have been worked out to this point and they're going to be worked out all the way!

In this connection I'm going to make a very important distinction that the Bible makes between two kinds of things: SECRET THINGS and THINGS THAT ARE REVEALED.

In Deuteronomy 29:29 Moses says this to the people of Israel and this where we see the distinction:

"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law"

So there are the two 'kinds' of things. There are things that are secret, that God doesn't permit us to know, they belong to God, they're not our business. But then there are revealed things, things God had chosen to reveal to us, they belong to us and we're responsible for what God has revealed to us. We're responsible to react on it, to obey it, to let it have its course in our lives in such a way that our lives follow God's plan for us.

Now, one common mistake that's made in connection with looking into the future is that we become so busy with the secret things that we fail to obey the revealed things. And that's what I want to warn you against as we go on in the course of these studies.

I now want to give you two examples from the predictions of the New Testament illustrating revealed things and secret things.

1. AN EXAMPLE OF A REVEALED THING:

Acts 1:11, the words spoken by the angels to the apostles standing on the Mount of Olives after Jesus had been taken up to heaven and they had lost sight of Him, ***“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”***

Now that’s a revealed thing. That’s something we all need to know. Something that should affect our lives.

2. AN EXAMPLE OF A SECRET THING:

This is something which God had not made known and something we have no right to try to know. This is stated by Jesus Himself in Mark 13:32 which is a passage in which He has been sketching out the course of events that will follow as this age draws to its close and having given various signs and indications of the close of the age and then having spoken of His personal return to earth He says this:

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”

Now that’s a secret thing. The precise day and hour of the return of Jesus to earth are not known to anyone in the universe but God the Father, not even Jesus the Son knows. He’s awaiting the Father’s signal to return.

So if you ever meet anybody who claims to know the day and the hour of Jesus’ return, you know that they’re not in line with the Bible because that’s a secret thing that we cannot know.

Continuing in Mark, Jesus warns us to be awake: ***“Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”***

Notice Jesus says three times in these verses, ‘you do not know, you cannot know’ He says, be alert, be on the watch. Don’t be found sleeping!

Now in that parable, Jesus says that the landowner who went away and left his servants behind him left **each with his assigned task**. Each one had something specific to do during the master’s absence and the man who kept the door, his assigned task was to watch for the master’s return. Now this is true of us Christians. As long as we’re here on earth, we each have an assigned task. Something that we’re responsible to do, something that we’ll be answerable to God for when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ. What’s very, very important is, that we don’t neglect the revealed thing, the assigned task and get so occupied with the secret thing, the exact day and hour of the Lord’s return that we’re delinquent, that when He comes back we’ve omitted to the things He’s commanded us to do and we’ve been doing some things He said we couldn’t do. So as we continue with these studies, continually bear in mind the distinction between the secret things that we cannot know and the revealed things which we can know and which we should act upon.

Study No. 2 – CHRIST ALREADY REIGNS



I'm going to outline for you just what our attitude in facing the future should be and I'm going to give you an objective biblical basis for that attitude. The first thing I want to say, and it's of tremendous importance, is this:

AS CHRISTIANS, WE ARE WAITING FOR JESUS CHRIST

(conversely, we are *not* waiting for the Antichrist)

Now I'm a student of the Bible and I know that the Bible teaches that there have been many antichrists and that there are going to be more antichrists. I also believe myself that the Bible indicates that there is going to be one particular character in human history who will be *the* Antichrist. And I could believe that the shadow of the Antichrist has already fallen across the stage of human history, that his appearing is very near at hand. But *we are not waiting for the Antichrist.*

I've met dear fellow believers that have been so busy about the appearance of the Antichrist, his number, his name, the countries he'll rule, the methods he'll use, how he'll put his stamp on peoples foreheads and hands, that they've become almost, I would say, 'advertising agents' for the Antichrist. Well, he doesn't need advertising agents from us Christians and our business is not be witnesses to the Antichrist but to the Christ. Jesus said, ***"you shall be My witnesses..."*** So you see, it's of the greatest personal importance for each one of us that we cultivate this attitude in our lives of waiting for Jesus and that we do not let our attention get distracted by anything else. This waiting for Jesus, having our eyes turned toward Him with expectancy produces in our lives what I would call *radiant confidence*.

Listen to these two beautiful verses from Psalm 34:4-5, ***"I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame."*** That's partly a personal testimony and partly a general statement. David said, 'I could be afraid about what the future holds but I sought the Lord and He delivered me from all my fears.' Let me ask you, have you sought the Lord and been delivered from all fears about the future? If not, you can! And then David goes on with a general statement about looking to the Lord. Having that expectant attitude toward the Lord, he says, ***"those who look to Him are radiant! Their faces are never covered with shame."*** You see, that's a practical outworking of looking to the Lord. See, if I look at your face, I can tell which direction you're looking at. If your face is dark and overshadowed with care and fear I know you're not looking at the light because it's the darkness that's reflected on your face. But if your face is

radiant and peaceful and full of confidence I know there's only one explanation, you have your eyes turned toward the source of light, that's Jesus. So bear that in mind, the direction we look will effect what we experience.

There's another important practical result in our lives of having that attitude of 'waiting for Christ'. It motivates us to 'holy living'. This is stated many times in the New Testament. In 1 John 3:2-3, ***"Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. [that's one of the secret things] But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, [that's one of the revealed things] for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure."*** You see, when we have that continual expectancy, that joyful hope that we're going to see the Lord and we're going to be transformed to be *like* Him, then the natural, logical application in our lives is that we purify ourselves. We make ourselves ready, and the standard of purity is a high standard. We purify ourselves, '*just as He (Jesus) is pure.*' This offers motivation both for those who minister in the gospel and for those who are ministered to.

Listen to Paul's declaration of his motivation in his ministry to the Christians in 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20, ***"For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy."***

So Paul was always thinking about when he would stand before Jesus and answer for his life and ministry. He said, 'the thing I'm going to be proud about, the thing that's going to make me joyful, is the people whom I've helped to find their way to Jesus. They're going to be my crown, my glory and my joy.' *That's motivation!*

1 Thessalonians 3:13, is one of the most beautiful prayers or wishes found anywhere in the Bible, ***"May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones."*** You see, that's anticipation. Paul not merely anticipated that coming of the Lord for himself and wanted to be sure that he'd have something to offer the Lord as a tribute from his life's work, but he also wanted those who had come to the Lord through his life's ministry to have the same attitude of expectancy, *waiting* for the Lord Jesus. And he knew that that attitude would enable them to become blameless and holy.

Believe me friends, there is nothing that purifies our lives more effectively than the hope of seeing Jesus. If we really live in that hope, it will have a radical, permanent effect on the way we live. But you're waiting for the Antichrist, I believe that may not motivate you to holiness the least bit. It may prompt fear and uncertainty and lack of confidence. Listen to this beautiful verse which is one of my favorite verses from the book of Proverbs. Prov 4:18, ***"the path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter until the perfect day"*** When you first come to the Lord and step onto that path, it's just the first gleam of dawn, but as you walk forward continually in the path toward the light, with that attitude of expectancy, you go on on a path that gets brighter and brighter you will get to the full glory of midday. That's how the Christian life should be when we are directed toward Jesus and waiting for His return.

THE NEXT MAIN FACTOR IN FORMING A RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD THE FUTURE:

This is the realization that Christ *already* reigns as king of the universe and furthermore, He will *continue* to reign *forever!* There's never going to be time, from now on, till eternity, when Christ is not on the throne of the universe!

Ephesians 1:19-22, Paul is here trying to open the eyes of Christians to the tremendous, immeasurable power of God which is available toward us who believe and then he takes a standard to measure the power of God available to us as believers in our lives, and this is what he says, ***"That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms."***

So the same power that raised the dead body of Jesus from the tomb and exalted Him to the highest place in heaven is available to you and me who believe. Paul then goes on to depict the *level* of authority to which God has raised Jesus, ***"he has seated him in the heavenly realms far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come."***

So Christ is far above all other forms of rule or authority or power in the whole universe. He's not merely above them, He's *far* above them. He's above all rulers on the natural plane, kings, rulers, dictators, whatever we may wish to call them. One of His titles is 'Lord of Lords' and 'King of kings'. I interpret that this way, he is the ruler of *all* rulers, and the governor over *all* governors. That's on the natural human plane. But the Bible reveals that there are also unseen authorities and powers in the spiritual realm that are evil, that are under Satan's control. In many places the New Testament speaks about principalities and powers or rulers and authorities with reference to the kind of authorities and powers that Satan would seek to exercise against us and against God's people and God's purposes. But though these are all real, and we have to reckon with them, we have to bear in mind continually that the power and authority bestowed by God upon Jesus, is on a *far higher level*. It's above all human rulers and all human governments and all human authority. It's also above all unseen spiritual rulers and authorities in the unseen realm.

Then Paul says, and listen to this, its good news! ***"And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church"*** Those last three words are tremendously important ***"...for the church"*** Jesus is there on *our* account. He's there to represent *us*. He's there to watch over *us*. He's there to ensure that God's purposes and God's promises for us are unfailingly worked out, that no kind of satanic or human opposition or hindrance can ever frustrate the promises and the purposes of God on our behalf. He is the head over everything for the church. How important to realize that! The church is the primary object of His care and concern and all His power and all His authority are exercised on our behalf. Furthermore, not only is He there now but He's going to be there from now on and *forever!*

1 Corinthians 15:25 also speaks about Jesus reigning, it says, ***"For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet."*** I think there are some people who are so occupied with Antichrist and tribulation that they have a kind of impression that there's going to be a gap somewhere in the future of human history when Jesus will no longer be reigning. That's not true. He's reigning now, and He's going to continue reigning until He's put all His enemies under His feet. No matter what happens on earth,

Jesus is never going to abdicate that throne to which the Father has raised Him. He's there, He's going to continue to be there, and He's there primarily for the benefit of His people, the church.

Not merely has Jesus been exalted above all other forms of authority and power by the Father but the revelation of scripture takes us one important step further, and it is this:

CHRIST SHARES HIS AUTHORITY WITH HIS PEOPLE

This is unfolded by Paul in Ephesians 2: 4-7, ***“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”***

Paul there states three objective historical facts based upon our relationship, through faith, with Jesus Christ. Because we have committed our lives to Jesus and made ourselves one with Him by faith, we are identified in everything that God did for Him from His crucifixion onwards. And Paul, in these verses, specifies three things that God did for Christ that He has also done for us, who are in Christ:

1. verse 5, God made us ***alive with Christ***
2. verse 6, God ***raised us up*** [or resurrected us] ***with Christ***

but it doesn't stop there...

3. verse 6, God ***seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus***

So what is Jesus seated on? He's seated on a throne. So when we're seated with Him, we are enthroned with Him. So we have these three successive phases of our identification with Jesus. Where He is, we are! He is seated far above all authority and power and we are seated with Him, *far* above all authority and power! He rules – we rule with Him, not in the future, but *now*!

The same truth about our sharing the throne with Christ is stated in Romans 12:17, ***“For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!”***

So you see, when we're identified with Jesus Christ we reign with Him in life

He reigns – we reign with Him.

He's on the throne – we share the throne with Him.

You see, there's a difference between Satan and Jesus, Satan's a despot, he just rules over everybody. He tyrannizes and dominates all but when Jesus got to the throne He didn't want to dominate us, He wanted to share the throne with us. So we have *see* ourselves now *already* sharing the throne with Christ. We have to go into the future with that attitude that we are on the throne with Jesus.

It's so important that we realize who we are, and *only* the Bible can show us that!

Study No.3 - CONTINUOUS VICTORY



Today I'm going to take these truths one important step further:

CHRIST EXERCISES HIS AUTHORITY THROUGH HIS BELIEVING PEOPLE AND MAKES CONTINUOUS VICTORY POSSIBLE FOR US.

The first two verses from Psalm 110 are quoted more often in the New Testament than any other passage in the Old Testament. Jesus Himself quoted them as well as other writers. This is what the psalmist says, Psalm 110:1-2, ***"The Lord says to my Lord, sit at My right hand until I make thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet. The Lord will stretch forth Thine scepter from Zion saying, 'rule in the midst of Thine enemies'"***

Now we know, from the lips of Jesus Himself the application of the first verse, 'the' Lord is God the Father. 'My' Lord (the Lord of David), is the Messiah. So God the Father says to Jesus Christ the Messiah after His death and resurrection, *'sit at My right hand until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thine feet.'* We've seen that this has already been fulfilled, Jesus is *already* at God's right hand, He's waiting for God to put all His enemies finally under His feet but He's *already* ruling!

Now the next verse of Psalm 110:2 goes on like this, ***"The Lord will stretch forth Thine scepter from Zion saying, 'rule in the midst of Thine enemies'"*** 'Thy strong scepter' in Hebrew is literally the 'scepter of Thy strength'. The 'scepter' was the mark of a ruler in all Old Testament culture and history. So it says the Lord will stretch forth the 'scepter of thy strength' from Zion. Now 'Zion' in the Bible means the assembly of God's people met in divine order. So out of the 'assembly of God's people', the Lord stretches forth the authority of Jesus (which is in His name) and rules over the nations.

Now I believe the 'Lord', who stretches forth that scepter, is God the Holy Spirit. So we have all three persons of the godhead, God the Father, raised God the Son to sit with Him on the throne and then God the Holy Spirit, through the assembly of God's people, through their proclamation, through their preaching, through their prayers, through their testimony, He stretches forth the rod of Christ's authority over the earth and thus in *this* way, Christ, *through His people*, now rules in the midst of His enemies.

It's so important to see two things:

1. That Christ is ruling
2. But there are enemies at every hand.

So we have to balance the two facts. Sure there are many enemies, they're very active, they're very vocal, they're very vicious but Christ is ruling in the midst of His enemies and He's exercising His authority through us, His people, as we meet in order and we learn how to use the authority that is in His name. Furthermore, Christ sends us as His representatives to exercise His authority on His behalf. This is the final commission of Jesus to His disciples at the end of Matthew's gospel, Matthew 28, 18-20, ***"then Jesus came to them and said, 'all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me..."*** We've seen this stated in many places, the next word that he says is 'therefore', ***"therefore go and make disciples of all nations"*** What's the connection between the 'authority' and the 'going'? I believe it's this: the authority has been given to Jesus, it's our responsibility to *exercise* that authority and we do it as we go and do what He's commissioned us to do in His name. And as we obey His commission He says, 'I'm with you always, right to the end of the present age, if you have any hindrances, if you have any obstacles, remember, just appeal to Me, I'm on the throne, I'm there for your benefit and I'll see to it that you can do what I've commissioned you to do.'

So that's the picture, Christ is on the throne but He's *ruling*, He's exercising the authority that's in His name, through His people as we obey Him. And that's going to continue *right to the end of the present age!*

Let's look at this truth of Christ's victory manifested through us from another aspect. In Colossians 2:15 Paul says about the death and resurrection of Jesus ***"and having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."*** So when Jesus died on the cross and shed His blood and subsequently rose from the dead, He triumphed over all the satanic opposition. All the satanic powers and authorities that resist the purposes of God and resist God's people, Jesus triumphed over them.

Now it's important to understand what a 'triumph' is. A triumph is not the winning of a victory, it's the celebration of a victory that has already been won. In the Roman Empire, when a Roman general had been victorious overseas and added territory to the empire, when he came home, the senate of Rome voted him a triumph and this is how it went: they placed him in a chariot drawn by two white horses, the chariot was led through the streets, the people lined the street and applauded and behind that chariot were led the prisoners of war and the people whom that general had conquered. They were the evidences of his victory. So when Jesus died and rose from the dead, He triumphed over the forces of Satan. He led them behind His chariot in public display and the whole unseen universe applauded His victory. But it doesn't end there, in 2 Corinthians 2:14, Paul goes on to say, ***"But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere."*** Not merely is Jesus moving in triumphal procession but we are *sharing* His

triumph. We not only share His victory but we share His triumph which is the celebration of His victory. We are identified with Him. We are not there on the sidewalks applauding, we're certainly not among the captives that are being led behind Him in chains but we are in the chariot with the victor, sharing His triumph. And as we share His triumph, something wonderful and beautiful happens. Paul says, God, through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him. There's a kind of fragrance that comes out of our victorious living that permeates the atmosphere where we live. People who don't understand the gospel and don't appreciate theology are aware of our victorious living and Paul says two things, and I want to emphasize, God *always* leads us in triumph and through us He spreads *everywhere* the fragrance of the knowledge of Him. Put together those two words, 'always' and 'everywhere' that means in every time and every place, there's total victory possible for us as the people of God if by faith we learn how to share with Jesus His public victory and His public triumph. Isn't that glorious!

THE CONDITION OF THE WORLD TODAY

I'll be singling out some of the main elements in the Bibles' picture of the condition of the world in these closing days of the age and presenting them to you. As far as possible, I'll present this picture to you in an objective way and I'll leave it to you to compare the picture I present with the scenes that you yourself actually see in the world around us today. For the first element in the Bibles prophetic picture of these closing days, we'll turn to the words of Jesus in Luke 17:26. Jesus says, ***"Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man."*** A direct comparison between the days of the Son of Man, that is the days prior to the return of Jesus, and the days of Noah. So we need to find out what the days of Noah were like and for a description of the days of Noah we'll turn to Genesis 6:1-12, and pick out the main elements. Genesis 6:5, ***"The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time."*** Here the emphasis is on man's inner experience. What's going on inside the mind and the heart of man. It says his imagination, his thoughts, his intentions were all evil. I could sum that up perhaps in the phrase, 'universal corruption of thought life.' Everything had been contaminated. Images, speech, concepts, they were all permeated by something impure and unclean.

Genesis 6:11, ***"Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence."*** That's the next distinctive feature of the age of Noah, the earth was 'filled with violence.' There was an apparent upsurge of crimes of violence. Men became violent in their acts and their attitudes. Violence was a feature of their life that was accepted as common place.

Then we have another aspect of the days of Noah, ***"God saw how corrupt the earth had become..."*** Incidentally, I would suggest that that one word 'corrupt' sums it all up as well as any one word could. Then it goes on, ***"for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways."*** I understand that to mean that there was a total corruption of all the kinds of relationships that we associate with the 'flesh'. Primarily and particularly the sex life and relationships of the time had become corrupted and unnatural. We could sum it up in the phrase, 'sexual corruption and perversion'. So if we put those pictures together, we can single out four distinctive aspects of the days of Noah. As I go through these again in recapitulation, I'm inviting you to consider how far the same is true of our society and our culture today.

1. There was intense pressure and penetration from the occult realm. There were relationships that were unnatural between beings of different orders. Spirit beings from a higher realm and human beings on earth.
2. There was universal corruption of thoughts.
3. The earth was filled with violence. Crimes of violence increased dramatically.
4. There was widespread sexual corruption and perversion.

HOW DOES THAT MATCH UP WITH OUR SOCIETY AND OUR CULTURE TODAY?

- Do we see today and increasing penetration of normal human life by occult forces and influences?
- Is there a tremendously increased influence on the occult?
- Do we find that men's thoughts being corrupted?
- Languages degenerating?
- That everything's filled with impure and unclean images and suggestions?
- Do we see the earth filled with violence?
- Do we see sexual corruption and perversion around us in an ever increasing measure?

I'll leave it to you to meditate on those features of Noah and ask yourself, 'are the days in which we're living coming more and more like the days of Noah?'

For our next picture of what the world will be like towards the close of this age we're going to turn to another parallel statement of Jesus in **Luke 17:28**, ***"it was the same as happened in the days of Lot"*** in other words He not merely compares this closing period with the days of Noah but also with the days of Lot. Now for a picture of the days of Lot we have to turn, primarily, to Genesis 19: 1-13,

"The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. "My lords," he said, "please turn aside to your servant's house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning." "No," they answered, "we will spend the night in the square." But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate. Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them." Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him and said, "No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing. Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof." "Get out of our way," they replied. "This fellow came here as a foreigner, and now he wants to play the judge! We'll treat you worse than them." They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door. But the men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door. Then they struck the men who were at the door of the house, young and old, with blindness so that they could not find the door. The two men said to Lot, "Do you have anyone else here—sons-in-law, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of here, because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the Lord against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it."

Of course, the name of that city, 'Sodom', in the English language, was applied to a particular form of sexual perversion which was called 'sodomy'. Today that word is a little old fashioned, probably the most common word today would be 'homosexuality'. Much of the time of Lot was similar to the time of Noah but there was this special emphasis in Lot's time which is so clearly brought out in the passage I've read, an emphasis on homosexuality. And I'll believe you'll agree from the account that I've read, it was not just something that was practiced in secret, but this particular version of it was brazen, it came right out in the open, it made no pretenses, it offered no concealment. It was not merely passive, it was aggressive. It went out for victims. It searched for them with determination and with violence. It embraced both the young and the old and it ignored all accepted standards of behavior.

Now, with that in your mind, I invite you to consider what we see in the western world today. I'm going to leave *you* to draw the comparisons.

I've been speaking of the evil elements that were conspicuous both in the days of the days of Noah and of Lot. However, it would be wrong for me to close this picture of the days of Noah and of Lot without also presenting to you the positive side of the picture because there was a very real positive side in two main respects. First of all let's look at what the writer of Hebrews says about Noah. Hebrews 11:7, ***"by faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family"***

The feature there that I want to point out is that Noah was not left in ignorance of what was coming on the earth. As God's faithful servant, he received direct from God supernatural revelation of what was to come on the earth, of how he could face it, of how he could prepare for it and of how he could survive. God warned Noah in advance and showed him a way of survival.

I believe tremendous dangers face us. Catastrophes and judgments that we cannot fully measure or ascertain but I believe in the midst of it all God will still warn His faithful servants and show them a way of survival.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus promised this to His disciples in the person of the Holy Spirit. In John 16:13, ***"but when He, the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own, He will speak only what He hears and He will tell you what is yet to come"*** I believe it's very, very important we see that this is one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit to God's believing people that He will tell us what is yet to come. Not *all* that is to come, but all that we need to know. All that we need to know for survival and for the fulfilling of Gods purpose. The Holy Spirit will supernaturally reveal to us just as He did to Noah.

We've seen also that in the case of Lot, God sent angels to protect him and to deliver him. And I believe again, in these days of crisis and pressure, we can expect God in His faithfulness to do the same where it's necessary for us. I believe that we're entitled to expect the supernatural

presence and assistance of angels. The writer of Hebrews says they are 'ministering spirits' sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation, that's the believers of this time. So, although there's much that's evil and frightening events in the picture of the days of Noah and of Lot, much that agrees with the evil and the frightening in our time, we must also look to the positive side. We must see that there was never a situation for which God did not have an answer prepared in advance and the two particularly positive features of those days were that God gave His servants supernatural warning in advance of what was to come and showed them how to survive and He also sent angels to help, to protect, and to deliver. And I believe that we need, and can expect from God just the same in these days.

Study No. 4 – SIGNS GIVEN BY JESUS



I'm going to be dealing now with a comprehensive series of signs of the end of the age given us by Jesus Himself:

This is what we read in Matthew 24 beginning at verse 3, ***"and Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives and His disciples came to Him privately, 'tell us', they said, 'when will this happen [that was the destruction of the temple] and what will the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?"*** (Note the question: *what will be the sign of Your coming and the end of the age?*) ***"Jesus answered, 'watch out that no one deceives you* (That's always the first emphasis of scripture, a warning against deception as the age closes) ***"for many will come in My name saying, 'I am the Christ and will deceive many.' You will hear of wars and rumors of wars but see to it that you are not alarmed, such things must happen but the end is still to come"*** The mere fact of wars and rumors of wars is not by itself an indication that the end is immediately at hand. Then He goes on with what is the first major sign of the close of the age in verse 7, ***"nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places."*** Side by side with that we could put a verse from Luke 21:11 which records the same discourse of Jesus and in that verse it says, 'there will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilence'. So, in addition to the famines and earthquakes, we can add, the pestilences. So here we have, in verse 7, the following major signs:**

1. International wars
2. Famines
3. Earthquakes
4. Pestilences

Well, in my life, I've lived through two world wars and today famine is endemic in many areas of the world, over 10 million people perish yearly through famine. Wherever famine comes, pestilence will almost always follow. Then the scientific record of earthquakes shows a dramatic increase in the frequency and intensity of earthquakes in the last 100 years. Now having given

those initial signs, wars, famines, earthquakes and pestilences, Jesus says, *'all these are the beginning of birth pains'*

There's an analogy there, when a woman is going to shortly bring forth a baby, the birth pains set in and we all know, that the nearer the birth of the baby, the more frequent and more intense the birth pains become until the baby is eventually born. So Jesus says, when these signs come into human history, they're indications of the birth of a new age which is at hand and once these birth pains start, they'll become more frequent and more intense and there'll be no way of reversing that process until the new age is born.

Then He goes on in Mathew 24:9-12, with a whole series of other signs, ***"then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death and you will be hated by all nations because of Me..."*** There's a clear statement that Christians are going to be subjected to worldwide opposition, hatred and persecution. Verse 10, ***"at that time, many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other..."*** when it speaks about turning away from the faith, clearly it means the Christian faith. Under the pressure of that persecution that Jesus has spoken about, some Christians will renounce their faith and they will actually betray their fellow Christians and hatred will develop between the Christians who remain loyal to Jesus and those who betray Him and those who betray their fellow Christians, will betray them to the secular authorities for judgment. Verse 11, ***"many false prophets will appear and deceive many..."*** another major feature.

When we speak about 'false prophets' we should probably associate it with the word 'cult' for the product of a false prophet is a cult. And then verse 12, ***"because of the increase of wickedness [but more correctly 'lawlessness'] the love of most will grow cold"*** Now the word used for 'love' there is 'AGAPE' which is normally used for the love of Christians and we have to face this very solemn fact that, under the tremendous pressures of lawlessness, even the love of Christians will grow cold – unless, of course, they are forewarned and take the necessary precautions to maintain their love for the Lord and for one another.

Let me sum now that list of signs of the end of the age contained in Matthew chapter 24 that we've been looking at:

- international wars
- famines
- earthquakes
- pestilences [Luke 21]
- worldwide persecution of Christians
- apostasy and betrayal among Christians
- false prophets and cults
- abounding lawlessness leading to lovelessness

How important we see that! That lawlessness leads to lovelessness. The world has got a false idea of love. The world thinks of love as free and uninhibited and you do what you please. That's not God's kind of love. God's kind of love requires discipline and self-control. It's not selfish, it's not aggressive, it's not self-seeking, it doesn't please itself and only discipline will produce that kind of love in Christians. So lawlessness and the love of God are opposites. Where lawlessness abounds, the love of God is pressured out of people.

Let me now point out two main elements in this theme that Jesus paints. There are two main sources of pressure. The first is satanic spiritual pressure from the occult realm and the second is pressure brought about by the progressive degeneration of human character. We can compare two passages of the epistle of Paul to Timothy. With regard to satanic supernatural pressure, Paul says in 1 Timothy 4:1, ***"the Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons"*** Again, abandoning the faith refers to Christians. So under intense satanic demonic pressure, some Christians will turn away from their faith and be deceived by demons. That's the pressure from the occult.

Now, going on into 2 Timothy 3: 1-5, we find the concurrent degeneration of human nature, ***"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people."***

You see, there's a list of 18 major moral blemishes that will, become more and more obvious and more and more blatant as this age draws to its close because corruption of human nature initiated by sin is taking its full course. Note particularly the first and last items on that list, 'lovers of themselves; lovers of money' those are the first two items. The closing item; 'lovers of pleasure'. Put those three together, 'lovers of themselves; lovers of money' and 'lovers of pleasure'. How far does that describe the world we see around us in contemporary western culture? How far are people given over to love of self, love of money and love of pleasure? And yet, notice, they're not irreligious people, they have a form of religion but they don't let it change their lives.

Study No. 5 – THE SIGN OF ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH



I want to turn first to Luke 21 which is prophetic discourse from the Mount of Olives. Jesus gave His disciples a parable in verses 29-31, ***“He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.”***

Well that’s a parable, and we know, if we live any kind of northern climate at all, that there are main seasons, winter and summer, spring and fall. At the end of winter all the deciduous trees are bare, they have no leaves and branches stand out against the sky, bare, their trunks just covered with bark and for me personally, it’s pretty hard to distinguish one kind of tree from another because I’m no expert. But then something begins to happen, those tender little green buds begin to appear and there’s a little kind of greenish haze that comes around the trees and Jesus says, ‘the moment you see that you know something, you know that summer is coming.’ You don’t have to go to a church or a library or even a synagogue to find out,’ He said, ‘you see for yourselves.’ This is sufficient evidence that summer is coming. Referring to His discourse, He said, ‘it’s the same, when you see the signs I’ve spoken about, you know for sure that the kingdom of God is near at hand. And particularly He gave them the sign of the fig tree *and all the trees.*

Now I want to share with you my personal belief that the fig tree there is a picture of Israel and ‘all the trees’ are all the other nations. So the sign of the fig tree is when the nation of Israel puts on its buds and then its leaves. It’s the *rebirth* of the state of Israel. This is always extremely exciting for me because by the providence of God, I had the privilege of being in Jerusalem when that happened. In 1948 when the state of Israel was born and became a sovereign nation again in its own land after more than nineteen centuries, I had the privilege of witnessing that event first-hand. So this is always very vivid for me. I saw the fig tree put on its leaves. And then later on I had the privilege also of being engaged in educational work in Kenya, East Africa. And this came again very vividly to me because there again were *all* the trees putting on their leaves. I was in East Africa when it was still a British dependency but within a few years of that time, three nation’s had emerged, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. What was that? It was those trees putting on their leaves. And when I used to teach my African students

along this line, they were always so excited to know that the destiny of their nations was referred to in the Bible. You see, in the continent of Africa since the close of world war two and since the birth of the state of Israel, probably fifty new nations have emerged. What's that? Well, the birth of the state of Israel was the fig tree putting on its leaves and what we saw happen in Africa and South America in Asia, all over the world, the upsurge of nationalism, was all the trees putting on their leaves. One of the greatest forces in the last few decades since world war two has been the upsurge of nationalism. Various different ethnic groups have said, 'we're not nations in our own right. We have our own culture, our own language, our own background, our own territory, we want to be our own. We don't want anybody to dominate us, control us or direct us.' That's the trees putting on their leaves. It's so remarkable to me that Jesus got the order right. First the fig tree, Israel, and then the other trees. And particularly in Africa when the emerging African nations turned to Israel for help, for council as a pattern of a nation that had emerged in the face of great opposition and had succeeded in surviving and establishing itself.

So I believe that this is an exact application of what Jesus said, 'look at the fig tree and all the trees, Israel and all the nations, when they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even though when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

Now I want to deal briefly with a few specific prophecies concerning the restoration of Israel as a nation. There are, I suppose, hundreds of such prophecies in the Bible and I'm only going to touch on one or two to emphasize my point. Beginning in Isaiah 11:11-12, ***"In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the surviving remnant of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the Mediterranean."*** We've lived to see that happen in our day. God has reclaimed the people of Israel from all those areas of the earth's surface. Then verse 12 says something very significant, ***"He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah [That's the Jews] from the four quarters of the earth."***

It's important for us to see that God's regathering of Israel back to their own land is also the raising of a banner to the nations. It's God's declaration to all the nations that the time has come to set the stage for the close of this age. All the prophecies that relate to the close of this age all assume one thing, the presence of Israel as a sovereign nation in their own land. Until Israel was restored, none of those prophecies could be fulfilled. But the restoration of Israel set the stage for the fulfillment of all those prophecies.

Listen to just a few other prophecies along this line: Jeremiah 16:14-15, ***"However, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "when it will no longer be said, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,' but it will be said, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north [that's Russia and Europe] and out of all the countries where he had banished them.' For I will restore them to the land I gave their***

ancestors." We have lived to see that happen! I've had the privilege of witnessing much of that happen with my own eyes. If anything is clear and vivid in the Bible to me, it's that.

And then listen to what the Lord says a bit further on in Jeremiah 31:10, **"Hear the word of the Lord, you nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: 'He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.'"** This is a message to all nations and it has tremendous significance for us. First of all, for us as Christians, it guarantees to us that the Bible is still an accurate up to date relevant book. And secondly, it's a sign to all the nations that God is setting the stage for His planned and predicted climax to the close of the present age. We need to take heed to what God is doing in Israel. It's a tremendous encouragement for all of us who believe the Bible.

Today I'm going to speak about a sign that relates directly to God's people, the church of Jesus Christ. This sign may be summed up as a dramatic increase of the activity of the Holy Spirit in and through the church. This too has been clearly predicted in scripture. We'll turn first of all to the words of the apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit first fell on the waiting disciples in Jerusalem. As a result of the dramatic supernatural manifestations, a crowd of unbelievers gathered and there were various reactions. Some of them mocked and said that the apostles were drunk to which Peter stood up and gave this answer in Acts 2:15-18, **"These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.'**" Note, in the *last days* God says, as this age comes to its close, 'I will pour out My Spirit on *all people*' The literal word is '*all flesh*', the whole human race. There will be dramatic, supernatural manifestations in the people of God.

Now, in order to understand what exactly is indicated by those words, we need to turn back to the original source which was quoted by the apostle Peter. He said, '*this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel*' and if we turn back to the prophet Joel in the Old Testament, in the second chapter of Joel, we'll find the prophetic words that Peter applied on the day of Pentecost. In particular, I want to read from Joel chapter 2, two verses, verse 23 and verse 28, and I want to put these two verses together because putting them together gives a much fuller insight into the full scope of this prophecy. Verse 23 says, **"So rejoice, O sons of Zion [that's God's people] and be glad in the Lord your God; for He has given you the early rain for your vindication. And He has poured down for you the rain, the early and latter rain as before."**

And then, the actual passage quoted by Peter is in Joel 2:28, **"And it will come about after this [and God is speaking] that I will pour out my Spirit on all mankind [all flesh] and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions."**

Now God says, **"I will pour out my Spirit."** Just previous to that, He's given the promise that He will pour out the rain that's due to the land. So, in other words, the outpouring of rain in the

natural order is a type or a 'picture' that illustrates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the spiritual order. Having seen this, we need to look more clearly at what God says about the outpouring of the rain in verse 23. He promises to pour down the rain in two major installments: the early rain and the latter rain.

Now, I've had the privilege of spending a number of years in the land of Israel and for me this is very vivid and I'd like to share it with you. We need to understand because if we understand the climate of the land of Israel, this prophecy assumes much greater significance.

In Israel, basically there are only two seasons, summer and winter. There's hardly anything that you would call fall, very little that you would call spring. During the summer season, the weather is completely dry. The summer normally lasts from about April until about November. This is approximate, there can be a difference of a month each way. And, amazing though it may seem to us, during those months no rain falls at all. So, at the end of the dry season, the winter, there comes what the Bible calls the early rain. That marks the beginning of winter and it's a major downpour that will extend over the whole country. After that, for the rest of the winter months, rain will fall, but normally it falls rather unpredictably; here a little and there a little, not covering the whole nation at one time, until the end of the winter, and at the end of the winter, then there comes what's called the "latter rain." This finishes the winter off. It's the greatest outpouring of all and, again, it's normally universal, it covers the whole land.

So no rain falls in Israel in the summer months, the early rain falls at the beginning of the winter, then there's unpredictable scattered falls of rain throughout the winter and then this final, major outpouring of rain at the end of the winter which is called the "latter rain."

Now, all this is a picture of what God does for the Church through the Holy Spirit. We've seen that the outpouring of rain is, in a way, a prefiguring of the way that God will visit the Church with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And particularly, it's emphasized in the prophet Joel, there'll be an early and a latter rain.

Now this is true to the facts of nineteen centuries of church history. The early rain, the first outpouring, fell on the early church in Jerusalem, and probably lasted something like a century. For the church, at that time, it was universal. It affected every area where the church was, it was a normal part of Christian experience, this supernatural visitation of the Holy Spirit. After that, in the terms of the analogy, there came the 'winter months' of church history. The Holy Spirit was never fully withdrawn, He was always active at some place or other, in some group or other but there was no major further outpouring of the Holy Spirit which affected the whole church. And so, we move on to the end of the winter season and then comes the latter rain, the last great, final, universal outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And I believe very firmly myself, that around about the turn of the present century, around about 1900, this latter rain of the Holy Spirit began to fall on the church and is falling today. And I've had the privilege of traveling in all the continents of the world but one, amongst many different nations, amongst Christians of almost endless different denominational and doctrinal backgrounds, and my experience is it's

falling on the whole church. It's a visitation that's touching the whole church. It's a restoration of supernatural power to the whole church and it's the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. And we need to understand that we are living in the time of the latter rain. This will help us to understand what to expect next.

Study No. 6 – THE BACKDROP



I want to paint in the backdrop to the stage on which the closing drama of the age will be acted out. In this backdrop there will be two contrasting color themes, on the one hand, dark and somber, on the other hand, brilliant and luminous. For a kind of general overall impression of this backdrop of the close of the age, I'm going to turn first to Isaiah chapter 60, verses 1–5. This predicts the end-time restoration of God's people in very clear and beautiful language but it also shows the background against which this restoration will take place. This is what the prophet says to God's people, ***"Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth, and deep darkness the peoples; but the Lord will rise upon you, and His glory will appear upon you. And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes round about, and see; they all gather together, they come to you. Your sons will come from afar, and your daughters will be carried in the arms. Then you will see and be radiant, and your heart will thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you, the wealth of the nations will come to you."***

I'd like to pick out four main features of that beautiful passage. The first is that both darkness and light are intensifying at the same time. It says there *"darkness will cover the earth, and deep darkness the peoples."* We see that happening, an ever greater spiritual darkness coming over the peoples of the earth. But in the midst of the darkness, *"the Lord will rise upon you [God's people] . . . His glory will appear upon you."* The message is to God's people, respond to what God is doing. *"Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you."* So both darkness and light are intensifying.

The second element is the re-gathering and restoration of God's people. *"Lift up your eyes round about, and see; they all gather together, they come to you. Your sons will come from afar . . . your daughters will be carried in the arms."* This has been literally fulfilled over the last 30 or 40 years in Israel. Spiritually, it's being fulfilled in the church as the glory of the Lord is returning to the church, the children of God are re-gathering into the church.

And then we see the third feature, that the nations turn to God's people for answers. This always blesses me. I've always been convinced that we who are God's people should be part of the solution and not part of the problem. Here it says, in verse 3, *"nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising."* I believe that's going to happen. I believe that both nations and their rulers are going to be at a loss for answers to their urgent and pressing problems. And just as, at one time, Pharaoh the ruler of Egypt, turned to God's servant Joseph for an answer, so I believe, in these closing days nations and their rulers are going to turn to God's people as they're illuminated by the glory of God and endowed with the wisdom of God and we're going to have the answer to the needs and the problems of the nations and their rulers.

Then the fourth feature there is that the resources of the nations are made available to God's people. *"Then you will see and be radiant, and your heart will thrill and rejoice; because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you, the wealth of the nations will come to you."* I believe that's going to happen, too. I believe we need that abundance and that wealth to carry out the tasks that God has committed to us. And when the time comes and we exercise the faith and see who we are and what God's purposes are, tremendous abundance of resources is going to be released to the people of God.

Returning to the theme of the backdrop, I want to point out to you one other parallel feature of the close of this age. I'll turn to the closing chapter of the closing book of the Bible, Revelation 22: 10–12. These verses picture a separation of the righteous from the unrighteous, bringing a situation where compromise and neutrality on the issues of righteousness will no longer be possible. These words are from Jesus Himself to John the revelator, ***"Then he told me, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. [This is right near the close of the age.] Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy. Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.'"*** So that middle verse is sandwiched between two warnings of the closeness of the Lord's return.

These verses picture a separation of the righteous from the unrighteous. Verse 10 says, ***"The time is near."*** Verse 12, Jesus says, ***"I am coming soon."*** And in the midst there's this challenge from the Lord to the righteous and to the wicked. It's amazing to me that the Lord would say, *"let him who is vile continue to be vile,"* but that's what He says. I think we understand it even more clearly in the Living Bible version of verse 11, ***"And when that time comes, all doing wrong will do it more and more [the vile will become more vile], good men will be better, those who are holy will continue on in greater holiness."***

See, the picture is, the pressures are getting so strong that we're going to be caught up in one or other of two main streams: one is the stream of righteousness; the other is the stream of wickedness. And, as the streams become more and more forceful, it will be almost impossible to escape from the stream that you're in. If you're in the stream of righteousness, you'll be

carried on almost irresistibly by the power of that stream. But if you're in the stream of wickedness and rebellion, then you'll be carried on in the power of *that* stream. And each will intensify. The righteous will become more righteous; the wicked will become more wicked. Rebellion and vileness are coming to maturity. There are two harvests maturing at the same time: the harvest of righteousness and the harvest of wickedness. And Jesus tells us the harvest is the close of the age.

So, it's a very important lesson for us, both good and evil are intensifying; the gap between them is becoming wider and wider; ultimately it will be unbridgeable. Every one of us needs to make a firm decision that we will be totally committed to God and to His righteousness.

I want to suggest to you three ways in which I believe it is appropriate for us to respond to this situation that confronts us in the world, to the pressures, to the crises, to everything that we see around us and coming against us. I believe it's urgently necessary for God's people to know what the appropriate response is. What God's Word reveals. And I'm going to suggest to you three ways in which it's appropriate to respond.

THE FIRST RESPONSE IS **OPTIMISM**.

I believe we're obligated to be optimists in the face of everything that we see. In Luke chapter 21, Jesus sketched out a very clear picture of the events and the trends that would lead to the close of this age and He mentioned many of the things we've been speaking about and then, at the end of that discourse, in Luke 21, verse 28, He said this, ***"When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."***

He didn't say, "Get frightened." He didn't say, "Look for a hiding place." He didn't say to just plan some method of escape and concentrate on survival. His attitude was, "Look up, things are going to get *better*. Your redemption is drawing nigh." It's very important that we who are God's people present to the world the picture of confident assurance because that's going to impress them. That's going to make them want to know what it is we have that they don't have, that we can face these pressures and these crises with such calmness and such confidence.

THE SECOND RESPONSE IS **COMMITMENT**

Our second response, I believe, can be summed up in one word: commitment—total, unreserved commitment to God. There's one verse in Psalm 110, verse 3, which I believe expresses this. The psalmist is speaking prophetically to the Lord and he's speaking about events that will bring the age to its close and he says, addressing the words to the Lord, ***"Your troops will be willing on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy majesty, from the womb of the dawn you will receive the dew of your youth."***

First of all, the Bible is realistic. It says it's a day of battle. It's not a day of peace, it's a day of battle. And God has troops. God's people are His army. This is revealed many places in Scripture, particularly in Ephesians 6. So, the psalmist says to the Lord, ***"Your troops will be willing on your day of battle."*** Now, that translation doesn't carry the full force of the Hebrew.

What it actually says is, “Your troops will be *free-will offerings*.” You see, the picture is God’s people offer *themselves* to God without reservation; they put themselves totally at God’s disposal; nothing held back.

It isn’t really true that God wants your time or your talents or your money. If you give those to God and you think you’re doing God a favor, you’re deceiving yourself. God says, really, “*What I want is you! And when I have you I have everything that you have.*” In these closing days, God is not going to settle for a lesser commitment than *YOU*. Have you ever totally given yourself to God, without reservation, placed yourself at His disposal? That’s commitment. That’s the appropriate reaction.

And then I would just like to read an alternative translation for the latter part of Psalm 110:3, “***Arrayed in holy majesty from the womb of the dawn your young men will come to you like the dew.***”

I have the firmest conviction that at the close of this age there’s going to be a great army of young men totally committed to Jesus Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit, detached from the cares and the ambitions and the pride and the covetousness of this world, set apart to God, arrayed in holy majesty.

You know, one of the most beautiful sights in nature is the dew in early dawn on the grass as the slanting rays of the sun first catch those little drops of moisture on the grass and every one of them sparkles and is radiant. That’s the picture of the youth that Jesus is calling to His side and to His service for this battle—the closing day of the age.

You see, I want to tell you, if you’re on the devil’s side, you’re backing a loser. And if I were you I’d change just as quickly as I could and enlist in the army of the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who’s going to win every battle that He ever fights.

I’ve spoken of two ways in which it’s appropriate to respond to the situation in the world for God’s people. The first is optimism, the second is commitment—total unreserved commitment.

THE THIRD RESPONSE IS TO ***ALIGN YOURSELF WITH GODS PURPOSES***

God has certain purposes He’s working out in the earth. If you align yourself with God’s purposes, you are as unshakable and as unsinkable as the purposes of God. 1 John 2:17 says this, “***The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.***”

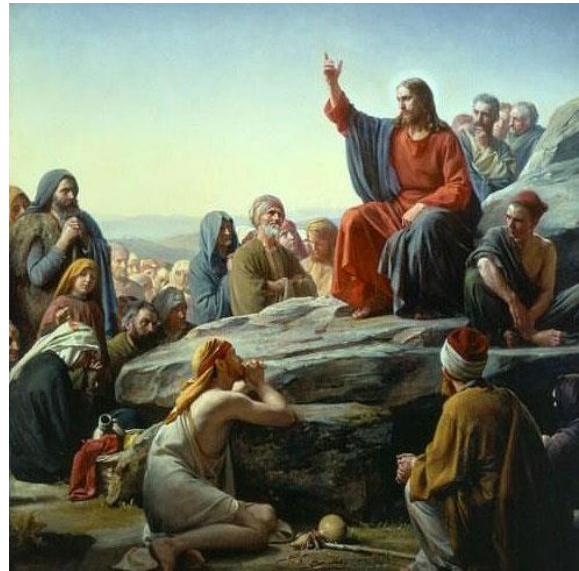
How true that is, the world is so temporary. Everything in it is passing away. It is impermanent, unstable, insecure. But the one who aligns himself with God’s purposes, the one who’s set to do the will of God, abides forever. He’s unshakable, nothing can overthrow him, nothing can overcome him.

Let me go back to a verse that's become very precious to me, I've quoted it more than once in this series, Isaiah 46:10, where God says this, ***"I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please."***

So when you align yourself with God's purpose, you're aligning yourself with something that's *irresistible*.

There are the two kinds of kingdoms: the kingdoms of this world that are shakable and are being shaken and are going to go on being shaken more and more. And there will be no stability, no ultimate security in any kingdom or system of this world. Then there's the unshakable kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the kingdom that cannot be shaken and we are urged by the writer of Hebrews to ***"be thankful . . . [to] worship God acceptably with reverence and awe for our God is a consuming fire."***

Study No. 7 – GOD’S PURPOSES CENTER IN HIS PEOPLE



It's very important that we have a clear understanding of the purposes that God has set Himself to work out in the midst of all that's going on around us in the world. The first and a vital fact is this: God's purposes center in His people. God is more interested in people than in things. Deuteronomy 32:9 says this, ***"For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob [is] his allotted inheritance."***

There's a general and a particular there. The general is the Lord's portion is His people; the thing that God is going to get out of history is a people for Himself. That's what God is working at. God's not so much concerned about material things, gold and silver, buildings, banks, institutions, governments, even about religion. *God is concerned with people.* His portion is His people. And then it says, "Jacob his allotted inheritance." One specific people is picked out; that is, Jacob or the people that today we know as "Israel."

You see, God has two covenant peoples in the earth. This is clearly unfolded in Scripture. Two peoples to whom God is committed by a covenant which He Himself made and which He has declared He will never break. Those two peoples are Israel and the Church of Jesus Christ. Basically, Israel is formed out of natural descent from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel). The church is formed out of supernatural regeneration through the Holy Spirit. Israel is a 'natural' people, the church is a 'spiritually regenerated' people. Each are related to God by a covenant unfolded in Scripture, which God Himself declares He will *never break*.

Let's look at what God says about His covenant with Israel, first of all, in Jeremiah 31, verses 35–37, ***"Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day, and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; the Lord of hosts is His name: "If this fixed order departs from before Me," declares the Lord*** (this "fixed

order” is the sun, the moon, the stars and the sea) ***“If this fixed order departs from before Me,” declares the Lord, “then the offspring of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever.”***

So God says as long as you see the sun and the moon and the stars—and you know they’re going to continue—then you know that Israel is going to continue as a nation before the Lord forever. And then he gives another comparison, verse 37, ***“Thus says the Lord, “If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out below, then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done,” declares the Lord.***

So, God says as long as heaven remains immeasurable and the foundations of the earth cannot be searched out, then as long as that continues, you know that I will never cast off the nation of Israel or cause them to cease from being My covenant people. And actually, the more we try to measure the heavens, the more immeasurable they become. So, in other words, God is saying Israel is eternally My people, I will never cast them away.

Then listen to what Jesus said about the church in Matthew 16, verse 18, ***“I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”***

The gates of Hades really represents all the unseen spiritual forces of wickedness, of Satan and all his kingdom. Jesus says, “I’m going to build my church in such a way that there’s no force of evil that will ever be able to overthrow it or to overcome it.” So there’s a guarantee of the absolute continuation and victory of the church of Jesus Christ.

Now, in relation to both of these people, God has one purpose that He’s working out in different ways that are appropriate to the nature of the peoples but the purpose is the same. The purpose is *restoration*.

This is clearly unfolded in Acts 3, verses 19–21, where Peter says to the Jewish people, ***“Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.”***

There are four successive phases there unfolded all related to the close of this age and, interestingly enough, in the English language each of them is summed up in a word which begins with the letters R-E. The first is repent. God calls His people to repentance that they may come into line with His purposes because as long as we’re stubborn and rebellious and unyielded, we cannot come into line with God’s purposes. God says, ***“As you, My people, repent, there will come times of refreshing.”*** That’s the second word, refreshing. And then He says these times of refreshing will lead us into the period of restoration of all things. So everything is going to be put back in its right place, it’s right condition—and *particularly* God’s people!

Now, this period of restoration of all things is so important that God has spoken about it by the mouth of all His holy prophets from ancient time. It's the theme of all prophecy. And then, in connection with this period of restoration, the Scripture indicates we may look for the return of Jesus Christ from heaven. So you have those four words that are so easy to remember because they all begin with R-E. Try and grip them with your memory.

First, **REPENT**

Second, **REFRESHING**

Third, **RESTORATION**

Fourth, the **RETURN** of Jesus Christ

Associated with this period of restoration is the return of Jesus Christ. And the restoration primarily concerns not *things*, but *people*. The people of God, the peoples to whom God is related by His unbreakable covenant, that is, Israel and the Church of Jesus Christ. This promise of restoration for God's people is the key to understanding the purposes of God that are being worked out.

First of all, we need to see that right from the time that God created the nations and provided the earth for them to dwell in, His plan for all nations centered around Israel. This is stated in Deuteronomy 32, verses 8–9, ***"When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind [notice this is all mankind], he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel. For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance."***

It's very important we see that. There are certain elements of national pride and prejudice in most of us that would reject the fact that God made His plan for all nations center around Israel, but that's what it says. I'll read it again, ***"When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel."***

In other words, Israel were allotted their inheritance and *all* other nations were allotted their inheritance in relationship to the inheritance of Israel. So that the inheritance and wellbeing and blessing of all nations ultimately revolves around *Israel*. And when Israel are out of their place, then all other nations are in some measure also out of order.

Let me give you a very simple example, a very down to earth example. Suppose you have a garment that has buttons down the front, maybe six or seven buttons down the front, a jacket or a sweater, and you start buttoning it up but, by accident you get the wrong button in the wrong hole right at the top. What will happen? Every other button that you place in its hole will be in the wrong hole. Once you get one button out of place, all the rest will be out of place and then you get down to the bottom and there's something wrong. That is, of course, if you button your jacket from the top to the bottom, as I do, not from the bottom to the top. That's just by

the way. Well, that's how it is with Israel. They're the first button to be placed in the hole. And, if that button is in the wrong hole, then all the other nations must, inevitably in some way, be out of order. They cannot be fully in their right place because it all hinges around Israel. So all other nations really need to understand that the restoration of Israel is for the good of all nations. In fact, the wellbeing of all nations ultimately depends on the destiny of Israel. God, in many, many passages of Scripture, unfolds in precise detail the way that He's going to restore Israel. I do not have time to give you more than just a few quotations but I want you to see how very precise these predictions are and also how very exactly they are being fulfilled before our eyes today.

Jeremiah 32, verses 36–42, ***“This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says: [And notice, He is the God of Israel] I will surely gather them [that's Israel] from all the lands where I banish them in my furious anger and great wrath; I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety. They will be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me. I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land [that's the land of Israel] with all my heart and soul.”***

Let me comment that when God plants something with all His heart and soul, there is no power in the universe that can uproot what God has planted. Then the closing verse is very significant, verse 42, ***“This is what the Lord says, “As I have brought all this great calamity on this people, so I will give them all the prosperity I have promised them.”***

A little further on in Jeremiah 33, verses 7–8, God says, ***“I will bring Judah and Israel back from captivity and will rebuild them as they were before. I will cleanse them from all the sin they have committed against me and will forgive all their sins of rebellion against me.”***

Notice the order. God says, “First of all, I will bring them back to their land, secondly, I will rebuild them, thirdly, I will cleanse them and forgive them.” The spiritual restoration is the climax. It's the ultimate, it's the objective, but it does not come first. We are seeing at present the first part of that promise fulfilled, the second is sure to follow.

I want to turn to one other very clear, prophetic picture of Israel's restoration which is given in Ezekiel 36. The reason why I emphasize this particular picture is that it makes it so clear that the restoration will, first of all, be political and then spiritual. That's God's appointed order. And we see exactly what's written in these words being fulfilled before our eyes today.

Ezekiel 36, verses 22–28, ***“Therefore say to the house of Israel, “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone.”***

It's important to see that Israel do not *deserve* God's blessing and God's mercy (no more does the church, let me emphasize that!) Both Israel and the church are totally dependent on God's free, sovereign grace. It's not desserts, it's not justice, it's grace we're talking about in both cases. God says, 'I'm not doing it for your sake, I'm doing it for my name's sake. You've profaned my name; I want to restore the honor of my name in you.' He goes on, "***I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes. For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land.*** (Now, in the past fifty years or so we have seen that statement being exactly fulfilled.) ***I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.*** (Notice, they're re-gathered in spiritual uncleanness; the process of cleansing them and sanctifying them takes place after the initial re-gathering.) ***I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.***

You see, it's so important, neither Jew nor Gentile can do God's will apart from the Holy Spirit. It's only when God puts the Holy Spirit in that anyone can do the will of God. ***"You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God."***

That's being fulfilled. Every Christian that reads those words or hears them should rejoice. It's a testimony of God's covenant-keeping faithfulness to His people. It's a testimony of the absolute accuracy of the Bible. It's today an up to date message that's being fulfilled before our eyes.

Study No. 8 – THE GLORIOUS CHURCH



Let me go back to a Scripture that I quoted earlier in these messages in Isaiah 11:11–12. In these verses God says that the re-gathering of Israel is a banner lifted up to all nations. In other words, when He re-gathers Israel, He calls the attention of all nations to what He's doing and He shows them that it aligns with the prophecies that He's given many, many centuries ago through His prophets. Listen to this in Isaiah 11:11–12, ***"In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea."***

We could pause for a moment to look at what those countries are: Assyria is essentially Iraq; lower and Upper Egypt we know, Cush is possibly Ethiopia, Elam is Persia or Iran; Babylonia is in the area between Iraq and Iran, Hamath is Syria, and the islands of the sea would be all the other continents and lands. So this is the re-gathering we've seen taking place in our days with our own eyes.

Then in connection with this re-gathering, the prophet continues in verse 12, ***"He [that is, the Lord] will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah [and Judah is the word that gives rise to the name Jew, He will assemble the scattered Jewish people] from the four quarters of the earth."*** So this re-gathering of Israel is a banner lifted up by God Himself to attract the attention of all nations.

And then in Jeremiah 31, verse 10, the Lord orders His messengers to make a proclamation to all the nations in regard to this re-gathering of Israel. In other words, it's not just something that's been done very secretly and quietly but it's something that God wants to attract the attention of the whole earth to.

I've spent a good deal of time recently in Israel with my wife and one of the amazing things is that that tiny little nation of 3½ million people is almost never out of the headlines of world news. Far larger nations carry on from year to year and you hardly ever hear about them, but everything that happens in Israel is news today on all the media. And there's a reason for that. The reason is that God is attracting the attention of the whole world to what He is doing for Israel. This is the proclamation in Jeremiah 31:10, ***"Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and***

declare in the coastlands [or the continents] afar off, and say, “He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.”

So God’s message to the whole earth, to all nations, is that the same God who scattered Israel will gather him. And just as the scattering is a fulfilled event of human history, so the re-gathering will also take place on the same stage of human history, before the eyes of all nations. It’s a proclamation to be made to all nations.

Now, let me go back for a moment to God’s original promise to Abraham when He called him to leave Ur of the Chaldees and to go to another land which he would later receive for an inheritance. This promise of God to Abraham is stated in Genesis chapter 12, verses 2–3, and it’s a very beautifully complete promise. It has seven distinct sections to it, as follows, ***“I will make you into a great nation I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, whoever curses you I will curse; all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”***

That’s the sevenfold promise of blessing to Abraham. The fifth and sixth promises are particularly important and relevant to our present subject. ***“I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse.”*** So in a certain sense, the destiny of all nations will ultimately be settled by their attitude to Abraham and his descendants. Those who bless Abraham and his descendants God will bless, but whoever curses Abraham and his descendants God will curse. So, Abraham and his descendants are the touchstone by which all other nations are going to be judged.

In Matthew 25, in a parable or a discourse of Jesus, we find a picture of the final outworking of this principle that all nations will be judged by their attitude and their dealings with Abraham and his descendants.

Matthew 25, verses 31–34, ***“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.”***

So all nations are going to be divided into two groups: sheep on the right, goats on the left; sheep to be accepted and blessed, goats to be rejected and cursed. And then, this is the promise, first to the sheep, verse 34, ***“Then the King will say to those on His right, “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”***

Later in verse 41, we get His words to the goat nations, ***“Then He will also say to those on His left, “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels . . .”***

A *totally* different destiny. One is blessed, the other is cursed. I want you to notice that word “curse”. Because God said to Abraham, “Whoever curses you I will curse.”

NOW, NOTICE THE PRINCIPLE OF JUDGMENT WHICH SEPARATES THE NATIONS.

- First of all, the principle on which nations are accepted, Matthew 25:40, ***“The King will answer and say [to these accepted nations], ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’”***
- And then, the principle on which the nations are rejected, ***“Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these [and that’s My brothers], you did not do it to Me.’”***

So, all nations are going to be judged by the way that they treat and relate to the ‘brothers of Jesus.’

And remember, Jesus is a Jew and the Jewish people, even in their rejection by God and their disobedience, are still the brothers of Jesus. So, the dividing point between the nations, the sheep who are accepted, the goats who are rejected, will be the way they have dealt with Jesus’ brothers, with Abraham and his descendants. Those who bless them will be blessed, and those who curse them will be cursed.

To reinforce the message of this picture of the end time judgment of the nations, I want to give you some specific warnings and a specific promise of blessing and I want to leave them with you. First of all, two specific warnings to the nations on the way that they relate to God’s purposes for Israel, for the land, for the city of Jerusalem. Psalm 129, verse 5, ***“May all who hate Zion, be put to shame and turned backward . . .”***

Ultimately, any nation that opposes God’s purpose for the restoration of Zion will be put to shame and turned backward. That’s the everlasting Word of God. It’s not dependent on the amount of oil or armaments or these other factors that politicians take into account. This is an eternal statement of God’s divine purpose and judgment. ***“May all who hate Zion, be put to shame and turned backward.”*** The nations need to give heed to that warning.

I’m now going to speak about God’s purpose to restore the church and how we can align ourselves with that. First of all, we need a vision of what God has destined the church to be. In the book of Proverbs we are warned that where there is no vision the people perish or cast off restraint. In other words, God’s people need an ongoing vision to fulfill their calling. And this is particularly true in connection with the church. The church is so high above man’s natural concepts and ideas and plans that we absolutely must depend upon the vision given in Scripture by the Holy Spirit of what God has destined the church to be.

One place where this vision is made gloriously plain is in the epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 5, verses 25–27. This begins by an admonition to human husbands to love human wives and that’s very much in place and very necessary, but Paul uses it as a kind of stepping stone to a higher level of love, the love between Christ and His church. And he compares the relationship of Christ to the church to that of a man to his bride who is to become his wife. This is what he says, ***“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for***

her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless."

First we need to see Christ's double provision for His church, the provision that He made through His blood and the provision that He makes through His Word. I could express it simply this way: Christ redeemed the church by His blood that He might thereafter sanctify or make the church holy by His Word. Each provision is absolutely essential for God's purpose to find its fulfillment.

First of all, as Paul says, Christ gave Himself up for the church. He became the atoning sin offering. On the cross He shed His blood and by His blood He redeemed His people to make them a new creation, a new kind of people in the earth, something that the earth had never seen or even conceived of before. But once Christ had purchased His people to Himself by His blood, His plan and purpose was not complete. His final provision for the church is thereafter to cleanse her, to sanctify her, to wash her with the pure water of the Word of God. This is just as essential to make the church what Christ desires her to be as the shedding of the blood with which He redeemed her. And if the church is ever to become what God intends, then the church has to be continually cleansed and sanctified by the precious water of the Word of God. There's got to be a cleansing in every area of our lives (our thoughts, our motives, our imaginations, our attitudes and relationships), all have got to be washed continually by the sanctifying, purifying water of the Word if we're ever to become the kind of church that Jesus has destined us to be.

God will never lower His standards to come down to man's standards. But God has made provision to raise us up to the standard that He's set for us. And the provision here revealed is first, the redeeming blood of Jesus and second, the cleansing, sanctifying water of the Word of God.

I would like to speak now about the response that's demanded from us. First of all, the individual response from each believer. This is very clearly unfolded in the first epistle of John, chapter 3, verses 2–3, ***"Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he (Christ) appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*** (Again you see, there *has to be a vision*. We're going to be *like Jesus*) And then John points out the practical application of this glorious vision, ***Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he (Jesus) is pure."***

So the response that's required from each of us individually, when confronted with the vision of what God intends the church to be, that response is that each one of us will purify ourselves, through the washing of water by the Word of God and the standard of purity is God's standard, not man's. ***"Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he [Jesus] is pure."***

And then we look for a moment at the corporate response required from the church as a whole. This is beautifully unfolded in Revelation chapter 19, verses 6–8, which prophetically

portrays the climax of this age, the marriage supper of the Lamb. This is how it was revealed to John, ***“And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”***

There’s a picture of the church’s corporate preparation. It says, *“His bride (the church) has made herself ready.”* That indicates a process of preparation and her preparation is described in the final phrase there, *“for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”* The beautiful garment that the church must put on is a garment woven, not out of threads of linen, but out of righteous acts done in obedience to God and to His Word. So each righteous act is one thread in the total garment that will clothe the church and make her glorious.

Study No. 9 – THE FIRST OBJECTIVE: UNITY



Today we'll focus on God's purpose to restore unity to the church, or to bring the church into unity. We'll turn, first of all, to the great high priestly prayer of Jesus recorded in John chapter 17. At the close of this chapter Jesus goes to His arrest and to His trial. He's separated from His disciples and not restored to them until after His death and burial and resurrection. So in a sense, these are really the last words that the disciples heard from their Lord before He was separated from them and I believe they are words of special significance. They are the prayer of Jesus to the Father on behalf of His disciples, His believing people. In the first part of the prayer He's praying for the disciples who are then with Him, but in the closing part of the prayer He launches out into a prayer for all future believers of all ages, all races, all denominations, all backgrounds. And this glorious close to the prayer indicates the deepest longing and the purpose of Jesus for His church, His people. I'm going to read John 17, verses 20–23, ***"My prayer is not for them alone [that's the disciples who were then present with Him]. I pray also for those who will believe on me through their message . . ."***

I understand that to be *all true believers of all subsequent ages* because ultimately, if you analyze how believers come to faith, it's always through the message of the apostles. That's the message that's recorded in the New Testament and that is the only real basis for the faith of all believers. So Jesus is praying for all believers and He said, ***"I pray . . . for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one [that's all believers], all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you."***

Jesus speaks about the relationship that's to exist between all true believers and He compares it to the same relationship that exists between the Father and the Son, ***"Just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one."***

Notice again God's standards never come down. He never comes down to a lower standard than that which is worthy of God Himself. His standard of unity is the standard of the Godhead. The unity that exists between the Father and the Son is the unity that Jesus prays for in the church. ***"I have given them the glory that You gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I***

in them and You in Me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent Me and have loved them even as you have loved Me.”

You see, Jesus not only focuses on His own believing people but, as always, He has a deep compassion and concern for the world that doesn't yet know Him. And He sees and explains to us that the ultimate testimony, the only testimony that can reach the whole world is the visible unity of His believing people. He says, “That the world may believe” and that “the world may know” that God sent Jesus to be the Savior.

Now, we have to be realistic. It's not just some mystical unity in another realm. It must be the kind of unity that this unbelieving world can apprehend with its senses. It must be a visible demonstrated unity. That's the only kind of unity that could convince the world and that's the kind of unity for which Jesus prayed to the Father. And my conviction is that the Lord Jesus never prayed a prayer that the Father will not answer. I believe God is going to answer that prayer of Jesus for the visible unity of the church, a unity that's of the same type as the unity that exists within the Godhead between the Father and the Son.

In examining how this kind of unity that I've been speaking about can be brought about, I want to turn now to a very beautiful picture from the Old Testament, a symbolic picture of the re-gathering of God's scattered people into a unity. It's found in the prophet Ezekiel, in the 37th chapter and the opening part of the chapter. It's a vision that God gave to Ezekiel. It's usually known as the vision of the valley of dry bones.

This is how Ezekiel records the vision, ***“The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. [And this was a revelation of God's people; lifeless, scattered, separated.] [God] asked me, ‘Son of man, can these bones live?’ I said, ‘O Sovereign Lord, you alone know.’ Then he said to me, ‘Prophecy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.’” So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, ‘Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’” So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.’***

What a beautiful picture of God's purpose, to re-gather His scattered people at the close of this age. Apparently, a totally hopeless task. As Ezekiel walked up and down amongst those dry bones he must have said, “Surely, this is beyond help.” And sometimes, we could feel the same

about the condition of the church, that it's beyond help—it's divided, it's scattered, it's weak, it's ineffective; but God's purpose stands. And God gave Ezekiel the ministry that brought restoration and reunification to the people of God.

I believe that prophesying to the bones represents preaching, but prophesying to the breath represents prayer and intercession and I want to suggest to you that both are desperately needed. The preaching of the Word that will bring life and unity back to God's people and the kind of prayer and intercession that will bring the Holy Spirit back in His fullness into the Body of Christ and raise up what used to be scattered, separated, lifeless bones into a vast army.

I love that phrase. In the Hebrew language it's very, very emphatic, a *very, very, great army*. This translation says "a vast army." There again we need to see the objective. God's objective here is not portrayed as a bride, but as an army, an army to do battle, an army to assail the strongholds of Satan, to go out and cast down the strongholds of Satan, drive back his wicked forces and usher in the revelation of the glory of God to the whole earth.

We'll turn to the epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 4, verses 11–16, which speaks about the main ministries that Christ has set in His church and the purpose for which those ministries are set there. And this is what Paul says in Ephesians 4:11–16, ***"And He [that is the resurrected, ascended Christ] gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers*** (there's five main ministries: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.) Now we're told the purposes for which these ministries are set by Christ in the church, verse 12, ***"for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."***

Again we see the necessity of having a vision. The vision of the completed, mature, properly functioning body is stated there by Paul in verse 16, it's the end to which everything that God is doing in the church is directed.

Now let's go back and pick up some of the salient features of that tremendously important revelation of God's program to bring the church into unity. Let me make certain practical and important points. First of all, when God wants to do something, He begins by finding men to do it. And so Jesus begins His program in the church by giving men to the church in these various ministries.

You see, God works through leaders and where there are no leaders to work through, the purposes of God are frustrated.

Now, as we look at these ministries that are mentioned here: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, certain specific functions for them are stated.

First of all, to equip the saints for their service. It isn't God's purpose that the "full-time" ministers shall do it all, that's a misunderstanding which has crept into some churches, but it's God's purpose that those ministers shall equip the rest of the believers to do their work. And, in some sense, the minister who does it all is really frustrating the purposes of God. It's much more important to equip others to do it. So that's the first purpose, to equip the saints for the service.

The second is to build up the body of Christ. These ministries must have this vision of the completed body. All their labors and efforts must be directed to producing this body which is the ultimate vision and purpose of God.

The third purpose, which is the one most closely connected with what I'm speaking about today, is to bring us into the unity of the faith. Paul actually uses the words "*until we all attain to the unity of the faith*." He's speaking about the unity of the faith as an objective to which we must come. And it's dependent on these ministries functioning correctly in the church.

He also says something further, which is revealing about how we will attain to the unity of the faith. He says through "the knowledge of the Son of God." But the Greek word means really "acknowledging". It's not just an intellectual knowledge of Jesus as the Son of God, it's acknowledging Him, it's giving Him His right place in every part of the church and in every area of our own lives. And I do believe that is the path to unity that, as we acknowledge Jesus and give Him His rightful place and His preeminence in every area of our lives and in the church which is His body, everything else will fall into line.

You see, doctrine is not enough. Every doctrine of the New Testament centers in a person and that person is Jesus. Salvation requires a Savior, sanctification requires a Sanctifier, healing requires a Healer, and so on. So, it's not enough to have the doctrine. The doctrine must bring us into relationship with the person and when the person of Jesus is rightly acknowledged in His church, then everything else will fall into its due place and order around Him.

The fourth purpose for these ministries is to bring us to maturity and completeness. A complete body, every part there, every part doing its job. A mature body, not the body of a small boy or a young person but a mature, full-grown body.

Let me just briefly recapitulate the functions of those ministries:

- first, to equip the saints for their service
- second, to build up the body of Christ

- third, to bring us into the unity of the faith through the acknowledging of the Son of God
- and fourth, to bring us to maturity and completeness.

Now I want to speak about our *response* to these ministries:

If we reject these ministries, if we are self-willed and stubborn, go our own way and do not submit to spiritual authority that God has set in the church, the result is stated by Paul in the 14th verse of Ephesians 4, (As a result, he says), ***“we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.”***

The implication is clear. If we do not come under these ministries and submit to their authority and obey their direction, we will continue to be spiritually retarded infants. We will be old in years but very young spiritually. We’ll be subject to every form of deception, every kind of new doctrine that comes along. We’ll be carried hither and thither. We’ll never attain to stability or maturity or real responsibility. That’s the penalty of refusing the ministries that God sets in the church. On the other hand, if we submit to these ministries, then the result will be love and right relationships and growth to fulfillment. Paul sketches out the pathway to this goal in verse 15, ***“Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him”***

We have to get in right relationship to the ministries, to the authorities that Jesus sets in His church. And being in right relationship to those ministries will bring us into right relationship with our fellow believers. We’ll be “speaking the truth in love” and as we speak the truth in love, under discipline and authority, we grow up. We cease to be spiritually retarded infants. And we grow up into Christ, He’s always the ultimate, He’s always the objective. And we become members of that whole body, which is fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies in which every individual part is doing its proper job and which, as a result, the body grows naturally out of its own inner resources and life. It says that this relationship established between the members promotes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

God has a vision. God has a plan. God has a program. First of all, we have to hear the prayer of Jesus. Then we have to commit ourselves to the purpose of Jesus. Then we have to submit ourselves to the authority, to the ministry that Jesus sets in His church. And then we have to come into right relationship with our fellow believer and become part of that total functioning body which is the objective of God.

Study No. 10 – THE SECOND OBJECTIVE: OUTREACH



In earlier talks on this theme I've spoken about the specific and distinctive sign of the end of the age that relates to the church, namely, the outpouring of the latter rain of the Holy Spirit. You'll remember that we saw that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church is symbolized in Biblical prophecy by the fall of rain upon the land of Israel. Just as the rain in Israel comes in two main outpourings, the first rain at the beginning of winter and the last rain at the end of winter. So, historically, the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon the church in two main visitations. The first rain upon the church of the New Testament and the last rain upon the church at the close of the age. And it's my personal conviction that we are living in the time of the latter rain, that the present world-wide visitation of the Holy Spirit upon the church is the fulfillment of that prophecy of Joel that God would send His people both the first and the latter rain.

Now, this first comparison between the natural rain and the spiritual rain leads directly to a second comparison between the purposes for which each type of rain is given. In each case, the end purpose of the rain in God's economy is *the harvest*. This is stated almost everywhere in the Bible that God speaks about giving His people rain—it's directly linked with the harvest.

So, in the case of the natural rain, logically, it's a natural harvest (the ingathering of the grain from the earth) but in the case of the spiritual rain, equally logically it's a spiritual harvest. What is that harvest? It's the ingathering not of grain, but of the souls of men from the harvest that is now ripening all over the fields of the earth, a great final ingathering of souls into the kingdom of God through faith in Jesus Christ and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And, as the rain does its work, so the soil of the world is prepared for this last great ingathering, this *final harvest*.

You see, there are two important lessons there for us. Both the early and the latter rain are necessary for the harvest. As that is true in the natural, so it is true in the spiritual. The final great ingathering of souls into the kingdom of God cannot take place until we've had the full outpouring of the latter rain of the Holy Spirit upon the church all over the earth.

And then, the second important truth is that the latter rain *immediately precedes the Lord's return*. In those verses in James 5, verses 7–8, James both begins and closes with the theme of the Lord's return. He says, ***"Be patient, therefore . . . until the coming of the Lord."*** And then He says at the end, ***"You too***

be patient . . . for the coming of the Lord is at hand.” In other words, in the program of God, it requires both the first rain on the early church, the last rain on the church at the close of the age to prepare the harvest, and the coming of the Lord is related to the time of the harvest. Jesus says this Himself in a number of parables. For instance, in one parable in Matthew 13, verse 39, Jesus says this, ***“The harvest is the end of the age.”***

You see, there’s so many different Scriptures that all point to the same conclusion: the first rain on the early church, the last rain on the church at the close of the age, then the harvest, the great ingathering of souls into the kingdom of God, and, in the time of the harvest, the return of the Lord. That’s why God gives the rain. Because without the rain the harvest cannot be gathered. True in the natural, true in the spiritual. Why is God then pouring out the Holy Spirit upon the whole church now in fulfillment of prophecy? Because He’s reserved to us the appointed weeks of the harvest.

To me, that’s a most urgent message. The harvest is never a lengthy period in any land. It’s just a brief period. Any farmer knows, anywhere in the world, when the harvest is ripe you either gather it or you lose it. It’s just a few brief weeks. God has reserved those weeks for the church in the earth today that the harvest may be gathered in. It’s a matter of *tremendous urgency*. It’s so essential that our eyes be opened and we see the provision and the program of God and align ourselves with His purpose.

Now I’m going to take this theme of the harvest just a little further, to give it a very practical type of application to the situation of our world today. Suppose in the midst of this population explosion, with all the facilities of travel and communication at our disposal, there was a tremendous spiritual explosion in the church, the Holy Spirit was restored in His power and glory and fullness. The church became united, was equipped by the ministries, was empowered by the Holy Spirit and then, in the purposes of God, was thrust out with this spiritual equipment and with this vision into the ripened harvest fields of this tremendous population that’s in the world today. What would be the result? I’ll tell you what I believe the result will be. I believe it’s very practical to estimate that in a period of five or ten years, in those conditions, more souls would be gathered into the kingdom of God than have been gathered into the kingdom since Jesus died and rose from the dead. And do you know what I believe that will be? Just what the Bible says it will be. *It will be the harvest!* It will be the ***‘end of the age’***. It will be the objective and the fulfillment of God’s purposes. And you and I who belong to Jesus Christ at this time are obligated to see God’s purposes and fulfill them. The book of Proverbs says, ***“A son who sleeps in harvest causes his father shame.”*** My prayer is that neither you nor I may be sons of God that sleep in the harvest and cause our Father shame. May we be *awake* to what God is saying and doing in our world today.

So seldom do God’s people seem to realize that really, the initiative is with *us*! It’s not with the world. It’s not with the Politicians or the scientists or the military commanders. The initiative is with God’s people, the church.

I want to go back to a passage that we looked at earlier in this series of talks, Matthew chapter 24, which is the prophetic discourse that Jesus gave, seated on the Mount of Olives, overlooking the temple area, in which He gave a preview of the main events and trends that would mark the close of this age. First of all, I want to look at the question asked by the disciples which prompted the answer that Jesus gave. This question is stated in Matthew 24, verse 3, ***“The disciples came to Him [Jesus] privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen (that’s the destruction of the temple), and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”***

The disciples, being religious Jews, couldn't conceive that the temple would be destroyed without the age coming to a close. Of course, they were mistaken, the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. The ages continued for nearly two thousand years longer. Let's leave out then, the destruction of the temple and let's come to the latter part of their question, *"What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"* Notice, the question was singular, not "what will be the *signs* of your coming," but what will be the distinctive, sure sign of your coming and of the end of the age.

In the next ten verses, Jesus gives many signs but not *the* sign. He speaks about international wars, famines, earthquakes, pestilences, persecution of Christians, apostasy and betrayal amongst Christians, false prophets and cults, abounding lawlessness leading to lovelessness—that's a kind of brief summary of those ten verses. He's given *many* signs, but He has not given *the* sign. But He does do it. We read on just a little further and then Jesus answers that specific question with a specific answer. Matthew 24:14, ***"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."***

That's very clear. A specific question, a specific answer. *"What will be the sign of your coming?"* The answer: *"This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."* When will the end come? The end will not be provoked by the activity of evil, by the forces of Satan, even by human conflict. All this has got a part, but the decisive factor is the preaching of *"this gospel of the kingdom . . . in the whole world . . . to all nations."* When *that* has been done, the end will come.

Do you believe that there's a specific day appointed for the return of Jesus? Well let me say I do. But I also believe that certain things must happen first. And I don't know the day, *nobody* knows the day. We don't know all that must happen but nevertheless, certain things *must* happen. How do we reconcile these two things? Through the absolute foreknowledge of God. God knows when these things will have happened and He's appointed the day in the light of His foreknowledge.

Let me say again the initiative in world affairs to bring this age to its close is not with the people of this world, it's with the church of Jesus Christ. The church is God's representative, the body of Jesus Christ in the earth, and God will never allow the initiative to pass into other hands while the church is here as the representative of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Let me take you back to the commission of Jesus Christ to His disciples as it's given in Matthew 28, verses 18–20, ***"Then Jesus came to them (the disciples) and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.'"***

There's one very important word there. It's the word "therefore." We must never miss out the word "therefore" when we find it in the Scripture. Probably some of you have heard me say before, "When you find a 'therefore' in the Bible, you need to ask what it's 'there for.'" Jesus says, *"All authority has been given unto me therefore go . . ."* Why the "therefore"? I understand it this way: the authority was given by God the Father to Jesus, the Son, after His death and resurrection. And Jesus in turn, here transmits that authority to His disciples. So He says, "All authority was given to Me, now you go and exercise that authority on My behalf. The authority is vested in My name, as you go in My name, you have My authority."

You see, it's very important to understand that authority is effective *only when it's exercised*. A man may have authority and never use it and no one would ever know that he had that authority. And so it is with the authority of Jesus Christ. It's committed to us, but it's effective only when we exercise it. The only way the world will know the authority that's been committed to Jesus Christ as a result of His death and resurrection is when we, His disciples, *exercise* it on His behalf. Otherwise, the world is left in ignorance of what Jesus has actually accomplished. The world doesn't know that the Father has committed all authority to the Son. Only through our obedience to Jesus' commission can the world ever be brought face to face with this fact that there is a king, a *King of kings* and a *Lord of lords* and His name is Jesus and all authority is vested unto Him. We're responsible to demonstrate this to the world. And as we go in obedience to the command of Jesus and bring His message, He will confirm it with the supernatural signs that He's promised and attest His own authority in the Word that He's committed to us.

And then there's another reason, I believe, why He says, "*All authority is given to me . . . go therefore,*" because there are many places that it's very *difficult* to go. There are governments in the earth that resist and even refuse the preaching of the gospel. There are many "closed doors" today. But Jesus says, "If you will go and obey Me, remember *I have the authority*. If you will talk to Me about it, I'll open those closed doors, I'll make a way where there is no way. If you're determined to obey Me, I'll make it possible to obey Me."

Let me say in closing, that safety and success for the church lies in bold positive outreach, not in getting frightened, not in just looking for survival, not in hiding somewhere in a cave with some hoarded groceries. That's not the way to survival, it's not the way to success. **The way to safety and success is bold, positive outreach in obedience to the Lord.**