



CHRIST'S KINGDOM IS FUTURE

V O L U M E I

The
King's Genealogy



W.E. BEST

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CHRIST'S KINGDOM IS FUTURE

VOLUME I THE KING'S GENEALOGY

by
W. E. Best

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This is Volume I of an extensive series on the subject of Christ's future Kingdom. Subsequent volumes will be released periodically. Volume I covers only the King's genealogy. Future volumes will comprehensively cover all aspects of Christ's future Kingdom as revealed in the Scriptures from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21.

CHRIST'S KINGDOM IS FUTURE—AN OVERVIEW

There is no subject of Scripture about which there are so many conflicting views as the doctrine of eschatology. The word eschatology comes from the Greek adjective *eschatos*, which means last or final. Among the many views espoused, two major conflicting opinions, which may be called “confusion twice confounded,” are outstanding. Many who embrace the unconditional covenant with reference to soteriology (the science of salvation) reject the unconditional covenant as it relates to eschatology (the science of last things). On the other hand, others embrace the unconditional covenant as it pertains to eschatology, but they reject the unconditional covenant as it relates to soteriology. Therefore, the inconsistency of both those who believe in free grace and those who believe in free will is manifested.

The foundational problem in the study of eschatology lies in the misunderstanding of God's covenants. A definition of the Greek noun *diatheke* is important. It means a disposition, arrangement, compact, covenant, will, or testament. The word covenant is used as eternal and temporal; unconditional

and conditional; and soteriological and eschatological. In order to properly handle the subject of covenants, one must be able to distinguish between covenant and covenant.

God made legal, ceremonial, and national conditional covenants with Israel in time, but His covenant of grace is eternal. Therefore, the covenant of grace reached up to God's chief attributes and down to man's deepest needs. Nothing can alter the disposition of God who gave it because He foresaw changes, overrules all events, and provides for all circumstances. In studying the covenant of grace as it relates to Israel, the lessons typified by the tabernacle are important. For example, the ark is a symbol of God's throne from which all blessings descend. The mercy seat was placed upon the ark, and it was the same size as the ark, signifying that God's saving grace reaches no further than the eternal covenant. The eternal covenant has the God of peace as its Author, the great Shepherd of the sheep as its fulfillment, and the sheep for whom Christ died as its recipients (Heb. 13:20,21).

Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, fulfilled all the obligations of the eternal covenant. He is great in His person, power, work, and exaltation. Furthermore, Christ shall be great when He comes the second time to establish His kingdom (Titus 2:13; II Tim. 4:1). The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ, who paid the penalty of sin by His death, satisfied the righteous demands of the law, and gave assurance of peace to the elect of God on the basis of satisfied justice. Since Jesus Christ was raised by God, the eternal covenant proves that His redeeming work has been accepted by God the Father and the security of salvation for His people is assured (Matt. 1:21).

The new covenant is connected with restoration promises. It is no longer revealed by shadows but by the Lord Jesus Christ who fulfilled all the obligations and promises of the

eternal covenant. Its blessings are for all of God's elect. Those who spiritualize the kingdom ridicule the idea of a restored Israel. They accuse futurists of pinning their whole hope for the future on a castaway (Israel), thus proving their forced and unscholarly method of Biblical interpretation. Contrary to this accusation, Christians who embrace the Biblical teaching of the Scriptures concerning Christ's kingdom are fastening their hope on the promise of Christ, not on Israel: "Looking [*prosdechomenoi*, present middle participle of *prosdechomai*, which means to look for, to expect, or await] for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). Hope is the expectation of something good or excellent to its highest degree. The personal unmediated presence of Jesus Christ is the object of this hope, and the eternal kingdom is its conclusion. What can excel the personal unmediated presence of Jesus Christ, in whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily, in the eternal kingdom?

"Confusion twice confounded" becomes evident when one begins considering the works of men on the subject of eschatology. Many "theologians" believe God's promise to save the elect is unconditional, but they reverse their position on a promised consummation of soteriology in what they call a conditional kingdom. Thus, they make the covenant of grace unilateral, but they inconsistently make the covenant concerning the Kingdom bilateral. The "I will" and "I shall" of God are stressed in the first, but the "if" and "unfaithfulness" of men are emphasized in the second.

One must understand that the fulfillment of God's purpose is not limited by conditions outside the Person having purposed:

For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief nullify the faithfulness of God? God forbid [absolutely not].... —Romans 3:3,4 (translation)

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, shall he not make it good?—Numbers 23:19

The unfaithfulness of neither the Jews nor the believers in the body of Christ can nullify the faithfulness of God concerning the fulfillment of His eternal purpose in regard to the kingdom:

...I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure. —Isaiah 46:9,10 (NASB)

A literal promise spiritualized is exegetical dishonesty. Theologians are guilty of this when they spiritualize the promises of salvation's completion in the coming kingdom to mean its completion in the assembly Christ is building. How can salvation be completed in the assembly, since the assembly Christ is building is only one of the preparatory stages for the future kingdom? Scripture records not only Israel's historical past but also her future and the future of the nations of the world subsequent to the assembly which Christ is presently building (Rom. 11; Rev. 7). How can the kingdom exist in the heart or be the church/kingdom since Christ has gone to receive it from the Father (Luke 19:12)?

Jewish and nonjewish believers of the Old Testament constitute one order of God's elect. Jewish and nonjewish Christians of the New Testament—the assembly which is Christ's bride—form the second order of God's elect. The 144,000 Jews and the innumerable multitude of nonjews of Revelation 7 make up the third order of God's elect. Hence, believing Jews plus engrafted believing Gentiles of all three orders constitute the heirs of the kingdom. There is nothing symbolical about either the unconditional covenant of grace or its consummation in the kingdom.

Affirming God's free grace in salvation while denying God's freedom to complete that salvation in the kingdom does not make sense. On the other hand, denying God's free grace in salvation while affirming God's freedom to establish His kingdom is heresy. Although the latter is more heretical than the former, by God's grace, believers do not have to make a choice of either/or. While the latter is distasteful to the spiritual nature of the Christian, the former is antagonistic to his hope.

Christ's kingdom which He has gone to receive from the Father is not limited to a period of one thousand years (Luke 1:32,33). It is unfortunate that the word "millennium" has been substituted for the Biblical term "the kingdom of the heavens," "the kingdom of God," or "My [Christ's] kingdom" (Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:15; John 18:36). The Greek adjective *chilioi*, which means a thousand, is used six times in Revelation 20:2-7. This cardinal adjective which expresses amount is distinguished from an ordinal adjective that expresses degree or position in a series, such as first, second, or third. The adjective *chilioi* is used only to express one thousand, but the noun *chiliades* signifies thousands (Rev. 7:4-8; 11:13; 14:1,3; 21:16). Christ's kingdom is one in which He shall reign not only a thousand years but also forever. (See Dan. 2:44; 7:13,14; Luke 1:32,33; Rev. 11:15.)

A true concept of the kingdom involves the total message of the Bible. Hence, the subject of Christ's kingdom casts light upon the covenants, types, shadows, and prophecies of the Old Testament. Moreover, the study of the kingdom in the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles in the New Testament makes the light that shone in the Old Testament brighter. There is no explanation for either the past light or the present brighter light without considering the ultimate light as it is displayed in the coming kingdom. Therefore, there is a sense in which the light of truth shines brighter and brighter until it reaches the endless light of the eternal kingdom. There is progression of light in time, but progression gives way to perfection in eternity.

The predicted kingdom is never declared to be a kingdom either in heaven or from the world, but it is a kingdom from heaven and not from this place (the world). Therefore, the kingdom is "the kingdom of the heavens [*he basileia ton ouranon*, genitive of description]" (Matt. 3:2—translation); "the kingdom of God [*he basileia tou theou*, genitive of description]" (Mark 1:15); "the kingdom which is mine is not from this world [*he basileia he eme ouk estin ek*, ablative of source, *tou kosmou toutou*]" (John 18:36—translation). Therefore, the hope of the Christian is not for something that remains in heaven, but it is the fruit of grace which shall descend from heaven in blessed reality to him on earth. Furthermore, the hope that has its source in heaven will never disappoint its recipient. Thus, the hope of the kingdom has its foundation in the covenants of eternity and time. It is presently confirmed by Jesus Christ and the apostles, and faith looks to Jesus Christ's second advent for its realization. As the first advent of Christ brings regenerating and saving grace to the elect, the second advent shall perfect the elect in the kingdom.

The light of prophecy concerning the kingdom was not obscure in the Old Testament. The kingdom described by

Daniel cannot be the rise and spread of a mere spiritual kingdom in the midst of earthly kingdoms. It will be a kingdom which shall break in pieces and consume all earthly kingdoms. Christ did not do this at His first advent:

And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. —Daniel 2:44 (NASB)

Fifty years subsequent to Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's vision, recorded in Daniel 2, the prophet himself had a vision that harmonized with his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's vision (Dan. 7:13,14). The kingdom given to the Son of Man is the same kingdom symbolized by the stone that was cut out of the mountain without hands (Dan. 2:45). Christ did not attack the kingdoms of this world when He came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. On the contrary, the Lord Jesus was apprehended by the Jews and handed over, according to the fixed counsel and prearrangement of God, to be nailed to a cross and killed by the hands of lawless men (Acts 2:23). Thus, the image of Nebuchadnezzar smote the Son of Man, instead of the Son of Man smiting the image.

Daniel described the kingdom as being given to the Son of Man by the Ancient of days:

I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations, and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed. —Daniel 7:13,14 (NASB)

His description is explained by Jesus Christ in Luke 19:11-27. The Ancient of days cannot be both the Father and the Son. According to Luke 19:12, the Son has gone into a distant country “to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.” The kingdom given to Christ by the Ancient of days (the eternal Father) must be distinguished from Christ’s sovereignty. The kingdom belongs to Christ as the Son of David (Matt. 1:1; Luke 1:30-33), but sovereignty is the Son of God’s eternal endowment. Christ’s kingdom is never promised to Him as the Son of God, but it is promised to Him as the Son of Man or Son of David. Hence, Christ’s sovereignty is not His promised reign. Christ’s all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18) differs from His visible unmediated presence bringing all things into subjection to Himself on earth as the Son of David (Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7; Matt. 1:1; Luke 1:32; Rom. 1:3,4; Phil. 1:9-11; Rev. 5:10; Matt. 5:5; James 2:5). Furthermore, Christ can never share His sovereignty with His people, but He will share His reign in the kingdom with them (II Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:10; 20:6; 22:5). Who would be so foolish as to say we are presently reigning with Christ in His spiritual kingdom as we behold Him in His unmediated presence?

The kingdom prophesied in the Old Testament is the same kingdom that was taught by Jesus Christ and the apostles in

the New Testament. There is no clearer reference to Christ's future kingdom than the record of the model prayer Christ taught His disciples to pray (Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4):

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. —Matthew 6:9-13

Christ never intended that believers should repeat the model prayer as a mere religious formality. The disciples had referred to John the Baptist's teaching His disciples to pray, but they evidently thought something was lacking in that teaching. The Lord Jesus had already given a warning about how to pray (Matt. 6:1-8); but now in answer to the disciples' request, He described the correct method of praying. Paul characterized the heart of the prayer:

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. —Romans 8:15

Christians must not overlook the proper order in the model prayer: (1) God's interests and (2) His people's need. Christ

gave the method, and the Holy Spirit gives the utterance of prayer (Rom. 8:26,27). The desire to pray is the fruit of grace, but the manner of prayer is a matter of instruction.

The model prayer, like the decalogue, was given twice (Matt. 6; Luke 11) and taught that responsibility to God precedes personal need. Obedience to God qualifies believers to pray for personal need. The greatest mistake made in prayer is the tendency to look first to one's need. But God will not be used like a wrecker service for a wrecked or malfunctioned automobile. He has first place or no place at all in the life of an individual. Hence, a person is dependent on the sovereign God to supply his need. God the Father's attributes of omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence must be recognized by the person praying.

“Our Father [*pater hemon*, literally means ‘Father of us’]” proves relationship, but we must understand that there is more than one form of relationship to God: (1) The Father's relationship to Jesus Christ, His eternal Son, is one of transcendent glory. This is the reason Christ, after His resurrection, said to Mary:

...Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. —John 20:17

Unlike our bodies, the body of Christ, which God had prepared for the Son's incarnation, was not subject to corruption. However, one phase of His mission must be completed before His earthly body took on “another form [*hetera*, ad-

jective, locative feminine singular of *heteros*, which means a different form rather than one of the same form]” (Mark 16:12). This different form is explained:

Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself:
handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and
bones, as ye see me have. —Luke 24:39

The unfulfilled part of His mission is explained in Hebrews 9:11-12. (2) The Father’s relationship to all mankind is one of creation and providence. Paul declared before the Athenians that all human beings—elect and nonelect—are living, being moved, and having their existence in God. Furthermore, Paul quoted some of the poets among them who had said, “we are also his offspring” (Acts 17:28). Religionists can take little comfort from this verse because reprobates are included. (3) The Father’s relationship to the elect is one of grace. This grace was first given to the elect in Christ before the “times of ages” (before the world began) (II Tim. 1:9). It was then given in time when we were made alive in Christ (Eph. 2:4-10). Therefore, Christians are indebted to God the Father for not only the grace of election but also life and likeness.

The person who approaches God in prayer has reverence for the Father’s name, interest in the future kingdom, and concern for the will of God. Hence, the order of Christ’s model prayer for His servants must not go unnoticed. The prayer’s proper reverence for God the Father is evidenced by interest in the kingdom of God’s Son. Assurance of a future kingdom not only comforts persecuted and suffering believers, but it also dispels the present darkness. There is no

explanation for the present imperfection in the Christian life without considering its perfection in the coming kingdom. As important as instruction to the assemblies of Christ is to the present, salvation will not be complete until the subjects of the assembly which Christ is continuing to build are perfected in the kingdom. Considered as a whole, the main idea in the model prayer is the saints' longing for Christ's kingdom in which God's will shall be done on earth. While the politicians' work is worthless and their hope is hopeless, Christians work, hope, and pray with assurance of faith. Furthermore, while society's aims are aimless and its anticipation is never realized, Christians set their affections on Christ and His kingdom with the assurance of their present foretaste becoming a reality.

Christ's instruction in the model prayer stressed something that lay ahead: "Let your kingdom come [*elthato he basileia sou*]..." (Matt. 6:10—translation). This petition emphasized eschatology. Luke's account of the model prayer in Luke 18:1-8 follows Christ's discourse on His second advent in Luke 17:22-37. Thus, our Lord encouraged praying without fainting during the long interval between His first and second advents. The time of suffering and persecution of God's people occurs between Christ's two advents (I Cor. 4:8; II Thess. 1:3-10; II Tim. 2:10; 3:12). Luke portrayed perseverance in prayer by the parable of a friendless widow who obtained justice from a wicked magistrate by persistent solicitation. Christ applied the parable by showing that if importunity obtained so much from a wicked magistrate, how much more will persistence obtain for the elect from the righteous Judge. The elect alone persevere in prayer.

The heavenly kingdom will have an earthly existence—let your kingdom "come" (*elthato*, aorist active imperative of *erchomai*, which means to come, to come from one place into another, or to appear). The kingdom is the Father's to give,

and it is the Son's to receive. When Christ receives the kingdom from the Father, He will return (Luke 19:12). Will He return to the earth with the kingdom? "Let your will [*thelema*, will or desire] be done [*genetheto*, aorist passive imperative of *ginomai*, which means to be done or to take place] as in heaven [*hos en ourano*], also on earth [*kai epi ges*]" (Matt. 6:10—translation). God's will done on earth as it is in heaven will never take place until the son of Man establishes His kingdom on the earth. In fulfillment of prophecy, in the kingdom "...the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Is. 11:9). (See Ps. 72:19; Hab. 2:14; Zech. 14:9; Rom. 11:26; II Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1.)

The will of God that shall be done on the earth as it is now being done in heaven brings up some important questions that must be addressed: (1) What is the difference between the "secret things" which belong to the Lord our God and the "things revealed" which belong to us? (2) How can Christ's reign with His saints for one thousand years be considered to be forever, or how shall it have no end? (3) How can the glorified saints come back into time during the millennium?

1. God's will is a great sphere with two hemispheres—revealed and unrevealed. Man cannot see the sphere of God's will, but he is responsible to know the hemisphere of God's revealed will. There are some things concerning God's will (purpose) that are secret. His eternal purpose is not a matter of prayer. No believer can question the fact that God's purpose on earth is being fulfilled, and the time is fast approaching when it will be completed. However, one cannot say that the revealed hemisphere of God's will is being done on earth as it is in heaven. That will not take place until the kingdom is established.

2. There is much confusion concerning the duration of

Christ's kingdom. The first phase of the kingdom will be in time; therefore, we are told that it will continue for one thousand years. During this time period, Christ the King will be ruling with a rod of iron (Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15). Why will a rod of iron be used if God's will is being done on the earth during the kingdom? Since there will be unsaved people during this time period of the kingdom, the rod will be necessary for a righteous government. Scripture proves that unsaved people will be present during the one thousand years (Rev. 20:7-10). However, Revelation 21 and 22 show that the power of opposition will have been completely subdued by the superior force of the King of kings. All the judgments will then be over, including the one at the close of the millennium. Therefore, the difference between the millennium and the eternal reign of Christ is His reigning with a rod of iron during the millennium and His reigning without a rod subsequent to the millennium.

3. The glorified saints will come back into time to reign with Christ in the same way Christ came back into time. The glorified Savior came back on several occasions between His taking "another form" and His ascension.

"Let your kingdom come" is a petition for one distinctive future kingdom that shall be given by the Father to His Son for its establishment on the earth. The aorist active imperative Greek verb of request does not suggest that we pray for a gradual coming but for a sudden social and moral change due to the unmediated theocratic rule and reign of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the imperative of entreaty, which carries the idea of urgency or request, can be linked with the petition of Revelation 22:20. "The one witnessing these things is saying, Yes indeed I am coming soon. Amen, Come Lord Jesus" (translation). Who can deny that this prayer is for a future kingdom? A theory is hard pressed for argument to change "Let your kingdom come" into a present kingdom in the heart,

the spread of the gospel, Christ's rule in His assembly, the kingdom of grace, success of the gospel, etc.

One who is already in the kingdom cannot pray for its coming. Therefore, the request "let your kingdom come" points to the future, and it is an expectation as much as a petition. It is a desire uttered by the kingdom's heirs that expresses faith and hope in a distinctive kingdom whose place of establishment will be the earth.

The duration of the kingdom cannot be restricted to a millennium. Even the word "duration," which means the length of time during which something continues, is out of place when speaking about the endlessness of Christ's kingdom. The millennium refers to the time of Satan's being bound, but there is no thought of Christ's reign being terminated. Such an idea of cessation is contrary to the true conception of Christ. Luke's statement with reference to Christ's kingdom was that there shall not be an end (Luke 1:33). This teaches that His kingdom extends into eternity when time shall be no more.

VOLUME I
THE KING'S GENEALOGY

INTRODUCTION

Matthew is the author of the genealogy of the King. Matthew's Gospel is the transitional book between God's dealings with the Jews in the Old Testament and His actions toward them at the time of and subsequent to the incarnation. This explains the reason for the order of David and then Abraham rather than the chronological order. Matthew was more concerned about Christology than he was about chronology, but chronology must be complete enough to satisfy the Jews. This pedigree contains Christ's relationship to Israel as their Messiah and rightful King. Matthew gave the presentation, principles, powers, and parables of the King, but the Jews rejected the message of the King. Therefore, Jesus Christ left them and departed (Matt. 16:4).

The Gospel of Matthew was written before 70 A.D., but Mark's Gospel was written some time before Matthew's. Nevertheless, the Gospel of Matthew precedes Mark's because Matthew was stressing the Jewish concept. The Biblical order of proclaiming God's message is to the Jew first and then to the Gentile. A detailed study of the pedigree recorded

by Matthew will enable a Christian to have a workable knowledge of the entire Old Testament.

Matthew stated the King's lineage in the first verse:

The book [*biblos*—book, scroll, or record] of the genealogy [*geneseos*, genitive of *genesis*, which means origin, descent, or lineage] of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. —Matthew 1:1 (NASB)

David and Abraham were the two with whom God made covenants which had unconditional and conditional aspects. (See II Sam. 7:9-16; Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:18-21; 17:1-8; 22:17,18.) The name “Jesus” is the human name of the King, but the context of Matthew 1 proves He is more than human: “...and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). There is no other name by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). Mark said of Him that God alone can forgive sins (Mark 2:7-10).

The word “son” used in connection with David and Abraham is from the Greek word *huios*. The flexibility of the use of this word is disclosed in the Scriptures. Jesus Christ was not the son of David and the grandson of Abraham. Being the “son of David, the son of Abraham” signifies that Jesus Christ was identified with David and Abraham. For example, sons of thunder were identified with thunder (Mark 3:17); sons of disobedience are identified with disobedience (Eph. 2:2); sons of God are identified with God (Rom. 8:14). Matthew emphasized the son of David because he was writing to Jews, and Jesus Christ as the son of David would fulfill the

unconditional aspect of the covenant that God made with David. Jesus Christ was not the son of David in the immediate sense, but He was the son of David in the ultimate sense. There were many generations between David and Jesus Christ.

The lineage of Jesus Christ contains an important link in the understanding of the future kingdom. Since Matthew portrayed Jesus Christ as King, the King must have a lineage that was known to the Jews. Although David appeared before Abraham in our text, Abraham is the first in the historical chronology. Mark omitted a genealogy because he presented Christ as a Servant, and a servant does not need a record of his genealogy. Luke introduced the Lord Jesus as the perfect Man; therefore, he gave His lineage. John revealed the eternal son of God who was manifested in the flesh, and God can have no lineage.

Since the Son of David shall be the fulfillment of Israel's hopes and promises, the Holy Spirit began the genealogy with the Son of David. If the Savior was to descend from David for merely the purpose of redemption, why place so much emphasis on the royal line? Furthermore, if David's throne is God's throne in heaven, no satisfactory reason can be assigned to something that is merely symbolical. The throne of David is not typical, representative, or symbolical; it is actually and really covenanted to the Heir, Jesus Christ, the Son of David.

Three things that were made sure to David were a house, throne, and kingdom (II Sam. 7:13). In these are portrayed posterity, royal authority, and sphere of rule. The unconditionality of the covenant was dependent on the faithfulness of God, not on the faithfulness of Israel. Unfaithfulness by men never prevents the fulfillment of God's purpose set forth in the unconditional aspect of God's covenants in time. The unfaithfulness of the first generation of Jews (Num. 32:13)

did not keep the nation of Israel from entering Canaan (Josh. 14:1). Furthermore, the Jews' rejection of Christ during His first advent did not nullify God's promise that "all Israel shall be saved [*sothesetai*, future passive indicative of *sodzo*, which means to save or deliver]" (Rom. 11:26). Hence, the salvation of Israel was future when Paul wrote the Roman letter by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the passive voice signifies that Israel will be passive (have no part in her deliverance) when God delivers her, and the indicative mood is the mood of reality. Israel's past and future are based on God's election of Israel, not on Israel's choice of God. Therefore, Israel's election does not rest on her merits but on God's choice and faithfulness (Deut. 7:6-11; Rom. 11).

God made provision for any sin or failure in the unconditional aspect of the covenants made in time:

When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; and your throne shall be established forever. —II Samuel 7:12-16 (NASB)

Verse 15 was inserted in the Davidic covenant to cover not

only Solomon but also his erring descendants until the true and perfect King came from David's seed. Paul spoke of the Son who came from the seed of David according to the flesh (Rom. 1:3). David's life was not all conquest and success. He had his weak moments, and he was not always kinglike in his heart. However, he felt his weakness, and that was his strength (Ps. 32; 51).

David's understanding of the promised kingdom was stated in his own language (Ps. 132:11; also study Ps. 89:34,35). The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah had the same understanding of the kingdom.

The LORD has sworn to David, A truth from which
He will not turn back; Of the fruit of your body I will
set upon your throne. —Psalm 132:11 (NASB)

There will be no end to the increase of His government
or of peace, On the throne of David and over his
kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice
and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The
zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.
—Isaiah 9:7 (NASB)

Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD,
When I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch;
And He will reign as king and act wisely And do
justice and righteousness in the land. In His days
Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely;
And this is His name by which He will be called, The
LORD our righteousness. —Jeremiah 23:5,6 (NASB)

All the terms of these Old Testament prophecies were not fulfilled at Christ's first advent. The Jews not only rejected Jesus Christ, but they also said, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). Although the kingdom of the seed of David is

the subject of Old Testament prophecy, that prophecy was only partially fulfilled at Christ's first coming. A child was born, and a Son was given. But the government was not upon Christ's shoulder, and He did not rule in peace at His first coming (Matt. 10:34). Furthermore, when He finished the work the Father sent Him to perform, He did not sit on the throne of David; but he sat on His Father's throne (Rev. 3:21).

David's name not only appears first in the genealogical record of Matthew, but it also concludes the first of three divisions of the generations from Abraham to Joseph in Matthew 1:1-17. The three divisions are as follows: (1) The generations from Abraham to David emphasize the promise in the unconditional aspect of the covenants. (2) The generations from David to the captivity in Babylon stress spiritual decline. (3) The generations from the Babylonian captivity to Joseph describe a period of darkness which concluded with four hundred years without a recorded witness. The division of promise concluded with David and began with Abraham because Jesus Christ is the seed of both David (the royal line) and Abraham (the line of promise). (See Rom. 1:3,4; Gal. 3:16.)

Jesus Christ is the seed of Abraham as the chosen Head of the elect of God. Thus, Paul showed that the promised salvation by grace is concentrated in one Person, namely, Jesus Christ. The prominent feature of the Abrahamic covenant is grace. It is unconditional because it looks forward to Jesus Christ in God's fixed purpose. Thus, we see the reason for Matthew's beginning with David and then going back to Abraham. The Jews during Christ's first advent never questioned the descent of the Messiah from David, but they lacked the understanding of grace promised in the seed of Abraham. Therefore, Matthew mentioned David first to get their attention, and he then went back to Abraham to show that the election of grace is the foundation of hope for the promised kingdom for both Israel and the assembly Christ is building.

SECTION I

**THE UNCONDITIONAL ASPECT
OF GOD'S COVENANTS
OF PROMISE WAS EMPHASIZED
FROM ABRAHAM TO DAVID**

2

PATRIARCHS' NAMES RECORDED IN THE KING'S GENEALOGY

There are some marvelous examples of God's grace and the working out of His eternal purpose in the first division of the generations from Abraham to David. The division of promise concluded with David, but it began with Abraham. Now we know why Matthew 1:1 gave prominence to these two patriarchs. Paul was speaking of the Abrahamic covenant when he said:

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. —Galatians 3:16

Jesus Christ, therefore, is the seed of Abraham and of David. In a far higher sense than Isaac, Jesus Christ is the seed of

Abraham as the chosen Head of the elect of God. Paul was showing that the promised salvation by grace is concentrated in one Person, namely, Jesus Christ. This comment by Paul has given rise to much discussion, but there is no real basis for such controversy. The prominent feature of the Abrahamic covenant is grace; therefore, it is unconditional. It clearly looks forward to Jesus Christ. In the Davidic covenant, the promised seed was Solomon in the immediate sense and Jesus Christ in the ultimate sense.

The names of some of the persons included in the first division of the genealogy are recorded for several reasons: (1) The proud Jews who gloried in their ancestry should be cut to the very heart by learning that lineage is not a guarantee of salvation. (2) All Christians must be reminded that not one believer is without sin. (3) Christians should not only consider the condescension of Jesus Christ but also understand that the Lord Jesus was born of impure parentage without being contaminated. How wonderful that the eternal Son entered the human race through such a sinful channel without being contaminated with depravity.

Abraham

Abraham occupies a special place in Scripture due to his effectual call (the fruit of electing grace) and as the founder of a nation that would bless all nations. He was the beginning of the nation of Israel because he fathered Isaac, and Isaac fathered Jacob who became Israel:

...Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed. —Genesis 32:28 (NASB)

Although Jacob received a new name at Peniel (the name means “turn thou, God”), it was at Bethel (the name means “house of God”) that God revealed His name. Thus, the covenant God made with Abraham was confirmed with both Isaac and Jacob:

And God said to him, Your name is Jacob; you shall no longer be called Jacob, But Israel shall be your name. Thus He called him Israel. God also said to him, I am God Almighty; Be fruitful and multiply; A nation and a company of nations shall come forth from you, And kings shall come forth from you. And the land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, And I will give the land to your descendants after you. —Genesis 35:10-12 (NASB)

The covenant God made with Abraham was rooted in the electing grace of God. Its three main features were the seed, the land, and the nations (Gen. 15:5,7; 18:18). The seed is stated to be his son, Isaac, and his descendants are described by the figure of the stars. As to the land, Abraham asked, “O Lord God, how may I know that I shall possess it?” (Gen. 15:8 NASB). God condescended to a covenant sacrifice, and Abraham’s faith was tested as it would again be tested in the case of Isaac. When Abraham’s faith was tested, he was assured that God would sustain the covenant relationship. The patriarch’s question is answered in the record of the centurion who came beseeching the Lord for his servant who was ill (Matt. 8:5-13). The Lord Jesus marveled at the centurion’s admission of his unworthiness when He told him he would heal his servant. He told the multitude that had followed Him from the mountain (Matt. 8:1) that He had not found such

faith in Israel. He said to them:

...I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. —Matthew 8:11

The mercy extended to the centurion had direct reference to the purpose of Jesus Christ according to Christ's foreknowledge of His rejection by the Jews and His introduction of Himself to the Gentiles.

The record of the healing for the centurion, a Gentile, proves that both elect Jews and Gentiles shall inherit the kingdom. How shall we sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom if these patriarchs do not personally inherit it (Matt. 8:11)? Christ predicted His rejection by the Jews and the subsequent call of the Gentiles in Matthew 8:12 and 13. The believing Gentile, who had become a "Jew inwardly" (Rom. 2:29) and had received a place in the kingdom, was contrasted with the unbelieving sons of the kingdom by natural descent who were not the children of God and were cut off from the covenanted kingdom (Rom. 9:8).

Isaac

As the purpose of God the Father is seen in Abraham, in Isaac is seen a great type of Jesus Christ, who is the heir of His Father's wealth. Abraham's servant acknowledged that Isaac was the heir of all that Abraham had:

Now Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master in her old age; and he has given him all that he has.
—Genesis 24:36 (NASB)

The writer of Hebrews declared that Jesus Christ is the heir of all things:

GOD, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things.... —Hebrews 1:1,2 (NASB)

Isaac, like Christ, came into his possession after passing through the figure of death (Heb. 11:19).

One of the most beautiful chapters in the Bible is Genesis 24. It is as though the books of Ruth and The Song of Solomon were rolled into one great love story of redemption and of the relationship between Jesus Christ and His own. The following are five great features of the chapter:

1. The Father's purpose is typified in Abraham. As the Father's purpose centered in His Son, Jesus Christ, Abraham's purpose centered in his son, Isaac. As the thought of the bride of Christ originated with God the Father, the thought of the bride for Isaac originated with Abraham.

2. The Bridegroom of the bride of Jesus Christ is symbolized in Isaac. Isaac became the heir of all that Abraham

possessed, and a bride was to be effectually called for him.

3. Eliezer, Abraham's servant, is typical of God's messengers operating under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. He was obedient, zealous to fulfill his commission, and discerning. He revealed the things of Isaac rather than the things of himself. He was a faithful guide in his preparation of the bride he had betrothed to one husband, Isaac. Thus, the servant who is in subjection to proper authority has the right message for the right person at the right time. There is a ministry of the gospel that is indiscriminate from the minister's point of view, but there is also a ministry that discriminates from the Spirit's point of view. The first is general, and the second is particular. Abraham desired (purposed) the bride; Isaac wanted her; and the servant by the leadership of the Spirit was committed to Abraham and Isaac.

4. Rebekah typifies the assembly Christ is continuing to build. As Rebekah was presented to Isaac, the assembly, upon her completion, will be presented to the Bridegroom. Isaac's bride was thought of before she knew anything about it (Gen. 24:4,14). The servant did not go and find someone unsuitable and make her suitable, but he found someone already prepared by grace who received his message. She was suitable to the servant, because in figure she was of Divine origin. The secret to all response to God's gospel is grace. Although Rebekah's mind and heart were on Isaac, there was room in her heart for the servant who had betrothed her to Isaac and was preparing her for the wedding. The servant knew her, and she knew the servant. (See I Thess. 5:12,13.)

5. The wedding of Isaac and Rebekah is a figure of the future blessing and hope of Christ's assembly. As all the trials and hardships of Rebekah's pilgrimage were forgotten with one glimpse of Isaac, all our wounds and scars will be forgotten when we see Jesus Christ.

Jacob

The son of Isaac and Rebekah was named Jacob, which means supplanter (Gen. 27:36). He represents the elect of God; therefore, his heart was set on the blessings. He had a great mixture of human infirmity, expedience, and unbelief; but he had true faith that caused his desire to be in the line of the birthright and blessing. God was pledged to Jacob from the beginning. We must not become so occupied with Jacob's faults that we fail to observe his qualities that manifest Divine election and God's confirmation of the Abrahamic covenant in him. Jacob's name was changed to Israel. His sons and the meaning of their names are separated into the following divisions: (1) Representing what Israel was in Egypt were Reuben—you see, Simeon—hearing, and Levi—joined (Gen. 49:3-7). (2) Portraying the wilderness influence that led to departure from the blessing were Zebulun—dwelling, Issachar—reward, and Dan—judging (Gen. 49:13-18). (3) Symbolizing the power and effect of deliverance from indwelling sin subsequent to the passover were Gad—a company, Asher—happy, and Naphtali—wrestling (Gen. 49:19-21). (4) Typifying Jesus Christ in different ways were Judah—praised, Joseph—addition, and Benjamin—son of the right hand (Gen. 49:8,22,27). The order in which we have mentioned the names in this last division is very important. In Judah, the Lordship of Jesus Christ must be acknowledged; in Joseph, the answer to the believer's living out of Christian character is found in Jesus Christ; and in Benjamin, the hope of the Christian's present suffering is portrayed in Jesus Christ.

Judah

Judah learned the hard way that the infection of sin led to

defection from truth, and defection from truth resulted in the infliction of punishment (Gen. 38). First, he took a wife from Canaan without his father's consent. His wife Shuah gave him three sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah. Er was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord took his life. Since levirate marriages were customary, Judah told Onan to take his deceased brother's wife, Tamar, and raise up offspring for his brother. (See Deut. 25:5-10.) Knowing the offspring would not be his, Onan refused. His crime was not so much self-pollution as his refusal to raise up offspring for his brother. What he did was displeasing to the Lord; so the Lord took his life as He had taken the life of Er. Following the death of Onan, Judah told Tamar to remain a widow until Shelah became a man.

After much time had lapsed, Judah's wife died. Having lost two sons and his wife, Judah was on his way to Timnath (Timnah) when he saw a woman he thought was a harlot. Tamar had been told that Judah would be passing through on his way to Timnath. Furthermore, she knew that Shelah was a man now, and she had not been given to him to bear offspring for his deceased brother, Er. Therefore, she disguised herself as a whore and waited for Judah. Judah was wrong for lusting, and Tamar was wrong for disguising herself as a harlot. Judah promised Tamar a kid from his flock for her services, but she would not submit until she had received an earnest. She asked for his seal, cord, and staff which he gave to her, and she conceived by him.

After some time, Judah sent the kid he had promised Tamar; but she was not to be found. Three months later word came to Judah that Tamar, his daughter-in-law, had played the harlot and was with child by harlotry. He wanted her brought forth and burned; but when he learned that she was bearing his child, he said, "She is more righteous than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah" (Gen. 38:26 NASB).

Of all the children of Jacob, Judah was singled out to continue the Messianic line. God, in His sovereignty, passed by Reuben, the firstborn, and chose Judah, the fourth child. Judah's sin with Tamar did not prevent the sovereign God from choosing him to manifest His purpose and grace:

Judah, your brothers shall praise you; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father's sons shall bow down to you. Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh [the bringer of peace and prosperity] comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. —Genesis 49:8-10 (NASB)

Pharez And Zarah

The twins brought forth by Tamar are both mentioned in Christ's lineage (Gen. 38:27-30; Matt. 1:3). Pharez (also spelled Phares and Perez) precedes Zarah (also spelled Zerah and Zara), but Zarah was the eldest. In Jewish tradition, the eldest son is mentioned in the books of lineage, but this instance is unique because it carries a prophetic lesson in this first division of the genealogy of Jesus Christ. While Tamar was giving birth, Zarah put out a hand; and the midwife tied a scarlet thread on his hand saying, "This one came out first" (Gen. 38:28 NASB). As Zarah drew back his hand, his brother Pharez came out. The midwife said, "What a breach

[a breaking in upon or an overthrow] you have made for yourself!” (Gen. 38:29 NASB). Hence, he was named Pharez (the name means “a breach”). In like manner, the Jews first put forth their hand, but they fell through unfaithfulness. However, subsequent to the gathering in of the Gentiles, the Jews shall rise again. This is prophesied by the fact that after Pharez was born, Zarah (the name means “an arising”) came forth, showing that Zarah shall rise again.

The prophetical message of Judah’s twin sons by his daughter-in-law, Tamar, is reinforced in prophecies given by Isaiah in the Old Testament and Simeon in the New Testament:

1. In the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah had a vision of God, of himself, and of a remnant from among the Jews that would constitute Jehovah’s tithe (Is. 6:9-13). Isaiah was commissioned as follows:

Go, and tell this people: Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand. Render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Lest they see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their hearts, And repent and be healed. —Isaiah 6:9,10 (NASB)

The prophet’s question that followed, “Lord, how long?” (Is. 6:11), was not a cry of despair. It was an expression of hope by one who knew that somewhere down the long passageway of time there would be a kingdom on earth. In Isaiah 6:13, the answer to his question is given:

Yet there will be a tenth portion in it, And it will again be subject to burning, Like a terebinth or an oak Whose stump remains when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump. —Isaiah 6:13 (NASB)

Therefore, as a living seed does not perish when buried in the ground, Israel shall never perish from among the nations of the world. (See Ps. 89; Rom. 11; Rev. 7.)

2. Simeon, a just and devout man, was in Jerusalem for the consolation of Israel (Luke 2:25-35). The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ. Simeon's name signifies "one who hears". He lived at the close of the four hundred years when there was no prophet of God. Nevertheless, he heard God by the Holy Spirit, and he went into the temple. His vocation was awaiting (expecting) the consolation of Israel. His character is described as being just toward men and devout toward God. His companionship was the Holy Spirit "upon [*epi*, the accusative of relationship] him" (Luke 2:25). The Holy Spirit's being "upon him" is Old Testament terminology. This Old Testament believer went to the temple and greeted Jesus Christ in His incarnation.

Simeon's inward grace did not allow him to neglect the outward visible signs appointed by God. He was faithful in attendance in the temple. Month after month and year after year when no message was given by the prophets, this just and devout man went to the temple. There is no substitute for God's people being in God's appointed place at God's appointed time. The temple was to Simeon what the sanctuary was to Asaph. Asaph's questions concerning the deprivations of the people of God and the abundance of the wicked were answered when he went into the sanctuary of God (Ps. 73:1-

17). As the temple was a sanctuary scene for Simeon, the assembly of Jesus Christ is the sanctuary for us. As Simeon went into the temple awaiting (expecting) Jesus Christ before His first advent, how much more should Christians, acting in the knowledge of His first advent, wait expectantly for Christ's glorious second advent.

There is only a short biography of Simeon recorded. Short biographies, like this one, denote true character. Devout men want the Lord and not themselves to be exalted. The context of Luke 2:25-35 proves that Simeon was an old man when he saw Jesus Christ the infant. Regardless of circumstances, a Christian's last days should be his best. Simeon was not occupied with events but with the Person of Jesus Christ. Although Jesus Christ had not occupied David's throne, Simeon's affection for His incarnation made his last days his best. Simeon's faithfulness was rewarded by his holding the infant Jesus Christ and by God's using him to give us a prophecy:

Lord [*despota*, vocative masculine of *despotes*, which means Lord or Master] now lettest thou thy servant depart [*apolueis*, present active indicative of *apoluo*, which means release or dismiss] in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to [*eis*, accusative of purpose] lighten [*apokaluphin*, accusative singular of *apokaluphis*, which means a revelation] the Gentiles [*ethnon*, genitive plural of *ethnos*, which means nations, nonjews, or Gentiles], and the glory of thy people Israel.... Behold, this child [one] is set [*keitai*, present middle indicative of *keimai*, which means appointed or destined] for [*eis*, accusative of purpose] the fall and

rising again [*anastasin*, accusative singular of *anastasis*, which means a raising or rising up] of many in Israel; and for [*eis*, accusative of purpose] a sign which shall be spoken against [*antilegomenon*, present passive participle of *antilego*, which means to object or oppose]. —Luke 2:29-34

Simeon's prediction has two important purpose phrases introduced in each instance by the accusative case of the preposition *eis*. In the first instance, Jesus Christ would be a light for a revelation of the Gentiles (nonjews) (Luke 2:32). Since Israel is associated with the Shekinah in the Old Testament, no more fitting description can be given of her than Simeon's reference to the "glory" of Israel (Luke 2:32). Christ spoke of having sheep other than those of the fold of Judaism (John 10:16). (See Acts 9:15; 11:1-18; 13:42-48; 18:6; 28:28.) In the second instance, the Lord Jesus would be the cause of both Israel's fall and her rising, in that order (Luke 2:34).

WOMEN'S NAMES RECORDED IN THE KING'S GENEALOGY

The list of women in the genealogy of our Lord is a wonderful display of not only God's unmerited favor on sinners, but also a miracle that His human nature was not contaminated by depravity. The women's names were included not for the purpose of genealogy but for the manifestation of God's grace.

Tamar

Tamar (also spelled Thamar) was one of the women whose characters were far below average who were included in Christ's pedigree, and yet the Lord of glory was not disgraced by them. Tamar's name was the first listed in the division of the generations that stress God's promise. After the death of her husbands, Er and Onan, Tamar disguised herself as a harlot and tricked her father-in-law into an incestuous relationship by which she brought forth twins. Since we have already discussed Tamar in connection with Judah and the

twins, Pharez and Zarah, we will proceed to the second woman named in Christ's pedigree.

Rahab

Rahab (also spelled Rachab), a prostitute saved by God's grace, became the mother of Boaz, fathered by Salmon. It was Boaz who purchased Ruth and married her. The harlot Rahab became an unexpected ally of God's chosen people (Josh. 2). Like Cornelius before Peter was sent to give him words whereby he could be saved, Rahab had already been quickened by God's grace before the spies came from Jerusalem. Joshua's sending two spies to secretly observe Jericho was not by chance. In God's providence, the spies must go to Rahab's home, as the Lord Jesus Christ must go through Samaria because one of His sheep was there (John 4). The former harlot needed the message of the spies to convert her and give her assurance of her salvation. By Rahab's choice, she became a whore; but by God's choice, she had been quickened by Divine grace (Ps. 65:4; Eph. 1:4). Although saved by grace, Rahab carried the stigma of harlotry into the New Testament record (James 2:25).

The sending of the spies by Joshua was not from his lack of trust in God, but it proves that faith does not preclude the use of proper means. God's promises intensify affection, induce caution, and prompt obedience. The effect of God's promises is to stimulate zeal. Hence, to expect the fulfillment of promises without working is to test God, and to work without expecting their fulfillment is to dishonor Him. The promise that Israel would possess Canaan caused Moses to send spies to view the land (Num. 13), and Joshua followed the example of his predecessor. God promised success to His ancient people, but possession is impossible without dispossession. This is a lesson all Christians must learn, regardless

of the age in which we live.

Although the men Joshua sent forth were spies, they were also messengers in relation to Rahab. Saving faith cannot exist with deadly sins. Therefore, the gift of faith which Rahab possessed could no longer permit her to be employed in the trade of prostitution. The context gives evidence that at the time the Jewish spies came to her home, she was employed in the preparation of flax. She “hid them [the spies] with the stalks of flax” (Josh. 2:6). The outstanding characteristic of faith is that it is always inclined to salvation. Rahab had both hearing ears and seeing eyes. The confession of her faith is revealed in her statement to the men:

I know that the LORD hath given you the land.... For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea...and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt....
—Joshua 2:9-11

Since faith is always put to severe tests, Rahab’s faith was no exception. The crucial question is, how could she lie about the spies? A long list of those who lied could be added to her name. Why did Abraham, the father of the faithful, lie before Abimelech about his wife (Gen. 20)? Why did Peter lie before the damsel about being one of Christ’s disciples (John 18:15-18)? The question about Rahab’s lying has given rise to several false views. Some think the end justifies the means; therefore, anything goes if you get results. This view is employed by religionists in general today. Others say cir-

cumstances alter certain cases; therefore, in the case of Rahab, she was justified in what she did. It was better to lie and save the spies than to tell the truth and have them killed. Such reasoning leaves God out altogether. People who advocate this view would call Rahab's falsehood a white lie, believing that a white lie is not criminal. The truth is that Rahab, like Abraham and Peter, sinned by lying. However, she was not as well-informed as either Abraham or Peter.

James mentioned Abraham and Rahab together. They were different vessels, but the same treasure of grace was placed in each. Whether the vessel is reputable or disreputable, what God puts in the vessel is important and not the vessel itself. The grace of faith distinguishes a person with God. Grace sanctifies the vessel. (See James 2.) The only bounds known to grace is the one limited by the eternal covenant.

Rahab's falsehood, although it was for the purpose of saving life, did not vindicate her on that ground. As there were mixed actions in Rahab, in a moral sense, there are mixed actions in all Christians. For instance, one may take a conglomerate mineral and single out one ingredient for discussion, thus drawing attention away from the other ingredients. One aspect of a complex Christian life may be singled out for either admiration or condemnation; but continual actions, not occasional actions, determine the Christian's character (I John 2:29-3:10). A person's genius may be emphasized without approving his principles or his skill praised while disapproving of his policy. Hence, Scripture commends Rahab's faith without approving of her falsehood. The New Testament speaks of Rahab's faith and works without mentioning her sin:

By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. —Hebrews 11:31

Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? —James 2:25

Saving faith always manifests itself by works. Rahab tied the scarlet cord in the window as she had been instructed by the spies. She said, "...According unto your words, so be it" (Josh. 2:21).

Both God's blessing and His curse are represented by cities. Jerusalem is called a place of blessing (Ps. 48:1-3), and Jericho is called a place of curse (Josh. 6:17). Rahab represents one who has been delivered from a place of curse—"shall be accursed" (Josh. 6:17), and she was destined to a place of dual peace—"peace of heart and peace of society." Heart peace is a present enjoyment. Society peace will be enjoyed in the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21). Although she was destined for Jerusalem, she was left in Jericho for a time. As Christians, we have been delivered from this evil age; but we are left in it for a time of training, testimony, and work.

Rahab's life had sunk to a level lower than most others in Jericho, but by grace she had risen higher than all. Although Rahab was a harlot, the Lord told the religious Pharisees that the harlots would go into the kingdom before them (Matt. 21:31). She did not perish with those who did not believe. There is no more saving merit in faith than there is in works. One is not regenerated because he believes, but he believes because he has been quickened. Rahab's faith caused her to live a lonely life in Jericho, but that is the testimony of all Christians in every age. The gift of faith cuts us off from the

world, which is lying in the lap of the Devil (I John 5:19). However, the believer knows that he will be rewarded for his faith and obedience. Rahab was rewarded in time by becoming the mother of Boaz (Matt. 1:5).

Rahab's faith can be summed up in the following ways: (1) Its nature was that it was God-given, and she did not continue as a harlot. (2) Its confession was that as soon as she heard the message of the spies her heart melted. (3) Its imperfection was that she lied about the spies. The Psalmist said, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Ps. 130:3). (4) Its reward was that her name is eternally inscribed on the imperishable scroll of Scripture not only in the hall of faith (Heb. 11) but also in the genealogy of Christ.

Ruth

The book that bears Ruth's name is a literary and spiritual classic. There is nothing in human literature more beautiful than Ruth's address to her mother-in-law:

Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me. —Ruth 1:16,17 (NASB)

Ruth is the only book in the Bible which is wholly devoted to the history of a woman. Therefore, it is not surprising that

Ruth's name is found in the genealogy of our Lord. The chief purpose of the book is to trace the genealogy of David and David's Lord. Ruth was a Gentile who married a Hebrew, Boaz, the son of Rahab. He was the kinsman redeemer who lifted Ruth from the ash heap of Moab to sit as a princess with himself. There are thirty references in this short book to the redeemer or kinsman. Boaz declared that in redeeming the property of Elimelech and his sons, Chilion and Mahlon, he had also purchased the widow of Mahlon—Ruth—to be his wife (Ruth 4:10). What the nearer kinsman was unable to do, Boaz performed. This describes what Jesus Christ has done for the elect:

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.
—Romans 8:2,3

The book of Ruth (the name means “satisfied”) begins with a story of wanderers from God. Elimelech (the name means “my God is king”) took his wife Naomi (the name means “my pleasantness”) and his two sons Mahlon (the name means “sickness”) and Chilion (the name means “consumption or wasting away”) and went to Moab. Famine had made their home in the area of Bethlehem (the name means “house of bread”) uncomfortable. Elimelech did not patiently endure God's will for his life; therefore, he departed from God's land, God's company of people, and the privilege of God's revelation. God sent temporary trouble, and Elimelech fled from it. But how mournful are the consequences of wandering from

God. The “house of bread” is better in a time of famine than the land of Moab in the time of plenty.

Elimelech was a Hebrew whose inheritance was in the area of Bethlehem. Because of the sins of the Israelites, tolerating idolaters and public monuments of idolatry (Judg. 1-3) and the Israelites themselves falling into idolatry (Judg. 2:11-13,17), God sent a famine to chasten them (Lev. 26:18-20). When God chastens by famine, the duty of His people is to submit with contentment. God’s people are to bear the rod of Him who appointed it. Elimelech, however, went to Moab because abundance was in that land.

Moab was a doomed country. Before Ruth’s birth, Balaam issued a prophetic statement about Moab:

I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.
—Numbers 24:17

Balaam’s prophecy reminds one of Caiaphas’ prophecy to his own condemnation, but he declared the truth of God (John 11:50-52). God often uses extraordinary means of awakening men to a sense of sin. Christ is not viewed in the prophecy of Balaam as coming out of heaven but out of Jacob. The Sceptre will rise out of Israel. This is the same Jacob and Israel seen in the other parables spoken by Balaam, but they are now seen as those out of whom Christ will come to reign. The Star is a symbol which is evidently in the night period. The Star coming out of Jacob and the Sceptre rising out of Israel

portray that Christ, as He is presently known to His saints, is coming to introduce the day and to reign. Shall we, like Elimelech, go down to a condemned world to seek help? It may seem strange that Christians should suffer famine when worldlings wallow in plenty (Ps. 17:14; 73:4,12), but one must not lose sight of God's chastisement of Christians. Elimelech sought livelihood in enemy country but forfeited life itself. He sought bread apart from the house of bread but found a grave (Ruth 1:3).

The sons of Elimelech married strange women. Mahlon married Ruth (Ruth 4:10), and Chilion married Orpah. After ten years in Moab, Mahlon and Chilion died. Naomi was left a widow with two daughters-in-law in enemy country. There was death for those so dear to her and solitude for herself. Her losses made her think more about Canaan, the land of promise. News also came to her about the Lord giving bread to the famine-stricken people. During her ten years absence, Naomi had a rest and reality of spiritual strength that never departed.

Naomi began her journey back to the land of Judah. God's providential dealings with Naomi brought recovery. A broken and contrite heart is the result of God's judgment, which is absolutely necessary for all recoveries. Without a sense of departure, there will be no desire for recovery. This lack is the spirit of our age. Mercy is rich in affliction which brings us from worse to better, from Moab to Canaan, and from being afar off because of sin to being near the Lord again because of repentance.

The two daughters-in-law said to Naomi, "Surely we will return with thee unto thy people" (Ruth 1:10). Orpah promised but did not purpose to go. Ruth promised and purposed to go. A person who merely promises may manifest religious zeal, but for want of a regenerated heart his promises

come to nothing. Promises of the mouth often proceed from passion and not from principle. The bud of a mere promise will not ripen into precious fruit. It is like the seed that was cast on stony ground. It grew rapidly, but withered when the sun began to shine. This was Orpah's experience. She kissed Naomi, but turned back to her people and to her gods. (See John 6:66,67.) Conversely, Ruth promised and also purposed by cleaving to Naomi. Ruth persevered because she made the following choices with a purposed heart (Ruth 1:16,17 NASB): (1) She chose Naomi's path—"where you go I will go." (2) She chose Naomi's habitation—"where you lodge I will lodge." (3) She chose Naomi's people—"your people shall be my people." (4) She chose Naomi's God—"your God shall be my God." (5) She chose Naomi's death and place of burial—"where you die I will die, and there I will be buried." The strength of Ruth's purpose was manifested when she said, "...If anything but death parts you and me" (Ruth 1:17 NASB). The bond of faith is so powerful that it makes believers desirous and resolute to live and die together. When Naomi heard Ruth's confession, she was convinced of her sincerity. She had been tried and proved. Failure to try a person before trusting him is want of wisdom, but refusing to trust him after he has been tried is want of love.

The backslidden Naomi returned to the place from which she had departed. She and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem at the time of barley harvest. Naomi's good reputation among the Jews was manifested by the people being stirred by the couple's presence in the city. The question was asked, "Is this Naomi?" (Ruth 1:19). Naomi expressed her regret by saying, "Call me not Naomi [pleasantness], call me Mara [bitter]" (Ruth 1:20). She knew from the promise of Scripture that she was guilty of distrusting the Lord: "Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed" (Ps. 37:3). The humbled Naomi came back empty. Many people are humbled but not humble; they are made low

but not lowly. Naomi went out full not because of desire but from fear of want. Although in the strict sense Naomi did not come back empty, she must not assume the credit for Ruth's accompanying her. God had overruled her disobedience; and because of her repentance, He gave her a traveling companion. Only a restored backslider can be a blessing to others. Upon returning, Naomi found a well-spread table and the precious blood of the paschal Lamb, because it was the time of barley harvest—the passover. This is what the backslider finds when he returns to God.

The book of Ruth belongs to the time of the Judges. It stands in relation to a time of failure and departure. There had been repeated departures by God's people and God's gracious interventions to raise up deliverers. However, there is no account in the book of Judges of recovery to the normal enjoyment of the inheritance. The judges were all marked by defects. Not one of them was able to reinstate the people to the enjoyment of the inheritance according to God. This is where the book of Ruth stands out like an oasis in the desert. The inheritance was recovered. One appeared who was great enough to exercise the right of redemption, redeem the inheritance, and secure a seed to enjoy it. Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a mighty man of wealth. His name was Boaz (the name means "in him is strength"), the son of Rahab, who was able to redeem what Naomi had lost through poverty. This redemption involved his marriage with Ruth. Therefore, Ruth would be wise to abide with the maidens of Boaz and seek no other field in which to glean.

The law opposed Ruth because she was a Moabitess, a Gentile, which prevented her from entering into the congregation of the Lord (Deut. 23:3). The law can only condemn. Boaz must purchase Ruth from a kinsman who had a prior claim but could not redeem her lest he mar his own inheritance. This left Boaz free to do what the kinsman nearer

than himself could not do. Therefore, Boaz purchased the inheritance of Elimelech. Thus, he bought Ruth the Moabitess to be his wife to “raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance” (Ruth 4:10).

The nearer kinsman represents the law (legal principle). He could not redeem the inheritance for himself (Ruth 4:6); therefore, he plucked off his shoe in token of giving place to another, namely, Boaz. Since the law cannot redeem, it must give place to Him who is full of grace and truth (John 1:14-17). Christians have become dead to the law by the body of Christ in order that we might be married to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead (Rom. 7:1-6).

Estates fall into litigation in court when there is no heir whose title can be established. Without heirs the inheritance would go into the hands of the state. However, God’s purpose cannot be invalidated because “he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth” (Job 23:13). Hence, a seed who was capable of enjoying the inheritance was secured through Boaz and Ruth. A son was born (Ruth 4:13) who had the right of redemption (Ruth 4:14). They called his name Obed (the name means “serving”). Obed was the father of Jesse (the name means “my subsistence” or “God exists”), and Jesse was the father of David (the name means “beloved”). As to the flesh, Christ is the son of David (Matt. 1:1; Rom. 1:3,4). We are tracing the genealogy of David and David’s Lord. Ruth is connected with the Messianic line.

In Christ’s humanity, He is our nearest kinsman. In His Deity, He is able to supply our needs and defend us from all danger. As the promised Redeemer, the Lord Jesus has a special relation to Israel and a particular personal relation to every regenerated and converted person. He is the kinsman Redeemer of Israel. He is the seed of Abraham in whom all

nations are blessed. Furthermore, He is the seed of David and is therefore the ultimate Son who shall sit on David's throne.

The following are qualifications the Redeemer must meet: (1) He must be willing to perform the work of redemption. (2) He must be absolutely free from sin. (3) He must possess the ability to redeem. (4) He must have the price of redemption. (5) He must be a near kinsman. In Christ's humanity, the first and fifth qualifications are met. In His Deity, the second and third are fulfilled. In Jesus Christ as God-Man, the fourth is fulfilled.

Bathsheba

The list of women's names concludes with Bathsheba. She is not specifically named in Christ's genealogy; but her second son, Solomon, is referred to as being fathered by David "from the wife of Uriah [*ek tes tou Ouriou*]" (Matt. 1:6—translation). Bathsheba was an adulteress who exploited her beauty by bathing in a place where she could be seen. As she made her body available to David's eyes, she made her heart available to the King's desire. A woman who dresses immodestly to arouse the passions of a man is as sinful as the man who looks upon her until he commits heart adultery. Bathsheba's exploitation of her body led to an adulterous relationship between David and herself. David, a man after God's heart, committed adultery in his heart before he committed the act. The sin of adultery is the Devil's nest egg which causes many sins to be laid one after another.

Fashion designers today are bold to say their fashions for women are designed to attract the sensuous nature of men. There is no doubt that present day dress codes have contributed to the rising crime of rape and other crimes. Christian women must in good sense dress modestly. The Bible ex-

plicitly describes the modest apparel with which women should clothe themselves:

In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest [*aidous*, genitive singular of *aidos*, which means a sense of shame or modesty] apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety [*sophrosunes*, genitive of *sophrosune*, which means soundness of mind, self-control, or sobriety]; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. —I Timothy 2:9,10

David's sinning went from seeing the woman to sending for Bathsheba to climax his act of adultery. David was enticed by his own lust; and when his lust conceived, it brought forth sin (James 1:14,15). Although Bathsheba stood naked before David's eyes, the real sin could not be attributed to providential circumstances. Bathsheba was only the occasion for David's passion to be inflamed. Christians are presently subjected to things almost as bad as that which David saw three thousand years ago. Every Christian is thankful for restraining grace. Bathsheba was not free from fault in the adulterous act with David. She prostituted her beauty near the King's court for the purpose of enticing him. The prostitution of herself was followed by her willingness to respond to the King's first invitation. When any woman goes as far as Bathsheba did, she is a push-over for man's first advance. Like David, Bathsheba was guilty of adultery in her heart before she committed the act.

David's sin went from adultery to an attempted cover-up

of his sin. Under the Jewish law, adultery was a capital offense. Therefore, David contrived to conceal his sin by having Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, brought home from the battlefield. The King thought that by Uriah's lying with his wife, he might believe her conception was of his own fathering. In his conference with Uriah, David inquired about Joab, the people, and state of the war. David's attempt to appear interested in the importance of a firsthand report from his trusted servant reveals how deceptive a Christian's heart can be in devising a cover-up. David used his office of kingship to appeal to Uriah. The King instructed Uriah to go home and refresh himself. Surely he would take the opportunity of rejoicing with the wife of his youth (Prov. 5:18). After Uriah's departure from the King's house, David sent a present to him. After all of this, David's scheme failed. While trying to hide his sin, his deceitful heart overlooked the providence of God. Uriah did not go home, because his loyalty to the King led him to sleep at the King's door with the servants.

David was informed that Uriah did not go home, as he had instructed. The King was dissatisfied with Uriah's reply to his inquiry as to why he did not go:

...The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing. —II Samuel 11:11

Tenderhearted David became a monster. This shows what sin will do to a Christian when passion gets the upper hand. If

David would take advantage of Uriah's absence to commit adultery with his wife, Uriah's expressed loyalty would not affect the King. Hence, the failure of his first plot only caused the King to invent a new one.

David's next step in trying to conceal his sin was to make Uriah drunk, hoping that by intoxication Uriah would break his vow of not lying with his wife. But this also failed:

And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house. —II Samuel 11:13

However, David refused to give up; and he pursued a more deadly course. King David framed a letter to have Uriah killed and sent it to Joab by the hand of him who was to die. Thus, he involved another man in an unjust and atrocious act to cover his own crime. The letter instructed Joab that Uriah should be placed where he would be most exposed in battle that he might die by the hands of Israel's enemy. The record states that Uriah died in battle, which proves that no sin stands alone. The little break in a dam widens until the whole dam gives way, and a little speck of rot slowly spoils fruit of its useful character. Scripture states that the little foxes spoil the vine (Song of Sol. 2:15).

When Bathsheba heard that Uriah was dead, she mourned for her husband; but her mourning was short-lived because the next day she became David's wife. The hasty marriage of widows and widowers manifests the hypocrisy of such sorrow. Those who consider hasty remarriage may not be guilty of the act of adultery or murder, but they evidence lust in the heart. They seek to cover their lust with the excuse of desiring companionship.

SECTION II

**SPIRITUAL DECLINE
WAS EMPHASIZED FROM DAVID
TO BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY**

PREFACE TO SECTION II

The second division of the generations of Jesus Christ is portrayed as the decline of Israel. God's ordained form of government was a theocracy. Therefore, Israel's decline began with her demand for a king and concluded with the Babylonian captivity.

During the declining years of Israel's history, David, Solomon, and Rehoboam reigned over Israel. The kingdom was divided into the northern (Israel) and the southern (Judah) kingdoms under Rehoboam. Subsequent to Rehoboam, there was not one good king in Israel (the northern kingdom). However, among the kings of Judah (the southern kingdom), there were eight good kings, four of whom are mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. The last three kings of Judah—Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah—did evil in the sight of the Lord (II Kings 23:37; 24:9,19).

THEOCRACY—GOD’S ORDAINED FORM OF GOVERNMENT

In the genealogy of the King, Matthew goes from Jesus Christ, “son of David,” to “David the king” (Matt. 1:1,6). The royalty of David’s family was established according to God’s eternal purpose of electing grace. Therefore, the perpetuity of this royalty is dependent on the faithfulness of God. Although God stressed the responsibility of man in the conditional aspect of the covenants of time, the accomplishment of the covenants is according to God’s grace and power. Failure is written over man in every age of human history. As in the days of the Judges when every man did that which was right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25), in the days of the apostles all sought after their own interests and not those of Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:21). In view of man’s failure, it is wonderful that we can look to the faithfulness of God. Thus, we look from the changing world to the unchanging covenant of God. Informed Christians are able by God’s grace to leap from the tempest-tossed vessel of this world and stand on the terra firma of the unconditional aspect of God’s covenants in time, because we have our foundation in the eternal covenant of God’s purpose.

Theocracy must be defined and explained in order to have a correct concept of the future kingdom of Jesus Christ. The term “theocracy” means a form of government in which God is recognized as the supreme Ruler. God did not reign over Israel as Elohim, the Creator, but as Jehovah, the covenant God. Jehovah descended to reign over Israel. Hence, they had a supernatural form of government. Theocracy is neither a republic nor a democracy, because both forms are exercised by men. In theocracy, God is Ruler in the highest sense, because the supreme power of sovereignty resides in Him.

The theocracy during the time of Moses was not a government by priests as opposed to kings, but it was a government by God Himself as opposed to government by priests and kings. Theocracy exalted Israel above all other nations, thus causing the nations of the world to hate the people who claimed God as their supreme Ruler. God chose Israel not only to be a holy people to Himself but also with a view to the kingdom: “And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation...” (Ex. 19:6). This is the first reference to the kingdom as it is related to God. God in His sovereignty and election raised up the descendants of Abraham in their associated capacity (Rom. 9:4; Deut. 7:6-11). This associated capacity of the natural descendants of Abraham does not indicate that every individual in it had been elected to salvation in Jesus Christ, because there were some in the associated capacity of national Israel who were not, in reality, of Israel (Rom. 9:6-8). The nation in its corporate capacity may reject the truth, but God had an election of grace within a national election. The unbelief and sinfulness of Israel in her corporate capacity shall cause God to remove His blessing, but His national election is never affected (Is. 6:12,13; Luke 2:34; Rom. 11).

The following ten things should be considered with reference to Israel and the future kingdom:

1. God as Jehovah, the covenant God—not God as Elohim, the Creator—chose the Jewish people with a view to the kingdom.

2. Their election embraced a nationality—the natural descendants of Abraham in their associated capacity.

3. This election was unconditional, according to God's eternal purpose. Matthew addressed his Gospel primarily to the Jews. He spoke to them of a future kingdom:

When the son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.... —Matthew 25:31

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed [*eulogemenoi*, perfect passive participle of *eulogeo*, which means having been blessed] of my Father, inherit [*kleronomesate*, aorist active imperative of *kleronomeo*, which means inherit at once] the kingdom prepared [*hetoimasmenen*, perfect passive participle of *hetoimadzo*, which means having been prepared] for you from [*apo*, ablative of time] the foundation of the world. —Matthew 25:34

These two verses must be considered together. When Jesus Christ comes in His glory to establish the kingdom, He will tell those who have been permanently blessed to enter at once into the kingdom that has been permanently prepared for them from the foundation of the universe. This applies to national Israel, but this same truth is for every child of God. National Israel has not come into possession of the kingdom, and neither have we because we will possess it through Israel.

Two perfect passive Greek participles are found in Matthew 25:34. The perfect tense looks at not only the beginning but also the conclusion of the action. It represents a present condition or state as a result of a past completed action. The sheep had been eternally blessed, and the kingdom had been eternally prepared concurrently. The kingdom is permanently prepared because the sheep are permanently blessed. The sheep could not be permanently blessed apart from “the Lamb slain [*esphagmenou*, perfect passive participle of *sphadzo*, which means having been slain] from [*apo*, ablative of time] the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). Without the Lamb having been permanently slain, the names of the sheep would never have been “written [*gegraptai*, perfect passive indicative of *grapho*, which means having been written] in the book of life from [*apo*, ablative of time] the foundation of the world...” (Rev. 17:8).

4. The unbelief and sinfulness of the nation of Israel may remove the favor of God from them, but this does not affect Israel’s election.

5. The same elect nation, chastened and scourged, scattered and dispersed, shall be recalled and exalted.

6. While the nation comprising the national descendants of Abraham are thus chosen, it does not follow that every individual in it is personally elected to salvation (Rom. 9).

7. God has made provision for the elect Gentiles by grafting them with preceding believers (Rom. 11).

8. Israel under theocracy was a type of a future kingdom.

9. The root stump that remains is a holy seed.

10. The kingdom is given to the natural descendants of

Abraham in their corporate capacity.

The book of Judges covers the period between Israel's conquest of the land of Canaan and the death of Joshua to the judgeship of Samuel and the people's choice of a visible king. This period was one of theocratic regime in which Jehovah Himself was Israel's "invisible King." However, there were many departures from God by Israel during this period which concluded with their desire to have a king like all the nations to judge them (I Sam. 8:5). This took place during the judgeship of Samuel when his sons, Joel and Abiah, walked not in the ways of their father.

The change from theocracy to what Israel would call monarchy, "a king to judge us like all the nations" (I Sam. 8:5), was what people today call "the right of self-determination." The following verses were Samuel's words to Israel and Israel's response:

And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king.... —I Samuel 8:18-22

Therefore, God gave Israel a king of their choosing in the

same manner that He gave them flesh to eat (Num. 11:20; Ps. 106:15).

Israel wanted to be like the people from whom they had been delivered. This sounds like modern-day Christendom. The religious world is saying that a religion is not true without denominations, associations, conventions, conferences, forms, ceremonies, programs for such maladies as AIDS, addicts, the homeless, battered wives and children, and other social programs, professional choirs, musicians, hierarchies, and a peccable savior to sympathize with men when they are seduced by the world's evils. Therefore, they must conclude that a religion which has only a sovereign God, an impeccable Savior, a regenerating Holy Spirit, a Bible, and a song book cannot be the true religion of our day of intellectualism, socialism, and humanism.

The first thing man does when God sets up something of His own on the earth is to either counterfeit it or substitute something for it. Thus, man has another Jesus, a different spirit, and a different gospel (II Cor. 11:4). However, as God has Jesus Christ who is the Son of the living God, the Holy Spirit, and the gospel which was settled in heaven before the foundation of the world, He also has a remnant in the corrupted nation of Israel.

Israel's real reason for wanting a change in government was not the degeneracy of the sons of Samuel. Although Samuel was a godly man, his sons were a disappointment. His grief was the same as that experienced by Isaac, Aaron, Eli, David, and other Biblical individuals. Neither Eli's softness nor Samuel's firmness gave character to their sons; grace alone gives character. This strikes across the grain of the cliché, "A man's character is reflected in his children." When children without grace leave the enclosure of a godly home, they have no principle of restraint.

Three things should be observed concerning Israel's demand for a king like all the nations: (1) Israel's reference to Samuel's sons was the most evident thing the people could mention because his sons walked not in the ways of their father, Samuel. Therefore, they "turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment" (I Sam. 8:3). (2) Their inner motive was that the people might be like other nations. (3) The true reason was that Israel had now rejected the theocracy:

And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. —I Samuel 8:7

Israel had rejected the Lord's invisible reign, and the Israelites were making Samuel's age and his sons an excuse for their rebellion. The people had forgotten their covenant relation with God, and they wanted to have a "say" in their government.

Although God allowed Israel to choose their king, God safeguarded the principle of kingship in a monarchical government under King David (Deut. 17:14-20). The king was directly responsible to God, and the people were no less responsible than their king. Israel's king, therefore, was to be a monarchical king (an earthly king under God's rule), not an autocratic king (an earthly king vested with absolute authority). Government was to be a kingly power in the hands of men who acted in obedience to the written law of God. Theocracy instituted by God is the introductory form of government which shall be perfected not in imperfect men,

such as Solomon, the immediate son of David, but through the perfect One in the royal line, who is “the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star” (Rev. 22:16). This perfect King shall reign eternally over His perfected people.

Since the time of Israel’s rejection of God’s theocratic rule, they have declared, “We will not have this man [the Jehovah of I Samuel 8:7] to reign over us” (Luke 19:14). The Jews have been scattered throughout the nations of the world. This scattering will continue until both “the times of the Gentiles” (various forms of Gentile government from Nebuchadnezzar to the establishment of Christ’s kingdom at His second advent) (Lk. 21:24) and the “fulness of the Gentiles” (Christ’s visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name—Acts 15:13-17) may come in (Rom. 11:25). The kingdom of Christ has not been manifested because God’s purpose was that the Son of Man would be honored and glorified in heaven before He shall be honored on earth. Therefore, according to Christ’s own teaching, His kingdom will be assumed from the heavenly rather than the earthly realm.

Theocracy is not the same as sovereignty. It may be premised that Jesus Christ, in His oneness with the Father, is exercising His dominion over all things at the present time. Nevertheless, when Jehovah withdrew His kings in the Old Testament, He did not cease to be Israel’s sovereign. Furthermore, the kingdom belongs to Jesus Christ as the Son of David, and sovereignty is His as the Son of God. The kingdom is never promised to Jesus Christ as the Son of God but as the Son of Man or the Son of David. While sitting at the Father’s right hand, Christ has not laid aside His sovereignty. All power in heaven and in earth was given Him (Matt. 28:18), but something will be added to that when He comes to establish His kingdom as the Son of Man. At that time, He will manifest His power openly and will visibly bring all

things into subjection to Himself on the earth.

The theocratic form of government is never represented as a type. When Israel rejected this form of government, all the prophets with one voice proclaimed its restoration. No wonder depraved men, including depraved religionists, hate the theocratic form of government.

Christ rules now through the “powers that be” (Rom. 13:1-7), but the “powers that be” do not constitute a theocracy. The Greek text of Romans 13:1, *Pasa psuche exousiais huperechousais hupotassestho*, is translated “Let every soul be subordinate to governing authorities.” The participle *huperechousais* is a present active form of the verb *huperecho*, which means to have power over, be highly placed, those in high position, or governing authorities. The imperative, *hupotassestho*, is a present passive form of *hupotasso*, which means to be in subjection or subordinate. Peter spoke of submitting to “every ordinance [*ktisei*, dative feminine singular of *ktisis*, which means human authority] of man [*anthropine*, dative feminine singular of the adjective *anthropinos*, which means human or belongs to man]” (I Pet. 2:13). Human authority does not mean that it is any less God’s authority; but it is delegated authority, unless it is opposed to God’s revealed will. The word “human” denotes the means through which the authority operates. An example of this is the delegated authority of elders in local assemblies (I Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7,17,24).

Obedience to human authority has its limits. Parental authority and civil authority are responsible to God, whether the ones occupying those positions are Christians or nonchristians. As an alien in this country is not free from subordination to our laws, one’s spiritual inability as an unregenerate person does not nullify his responsibility to God. Man is responsible for his own depravity by his solidarity with Adam in the fall,

and he lacks spiritual ability to do the will of God. Nevertheless, he is accountable to God.

God has two governments during the age of the assembly, the time between the first and second advents of Jesus Christ. There is a spiritual government for Christ's assembly which He is building; and there is a civil government for the protection of society, which is made up of both elect and nonelect. Paul wrote Romans 13:1-7 to Christians in Rome to inform them concerning their relationship to the civil government where they resided. They were to be subordinate to the authorities of the civil government of Rome. The only exception to such subordination occurs when man's authority contradicts God's supreme authority. What did the "certain Jews" do when Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold and commanded all the people to come to the dedication of the image (Dan. 3:1-25)? Although the King issued a mandate for all the subjects of Babylon to worship the image, the faithful Jews knew the mandate was directly opposed to God who said:

I am the LORD thy God.... Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.... Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them..... —Exodus 20:2-5

The lesson in Paul's instruction to the Roman Christians teaches Christians of all time that believers are to be subordinate to governing authorities because there is no authority except from God. However, Christians must not be subordinate to false gods established by governing authorities. To embrace a false god established by a governing authority would be to deny the true God who gave the ruler his

authority. Hence, our answer to such authority must be the same as that given by the faithful Jews:

...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.
—Daniel 3:17,18

Christians must be willing, like the “certain Jews,” to suffer the consequences of refusing to obey the demands of civil authorities when they set themselves above the supreme authority of God. Three principles are established with respect to the “certain Jews” that Christians must consider: (1) They did not defile themselves by partaking of that which Babylon provided (Dan. 1). The King gave them a tuition-free three-year course in a false religion, but they had a meat to eat that Babylon did not understand. Biblical principles remain unchanged regardless of where God’s people live (Dan. 1:4-8). (2) God gave the young men of Israel knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom, thus enabling them to resist false teaching designed to lead them astray. The King knew that the religious nature of men, apart from grace, is easily carried away by anything that stirs their religious feeling. Therefore, as false religion is doing today, the King used Babylon’s music for persuasion. Who can deny that music plays a role in the spread of false religion? False religion inspired by false music works on false emotions to respond to a false peace that shall be offered by a false prophet. This indicates that things are speedily shaping up for the manifestation of the antichrist (Dan. 3:1-7). (3) The young men

faithfully refused to acknowledge any god other than the true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Dan. 3:13-18). Likewise, Christians in every age will be faithful to God and say with Peter and the apostles that we must be obeying God rather than men (Acts 5:29). Doing the will of God denotes character. Unawed by the presence of King Nebuchadnezzar and unseduced by the terrors of the burning fiery furnace, the faithful remnant refused to bow down and worship the image. In like manner, Christians who purpose in their hearts to please God act in the light of eternity.

The miracle recorded in Daniel 3 is a type of the remnant of Jews preserved by God during the great tribulation of Revelation. Some who profess to be theologians are as confused about the great tribulation as the pastor who preached the funeral of one of his assembly members and referred to him as one who came out of great tribulation. Since the Greek does not have an indefinite article comparable to the English, the absence of the article from the Greek is the equivalent of the indefinite article “a” in the English. The presence of the article in the Greek identifies; the absence of the article qualifies (makes less strong or positive). Therefore, the presence of the Greek article in Revelation 7:14, “...These are the ones who come [coming] out of the great tribulation...” (NASB), distinguishes it from the ordinary tribulations experienced in life.

A correct estimate of human government cannot be formed apart from the Biblical teaching of the future kingdom of Jesus Christ. While one political party will praise and magnify democracy as a Divine institution, another political party will condemn democracy and advocate socialism. There are others, however, who condemn all human government; but this must be denounced because any form of government is better than none. There are those who speak about “the rights of the people,” “all people being created equal,” “the

sovereignty of the people,” “the supreme power resting in the body of citizens instituted to vote,” etc. The promoters of different political philosophies are trying to influence the world with their ideologies. Therefore, the political battles become so heated that they turn into political wars. All human authorities must realize that authority does not rest in the policeman’s badge, the judge’s robe, or the king’s crown. It goes back of these symbols to the sovereign God who says to all authorities what Jesus Christ told Pilate: “You could be having no authority against me except it was being given to you from above” (John 19:11—translation).

The different forms of human government in society must be distinguished from the one established form of Divine government for Christ’s assemblies. Nothing is stated in Romans 13 or I Peter 2 concerning forms of government. The emphasis is on some established order for the protection of society, which includes both Christians and nonchristians. On the other hand, believers have a Divinely established order of government for Christ’s assemblies which cannot be altered regardless of the different forms of human government under which the assemblies exist. During the absence of Christ’s theocratic kingdom, the Divinely established government of Christ’s assemblies cannot make the state which is composed of regenerate and unregenerate people subordinate to their principles. However, the assemblies with their one established form of Divine government should be subordinate to different and changing human authorities, except when they oppose God’s established will, because Christianity is not controlled by human authority that is opposed to God’s revealed will.

The voice of Christianity must not remain silent before civil and political corruption. As the voices of the prophets were heard in the Old Testament, the voices of the elders must be heard proclaiming the same principles and giving the same

warnings in New Testament times. Consider the calling and work of such prophets of the Old Testament as Samuel (I Sam. 3:1-21; 7:3-15; 8:6-18), Shemaiah (II Chron. 12:1-12), Micaiah (II Chron. 18), Elijah (I Kings 17-22), the major and minor prophets, and concluding with John the Baptist. John, like Elijah before him, knew he was asking for trouble when he rebuked the one who sat on the throne: "...It is not lawful for thee to have her [his brother Philip's wife]" (Matt. 14:4). John the Baptist was not the last messenger to die for the cause of Christ. (See Matt. 24:9; John 16:2; 21:19; Acts 7:59-60; 12:1-2; Rev. 2:13.) The messengers of God must never compromise the principles of eternal truth regardless of the consequences.

The assembly of Christ should never be affiliated with any political party. However, this in no way excludes Christians from their responsibility to civil authority and their payment of taxes to the human authority under which they live. Since political and social structures of human authorities frown upon the perfected theocratic government under the Son of Man, the Son of David, Christians cannot endorse one form of humanism over another. Hence, a Christian is not justified in saying, "I have chosen the lesser of two or more evil parties." All human authorities accuse Christians of being too occupied with the other world, but all informed believers know that no one can properly understand his duty to the present without regarding it in the light of eternity. Therefore, chaos and confusion in society and Christendom are the fruit of rhetoric among politicians and religionists concerning a better society apart from the Biblical concept of the theocratic kingdom. Hence, the result prior to Christ's second advent will always be circumstances described by Jesus Christ:

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed

that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. —Matthew 24:4-8

Paul did not manifest any resentment toward the government under which the providence of God placed him. Therefore, he had no conflict between his rendering to Caesar the things that belonged to him and surrendering to God the things that belonged to Him. Because Christians revere the authority of God, they make better citizens of Caesar's domain than those who are strangers to God's grace. Since all nature is submissive to God's laws, Christians should submit to God's providence by submitting our hearts that are prone to carnality to God's holiness, arrogancy to His mercy, and rebellion to His sovereignty in providence. Some of the Roman believers to whom Paul wrote needed Paul's counsel concerning submission:

Whosoever therefore resisteth [*antitassomenos*, present middle participle of *antitasso*, which means oppose or resist] the power [*exousia*, which means authority, ruling power, or government], resisteth [*antithesteken*, perfect active indicative of *anthistemi*, which means resist, oppose, set against, or withstand—has opposed and is in a state of opposition] the ordinance [*diatage*, which means decree or

ordinance] of God: and they that resist [*anthesekotes*, perfect active participle of *anthistemi*, which means having opposed and are in a state of opposition] shall receive to themselves damnation [*krima*, which means judgment or punishment]. —Romans 13:2

Although wicked Nero was on the throne at the time Paul wrote this letter, the believers in Rome were to be subordinate to God and to the ruling authority as Solomon in his wisdom instructed: “My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle [interfere] not with them that are given to change” (Prov. 24:21). Note the order of “the LORD and the king.”

Contrary to Jesus Christ and the apostles, who never sought to overthrow human government, many religionists are trying to cause the downfall of some form of human government. Christians are living on a higher plane than any earthly ruler; furthermore, this is not the time for Christians to reign. We look forward to the time when we shall judge the world (I Cor. 6:2). Our judging the world will occur when we shall rule and reign with Jesus Christ. Therefore, the role of Christians during the absence of Christ’s theocratic rule in His kingdom is submission to the rule of the sovereign God and to continually changing human government as long as it does not demand opposition to God’s revealed will.

There are principles that bear on the right or wrong of revolution. Christians must not identify themselves with political associations to oppose or subvert the government of their country. Every age has its political and social tastes, but reverence for God is not one of the most popular virtues of any age, especially the one in which we live. Man without reverence sees no greatness in God’s universe which transcends himself. Knowing God through Jesus Christ is

necessary for one to act reverently. The attitude of deep respect is compatible with love. Our age of existentialism has produced a generation in which there is very little reverence or respect for anyone or anything. Existentialism is a high-sounding title for humanism which makes human experience the norm for judging reality. Since man is doing that which is right in his own eyes, he judges everything by his own standard.

There are three important things to understand about human government: (1) It is necessary in order to prevent anarchy. Any kind of government is better than no government. Lawlessness would abound in a nation without some form of human authority. (2) Human government, as far as its character is concerned, is not asserted to be acceptable to God. It may be described as a “beast” (Dan. 7; Rev. 13; 17). The four beasts of Daniel 7 are the world empires of history. Their moral character is described, and the fourth kingdom is so terrible that there is no beast to describe it. The order is reversed in Revelation 13 because Daniel was looking forward, but John was looking backward. The “MOTHER OF HARLOTS” riding the beast of Revelation 17 speaks of her dependence on and confidence in him to whom she is united. Since no nation is ever called a harlot, she represents the false assembly which claims relationship with God while being allied elsewhere. The false assembly will be used by the beast’s authority until she has served his purpose, and then she will be destroyed. (3) Human government, like everything ministered by men, is always imperfect. The authorities which exist are not viewed in Scripture as having intelligence of a spiritual order.

Christians have no form of government, civil or ecclesiastical, to impose on a nation. They are to pray for those in authority in order that they might lead a peaceful and quiet life in godliness and respectability (I Tim. 2:1,2). The Chris-

tian, like the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, desires to pass his life of pilgrimage on earth in peace (Num. 21:22), serving God in the path of the just that shines brighter and brighter until the perfect day (Prov. 4:18). That which shines brighter and brighter does not refer to a better path of life brought into being through political and ecclesiastical influences on human authorities. One must not discount the fact that political and religious propaganda will bring the deceived to say, "Peace and safety," but then sudden destruction shall come upon them (I Thess. 5:1-3).

There is no authority except from God. The God-given authority of civil government is affirmed in Romans 13:1-7. But unlimited power over people under a particular form of human government is not awarded to men. The authority of human government and the obedience of the governed are limited. Since God is sovereign, no human government has the authority to violate God's commandments and principles. When human authority approves and practices that which God condemns, Christians must obey God rather than men and be willing to suffer the consequences of having obeyed God (Acts 5:29). Biblical examples of obedience to God while disobeying civil government are given: (1) The King of Egypt requested that all the Hebrew male children be killed, but Moses' parents disobeyed this command (Ex. 1:16,22; 2:1-3). Their obedience to God is recorded in Hebrews 11:23. (2) Rahab, a converted prostitute, appears among the heroes of faith because of a courageous act of civil disobedience (Josh. 2; 6). By this act, she was justified by her work (James 2:25). (3) In disobedience to the rulers during the time of Ahab and Jezebel, Obadiah hid 100 prophets in caves to protect them from the authorities (I Kings 18:13). (4) The three Hebrew children refused to obey King Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 3:17,18), and their faith is spoken of in Hebrews 11:34. (5) Daniel refused to comply with a royal decree that he must not pray to his God three times a day with his face

toward Jerusalem. His faith is recorded in Hebrews 11:33.

Civil government is a human institution that formulates law without direct reference to Scripture for temporal welfare and prosperity, and it applies to all its subjects. Assembly authority is based on Scripture for the eternal good of believers whose subordination to God takes priority over civil government, and they must never compromise Divine authority. Civil government has definite limitation. It cannot intrude into assembly government and command Christians to disobey God. Assembly government cannot intrude into civil government and command unbelievers to live a Christian life which they are unable to do. Biblical principles cannot be imposed on unregenerate people. That does not indicate that unregenerate people are not responsible to God. God is the supreme authority. The assembly intensifies her influence by keeping separate from the state. The role of the assembly in the world is not to dabble in politics but to keep separated from politics and be in a position by a life of separation to condemn everything that is contrary to the purpose and command of Almighty God. Christians must obey authority that does not disobey God, the supreme authority. We must be honest in dealing with our fellow men, owe no man anything, and live clean lives without compromise.

God rules in the governments of men by giving authority to whom He will (Prov. 21:1; Dan. 4:17). Some rulers may consider themselves absolute and unaccountable to any, but they are overruled by God who is higher than the highest. The king's heart being in the hand of the Lord does not mean that the Lord is in his heart. Whether regenerate or unregenerate, the king's heart is in the hand of the sovereign God (I Sam. 2:6-10; Acts 17:28). The quality of the ruler's heart is not changed if he is unregenerate, but the path of its actions runs under God's guidance and subservient to His pleasure for the fulfillment of His purpose. The Christian goes beyond the

reasoning of the natural man to see God sending Joseph to preserve many people alive (Gen. 50:18-20), sending Shimei to curse David (II Sam. 16:10), and delivering Jesus Christ to wicked men for crucifixion (Acts 2:23). Job expressed his belief in (1) the truth of God's agency—"he taketh away," (2) the sovereignty of His dominion—"who can hinder him," and (3) the justice of His conduct—"who will say unto him, What doest thou?" (Job 9:12).

The following are three important questions for consideration: (1) Does the New Testament set boundaries between civil and assembly jurisdictions? (2) Does the New Testament suggest the union of assembly and state, in other words, a theocracy of sort? (3) Does Christ expect the assembly to fulfill the commission by legislation? (Study Luke 12:13-15.)

6

KINGS PRECEDING THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM

David

David, whom God selected to be king and sent Samuel to anoint, was the son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite. God said to Samuel:

How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons. —I Samuel 16:1 (NASB)

Israel's first king had been the people's choice, and the people's choice always fails. God had allowed Israel to

choose their king to show the nation that their best choice could never meet their need. The genealogy of Saul suggests pride, self-will, excellence of nature, weakness, and deceitfulness (I Sam. 9:1,2). During the period of the Judges, Israel's rejection of God as their invisible King reached its climax in Samuel's day when they asked for a king like all the nations (I Sam. 8:5,19,20). The man of Israel's choice soon became a failure, and God told Samuel that He had rejected Saul's reign over the people. However, God sought a king after His own heart (I Sam. 13:14; 16:1).

He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. —Psalm 78:70,71

Saul's success was also his failure (I Sam. 15:11-23). How could Saul succeed and fail at the same time? He conquered Agag but disobeyed God by failing to destroy the Amalekites. Hence, the glory of his victory was lost in the darkness of his defeat. One may conquer some of earth's greatest kings, but his life is a failure if he disobeys the King of all kings. Therefore, Saul's sin of disobedience must be condemned rather than his victory praised. There are three lessons to be learned in Saul's disobedience: (1) Saul took King Agag alive but did not destroy him. Someone might reason himself into saying that imprisonment for life is a worse punishment than death. But no one has the right to alter God's command. (2) Saul shifted the responsibility to the people: "But the people took of the spoil...to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal" (I Sam. 15:21). Saul made the people his means of escape, but he tried to make it light on them by saying they

spared the sheep for sacrifice. Now that was being truly thoughtful of the people! (3) Saul offered a religious excuse for his sin of disobedience by suggesting that using the sheep for sacrifice would be better than slaying them in war. Although God said to slay them, Saul's reasoning was that it does not matter how they are slain. Disobedience is not condoned by partial obedience. Samuel rebuked him for his disobedience:

Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft [divination], and stubbornness [insubordination] is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king. —I Samuel 15:22,23

Saul's confession did not come until the evidence of his sin was revealed. He was frightened into a religious feeling (I Sam. 15:24). Furthermore, in his confession, he placed the blame on the people because he feared them: "...I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel..." (I Sam. 15:30). He was more concerned about standing well in the sight of the people than before the Lord. In contrast, Christians confess their sins because they desire to stand well in the sight of the Lord.

David was chosen long before Samuel was sent for him (Ps. 78:70). Those chosen by God are immovable because they are connected to the foundation of God's purpose. David was the eighth son of Jesse to pass in review before Samuel

when he was sent to anoint God's choice of a king. The unseen God is the all-seeing One who moved Samuel to recognize the son of Jesse who was to be the king of Israel. (See I Sam. 16:6-13.) God's choices are different from man's choices because God looks not upon man's physical stature (II Sam. 14:25), social rank (I Cor. 1:26-31), or material wealth (I Sam. 16:11). David appeared before Samuel:

And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward.... —I Samuel 16:12,13

The "sweet psalmist of Israel" (II Sam. 23:1) denotes David's character, the basis of which was that he was raised on high:

He [God] raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap To make them sit with nobles, And inherit a seat of honor.... —I Samuel 2:8 (NASB)

Seventy-three of the 150 Psalms were written by David, and they were set to music for the tabernacle and temple worship. Therefore, they reveal the attitude of the soul in God's presence while thoroughly considering past history, present experience, and prophetic hope.

The Spirit of the Lord speaking through David involved the triune God—the Spirit of the Lord, the God of Israel, and the Rock of Israel (II Sam. 23:2,3). The God of Israel is the Author of the eternal covenant, and the Rock of Israel shall fulfill the obligations of the covenant. Jesus Christ is represented as the Person by whom God created all things (I Cor. 8:6), and as the Divine Being who accompanied the Israelites in the wilderness as their deliverer. Paul's statement in I Corinthians 10:4, "that Rock was Christ," proves Christ's preexistence. In the Old Testament, Christ appeared as "the angel of the LORD" (Ex. 3:2), "the angel of his presence" (Is. 63:9), and "the messenger [angel] of the covenant" (Mal. 3:1). Hence, it is easy to understand the relation that Paul made between the Rock of the Old Testament and the Christ of the New Testament.

David's hope was for a "morning without clouds" (II Sam. 23:4), which is a messianic prophecy. The basis of his hope was "the everlasting covenant" which was ordered and sure. David's statements "Although my house be not so with God" and "yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant" of II Samuel 23:5 must be contrasted, because the faithfulness of God is presented in contrast to the failures of King David. In any honest biography of the best of men, one will find a "but" or an "although." Hence, the only thing that gives permanent hope is God's unconditional covenant and His faithfulness in fulfilling it.

King David rejoiced in God's covenant—II Samuel 23:5—for the following reasons: (1) It was Divine in origin—"God...made with me an everlasting covenant." (2) It was a personal covenant—"God...made with me...." (3) It was everlasting—"...an everlasting covenant." (4) It was ordered—"ordered in all things." (5) It was sure—"and secured" (NASB). (6) It was the satisfaction of his heart—"this is all my salvation." (7) It was all his desire—"and all my desire."

The promises of God are yes and amen (II Cor. 1:20).

The unfaithfulness of David's house included his own personal failures. When Christians near the end of their lives in time, their hearts are set upon what they were in sin, what they are in Christ, and how miserably they have failed God as believers. Hence, they lament their failures and grieve over the way they have prostituted their blessings and privileges. However, like David, they do not spend all their last moments lamenting and grieving over their failures. As David became absorbed with God's covenant that was ordered and secured, informed Christians become occupied with God's eternal, unilateral covenant of grace that is the foundation of all the covenants of time.

The prophetical kingdom is represented by the following poetic expression in II Samuel 23:3-4 (NASB):

He who rules over men righteously,
Who rules in the fear [reverence] of God,
Is as the light of the morning when the sun rises,
A morning without clouds,
When the tender grass springs out of the earth,
Through sunshine after rain.

Paul said, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand..." (Rom. 13:12). The night is the time and power of darkness (Luke 22:53); therefore, it is the time of warfare, trial, struggle, absence of the Bridegroom, man's judgment, mixture of tares and wheat, tribulation, sorrow, and death. Conversely, the morning is the time of no clouds, complete deliverance, eternal glory, and the righteous rule of Christ in the eternal

kingdom. The evening of the world is dark and depressing, but Christ Jesus shall be the light of the morning. The purity of the morning follows the purifying judgment of God. A willing people shall bow before the righteous rule of Christ in the day of His power and glory. Therefore, in the beauty of holiness from the womb of the morning, Christ shall have the dew of His youth; thus, everything under His quickening power shall flourish in His kingdom. (See Ps. 110.)

Critics have seized on David's sin with Bathsheba and his having Uriah killed to ridicule David as a great Bible hero. They ask what kind of God could find anything in David to praise. God Himself acknowledged this criticism against Himself and His people when He inspired Daniel to say these words:

O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name. —Daniel 9:18,19

A stain appeared to be on the name of God for four hundred years. God forgave sinners in Old Testament times because His Son was on the way to Calvary. He would soon justify Himself in the sight of all His critics. God will by no means clear the guilty (Rom. 3:24-26).

God's commendation of David proves that David, like

Rahab the harlot, did not wallow in sin; but his pleasure with Bathsheba displeased the Lord:

...David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. —I Kings 15:5

And when the mourning [Bathsheba's mourning over Uriah's death] was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD. —II Samuel 11:27

As threatening as David's hypocrisy and self-deceit were, he was honest within himself all the self-deceiving time. One might ask how David could go for a year without forgiveness of his sin. It would be inconceivable if we did not look at David through some of our own experiences and confess that the same detestable sin principle that was in David is in each of us.

There was a lapse of time between David's sin and his being rebuked. God did not awaken David to a sense of his wickedness by raising up enemies to lay waste his country, but He sent to him one of His faithful ministers. The King did not fly into a rage when Nathan faithfully performed his duty. David was so horrified when convicted by the parable that he said, "I have sinned against the LORD" (II Sam. 12:13). After David's confession, Nathan said:

The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. —II Samuel 12:13,14

A principle in the moral government of God that must not be overlooked is that we reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7). God said the following words to David through Nathan:

Why have you despised the word of the LORD by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon. Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your companion, and he shall lie with your wives in broad daylight. Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun. —II Samuel 12:9-12 (NASB)

God's promise that He would raise up evil against David and his own house was fulfilled in (1) the death of his first son by Bathsheba (II Sam. 12:14,19), (2) Amnon raping his half-sister Tamar (II Sam. 13:14), (3) Absalom having Amnon assassinated (II Sam. 13:28,29), (4) Absalom being slain by

Joab (II Sam. 18:14), and (5) Adonijah falling by the sword at the command of Solomon (I Kings 2:24,25).

Another recorded sin in David's life was his ordering a third census in Israel. Although God ordered two numberings of the children of Israel (Num. 1:2; 26:2), David sinned by ordering the third census (II Sam. 24:1,2,10; I Chron. 21:1). The first census was in order to determine Israel's military strength and to facilitate orderly progress. Since only Israelites were to fight Israel's battles, the mixed multitude was eliminated because they could not prove their pedigree. The numbering was not a mere numbering of the Israelites, but it was to be a declaration of their pedigree by acknowledging the covenant, their redemption, and their identification with the tent of meeting. These three things stand or fall together in the case of national Israel, and they also contain a principle that applies to Christians in the dispensation of grace. The numbering in the second census had in view Israel's entrance into Canaan and the division of the land (Num. 26:52-54). Israel was to have an interest not only in position but also in her inheritance. This principle also applies to Christians today. Our use of grace and not grace itself is the difference between Christians. David's command to have Israel and Judah numbered was not from God. He ordered Joab to number the people "that I may know the number of the people" (II Sam. 24:2). Subsequent to the census, David said:

...I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now,
O LORD, please take away the iniquity of Thy servant,
for I have acted very foolishly. —II Samuel 24:10 (NASB)

Scripture does not specifically state what the sin was that David committed; therefore, the answer must be found in the context and circumstances of David's life: (1) David was not commanded to take a census. (2) Satan provoked (moved) David to number Israel (I Chron. 21:1). (3) The numbering of Israel was out of the pride of his heart—"that I may know the number of the people."

David was given a choice of the method of punishment he would receive for his sin: (1) seven years of famine, (2) fleeing his pursuers for three months, or (3) three days of pestilence in his land (II Sam. 24:11-13). After hearing the choices from the prophet of God, David returned to a proper sense of submission to the sovereign God. Recognizing his sin and foolishness, he was willing to fall into the hands of the merciful God, knowing that in governmental forgiveness he must be punished for his sin.

At the close of David's life, he was made to have a keen sense of his own personal sin, failure, and neglect of duty. The last words of King David present a difficulty to some, but what appears to be a problem between I Kings 2:1-11 and II Samuel 23:1-5 is not a problem when one sees that II Samuel 23:1-5 is David's expression of faith and hope in his dying moments. Such is the testimony of every properly instructed dying believer. What David said in his last address extended beyond himself; therefore, his words should be considered as both a charge and a prophecy. Let us look first at David's charge to his son, Solomon, and then at his dying testimony.

The King was about to take his last step out of time into eternity. Hence, he acknowledged that the glory of his reign as king over Israel was nearing completion: "I go the way of all the earth" (I Kings 2:2). Although his sun was sinking slowly in the west, he had an interest in the future of Israel; therefore, his last words to Solomon are the words of a patriot to a young soldier:

I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel. —I Kings 2:2-4

David's admonition to Solomon to "shew thyself a man" reminds one of Paul's admonition to Timothy, his child in the faith, to become strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (II Tim. 2:1). One of the difficulties of Solomon's position was his youth. Therefore, David exhorted him to be a "man" with reference to his responsibilities as king over the people.

Solomon was introduced to the throne; the book of the law was placed in his hands; and David gave him the charge of the Lord his God to walk in His ways. The charge consisted of keeping the following things: (1) God's statutes—the positive statutes of the law, (2) His commandments—the moral precepts, (3) His judgments—the laws belonging to civil government, and (4) His testimonies—the laws directing the commemoration of certain events. This charge was also a reminder of God's covenant to motivate Solomon's faithfulness. Hence, the charge extended further than father to son; it was also from a king to his successor.

King David's words about Joab and Shimei of I Kings 2:5-9 have caused a lot of controversy among "scholars." Some

have said they would like to pass by the words of David to Solomon if they could. They have difficulty harmonizing this with David's forgiveness of Joab and Shimei. Some who consider themselves more loving and forgiving than the man after God's own heart would never stoop to utter such language. Thus, they are Pharisees who know neither their hearts nor the justice of God. Being too weak to carry out the law, David pronounced sentence on the criminals and charged his successor to carry out its penalty. This was not vengeance but justice. (See Num. 35:31-33; Deut. 19:13.)

Distinction must be made between David as the man after God's own heart (I Sam. 13:14) and David as the king. Although David was used by God to give many of the Psalms, scoffers have questioned how he could be a man after God's own heart in the face of his heinous sins. But David's life as a whole must be considered. Furthermore, David's repentance and his inner life as revealed in the Psalms should be taken into account. Inspired Scripture gives the answer to the reason for David's being a man after God's heart:

And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. —Acts 13:22

Hence, one who fulfills all of God's desires is a person after His heart. Man's custom is to fix his eyes on either a virtuous act or a heinous sin without knowing if either is upright or vicious. This can be illustrated on one hand by Noah's drunkenness and Moses' murder of an Egyptian, and on the

other hand, by Balaam's truthfulness and Judas' repentance. Therefore, a life, not an act, should be taken into account. David, as the man, used Joab as his accomplice in the murder of Uriah (II Sam. 11:14,15); and he said concerning Shimei who cursed him:

...What have I to do with you, O sons of Zeruiah? If he curses, and if the LORD has told him, Curse David, then who shall say, Why have you done so? —II Samuel 16:10 (NASB)

David knew that duty was his, and the events of providence were God's. Therefore, he looked beyond second causes to God who works all things after the counsel of His own will.

Scripture is not clear as to exactly what Joab had done that caused David as king in his charge to Solomon to say, "So act according to your wisdom and do not let his gray hair go down to Sheol in peace" (I Kings 2:6 NASB). The following things have been suggested: (1) It was Joab's strong language concerning David's excessive mourning over the death of Absalom (II Sam. 19:1-8). (2) It was Joab's treason in turning to Adonijah who feared Solomon (I Kings 1:41-53). Whatever Joab had done, David was speaking as king in charging his successor, and punishment was justified from the standpoint of public duty, not from private vengeance. Furthermore, recognizing that the kingdom was in peril, David made reference to Shimei whom he met at Jordan and to whom he had sworn, "...I will not put thee to death with the sword" (I Kings 2:8). (See II Sam. 19:16-23.) David's last charge to Solomon is given:

Now therefore, do not let him go unpunished, for you are a wise man; and you will know what you ought to do to him, and you will bring his gray hair down to Sheol with blood. —I Kings 2:9 (NASB)

According to I Kings 2:36-46, Shimei added iniquity to iniquity; thus proving David correct in what he did. Sin may appear to have been confessed by one saying, as Shimei did at Jordan, “I have sinned” (II Sam. 19:20). Instead of a true confession, the so-called confessor was only waiting for an opportunity to strike again with greater force. Following the death of Shimei, the kingdom was established in the hands of Solomon.

As a type of Christ, David as a man and as the king should be distinguished. Jesus Christ as the perfect Man, who was attested by God by miracles, wonders, and signs (Acts 2:22), must be distinguished from Jesus Christ as Mediator and King.

Jesus Christ, the perfect Man, gave us an example by speaking to His Father on behalf of those who were putting Him to death:

...Father forgive [*aphes*, aorist active imperative of *aphiemi*, which means cancel, remit, pardon, forgive, or tolerate] them; for they know [*oidasin*, perfect active indicative of *oida*, which means know, understand, or perceive] not what they do [*poiousin*, present active indicative of *poieo*, which means do, cause, perform, or accomplish]. —Luke 23:34

Father, forgive them, for they have not known what they are doing. —(Translation)

Although this was Christ's first cry from the cross, it was not His intercession for the transgressors prophesied by Isaiah (Is. 53:12).

FIRST—Christ's praying in His perfect manhood was subject to the law; therefore, He forgave wrongs done to Him and prayed for His enemies, thus leaving us an example. He asked the Father to forgive those who crucified Him in ignorance; He was not asking forgiveness for all who participated in His death. Peter explained to the Jews the miracle of the lame man who received full health by telling them he had known that they acted on the basis of ignorance when they murdered the Author of life (Acts 3:14-17). Paul went beyond the Jews' guilt of murdering Jesus Christ when he told the Corinthians he was proclaiming God's wisdom in a mystery which had been hidden but was predestined before the ages to the glory of the elect. Furthermore, he said the rulers of this age have not understood; for had they understood, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (I Cor. 2:6-8). Therefore, in view of Christ's knowing what was in man (John 2:23-25), He could not have interceded for those who died in their sins. The ignorance of those who murdered Jesus Christ was not their ignorance that they murdered but their ignorance concerning the Author of life whom they murdered. Hence, the subsequent salvation of some of them signifies that the Son of God asked the Father to tolerate the ignorant concerning this heinous crime for the sake of the elect among them who would be saved. Although some who crucified Christ in ignorance were later saved, He did not say that they all might believe, because that would have been indefinite.

SECOND—Christ's praying in His office as Mediator is on behalf of the elect. There is nothing indefinite about that which is effectual, and nothing can be ineffectual about Christ's intercessory work. Many believe Christ's first saying

from the cross was a general intercession for all men that they might believe. If that were true, Christ's intercession would be unsuccessful because all men are not believers. If Christ prayed for the forgiveness of all men, one of two absurdities will follow: (1) Either the Father does not always hear Christ, which contradicts John 11:42, or (2) all men shall be forgiven, which is also contradictory to Scripture (Matt. 7:13,14; 13:38-43; II Thess. 1:5-10; etc.).

In David's dying moments, he expressed his faith and hope of the future in terms of poetic skill. Here is an example of how the Holy Spirit took the God-given ability of the "sweet psalmist of Israel" and gave him God's message, which the Psalmist expressed. Some think "the light of the morning" of II Samuel 23:4 refers to the first advent of Christ as depicted by Matthew:

The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, And to those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, Upon them a light dawned. From that time Jesus began to preach and say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven [the heavens] is at hand [has approached]. —Matthew 4:16,17 (NASB)

Jesus Christ said nothing to mislead the Jews from the truth that He was their Messiah. Furthermore, He did not leave them wondering about His mission to the Gentiles. (See Is. 42:6,7; 60:1,3; Luke 2:32; Rom. 2:19; 11:11-25). David's statement, He "Is as the light of the morning when the sun rises, A morning without clouds, When the tender grass springs out of the earth, Through sunshine after rain" (II Sam. 23:4), goes beyond the description of Christ's first advent.

The events that are associated with “a morning without clouds” are of such nature that they can be realized only after Christ’s second advent.

A comparison of David’s charge in his last days to Solomon, his successor (I Kings 2:1-11), with his last words (II Sam. 23:1-5) presents no problem. His last words were his dying testimony of faith and hope. His testimony looked beyond himself; therefore, his words are to be viewed both historically and prophetically.

Historically, David’s last words, II Samuel 23:1-5, emphasize the following things: (1) David was the “son of Jesse” by nature (v.1). (2) By grace he became “the man who was raised up on high” (v.1). (3) “The Spirit of the LORD” spoke by him (v.2). (4) His view of the Godhead was “The Spirit of the LORD,” “The God of Israel,” and “the Rock of Israel” (vv.2,3). (5) His hope in the future was “a morning without clouds” (v.4). (6) His confession in view of stepping out of time into eternity was “Although my house be not so with God” (v.5). (7) The foundation of David’s hope was “He has made an everlasting covenant with me, Ordered in all things, and secured” (v.5 NASB).

Prophetically, David’s last words stress the following things: (1) “The Rock of Israel...who rules over men righteously,” (2) “Who rules in the fear [reverence] of God,” (3) “Is as the light of the morning when the sun rises,” (4) “A morning without clouds,” (5) “When the tender grass springs out of the earth,” (6) “Through sunshine after rain” (II Sam. 23:3,4 NASB).

Solomon

Solomon succeeded David on the throne. Solomon’s love

for the Lord was reciprocal (I John 4:10); Divine love begets love. “Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father...” (I Kings 3:3). How futile for man to think he can talk himself into loving God. The origin of Divine love is not found in a sense of duty but in love itself. Hence, when the sun of Divine love melts the icy-hard heart, the stream of affection begins to flow to God who is love. If all the rocks of ice could be broken with the hammer of either law or duty, not a drop of affection would flow toward God. The “thousand burnt offerings” that Solomon offered upon “that altar” (I Kings 3:4) reveal that he knew something of God’s holiness, the horribleness of his own sin, and the greatness of the atonement. Hence, he knew that man must look above his path in order to walk in it.

Solomon’s career may be divided into four stages: (1) His purpose as a young man was to seek the Lord, who appeared to him twice (I Kings 3:5; 9:2; 11:9). (2) In his prosperity, he attained the highest glory of any man (I Kings 10:1-13). (3) He had the privilege of building the temple, and he made a contribution to the Scriptures. (4) In his perversion, Solomon’s heart was turned from the Lord, and his reign ended in disaster.

Solomon’s greatness was confirmed by Christ’s saying of Himself, “a greater than Solomon is here” (Matt. 12:42). In addition to the kingdom being established under his reign, Solomon possessed great wisdom and built the temple. He wrote Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon, and some of Proverbs.

Scripture states the following about Solomon:

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding

exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. —I Kings 4:29

Wisdom is not the same as talent, ability, sense, or prudence. All of these combined cannot give one wisdom, which is more than a high order of genius. Wisdom is the exercise of reason into which the heart enters plus a structure of the understanding, which is the product of one's spiritual nature. The writings of Solomon have some enlightening passages on wisdom that are incomparable with modern day intellectualism, which emphasizes the abstract conceived apart from the concrete. Solomon knew by experience that intellectualism alone could never give happiness. (See Eccl. 1.) Proverbs, unlike Ecclesiastes, sets forth the sufficiency of Divine wisdom. Ecclesiastes proves the world's wisdom can never give a person the true concept of God; furthermore, the wisdom of God can never be reduced to something that conforms to the wisdom of the world. (See I Cor. 1:18-31.) Therefore, four things are absolutely essential to a saving knowledge of God through Jesus Christ: (1) Divine illumination in the understanding (Eph. 1:18), (2) God-given faith in the heart (Eph. 2:8; Jude 20), (3) Godly fear in the conscience (Jer. 32:40; Phil. 2:12), and (4) heavenly love in the affections (Rom. 5:5). Without enlightenment we cannot see spiritual things; without God-given faith we cannot believe His promises; without fear we cannot reverence God; without love we cannot embrace Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life.

The wisdom of Solomon surpassed the wisdom of the sons of the east and Egypt (I Kings 4:30 NASB). His wisdom was not restricted to one or two sciences, like great minds today which specialize in one of many aspects of one particular science. His God-given wisdom included such natural scien-

ces as literature, music, forestry, zoology, ornithology, and biology (I Kings 4:32,33). In addition to these natural sciences, Solomon's God-given wisdom included such Biblical sciences as theology, anthropology, Christology, soteriology, and eschatology.

No one is to suppose that all the proverbs contained in the book that begins with "THE proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel" (Prov. 1:1) constitute the exclusive work of the King himself. There should be no doubt that his "three thousand proverbs" (I Kings 4:32) are included; but internal evidence shows that some are by Agur (Prov. 30:1) and others are the words of "...king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him" (Prov. 31:1). These last two references do not contradict Proverbs 1:1. Solomon was the collector and editor, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, of the proverbs of others as well as being the author of his own. The book of Proverbs is to be regarded as a practical guide of life because it contains counsels from above for conduct below. These pointed precepts for practical living are considered one of the most ancient forms of instruction. Their ability to whet the spiritual appetite for knowledge can be best expressed by the proverb, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov. 25:11). The word "fitly" in Hebrew signifies "wheels," and it has been rendered, "a word spoken on his wheels," meaning a word spoken in proper circumstances. (See Ezek. 1). This does not mean that grace and courtesy are to be substituted for truth and honesty. Letting our "Yea, yea; Nay, nay" (Matt. 5:37) degenerate to an artificial politeness is not what the proverb teaches. The truth portrayed in this text is that things of rare worth and beauty are words fitly spoken.

King Solomon knew from experience the meaning of the proverb, "THE king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes" (Prov.

21:1 NASB). Kings are not only ruled but also overruled by God who “is higher than the highest” (Eccl. 5:8). God does not always change the quality of the heart of a king, but He does direct his course of life for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose. Solomon was one who had experienced a change in the quality of his heart as well as the control of the course of his life. No one can read the writings of Solomon and deny that he had more than a theoretical knowledge of God. By grace, Solomon rose above human reason because he could not ascribe the things mentioned in his life to human agency apart from God’s intervention.

A consideration of the three books by Solomon will reveal the sufficiency of Divine wisdom in Proverbs, the insufficiency of human wisdom in Ecclesiastes, and the object and purity of Divine love in The Song of Solomon, which stands in contrast to the “vanity of vanities” in Ecclesiastes. Christians are attracted to Christ not merely for what He has done but because of who He is in His perfection. Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of God, is represented as the personification of Wisdom in Proverbs 8, and representation climaxes with the question concerning His name:

Who has ascended into heaven and descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has wrapped the waters in His garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name or His son’s name? Surely you know! —Proverbs 30:4 (NASB)

The true mark of wisdom is one’s knowledge of his own ignorance. Although Agur was an informed philosopher, he felt that he could not by searching come to the knowledge of

the sovereign God of the universe. Therefore, he was letting his friends know that true wisdom is a revelation from God. The Wisdom of Proverbs is the Old Testament representation of the incarnate Word of the New Testament (Prov. 30).

Solomon is called the Preacher seven times in the book of Ecclesiastes (1:1,2,12; 7:27; 12:8,9,10). “Preacher” is a proper name by which Solomon is distinguished because of his lectures of wisdom given in the congregation of the people. His message in Ecclesiastes (the name means “convoker, to call together or summon”) describes “man under the sun” (used 28 times), not “in the Son of God.” The reasons for dissatisfaction in “men under the sun” is that God “has also set eternity in their heart” (Eccl. 3:11 NASB), and they are depraved. “Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices” (Eccl. 7:29 NASB). Having viewed these basic principles in this book where the covenant title “Jehovah” is not used, let us observe the answer to man’s problem in The Song of Solomon. We learn from Ecclesiastes that science, wisdom of the world, pleasure, materialism, religion, wealth, and morality cannot satisfy us “under the sun”; our hearts are too large for our objects because the world—eternity—has been set in our hearts (Eccl. 3:11). We learn from The Song of Solomon that the Object of our faith and love is infinite; therefore, the Son of Man, in whom the Godhead dwells bodily, is too large for the heart in which eternity resides. This is the reason that Jesus Christ alone satisfies.

The Song of Solomon is greater than all the other songs he wrote (I Kings 4:32). The theme of The Song of Solomon is a consciousness of Christ’s love which makes the heart desire to please Him. When Christ’s love is valued more than all earthly joys, its personal intimacy will be experienced. There is no sensual love in “THE song of songs, which is Solomon’s” (S. Of Sol. 1:1). The natural man can neither

understand nor give a true interpretation of this book. It stands in contrast with the “vanity of vanities” because it is the “holy of holies” of Solomon’s songs. This book is a revelation of the chaste and virtuous love which no grandeur can dazzle and no compliment can seduce. The Song presents three levels of love: (1) The young believer thinks chiefly of Jesus Christ as his and of Christ’s being in some way for his pleasure: “My beloved is mine, and I am his...” (S. of Sol. 2:16). (2) Christ’s ownership takes first place in the believer who has grown to some extent in grace and knowledge of Christ: “I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine...” (S. of Sol. 6:3). (3) The word “mine” is dropped in the assurance that belonging to Christ includes all: “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me” (S. of Sol. 7:10). Thus the mature believer understands that Christ’s ownership swallows up every other thought. Every Christian can know by these three Scriptures the level of love on which he stands before God.

Solomon purposed to build a house for the name of the Lord his God because the Lord had spoken to David:

...Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he will build the house for My name. —I Kings 5:5 (NASB)

God was pleased to accept the sincere purpose of David’s heart. He accepted David’s will for the deed, as He accepted Abraham’s willingness to offer up Isaac. David’s motive was right or God would not have said, “...you did well that it was in your heart” (I Kings 8:18 NASB). Observe that the temple was not built for the Lord but for the name of the Lord. Pagan temples are intended by their builders for the actual residence

of their gods, but Solomon knew better:

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built. —I Kings 8:27 (NASB)

A place where God manifests Himself to man is the basic idea of a temple. This is demonstrated by the Shekinah, the Person of Jesus Christ, and the holy character of Christians. (See I Kings 6-8; John 1:14; I Cor. 6:19,20.)

Solomon's statement in I Kings 8:27 indicates that he recognized the omnipresence of God. The spiritual dimension is outside of human reason. There is existence beyond the physical as we know it. Since God is spiritual in nature, He is everywhere present and cannot be restricted by material nature. A material body may be dissolved, but the Godhead is incapable of dissolution. God's spiritual nature cannot be divided; therefore, He is entire in every place:

Am I a God who is near, declares the LORD, And not a God far off? Can a man hide himself in hiding places, So I do not see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill the heavens and the earth? declares the LORD. —Jeremiah 23:23,24 (NASB)

The absolute perfection of the Godhead cannot be

restricted because limitation is imperfection. For example, the Being of the absolutely perfect God must with regard to time be eternal, with regard to space be omnipresent, with regard to power be omnipotent, and with regard to wisdom be omniscient. If the Godhead is not always existent, the Godhead never was existent; if the Divine Being is not everywhere at the same time, He has no being anywhere; if the Divine being could not manifest His power everywhere at once, He does not exist. Power without existence cannot be a reality. The Divine Being who wisely governs all actions must be eternally present with omnipresence and omnipotence because if the Divine Being can be absent at any time, He may be absent at all times.

The period between the exodus and the beginning of the building of the temple has been a stumbling block to many. The problem is the 480 years mentioned in I Kings 6:1 and the 573 years recorded in the five periods in Israel's national history (Judges 3:8-13:1). The five periods mentioned in Judges are punishments by God for the evil Israel had done: (1) God sold the sons of Israel into the hands of Chushanrishathaim, king of Mesopotamia for eight years (Judges 3:8). (2) Israel served Eglon, the king of Moab, for 18 years (Judges 3:12-14). (3) They served Jabin, king of Canaan, for 20 years (Judges 4:2,3). (4) They served Midian for seven years (Judges 6:1). (5) They served the Philistines for 40 years (Judges 13:1). The solution to the problem is the uncounted 93 years that Israel lived out of God's will. The sins of those years were remembered until they were confessed, but these were wasted years and not counted in God's spiritual chronology (I Kings 6:1). Those who wonder about Israel's being sold into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites of Judges 10:7 and 9 must consider that this affected only the tribes "beyond Jordan" and did not suspend Israel's national position.

In the study of the temple, many want to stop with the assembly of Christ as the spiritual temple (Eph. 2:22; I Pet. 2:4,5). However, we must look at the temples in their historical sequence. (1) The first was the tabernacle erected by Moses. This was the traveling tent of meeting of God in the wilderness. (2) The temple built by Solomon followed the same floor plan of the tabernacle, but it was more magnificent. It was the center of worship for centuries, in spite of the apostate form of worship introduced by Jeroboam (I Kings 12). When the temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, the service in Israel was discontinued for 70 years. (3) Following Israel's return from captivity, the temple was rebuilt by Zerubabel. This was the temple that Jesus Christ as a boy entered (Luke 2:46), and from which He later drove out the money changers and as a Prophet taught (John 2:14-17). The curtain in this same temple was rent (Matt. 27:51; Heb. 9:8,9; 10:19,20). This temple was destroyed by Titus in 70 A.D. (4) The temple of the body of Christ was the earthly tent in which the fullness of the Godhead is dwelling in Him bodily (John 1:14; 2:19; Col. 2:9). (5) The assembly that Christ continues building is the spiritual temple (Eph. 2:22). (6) The temple shall be rebuilt (Ezek. 40-48). (7) The heavenly Jerusalem is represented as a temple (Rev. 21,22). The last two references to the temple are associated with Israel in the future (Ezek. 40-48) and the future eternal kingdom (Rev. 21-22). The kingdom will be material. Those who spiritualize the last two references to the temple and literalize the others are not consistent.

Scripture teaches the following:

The heavens are the heavens of the LORD; But the earth He has given to the sons of men. —Psalm 115:16 (NASB)

Blessed are the gentle [meek or humble], for they shall inherit the earth. —(Matthew 5:5 (NASB))

But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. —II Peter 3:13 (NASB)

And thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth. — Revelation 5:10 (NASB)

AND I saw a new heaven and a new earth.... — Revelation 21:1 (NASB)

Scripture nowhere states that our final abode with God will be “up in heaven.” Where is heaven? The common reply to that question is that heaven is up. But where is up? What is above our heads at noon is beneath our feet at midnight. Was Christ looking in the same direction during the day when He took the five loaves and two fish and looked “up” toward heaven as He was on the night of His betrayal when He lifted “up” His eyes to heaven (Luke 9:16; John 17:1)?

If heaven were in a fixed locality, we would have to know behind what group of stars or on what planet it is located in order to know when to look toward heaven. It would have to be in a certain position before we could look up toward heaven. We must understand that the heaven of Holy Scripture is always up to Christians. Therefore, we do not regard heaven as a topographical term. Thomas was not told where heaven was located, but he was told the way to heaven:

Thomas said to Him, Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way? Jesus said to him [Thomas], I am the way, and the truth, and the

life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.
—John 14:5,6 (NASB)

Paul was transported to that blessed sphere, but he was not allowed to give information pertaining to its locality (II Cor. 12:1-4). The location of the third heaven has never been revealed. The term “heavens” suggests that the true direction of the elect is always upward. Moral and spiritual excellence are expressed in terms of altitude. We naturally use such expressions as “lofty purpose,” “high resolve,” or “elevated views.” Conversely, we naturally use such expressions as “base passions,” “degraded character,” and “stooping to do it.” Since the Greek noun *ouranos* is defined by Greek lexicons as the heights above, the upper regions, the vaulted expanse of the skies, the region above, the seat of an order of things eternal and consummatively perfect, where God dwells, etc., we can say the true life is a perpetual soaring. While we do not attempt to be wise above that which is written, we should attempt with great earnestness to be wise in that which has been written. Like God’s glory, heaven cannot be interpreted, but it can be experienced. However, one must realize that spiritual or heavenly blessings cannot be enjoyed in a worldly atmosphere.

Although heaven is not a fixed location, we are not left without descriptive terms denoting what heaven really means. The Father is there (Matt. 6:9). Christ came from there (John 3:13). Christ ascended back there (John 6:62; Acts 1:9-11). The Holy Spirit came from there (John 16; Acts 2). Our citizenship is there (Phil. 3:20). Our treasure is there (Matt. 6:19,20). Our inheritance is there (I Pet. 1:4). Our reward is there (Matt. 5:12). We are expectantly waiting for Christ to come from there (I Thess. 1:10; Titus 2:13). But the heaven as it is now is not the final dwelling place of the saints. The

heaven of the future is always spoken of as “the new heaven and the new earth.” Therefore, they shall form one sphere of life, worship, and service. Since this is a Biblical fact, how can people teach that heaven is to be viewed as merely a spiritual state without a particular place? There is nothing in Scripture to justify our singing, “When I can read my title clear to mansions in the skies.” Christ has gone to prepare a place for His own (John 14:2), and we are not left in doubt as to what part of the universe that place will be where His own shall reside. (See Ps. 37:9,11,22,29; Is. 65; 66; II Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21; 22.)

As to the saints’ future in the eternal kingdom, we know that we shall never be infinite, but we shall always be in the presence of the infinite God and Savior. As new persons with new names singing a new song, we shall reside eternally in a new heaven and a new earth, which form a new sphere for our eternal habitation. (See Eph. 2:15; Rev. 5:9; 21:1.) Please note that Scripture goes from the plural heavens, which shall be purified, to the singular new heaven subsequent to the purification (II Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1). Hence, the heaven and earth becoming one sphere of habitation represents God and man being brought together in the highest relationship between the Redeemer and the redeemed.

At the dedication of the temple, all the men of Israel assembled themselves to King Solomon (I Kings 8). The King, rather than the priest who took the secondary place, dedicated the temple. Although Solomon was not subject to the priest, he was subject to God. Both king and priest were to yield to the prophet, because the prophet revealed the will of the supreme Ruler to both. One of the great studies of the times of the kings is the role of the prophet. In addition to the kingship and priesthood, a prophetic office ran parallel with the kingship from the first to the last king.

The Queen of Sheba, hearing about the fame (report or tidings) of Solomon's wisdom, desired to have some heartfelt questions answered (I Kings 10:1-13). Having seen in Christ's pedigree God's election and the quickening of those elected in such cases as Rahab and Ruth, we now see the same sovereign God working in the heart of the Queen of Sheba when she heard of Solomon's fame. She had such an impelling desire to speak with him about all that was in her heart that she traveled a thousand miles to test him with difficult questions. Since no person can ask another's questions, she could not be content with the report by another. What is distance when a person has questions concerning the wisdom of God? Therefore, the Queen was moved by the strongest and loftiest of motives to undertake her journey. This had to be true when one royal person (the Queen of Sheba) was desiring to stand before another royal person (the King of Israel whom God loved) and speak with him about all that was in her heart.

As recorded in I Kings 10, the things to be considered concerning the Queen are what she saw, said, and did. The Queen saw (1) Solomon's wisdom (vv.4,5), (2) the house that he had built (v.4), (3) his servants (v.5), and (4) his ascent (v.5). Her reaction was demonstrated in her words: (1) "It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts [words] and of thy wisdom" (v.6). (2) "...Behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard" (v.7). (3) "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom" (v.8). The Queen gave the following things: (1) She gave the praise of her lips—"Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel..." (v.9). (2) She gave the gifts of her substance—"And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of

Sheba gave to king Solomon” (v.10).

What lesson do we learn from the Queen of Sheba? All who are born of God desire to come to Jesus Christ who is greater than Solomon in all of the following ways: (1) In birth, Solomon came by natural generation. Jesus Christ came by supernatural generation. He was not only the source of David, but He was also David’s Lord (Rev. 22:16). (2) In character, Solomon worshipped God; but he fell into sin. Jesus Christ, the impeccable Savior, is worshipped because He knew no sin, and He did no sin. (3) In substance, Solomon was a type of Christ; but a type is only a shadow. Christ is the substance of all the shadows. (4) In his claims, Solomon was a wise man. Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God. The first lesson the Christian learns is that Christ is the Wisdom of God, a Wisdom hidden until God reveals Him to the elect. The apprehension of God’s Wisdom makes one not only independent of man’s wisdom but also infinitely superior to it. However, this makes a believer humble, not proud. Thus, the Christian is both bold and humble; and this is something the wisdom of the world can neither explain nor understand. (5) In works, those of Solomon were the marvel of the world; but they cannot compare with the works of Jesus Christ. (6) In wealth, Solomon possessed things of great material value, but what was that in comparison to Christ who is the Heir of all things? (7) In his kingdom, Solomon had a kingdom that included one nation, was circumscribed to one country, was divided at his death, and went into decay. Jesus Christ shall be King of kings and Lord of lords. The kingdom’s geographical bounds shall cover heaven and earth; it will never be divided; and it shall be eternal. (Study I Kings 10 and II Chron. 9.)

In reciprocation for her words, actions, and deeds, King Solomon gave “the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal

bounty” (I Kings 10:13). A person’s true character is indicated by his desires. Two of Solomon’s proverbs must be considered at this point of study: (1) “The desire of the righteous is only good...” (Prov. 11:23). The righteous man is not one who is righteous in his own eyes (Prov. 30:12; Luke 18:9-12), but he has been made righteous by God (II Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:6-9). The desire of the person made righteous by God is good, because it comes from the heart motivated by grace. A person’s action can be counterfeited, but not his desire motivated by grace. Hence, the desire motivated by grace may be compared to one praying in the will of God. (2) As praying in the will of God assures an answer (I John 5:14), “the desire of the righteous shall be granted” (Prov. 10:24). Paul’s true character was demonstrated by his expressing no desire to have his circumstances changed (Phil. 4:11-13). When one makes circumstances an excuse for his lack of devotedness to Christ, he is motivated by the flesh rather than the Spirit of grace. The righteous person motivated by the Spirit of grace knows self must die. The Epistle to the Philippians starts at the level of Galatians 2:20. The “I’s” and “me’s” of Philippians are different from those of Romans 7:15-25. In Philippians, it was no longer what happened to Paul but the desire that in whatever happened to him, Christ would be magnified. (See Acts 20:24; II Cor. 4:10-12.) May the Spirit teach us the meaning of our God fulfilling our every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19). This is that “royal bounty” which comes from Him who said, “A greater than Solomon is here” (Matt. 12:42).

The glory of the Solomonic period was short-lived. The King was the cause of his own failure. While God conferred many blessings and privileges on Solomon, He never conferred the privilege to sin. Solomon’s sins may be classified in three categories: (1) Unholy alliances were a contributing factor to his downfall. He loved many strange women (I Kings 11:1). He married not only Pharaoh’s daughter but also many

other strange women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites. These “foreign women” turned him aside (Neh. 13:26 NASB). (2) Solomon disobeyed the law of God by multiplying horses, taking many wives, amassing to himself silver and gold, serving other gods, and making offerings on high places (Deut. 12:3; 17:16,17). (3) Solomon gave his heart to worldliness. All of that which is under the sun cannot satisfy (Ecclesiastes); therefore, we should hold all that we have loosely in order that it may not turn away our hearts.

Solomon’s adversaries were both foreign and domestic. His foreign enemies were Hadad, the Edomite (I Kings 11:14-22), and Rezon, who reigned over Syria (I Kings 11:23-25). His domestic enemy was Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, Solomon’s servant. Jeroboam, like most persons who are taken in and helped, became unthankful and disloyal. However, Solomon’s own disobedient life ensured trouble within and without the home. The record states that God stirred up Hadad and Rezon. Their restlessness was sent from God. This does not mean that God infused malice in them. The malice was theirs by depravity, but God often uses those with whom His people have had to deal harshly as His executors of discipline to punish His people for their defection.

In his old age, Solomon added to his other transgressions by an insane passion for building palaces for himself and his heathen queens and temples for their gods. (I Kings 11:1-8). Hence, the people were burdened with taxes (I Kings 12:1-5).

God became angry with Solomon because of his sin (I Kings 11:9). Opportunities cannot be neglected with impunity. Neglected duties aggravate God’s anger against His people which is not only His aversion to sin but also His punishment for sin. He raised up Jeroboam from within Solomon’s house to punish him. God did not judge Solomon

without previous warning (I Kings 11:11). Chastisement is the fruit of God's displeased love. A parent chastens his child through displeased love. Jeroboam would not wait for God to give him the kingdom, but he sought to get it. Man's nature is so depraved that he will use Divine promises and the daily gifts of God for the accomplishment and pleasure of his own desires and thus degrade the gifts and promises of God. The sin of today becomes the suffering of tomorrow and tomorrow, because tomorrow never comes. Governmental forgiveness may continue throughout one's life. The truth that the sword never passed from David's house should be a warning to every child of God. The way of the transgressor is hard.

Rehoboam

As soon as Solomon died there was a division in the kingdom, which had been united for 80 years under David and his son. The King's failures clearly led to Israel's turning from the Lord and going into idolatry. The Prophet Ahijah told Jeroboam, Solomon's servant, that God would rend the kingdom and give him ten tribes (I Kings 11:28-33). Only Judah and Benjamin would be left to Solomon's son, Rehoboam.

When Solomon died, Rehoboam (spelled Roboam in Matt. 1:7) assumed that the throne was his by the right of succession. He thought he could pass to the throne unchallenged. Kingship to him meant being served rather than serving. He soon learned differently. The crisis, which resulted from the people being bled to death under the leadership of Solomon, was more than Rehoboam could handle.

Rehoboam resorted to politics to solve the impending problem. Politics, however, is too often the game of ambition rather than a sphere of service. The old heathen idea of

forcible dominion is still largely governing politics. It carries the idea that to be great is to receive much service without rendering any. Hence, the politician too often forgets that nothing in creation is self-serving and every element is intended to serve another.

Rehoboam left the impression with the people that he would give due consideration to their request. Therefore, he consulted with the counselors of his father, but he did not heed their counsel. As far as he was concerned, he was king; and the people had no right but what he chose to give them. After consulting with the old men and refusing their counsel, Rehoboam turned to the young men. When respect for age and experience is refused, the foundation for a sound moral character is jeopardized. The advice of the young men reflected a spirit of arbitrariness; "...thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins" (I Kings 12:10). This is the same as saying, "Solomon was only a child, but I am a man." The people fulfilled Ahijah's prophecy by refusing to hearken to Rehoboam (I Kings 12:16,19).

Rehoboam was the first king following the death of his father, Solomon. He began his seventeen year reign contrary to the true spirit of a leader defined by Christ: "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister..." (Mark 10:45). The strength of a leader is service for and sympathy with the people he rules. Pride led Rehoboam to think that his father was only a child, but he was a man. Hence, he increased the burdens his father had inflicted on the people.

Jeroboam was present with the people when they all came at Rehoboam's appointment (I Kings 12:12). Jeroboam was a talented young man who quickly rose in Solomon's service. He had great influence with the people; therefore, he saw what his chances were to eventually become king. When the people

saw that Rehoboam hearkened not to their request, they called Jeroboam and made him king over Israel (I Kings 12:20). This left only Judah and Benjamin to stand with Rehoboam.

Seated firmly on the throne, Jeroboam faced the opportunity of his life. He failed because he chose the path of expediency rather than the path of righteousness. This is always the path of a depraved heart. The causes of his failures were seductive. They seemed to be justified by the soundest maxims of governmental policy. He reasoned that having the center of the national religion in a foreign city, especially the chief city of the country from which his subjects had come, would never work. The old ties might prove too strong, and religious principles might overcome political considerations. Hence, Jeroboam, with whom expedience took the place of principle, made the fatal mistake of setting up politics before righteousness.

The King, Jeroboam, made use of man-made religion to serve his political ambitions. Israel sacrificed her religious principles for her love of ease. A servile priesthood (not of Levi) aided in the idolatry of the people. The King chose his priests where he pleased (I Kings 12:25-33). Jeroboam manifested his man-made religion. He made two calves of gold and set one in Bethel and other in Dan, so the people would not return to Jerusalem for worship. He made a house (temple) and made priests of the basest of people. Jeroboam ordained a feast like the feast in Judah and offered on the altar he had devised in his own heart and set up in Bethel.

There is a lesson for our day in Jeroboam's religious actions. Religious leaders are chosen today outside the prescribed requirements of Scripture. Hence, man-made religion is manifested in the following ways: (1) The kind of ministers who serve are men-pleasers. (2) They preach doctrine that will tickle the ears of their followers. (3) The kind of service

they render is with the incorrect motives of personal or denominational success. (4) The masters they serve are their own self-appointed or denominational programs.

The division of the kingdom was the result of Solomon's sin and Rehoboam's folly. God was not the author of either Solomon's sin or Rehoboam's folly, but He directed both for the accomplishment of His purpose. This is understood in the same sense as the crucifixion of Christ (Acts 2:23). God orders all the disorders for the fulfillment of His own purpose. He often uses evil to punish evil (Is. 45:7). God's overruling providence is demonstrated by a wheel within a wheel (Ezek. 1:16). Ezekiel's vision by the river Chebar was for the purpose of encouragement. Hence, the vision of the cherubim and the wheels was designed to correct his despondent mood and to assure him that God was keeping watch over His own in a dark hour of Israel's history. Their lives had not passed out of God's control. Above both the cherubim and the wheels, the prophet saw the glory of God.

The decline took a sharp turn with the northern kingdom under Jeroboam and the southern kingdom under Rehoboam. "AND it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him" (II Chron. 12:1). Neither fenced cities nor worldly wisdom can protect a ruler who is disloyal to truth. Deterioration follows those who ignore the objective standard of God. Departure from God always brings defeat; therefore, God used Shishak, King of Egypt, to go up against Jerusalem and carry away the "shields of gold" which Solomon had made (II Chron. 12:9). Rehoboam's replacement of the "shields of gold" with "shields of brass" demonstrated that he wanted to replace the appearance of principle with something of lesser value. People turning from right principles is bad, but the same people trying to repair the loss with something of lesser value

is worse. Professing Christendom is doing the same thing today by “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof...” (II Tim. 3:5). Persons dedicated to God never bring Him brass for gold. On the other hand, persons going away from God can never bring gold to God.

Not one of the nineteen kings who reigned in Israel (the northern kingdom) from the time of Jeroboam until Israel’s captivity in Assyria, during the reign of Hoshea, was a good king. There were some good prophets during this period of 241 years, but their messages fell on deaf ears.

Judah had nineteen kings over a period of 393 years before their captivity in Babylon. Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, who was Jehoram’s wife, usurped the throne for six years. The eight good kings among the nineteen kings of Judah were Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoash, Amaziah, Azariah, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah. Even though there were some bright spots during the 393 years, there was a continual decline until the Babylonian captivity. The messages of the prophets went forth, but the times of revival were short-lived. Therefore, the general decline continued until there was nothing but judgment left.

But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy [healing]. —II Chronicles 36:16

The judgment of God in Babylon was terrible, but it was not final.

God uses rulers for the benefit of His people. He raises up men not only from among but also outside of His people to lead and instruct. But the Lord also raises up men not belonging to His people to work on behalf of them. Through the influence of Esther and Mordecai, Ahasuerus preserved the Jews. Through the intervention of Joseph, God made Pharaoh the preserver of His people. The same thing is seen during the reign of Cyrus, Artaxerxes, and others during the time of the reformation. One thing for sure is that the Spirit of God is in the world preparing His people for the coming kingdom.

FOUR GOOD KINGS IN JUDAH SUBSEQUENT TO THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM

Asa

Although Asa was the third king after Solomon, he was the first good king of Judah subsequent to the division of the kingdom. Asa reigned in Judah during the last two years of the reign of Jeroboam in Israel (I Kings 15:9,10). His reign lasted 41 years. His contemporaries who reigned during this period in the northern kingdom were Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, and Ahab.

Asa's father, Abijam, son of Rehoboam, reigned three years (I King 14:31-15:2). The name Abijam in I Kings is recorded as Abijah in II Chronicles 13 (spelled Abia in Matt. 1:7). Abijah is believed to be his real name, while the name Abijam is a form of the name. Due to the religious feelings of the Jews, they would not allow the word Jah, a construction of Jehovah, to be retained as an element in a bad king. An illustration of this feeling is also seen in the change of Beth-el

(the name means “house of God”) to Beth-aven (the name means “house of vanity”). The change of the name from Abijah (the name means “my father is Jah”) to Abijam (the name means “father of the sea”) is understandable:

And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father. —I Kings 15:3

As wars had continued between Rehoboam and Jeroboam, war between Abijah and Jeroboam followed the death of Rehoboam (II Chron. 13). Although Judah was outnumbered two to one—eight hundred thousand to four hundred thousand—God used Abijah to punish Jeroboam. The religion of Jeroboam was idolatrous (I Kings 12:25-33), and Abijah was also evil. But for the sake of the good people in Judah, God gave them victory over Jeroboam and his army. The world’s philosophy is “might is right,” but to God’s people “right is might.” Judah’s enemies are described as rebels against appointed authority, vain men, children of Belial, and those who strengthened themselves (II Chron. 13:6-9). Abijah had made a great speech (II Chron. 13:4-12), but while Jeroboam was listening, his men were preparing for an attack from the rear. Although Abijah was for peace, Jeroboam was for war. The record states that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. Thus, Abijah and his army slew five hundred thousand chosen men of Israel. Judah prevailed because they relied on the Lord God of their fathers (II Chron. 13:13-20).

Asa’s mother (grandmother), Maachah, the daughter of

Abishalom, was an idolater (II Chron. 15:16). In doing that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, Asa “...took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made” (I Kings 15:12). He also removed his mother (grandmother) from being queen because she had made an idol in a grove. He not only cut down her idol but also crushed and burned it at the brook Kidron (II Chron. 15:16). Relatives did not stand in Asa’s way when it came to serving God. This principle is the same as that taught by Jesus Christ. (See Matt. 10:32-38.) Tearing down is insufficient. True service must also set up something constructive in the place of that which has been destroyed. Hence, both negative and positive actions are necessary.

One must not misapply the perfection of Asa: “...nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect [blameless] all his days” (II Chron. 15:17). When the heart is right before God, the man is counted perfect (blameless). This is not talking about state or condition. It is referring to Asa’s standing or position before God. The state of one’s heart cannot always be determined by external symptoms; conversely, the state of the heart may be unsound even though its unsoundness is not manifested by outward actions. Asa’s life proves that a person may be wholly devoted to the Lord and yet have sin. (See I John 1:8-10.) It is a Biblical fact that God does not see sins as condemnatory where He sees grace. Asa’s sins were not seen because they were covered by the mercyseat, and this was manifested by his actions. What we see in Asa is opposite to what we see in Jehu:

But Jehu took no heed [observed not] to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin. —II Kings 10:31

Asa not only did what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God, but he also prepared for war before he entered into battle (II Chron. 14:6-8). He began as follows:

[He] commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers and to observe the law and the commandment. He also removed the high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah. And the kingdom was undisturbed under him. —II Chronicles 14:4,5 (NASB)

Preparation for this begins with people being right with God. Since Asa ascended the throne in a crisis situation in the nation's history, this first good King since the division of the kingdom must seek to rectify the transgression of both his father and grandfather, Abijah and Rehoboam. If Judah had followed their path, the southern kingdom would have gone the way of Israel. However, God in His faithfulness to the unconditional covenant made with David, raised up Asa to keep alive the promise:

Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down to you. Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. —Genesis 49:8-10 (NASB)

Judah becomes a gathering place for God's elect people. This is presently realized in the assembly meetings, but these are only a foretaste of the great gathering and obedience of the future, expressed by Paul:

With a view to an administration suitable to the fulness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. In Him. —Ephesians 1:10 (NASB)

Since Christians are soldiers, we must be prepared for battle if we expect to win the war over our enemies. In the beginning of Ephesians, the believers are described as chosen, predestined, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, sealed, and seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus; but at the conclusion, the Ephesian believers were to stand (Eph. 6:11-17). Christians have three great foes; they are to flee the world and the flesh but fight the enemies of truth. According to Ephesians, the Christian walk merges into a warfare. The Epistle begins with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ and closes with all spiritual enemies in the same position. Positionally, Christians are victorious; but conditionally, we may be defeated. For conditional victory, we must fight in order to win; but it can never be negotiated.

As soon as Asa prepared Judah for war, Zerah, the Ethiopian, came out against them with a million men and three hundred chariots (II Chron. 14:9). The odds were so great (580,000 against 1,000,000) that all Asa could do was to cry unto the Lord his God:

LORD, there is no one besides Thee to help in the battle between the powerful and those who have no strength; so help us, O LORD our God, for we trust in Thee, and in Thy name have come against this multitude. O LORD, Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee. So the LORD routed the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled. —II Chronicles 14:11,12 (NASB)

The world says that “self-reliance” is the conquering virtue, but Scripture teaches that “self-distrust” is the condition of all spiritual victories. Courageous advance should follow self-distrust. Therefore, it is good when self-distrust leads to confidence, but it is better when self-distrust and confidence in God lead to spiritual courage.

Asa was warned by the prophet Azariah (II Chron. 15:1-7). The prophet admonished Asa and his army concerning their duty after so great a victory:

...Listen to me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: the LORD is with you when you are with Him. And if you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you. —II Chronicles 15:2 (NASB)

Following this warning, Azariah used Israel, the northern kingdom, as an illustration of a people forsaking God:

And for many days Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law. But in their distress they turned to the LORD God of Israel, and they sought Him, and He let them find Him. And in those times there was no peace to him who went out or to him who came in, for many disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the lands. And nation was crushed by nation, and city by city, for God troubled them with every kind of distress. But you, be strong and do not lose courage, for there is reward for your work. —II Chronicles 15:3-7 (NASB)

The victorious Asa became the bribing and defeated Asa (II Chron. 16). Having done his best at the first, Asa could not say that the conclusion of his life was better than the beginning. Hence, men at their best are but men. The greatest faith of yesterday will not suffice today. One must be experiencing fellowship with God that results in his going from faith to faith, strength to strength, and glory to glory to be victorious. The good King Asa failed to take his problem to the Lord when Baasha, King of Israel, came against Judah, as he did when Zerah came to Mareshah. His actions showed that Asa was not completely divorced from confidence in the flesh even after the victory over the Ethiopians and his covenant to seek the Lord God. Resorting to fleshly schemes is always disastrous because the sad fruit of such schemes will soon manifest itself.

Asa used bribery to get Ben-hadad, King of Syria, to break treaty with Baasha, King of Israel. A believer teaching an unbeliever to be untrue may be considered good politics, but it was a black mark against one who had entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God with all his heart and soul (II Chron. 15:12). According to II Timothy 3:3, truce breaking

is a sin. It has been said that a political ambassador is a person who is sent abroad to lie for his country. Consider the tricks, plots, deceptions, and intrigues of political diplomacy! Was Asa foolish enough to think that all was fair in war?

God sent His prophet Hanani (the name means “my grace—gracious”) to warn Asa:

...Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand. For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect [completely His] toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars. —II Chronicles 16:7-9

The prophet showed that God sees the whole of a thing, whereas we see but a little of anything. God’s government is practically denied when we walk contrary to the checks of providence, or when we lean on the arm of the flesh.

The good King Asa did something that Rehoboam, the bad King who was his grandfather, did not do. Rehoboam did not put the prophet Shemaiah in prison, but Asa became so angry with Hanani for telling him the truth that he put him in prison. (See II Chron. 16:6-10.) Asa was not only enraged at Hanani the prophet, but he also oppressed some of the people. When Asa failed to listen to the prophet, God sent another messenger to the King in the form of a mortal disease which lasted

two years before he died. During those two years, Asa sought not the Lord but the physicians (II Chron. 16:12). The King fell into his former sin of creature confidence. He was not wrong to seek physicians, but he was wrong to seek them without first seeking the Lord. The saddest thing about Asa is that during this time he never sought the Lord with whom he made a covenant to seek Him with all his heart and soul. Therefore, the Lord took him after two years of suffering for his sin; and his acts—first and last—are written in the book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

Jehoshaphat

Jehoshaphat (the name means Jehovah is judge) (spelled Josaphat in Matt. 1:8), Asa's son, was the second good King of Judah (I Kings 15:24; 22:41-49; II Chron. 17:1-21:1). He walked in both the good and bad ways of his father throughout his twenty-five years of reign. Jehoshaphat's reign in Judah was during the time of Ahab and Ahaziah, Kings of Israel. His walking in "the first ways of his father David" revealed the character of this second good King. The first ways include the strengthening of himself against Israel, seeking the God of his fathers, and sending his princes and Levites to teach the people of the kingdom of Judah (II Chron. 17:1-9).

The first ways of David cannot be commended without a warning subsequent to the eulogy. This reminds the student of Scripture of what Christ said to the assembly in Ephesus:

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. —Revelation 2:5

Retrogression in the Christian life is a deviation from the normal way. Apart from repentance, the just punishment by God will come upon the assembly by the removal of the lampstand, or punishment like the sickness that God sent upon Asa (II Chron. 16:11-14). The reason God records the shortcomings of His people, and His public servants in particular, is to warn all believers that men at their best must never be viewed as anything but men. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only perfect example for the people of God.

The first ways of Jehoshaphat, plus the teaching of the people by the rulers and Levites, caused the fear of the Lord to come upon all the kingdoms around Judah. In the third year of Jehoshaphat's reign, he sent his rulers Ben-hail (the name means "son of valor"), Obadiah (the name means "serving Jehovah"), Zechariah (the name means "remembered of Jehovah"), Nethaneel (the name means "given to God"), and Michaiah (the name means "who is as Jehovah") to teach in all the cities of Judah. The king sent with them the Levites Shemaiah (the name means "heard of Jehovah"), Nethaniah (the name means "given of Jehovah"), Zebadiah (the name means "endowed of Jehovah"), Asahel (the name means "wrought of God"), Shemiramoth (the name means "name of heights"), Jehonathan (the name means "Jehovah is giver"), Adonijah (the name means "my Lord is Jehovah"), Tobijah (the name means "goodness of Jehovah"), and Tobadonijah (the name means "good is my Lord Jehovah"). With the Levites, the King sent the priests Elishama (the name means "my God is a hearer") and Jehoram (the name means "Jehovah is exalted"). Thus the character of the men Jehoshaphat sent with the "book of the law" to teach the people throughout all the cities of Judah was revealed in the meanings of their names (II Chron. 17:7-9). The same principle was applied by Paul in his exhortation to Timothy to commit what he had heard from Paul through many witnesses to faithful men who shall also be capable to teach others (II Tim. 2:2).

The people of Judah became spiritually strengthened so that the fear of the Lord was upon the surrounding kingdoms to the extent that they did not make war with Jehoshaphat. The Philistines and Arabians brought gifts to Jehoshaphat, and he grew greater and greater; therefore, he built fortresses and store cities in Judah. However, his greatest strength was spiritual. The principle of spiritual fortification by means of Biblical doctrine is the lesson for God's people in every age. Although Satan is already judged and condemned, his execution is stayed until the consummation of time. Satan is not only the ruler of demons (Matt. 9:34), but he is also the ruler of this world's system (John 14:30). He has his secrets of human government, ministers of state, and mysteries of iniquity. Not feeling danger is the greatest danger to God's people. The whole armor provided by God must be put on by every believer if he expects to win the hand to hand combat. This armor is not to be used as a cover for but as a defense against sin. When the whole armor is used against sin by the assembly, fear will come upon the assembly; and those outside will not be bold enough to unite with the assembly (Acts 5:1-13).

The first verse of II Chronicles 18 is indeed sad:

NOW Jehoshaphat had great riches and honor; and he allied himself by marriage with Ahab. (NASB)

Riches and honor are more to be feared in the Christian life than poverty and contempt. Daily watching, studying, and praying are as necessary to the experienced as to the inexperienced believer. Alliance with evil prevents victory over evil. Jehoshaphat's faithfulness to Ahab meant his unfaithfulness to God. The record states that after some years

Jehoshaphat “went down to Ahab” (II Chron. 18:2), which proved to be a spiritual decline for the King of Judah. Ahab had manifested his lack of spirituality by saying to Elijah:

Have you found me, O my enemy? And he answered, I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD. —I Kings 21:20 (NASB)

Jehoshaphat not only joined himself with Ahab who had sold himself to do evil, but he also made peace with him (I Kings 22:44). Subsequent to wicked Ahab’s request that Jehoshaphat go up to Ramoth-gilead, Jehoshaphat made a statement to him that should be contrasted with Ruth’s statement to Naomi:

I [Jehoshaphat] am as you [Ahab] are, and my people as your people, and we will be with you in the battle. —II Chronicles 18:3 (NASB)

But Ruth said, Do not urge me to leave you [Naomi] or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. —Ruth 1:16 (NASB)

Jehoshaphat’s alliance was evil, but Ruth’s alliance was spiritual.

In every age, God calls His people to a life of separation (II Cor. 6:14-18). (1) God said to Abraham: “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred” (Gen. 12:1). (2) God told Israel to get out of Egypt (Ex. 11:8). (3) John the Baptist stood outside of organized Judaism (Matt. 3). (4) Christ led His sheep out of Judaism (John 10). (5) Peter told the converts at Pentecost to be saved from this perverse generation (Acts 2:40). (6) The writer of Hebrews admonished Christians to go forth to Christ outside the camp (religious Jerusalem) (Heb. 13:13). (7) In the future, the call of God shall go forth to His people to come out of Babylon (Rev. 18:4).

Recorded in II Corinthians 6:14-16 are the following five spheres of separation:

1. COMMERCIAL—In the commercial sphere, there can be no partnership between righteousness and lawlessness: “...for what partnership [*metoche*] have righteousness and lawlessness?” (v. 14 NASB). Men of the world often unjustly get commercial riches, but no one can unjustly get spiritual riches because God cannot be bribed. Furthermore, unsaved people often choose the god of mammon, but the mammon of iniquity is not gain but loss. Conversely, the man of God has the righteous principle in making money, and he uses his money with an eye on the future judgment seat of Christ. Therefore, a partnership that involves a believer and a non-believer cannot be successful, because the partners operate on two different principles—righteousness and lawlessness.

2. POLITICAL—In the political sphere, there can be no close relationship between light and darkness: “what fellowship [*koinonia*, close relationship] has light with darkness?” (v.14 NASB). Scripture tells us that a worldly master praised the wrongdoing of a worldly steward “because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light” (Luke 16:8 NASB).

Christ gave the disciples a lesson on how money should be used. The sons of this age use money to make friends, but their friends are restricted to their own generation for personal gain. “...But those who love the rich are many” (Prov. 14:20 NASB). “Wealth adds many friends...” (Prov. 19:4 NASB). Friends gained by wealth last only as long as they are its recipients. Hence, their thoughts are on this age without any concern for eternity. The sons of this age are “now” people; they give no thought to “then.” Conversely, the sons of light have a deep concern for “then,” but they must realize that they have a responsibility “now.”

Jesus Christ did not suggest to the disciples that they should be dishonest, but He taught them to wisely use what they had for the spiritual benefit of the elect. The sons of this age are wise for a little while, but they shall be fools forever. On the other hand, the sons of light are fools for a short time for Christ’s sake, but they shall be wise in Christ for eternity.

3. SOCIAL—In the social sphere, there can be no agreement between Christ and the Devil: “What harmony [*sumphonesis*, which means harmonious with or agree with] has Christ with Belial [the Devil]” (v. 15 NASB). Paul was not suggesting isolation but separation in the sense of being insulated against anything in society that is contrary to Biblical principles. Christ associated with sinners, but He did not become their ally because sin does not exist in Him (I John 3:5). Furthermore, inward separation results in outward separation. One is wrong to become affiliated with benevolent, cultural, or political organized social groups for community benefits. Moreover, Christians must never compromise Biblical principles in order to have a place to “serve” in a religious institution. Full obedience to God is more important than a larger sphere of service to men. Uncompromising Christians know that compromise limits God’s message, whereas no compromise limits their fellowship.

4. MARITAL—In the marital sphere the believer can have no part with the unbeliever: “What has a believer in common [*meris*, which means part, share, or portion] with an unbeliever?” (v. 15 NASB). As in nature before the fall, by grace, “marriage in the Lord” surpasses everything human. Such a marriage finds what is of Jesus Christ in one another in spite of failures. The one who best knows his or her partner in marriage and seeks out of real love to correct his or her failings, gains a place in the spouse’s heart that cannot benefit a flatterer. Peter spoke to husband and wife as sharing together the grace of life (I Pet. 3:7). Paul spoke of marriage as man and woman becoming “one flesh” (Eph. 5:31). Since man and woman become “one flesh” in marriage, the body of each belongs to the other, regardless of the shape or condition of it, until death parts them. How can a believer married to an unbeliever present his or her body (one flesh) a living sacrifice, holy, and well-pleasing to God? (See Rom. 12:1.) Although the grace of God is sufficient for the believer, the unbelieving mate in a marriage relationship is a hindrance to the believer’s worship and service because of the unequal yoke.

5. SPIRITUAL—In the spiritual sphere, there is no agreement between the temple of God and idols. “What agreement [*sugkatathesis*, which means agreement, approval, or in company with] has the temple of God with idols?” (v. 16 NASB). Paul used the Jewish temple as an analogy of the Christians in Corinth. He said that we are the temple of the living God; and that God said He will lie in us, walk in us, live among us, and be our God, and we shall be His people (v. 16). As the beauty, fragrance of the incense, or the order of the service of the temple, which were outward appearances, did not reveal God’s presence, the human understanding of some Biblical principles, or the assembling of ourselves together does not prove that God is living within us. The Shekinah demonstrated God’s presence, and the Spirit of Christ being in us

proves we have passed from spiritual death to spiritual life. As Christ would not tolerate any worldly merchandise in the temple in Jerusalem, Christians will cleanse themselves from all defilement of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (II Cor. 6:17-7:1).

The unholy alliances of Jehoshaphat included military, commercial, and family affiliations. The military alliance between Jehoshaphat and Ahab resulted in both taking refuge in human inventions rather than in Divine principles. Ahab disguised himself; and Jehoshaphat, dressed in his royal robes, was thought to be the King of Israel. Their inventions brought death to Ahab and trouble to Jehoshaphat (II Chron. 18:1-3; I Kings 22:1-40).

Jehoshaphat committed the same sin that he had perpetrated with Ahab, Ahaziah's father, subsequent to the death of Ahab, when he joined himself with Ahaziah. But this time the union was for commercial reasons (II Chron. 20:35-37).

Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram (spelling is Joram in Matt. 1:8), married the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. Her name was Athaliah, and her character proved the commonplace saying, "like mother, like daughter." The marriage of Jehoram and Athaliah was the fruit of Jehoshaphat's union with Ahab.

Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab was a compromise which led to serious consequences. Although Ramoth-gilead belonged to Israel, undertaking its recovery by going to war with Ahab was a sin for which Jehoshaphat must pay. His affinity with Ahab, who sold himself to do evil, affected his whole reign as king. Association with wicked people is always harmful to Christians. The company believers keep is important because bad associations corrupt good habits (I Cor. 15:33,34). Since the righteous cannot change the unrighteous, unholy alliances weaken the righteous. It has been said that

disease, not good health, is contagious. Hence, the believer who compromises in his Christian life, thinking that some good will come from it, will learn that he loses on both ends. He sins by compromise, and the person with whom he has banded in his compromise loses respect for what he claims to believe.

As soon as Jehoshaphat said to Ahab, “I am as you are, and my people as your people, and we will be with you in the battle” (II Chron. 18:3 NASB), he asked Ahab to “please inquire first for the word of the LORD” (v. 4 NASB). Ahab called the first ecumenical council when he gathered the four hundred prophets (v. 5). Although the prophets promised the King victory, Jehoshaphat was not satisfied without an answer from a prophet of the Lord. With all the opinions of false teachers today, no greater request can be made than the one by Jehoshaphat: “Is there not yet a prophet of the LORD here that we may inquire of him?” (v. 6). The word “prophet” has a twofold meaning: (1) telling forth the word of truth, and (2) foretelling what will take place. Since the prophetic message has been completed, the man of God today can only tell forth what God through inspired men has already given.

Ahab told Jehoshaphat that he knew one prophet of the Lord:

There is yet one man, by whom we may inquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil: the same is Micaiah [the name means “who is as Jehovah”].... —II Chronicle 18:7

One who hates the man who tells him the truth must remember what happened to Ahab (II Chron. 18:13-28). Ahab's statement about Micaiah's prophecy against him was an indictment against himself. Did the King think that if he had not been told the truth, the word of God through the prophet would have been divested of its authority? Many today deceive themselves to think that if they are ignorant of Scripture, they may take the liberty to do what seems good to them. Furthermore, they assume that since God judges them according to the light they have, they would be better to remain ignorant and say, "We did not know that." However, the truth is that people will be judged according to the opportunities created for them by Divine providence. Therefore, our duty is to find the true teachers who have been provided by God's providence that we may learn as much about the truth of God as possible at all cost.

Although the God-appointed minister is nothing in himself, the measure of his authority is determined by the measure of his knowledge of truth. Micaiah lived in God and spoke only what God spoke. Ministers must seek to emulate Micaiah's independence of "the establishment"—the school of the prophets—but experience total dependence on God. The false prophets, like false ministers in the twentieth century, accommodated themselves to the spirit of the times. Furthermore, the sad commentary of our day is that rulers like Ahab and Jehoshaphat are inventing tricks to surprise the enemy rather than taking refuge in the sanctuary of Biblical principles.

The messenger who was sent to summon Micaiah told him that the four hundred prophets with one voice predicted that God would give the King victory. Since the four hundred unanimously approved Ahab's going up to Ramoth-gilead, the messenger requested that Micaiah also give his approval (II Chron. 18:5-12). A popular cry should be feared because "everybody" is a fearful tyrant. A fact of human nature is that

it drifts with the tide because dead things and refuse drift with the stream. The grace of God and a knowledge of Biblical principles are necessary for one to go against the tide of human nature which is under the direction of the god of this age. Micaiah is a demonstration of one with grace and conviction to contradict the majority, but his speaking the truth of God was not without a personal price (II Chron. 18:23-27). The following examples confirm that this is a fact of Scripture: Ahab accused Elijah of being a troublemaker— “Art thou he that troubleth Israel?” (I Kings 18:17). The man of God is an intruder upon the peace and order of society. Like Elijah, he traces evil to its proper source. Elijah said to Ahab:

...I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim. —I Kings 18:18

Paul was forsaken but not forsaken by God (II Tim. 4:10, 16-18). The apostle did not die in a blaze of glory and praise, but his complete self-sacrifice for Christ's sake was evidenced.

Micaiah valued the truth of God above all the sayings of men: “As the LORD lives, what my God says, that I will speak” (II Chron. 18:13 NASB). Micaiah's faithful proclamation of truth caused Ahab to express his hatred for him: “I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me but always evil” (v. 7 NASB). Although Ahab did not intend to commend Micaiah, no greater commendation can be paid the man of God than the enemies of truth saying, “We hate him.” The wicked become angry because the word of God destroys

human theories, annihilates prejudice, and unveils sin. Thus, speaking the truth causes the haters of truth, like those of Jeremiah's day, to say:

Come and let us devise plans against Jeremiah. Surely the law is not going to be lost to the priest, nor counsel to the sage, nor the divine word to the prophet! Come on and let us strike at him with our tongue, and let us give no heed to any of his words. —Jeremiah 18:18 (NASB)

Festus, an example of haters of truth, did not denounce Paul as a hypocrite but as a brainless fanatic (Acts 26:24). The charge of madness against the proclaimer of truth requires no thought but only a mouth of cursing and bitterness, running with its depraved brain out of gear. Furthermore, religionists today are resolving among themselves, like the enemies of Jeremiah, what should be done. When they stand for their depraved opinions, they are as much opposed to God's true servants as the Jews were to Jeremiah. Look at their vain, glorious self-confidence! The Jews had their priests, wise men, and prophets. Their law, counsel, and word meant more to them than the law, counsel, and word of God through the prophet. Jeremiah's enemies hoped to stir up the anger of King Jehoiakim against him because he did not belong to them.

Micaiah, the prophet of the Lord, would not compromise for either the pleasure or displeasure of any person. Therefore, he told King Ahab that in going up to Ramoth-gilead the people would be delivered into his hand, but at the same time Israel would be scattered as sheep without a shepherd. Hear-

ing this, the King reminded Jehoshaphat, “Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?” (II Chron. 18:17 NASB). Micaiah told Ahab that the Lord had put a deceiving spirit in the mouths of his prophets, because the Lord had proclaimed the King’s destruction (II Chron. 18:22; II Thess. 2:11). Hence, God declared through Micaiah what He decreed. The declaration of truth by God’s prophet caused Ahab to have Micaiah imprisoned with a diet of bread and water until he returned safely. But Ahab did not return safely; he died. Men of such heroism as that displayed by Micaiah often suffer for their principles. Micaiah told Ahab, “If you indeed return safely, the Lord has not spoken by me” (II Chron. 18:27 NASB).

Ahab pretended to honor Jehoshaphat while intending to save himself and avoid Micaiah’s prophecy. The King of Israel said, “I will disguise myself, and will go to the battle; but put thou on thy robes...” (II Chron. 18:29). The King of Syria had commanded his men to fight with only the King of Israel. Therefore, when they saw Jehoshaphat dressed as a king, the warriors of Syria thought he was the King of Israel:

It is the king of Israel. Therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD [Jehovah, the covenant Savior] helped him; and God [Elohim] moved them to depart from him.
—II Chronicles 18:31

While sparing the good King, Jehoshaphat, the God of heaven directed the arrow from the bow to its destined target. It went through the joint of Ahab’s armor and caused his death at sunset that day.

Following Jehoshaphat's safe return to Jerusalem, the prophet Jehu pronounced judgment upon him:

Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD. Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God. —II Chronicles 19:2,3

Jehu was the brave prophet who reproved Baasha, King of Israel (I Kings 16:1-6). God then sent him to Jehoshaphat to reprove him with the strongest language possible for his unholy alliance: "Shouldest thou...love them that hate the LORD...?" (II Chron. 19:2 NASB).

Ahab was an idolater who had introduced his own depraved religion into his kingdom (I Kings 18:17-40). God's altar and Baal's altar, like free grace and free will, cannot stand side by side because there can be only one sovereign God. Moses challenged the necromancers of Egypt. Elijah challenged the false prophets of Baal. Jesus Christ challenged the Pharisees. The apostles challenged the false teachers. Christendom, like the religion of Baal, has many followers. Anyone who unites himself with a religion that denies the following truths is loving those who hate the Lord: (1) God's absolute sovereignty, (2) the inerrancy of Scripture, (3) man's depravity, (4) unconditional election, (5) particular redemption, (6) irresistible grace, (7) perseverance of the saints, (8) regeneration by the Spirit apart from man's faith, (9) conversion by the gospel, (10) justification before God by the imputed righteousness of Christ, (11) justification by God's gift of faith before one's consciousness, (12) justification by works before men, (13) sanctification, (14) the impeccability

of Jesus Christ, (15) the future kingdom of Christ for which the assembly is being prepared and Israel shall be prepared, and (16) eternal punishment for the nonelect. Since idolaters are haters of the Lord, they are to be hated. David declared that he hated his enemies:

Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies. —Psalm 139:19-22

Jehoshaphat exemplified the true spirit in which one should receive Divine reproof (II Chron. 19:4-11). He not only went out among the people and brought them back to the Lord, the God of their fathers, but he also sent out judges for the purpose of judging for the Lord rather than for man. Moses had instructed Israel:

You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not fear man, for the judgment is God's. And the case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it. —Deuteronomy 1:17 (NASB)

Christ exhorted Christians: "Judge not according to the ap-

pearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). Christ used two present active imperatives: (1) The first was negative—“Be not judging by external standards.” (2) The second was positive—“Be judging righteous judgment.” The principle on which all issues are to be settled is subjection to God’s will. However, the flesh always wants to be vindicated; therefore, people motivated by the flesh go to persons who will take their side of an issue. On the other hand, the person motivated by the Spirit looks for adjustment to the will of God. A righteous judgment must be based on Biblical principles before two or three witnesses (Deut. 17:6; Matt. 18:16; I Tim. 5:19).

The repentant King told the judges to “let the fear of the LORD be upon you” (II Chron. 19:7). Furthermore, “he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart” (II Chron. 19:9). The word “perfect” means with a heart of pure intent. When the heart is fixed on a Biblical principle one will strive wholeheartedly to reach the goal. In verse 7, the Hebrew word for “fear” is *pachad*, and it refers to the object of fear: “let the fear of the LORD be upon you.” In verse 9, the Hebrew word translated “fear” is *yiraw*, which means reverence. Since God’s people are representatives, their representation must be worthy of God: “I THEREFORE, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Eph. 4:1).

As the result of Jehoshaphat’s affinity (marriage) with Ahab, God’s wrath (great displeasure) came on him. Having experienced God’s great displeasure, the King warned his judges that they must perform their work in awe of God because God will have no part in unrighteousness. Therefore, in reverence of God to whom they were accountable, they must warn the people that disobedience brings God’s great displeasure on them.

Professing Christians seem to have no place in their vocabulary for God's wrath (displeasure). Their common language is "God loves you" or "God love you." The power of positive thinking supposedly gets people through any problem or condition, regardless of the reason for these situations. Many professing believers emphasize God's love to the exclusion of His wrath. Knowing nothing about the ways the word fear is used in Scripture, they represent fear as pertaining to the realm of slavery. There are several Hebrew and Greek words translated fear in the Old and New Testaments. Hence, the English word fear translated from either the Hebrew or Greek can mean terror, horror, alarm, cowardice, fear, reverence, respect, worship, godly fear, etc.

Scripture affirms that fear is an essential part of the Christian life: "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Ps. 130:4). God cannot be revered where there is no forgiveness. Paul's list of horrible indictments against the unforgiven concludes with "There is no fear [*phobos*, reverence for God] of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18). The person who has been convinced of sin fears God: "...And by the fear [Hebrew for reverence] of the LORD one keeps away from evil" (Prov. 16:6 NASB).

Fear is a permanent principle wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God in regeneration (Jer. 32:40), and it is a manifestation of Divine election. This principle is constantly stimulated by the name, word, and worship of God, all of which are fearful:

If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in this book, to fear this honored and awesome name, the LORD your God, then the LORD will bring extraordinary plagues on you and

your descendants, even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic sicknesses. —Deuteronomy 28:58,59 (NASB)

The one who despises the word will be in debt to it, But the one who fears the commandment will be rewarded. —Proverbs 13:13 (NASB)

But as for me, by Thine abundant lovingkindness I will enter Thy house, At Thy holy temple I will bow in reverence for Thee. —Psalm 5:7 (NASB)

Very few today have a true Biblical concept of love and fear. Many quote Scripture without understanding its true meaning. For example, some quote I John 4:18 as a proof text that love casts out all fear: “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love” (NASB). Since the unregenerate person neither fears nor loves God, he often mistakes the absence of fear for the presence of love. The Greek noun *phobos* (fear, terror, reverence for God, or respect for persons) is used twice, and the participial form of the verb *phobeo* (to fear, be afraid of, to reverence) is used once in this verse. How are we to understand this verse in the light of the immediate text and the overall context of Scripture?

An isolated feature of God never gives a true picture of His character; therefore, all the attributes and characteristics of God are required to give a true perspective of the sovereign Lord. When the characteristics of God are separated, each feature may be presented as something that does not portray His true character. Hence, the Bible speaks of God as the God of love, hate, righteousness, holiness, judgment, wrath, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, justice, severity, mercy, forgiveness, goodness, etc. Reverence for such a God is the alphabet of Christianity. As one cannot acquire know-

ledge without the alphabet, he cannot acquire spiritual knowledge without reverence for God, which is the fruit of regeneration. The one attribute of God which can be said to be the beauty of all His attributes and characteristics is holiness:

Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? —Exodus 15:11

God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. —Psalm 47:8

There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. —I Samuel 2:2

Contrary to those only professing to be Christians, no Christian will emphasize one attribute of God at the expense of another. A person does not have to listen very long until he hears one who is only a professing believer say, “I have no use for religious dogma; it is enough for me to know that God loves me.”

The oversimplification of “God is love” has resulted in a dislike for both doctrine in general and doctrine that is distasteful to oneself in particular. Any system of doctrine built on the oversimplification of “God is love” leads to affinity with modernism and socialism. Hence, the final outcome will be a denial of eternal punishment because if God is essentially love, one cannot believe in eternal punishment.

When John said, “There is no fear in love...” (I John 4:18a), he was not saying the believer has no filial fear of God. The

word filial pertains to a son or daughter having parental fear or respect. Scripture teaches that we are to live in fear during the time of our staying in a strange country (I Pet. 1:17; 2:17; Phil. 2:12; Heb. 12:28; II Cor. 7:1,11). The fear the Christian has as he sojourns in an alien country is that of displeasing his heavenly Father by failing to either work out his salvation properly or cleanse himself from all defilement of the flesh and spirit. Filial fear gives positional confidence: “In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge” (Prov. 14:26). Reverential fear drives out slavish fear, and that gives confidence.

Following John’s statement “There is no fear in love” in I John 4:18a, the superordinating conjunction *alla* is used to introduce his next statement, “...but perfect [*teleia*, from *teleios*, which means perfect, full grown, or mature] love casteth [*ballei*, present active indicative of *ballo*, which means throw, throw down, or as it is used here, drive out fear] out fear....” This signifies that mature love exerts its influence on the elect. According to verse 17, “love has been permanently matured [perfect passive indicative of *teleioo*] with [*meta*, genitive of association] us in order that we may have confidence in the day of judgment” (v. 17a —translation). The recipient of love has filial fear, but he is not governed by this fear “because fear hath [*echei*, present active indicative of *echo*, which literally means is having] torment [*kolasin*, accusative feminine singular of *kolasis*, which means punishment]” (v. 18b). This is the only place in the New Testament where the noun *kolasis* is used. Thus, the statement that “fear is having punishment” (v. 18b —translation) is something presently taking place in the believer who has not reached maturity in his Christian life. Since there are no degrees of God’s love to the elect, the passage is discussing the growth and maturity of our love to God and His people. I John 4:18 concludes, “The one fearing has not been matured in [*en*, locative of sphere] the sphere of love” (translation); therefore,

he lacks conditional confidence.

Mature love lifts from the heart of the Christian the burden of fearing to meet his Judge at the judgment seat of Christ. Although reverential fear of God exists in every believer, regardless of his growth and maturity, he is governed by mature love when it comes to judgment. As the judgment of the Savior for the sins of the elect is behind Him, it is also behind the elect; and matured love is made conscious of this truth. Hence, as Christ the Savior “is [*estin*, present active indicative of *eimi*], so are [*esmen*, present active indicative of *eimi*] we in this world” (I John 4:17b). We are in this world not as Jesus Christ was in it but as He is now in it in reference to judgment (Rom. 8:1-3). The judgment seat of Christ has nothing to do with our position, but it does have something to do with our condition before our Judge.

The love of God shed abroad in our hearts cannot exist as a subordinate (secondary) principle. True love admits no rival, allows no allurements of the world to alienate it from its object, and permits no comparison. Furthermore, God’s love, according to I John 4:18, has been permanently brought to completion with Christians in order that we may have confidence before the judgment seat (*bema*) of Christ (II Cor. 5:10). This love is constant because it has not been ignited by the things of time but by the eternal flame of God’s purpose in the salvation of the elect. John added that “We are loving him, because he first loved us” (I John 4:19—translation). Therefore, our love for God is the reflex of His love “which has been poured out [*ekkechutai*, perfect passive indicative of *ekcheo*] in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 5:5—translation).

“The one fearing has not been brought to completion [*teteleiotai*, perfect passive indicative of *teleioo*] in the sphere of love” (I John 4:18b—translation). Love is like honey, but

love brought to completion is like honey with all the comb and wax strained out. The condition of Christians will vary from believer to believer. Some have fear without matured love; thus, their lack of growth and development in Biblical doctrine causes them to lack the conditional confidence that comes with maturity. Others have grown to a greater degree in doctrinal teaching, but their condition contains fear and love when they contemplate the judgment. Love has not matured to the degree that they are not apprehensive about the judgment. Finally, there are Christians whose condition is without fear of the judgment because their love is mature. This is what John was talking about when he said the following:

By this our love has been perfectly matured with us, in order that we may have confidence in the day of judgment. —I John 4:17 (translation)

And now children, you be abiding in him; in order that when He may be made visible, we may have confidence before Him in His presence. —I John 2:28 (translation)

This lack of conditional confidence is due to insufficient growth and development in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. The Greek word for confidence is *parresia*, which means openness, boldness, fearless confidence, assurance, or freedom of speech. The noun is used 31 times in several different ways; but since our emphasis is fearless confidence or assurance, we shall restrict ourselves to this theme. No person can be fearlessly confident of his salvation by simply believing what is objectively contained in the Scriptures. There must be a subjective experience of objective truth. Hence, a subjective knowledge of “I believe,” apart from the

Holy Spirit to mediate the objective and subjective elements to the consciousness of the believer, will not give assurance (Rom. 8:14-16). Therefore, the character and not the strength of one's conviction proves the validity of his fearless confidence.

Peter's subjective experience had become reconciled to the objective truth of God when he replied to Christ's question, "Do you desire to be going away?" by saying:

...to whom shall we go? you have the words of eternal life, And we believed [*pepisteukamen*, perfect active indicative of *pisteuo*, which means have permanently believed] and have known [*egnokamen*, perfect active indicative of *ginosko*, which means have permanently known] that you are the holy one of God. —John 6:67-69 (translation)

Most people think of reconciliation only as God being reconciled to a sinner. It is true that God is reconciled to the sinner, but the person dead in trespasses and sins must have his sins paid for before he can be reconciled to God.

As freedom from condemnation in Romans 8:1 embraces more than freedom from the judgment of sin's guilt, judgment of sin in the flesh by the believer embodies more than legal judgment of sin in the flesh. Persons engaged in the conflict between the spirit and the flesh must realize that the "power of sin" as well as the "penalty of sin" has been once-for-all judged, and the ruling power in the believer is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1-3). In the natural world, matter does not form the life; but the life forms matter. In the

spiritual world, the man does not form the Christian; but the Spirit of God forms the Christian. Flesh manifests itself in deeds of the flesh (Gal. 5:16-21; Col. 3:9), confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:4), fleshly religion (Gal. 1:14; 3:3; Phil. 3:4-7), fleshly worship (Gal. 3:3), fleshly service (I Cor. 11:22), and fleshly methods that are adopted by those who practice fleshly religion. Whereas the Spirit of God leads the Christian to manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-24).

Doctrine, walk, and warfare are inseparable in the Christian life. The Epistle to the Ephesians begins with God's election, predestination, foreordination, reconciliation, etc.; continues with the Christian walk; and concludes with warfare in the Christian life. If a person understands doctrine and this objective truth of God has been mediated by the Holy Spirit between the experience of these truths with the objective truths themselves, the experience of the person who says he believes these things will harmonize with the objective truths of God. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. Work of faith, labor of love, and endurance of hope distinguish God's chosen ones (I Thess. 1:3).

The Spirit of God bears witness with the spirit of each Christian enabling us to know we are the sons of God (Rom. 8:14-16). The only way we can know when we are led by the Spirit of God is by knowing the objective message of God. The objective message and the subjective knowledge become one in regeneration. Before his regeneration, Paul thought he knew and understood the law, but he did not. After his regeneration, he was made by the Spirit of God to see the spirituality of the law. The Holy Spirit mediated what Paul knew objectively and what he experienced subjectively on the road to Damascus. When one has been reconciled to Jesus Christ and then the Holy Spirit regenerates him, he knows that he and Christ are one. As the result of having been reconciled to Christ, the experience of the individual who has been

regenerated will be reconciled to the objective truth of God; and the objective truth of God and his experience will be one. The regenerated person responds to truth. When there is no response, there is no mediating Spirit of regeneration in him.

God-given faith is not contented with an obscure and ill-defined understanding of anything pertaining to one's relationship to God. From faith, the Christian derives confidence through the objective message of God; and from confidence in God's word, he approaches with confidence the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16). Such confidence in approaching God stems from the believer's assurance in what the Scripture says about the foundational truth of judgment for the believer's nature of sin and his sins of nature in the death of Christ. Confidence is the result of knowing the following things: (1) The fire of God's judgment is ignited by man's sin. (2) Jesus Christ bore the judgment of God on behalf of the elect. (3) The word of God assures everyone born of the Spirit that there is now no condemnation to those in Christ.

The Son of God died not only for what the elect have done and have not done but also for what we were in Adam. The wrath of God due to both our sinful nature and the sins of our sinful nature was borne by the holy One who had neither sin nor sins. Since the wrath of God expended itself in Christ Jesus on behalf of the elect, we are positionally complete in Christ. What confidence! What assurance! What boldness!

Jehu's warning stirred Jehoshaphat to make some compensation for the loss he had caused in Judah. Thus, his recovery from his declension was manifested. God not only reproved His backslidden King, but He also commended him for the good he had done. The reproved King received the rebuke and wasted no time in setting things in order. (1) He appointed judges in all the cities to judge not for the benefit of man but for the benefit of God (II Chron. 19:6). (2) Their judgments

were to be in the fear of the Lord, because the Lord “will have no part in unrighteousness, or partiality, or the taking of a bribe” (II Chron. 19:7 NASB). (3) He charged them to operate “in the fear of the LORD, faithfully and wholeheartedly” (II Chron. 19:9 NASB). (4) He warned them “that they may not be guilty before the LORD, and wrath may not come on you and your brethren...” (II Chron. 19:10 NASB). (5) There were distinctions as well as order in the King’s appointments. First, spiritual matters were involved in the King’s appointment of Amariah (the name means “the saying of Jehovah”) over the people in all that pertained to the Lord (II Chron. 19:11 NASB). Second, civil matters were involved in his appointment of Zebadiah (the name means “endowed of Jehovah”) as ruler of the house of Judah. Third, the King appointed the Levites as officers to see that things were correctly carried out and good laws were executed. The ruler’s offering must be male (Lev. 4:22-26) to show that a ruler or judge must be of masculine gender. The people’s offering, however, might be a female (Lev. 4:27-35). This same principle is maintained in the New Testament. Our generation ignores God’s principle pertaining to the sexes, and we are paying for this rebellion. (6) The King exhorted them to “Deal courageously, and the LORD shall be with the good” (II Chron. 19:11). “Act resolutely, and the LORD be with the upright” (NASB). The Hebrew word translated “courageously” in the King James Bible and “resolutely” in the New American Standard Bible is *chazaq*, which means strong, firm, undaunted, or courageous. The Septuagint uses the Greek word *ischuo*, which means to be able, win over, or be strong, to translate the Hebrew word *chazaq*. The English word “resolute” means firmly resolved or determined.

Few people in religious circles today consider the value and need of resolved or determined Christians. Hence, only a small number of believers are undaunted in their proclamation of the truth. These few are not forced by fear of man to

abandon their purpose in declaring the whole counsel of God regardless of the consequences. Therefore, believers who will defend the truth thoroughly and boldly are rare. Many neglect such responsibility not because they lack sympathies, sentiments, and ideas but simply for lack of courage to take the first line trenches where the real warfare is being fought. This lack of courage is a manifestation of a want of confidence in what they really believe.

Some persons may have boldness without spiritual confidence. Many assume that they are acting spiritually when they are really acting from prejudice or sentimental feelings. Their actions may be classified as bulldog determination or intestinal fortitude (guts). Such resolve may attract uninformed believers, but it is soon detected by persons who have experienced Biblical principles. Persons having tasted that the Lord is gracious cannot remain silent:

We having the same spirit of faith, according as it has been written, I believed, therefore I spoke; we are also believing, for this reason we are speaking. —II Corinthians 4:13 (translation)

It can be said that “...the righteous are as bold as a lion” (Prov. 28:1). This, however, is not bulldog boldness. No Christian has ever been more bold than Paul, but his boldness had another side which was revealed in his admonition to the Ephesian elders: “Therefore, watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:31). Paul’s tears were not for public display or showmanship, but they were a manifestation of his tenderness that is inseparable from spiritual boldness.

A minister was asked, "How could you be so calm while people were weeping as you preached?" He replied, "My weeping was done yesterday."

Solomon restricted the proverbial statement "bold as a lion" to the righteous. Hence, distinction must be made between physical and spiritual courage. Natural courage is nothing more than self-confidence, but spiritual courage is Christ-confidence. The first is presumptuous; the latter is trust in God who cannot fail. Self-confidence cannot withstand the trials and exposures of life. Christ-consciousness enables the righteous to bid farewell to doubt and insecurity, because they are in Jesus Christ who gives a hope that is sure and steadfast. Righteous courage is manifested throughout Scripture in such men as Joseph, Moses, Caleb, Joshua, David, Elijah, Daniel, the three young Hebrew men, Paul, etc. (See. Heb. 11.)

The degree of courage depends on the spiritual level the Christian is living. Furthermore, the spiritual level is determined by the indoctrination one has experienced. Who can deny that Peter disgraced himself by denying that he was one of Christ's disciples (John 18:17,27)? Peter should have been humbled to have had both his sin and restoration predicted. (See Luke 22:31-34.) Peter was like a glass filled with muddy water. Under normal conditions, the mud settles to the bottom, and the water looks clear. However, under abnormal conditions, the water is stirred, and the condition becomes realistic. Peter's self-confident statement, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death" (Luke 22:33), was a manifestation of his flesh at its best before men. However, when he denied that he was Christ's disciple, the muddy water of his flesh manifested his condition of life. Do not overlook the fact that Christ's prayer, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32), revealed Peter's position. Our flesh will surely be exposed. Its untrustworthiness must be brought to light; and at the same time, the removal of the chaff

causes faith to be more evident.

Although Peter, through lack of courage, lied about being Christ's disciple, the cowardly Simon became the courageous Peter on the day of Pentecost. Satan's desire was to do Peter harm, but Christ's desire by means of Satan's sifting was Peter's spiritual profit. The sifting of wheat does not destroy the kernel of life in the wheat. Even though there was some chaff in Peter, he was not all chaff.

Although Jehoshaphat committed a heinous sin, Scripture records a "nevertheless [but]":

Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God. —II Chronicles 19:3

God distinguished a backslidden believer from an apostate. He preserves, reproves, and commends the Christian. Thus, in judgment, God remembers mercy. Jehoshaphat's taking away the groves refers to his removing the idols worshipped in the groves. Even the good works done by God's people are performed by grace.

Hezekiah

Hezekiah (the name means "strengthened of Jehovah") was the third good king in Christ's genealogy (II Kings 18-20; II Chron. 29-32; Is. 36-39). There is more recorded history on Hezekiah (spelled Ezekias in Matt. 1:9) than on the other good

kings in Judah subsequent to the division of the kingdom. The civil events of Hezekiah's reign are emphasized over his religious life in II Kings; however, his religious life is stressed over his secular life in II Chronicles. Each book demonstrates that it is independent of but complimentary to the other. Difficulties are created by persons assuming that the books should be alike. Since both were written by one Author, God, they were written for the edification of His people.

The life of Hezekiah challenges the supremacy of influence and circumstances. He was the good son of a wicked father, Ahaz, whose precept and example contributed nothing to his morality. Ahaz supported every form of heathenism he found in the land and introduced new varieties of sin from other lands. There was evil not only in the home but also in the southern kingdom. History proves that oftentimes the worst of fathers leave behind them the best of sons. This is only another proof of God's absolute sovereignty. We are informed that God makes a distinction between persons (I Cor. 4:7). Ahaz could take no credit for the good character of his son, Hezekiah. Hezekiah did not honor the things his father had done; if he had, he would have dishonored God. The record states the following about Hezekiah:

He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses, And the LORD was with him, and he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not. He smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to

the fenced city. —II Kings 18:5-8

Hezekiah set out immediately to restore what Ahaz his father had destroyed. Hezekiah has been called a Jewish iconoclast (one who attacks cherished beliefs, traditional customs, and traditional institutions as being based on error or superstition—a destroyer of images). Therefore, he began by removing the high places, breaking the images, and cutting down the groves; and he broke in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made (II Kings 18:4). The King saw that the brazen serpent was nothing but a piece of brass. Hence, he saw that what the people accounted as a god and worshipped by burning incense to it was only a lifeless, senseless piece of brass. The brazen serpent was not made for an object of worship, but for a means of a cure. Destruction of the brazen serpent was to the great displeasure of the people who worshipped it.

Blind veneration for the past often becomes an obstacle in the path of spiritual progress. An intelligent regard for the past helps in the direction of progress, but clinging to customs becomes a hindrance. That which has been ordained by God for a blessing might be misused so as to become a curse. For example, ordinances may become curses if we worship them instead of Him whom they portray. Every symbol loses its significance and value if it is converted into an idol. The brazen serpent had not been mentioned for nearly 800 years until it became necessary for Hezekiah to destroy it. Although God commanded the serpent of brass to be made and used, there is no record of a Divine command for its preservation, as in the case of the golden pot that had manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant. This demonstrates the importance of God's people knowing the teaching of Scripture.

A consideration of the record of the purpose for the brazen serpent is important at this point (Num. 21). Making the distinction between “look and live” of Numbers 21:8-9 and “live and look” of Ezekiel 16:6-8 is absolutely imperative. The serpent was lifted up in the fortieth year of Israel’s wilderness journey. Chronologically, this event followed the “red heifer” offering of Numbers 19, God’s provision for the flesh during the wilderness journey. Those who lived by looking upon the serpent of brass lived in view of their entering Canaan, the promised possession. There is no looking in Ezekiel 16:6, because “living” there is by the voice of God which is regeneration. However, looking in Numbers 21:8-9 is conversion because Jesus Christ must be lifted up to effect a true conversion experience. Eternal life is outside the life of the flesh. The type in Numbers 21 teaches that sinful flesh has been condemned (Rom. 8:3). Life involves the gift of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:10). Therefore, by the Spirit the believer puts to death the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:13) by looking at what the brazen serpent symbolizes.

The cause for God’s ordering the making of the serpent of brass was twofold: (1) sin on man’s side and (2) grace on God’s side. The bite of the serpent was Divine conviction in the Israelites of what the flesh truly is in the source of its being. God is determined to bring His people to judge the root of the flesh. The serpent’s bite brought a conversion experience in the lives of the bitten Israelites who were healed. Christ did not use the analogy of the serpent of brass with Nicodemus (John 3:14-16) to teach how a person is regenerated (John 3:8). Conversion does not come in the same manner as regeneration. The sinner is passive in regeneration, but he is active in conversion. Regeneration is the motion of God toward the sinner, and conversion is the motion of the quickened sinner toward God. The brazen serpent was carried, not by God’s command, by the Israelites into the land of Canaan; and it became the object of idolatry which Hezekiah destroyed.

Christians in any age must beware of uses and abuses of “church” history. Progress in the Christian life can be greatly hindered by romanticizing or absolutizing “church” history. Romanticizing the past means giving it a quality which it does not possess. Christians should be grateful to God for His servants of the past who made a contribution to the cause of Christ; but since Christians are imperfect, their achievements cannot be regarded as perfect. Absolutizing the past is to regard some period in the past as a norm for all time. As important as the reformation was, it should never be considered as the norm for all time. Although the puritans had a lot of truth, they should never take precedence over the Scriptures which are God’s absolute truth settled in heaven before the foundation of the world. A fallible “church” history must never take the place of the infallible Scriptures.

Hezekiah was an outspoken King who called things by their correct names. He called the brazen serpent, Nehushtan, which means “a piece of brass.” While many were regarding the serpent of brass as some kind of god by burning incense to it, Hezekiah recognized it as an idol that must be destroyed. Many religionists assume that the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s supper are a means of getting into Christ Jesus and Christ getting into them. May God grant us the courage to do as Hezekiah did and call things by their correct names. To make the ordinances the means of obtaining salvation is to make idols out of symbols ordained to portray salvation. Ordinances may become curses if we worship them instead of Him whom they reveal. Symbols lose their significance and value if they are converted into idols.

Hezekiah demonstrated that he was a man of action by not only condemning but also destroying all the idols. Unlike the ordinances of the assembly of Christ, Hezekiah could destroy the idols, which included the brazen serpent, because there was no command from God for their preservation. The or-

dinances of the tabernacle, priesthood, and offerings have served their purpose. Christians, therefore, have moved from the symbols to embrace the substance. (See Heb. 10.)

Hezekiah's surroundings were extremely unfavorable (II Chron. 29); therefore, the character of his work deserves special attention. His wicked father had not only corrupted the court but also closed the door to God's house. Knowing that the cause of Judah's trouble was ungodliness, Hezekiah immediately began to put things in order. (1) His work began on the first day of the first month of the first year of his reign (II Chron. 29:3,17). (2) He opened the doors of the Lord's house and repaired them (II Chron. 29:3). Reverence for God is at the foundation of all that is trustworthy in private character and enduring in public order. (3) The work was of a positive nature. It did not address itself chiefly to the destruction of the emblems of idolatry, but to the work of reconsecrating the temple (II Chron. 29:3-19). (4) Extreme measures were adopted in the work (II Chron. 31:1). Hezekiah went further in destroying the idols than either Asa or Jehoshaphat because he wanted no remaining germs of idolatry in Judah. (5) The work included putting things in order (II Chron. 29:4,5,20,28). He began with the priests; then the Levites, and then the rulers of the city. (6) The work called for sanctification (II Chron. 29:5,15,16,31), which went further than external legal rites to include repentance, faith, obedience, and fitting themselves for their respective services. (7) Hezekiah's work had a good beginning. He was correct in life (II Chron. 29:2), prompt in action (II Chron. 29:3,20), and holy in influence (II Chron. 29:5). (8) His work included the sad confession that the Lord had been forsaken (II Chron. 29:6); the Lord's house had been abandoned (II Chron. 29:7); and God's wrath had been incurred (II Chron. 29:8). (9) His work contained a wise appeal because he desired to make a covenant with the Lord (II Chron. 29:10), avert God's wrath (II Chron. 29:10), and perform his duty (II Chron. 29:11).

We must not conclude our consideration of Hezekiah without observing his sin before his death. After the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, many brought gifts to Hezekiah. Thus, He was exalted in the sight of all nations. He became mortally ill and prayed to the Lord. The Lord gave him a sign, but Hezekiah failed to acknowledge the benefit he received because his heart was lifted up with pride. Therefore, the wrath of the Lord came on him, Judah, and Jerusalem (II Chron. 32:22-25). Hezekiah was very wealthy (vv. 27-30). If he had remained close to the Lord, he would have spoken to the ambassadors of Babylon of God's unsearchable riches and not of his own worthless treasures of silver and gold (v. 31).

Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah. And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour.... —II Chronicles 32:26,27

Genuine goodness desires neither record nor remembrance. God left Hezekiah to try him in order that the King might know all that was in his heart (II Chron. 32:31). This trial, like all trials in the lives of God's people, was in order that the King might discover for himself and others what he really was in himself.

Josiah

Josiah (spelled Josias in Matt. 1:10) was the last of the good kings of Judah to be named in the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:10,11). His name means "sustained by Jehovah."

This last good King was prophesied over 300 years before his birth (I Kings 13:2). He was eight years of age when he began to reign. The high points in his life were his conversion at the age of 16, finding the book of the law which had been lost, and the reformation of Judah.

In the eighth year of his reign, Josiah began to seek after the God of David (II Chron. 34:3). His desire to seek the Lord was equivalent to spiritual enlightenment. The Psalmist said, "O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days" (Ps. 90:14). In seeking the Lord early, Josiah turned from the way of the world, the carnal desires of youth, the vanities of imaginations, false friends, and evil counselors. Satisfaction is the cry of humanity, but God's mercy alone can give lasting gratification. Realization of Divine mercy is one link in the chain of blessings that began in God's eternal purpose and extends through the ceaseless cycles of eternity.

He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end. —Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NASB)

After Josiah's conversion and prior to the discovery of the book of the law, he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from idolatry. Six years later the book of the law was found, and he learned from it how defective his purging had been. Therefore, he proceeded to a cleansing that would be in accordance with Scripture rather than one that met the approval of traditions or his uninformed conscience. Conscience is revealed in Scripture as needing the aid of objective

truth to develop it. Therefore, in regeneration the objective truth is written in the new heart as a power to govern and transform. Hence, the light of Josiah's convicted conscience led him to discover the revealed law of God. "So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD..." (Hos. 6:3 NASB).

What appears to be a discrepancy between II Kings 23 and II Chronicles 34 disappears when one realizes that there was a partial restoration before the book of the law was found. The finding of the book of the law gave Josiah a new basis for his faith and courage. Knowledge of the law of God enlarges one's concept of duty. The results of the law of God being lost were as follows: (1) Knowledge of truth was lost. There must be an objective standard of truth. Without it, everyone does what is right in his own eyes. (2) There was no true worship of God apart from His word: "God is spirit, and the ones worshipping must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24—translation). (3) The services of the temple ceased. (4) The sanctuary was polluted. (5) False religion came in like a flood. The land was filled with idols. (6) Crimes of violence and deeds of oppression abounded. Where there is no fear of God, there is hatred for men. (7) Immorality was rampant.

The following are the results of finding the law of God: (1) False religion was destroyed. (See Gal. 1:6-9; 5:12.) (2) The people repented and turned to God. (3) Truth was learned. (4) The temple was beautified and opened for service. (5) A measure of mercy was experienced. (6) Truth was handed down to other ages. (7) Temple service was no longer in vain.

The following are ways the importance of Divine truth is seen: (1) If we are in need of reviving, "Thy word has revived me" (Ps. 119:50 NASB). (2) If we are to grow, "desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (I Pet. 2:2). (3) If we are to be fed, "man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the

LORD doth man live” (Deut. 8:3). (4) If our souls are enlightened, “The entrance of thy words giveth light” (Ps. 119:130). (5) If our hearts are comforted, they must be comforted “through patience and comfort of the scriptures” (Rom. 15:4). (6) If we are renewed, we are “renewed in knowledge” (Col. 3:10). (7) If we are to be established, God must “stablish you in every good word and work” (II Thess. 2:17). (8) If we are to be conquerors, we overcome “by the word of their testimony” (Rev. 12:11).

It was no mere coincidence that Hilkiah, the priest, found a “book of the law of the LORD” (II Chron. 34:14) because the priest was busy trying to set things in order (II Kings 22:3-14). The law of God can be lost in the assembly place or home even though a copy of it may be located therein. Hence, the Bible is a lost book to those who neglect it, disbelieve it, or disobey God.

As soon as a person has been quickened by the Spirit of God, he is made to realize the importance of the word of God in preserving his salvation. Paul referred the elders in Ephesus “to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). Both the God of the word and the word of God are identified in this passage. Placing the written word on a level with the incarnate Word, the Divine Being, is improper because that would lessen the glory of the Divine Being. However, the written word, which is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), has the power to accomplish a great work, the conversion and progressive sanctification of the one who has been begotten of God.

Josiah’s piety was demonstrated by his having a tender heart:

Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humblest thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me: I have even heard thee also, saith the LORD. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace.... —II Chronicles 34:27,28

Since all by nature have stony hearts, all the threatenings in the world will do no good. The heart must be wrought upon by the power of God in order to become tender. One with a tender heart desires to know the will of God. Hence, a tender heart implies one's readiness for spiritual things, a disposition to obey revealed truth, and the desire to make the things of God his chief business.

The great things in the life of Josiah have been observed, but sin was displayed in his life when he "hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God" (II Chron. 35:22). The good King "disguised himself"; that is, he clothed himself falsely. Disguising oneself means undertaking something which contradicts one's character by dress, speech, or manner of life. Our hearts are so deceptive that while priding ourselves on our subjection to the Scriptures we may, like Josiah, refuse a message from God by a heathen messenger.

Necho, King of Egypt, slew Josiah at Megiddo. Egypt remained the dominant power until the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and in that year Nebuchadnezzar defeated Necho. Following Josiah's death, all Judah and Jerusalem mourned his death. Although Josiah died at the age of 39, the length of his life did not determine his usefulness.

Surely there is a warning for God's people in general in the sins of the four good Kings mentioned in Christ's genealogy. Asa's sin was relying on the King of Syria and not on God. Jehoshaphat joined affinity with wicked Ahab. Hezekiah sought his own glory in preference to God's honor. Josiah refused a message from God by a heathen King. The sins of these good Kings were not recorded for our emulation but for a warning.

Spiritual decline continued in Judah, and the people were led into Babylonian captivity while Jehoiachin, grandson of Josiah, was reigning (II Kings 24:8-16). God caused Judah to be carried away into captivity because of her sin:

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon.
—Jeremiah 29:4

The sin was great which induced a loving God to cause His chosen people to be driven away into Babylonian captivity for seventy years. (See Deut. 31:17,18.) The Lord had required Israel to observe every seventh year as a season of Sabbatic rest. This injunction had been practically ignored for four hundred and ninety years. Seventy Sabbatic years had been desecrated; hence, seventy years of captivity in Babylon was Israel's punishment. The purpose of the captivity was not only to punish but also to reform. God's people reap what they sow. The captivity taught Judah what it meant to be without the sanctuary, to be deprived of the Scriptures, and to be governed civilly by pagans.

Babylon represents the current system of religion to which many of God's people have been subjected and to which many are rendering service. Any time Christians take part in a service not ordered by the Spirit of God, they are in spiritual captivity. It is impossible for religious Babylon, which lies in the lap of the Devil (I John 5:19), and Christians to take common ground before God in worship and service. The heavenly character of God's people cannot be known by an earthly system. The headship of Jesus Christ cannot be embraced by a totalitarian power of this world's system. The saints of God cannot serve God in a system that recognizes nothing above the flesh.

Although Israel as a nation was on a downward course, God purposed the return of a remnant. It had been prophesied, and God provided for it by His ways in government. (See Jer. 25; 29.) God's people, the Israelites, were cast out but not cast off. The captivity was God's judgment upon His people for their sins, but it was judgment tempered with mercy. God's covenant people are not immunized against either sinning or being punished for their sins. Responsibility always accompanies privilege.

A SHORT REVIVAL UNDER ZERUBBABEL

The Temple Rebuilt

Zerubbabel was God's chosen servant to lead the remnant back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (Hag. 2:23; Ezra 5:1,2; Zech. 4:1-10). The return of the remnant was in fulfillment of a prophecy given by Isaiah nearly two hundred years before (Is. 44:12-28). The Lord addressed Cyrus personally (Is. 45). When Babylon fell, the kingdom was replaced by the Persians. The name Cyrus was the Persian designation for the sun (Is. 45:6). The Lord reaffirmed to Cyrus that He was Jehovah and that He had equipped him for this particular job at this particular time, when Cyrus did not know Him (Is. 45:5).

The Persian King represents an aspect of world power that God overrules and uses for the benefit of His people. Cyrus was chosen before he was born for the purpose of releasing the remnant after their seventy years of captivity so the remnant could return to rebuild the temple. (See Is. 41:2;

44:28; 45:1-5; 48:14.) The rule of Cyrus over Babylon was no accident. "THE king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Prov. 21:1). Hence, the liberties or captivities of God's people are not accidental. They are the results of God's choice.

When the remnant returned under the leadership of Zerubabel, God had no thought of setting up something new. The lesson, therefore, for God's people in every age is that God would have His people to return to His original thoughts. God's thoughts are not man's thoughts, and His ways are not ours (Is. 55:8). The vessels of the tabernacle that were out of their Divinely appointed places were not a blessing to the people. They must be returned. Not only did the people have to return to their Divinely appointed places but all the services of the temple had to be restored to their Divinely appointed places. For the application of this principle, the believer should study Acts 2:37-47, I Corinthians 12:1-31, and Ephesians 4:1-16.

The rebuilding of the temple was not without opposition. The work had no sooner begun when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin said, "Let us build with you" (Ezra 4:2). When God opens a door, there are adversaries (I Cor. 16:9). The refusal of the adversaries by the remnant caused them to manifest their true colors. They were "the people of the land" (Ezra 4:4). Hence, counselors were hired by the people of the land against the Jews. Every effort was made to frustrate the purpose of the returned exiles. God's people are responsible to let "the people of the land" know that they have nothing to do with the building of God's house (Ezra 4:3). However, the efforts by Israel's adversaries were not deterred. When our enemies cannot bend us to their wishes and aims by plausible pretenses, they alter their tactics to unscrupulous opposition in various forms. Letters were written against Jerusalem. The

Jews were accused of building the rebellious and bad city (Ezra 4:12). This frightened the Jews, and they ceased from their work for fifteen years. The zeal of the people for the sanctuary of God grew cold during the long delay. They looked on the unfinished work and said, "The time is not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built" (Hag. 1:2).

Opposition in itself has never hindered the Lord's work. Waning interest by God's people is the hindrance. According to Haggai, the work ceased because it was no longer the people's chief interest. When God's chief interest becomes ours, things go well; but when this concern ceases, some form of self-consideration manifests itself. This very thing caused Paul to write as he did to the assembly at Philippi: "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. 2:21). Haggai gave a vivid description of this self-centeredness in his prophecy.

Haggai's Prophecy

According to Ezra 5:1, Haggai and Zechariah were among the first exiles to return to Jerusalem. Nothing about Haggai is known beyond the fact that he was a prophet working in conjunction with Zechariah. Haggai began to prophesy two months before Zechariah, and his prophesying continued three months and twenty-four days. Whereas, Zechariah's prophesies continued three years. The name Haggai means "my feasts," signifying anticipation of the return of the remnant from Babylonian captivity. Haggai uttered four short prophecies. Each message began with "...came the word of the LORD" (Hag. 1:1; 2:1,10,20). The subject of Haggai's prophecy was the temple. He sought to show the remnant that their neglecting God's house was neglect of God. If they had really thought of God, His house would have been their

primary interest. This was the burden of the prophet's first message of chapter one.

This prophecy by Haggai produced the desired effect. The people rose up to resume their work of rebuilding the temple. Haggai exhorted them to be strong and build because the Lord was with them (Hag. 2:1-9). This second prophecy came one month after discouragement seems to have overtaken them. Two months later the prophet showed the returned remnant that sacrifices, however holy in themselves, cannot sanctify disobedience and self-will (Hag. 2:10-19). That which is holy cannot sanctify the profane, but that which is unclean defiles that which is holy—the main lesson of this message was to reveal this to them. Haggai showed that war will continue until the second advent of the great King of Israel (Hag. 2:20-23). The prophet had something to say to Zerubbabel on the same day that he gave his third message. The message addressed to Zerubbabel concerned the Messiah, of whom Zerubbabel was a type.

The subject of Haggai's first message was responsibility. Neglected responsibility incurs chastening. Therefore, Haggai's mission was to urge the Jews to fulfill their incumbent work. The people acknowledged that the work was needful, but they said the time had not come to build the Lord's house (Hag. 1:2). How did they know the time had not come? Were they judges of the time? Had they been given the freedom to return to Jerusalem to build their own houses before they built God's house? Were they to provide for the flesh before they provided for the soul? Here is a classic example of how people can be orthodox but disobedient. Hence, correctness of opinion and incorrectness of conduct may coexist in the same people. Postponement is a denial by conduct of what the intellect affirms. The cause of God suffers more from its professed friends than from its avowed enemies. While the Jews were taking care of themselves and their own interests,

the building of the temple was neglected. Sin is essentially selfish. Since the Jews did not have the courage to disallow God's claim, they acknowledged it; but said, "The time is not come...."

Haggai sought to shame the people by asking a probing question: "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled [paneled] houses, and this house lie waste [desolate]?" (Hag. 1:4). He asked them to consider their ways (Hag. 1:5,7). Consideration is the operation of the mind in order to bring about reformation of life. It is equivalent to "judge yourselves" (I Cor. 11:31). Little can be learned in life without deep consideration. Consideration is not the same as meditation, which is the continued operation of the mind of those who have been revived by contemplation. The revived person meditates in God's law day and night (Ps. 1:2). The Jews had outward difficulties of circumstance; but their chief hindrance was their personal interests, as Haggai 1:6 reveals. Money had been diverted from God's work to personal use, which resulted in spiritual drought.

In Haggai 1:6, the bad investment by God's people was revealed by Haggai in a fivefold manner:

1. They had sown much but harvested little: "Ye have sown much, and bring in little." Israel's sowing was for themselves; therefore, nothing spiritual could be expected. There may be much activity but no fruit. When God's house is neglected, no fruit can be expected because the assembly of Jesus Christ has been appointed for the propagation of God's word.

2. They ate but were not satisfied: "Ye eat, but ye have not enough." There is a kind of eating which gives no satisfaction. Too many of God's people have developed spiritual malnutrition from being fed the wrong food by man-appointed preachers. Others have deliberately eaten the wrong food when better food was available.

3. They drank but were not filled with spiritual drink: “Ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink.” There is a drinking that adds nothing to the spiritual man. Artificial drinks can never take the place of the river of God. The Psalmist said, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God...” (Ps. 42:1,2). The spiritually thirsty person can find satisfaction by going directly to the sovereign Lord for the best wine (John 2:10).

4. They clothed themselves but were not sufficiently warm: “Ye clothe you, but there is none warm.” One may be clothed with things that give no warmth to the soul. Too many think that to admire and discuss heavenly garments is fine, but to be clothed with them is unnecessary. The fashion of the religious world is setting the fashion for Christ’s assembly. Hence, many believers improperly adorned before God appear in the eyes of the religious world to be properly adorned.

5. They earned wages but did not spend them wisely: “and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag [purse] with holes.” The only purse without holes is the will of God. While toiling for their temporal gratification, the Jews did not realize that God would send a drought upon their land, crops, cattle, and the labor of their hands (Hag. 1:11). They knew how to make money but did not know how to take care of it. Half the battle of life is to make money, and the other half is to take care of it. The Jews had looked for much, but it came to little (Hag. 1:9). Their sin of preferring their own interests before God’s caused both their spiritual and physical droughts.

Haggai recorded God’s message to the remnant of Israel before Christ’s first advent, and the letter to Laodicea (Rev. 3) records God’s message to the remnant of God’s people before Christ’s second advent. Haggai told Israel that the

drought they experienced was because of their neglect. His remarks produced the desired effect. The people rose up and began the work of rebuilding the temple which had been interrupted for fifteen years by Israel's surrounding enemies (Ezra 1-4). There will always be outward opposition, but outward opposition is not as bad as inward disinterest. Living in our own things leads to spiritual poverty and dissatisfaction.

Haggai prophesied in a transition period. The return of the captives to Jerusalem was the glimmering dawn in a very dark and stormy night. They had been in Babylonian captivity without a sanctuary, without hearing the word of God, and under the rule of pagans for seventy years. Although this was a time of darkness, the darkest hour spiritually and physically is just before dawn. As Israel's darkest hour preceded the first advent of Jesus Christ, the Christian's darkest hour precedes the second advent of Jesus Christ. Therefore, like Haggai, we are to hold forth the word of life whether people hear or forbear. No matter how dark the hour, the path of the Christian shines brighter and brighter until the perfect day (Prov. 4:18).

Haggai's second message was one of encouragement (Hag. 2:1-9). He had sharply rebuked the remnant in the first message. Recovery from captivity was slow and painful. The remnant was weak and despised. They were opposed by the Samaritans and discredited at the Persian court. Self-justification is easy when one is eager to recede from duty that seems, from man's point of view, impossible to accomplish. Looking at circumstances rather than to the God of circumstances will discourage God's people any time. Success does not lie with God's people but with their God.

The glorious past is never disdained, but there is a future to inspire God's people. Haggai asked:

Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? —Haggai 2:3

There is a past that humbles the present.

Israel had a glorious past in spite of her sins. She had been redeemed from Egyptian slavery. She had been delivered by power through the Red Sea. She had experienced provision for her in her wanderings in the wilderness. She enjoyed God-given victory in the land of Canaan. Nevertheless, God does not regard the past as the end of His manifestations. The past with Israel was a memory, and the future was a dream.

The future that inspires the present is the consummation of all things in the kingdom. Because we have seen greatness, we shall see glory. Hence, the future will be more than a dream. As we await the kingdom, we should be strong because the Lord promised to be with us. He is with us in acceptance and in assistance. Reference is made in Haggai 2:4 to not only the covenanting God but also to the Holy Spirit who remains with us and was remaining with the Israelites. Jesus Christ promised the disciples that He would send the Comforter who would never leave nor forsake us but would be with us forever (John 14:16).

The Trinity in unity is portrayed in Haggai 2:5. The angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire out of the midst of a burning bush to give God's word to Moses concerning Israel's deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 3). Christ is called the messenger (angel) of the Lord (Mal. 3:1). Hence, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were with Israel and are with the children of God today. The believer should have no fear because he has God in Christ by the Holy Spirit: "For through

him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph. 2:18).

Haggai’s prophecy of Haggai 2:6-9, like that of other Old Testament prophecies, told of the advent of the Messiah without distinguishing His first and second advents. The Lord spoke of a “little while” when He will shake the heavens (Hag. 2:6). A little while to God is a long time to us: “...one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (II Pet. 3:8). Sometimes God’s help seems long in coming because we are shortbreathed and shortsighted. The Jews found by experience that the spoiling of their goods caused them to exercise the patience which they needed, but waiting for the fulfillment of God’s promise required more than ordinary patience. It required God-given patience.

The time of the great shaking is explained in the following verses in Hebrews:

Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire. —Hebrews 12:26-29

This great shaking will not be the result of the preaching of the gospel of the Lord Jesus. It will be when Jesus Christ

comes in Person as King of kings and Lord of lords. It goes beyond the gospel dispensation to the second advent of our Lord. The Lord “will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts” (Hag. 2:7). The desire of all nations will be Christ. Christ is not presently the desire of all nations. The time that Christ will be the desire of all nations will occur when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ (Rev. 11:15). Hence, Jesus Christ is not only the Deliverer but He will also bring the things desired by all nations—peace, health, abundance, and happiness. The moral glory of God in the temple at the first advent is here overleaped and His apparition in glory is predicted. He will then manifestly fill the house with glory. The Spirit pointed to the excellency of that glory above material glory (Hag. 2:8,9). Although the streets of Jerusalem will be gold (Rev. 21), spiritual glory that shall fill the house will far exceed that. The absence of precious metals from the first house made the people ashamed of that house. But they were assured that its last glory would be greater than its first, and that it would also be the dwelling place of the Prince of peace.

The prophet’s third message showed that sacrifices, however holy in themselves, cannot sanctify disobedience and self-will (Hag. 2:10-19). The people who had neglected Jehovah had become profane. That which is holy cannot sanctify profane things. On the other hand, an unclean thing can defile that which is holy. The presence of evil destroys holiness merely by its presence, unless holiness is the nature of God. God’s holiness excludes all that is contrary to it. Mere ceremonial holiness can neither impart virtue to our actions in daily life nor render our efforts in the service of God acceptable. Haggai concluded with the thought that when the heart is right, chastisement will stop and blessing will begin.

God had a message through Haggai for Zerubbabel in

Haggai 2:20-23. God purposed to magnify Christ, of whom Zerubbabel was a type. In verse 23, five things of importance are included in the message: (1) The set time—"In that day"; (2) the person to be advanced—"my servant"; (3) the Author of the advancement—"I...will take thee"; (4) the ground and reason—"I have chosen thee"; (5) the ratification of the promise—"I...will make thee as a signet." The promise was sealed with the seal of the living God. Observe the contrast between this seal and that of Jeremiah 22:24—"As I live, saith the LORD, though Coniah the Son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence." God rejected Jechonias (Coniah); but in Jesus Christ, the greater Son of David, and Zerubbabel, God's signet shall be impressed upon all nations in His perfect will and way.

In God's providence, the remnant of the Jews had been given freedom to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. However, the rebuilt temple did not have the glory of the first: (1) There was no king in Jerusalem. (2) The disobedience of Israel was felt in everything. The times of the Gentiles had already begun with Nebuchadnezzar and would not be completed until the perfection of the kingdom under the righteous rule of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. While sustaining the faith of the remnant by His mercy, God went much further in His prophecy. Since God would not manifest Himself as He had in times past because of Israel's disobedience, the time would come for His intervention by His own power in the kingdom. As Israel is looking for the perfection of the kingdom, the assembly of Christ is looking for the completion of the bride who shall inherit the kingdom.

CONCLUSION

Some attention should be given to the supposed discrepancies in the second section of Christ's genealogy recorded in the first chapter of Matthew. There is little agreement among scholars concerning the generations, how they should be divided, and how to harmonize the discrepancies. Some have suggested that the genealogical records were destroyed in 70 A.D.; but if that were true, it would have no effect on the fact that the enemies of Jesus Christ never challenged that He was the rightful heir to David's throne. Their nonquestioning of Jesus Christ's descent from David during His earthly life is a great comfort to the people of God in a day when critics are trying to cut the Bible to pieces.

The generations have been divided by men in the following ways:

FIRST: The first division goes from Abraham to David (14 generations), the second from David (heading the second division) to the captivity (Josiah) (14 generations), and the third from the captivity represented by Jechoniah to Christ (14 generations).

SECOND: The first division goes from Abraham to David (14 generations), the second from Solomon to Jechoniah (14 generations), and the third from Jechoniah to Jesus Christ (14 generations). Jechoniah's childlessness, predicted in Jeremiah 22:30, meant no more than that none of his offspring would occupy David's earthly throne. Furthermore, his change before and after the deportation justifies his being counted twice. (See II Kings 25:27-30; Jer. 52:31-34.) Being freed from prison, Jechoniah was treated kindly by Evil-merodach, King of Babylon; and he received a seat above the kings that were with him in Babylon. This may be illustrated with an analogy to Mr. Cleveland, an American President, who must be counted twice since he served as president for two nonconsecutive terms—1885-1889; 1893-1897.

THIRD: There are not literally 42 generations from Abraham to Christ. The three fourteens are used to show the completion of the Divine purpose. At the death of Josiah, Jehoahaz reigned three months. He was followed by Jehoiakim, the father of Jechoniah. Jechoniah was never a king. The kings in order were Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim—the puppet, Jehoiachin—son of Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah (Mattaniah)—son of Josiah. This division can be confirmed by explaining II Chronicles 36:1-2; II Kings 23:30-36; 24:1,6,15,17; and Jeremiah 22:28-30.

Since no one has come up with a valid argument on the divisions of the generations from Abraham to Christ, this writer rests his case by saying the infallible Spirit of God had His unexplained reason for stating it as He did in Matthew 1:17. It must be observed that there were omissions of the kings from this genealogy, and some say the answer to that is found in Exodus 20:4-5. The genealogy by Matthew speaks of deterioration. Corruption and hopelessness are clearly evident in it. It begins with Abraham; and as generation after generation passes, the shameful history of national Israel

unfolds. However, such a history apart from God's unconditional covenant of grace would be only unexplained desires and unfulfilled hopes. Therefore, we see the unfolding of the dawn of the day which Abraham rejoiced to see (John 8:56), and we hear Simeon say:

...mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.
—Luke 2:30-32

Although God placed a curse on the descendants of Jechoniah, Jesus Christ escaped the curse by being virgin born and yet becoming the legal heir to David's throne.

The third division of the generations from Abraham to Joseph reveals the spiritual darkness that preceded the first advent of Jesus Christ. Nothing can be written about the time of spiritual darkness, because Scripture is silent about the 400 years when there was no prophet in Israel or Judah. In the study of the three divisions, we have seen regression from promises to decline; now we observe darkness. Light, diminishing light, and darkness constitute an order that is manifested throughout Scripture. The age of the New Testament assembly is not different from other ages. Apostasy was predicted before the death of the apostles. The greatest period of spiritual darkness the world has ever seen will precede the second advent of Jesus Christ.

This concludes Volume I in which we have considered the King's genealogy. Volume II will continue with the next aspect in our study of Christ's future Kingdom.

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