Preface

This book contains simplified versions of some of the outlines I have used to preach over the past few years. These outlines do not contain every point, Scripture reference, or example used in the sermons. Instead, they list the major points along with just enough information to provide a brief explanation without getting into very much detail.

This book is meant to be a source of ideas for those who preach sermons, present short talks, write articles, etc. Sometimes the hardest part of preaching is in coming up with an idea about what to preach. My hope is that this book can help with that.

However, this book is called *Do It Yourself Sermon Outlines* for a reason. While you may find ideas in this book that you can use, you will still need to fill out your lesson with your own points, sub-points, examples, passages, etc.

If you find these outlines to be helpful, there are even more available at www.diysermonoutlines.com. This website contains hundreds of outlines in addition to the ones that are in this book and is updated weekly.

I hope the material here might be a useful resource in your efforts to accurately teach the truth from God’s word.
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A City Set on a Hill
Text: Matthew 5:14

Highly Visible
• We should not expect to blend in with the world (Rom. 12:1-2)
• There will be a sharp contrast between Christians and the world (Jn. 15:18-19; 1 Pet. 4:3-4)

Target of Attacks
• Expect persecution (1 Pet. 4:12)
• Do not surrender (Rev. 2:10)
• Fight back (2 Cor. 10:3-5)

Position of Strength
• God is on our side (Rom. 8:31)
• We have a firm, unchanging foundation (Mt. 7:24-27)
• We have support (Heb. 3:12-13; 4:14-16)
• But we must not abandon our position (Heb. 10:39)
A New Covenant

Text: Jeremiah 31:31-34

“Days Are Coming”
• Recurring phrase in Jeremiah – indicates divine prophecy
• Divine foreknowledge/foreordination

“A New Covenant”
• The Old Law was nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14)
• The New Law would be for both Jews and Gentiles (Is. 2:2-4; Rom. 1:16)

Not Like When He “Took Them by the Hand”
• God delivered Israel from Egypt because of the covenant made to Abraham (Ex. 2:23-25) – yet they often complained about their deliverance (Ex. 14:11-12; 16:2-3; 17:2-3)
• He drug them along in order to carry out His scheme of redemption (Gen. 12:3)
• Today we must come to Him (Mt. 11:28-30) – willingly, not under compulsion

“I Will Put My Law Within Them”
• We must know it (2 Tim. 2:15)
• We must meditate upon it (Ps. 119:97)
• We must speak of it (Pr. 4:23)
• We must practice it (Pr. 23:7)

“I Will Be Their God”
• We are each directly accountable before God (2 Cor. 5:10)
• God is concerned about each one of us (2 Pet. 3:9)
“They Will All Know Me”
• Under the Old Law, one entered into the covenant by physical birth – would be taught later
• Under the New Law, one enters by spiritual birth (Jn. 3:3, 5) – after being taught (Mk. 16:15-16)

“I Will Forgive Their Iniquity”
• Forgiveness found in Christ (Eph. 1:7)
• We enter into Christ through baptism (Gal. 3:27)
• We must continue to walk with Him to receive forgiveness (1 Jn. 1:7)
Accepting One Another
Text: Romans 14

What We Must Understand As We Begin:
- Controversy: Does Romans 14 allow ongoing fellowship with those in sin/error?
- We can understand this (Eph. 3:4)
- Scripture does not contradict itself (Jn. 10:35)

What Does This Chapter Teach and What Does It Not Teach?
- Don't judge others' opinions by your opinions – NOT: Don't judge (v. 1-6)
- God will judge all – NOT: God will accept all unconditionally (v. 10-12)
- Nothing is unclean in itself – NOT: Anything goes, we can do as we please (v. 14)
- Pursue the things which make for peace – NOT: Ignore sin and error in order to maintain fellowship and unity (v. 19)

Passages Contradicted by the False View
- 2 Th. 3:6, 14-15 – withdraw from brethren living in sin who refuse to repent
- 1 Cor. 5:9-10, 13 – refrain from social contact with erring brethren, except to teach (2 Th. 3:15)
- Eph. 5:11 – not to have fellowship with works of darkness; don’t ignore them, but expose them
- Rom. 16:17 – mark and avoid false teachers
- 2 Jn. 10-11 – receiving, even greeting, a false teacher amounts to participation in his evil deeds
All Scripture is Inspired by God

Text: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

The Process of Inspiration

• God revealed His message to man (Heb. 1:1-2)

Characteristics of the Inspired Word

• True (Ps. 119:160) – because God is always true (Tit. 1:2)
• Timeless (1 Pet. 1:25) – because man's needs do not change (Eccl. 1:9)
• Understandable (Eph. 3:4) – as our Creator, God knows how to communicate with us (Gen. 1:27)
• Unchanging (Gal. 1:6-9) – because God does not change (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8)

It is Useful to Us

• “For teaching” – setting forth the truth (Jn. 17:17)
• “For reproof” – condemning sin and error (Jn. 16:8)
• “For correction” – showing the path to repentance (Acts 14:15)
• “For training” – producing growth (Acts 20:32)

It Has Everything We Need

• In learning how to please God, we don't need to look anywhere but His word (2 Pet. 1:3)
• The inspired word makes us complete
• The inspired word equips us for every good work
All Spiritual Blessings in Christ

Text: Ephesians 1:3-14

Spiritual Blessings

- Predestination (v. 4-5) – God was able to foreknow who would be saved: those who would be holy and blameless
- Grace (v. 6) – God’s gift of salvation, given to us freely, not according to what we deserve
- Redemption (v. 7) – God purchased us, bought us back from our bondage to sin
- Forgiveness (v. 7) – sin separates us from God; He made it possible to have fellowship with Him once again
- Revelation (v. 8-9) – to lead us to Christ
- Inheritance (v. 11) – available to children, heirs
- Pledge (v. 13-14) – God has assured us that He will save us if we follow Him

These are in Christ

- Predestination – “He chose us in Him” (v. 4)
- Grace – “freely bestowed on us in the Beloved” (v. 6)
- Redemption – “In Him we have redemption” (v. 7)
- Forgiveness – “In Him we have... the forgiveness of our trespasses” (v. 7)
- Revelation – “He made known to us the mystery... which He purposed in Him” (v. 9)
- Inheritance – “In Him also we have obtained an inheritance” (v. 10-11)
- Pledge – “In Him... after listening to the message of truth... sealed... given as a pledge” (v. 13-14)

How to Get in Christ

- Through baptism (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27)
All Things Work Together for Good
Text: Romans 8:28

What This Verse Does Not Say
• This doesn't guarantee material prosperity as a reward for faithfulness (Phil. 4:12)
• This doesn't guarantee good health for the faithful (2 Tim. 4:20)
• This doesn't mean that every coincidence we deem to be good is God's direct working (Mt. 5:45)
• This doesn't mean that if our physical circumstances are bad that they will eventually improve (1 Cor. 15:19)

Remember the Context
• Paul is discussing spiritual matters (Rom. 8:6, 23-25, 29-30)
• This verse is talking about our spiritual good

God Has Done His Part (v. 29-31)
• Foreknowledge
• Predestination
• Calling
• Justification
• Glorification

We Must Do Our Part
• “Those who love God” are those who obey Him (1 Jn. 5:3)
• We must strive to use every situation for our spiritual good
“Awake, Sleeper”

Text: Ephesians 5:14

What Paul Says They Needed to Do
• Go from sleep to being awake – state of alertness
• Go from death to life – state of salvation
• Go from darkness to light – state of enlightenment

Why They Needed to Do These Things
• If they were not alert, they were vulnerable (1 Pet. 5:8)
• If they were not saved, they were condemned (Mk. 16:16)
• If they were not enlightened, they were lost (Heb. 6:4)

Alien Sinners Need to be Awakened
• Important to deal with this point here because those who are alien sinners need to come to Christ (Mk. 16:15)
• The alien sinner is vulnerable – enslaved to sin (Tit. 3:3); living under the power of the devil (Eph. 2:2)
• The alien sinner is condemned – salvation only in Christ (Acts 4:12)
• The alien sinner is lost – right direction not in us (Jer. 10:23)

Weak, Erring, Complacent Christians Need to be Awakened
• Dangerous state for a Christian – asleep/inattentive (1 Pet. 5:8); dead (Rev. 3:1-2); in darkness/lost (Gal. 1:6-7; 2 Tim. 4:3-4)
• Wake-up call to those who practice sin (5:3, 5), downplay the severity of sin (5:4, 12), and fellowship those in sin (5:11)

What We Need to Do
• Imitate God (5:1)
• Walk in love (5:2)
• Walk as Children of Light (5:8)
• Learn what is pleasing to the Lord (5:10)
• Expose the deeds of darkness (5:11)
Be Filled with the Spirit
Text: Ephesians 5:18

This is a Command
• Therefore, this does not mean that God *miraculously* fills us with the Spirit – we can obey this command
• How do we become filled with the Spirit? – by letting the word of Christ richly dwell within us (compare Eph. 5:18-6:9 with Col. 3:16-4:1)
• What is this verse telling us to do? – be filled with God’s word (Heb. 8:10) and act according to the teachings of the word (James 1:22; Gal. 5:16-25)

To Be Filled with the Spirit Implies Completeness
• The word revealed by the Spirit gives us all we need to be faithful to God (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
• As the Spirit equips us, we must be busy doing “*every good work*” (Mt. 28:20)

To Be Filled with the Spirit Implies Purity
• We must not allow the teachings of the Spirit to become diluted or mixed with anything else
• If we are to be filled with the Spirit, we must be filled with the truth, leaving no room for error (Gal. 1:6-7)

To Be Filled with the Spirit Implies Contentment
• We must fight any urge to look for something “more”
• Paul acknowledged that there were some who were not content with the word (1 Cor. 1:22), but he simply preached the word (1 Cor. 1:23) – Why? That’s what the Spirit revealed (1 Cor. 2:10, 12)
• God has told us all we need to know (Deut. 29:29)
**Blessings and Burdens of Spiritual Independence**

Text: 2 Peter 1:3

Through the provisions He has given, God has made it so that each of us can faithfully serve Him, regardless of what others choose to do. This is not to say we should not work together or help one another, but rather that we must take responsibility for our own actions in our spiritual lives.

**Independent in Our Service to God**
- Though we “act as free men,” we must serve God (1 Pet. 2:16)
- God’s provisions – instructions (2 Tim. 3:16-17), commands that are able to be carried out (1 Jn. 5:3)
- Blessings – we can be faithful, even if others forsake Him (Mt. 26:33)
- Burdens – we cannot blame others for our actions (Ezek. 18:20)

**Independent in Appealing to God**
- We are instructed to pray to God (Phil. 4:6)
- God’s provisions – through Christ we have access into heaven itself (Heb. 9:24)
- Blessings – we can come boldly to the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16); not dependent upon any human intermediary
- Burdens – must take time to pray and develop the habit (1 Th. 5:17); learn how to pray (Lk. 11:1)

**Independent in Studying the Bible**
- Without faith we cannot please God (Heb. 11:6); faith comes from the word (Rom. 10:17)
- God’s provisions – He revealed His word (1 Cor. 2:10-13); did so in a way that we can all understand (Eph. 3:3-4)
- Blessings – we have access to everything God wished to reveal to mankind (Deut. 29:29); there is nothing hidden that is only knowable to an elite few
• *Burdens* – individual responsibility to understand (Eph. 5:17); therefore, study (2 Tim. 2:15)

**Independent in Standing Against Opposition**

• As Christians we will face opposition (1 Pet. 4:12)

• *God's provisions* – Christ’s example (Heb. 12:2-3), His promise to be with us (Heb. 13:5-6), the promised reward (Rev. 2:10)

• *Blessings* – we are never helpless in time of opposition; we can stand (2 Tim. 4:16-17)

• *Burdens* – takes preparation, courage, and a willingness to face opposition
By Your Providence
Text: Acts 24:2

The word “providence” is used only once in the Bible – describes the providence of a human governor. The way Felix would carry out various works by providence helps explain how God’s providence works today.

God Has Given Instructions
- To carry out his plans, Felix would need to give instructions to those who would do the work
- God has provided instructions in His word (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- He has told us what to do and how to do it

God Has Provided Resources
- In addition to giving instructions, Felix would provide resources necessary to carry out his work
- God has provided all the physical blessings we need in Creation (James 1:17; Acts 14:17)
- He has provided all the spiritual blessings we need in Christ (Eph. 1:3; 2 Pet. 1:3)

God Has Offered Incentives
- Instructions and resources would not be enough for Felix to get people to do his work – he needed to offer incentives also
- God has given the promise of a reward (Mt. 25:21)
- He has also given the threat of punishment (Rom. 6:23)
Can a Christian Fall from Grace?

Text: Jn. 10:27-29

“Once saved, always saved” – It would be comforting if it were true.

Warnings About Falling Away

- If the righteous do evil, their righteousness will be forgotten (Ezek. 33:12-13)
- Parable of the sower – rocky soil (Lk. 8:13)
- The vine and the branches (Jn. 15:2, 6)
- Paul – possible for him to fall away and be lost (1 Cor. 9:27)
- We can receive the grace of God in vain (2 Cor. 6:1)
- Apostasy was coming (2 Th. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1)
- Warning of drifting from what we’ve been taught (Heb. 2:1-3)

Examples of One Who Did Fall Away

- Angels (2 Pet. 2:4)
- Elders (Acts 20:30)
- Christians – Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10), man in Corinth (1 Cor. 5:5), Simon (Acts 8:12-13, 21-23), Demas (Phile. 24; 2 Tim. 4:10), Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim. 1:19-20), Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim. 2:17-18)
- Israelites (Jer. 3:6, 22; 8:5; Rom. 11:17, 19-22; 1 Cor. 10:8-12) – examples for us

We Must Remain on Our Guard

- The devil is like a roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8)
- Be on the alert (1 Cor. 16:13)

God Has Given Us Help to Keep from Falling Away

- His word (2 Pet. 1:10; Acts 20:32)
- The assembly (Heb. 10:24-25)
- Fellow Christians (Heb. 3:12-13; 1 Th. 5:14)
Caring for the Widows
Text: Acts 6:1-7

Why the Widows?
- Earlier the poor in general were helped (Acts 4:32-35) – here the widows specifically were served, implying ongoing care
- The church was to provide ongoing care to certain widows (1 Tim. 5:3, 9-10)
- Why not other widows? – they had others to care for them (1 Tim. 5:4, 16); goes back to the responsibility to provide for one’s family (1 Tim. 5:8)
- The church can provide temporary help for Christians (Acts 4:32) – ongoing benevolence is more limited

The Complain was Addressed
- There was a real problem that needed to be dealt with
- The complaint was not ignored
- The complaint was not met with resistance
- The complaint was not made into a bigger problem

Character of the Servants
- The congregation was to select seven men (v. 3) – but not just anyone; they were given a few qualifications
- Good reputation
- Full of the Spirit
- Full of wisdom
- This is a reminder of the need to carefully consider who we might select to perform a task on behalf of the congregation – caring for the needy, teaching a class, handling the treasury, anything involving dealings with others, etc.
Why the Apostles Were Not to Do This

- Not desirable for them to neglect the word to serve tables (v. 2)
- They had their own role – prayer and ministry of the word (v. 4)
- We don't have apostles today (no one is qualified, Acts 1:21-22), but the work of an apostle does share some similarities with other works – elders and preachers
- Elders are to focus on watching out for the spiritual well-being of the flock (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17)
- Preachers are to focus on preaching and teaching the word (2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Tim. 4:16)
- If there are others to attend to these physical matters, let them take care of them

Result: Growth

- Once this matter was resolved, there was harmony within the congregation and the apostles were able to focus on preaching and teaching – What was the result?
- The word of God kept spreading – the apostles weren't pulled away from this work to serve tables
- The number of disciples continued to increase – result of more people hearing
- Even a great many priests were obeying the gospel – shows the effectiveness of the gospel and the work of the apostles
Charges Brought Against Paul
Text: Acts 24:1

Paul’s example shows us how to deal with false charges and persecution.

The Charges
- Causes division (24:5) – those who depart from the truth are the ones who cause the division, not the faithful (Jude 19)
- Opposes the government (24:5) – Christians are to submit to the government (Rom. 13:1), as long as we can do so without violating God’s law (Acts 5:29)
- Opposes religion (24:6) – we follow God’s standard, not any religious standard of man

The Defense
- Made cheerfully (24:10) – opportunity to teach
- Facts were on his side (24:11-13) – truth has nothing to hide from open, honest investigation
- Appealed to his character (24:16) – the key is that we must have a good character (1 Pet. 4:15); Paul did (Acts 23:1)
- Taught the truth (24:14-15, 20-21) – use every opportunity to teach the gospel
“Christian” is More than a Name

- The term “Christian” describes what we are – Christ-like
- Disciples of Christ (Acts 11:26) – daily, full-time responsibility
- One must be persuaded to become a Christian (Acts 26:28) – different than the world
- Target of persecution (1 Pet. 4:12, 16)
- If one wants to be a Christian, he must do more than say he is a Christian – must act, talk, and think like a Christian

Characteristics of One Who is a Christian in Name Only

- They try to blend in with Christians (when convenient) – they wear the name (Rev. 3:1), assemble (1 Cor. 11:17-18), often keep Christian friends (Jude 12)
- They are friends of the world (James 4:4) – we cannot go out of the world (1 Cor. 5:10), but we must be separate (2 Cor. 6:17)
- Often unfamiliar with the word – they do not study so as to grow in knowledge (2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 3:18)

Christians in Name Only Reflect Poorly on Devout Christians

- A popular charge used to discredit Christians and the gospel is *hypocrite* – but this term does not describe *faithful* Christians, but those who claim to be Christians but do not live like it
- We must not allow our lives to hinder the gospel (1 Cor. 9:12; 2 Cor. 6:3)
Commands, Traditions, Expedients, Innovations

Four Questions for Our Assemblies:
• Why do we do what we do in the assembly? Commands – NT pattern, what has been revealed
• How do we do it? Traditions – custom
• Is there a way we can do it better? Expedients – improve what we do to be more effective
• Are there changes we must not make? Innovations – changes to the pattern, departing from the truth

Commands
• It is essential that we follow the NT pattern (2 Tim. 1:13; Heb. 8:5)
• Christ has all authority (Mt. 28:18) – therefore we must do what He authorizes (Col. 3:17)

Traditions (3 Types)
• Traditions handed down by the apostles (2 Th. 2:15) – these we must keep (2 Th. 3:6)
• Human traditions that are authorized – how we customarily do things; must be authorized (Col. 3:17)
• Human traditions that are unauthorized (Mt. 15:3-6)

Expedients
• Something that is expedient means that it is profitable, better
• By NT definition, an expedient will always be authorized (1 Cor. 10:23)

Innovations
• Often claimed to be expedient, but are not lawful (1 Cor. 10:23)
• Result of man trusting in his own way (Jer. 10:23; Pr. 14:12)
Contrasting the Righteous and the Wicked

Text: Psalm 1

The Righteous Man is Blessed (v. 1-3)
- He does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly – following their thinking/advice
- He does not stand in the path of sinners – putting himself in a position to encounter them
- He does not sit in the seat of scoffers – among those who grumble and complain
- He delights in the law of the Lord and meditates upon it
- He is like a tree firmly planted by streams of water

The Wicked are Not Like the Righteous (v. 4-5)
- They follow the words of others who are wicked
- They do not try to avoid sin and temptation
- They join in complaining with the scoffers
- They do not delight in God’s law
- They are not life the tree firmly planted by the river
- They are like chaff – worthless, driven away by the wind
- They cannot stand in the judgment

Summary (v. 6)
- The Lord knows (approves of) the way of the righteous
- The way of the wicked will perish
Daniel in the Lions’ Den
Text: Daniel 6

Some Will Want to Harm Us
• Do not be surprised if the world hates you (1 Jn. 3:13)
• Persecution will be a reality (2 Tim. 3:12)

Keep Your Behavior Excellent
• Why? – some will try to slander you (1 Pet. 2:12)
• We must not suffer as an evildoer, but as a Christian (1 Pet. 4:15-16)

Legislation Can Be Used to Target God’s People
• God has ordained a specific role for civil government (Rom. 13:3-4; 1 Tim. 2:2)
• When governments assume the role of a god, they will see God as their competition and will therefore target His people

A Time for Deliberate Disobedience
• Christians are under no obligation to submit to laws that violate God’s law (Acts 5:29)
• When persecuted, rejoice and keep going (Acts 5:40-42)

Laws Have Consequences
• Ungodly laws, even when recognized as such, can be slow to change, if they change at all (v. 14-15, 18-19)
• If ungodly laws are passed, be prepared for suffering

Put Complete Trust in God
• God delivered Daniel (v. 23-24)
• God will not miraculously deliver us from persecution today – but trust Him (1 Pet. 4:19)
• Ultimately, He will save us (Rev. 2:10)
Doctrinal Correctness
Text: Acts 20:27

Is It Important What We Believe?
- The NT teaches the importance of faith (Heb. 11:6)
- Faith comes from the word of God (Rom. 10:17)
- God revealed what He wants us to know (1 Cor. 2:10-13)
- God’s word is true (Jn. 17:17) – we must believe it (all of it)

Should We Preach/Teach on Matters of Doctrine?
- We can surely keep ourselves busy preaching/teaching on other less controversial themes – some preachers do
- But we cannot rightfully ignore certain passages or subjects (1 Pet. 4:11; Acts 20:27)

What If It Doesn’t Lead to Sin?
- We must still preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27)
- Are we sure it doesn’t lead to sin? – any error can lead to sin
- Is this just the “slippery slope” argument? No – emphasizing the need to believe what the Bible says is not a slippery slope
Escaping Death in the Book of Acts

Peter (Acts 12:1-4)
- James had already been executed (12:2), yet no sign of panic (sleeping – 12:6)
- Importance of fellow Christians – first place he went was to the place where fellow Christians were gathered (12:12)
- Importance of prayer – they were praying for Peter (12:5, 12)

Paul (Acts 9:23-25; 14:19-20)
- Damascus (9:23-25) – despite being a new Christian, he did not fold under the threats against him
- Lystra (14:19-20) – boldly went back into the city after being taken out and stoned

Shipwreck Victims (Acts 27)
- Everyone’s lives would be spared even though the ship would be lost (27:21-26) – trust in God no matter how desperate your circumstances are
- Safety was only in the ship (27:30-32) – we must be in the place of safety (Eph. 1:7; Gal. 3:27)
- The soldiers cut the ropes to the lifeboat (27:32) – remove the temptation to abandon the place of salvation (Mt. 5:29-30)

Paul (Acts 28:1-6)
- While gathering firewood, Paul was bitten by a snake but suffered no harm
- Jesus said this would happen (Mk. 16:18) – to reinforce the message (Mk. 16:16)
Ezekiel’s Commission
Text: Ezekiel 3:1-21

Our Commission
• We do not have the same commission as Ezekiel did
• Great Commission given to the apostles (Mk. 16:15) and was fulfilled (Col. 1:23)
• Our responsibility is to live and serve God and teach about Him wherever we are – But there are still lessons in this for us today

“Eat This Scroll” (v. 1)
• Consume God’s word – read (1 Tim. 4:13), listen (Mt. 13:9), study (Acts 17:11)
• Have it within you (Col. 3:16)
• Allow it to sustain you (Mt. 4:4)

“Go to the House of Israel” (v. 4)
• Ezekiel’s target audience – ours is the world (1 Cor. 5:9-10)
• Sow the seed wherever you can (Mt. 13:3-8)
• If people reject it, move on (Mt. 10:14; Acts 13:51)
• If they accept it, continue to teach – after planting comes watering (1 Cor. 3:6)

“Speak with My Words” (v. 4, 10)
• We have a divine obligation to speak God’s words (1 Pet. 4:11)
• Not our opinions (Rom. 14:1)
• Not traditions (Mt. 15:6)
• Not doctrines of men (Mt. 15:7-9)

“Speak… Whether They Listen or Not” (v. 11)
• Simple reality – not every will listen; perhaps most will not
• Focus must be on the message, not the results (1 Cor. 1:17; 3:6)
• Don’t be discouraged if you don’t see as many converts as you would like – just keep teaching
“A Watchman to the House of Israel” (v. 17)

- If he failed to warn them, he was guilty for their deaths (3:18, 20)
- If he warned and they failed to listen, they were responsible for themselves (3:19, 21)
- We must teach what is needful, regardless of popularity or difficulty (Acts 20:20-27)
Finding Purpose Amidst the Vanity of Life

Text: Ecclesiastes 1:2-11

All is Vanity
- Futility of wisdom (Eccl. 1:12-18; 2:12-17)
- Futility of pleasures (Eccl. 2:1-3, 10-11)
- Futility of possessions (Eccl. 2:4-11)
- Futility of labor (Eccl. 2:18-26)

Yet These Things Can Have Profit
- Profit of wisdom (Pr. 3:13-18)
- Profit of pleasures (Eccl. 11:9-10)
- Profit of possessions (Pr. 10:15, 22)
- Profit of labor (Pr. 14:23)

Is the Wise Man Contradicting Himself?
- No – Scripture always harmonizes with Scripture (Jn. 10:35)
- Difference between profitability and futility is purpose (Eccl. 12:13)

Our Pursuits Must Be According to Our Purpose
- Pursuit of wisdom – seek God's wisdom (Pr. 3:5-7), seek after truth which leads to wisdom (Pr. 23:23), as wisdom is the application of knowledge, seek to obey God (James 1:22)
- Pursuit of pleasures – enjoy life, but remember that we will be held accountable (Eccl. 11:9), limit ourselves to wholesome activities (Phil. 4:8), must not neglect our responsibilities (spiritual, family, work, etc.)
- Pursuit of possessions – remember where blessings come from (James 1:17), use blessings to glory of God (1 Tim. 6:18), do not develop the love of money (1 Tim. 6:9-10)
- Pursuit of labor – work hard (Eccl. 9:10) as for the Lord (Col. 3:23); provide for self and family (2 Th. 3:7-10; 1 Tim. 5:8), help needy (Eph. 4:28), give back to the Lord (1 Cor. 16:1-2)
Giving Thanks to God
Text: Colossians 3:17

Why Should We Give Thanks?
• The Creation (Gen. 1:31)
• His care for us (Ps. 8:3-4)
• The scheme of redemption (Eph. 3:11)
• The sacrifice of Christ (Jn. 3:16)
• The church (Eph. 1:22-23)
• The word of God (1 Cor. 2:10-11, 16)
• The hope of heaven (1 Pet. 1:4)

How Do We Give Thanks?
• Verbally expressing thanks to God through prayer (Phil. 4:6) and singing (Col. 3:16)
• Using what we have been given
• Worshipping and serving God
• Looking to God for future blessings
God is Awesome
Text: Nahum 1:1-8

The term awesome is often used flippantly or carelessly today, such that it has lost its meaning. God is awesome, meaning we should stand in awe of Him. This includes fear and respect. There are many reasons to fear and respect God. This passage lists a few.

He is Jealous (v. 2)
- For this reason the Israelites were to have no other gods (Ex. 20:3-6) – God demands our exclusive devotion (Mt. 6:24)
- Man is often jealous and condemned for it (Gal. 5:20) – the difference is that God has the right to be jealous (Ex. 20:5, 11)
- As we consider the characteristics that make God worthy of fear and respect, remember His jealousy – we are not learning for the sake of learning; He will hold us accountable

He is Avenging (v. 2)
- Deals out vengeance to His adversaries (Heb. 3:7-11), to His enemies (Phil. 3:18-19), and to the guilty (2 Th. 1:8)
- No one worthy of His wrath will escape His wrath – only those He chooses to pardon (Rom. 6:23)
- Even the great Nineveh would not be spared

He is Powerful (v. 3-6)
- He can exert power over the natural world like no one else can (Mt. 8:23-27)
- His power is on display in the creation (Rom. 1:20)
- He would destroy Nineveh – He is more powerful than any earthly power (Eph. 1:19-23; 6:12-13)
He is Just (v. 3)
- Reasons so far show why we should fear Him – the rest are “positive” characteristics about God that should make us want to serve Him
- Justice shown in punishing of those who are evil (2 Th. 1:6-8)
- But if you are righteous, He will not forget you (2 Tim. 1:12)

He is Patient (v. 3)
- He is “slow to anger” – wants man to repent (2 Pet. 3:9)
- These people were given time to repent, but they would not – judgment would eventually come
- Same is true today – God gives us time now to repent (2 Cor. 6:2), but judgment will come (2 Pet. 3:10)

He is Good (v. 7)
- Goodness is the fundamental characteristic of God (Ps. 25:8)
- He is a stronghold in the day of trouble (Ps. 18:2; Heb. 13:6)
- He knows those who take refuge in Him (2 Tim. 2:19)
God’s Grace to Jerusalem
Text: Ezekiel 16

Man’s Helplessness without God (v. 4-5)
- We have no hope without God (Eph. 2:12)
- Why? – sin (Is. 59:2; Rom. 6:23)

God Showed Kindness to Man (v. 6)
- This was done while man was in a helpless state (Rom. 5:6-10)
- As we will see, grace does not guarantee salvation (Tit. 2:11; Mt. 7:13-14)

Covenant Between God and Man (v. 8)
- A covenant is an agreement between two parties (Amos 3:3)
- We enter this covenant today through baptism (Gal. 3:27, 29)

Man Can Break His Covenant Relationship with God (v. 15-22)
- God’s people can fall away (2 Cor. 6:1)
- “You did not remember” (v. 22) – we often sin because we forget the miserable state we were in before (Eph. 2:12), so we go back to it (2 Pet. 2:22)
- Different type of harlot (v. 32-34) – typical harlot received gifts; Jerusalem gave away the gifts God had given

The Unfaithful Will Be Punished (v. 35-41)
- God’s reward is conditioned upon continued faithfulness (Rev. 2:10)
- We will not escape punishment if we depart (Heb. 2:1-3)

The Unfaithful Can Be Restored (v. 60-63)
- God wants all to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9)
- If we fall away, He is willing to receive us back and forgive us (1 Jn. 1:9)
Grace-Unity Movement

Misunderstanding Grace Leads to Error
- More sin leads to more grace (Rom. 6:1-2)
- Grace is a license to sin (Jude 4)
- With the grace-unity movement, grace is the basis for unity

What is Grace?
- God’s gift of salvation (Eph. 2:8)
- The gospel is the message of God’s grace (Acts 20:24)
- Grace is not without works (Eph. 2:9-10)

What is the Basis for Unity?
- Not grace – or else we would have unity with all men (Tit. 2:11)
- Agreement (Amos 3:3)
- Our agreement must be upon the word of God (Jn. 17:20-21)

Characteristics of the Grace-Unity Movement
- Tolerance of sin (Lk. 17:3)
- Support of false teachers (2 Jn. 10-11)
- Fellowship with those outside the body of Christ (Eph. 5:11)
Having a Zeal for God
Text: Acts 22:3

What is Zeal?
- “Eagerness and ardent interest in pursuit of something” (Merriam Webster)
- If we are zealous for something – we will make it a priority, it will affect our actions, we will speak about it, we will hold fast our convictions

Zeal Alone is Not Enough
- Zeal for God was one thing Paul had in common with the Jews (Acts 22:3)
- Yet they were his enemies (Acts 21:27-32; 22:22)
- Both were zealous for God, yet they were on opposite sides of this conflict – Why?

Must Have Zeal According to Knowledge
- The Jews’ zeal was not according to knowledge (Rom. 10:1-4)
- Example of Paul (Phil. 3:6) – zeal demonstrated in persecution of the church
- Many today have zeal that is not according to knowledge

Being Zealous for the Things of God
- Starts with knowledge (Eph. 5:17)
- Zeal for God’s house (Jn. 2:17) – today this is the church (1 Tim. 3:15)
- Zealous for good works (Tit. 2:14)

If We Are Zealous for the Things of God…
- We will make them a priority (Mt. 6:33; Col. 3:2)
- It will affect our actions (Jn. 14:15)
- We will speak about it (Jer. 20:9)
- We will hold fast our convictions (2 Tim. 1:13)
- God will be with us (1 Pet. 3:13-14; 4:19)
Here I Raise My Ebenezer

Text: 1 Samuel 7:12

The song, *O Thou Fount of Every Blessing*, contains the phrase, “Here I raise my Ebenezer.” What is the story behind the Ebenezer?

The Background

- Philistines defeated Israel in battle, the Israelites brought the ark to help them, but it was captured (1 Sam. 4:2-11)
- Philistines brought the ark to house of Dagon, after idol was humiliated and there was a plague in the land, it was sent to Ekron (1 Sam. 5:2-11)
- Ekronites put the ark on a cart pulled by two cows and let them go, they came to Beth-shemesh (1 Sam. 6:7-12)
- In Beth-shemesh, the Lord killed over 50,000 because the men looked in the ark; they sent messengers to Kiriath-jearim to get the ark (1 Sam. 6:19-21); ark stayed here for 20 years (1 Sam. 7:1-2) until David would later move it (2 Sam. 6:3)
- After receiving the ark, Samuel addressed the people and called for their repentance; the Philistines came against them, but God helped them and the Israelites were victorious (1 Sam. 7:3-11)
- It was at this time that Samuel erected this stone – Ebenezer (1 Sam. 7:12)

God Was with Them

- Ebenezer means “stone of help” – without God they were defeated; with God they were victorious
- Before God would be with them and help them, they needed to repent (7:3-4), confess their sins (7:5-6), acknowledge their dependence upon God (7:8-9), and go out and fight (7:10-11)

It Was a Memorial

- Memorials are important because people often forget
- The Bible emphasizes the importance of being reminded (Deut. 6:6-12; 2 Pet. 1:12-13)
Memorials Do Not Guarantee Remembrance

- Even with memorials, people often forget
- Memorials and reminders do no good if we do not continually set our minds to follow the Lord
How God is Able to Establish You

Text: Romans 16:25-27

God is able to establish us through His word. Paul describes the word in several ways, showing how it is able to establish us.

The Gospel
- “Good news” – the message is beneficial to us
- Man enslaved to sin (Jn. 8:24) – gospel announces freedom from sin (Rom. 6:17)
- Man was lost (Is. 53:6) – gospel shows the right path (Jn. 14:6)

Preaching of Jesus Christ
- Preaching about Jesus – foundation of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-4)
- Preaching of Jesus – truth (Jn. 18:37); eternal life (Jn. 6:68)
- Jesus is the cornerstone in the foundation (Eph. 2:20-21)

Revelation of the Mystery
- Done by the Holy Spirit to inspired men (1 Cor. 2:7-10)
- What He has revealed is sufficient to establish us (2 Pet. 1:3)

Scriptures of the Prophets
- Part of their work was foretelling future events (Deut. 18:18-22)
- The OT is meant to help lead us to faith in Christ (Gal. 3:24)

Commandment of the Eternal God
- Jesus taught that His disciples were to follow His commandments (Mt. 28:20)
- Preaching the gospel was to lead to obedience (Rom. 16:26; 1:5)
- We must obey the gospel (2 Th. 1:8)

Made Known to All the Nations
- Apostles were to go into all the world (Mk. 16:15)
- Gospel is God’s power to save Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 1:16)
- God will welcome people from every nation (Acts 10:34-35)
How God Speaks to Us Today

Text: Hebrews 1:1-2

He Speaks to Us through His Son
- Jesus is the spokesman for God (Jn. 18:37)
- Son of God – through Him we see the Father (Jn. 1:18; 14:8-9)
- Creator – “through whom...He made the world” (Jn. 1:1-3)
- Deity – “radiance of His glory...exact representation of His nature” (Col. 2:9)
- Redeemer – “made purification for sins” (1 Pet. 1:18-19)
- Position of authority – “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Mt. 7:28-29; 28:18)

How Did He Speak to Us Previously?
- To the fathers – patriarchal dispensation (Noah, Abraham, etc.)
- In the prophets – Moses (Acts 3:22) and others later
- In many portions – incomplete revelation (1 Pet. 1:10-11)
- In many ways – speaking, dreams, signs, miracles

How Do We Get Christ’s Message Today?
- Through the apostles (2 Cor. 5:20; 1 Cor. 14:37)
- Inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:13) – temporary spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:7-11; 13:8-10); the instrument the Spirit uses today is the word (Eph. 6:17)
- If we want to know what God wants of us, we must look to His word (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

Other Avenues People Wrongly Use Apart from the Word
- Religious leaders (1 Jn. 4:1, 6)
- Dreams/visions – God’s word is complete (Jude 3)
- Feelings/emotions (Jer. 10:23)
- Signs (1 Cor. 1:22-23) – no longer necessary (Mk. 16:17-20)
- Other religions (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12)
“I Am the Lord Your God”
Text: Leviticus 19

This is a call for holiness (v. 2). What will holiness look like?

Honor God
- Keep My sabbaths (v. 3, 30) – consistent, ongoing action; reminded them of God’s work in creation (Ex. 20:8-11)
- Revere My sanctuary (v. 30) – respect the place of worship; specifically today, appreciate the reason for coming together to worship (Rev. 4:11)
- Your body belongs to God (v. 26-28) – we must glorify God in our bodies (1 Cor. 6:19-20)

Respect Authority and Wisdom
- Reverence father and mother (v. 3) – position of authority; children are to obey their parents (Eph. 6:1)
- Honor the aged (v. 32) – wisdom and experience (Job 12:12)
- These relate to the idea of humility, similar to how we are to respect God – willing to submit to one in authority (1 Pet. 5:6); willing to admit that we need guidance (Jer. 10:23)

Love Your Neighbor
- Love your neighbor as yourself (v. 18; Mt. 23:39) – do not hate him, though you may reprove him (v. 17); do not take vengeance (Rom. 12:19) or hold a grudge (James 5:9)
- Don’t oppress your neighbor (v. 13) or do wrong to a stranger (v. 33-34) – don’t mistreat others, even if they are unaware (v. 13-14); don’t withhold what you owe to someone (v. 13)
- When reaping, leave the corners of your field for the needy (v. 9-10) – help those willing to help themselves (2 Th. 3:10)

Value Truth and Justice
- We must love the truth (2 Th. 2:10) – don’t deal falsely or lie to one another (v. 11); don’t swear falsely by God’s name (v. 12);
honor commitments, even when we might prefer not to (v. 20)
• We must act justly with others (Amos 5:24) – do not show partiality (v. 15); do not speak evil of others and bring harm to them (v. 16); do not cheat people in business dealings (v. 35-36)

**Purity and Integrity**
- 3 things were not to be mixed (v. 19): breeds of cattle, kinds of seeds, materials in garments – lesson that God expects His people to be pure
- Under Law of Moses – no mixed marriages (Deut. 7:3-4), no false gods (Ex. 20:3)
- Under law of Christ – don’t be bound together with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14); don’t participate in unfruitful deeds of darkness (Eph. 5:11); walk in Light as He is in the Light (1 Jn. 1:5)

**Be Willing to Wait Patiently**
- When they entered the promised land and planted trees, they were not to eat of them until the 5th year (v. 23-25) – this would mean more fruitful trees in the future
- God’s people must wait patiently for His will, rather than rush for an inferior substitute (James 5:7)

**Listen to His Will**
- Don’t turn to mediums or spiritists (v. 31) – consulted to find some spiritual, divine, hidden information
- People today seek for answers in wrong places – creeds, popular opinion, feelings, human wisdom, world religious/philosophies
- We must look to God’s word (1 Cor. 2:10) and be content with it (1 Cor. 1:22-24)

**Obey Him in All Things**
- Observe all My statues and ordinances (v. 37) – He is the Lord
- Same requirement today for same reason – He has all authority (Mt. 28:18), we are accountable to Him (2 Cor. 5:10)
- If we believe Jesus is Lord, we must obey Him (Lk. 6:46)
“I Will Build My Church”
Text: Matthew 16:18

I
- Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Mt. 16:16)
- He is our Savior (2 Tim. 1:10), King (Jn. 18:36-37), and is Deity (Jn. 1:1)
- This is important because Jesus’ identity would be the foundation of His church (Mt. 16:18)

Will
- Indicates a future time when His plan would be carried out
- This plan was certain (Tit. 1:2; Jn. 5:17)
- When would this church be established? – soon (Mt. 16:28); would come with power (Mk. 9:1), which would come with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8), who would come at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4); here the church is established (Acts 2:47)

Build
- Jesus came to establish a new church/kingdom (Dan. 2:44)
- This would not be a physical building, but a spiritual one (1 Pet. 2:5-8; Eph. 2:20-22)

My
- The church belongs to Christ (Acts 20:28)
- He makes the rules and we must be subject to Him (Eph. 5:23-24)
- We proclaim and promote Christ, not ourselves (2 Cor. 4:5)

Church
- The church is the same as the kingdom (Mt. 16:18-19)
- Jesus did not come to build a social club, charity, day care, etc.
**Instructions About the Local Church**

Text: 1 Corinthians 11:16-34

**Churches of God (v. 16)**
- Similar to Paul’s mention of “churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16)
- Can we do anything we want as long as the congregation agrees to it? – No, we’re still accountable to God/Christ
- Required to act by His authority (Col. 3:17)
- Why sound churches generally look the same (1 Cor. 4:17)

**Necessity of Division (v. 18-19)**
- Earlier Paul condemned the divisions in Corinth (1:10-13), yet here says that factions are necessary – Why?
- Only one reason division would be desirable – when one is standing for the truth (Mt. 10:34-36)
- When error creeps in, it must be opposed (Tit. 1:10-11; Rom. 16:17)
- We must be willing to stand for the truth (Phil. 1:16-17)

**Desire for Unity (v. 20-22)**
- When we don’t have a difference between truth and error, unity must be maintained – regardless of opinions, personality differences, economic differences (as was the case in this context), etc.
- Many in our society try to drive a wedge between rich and poor – we must not allow this division to exist in the church (James 2:1-4; Gal. 3:28)

**Expectation of Attendance (v. 33)**
- In correcting some abuses of the Lord’s Supper, Paul tells the brethren to “wait for one another” (v. 33) – this implies two things
- A local church must have regular service times (Acts 20:7) – which also implies a formally organized group
- Attendance by the members is expected (Heb. 10:25) – you wait for those you expect will arrive
Is Anyone Among You Sick?

Text: James 5:14

Pray to God
- The suffering are to pray (James 5:13) and can have others pray on their behalf (James 5:14)
- It’s possible that one may not regain health despite fervent, ongoing prayer (1 Jn. 5:14-15)
- But prayer also has other benefits – reminds us of our reliance upon God (Mt. 6:7-8), peace of God (Phil. 4:6-7)

Take Care of Yourself
- Rest (2 Tim. 4:20)
- Medicines/remedies (Jer. 46:11; Lk. 10:34; 1 Tim. 5:23)
- Exercise (1 Tim. 4:8)
- Seek physician (Mt. 9:12)

Call for Help
- If others are to help, they must know of the need for help (James 5:14)
- If we are called upon, we must be willing to help when we can (Gal. 6:10)

Remember What’s Important
- Life is temporary (James 4:14) – heaven is eternal (Jn. 3:16)
- Suffering makes us long for heaven (2 Cor. 4:16-5:9)
- Remain faithful in sickness (2 Kings 20:1-3)
- If/when we face sickness to the point of death, be confident of your reward (2 Tim. 4:6-8) – to do this requires faithfulness up to this point
Jesus’ Equality with the Father

Text: John 5:17-18

Jesus’ Testimony about Himself

• He called God His Father (Jn. 5:17)
• He did the works of God (Jn. 5:19)
• The Father Loved Him (Jn. 5:20)
• The Father revealed things to Him (Jn. 5:20)
• He had the same power as the Father (Jn. 5:21)
• All judgment has been given to Him (Jn. 5:22)
• He is worthy of honor (Jn. 5:23)

Other Witnesses of Jesus

• Jesus’ testimony by itself would not demand acceptance (Jn. 5:31) – But there were other witnesses
• Testimony of John (Jn. 5:33-35; 1:29, 35-37)
• Testimony of His works (Jn. 5:36; 20:30-31)
• Testimony of the Father (Jn. 5:37-38; Mt. 3:17; 17:5)
• Testimony of Scripture (Jn. 5:39, 45-47; Gal. 3:24)
Jesus Wept
Text: John 11:35

Jesus Displayed Emotion

- We have emotions because we were made in God’s image (Gen. 1:27)
- We must control our emotions (1 Pet. 5:8)
- Emotions are a response to conditions – they are not a goal (emotionalism)

God Allows Human Suffering

- Jesus had the power to heal Lazarus and end his suffering – but He allowed him to suffer and die
- Human suffering exists as a consequence for sin (Gen. 3:22-24) – but it is not the punishment for sin (Ezek. 18:2-4)
- God allowing human suffering is not for the following reasons – He is uncaring (1 Pet. 5:7), uninterested (Phil. 4:6), unable to respond (Lk. 1:37), or punishing us for sin (Jn. 9:1-3)

Jesus Proved Himself to be “The Resurrection and the Life” (v. 25)

- Jesus told Martha that Lazarus would rise again by the power of Christ (v. 23-26)
- Jesus needed to convince those who witnessed the event (v. 38-44)
- He also needed to prove Himself to those who would hear of this event later (v. 46)
Know Well the Condition of Your Flocks
Text: Proverbs 27:23-27

In the midst of economic turmoil, we still have obligations (2 Th. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:8; Eph. 4:28). How do we handle everything?

Our Responsibility
- Take care of yourself – “your flocks ... your herds”
- Be good stewards – do not neglect your flocks, know their condition

Economies Can Collapse – “riches are not forever”
- How can we survive without a strong economy? Farming, ranching, hunting for food. Making homemade goods necessary for one’s household. Selling or bartering goods and services to obtain other things we need
- The shepherd did not need a functioning national economy to survive

Governments Can Fall – “…nor does a crown endure to all generations”
- Many believe government is the answer to fix the economy – it is not God’s answer
- God ordained civil authorities with a much more limited role (Rom. 13:3-4; 1 Tim. 2:2)
- Christians were told to separate from Rome before their fall, which brought an economic collapse (Rev. 18:4, 11ff) – Could we survive a government collapse?

God’s Providence Remains
- Look to what God has provided in creation
- Plants and animals for food (Gen. 1:29; 9:3)
- Proper conditions for survival (Acts 14:17)
- We can produce things we need, or to sell and trade
- Common theme – work hard (2 Th. 3:10)
• What if one is unable to work? – God has made provisions for such people (Gal. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 5:4, 16; Acts 4:32-35)

Conclusion
• Is it wrong to derive some benefit from the national economy or government? – No
• But we must be able to survive with or without them
• God has made it possible for us to do this – we must take advantage of what He has provided
Law of Sin Offerings
Text: Leviticus 4

Unintentional Sin is Still Sin

• A burnt offering had to be made for these sins (v. 3, 13-14, 22-24, 27-29)  
• Ignorance of guilt would not excuse sin (Hos. 4:6)  
• We must recognize the fact that all sins are wrong, regardless of motive or level of knowledge (1 Jn. 3:4)

Awareness had to be Made for These Sins

• Because these sins were done in ignorance, the guilty parties had to have their sin pointed out to them (v. 14, 23, 28)  
• Therefore, teaching must be done (Jn. 16:13; 2 Cor. 10:5-6)  
• If we are the sinner being taught, we must have the proper attitude – humility and repentance (Acts 9:9, 11), not arrogance and obstinance (Rom. 2:4-5)

Four Categories of Offenders

• The anointed priest (v. 3) – they were not perfect (Heb. 5:2-3); therefore, do not put your trust in men (Jer. 17:5)  
• The whole congregation (v. 13) – society, as a whole, can either be good or bad (Pr. 14:34); do not allow yourself to be influenced by society (Rom. 12:2)  
• A leader (v. 22) – do not allow civil leaders to lead you into sin (Acts 5:29)  
• Anyone of the common people (v. 27) – ultimately, each one of us is accountable (Ezek. 18:20); don’t blame others for your sin
Lessons from the Healing of Naaman
Text: 2 Kings 5

What can we learn from the people involved in this account?

The Servant Girl (v. 2-3)
• She was concerned for the well-being of others
• She wanted to be a good servant
• She had faith in God
• She spoke up

The King of Israel (v. 6-7)
• He at least knew the limits of his power – “Am I God?”
• But he did not seek help from God or His prophet

Elisha (v. 8-10)
• Sent word to the king without waiting to be called upon
• Wanted to show there was a prophet in Israel – not for his glory, but for God’s
• Did not come out to meet Naaman – message is the same, regardless of the messenger

Naaman (v. 11-14)
• Initially rejected the message
• His servant convinced him – instructions are simple: just do it
• When he obeyed, he was healed

Gehazi (v. 20-27)
• Elisha refused to receive Naaman's gifts (v. 15-16) – Gehazi decided to take something from Naaman
• He thought this was only fair – we should be concerned with what is right, more than what is fair
• He lied to carry out his plan
• He knew what he was doing was wrong – tried to hide it
• He was punished for his sin
Lessons from Three Prayers

Text: Luke 11:1

Disciples to Jesus: “Teach us to pray.” Here we’ll notice three prayers that each emphasize a different element of our prayers. This is not a comprehensive list of how to pray or what to pray for, but highlights some examples for our learning.

The Model Prayer (Matthew 6:7-13) – Pray for Needs

- Pray for food (v. 11) – looking to God, but we must still do our part (2 Th. 3:10)
- Pray for forgiveness (v. 12) – God is willing to forgive, but we must do our part (Acts 8:20-22; 1 Jn. 1:9)
- Pray for deliverance from temptation (v. 13) – Again, we must do our part in taking the way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13)

The Garden Prayer (Mt. 26:39, 42, 44) – Pray for God’s Will

- Jesus made a request, yet submitted to the Father’s will – shows an example of submission and faithful obedience (Heb. 5:8-9)
- We are told to make requests (Phil. 4:6), but we must pray, “Your will be done” (Mt. 6:10)
- The requests that are granted are the ones that are according to His will (1 Jn. 5:14-15)

The Disciples’ Prayer (Acts 4:23-31) – Pray to Praise God

- Call attention to His mighty works (v. 24)
- Exalt His word (v. 25-26)
- Recognize the opposition and God’s superiority (v. 27-28)
- God is certainly worthy of our praise – we ought to praise Him in our prayers (Mt. 6:9)
More Righteous Than the Religious

Text: Matthew 5:20

The scribes and Pharisees were the religious leaders of the day. Yet Jesus said our righteousness must *surpass* theirs to enter heaven. We must do more than fit in with those that the world recognizes as religious. We follow higher standard.

**Murder (Mt. 5:21-24)**
- Generally understood: murder is wrong, those who commit it will be held accountable
- Jesus said: we must not be angry with our brother

**Adultery (Mt. 5:27-30)**
- Generally understood: adultery is wrong
- Jesus said: do not even lust after a woman and commit adultery in your heart

**Divorce (Mt. 5:31-32)**
- Instruction under Old Law given because of their hard hearts (cf. Mt. 19:7-8): If one divorces his wife, he must give her a certificate of divorce
- Jesus said: only one divinely allowed cause for putting away one’s spouse – fornication

**Making Vows (Mt. 5:33-37)**
- Generally understood: false vows are wrong
- Jesus said: make no vows, they are unnecessary if we speak the truth at all times

**Revenge (Mt. 5:38-42)**
- Generally believed: one should retaliate when wronged
- Jesus said: do not take your own vengeance
Enemies (Mt. 5:43-47)
• Generally believed: if you love your neighbor, then hate your enemy
• Jesus said: love your enemies, pray for them

Conclusion (Mt. 5:48)
• Do not try to blend in with the world
• Strive to be perfect as God is perfect
**Nadab and Abihu**

Text: Leviticus 10:1-3

**God Must Be Treated As Holy**
- He is worthy of such treatment (Rev. 4:11; Jer. 10:10; Ex. 20:2)
- We honor God through careful obedience (Jn. 17:4; 14:15)

**What Did Nadab and Abihu Get Wrong?**
- Strange fire “which He had not commanded them” (v. 1) – important principle of authority and silence (Heb. 7:14)
- Unauthorized/presumptuous use of the firepans/censers (v. 1) – instructions previously given for making the firepans (Ex. 27:3), they were made (Ex. 38:3), but instructions regarding their use would not be given until later (Lev. 16:12)
- Wrong personnel (v. 1) – two priests, sons of the high priest; when the instructions were given later we see this was done by one priest, the high priest (Lev. 16:11-12)
- They did not act thoughtfully – drunkenness condemned immediately after their deaths (Lev. 10:8-11); they were perhaps drunk, but not necessarily; but it reminds us of the need to be sober-minded so we can serve God acceptably

**We Must Respect God’s Judgments**
- Natural reaction for Aaron following the death of his sons could have been sadness or anger, yet he kept silent (v. 3)
- Aaron and his other sons were forbidden from publicly displaying their grief (v. 6)
- God’s judgments are always true and righteous (Ps. 19:9)
Not Peddling the Word of God
Text: 2 Corinthians 2:17

Those Who Peddle the Word
• They corrupt the word – changing it (Gal. 1:6-9), leaving things out (Acts 20:27)
• They adulterate the word – mixing in the commands, traditions, and opinions of men (Col. 2:20-23; Mt. 15:6-9; Rom. 14:1)
• There are “many” who do this

We Speak from Sincerity
• No ulterior motives
• Plain speaking (2 Cor. 3:12)

We Speak from God
• As an apostle, Paul received the divine message directly from the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10; Jn. 16:13) – this is no longer done today (1 Cor. 13:8-10)
• We can still speak “as from God” (1 Pet. 4:11) – preach from the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

We Speak in Christ
• Any message from God will be in Christ (Heb. 1:1-2) – there is no other message (Jn. 14:6)
• Any message that claims to be from God is false if it doesn’t acknowledge Christ (Jn. 18:37) or contradicts the writings of inspired men (1 Cor. 14:37)

We Speak in the Sight of God
• Nothing is hidden from the eyes of God (Heb. 4:13)
• The teacher will be held accountable (James 3:1)
• Those in attendance will be held accountable as well (Acts 17:30-21; 2 Cor. 5:10)
Old Testament Religious Festivals
Text: Leviticus 23

This lesson takes a brief look at several feasts and observances from the Old Law and some of the lessons they provide for us.

Weekly Sabbath (v. 3)
- Creation – Sabbath patterned after Creation week (Ex. 20:11); reminds us that He is all-powerful (Rom. 1:20) and the only true and living God (1 Th. 1:9)
- Rest – this was a shadow of the true rest to come (Heb. 4:9-11)

Feast of First Fruits (v. 9-14)
- Providence – God sustains us (Acts 14:17); but we must work to take advantage of His blessings (Pr. 28:19)
- Priorities – first fruits; God expects us to place spiritual things as our top priority (Mt. 6:33)

Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread (v. 4-8)
- Deliverance – Israelites were in bondage in Egypt just as we are in bondage to sin (Jn. 8:34); in both cases God delivers those who meet His conditions (Ex. 12:7, 13; Rom. 6:17-18)
- Purity – leaven was not even to be in their houses (Ex. 12:15); in NT leaven symbolizes sin (1 Cor. 5:6-9); we must work to remove sin from our lives (1 Jn. 3:3)

Day of Atonement (v. 26-33)
- Forgiveness – sin has been a problem from the beginning (Rom. 5:12); God provides forgiveness through Christ (Eph. 1:7)
- Wrath – atonement saves from wrath (Rom. 5:9), not by eliminating it, but by giving us a second chance (Rom. 2:5); even after deliverance, sin must be dealt with (1 Jn. 2:1; 1:9)
Feast of Booths (v. 39-44)

- Pilgrimage – our homes here are temporary dwellings (2 Pet. 3:10); citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20); as pilgrims we must act a certain way (1 Pet. 2:11-12), not become attached to the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17)
- Hope – the Israelites did not leave Egypt to wander in the wilderness, they left for Canaan; we have a specific place we are headed (heaven) and must keep our eyes on the goal (Phil. 3:13-14; Col. 3:2)
Paul’s Thorn in the Flesh

Text: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Keep from Exalting Self
- Pride is a persistent problem (2 Tim. 3:2) – no matter who we are, we each have things we could boast about; but we must not
- Paul could have boasted in the revelations (v. 7) and other things (Phil. 3:4-6) – thorn in the flesh prevented that
- We need to have humility (Phil. 2:3-5)

The Thorn in the Flesh
- We don’t know what it was – theories (Gal. 6:11; 2 Cor. 10:10)
- Our thorn could be health, finances, family, work, etc.
- It is appropriate to pray for these to be removed (v. 8; Phil. 4:6)

Grace is Sufficient
- Despite his prayer, Paul’s thorn in the flesh wasn’t removed – the Lord answered, “My grace is sufficient for you” (v. 9)
- We may pray and nothing changes – God is not unconcerned
- God demonstrated love through grace (Tit. 2:11; Acts 20:24)
- Even if we live a miserable life here (by the world’s standards), we still have God’s grace (2 Cor. 4:16-5:2; 1 Cor. 15:19, 54-57)

Content with Weaknesses
- Physical limitations – weaknesses (infirmities, KJV)
- Trouble around us – insults, distresses, persecutions, difficulties
- We can do all things through Christ (Phil. 4:13)

Important: It Does Not Say “Content with Shortcomings”
- Paul does not say he is content with sin or spiritual weakness
- We must overcome sin (Rom. 6:11, 17-18), press on to maturity (Heb. 6:1)
- This does not negate the message of grace (Rom. 3:23; 6:23) – rather, grace instructs us to live to a higher standard (Tit. 2:11-14) and provides no license to sin (Jude 4)
Permit the Children to Come to Me
Text: Mark 10:13-16

Disciples First Turned the Children Away, Then Jesus Welcomed Them – Why?
- They were important – even from a young age, children are to be trained in the right way (Pr. 22:6)
- They provided an important reminder – “the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (v. 14)

Characteristics of Children Needed for the Kingdom
- Innocence – forgiven (Acts 2:38), dead to sin (Rom. 6:11), striving for perfection (Mt. 5:48)
- Trust – complete trust in the Lord (Pr. 3:5), His word (Ps. 119:160), His way (Jer. 6:16), His promises (Heb. 6:18-19)
- Dependence – we are dependent upon God for salvation (Acts 4:12)
- Curiosity – desire to learn about God and His will (2 Pet. 3:18; 1 Pet. 2:2)

Not to Be Like Children in All Things
- Foolishness (Pr. 22:15) – we must not be foolish in spiritual matters (Eph. 5:17) or in matters pertaining to this life (Mt. 10:16)
- Immaturity (1 Cor. 14:20) – all will be immature at some point (1 Pet. 2:2), but we must not remain in that state; we are expected to grow (Heb. 5:12-14)
Practicing the Golden Rule
Text: Matthew 7:12

We Must Take the Initiative
- Don’t treat others *as they treat you*, but as you *want them to treat you*
- People may not treat us the way we would like (2 Tim. 3:12; Mt. 5:38-41)
- We must treat others as we would want them to treat us (Rom. 13:8-10; Mt. 22:39-40)

Why Are We to Treat Others This Way?
- Commanded
- Value of each person (Gen. 1:27; Jn. 3:16)
- God deals with us in the way we deal with others (Mt. 6:14-15; 7:1-2)
- If we love God, we must love others (1 Jn. 4:11, 20-21)

How Should We Treat Others?
- Put others first (Phil. 2:3-4)
- Be willing to forgive (Mt. 6:14)
- Strive to live in peace (Rom. 12:7-21)
- Help them when they are in need (Gal. 6:10)
- Lead them to the truth (Col. 4:6; Eph. 4:15)
Pressing On to Maturity

Text: Hebrews 6:1

Our Life in Christ
• New birth (Jn. 3:3, 5; 1 Pet. 1:23)
• Babes in Christ (1 Pet. 2:1-2)
• Full grown (Heb. 5:13-14)
• We are not to remain stagnant (Heb. 5:11-12)

God Expects Us to Grow
• Individually (Jn. 15:2; 2 Pet. 3:18; 1:5-8)
• Collectively (Eph. 4:15-16; Acts 9:31)

What If We Fail to Grow?
• We stand condemned (Jn. 15:2)
• Parable of the talents (Mt. 15:14-19, 24-30)
• Parable of the sower (Lk. 8:13-14)

Areas in Which We Must Grow
• Knowledge of the word (2 Pet. 3:18)
• Ability to teach the word (Heb. 5:12)
• Encouraging our brethren (Heb. 10:24-25)
• Tolerance of opinions (Rom. 15:1)
• Hatred of sin (Ps. 119:104)
• Being a light to the world (Mt. 5:14-16)
• Prayer to God (Rom. 12:12)
• Faith – conviction, trust, peace (2 Th. 1:3)
Pressing On Toward the Goal
Text: Philippians 3:12-14

Forget What Lies Behind
- Our old lives of sin (Rom. 6:6)
- Evil companions (2 Cor. 6:14-17)
- Hopelessness (Eph. 2:12)
- Lack of direction (Jer. 10:23)

Reach Forward to What Lies Ahead
- Maturity (Heb. 6:1)
- Wisdom (Eph. 5:15-18)
- Hope (Heb. 6:18-20)

Press On Toward the Goal
- We need to have endurance (Heb. 12:1)
- Stay on the right path (Mt. 7:13-14)
- Remember the reward (1 Pet. 1:3-4)
Putting Faith Into Practice
An Overview of the Book of James

Faith is demonstrated by:

Our Words and Deeds
• Our works demonstrate our faith (2:16-17, 24)
• It is manifest in our speech (1:26; 3:9-10)
• This is a reflection of our heart (3:11-12)

Our Approach to God’s Word
• God uses His word to call us and to save us (1:18)
• Receive it eagerly and humbly (1:19-21)
• Be more than hearers, put it into practice (1:22, 25)
• Seek after the wisdom from above (3:17)

Our Handing of Temptation
• Trials from without – rejoice (1:2-4)
• Desires from within – overcome (1:13-15; 4:7-8)

The Use of Our Blessings
• God gives us all good things (1:17) – be good stewards
• Help those in need (1:27; 2:15-16)
• Planning for the future (4:13-15)
• Not to trust in riches (1:9-11; 5:1-3)

Our Trust in God
• Do not be a friend of the world (4:4)
• Humble yourselves (4:6-10)
• Endure sufferings (1:12; 5:7-8, 10-11)
• Singing/prayer (5:13-16) – in good and bad times, we direct our attention to God
Our Dealings with Brethren

- Not to judge unrighteously (2:1-5; 4:11-12; 5:9)
- Strive for peace (3:17)
- Not to seek after our own selfish desires (4:1-3)
- Turn others from sin (5:19-20)
Radical, Liberal, Institutional

Most of the time we use these terms negatively. Yet in a sense, these terms can also be used to describe the good that God expects of us.

Radical
• The Bible cautions us against radical ideas (Deut. 5:32; Pr. 24:21) – But...
• We are to be far different than the norms of the world (Rom. 12:2)
• A great change is required on the part of those who would follow Christ (Rom. 6:4-7)
• Jesus’ teachings were very radical (Mt. 5:21-22, 27-28; Jn. 6:51-56, 60, 66; Mt. 19:9-12)

Liberal
• We must not take a liberal approach to God’s word (2 Tim. 1:13; Col. 3:17) – But...
• We are to be liberal in our giving (2 Cor. 9:13) – examples (8:1-5; Mk. 12:41-44)
• Same attitude required of us in helping others (Gal. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 6:18)

Institutional
• In the context of the debate over human institutions, we must take a non-institutional stand; no authority for such institution (Col. 3:17) – But...
• We support the divinely given institution of marriage (Mt. 19:4-6)
• We defend the divine institution that is the church (Mt. 16:18)
Raising Lazarus
Text: John 11

Nature of Miracles
• True miracles cannot be faked, attributed to coincidence, or be just an unlikely event
• True miracles are undeniable – even Jesus’ enemies acknowledged the legitimacy of His miracles (v. 47-48)
• Miracles were performed to produce faith (v. 45; Jn. 20:30-31)

God Allows Human Suffering
• Jesus knew Lazarus was sick (v. 3-4), allowed him to remain sick and die (v. 6, 11-14) – Why does God allow this?
• So that He might be glorified (v. 4, 40; cf. 1 Pet. 2:12)
• To cause us to grow (James 1:2-4)

Resurrection & Life
• Jesus had the power to raise the dead and grant them eternal life (v. 25-26)
• This point has been made repeatedly in John’s gospel (Jn. 3:14-15; 4:13-14; 6:47-51, 54; 8:52; 10:28)
• Foreshadowing of Jesus’ own resurrection (Jn. 10:17-18; Mt. 16:21)

Responses of Jesus’ Enemies
• The chief priests and Pharisees knew what Jesus did, but conspired against Him anyway (v. 47) – Why?
• They were concerned about their own position of power (v. 48)
• Sadly, people willfully reject the truth if it does not personally benefit them in this life
Righteousness is as Filthy Rags
Text: Isaiah 64:6

This verse is often used by those who believe salvation is by faith only (“...all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment...”). This lesson examines the verse in question, as well as what the Bible has to say on the subject of faith and works.

What the “Faith Only” Proponents Want This Phrase to Mean
- Works of righteousness will not save us
- To try to be saved by righteous works is to try to earn salvation
- Seeking to be saved by righteous works actually makes us unclean
- Salvation is wholly the work of God
- We must trust Him to save us, rather than trying to save ourselves

Remember the Context
- Prayer to God for mercy and help – recognized God’s greatness (v. 1-4), acknowledged their sin (v. 5-7), sought God’s help and favor (v. 8-12)
- Important point – God shows favor to those who work righteousness (v. 5)
- Another important point – they had sinned (v. 5), were taken away by iniquities (v. 6), and would not call on the Lord (v. 7)

What the Bible Teaches about Righteousness and Works (Contrast with First Point: What the “Faith Only” Proponents Want This to Mean)
- “Works of righteousness will not save us” – Man’s works of righteousness will not save (Tit. 3:5), but God’s works of righteousness as revealed in the gospel (Rom. 1:17) must be practiced (1 Jn. 3:7)
- “To try to be saved by righteous works is to try to earn salvation” – We cannot earn salvation (Rom. 3:23; 6:23); it is by grace (Eph.
2:8), but it is not unconditional

- “Seeking to be saved by righteous works actually makes us unclean” – example of the Pharisees is often cited (Mt. 23:23); they were unclean, not for righteous deeds, but for lawless deeds (Mt. 23:27-28)

- “Salvation is wholly the work of God” – God has given us conditions we must meet to be saved (Jn. 8:24; 2 Pet. 3:9; Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21)

- “We must trust Him to save us, rather than trying to save ourselves” – salvation is impossible without God/Christ (Acts 4:12), but we must work to save ourselves (Acts 2:40; Phil. 2:12)

**Conclusion**

- The demons believe, but do not obey (James 2:19)
- We cannot be saved by faith alone (James 2:24)
- Faith and works must go together (James 2:20-22, 26)
Rightly Dividing the Word

Text: 2 Timothy 2:15

Clear Distinction Between Old and New Laws
• Many people blur the lines between the OT and NT – yet the Bible presents a clear distinction between the two
• New and better covenant was coming (Jer. 31:31-34) – old was obsolete (Heb. 8:13)
• Old law was nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14)

Danger of Blurring the Lines Between the Two Laws
• Jesus cannot be our high priest under the old law (Heb. 7:11-14)
• We commit spiritual adultery by trying to submit to both laws (Rom. 7:2-4)
• Keeping part of the old law obligates us to keep all of it (Gal. 5:3)

Conclusion
• The NT is a better covenant (Heb. 8:6)
• The OT pointed to the NT (Gal. 3:24-25)
• Therefore, we must keep the OT in its proper place (Rom. 15:4) and follow Christ and His new law (Gal. 3:26-27)
Singing and Making Melody with Your Heart

Text: Ephesians 5:19

Singing’s Place in the Assembly
• Singing was done in assembly in Corinth (1 Cor. 14:26) – language implies a normal and necessary practice
• Singing is done to one another (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) – indicates a group; assembly included

Types of Songs
• Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs
• The focus is on the content

Purpose of Singing
• To praise God (Is. 12:5)
• To teach and admonish our brethren (Col. 3:16)
• Not for our own entertainment – this doesn’t mean we can’t enjoy it, but the goodness of our singing is not determined by how it sounds to us or how it makes us feel

Singing with Understanding
• Sing with spirit and understanding (1 Cor. 14:15) – principle: if we don’t understand what we sing, it’s useless (1 Cor. 14:16)
• Singing involves teaching and being taught – not understanding the message doesn’t help that (Acts 8:30-31)
• Pay attention to the words: Are they accurate? – some in our song books are not

Why Singing is Helpful
• Music is natural for humans (James 5:13)
• Meter helps us stay together – only act of worship with more than one person speaking at a time (1 Cor. 14:29-33, 40)
• Melody helps us to remember the words
Singing Only?
Text: Ephesians 5:19

What About Instrumental Music?
- Not authorized (Col. 3:16-17)
- “But it’s not condemned!” – principle of silence (Heb. 7:14)
- We only read of the first century church singing (Mt. 26:30; Acts 16:25; 1 Cor. 14:15)

Four Ways God Shows What Has Been Authorized
- Express command
- Direct statement
- Approved example
- Divine implication

Singing is the Only Music that is Authorized
- Singing is commanded (James 5:13) – instruments not commanded
- Statements about singing (1 Cor. 14:15, 26) – no statements about instruments
- Examples of singing (Acts 16:25) – no examples of instruments being used
- Implication of singing in assembly (Eph. 5:19) – instruments are never implied
- We would need just one of these to establish authority for instruments – but we have none

Quibbles
- Instruments in Old Testament (Ps. 150) – different law (Col. 2:14)
- Harps in heaven (Rev. 5:8; 14:2) – symbolic; metaphor for singing
- What about song books? – aids vs. additions; expedients must first be authorized (1 Cor. 6:12)
Sins of the Rich Man

Text: Luke 16:19-31

Focused Only on This Life (v. 19)
- Nothing wrong with riches (1 Tim. 6:17) or enjoying life (Eccl. 11:9)
- But these are not our ultimate goal (1 Tim. 6:9; Eccl. 7:2-3)
- If we’re not careful these can turn us away from God (Lk. 8:14)
- This world is temporary (1 Jn. 2:17) – we must lay up treasures in heaven (Mt. 6:19-21)

Ignored the Needs of Others (v. 20-21)
- Generosity and a willingness to help should be characteristics of God’s people (Gal. 6:10)
- Our responsibility is dependent upon our ability (2 Cor. 8:12)

Did Not Appeal to God (v. 23-24)
- Interesting that this man appealed to Abraham for mercy – God is the one to whom we should appeal for mercy (Rom. 9:15)
- Abraham was the father of the faithful (Rom. 4:11) – but our faith must be in God, not in Abraham

Believed He Was Superior to Others (v. 24)
- The Scriptures teach that all men are equal (Gen. 1:27; Acts 17:26)
- This doesn’t mean that one man can’t have others that serve or work for him (Col. 4:1) – but it must be in an arrangement where the worker/servant is fairly compensated (James 5:4)

Had No Faith in the Power of the Word (v. 27-30)
- We have everything we need in the word of God (Jn. 20:30-31)
- The gospel is the power of God for salvation (Rom. 1:16)
Solomon Anointed King
Text: 1 Kings 1:38-40

Forgiveness of God
- Solomon's mother was Bathsheba (1:11) – well-known for her affair with David (2 Sam. 11)
- Punishment – the child would die (2 Sam. 12:14)
- This child died (2 Sam. 12:15-18) – the next child, Solomon, did not (2 Sam. 12:24), but rather became king
- When God forgives, those sins no longer against us (Heb. 8:12)
- Whatever our sin is, we can obtain forgiveness (1 Tim. 1:15)

Presumption of Adonijah
- Rather than allowing David to select him, Adonijah presumed to make himself king (1:5)
- He recognized that he had no authority to do this (1:10) – tried to get away with it anyway
- David recognized the danger of presumptuous sins (Ps. 19:13)
- Acting presumptuously will bring condemnation (Mt. 7:21-23)

The Missing Prophet
- Solomon's administration (1:8) – Solomon (king), Benaiah (captain), Zadok (priest), Nathan (prophet)
- Adonijah's administration (1:7) – Adonijah (king), Joab (captain), Abiathan (priest) – Where was Adonijah’s prophet?
- Role of the prophet was to reveal God’s will
- Without a prophet, Adonijah was simply following the will of man rather than the will of God – no surprise that he failed

David’s Charge (1 Kings 2:1-4)
- Be strong and show yourself a man (2:2) – meet responsibilities
- Walk in the ways of the Lord (2:3) – obey His commandments
- If he would do this, God would fulfill His promises (2:4)
- If we obey, God will keep His promises (Heb. 4:1, 9-11; 5:9)
Some Lessons from Elijah

Text: 1 Kings 17:1

MIRACLES CONFIRM THE SPOKEN WORD (1 KINGS 17:17-24)

- Miracles were a sign that God was with the speaker and was confirming the message (Jn. 3:1-2; Mk. 16:15-20)
- Today we have inspired testimony to lead us to faith (Jn. 20:30-31; Rom. 10:17)

WHO ARE THE TROUBLEMAKERS? (1 KINGS 18:17-18)

- Elijah accused of being the “troubler of Israel” (v. 17) – many truth teachers are accused of causing strife and division
- Yet the blame for division lies with those who depart from God’s ways (v. 18)
- If division must occur, we must never be on the side that divides from Christ (Mt. 10:34-36; 1 Cor. 1:12-13)

FAITH IN THE CONTEST ON MOUNT CARmel (1 KINGS 18:19-40)

- He told the people to choose between the Lord and Baal (v. 21) – truth has nothing to hide; we do not need to conceal error, but expose it
- He allowed the prophets of Baal to go first (v. 22-25) – he was not concerned with the possibility that they might be successful
- He mocked their attempts (v. 26-28) – Mean? No, necessary (Pr. 26:5)
- He drenched the altar with water (v. 30-35) – if God could light a dry altar, He could light a wet one; God is not limited by certain conditions (Eph. 3:20)
- Afterward, he killed the false prophets (v. 40) – this was the lawful penalty (Deut. 13:5)
Dealing with Discouragement (1 Kings 19:4)

• Elijah felt alone and that his work was in vain (v. 14)

• We are not alone (v. 18) – besides others we may not know about, we have the Lord (Heb. 13:5-6) and a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us (Heb. 12:1)

• Our work is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58) – even if others reject us we have our reward (Rev. 14:13); but we never know when our labor will help others (1 Cor. 3:6)
Some Lessons from Elisha

Text: 1 Kings 19:16

Requested a Double Portion of Elijah’s Spirit (2 Kings 2:6-14)
- Not referring to a greater ability to prophesy or perform miracles, but it had to do with the desire to follow in the footsteps of his master and continue his work (Deut. 21:17)
- Those who have led us are worthy of honor (1 Tim. 5:17) – emulate them (Heb. 13:7), continue their work (2 Tim. 4:5-6)

Cursed the Youths (2 Kings 2:23-24)
- These youths did not respect Elisha – he was to be respected as a prophet of God (as Elisha respected Elijah) and as someone who was older (Pr. 20:29)
- Children must be raised to respect authority and love others (Eph. 6:4; Mt. 22:36-40)

The Widow’s Oil (2 Kings 4:1-7)
- Serving God is not about physical prosperity – seek heavenly things (Mt. 6:19-21); while those who proclaim the gospel may be paid (1 Cor. 9:14), that should not be the goal (Phil. 4:15-17)
- We need to use the blessings we have – God did not miraculously provide food, provided oil that could be sold for food; God blesses all (James 1:17), but does so differently for each person; we must use what we have wisely
- We must pay back our debts – Elisha did not talk about bankruptcy, default, or to seek for debt forgiveness; he told the widow to pay her debt

Healing of Naaman (2 Kings 5:1-14)
- When the great Naaman came to Elisha’s house, the prophet did not come out to meet him, but sent his servant to deliver the instructions (v. 9-10) – this made Naaman furious (v. 11)
- Truth is truth, regardless of the teacher (Jn. 17:17; 1 Cor. 3:6-7)
- We must have faith in God’s word, not in man (1 Cor. 2:1-5)
Studying the Bible
Text: 2 Timothy 2:15

Preparing to Study (Ezra 7:10)
• Remember that the Bible is from God (2 Tim. 3:16)
• Being from God, it is infallible (Ps. 19:7; Pr. 30:5)
• It is our standard (Mt. 28:20)
• We will be judged by it (Jn. 12:48)
• Whatever it teaches, we must accept (Jn. 2:5)
• We need humility (James 1:21)

Developing the Habit of Studying
• Study regularly (1 Timothy 4:13; Acts 17:11)
• The word must be within our hearts (Col. 3:16; Heb. 8:10)
• We must surround ourselves with it (Deut. 6:6-9) – personal study (2 Tim. 2:15), study with others (Pr. 27:17), listening to Bible teaching (Acts 17:11), assembling with the saints (Rom. 15:14)

Applying Your Studies
• God expects us to take what we learn and practice it (James 1:22)
• Parable of the wise man and foolish man (Mt. 7:24-27)
• Ethiopian eunuch’s study led him to obey the gospel (Acts 8:27-38)
Taking Stock

Where Have We Been?
- Born innocent, without sin (Eccl. 7:29)
- All who have reached an accountable age have sinned (Rom. 3:23)
- Sin separated us from God (Is. 59:2; Eph. 2:1-3)
- Without direction (Jer. 10:23)

Where Are We Now?
- Those who have not had their sins forgiven are still in the condition described above
- Christians have been saved by God's grace (Eph. 2:5, 8)
- We have been added to Christ's church (Acts 2:47)
- We are part of His kingdom (Col. 1:13)
- We are still on the earth (2 Cor. 5:1-2; Phil. 3:13-14)

Where Are We Going?
- Death (Heb. 9:27)
- Judgment (2 Cor. 5:10)
- From judgment, either to heaven or hell (Mt. 25:46)

How Does One Get to Heaven?
- Believe that Jesus is the Christ (Jn. 3:16)
- Put away sin from your life (Acts 11:18)
- Confess your faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9-10)
- Be baptized into Christ to have your sins washed away (Gal. 3:27; Acts 22:16)
- Remain faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10)

How Does One Get to Hell?
- Anyway he wants (Pr. 14:12)
Tell Us Plainly

Text: John 10:22-27

This Was Not a Sincere Request from Genuine Truth-Seekers
• The Jews asked Jesus to tell them plainly if He was the Christ (v. 24) – yet this request had already been granted (v. 25)
• Same thing happens today – man wants a plain answer, God has already told us in His word (1 Cor. 2:10)
• Problem is not a lack of clarity, but a lack of faith

Man Blames God for Lack of Clarity
• If we don't understand something, man often concludes that God was not clear – confusion is not from God (1 Cor. 14:33)
• Many claim we can't understand His word – Paul says we can (Eph. 3:4)
• Is it that man believes God is incapable of leading us to understanding? – this would be strange, considering that God made us in His image (Gen. 1:27)
• Is it that man believes God never intended for us to understand? – no, we're commanded to understand (Eph. 5:17)

Why People Don’t Understand
• Lack of faith in the fact that the word is truth (Jn. 17:17) and/or that we can understand it (Eph. 3:4)
• They are not of His sheep (Jn. 10:25-27)
• Bias in favor of people, traditions, and various preconceptions
• They don’t want to understand (Jn. 7:17) – understanding requires action (James 1:22)

Necessary Steps to Understanding
• Desire to hear (Mt. 11:15)
• Willingness to obey (Jn. 7:17)
• Humility (James 1:21)
• Time and effort dedicated to study (2 Tim. 2:15)
• Recognition of what God’s word is (Jn. 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16)
The Conquest of Jericho

Text: Joshua 6

Follow God’s Instructions (v. 3-5)
- Begins with faith (v. 2) – God had already given the people the city
- God’s instructions are simple – easy to understand (Eph. 3:4) and carry out (1 Jn. 5:3)
- God’s instructions are unconventional – different than man’s solutions, but God’s way is always best (Is. 55:8-9)
- By human reasoning, God’s way is foolish (1 Cor. 1:18)

Salvation is Open to All
- The Jews were God’s chosen people (Deut. 7:6), yet Rahab was saved by faith (Josh. 2:9-11; Heb. 11:31)
- Salvation was only in her house (Josh 2:17-19) – salvation today is only in the body of Christ (Eph. 5:23)
- Those who are saved must continue in obedience – Rahab continued with Israel (Josh. 6:25), but was bound to follow God’s law (Num. 15:15-16)
The Creation Account

Different Theories to Explain Genesis 1

• The Bible describes Creation as occurring over six consecutive, literal, 24-hour days – but this does not fit with “science” (1 Tim. 6:20-21), so man has come up with alternate explanations
• The gap theory – large gap of time between verses 2 and 3
• The day-age theory – each day was not 24 hours, but a long period of time (thousands or millions of years)
• Framework hypothesis – not meant to be literal; ancient text intended to insert theology into the origin of the universe
• False, myth – this comes from those who believe that God had absolutely nothing to do with the origin of the universe
• Why is Genesis 1 attacked? – turning it into fiction can erode and eventually destroy one’s faith

The Creation Account is a Foundation

• The beginning of Genesis is not a collection of expendable stories – it provides a foundation for the rest of the Scriptures (Ps. 11:3)
• For the Jews, the Sabbath law was based upon God’s work in Creation (Ex. 20:8-11)
• Jesus, in giving instructions about marriage, cited the law established at the beginning (Mk. 10:6)
• The Creation is a foundation of apologetics (Acts 17:23-31; Rom. 1:20)
• The beginning of Genesis is also where we find the beginnings of the gospel – first prophecy about Christ (Gen. 3:15)

What Happens When We Discredit the Creation Account?

• Casts doubt on the rest of the Bible – the Bible claims that it is all true (Ps. 119:160; 2 Tim. 3:16); if we reject Creation, why stop there?
• Allows one to reject God – either He doesn’t exist or He acted
differently than He told us (allowing one to reject His word)

- Leads to the erosion of moral standards – if God does not exist, or His word is not believable, what standard are we to follow? – man will follow his own way
The Faith of Daniel’s Friends
Text: Daniel 3

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were called before Nebuchadnezzar to explain why they refused to worship the king’s golden image, despite the threat of the fiery furnace.

**They Knew What Was Right**
- They did not claim ignorance of the law – they deliberately defied the king’s order
- God condemned idolatry (Ex. 20:2-6)
- “Our God whom we serve...” – their faith was more than just a belief in the existence of God; they served Him
- A dead faith will not be strong against opposition (Jn. 12:42-43)

**They Knew What God Could Do**
- They were convinced that God could deliver them – How?
- God was the Creator of the universe (Gen. 1:1)
- God had a history of delivering His people
- Their faith was not based upon personal experience, but upon what they had been taught (cf. Rom. 10:17)

**Their Faith Was Not Based upon God Doing Their Will**
- “But even if He does not...” – They recognized the possibility that God would allow them to suffer
- The fact that God had the ability to save them did not necessarily mean that He would
- God’s will is not the same as man’s will (Is. 55:8-9)

**They Were Willing to Endure Anything**
- They knew the king’s punishment and that God could save them if He chose to do so – no guarantees about the outcome
- They were cast into the furnace (v. 19-23)
- Ultimately, God delivered them (v. 24-26)
The Fourfold Foundation of the Gospel

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

Four Facts of First Importance
- Christ died – laid down His life for our sins (Jn. 10:18; Col. 1:22)
- He was buried – shows that His death was not a hoax (Mt. 27:57-60)
- He was raised – first fruits of those who are asleep, gives us hope (1 Cor. 15:20; 1 Pet. 1:3)
- He appeared – provided proof of His resurrection (2 Pet. 1:16; 1 Jn. 1:1-3)

Our Lives Must Conform to Christ’s
- Our death – sacrifice our lives (Rom. 12:1), become dead to sin (Rom. 6:6, 11-12)
- Our burial – water baptism (Rom. 6:3-4)
- Our resurrection – new life in Christ (Rom. 6:4; Col. 3:9-10)
- Our appearance – prove through our lives that we have put off sin and that we now follow Christ (Mt. 5:16; Rom. 12:2)
The Gospel of the Kingdom
Text: Matthew 4:23

The Announcement
- Jesus came preaching the gospel of the kingdom (Mt. 4:23)
- This had been planned for a long time (Dan. 2:44; Is. 2:2-4)

The Kingdom at Hand
- The establishment of the kingdom was close (Mt. 3:2; 4:17)
- If we are still waiting for the kingdom, as some claim, then Jesus was wrong

Establishment
- The kingdom is the church (Mt. 16:18-19)
- The kingdom would come in the first century and come with power (Mk. 9:1)
- The power would come with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5, 8)
- The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4)
- Christians in the first century were already in the kingdom (Col. 1:13) – we can be part of this kingdom today

Law
- “The law will go forth from Zion” (Is. 2:3)
- First gospel sermon preached in Jerusalem on Pentecost (Acts 2:14, 40)
- Those who received the word and were baptized continued in the apostles’ teaching (Acts 2:41-42)
- The apostles’ doctrine came from Christ (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; Mt. 28:18-20)

Becoming Citizens
- Jesus explained how in giving the Great Commission (Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:46-47)
- Peter explained on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37-28)
The Great Faith of the Centurion
Text: Luke 7:2-10

What prompted Jesus to say, “Not even in Israel have I found such great faith” (7:9)? Let us consider what Jesus calls “great faith.”

Great Faith Recognizes One’s Own Unworthiness (v. 6-7)
- We must understand our insignificance in Creation (Ps. 8:3-4)
- We must understand our state as sinners (Rom. 3:23)
- We must understand our inability to deal with our sins apart from God (Rom. 5:6, 8)
- We must understand our aimlessness without God (Jer. 10:23)

Great Faith Recognizes the Power of Jesus (v. 6-7)
- Jesus’ power over Creation (Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16-17) – already demonstrated His power to heal (Lk. 4:40)
- The power of Jesus’ word (Heb. 4:12)

Great Faith Recognizes the Authority of Jesus (v. 8)
- Jesus as one under authority (Phil. 2:5-8; Mt. 26:39)
- Jesus as one with authority (Mt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-23)
- Our responsibility to obey (James 2:17-18, 26; Col. 3:17)
The Hand of God Was Upon Ezra

Text: Ezra 7:6-10

Why was God with Ezra?

He Set His Heart
• Ezra was able to please God because he made a conscious decision to do so
• Pleasing God does not happen by accident (Mt. 7:13-14)
• We must make a daily choice to follow God or not (Lk. 9:23)

He Studied the Law
• He was “skilled in the law” (v. 6) – only comes through diligent study
• We study today to produce faith (Rom. 10:17) and to discover God’s will (1 Cor. 2:10-16)

He Practiced the Law
• God expects obedience from His people (Heb. 5:9)
• We are told to be more than hearers – be doers (James 1:22)
• The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous (1 Pet. 3:12) – we become righteous by practicing righteousness (1 Jn. 3:7)

He Taught the Law
• In order to teach, one must first have a good understanding of what he is teaching (1 Tim. 1:6-7)
• We must teach as Ezra taught (Neh. 8:8) – read, explain, cause them to understand
The Head Covering
Text: 1 Corinthians 11:1-16

Controversy about the head covering aside, this passage teaches some important principles of which we ought to be reminded.

The Standard
- Imitate Christ (v. 1)
- Hold firmly to apostolic traditions (v. 2)

Chain of Command
- God, Christ, man, woman (v. 3)
- This is about order, not about superiority/inferiority (Gal. 3:28)

Necessary Roles
- Any organization or collective group has to be organized (1 Cor. 12:14-31)
- Man and woman are not independent of one another (v. 11-12)

Distinct Roles
- Society has blurred the distinction between man and women
- “Does not even nature itself teach...” (v. 14-15) – nature itself consistently shows the distinct roles of males and females
- God is not pleased when we abandon His design for something contrary to nature (Rom. 1:26-27)

Dealing with Human Customs
- Avoid contention (v. 16; Rom. 14:1-3)
- Always remember that Scripture trumps custom/tradition (Rom. 3:4)
The Honest and Good Heart

Text: Luke 8:15

What the Honest and Good Heart Will Do

• Hear the word – interested in truth (Lk. 8:8), seeking answers (Mt. 7:7)
• Be honest – examine what is taught to see if it is the truth (Acts 17:11); examine himself (2 Cor. 13:5)
• Do what is right – completely (Acts 2:37-42), not just partially (Mt. 19:16-22)
• Hold fast the word – do this in faith (2 Tim. 1:13) recognize God’s way is best (1 Cor. 1:25); no compromise (Gal. 2:4-5)
• Bear fruit – done by doing good works (Col. 1:10) and following the teachings of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23)

The Honest and Good Heart Must Be Developed

• We can develop an evil/hard heart (Ex. 8:15; 1 Tim. 4:1-2)
• We can also develop an honest and good heart (Ezek. 18:14-17)
• Developing/maintaining an honest and good heart is essential for all – Christian and non-Christian

How to Develop an Honest and Good Heart

• Exercise humility (James 1:21)
• Love the truth (2 Th. 2:10)
• Seek to practice what is right (Josh. 24:15)
• Recognize the value of the word (Ps. 19:10-11)
• Recognize our accountability before God (2 Cor. 5:10)
The Justice of God
Text: Ezekiel 18

God Wants All to be Saved (v. 23, 32)
- Jesus came to save the world (Jn. 3:16) – God wants all to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9)
- But just because God wants all to be saved does not mean that all will be saved (Lk. 13:23-24)

We Are Each Accountable (v. 20, 30-32)
- We will be judged as individuals (2 Cor. 5:10)
- There is one judge (James 4:12) – the Lord God (v. 30)
- We will be judged by the Lord’s standard (Jn. 12:48)

We Cannot Blame Anyone for Our Actions (v. 2-3, 5-19)
- A righteous man can have a wicked son and vice versa (v. 5-19)
- Many practice evil, believing they are doing right – Why? They’ve been raised with a certain world-view – but this is not an excuse
- God can be found by those who seek for Him (Acts 17:27)

There is Always Hope (v. 21-23)
- If the wicked man turns from his sins, he can be saved
- God is patient (2 Pet. 3:9) – but His patience is not eternal (2 Pet. 3:10)

There is Always Cause for Warning (v. 24-26)
- If a righteous man turns back to sin, he will be lost
- There is no “once saved, always saved” concept taught in the Bible (Heb. 4:11)
- We must continue on the right path
The Lord’s Supper
Text: Matthew 26:26-29

Instutition
• By Christ
• During the time of the Passover (Mt. 26:2, 17)
• Shortly before Jesus’ death (Mt. 26:2)

Elements
• Unleavened bread (Mt. 26:17; Ex. 12:15) – represents His body
• Fruit of the vine – represents His blood; blood of the new covenant (Heb. 9:14-16, 22-24)

Purpose
• Commemorate the death of Christ (1 Cor. 11:26)
• Causes us to remember His death – bread (body): willing sacrifice (Jn. 10:17-18); fruit of the vine (blood): atonement for sins (Heb. 9:14; Eph. 1:7)

Where It Would Be Observed
• In the assembly (Acts 20:7; 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:17-20, 33-34)

When It Would Be Observed
• Time frame – from the establishment of the kingdom until the Lord’s return (Mt. 26:29; 1 Cor. 11:26)
• Frequency – every first day of the week is necessarily implied: standard practice (Acts 20:7), regular practice (1 Cor. 11:26), weekly assembly (1 Cor. 16:2)

How It Must Be Observed
• Partake in a worthy manner (1 Cor. 11:27-28)
The “Miracle” of Birth

Text: Genesis 4:1

Two Ways in which God Can Operate
- Directly – through miracles
- Indirectly – through providence
- Childbirth fits into the realm of providence, not the miraculous

Childbirth is Common
- This is not to say that conception and childbirth are automatic and without risk of complications
- But childbirth is common for all peoples, places, and generations since the beginning (Gen. 4:1)
- Miracles are uncommon – childbirth is common because of God’s providence

Self-Sustaining Creation
- Creation made to be self-sustaining (2 Pet. 3:4; Acts 14:15, 17)
- One of the things God ordained was that living things would reproduce after their kind (Gen. 1:12, 21, 24, 28)

God’s Help in Childbirth (Gen. 4:1) – What has God provided to make childbirth possible?
- God made male and female (Gen. 1:27)
- God gave women unique role of bearing children (1 Tim. 2:15)
- God also gave women the ability to handle childbirth – there would be pain (Gen. 3:16), but women would not be unable to handle it
Conclusion

- God plays a role in childbirth (Ps. 139:13; 22:9)
- Yet He is not involved in the miraculous creation of each member of the human race – instead, by His providential design, each one of us was formed in the womb and born
- God instructed man to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28) – through childbirth He has given the way for this to be done
- It is a “witness” of God (Acts 14:15, 17) – perfectly showing His wisdom and power to all generations and peoples
The Name of Jesus
Text: Isaiah 9:6

Wonderful Counselor
- Jesus is the great teacher (Mt. 7:28-29)
- His message is of divine origin (Jn. 12:49-50)
- His words lead to eternal life (Jn. 5:24; 6:68)

Mighty God
- Power of Jesus displayed in Creation (Rom. 1:20; Col. 1:16)
- While on earth, Jesus demonstrated power over creation (Mt. 8:26-27)
- The deity of Christ (Mt. 1:23; Col. 2:9)

Eternal Father
- Jesus was not a created being – He was in the beginning with God (Jn. 1:1-2)
- Why is He called “Father”? – He was one with the Father (Jn. 10:30) and showed us the Father (Jn. 1:18; 14:8-10)

Prince of Peace
- Jesus is head over His government (Is. 9:6-7)
- He came to bring peace – peace with God (Eph. 2:14-16), peace among brethren (Lk. 2:14), but not peace with the world (Mt. 10:34-36)
The Perils of a Strong National Government
Text: 1 Samuel 8:4-22

The Manner of a King
• He will take your sons to serve in his army and do his work (v. 11-12)
• He will take your daughters to work for him (v. 13)
• He will take your property (v. 14)
• He will tax your resources (v. 15)
• He will take your servants (v. 16)
• He will enslave you (v. 17)

The Divinely Ordained Role for Civil Government
• Punish evildoers (Rom. 13:3-4)
• Protect the innocent (Rom. 13:3)
• Provide and maintain a free environment (1 Tim. 2:2)

What Should We Expect as the Government becomes More Powerful?
• Expect less freedom
• Expect higher taxes – be prepared to work harder (2 Th. 3:7-10) and live with less (Phil. 4:11-12)
• Expect persecution – those who set themselves up as god persecute believers in the one true God (1 Pet. 4:12, 16); do not be intimidated (Acts 5:28-29)

What Do We Need to Do?
• Be subject to civil authorities (1 Pet. 2:13-16)
• Pray for those in power (1 Tim. 2:2)
• Take care of yourself (2 Th. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:8) – if at all possible
• Be willing to help others (Eph. 4:28) – don't expect the government to do this (Eccl. 5:8)
The Plumb Line
Text: Amos 7:1-9

Three Warnings of Destruction
• Locust swarm, vegetation destroyed – Amos protested, God changed His mind (v. 1-3)
• Fire, farm land destroyed – Amos protested, God changed His mind (v. 4-6)
• God would spare the people no longer – no protest from Amos (v. 7-9)
• Why did Amos not protest the final warning? – He had no basis for protest
• What was different about the final vision was the plumb line – a perfect and unmistakable standard

The Condition of Israel
• How they perceived themselves (Amos 5:18, 22; 6:1)
• How God perceived them (Amos 6:8; 5:23-24; 2:6-8)
• Why the difference? – They weren’t following God’s standard; this became evident when God put the plumb line in their midst

Fallible Standard for Us Today
• Religious leaders (Mt. 5:20)
• Denominations (1 Sam. 8:19-20)
• The world (Rom. 12:2)
• Fellow Christians (2 Cor. 10:12)
• Our conscience (Acts 23:1)

The True, Infallible Standard
• The plumb line we must measure up to is Christ and His word (Jn. 12:48)
• It is the perfect standard (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
• It is infallible (Jn. 10:35) and will not be changed later (Jude 3)
• We must reject man’s standard and embrace God’s standard
The Progression from Sound Doctrine to False Teaching

Text: 2 Timothy 4:2-4

What is Sound Doctrine?
- The word we are to preach, the truth (2 Tim. 4:2-4)
- The gospel (1 Tim. 1:10-11)
- The words of Christ (1 Tim. 6:3) and the apostles (2 Tim. 1:13)
- All of God’s word (Acts 20:26-27), only God’s word (1 Pet. 4:11), without changes (Gal. 1:6-7)

What is False Teaching?
- Opposite of truth (2 Th. 2:10-12)
- A perverted form of the gospel (Gal. 1:6-9)
- Determined by message, not by a preacher’s motives

How Does the Progression Occur?
- Start with sound doctrine, backed up by book, chapter and verse (BCV)
- Right message, but BCV is replaced by stories, human wisdom, and misused Scripture
- Eventually false teaching is introduced – How? – through stories, human wisdom, and misused Scriptures
- The “style” is the same as those who make the right points without properly using Scripture – therefore it is hard for people to see the difference

How is This Stopped?
- Use the style of preaching found in the NT (1 Pet. 4:11; Acts 17:2-3)
- Do not be afraid to talk about all that God has revealed (Acts 20:26-27)
- This may not be popular (2 Tim. 4:2-4), but it is God’s way (2 Tim. 4:5)
The Suffering Servant

Text: Isaiah 53

He Did Not Have the Appearance of a King (v. 2)
- Man often judges superficially by appearance (1 Sam. 16:1, 6-7)
- God expects us to judge righteously (Jn. 7:24)

Man of Sorrows (v. 3)
- Jesus lived as a man (Jn. 1:14) – necessary to fulfill God’s plan (Heb. 2:14-15)
- In His life He suffered (Mt. 8:20; Heb. 4:15)
- Abandoned by those closest to Him (Mt. 26:31-35, 56)

He Bore Our Griefs and Sorrows (v. 4)
- Inspired commentary (Mt. 8:16-17) – healing sickness, casting out demons
- Through miracles He proved who He was (Jn. 3:1-2; Acts 2:22)

Yet We Esteemed Him Stricken (v. 4)
- Jesus proved that the Father was with Him (Jn. 11:41-48)
- Yet at the cross, many believe the Father was against Him (Mt. 27:38-44)
- This was the perception, but was not the reality – the Father was with Christ, even on the cross (Mt. 27:46; Ps. 22:1, 6-8, 22-25)

Why Jesus Had to Die (v. 5-11)
- For our transgressions and iniquities (v. 5) – sin separates us from God (Is. 59:2)
- All like sheep have gone astray (v. 6) – all sinned (Rom. 3:23)
- Not because of His sin – He had none (v. 9; 1 Pet. 2:22; Heb. 7:26)
- The Lord was pleased to crush Him (v. 10) – part of the plan (Acts 2:23)
- To satisfy the Father (v. 11) – divine requirement of a blood sacrifice (Heb. 9:22)
He Bore the Sins of Many (v. 12)

- Meaning of “bore” same as in verse 4 – He removed our sins
- Many – How many? The world (Jn. 3:16; Tit. 2:11)
- Interceded for the transgressors – reconciled man back to God (Is. 59:2; Eph. 2:16-18)
The Widow’s Mite
Text: Mark 12:41-44

The Rich Were Not Condemned
- Jesus made a comparison between the rich and the poor widow – but He was not condemning the rich
- We cannot put all of our money into the treasury – God requires a portion (1 Cor. 16:2)
- There are other things God expects us to do with our money (2 Th. 3:8-10; 1 Tim. 5:8; 6:18)
- However, one can contribute and still be condemned (Acts 5:1-2) – we must give with the right attitude (2 Cor. 9:7)

The Widow Was Commended
- She made a real sacrifice – gave everything to God
- She did not make excuses – if she gave nothing, it is unlikely that those familiar with her circumstances would have looked down on her
- She put her trust in God – this is the only way one can give this generously (2 Cor. 8:1-5)

Lessons for Today
- Ask yourself: Are you giving what you can? – no one else can answer this question for you
- Don't compare yourself with others – God judges us according to our ability (2 Cor. 8:12)
- Put spiritual things first (Mt. 6:19-21)
- Live by faith (2 Cor. 5:7)
The Work of the Holy Spirit
Text: John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26-27; 16:7-15

Who is the Holy Spirit?
• Not some mystical force or influence
• He is a person – Jesus used *He*, not *it*, to refer to the Spirit
  (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 8, 13, 14, 15)

Who is Jesus Talking to?
• The apostles

What Would the Holy Spirit Do?
• Provide help/comfort (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7) – How? [following points]
  • Described as the *Spirit of truth* (14:17; 15:26; 16:13)
  • Bring the apostles into remembrance of what Jesus taught (14:26)
  • Testify about Christ (15:26)
  • Convict the world of sin, righteousness, judgment (16:8)
  • Guide the apostles into all the truth (16:13)

Why Would This Be Necessary?
• We have to know God’s will to be saved (2 Th. 1:8)
• We cannot know God’s will unless He reveals it to us (1 Cor. 2:10-13)

Is it Necessary Today?
• Provide help/comfort? – done through revelation then and now; revelation now complete (Jude 3)
• Remind us of what Jesus said? – we didn’t hear Jesus in the first place; the apostles were eye witnesses (Acts 1:8; 1 Jn. 1:1-3)
• Testify of Christ? – we have the gospel; what more information do we need?
• Convict of sin, righteousness, judgment? – has God changed the standard since the first century?
• Guide us into all the truth? – we have all truth in the gospel (Col. 1:5)
• So is it necessary for the Holy Spirit to work with us directly as He did with the apostles? No!

How Does the Holy Spirit Operate Today?
• Not through visions and dreams
• Not through a “small, still voice”
• Not through signs and miracles
• Through the world He revealed – that is the instrument He uses today (Eph. 6:17)
Themes of the Cross
Text: 1 Corinthians 1:18; Luke 9:23

The themes associated with Christ’s cross extend to ours as well.

**Love**
- “God so loved the world...” (Jn. 3:16)
- Jesus laid down His life for us (Jn. 10:17-18)
- Our following Christ and enduring all things must be done in love (Jn. 14:15; Mt. 22:36-40)

**Grace**
- Man's condition before the cross (Rom. 5:8)
- The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23); sin separates man from God (Is. 59:2)
- Grace makes life and reconciliation possible
- Atonement – Jesus’ sacrifice has delayed the wrath of God, giving us time to repent (Rom. 2:4-6)

**Faith**
- In the garden, Jesus prayed that the Father’s will be done (Mt. 26:39, 42, 44)
- Jesus committed His spirit to the Father (Lk. 23:46)
- Look to the example of Jesus, the author of our faith (Heb. 12:1-3)

**Obedience**
- Jesus showed an example of obedience on the cross (Heb. 5:8) – He took on the form of a servant (Phil. 2:5-8)
- We are told to take up our cross (Lk. 9:23) – requires obedience
- We will be saved if we obey (Heb. 5:9)
- Obedience is the natural result of true faith (James 2:17-19)
Things That Are More Valuable Than Gold

Word of God (Ps. 19:10; 119:72)
- Valuable because it comes from God (2 Tim. 3:16) – He Himself is more valuable than gold (Job 22:24-25)
- Addresses the biggest problem in the history of man – sin (Rom. 3:23; 6:23); provides the only solution (Acts 4:12)
- It will never become outdated (Jude 3; Gal. 1:8-9)

Wisdom (Pr. 8:19; Job 28:12-15)
- Provides life and prosperity (Pr. 3:13-18)
- Delivers us from evil (Pr. 2:10-22)

Blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:18-19)
- Pure and perfect sacrifice (Heb. 9:14, 28; 7:26-27)
- Provides forgiveness (Eph. 1:7)
- Poured out for many (Mt. 26:28) – the whole world (Jn. 3:16)

Faith (1 Pet. 1:7)
- Faith is a product of the word (Rom. 10:17) – already has value
- Faith saves us (Heb. 11:6; Rom. 5:1)
- Faith will be tested (2 Tim. 3:12) – remain faithful (Rev. 2:10)

Heaven (Mt. 6:19-21)
- Treasures on earth are temporal (1 Tim. 6:17; 2 Pet. 3:10)
- Treasures in heaven are eternal (1 Pet. 1:4)
- Description of heaven (Rev. 21:18-21)

Our Soul (Mt. 16:26)
- This is the only part of us that is eternal
- Our bodies decay (2 Cor. 4:16-18); flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom, we must be changed (1 Cor. 15:50-53)
- At death our soul returns to God, we will be judged (Eccl. 12:7, 13-14)
**Three Branches of Government**

Text: Isaiah 33:22

**Judicial Branch** – “*The Lord is our judge*”
- Christ will judge each of us (2 Cor. 5:10)
- He is fit to be our judge – unbiased (Acts 10:34-35); knows and understands the law perfectly (Jn. 1:14)
- He has the exclusive right to judge us (Col. 2:16-17, 20-22)

**Legislative Branch** – “*The Lord is our lawgiver*”
- Christ delivered His law (1 Cor. 9:21)
- We must obey His word (Mt. 28:20; 2 Tim. 1:13; Col. 3:17)
- His law is perfect (Ps. 19:7), unchanging (Gal. 1:8), simple (Eph. 3:4)

**Executive Branch** – “*The Lord is our king*”
- Jesus claimed to be a king (Jn. 18:36-37)
- His kingdom is here today (Mt. 16:18-19; Mk. 9:1; Col. 1:13)
- He has all authority (Mt. 28:18)

**The Outcome** – “*He will save us*”
- No human government can save us (Is. 31:1)
- Salvation found only in Christ (Acts 4:12)
To Live is Christ, To Die is Gain
Text: Philippians 1:21-24

To Live is Christ
• Similar point in Galatians 2:20
• We must be crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:3-6)
• Fruitful labor (Phil. 1:22)
• Help others (Phil. 1:24)
• Live worthy of the gospel (Phil. 1:27)

To Die is Gain
• Nothing wrong with enjoying the blessings of this life (Eccl. 11:8) – but keep things in perspective
• God has promised a great reward after this life (Jn. 14:2-3; Rev. 14:13; 21:4)
• The only way we can say, “to die is gain,” is if we are truly living for Christ (Mt. 7:21-23; Amos 5:18-20)
• We must be prepared to meet the Lord in judgment (2 Pet. 3:14)
From the beginning there has been strife between Isaac and Ishmael. It continues today between Jewish and Arab peoples. This has led to some misconceptions.

**Misconceptions About the End: Is Armageddon Coming?**

- Common concept of Armageddon – armies of Christ and armies of nations gathered in Israel; one final, great battle
- Bible depiction of Armageddon – enemies of Christ gathered at Har-Magedon (Rev. 16:13-16)
- Symbolic language, but clearly not the end (Rev. 16:21) – enemies weren’t completely wiped out

**When Will the End Come?**

- At an unknown time (Mt. 24:36, 42)
- Without signs or warning (1 Th. 5:2-3)

**Misconceptions About Israel: The Promised Land**

- God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham’s descendants (Gen. 17:7-8) – this promise was conditional (Gen. 17:9)
- The land promise was fulfilled (Josh. 23:14) – Joshua reminded the people that their keeping the land was also conditional (Josh. 23:15-16)

**Misconceptions About Israel: God’s Chosen People**

- The Jews were God’s chosen people (Deut. 7:6-8)
- But the Jews rejected God (Mt. 27:22-26; Jn. 19:15) – so God cut them off (Rom. 11:17, 20)
- Who are God’s chosen people today? (Gal. 3:26-29; Rom. 2:28-29)
- A Jew can be one of God’s chosen people today, but only if he comes to Christ (Rom. 11:23)
Misconceptions About Israel: Restoration of the Kingdom

- Before His ascension, the apostles asked Jesus about the restoration of the kingdom (Acts 1:6) – many people are still waiting for this
- Yet Jesus was clear that His kingdom was *spiritual* in nature (Jn. 18:36)
- The Jews rejected Christ because He wasn't bringing the kind of kingdom they expected – many also misunderstand the nature of the kingdom today
Untimely Deaths in the Book of Acts

Judas (Acts 1:15-20)
- Judas’ death recorded earlier (Mt. 27:3-5), but discussed here
- His death fulfilled OT prophecy (Acts 1:20; Ps. 69:25; 109:8)
- He was a disciple (Acts 1:17) – Christians can betray Christ just as Judas did (Heb. 6:6)

Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)
- Follows accounts of great benevolence by Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 4:32-37)
- Do not place too much value on the things of this world (Mt. 6:19-21)
- Benevolence is good and necessary (Gal. 6:10)
- Don’t compare yourself with others – do what you are able to do (2 Cor. 8:1-5, 12)

Stephen (Acts 7:54-60)
- First martyr for the cause of Christ
- He was one of great character (Acts 6:3, 15)
- He boldly preached the gospel (Acts 6:9-14; 7:51-53)
- We may face persecution (1 Pet. 3:13-17) – trust in God (1 Pet. 4:19)
- Have a spirit of forgiveness (Acts 7:60)
- Death is temporary (“he fell asleep” Acts 7:60) – so do not fear (Mt. 10:28)

Herod (Acts 12:20-23)
- Herod had already demonstrated himself to be an enemy of the gospel (Acts 12:1-4)
- The people praised him as a god (Acts 12:22) – they looked to him as their source of blessings rather than God (James 1:17)
- Herod accepted their praise, rather than rejecting it as Paul and Barnabas did later (Acts 14:11-15, 18)
- Therefore, he died a slow and painful death
“It Is a Ghost!”

- Faith is necessary (2 Cor. 5:7) – but it is not baseless (Heb. 11:1)
- They had reason to conclude that they were seeing Jesus – already saw Him perform miracles (Mt. 14:13-21) – but this was not their conclusion
- They concluded that they saw ghost – Why? No good reason
- God gives a reasonable basis for faith – yet many reject this and believe something unreasonable (ex: Creation vs. Evolution)

Peter’s Initial Faith

- He investigated – “Lord, if it is you…” (Rom. 10:17; Acts 17:11)
- He waited for the command – did not act presumptuously (Ps. 19:13; Col. 3:17)
- He obeyed – the test of faith (James 2:18)

Peter’s Lack of Faith

- Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus (v. 29) – the others did not
- But Peter did doubt – despite his initial faith, Jesus rebuked him (v. 31)
- Why did he doubt? – he lost focus (v. 30; Heb. 12:1-2)

Deity of Christ

- The disciples concluded that Jesus was the Son of God (v. 33)
- Paul said that in Christ was the fullness of deity in bodily form (Col. 2:9)
- This passage backs up that claim – Jesus performed a miracle (v. 25) and accepted worship (v. 33)
Washing the Disciples’ Feet

Text: John 13:1-17

Jesus Knew His Place (v. 3)
- God was His Father
- All things had been given to Him
- He had come from God
- He was going back to God

Knowing His Place, He Washed the Disciples’ Feet (v. 4-5)
- Jesus should have been the one being served
- But He humbled Himself, took the form of a servant (cf. Phil. 2:5-8)

Peter’s Lesson (v. 6-10)
- At first he didn't want Jesus to wash his feet, then he wanted Jesus to wash more than just his feet
- Lesson: Be content with the Lord’s plan – don’t go beyond or fall short of it

He Knew Judas Would Betray Him (v. 11)
- Shows His omniscience – even in the flesh, Jesus exhibited the characteristics of Deity (Col. 2:9)
- He still washed Judas’ feet – shows His love for all

Jesus’ Example (v. 12-17)
- Jesus was their Teacher and Lord – yet He performed this act of service
- We must serve one another
- A slave is not greater than his master – if Jesus did something, we are not too good to do it too if that’s what He requires
- We will be blessed if we do these things
**We Need More Men Like Amos**

**Text:** Amos 1:1

**Amos Was a Regular Guy**
- He was a sheepherder (1:1) – common occupation
- He was “not a prophet” (7:14) – he certainly prophesied (7:15), but was not formally recognized or received wages as a prophet
- He was not a “son of a prophet” (7:14) – he received no formal training for the role of a prophet
- God needs regular people to do His work – those who are too proud to be just “regular people” will not come to Christ (1 Cor. 1:26-29)

**Amos Supported Himself**
- Amaziah threatened Amos (7:12-13) – his message was not welcome; if Amos wanted to receive support (“eat bread”), he would have to go elsewhere
- Prophets at this time were often supported by the government (1 Kings 18:19) – Amos wasn’t a prophet in this sense, he was a herdsman (7:14); his livelihood was not threatened
- Important for preachers to be able to support themselves (Acts 18:1-5) – when support does not exist for truth teachers, there is a temptation to compromise when a preacher is unwilling/unable to support himself (2 Tim. 4:2-5)
- Important that we work to support ourselves (2 Th. 3:6-10; 1 Tim. 5:8) – if possible, don’t rely on others (2 Th. 3:8); some are unable to support themselves and God has made provisions for them – but those who are able to support themselves should do so rather than try to get something for nothing
Amos Spoke the Words of God

- Amos revealed God’s word (7:15) – we must speak God’s word today as it has been revealed (1 Pet. 3:15; 4:11)
- Amos spoke without fear – when threatened he didn’t back down (7:15; Mt. 10:28)
- Amos spoke without compromise – he refused to change an unpopular message (Gal. 1:6-9)
- Amos spoke without “political correctness” – was not afraid to offend people with God’s word (4:1; 7:17) like so many are today
What Happened After Saul’s Conversion?

Text: Acts 9:18-26

He Took Food and Was Strengthened (v.19)
- Had been fasting and praying (v. 9, 11) – sign of godly sorrow
- After baptism, his fast ended (v. 19) – Why? His sins were forgiven in baptism (Acts 22:16)
- Important – this came after baptism, not after prayer

He Began to Proclaim Jesus (v. 20)
- This shows conviction
- Also shows a desire to save others (Rom. 10:1)
- We must be able to give an answer (1 Pet. 3:15)

He Suffered Consequences (v. 23-26)
- Becoming a Christian does not guarantee an easy life (Lk. 9:23)
- Saul faced persecution from his former brethren (v. 23-25) – others will notice that we are different (1 Pet. 4:3-4)
- Saul faced skepticism from his new brethren (v. 26)

He Tried to Associate with the Disciples (v. 26)
- Saul was already a member of the universal church (v. 18; Acts 2:47)
- But it was important that he be part of this local church (Eph. 4:16; Heb. 10:24--25)
What Happened at the Cross?

Darkness Fell Upon the Land (Mt. 27:45)
- In Scripture, darkness is used to depict evil, sin, separation from God
- Man is in darkness and without hope when he rejects Christ (Jn. 8:34-36; Heb. 10:26-29)

The Veil of the Temple was Torn in Two (Mt. 27:51)
- Veil separated the holy place from most holy place (Ex. 26:33)
- Inside the veil – presence of God (Ex. 25:21-22)
- Jesus is our high priest (Heb. 3:1) – went beyond the veil into the presence of God (Heb. 9:24)
- We have access through Christ (Heb. 4:14-16)

The Tombs Were Opened (Mt. 27:51-53)
- Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life” (Jn. 11:25)
- He conquered death so that we could also overcome death (Heb. 2:14-15)
- Jesus will raise all those who conform to His death (Rom. 6:3-5)

What These Events Show Us (Jn. 14:6)
- Jesus is the way – into heaven, into the presence of God
- Jesus is the truth – He is the light of the world (Jn. 8:12), showing the truth (Jn. 18:37)
- Jesus is the life – hope of the resurrection to eternal life
What Have You Done?

Text: Genesis 3:13; 4:10

No Sin is Hidden from God
- God knew their sin even though they tried to hide from Him (Gen. 3:8) or deny it (Gen. 4:9)
- We cannot hide anything from Him (Heb. 4:13)

We are Responsible for Our Actions
- Adam and Eve both tried to shift the blame for their sin (Gen. 3:11-13)
- Each one is punished for their own sins (Gen. 3:14-19)

Sin has Consequences
- Spiritual – separation from God (Gen. 3:23-24; 4:16; Is. 59:2)
- Physical – pain, hardship, death (Gen. 3:16-17-19, 23-24); mistreatment (Gen. 4:16; cf. Pr. 13:15)
- For others – no tree of life (resulting in death), hard work, pain in childbearing

God Will Judge Us
- God passes judgment on all parties involved – serpent, Eve, Adam (Gen. 3) and Cain (Gen. 4)
- God will judge us one day (Rom. 2:16)
What Is Truth?
Text: John 18:37-38

What is truth? It depends on our perspective. Truth can be...

**Comforting or Uncomfortable**
- The word of God is intended to comfort us (1 Th. 4:18)
- The truth is uncomfortable for some – it convicts us of sin (Jn. 16:8), exposes all of our flaws (Heb. 4:12-13), calls us to sacrifice (Lk. 9:23)

**Encouraging or Discouraging**
- The word of God is able to build us up (Acts 20:32); provides encouragement (Rom. 15:4)
- Discouraging to others when it’s different than they expect and requires a change in attitude and life (Mt. 19:16-22)

**Unifying or Divisive**
- Unity is to be based upon God’s sword (Jn. 17:20-21)
- Many believe teaching the truth is divisive; instead they opt for unity in diversity

**Inclusive or Exclusive**
- Truth is inclusive – the gospel is for all (Mk. 16:15)
- Many think it is exclusive because not all will be saved (Mt. 7:13-14) – problem is not that truth is exclusive, but that they have excluded themselves from the truth

**Good News or Bad News**
- Message of grace, salvation, forgiveness, hope, and eternal life
- The same message for others is a message of death (2 Cor. 2:15-16) – speaks of judgment and punishment (Rom. 2:16; 2 Th. 1:7-9)
What Judas Brought to the Garden

Text: John 18:1-3

It is interesting to see what Judas brought to the garden when he betrayed Jesus, particularly in light of what Jesus brought to the world.

What Judas Brought to the Garden

• Roman cohort – the military of the world empire of the day; would later be overthrown (Dan. 2:44)
• Officers from the chief priests – those who should have been the spiritual leaders of the people; but they were not helping them (Mt. 9:35-36)
• Some of the Pharisees – supposedly the sect that followed God’s law most strictly; yet they added to God’s law and neglected His instructions (Mt. 15:7-9; 23:23)
• Lanterns and torches – necessary because they came at night; darkness provides a cover for evil (Jn. 3:19-20)
• Weapons – instruments used to capture a dangerous criminal (Lk. 22:52)

What Jesus Brought to the World

• Divine kingdom – spiritual in nature (Jn. 18:36); would endure forever
• Better priesthood – sinless; sacrificed His own life; continues to hold His priesthood (Heb. 7:24-27)
• Law of liberty – free from sin (Rom. 6:22) and from following the commands of men (Col. 2:16)
• Light of the world – if we follow Him we walk in light (Jn. 8:12)
• Sword of the Spirit – not carnal weapons, but divinely powerful (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:17)
What Makes Churches of Christ Different Than Denominations?
Text: Romans 16:16

Note: This is not intended to endorse every congregation that wears the name “church of Christ.” For the purpose of this outline, the “churches of Christ” are those who are faithfully following the NT pattern.

Not Based on Our Name
- Many churches of Christ do not follow the NT pattern (Rev. 3:1)
- This is not to say that the name of a congregation is not important – the churches Paul associated with were called “churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16)

Not Based on Our History
- History can provide a context and background – but cannot be used to determine right and wrong
- The past is to stay in the past (Phil. 3:13)
- We will be judged for what we do, not what others of past generations have done (Ezek. 18:20)

Based on Our Message
- The church is to uphold and proclaim the truth (1 Tim. 3:15)
- No additions (2 Jn. 9), no subtractions (Acts 20:27), no changes (Gal. 1:6-7)

Based on Our Work
- Work of the local church – teach the truth (1 Tim. 3:15) and edify the body (Eph. 4:16)
- Benevolence authorized to a limited extent (Acts 11:29; 1 Tim. 5:4, 16)
- Man has invented all sorts of other programs and ministries – but by what authority? (Col. 3:17)
Made Up of Christians

• Anyone can claim to be a Christian – doesn’t mean they are
• How did people become Christians in the NT? – they believed, repented, confessed, and were baptized (Acts 2:38; 8:12, 36-38; 9:4-5, 9, 11, 18; 22:16; 16:30-34)
• Once one becomes a Christian, he must join a local church that will do the right work (Acts 2:41-42)
What the Cross Represents
Text: Galatians 6:14

The Cross of Christ
- A symbol of death (Acts 2:23)
- A symbol of rejection (Mt. 23:37; Jn. 19:15)
- A symbol of humiliation (Heb. 12:2)
- A symbol of rebellion (Jn. 19:12)
- A symbol of submission (Phil. 2:8)

Our Cross (Lk. 9:23)
- A symbol of death (Rom. 6:3-6, 11)
- A symbol of rejection (1 Pet. 4:12, 16)
- A symbol of humiliation (1 Pet. 4:4)
- A symbol of rebellion (Acts 5:29)
- A symbol of submission (Lk. 9:23; Rom. 6:16-18)
When Disaster Strikes


When disasters occur (terrorist attacks, hurricanes, earthquakes, accidents, etc.), people wonder if/how God was involved, and if these events were a sort of divine punishment against the victims/nation. It is important to know why these events happen and what they can teach us.

Why These Things Happen – Some Possibilities

- Divine act of judgment – Bible examples (flood, Sodom, ten plagues, captivities, etc.); each was announced beforehand by God (Gen. 6:13; 18:17-21; Ex. 3:19-20; Hos. 8:8-10; Jer. 25:8-11); no such prophecy exists today, so we must be wary of attributing such things to God (1 Pet. 4:11)
- Actions of evil men – there will always be wicked people who cause suffering for others; government ordained to deal with this (Rom. 13:4); but sometimes government is the force behind the evil (Rev. 17:5-6; Lk. 13:1)
- Happenstance – time and chance affect us all (Eccl. 9:11); people want to believe that all things happen for a reason, but this is just not the case (Lk. 13:4)
- Consequences of foolish or sinful behavior – our choices/actions impact our lives, positively or negatively; choices/actions of others can affect us as well

What These Events Teach Us

- Life is uncertain – our lives are but a vapor (James 4:13-16); therefore, we must set our minds on things above (Col. 3:2)
- Obedience to God is a priority – with these disasters in mind, Jesus told them to repent (Lk. 13:3, 5); obedience is not optional (Jn. 14:15; Heb. 5:9)
- God will ultimately judge us – all unrepentant sinners will suffer the same fate (Rom. 6:23); prepare for judgment (2 Cor. 5:10)
Who Will Go To Heaven?

Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

Judgment Belongs to the Lord
• He will judge perfectly (Ps. 19:9)
• He will judge righteously (Ps. 19:9)
• He will judge fairly (Acts 10:34-35)
• He will judge according to His divine standard (Jn. 12:48)

Not All Will Be Saved
• Many will be lost (Mt. 7:13-14)

Who Will Be Lost?
• Those who do not know God (2 Th. 1:8)
• Those who do not believe (Jn. 8:24)
• Those who do not obey (2 Th. 1:8)
• Those who turn from Him and go back into sin (2 Pet. 2:20)

Who Will Be Saved?
• Those who know God (1 Th. 1:8)
• Those who believe (Rom. 5:1)
• Those who obey (Heb. 5:9) – repent (Acts 3:19), confess (Rom. 10:9-10), baptism (Mk 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21)
• Those who remain faithful (Rev. 2:10)
Why the Interest in Judgment Day Predictions?

Text: Matthew 24:36

They Want to Know What God Knows

- This is how the first sin was committed – Eve wanted to have knowledge that was exclusive to God (Gen. 3:1-6)
- We need to be content with what God revealed (Deut. 29:29)
- God has given us everything pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3) and has equipped us to every good work through His word (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- If God hasn’t revealed something, it’s because we don’t need to know it

They Desire Exclusive Knowledge

- Having knowledge that others don’t have can lead to arrogance (1 Cor. 8:1) – desiring knowledge that others cannot have is a product of arrogance
- We are to share our knowledge (Mk. 16:15; Acts 1:8)
- We are to cause others to understand (Eph. 3:4; Neh. 8:8)

They Want a Deadline

- Non-Christians want to wait to obey the gospel – yet this is urgent (Acts 16:33; 22:16)
- Christians want to wait to repent of any sin in their lives – but we are not to wait another day (2 Cor. 6:1-2)
- Some want to put off telling others about the gospel – but we must always be ready to teach (1 Pet. 3:15)
- Some want to quit doing any work – some of the Thessalonians were doing this, but it was unacceptable (2 Th. 3:11-14)
- God wants us to go about our normal lives, yet in a state of preparedness (2 Pet. 3:10-11, 14)
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