



**A DIVINE VISITATION
AND OTHER SERMONS**

J.C. CRABTREE

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DIVINE
VISITATION
AND
OTHER SERMONS
BY DR. J. C. CRABTREE



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DEDICATION

I am dedicating these revival messages to the many Pastors, District Superintendents, Evangelists, and Church Leaders with whom I have ministered from coast to coast. Also, I want to commend the dedicated laity who supported the revival emphasis.

I give special tribute to my wife, Esther, whose support made it possible for me to carry out my call to be an Evangelist.

All glory, honor and praise be to our Blessed Lord and Savior.

FOREWORD

For more than half a century, J. C. Crabtree has ministered as an evangelist. His “Voice of Evangelism” has been heard in revivals, camp meetings, city crusades, conferences and colleges. Ministers and the laity have requested that he present his messages in print. To honor those requests, he has published several of his sermons in booklet form. This book contains seven of those sermons.

Hopefully, the truth will be circulated to keep the Church from falling prey to the errors designed by the devil to destroy the effectiveness of a spiritual Church. Let us contend for the faith and truth once delivered to the saints.

Let us pray that the Lord will use the printed truth to promote the Kingdom of God.

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SERMON ONE

**THE GREATEST NEED
IN THE CHURCH**

**A
DIVINE
VISITATION**

A DIVINE VISITATION

Scripture Reading: Revelation 3:14, 4:1

Text vs. 20 “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in.”

INTRODUCTION

I have just read the last of the seven letters of our risen Lord to the churches of Western Asia Minor. Each letter opens with a salutation. It mentions the church, then names the city in which the church is located. An example is found in verse 7. It reads, “*To the church IN Philadelphia.*” In speaking of the church, Christ assumes His rightful role as the head of the church. It is His church. It belongs to Him and He exercises authority over it.

REVELATION THAT IS STARTLING

I will call your attention now to a revelation that is startling in the salutation of this last letter. It is revealed in verse 14. It reads, “*To the church of the Laodiceans.*” You will note Christ does not name the city in which this church is located as He did in the previous letters. Instead He names the inhabitants who are called “Laodiceans.” If you will study this salutation closely, you will discover Christ has **DISCLAIMED** Himself as the head of this church. This is not Christ’s church. It is the Laodiceans’ church. This church does not belong to Jesus. It belongs to the Laodiceans. When members usurp the authority of Christ as head of the church, then Christ will **DISASSOCIATE** Himself from that church. Why did Christ **DISAVOW** Himself as head of this church? Perhaps the reason is this. In His letters to the other churches, Christ reproved them for their improprieties, but also He found something in each of the churches that was commendable and He praised them for it. But in this last letter He found nothing praiseworthy in this church. So He **DISOWNS** the church and **DEPARTS** from it. What you have left is a church without Jesus Christ. How many Christless churches are there in the world today? Matthew 5:13 could be applied to the church. Jesus said, “*Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.*” Such was the plight of the church of the Laodiceans.

Thirty years prior to the writing of this letter of condemnation, the Apostle Paul discerned a declining trend in this church. He sent a sharp message of rebuke to Archippas, the bishop of Laodicea. It is documented in Colossians 4:17. It reads, “*Say to Archippas, take heed to the ministry you have received in the Lord and see that you fulfill it.*” While we do not have direct evidence that Archippas failed to fulfill the ministry of the Lord, on the other hand, church history reveals every church eventually becomes the product of its ministerial leadership. A compromising church leadership produces a corrupt church membership.

HISTORICAL SETTING

Now, if you will look at the historical setting of Laodicea, you will see how the materialism of the city influenced the spiritual decline of the church. Laodicea was **reputed** to be a great financial and banking center. It was the wealthiest city in Asia Minor. The fabulous wealth made much of the populace financially independent. In 61 A.D. a great earthquake devastated the city. The Roman government offered them monetary funds to rebuild their city.

The Laodiceans proudly refused. Instead they rebuilt their city with the resources of their own wealth. The Laodiceans were so proud of their material prosperity, they were not aware of their spiritual poverty. Laodicea was **respected** as an outstanding textile manufacturing center. The sheep that grazed in the region were known for their soft black wool. From this wool they mass produced outer garments that were raven black and had a sheen to them. The demand was such they were exported to the known world. The Laodiceans were so proud of their garments they did not realize they were spiritually naked. Laodicea was **renowned** as a prominent medical center. Their doctors were so popular the profiles of their faces were minted upon the coins. The medical school in Laodicea was noted for two things ... ointment for the ears and salve for the eyes. The Laodiceans were so proud of their medical expertise that they did not recognize they were spiritually blind.

PROPHETICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Now if we are to fully comprehend what Christ was communicating in this letter, we need to have some understanding of the **prophetical significance** of the church of the Laodiceans. Each of the seven churches in the Book of Revelation represents a particular period in the history of the church age. The church of the Laodiceans represents the special segment beginning approximately 1900 A.D. and continues to this present moment. We are now living in the final phase of the church age. There are no other periods to follow this one. This is indicated by the fact the **Rapture** is scheduled to take place immediately following the end of this Laodicean church age. If you will look at the close of this letter, you will note the next verse says, "After this I looked and behold a door was opened in heaven and a voice said, "Come up hither and I will show thee things that shall be hereafter." This is a **prophetical preview** of the coming rapture. From this verse on through the Book of Revelation, there is no mention of the church on earth, because the raptured church will be with Jesus in heaven.

TEXT

With this background of information, I am going to lift verse 20 out of this letter as a text. It reads, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to Him and will sup with him and he with me.*"

There are three vital areas of truth in this text that are worthy of our consideration.

First, I would have you acknowledge the:

I. Visitation of Jesus

He said, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock.*"

Next, I urge you to listen to the:

II. Voice of Jesus

He said, "*If any man will hear my voice.*"

Finally, I will encourage you to experience the:

III. Victory in Jesus

He said, "*If any man will open the door, I will come in and sup with him and he with me.*"

CENTERED IN CHRIST

I trust you realize all there is in our system of church government with its assemblies,

committees and departments; all there is in our educational institutions and missionary endeavors; all there is in our creeds, doctrines, sacraments and various modes of worship. All of it is absolutely **worthless** unless it is **centered** in Jesus Christ and **redounds** to His glory. It is written, “*Christ is our all and He is in all.*” Consequently, all things **commence** in Christ; all things **continue** in Christ, and all things **conclude** in Christ. Christ is the ultimate consummation of all **things** pertaining to God.

I. DIVINE VISITATION

With this in mind, for some time now I have recognized the greatest need in the church is a **heaven-sent** divine visitation of the presence of the Lord. I mean the kind of visitation where heaven comes down and glory fills the soul. Just like the “foretaste of glory divine” that Fanny Crosby sang about. Just like the peace that passeth all understanding that Paul wrote about. Just like the joy unspeakable and full of glory that Peter preached about.

We need a divine visitation that will transport us spiritually out of this earthly realm into the heavenly realm. We need to get into the secret place of the most High God where we can sense the presence of a Holy God who loves us with an everlasting love. We need to provide a place for a period of time in His presence where we can get away from the disturbances of the devil, away from the distractions of sin, and away from the disruptions of this wicked world.

I am talking about the kind of visitation that will lift us in ecstasy above our personal problems, pressures, and petty differences. We need to be elevated to sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus in spiritual things.

Now—in a few instances, on some rare occasions, I have experienced such divine visitations from the presence of the Lord. I have been privileged to be in church services where the glory of the Lord fell upon the people like manna from heaven. Be that as it may, while others were getting blessed, some would sit tight-lipped, arms folded, teeth clenched, staring wide-eyed straight ahead as if they had been born dumb, refusing to open their mouth in praise to God. Say—why don’t you dare demonstrate a religious recklessness, rip the door off of its hinges, throw the key away, as it were, and let the Lord of Glory come in. Such a divine visitation will transform you to the extent your family and friends may not recognize you.

I never know when or where or in what manner the Lord will come with such a divine visitation. But I do know this ... when He comes, He always brings the atmosphere of the heavenly world with Him. There emanates from His presence the immortal joys of the celestial city of God.

I have an insatiable desire, a deep longing within my soul for such a divine visitation. If by some means, I can make my way through the clutter that the devil has caused in the church in these last days, and if in some way, I can get my hand on the door and get it open, we will experience these divine visitations once again in the church. If the Blessed Lord would be pleased to honor us with such a visitation, I want Him to know He won’t have to stand outside the door of my heart for one minute. I will swing the door wide open and let the Lord of Glory in!

THE LORD REVEALS HIMSELF

If we are to experience such a divine visitation, we need to know something about the **person** whose presence brings such glory into our midst. Always when the Lord stands ready to **reveal** Himself to us, He expresses some **quality** in His character. We see this in verse 14. He says, “*These things saith the **amen**, the faithful and true **witness**, the beginning of the **creation of God.***” First, He is the **Amen**. Second, He is the **Witness**. Third, He is the **Creator**.

This is the only place in Holy writ where you will find the word amen used as a proper noun. It is a sacred title ascribed to Jesus. It simply means Christ speaks the truth and so be it. His word is forever settled in heaven. What He has to say about your works; what He says about your spiritual condition is the last word on the subject.

STORY

Do you recall the story that Jesus told about the man who slipped into the wedding without the wedding garment on? He must have made a lot of excuses to the people present for his disrespectful condition. When the Lord saw him, He said, "*How camest thou in without the wedding garment?*" The Bible says, "*The man stood speechless.*" The excuses the man used to get by with the people were not sufficient when he stood before the Lord.

In the great day of reckoning, at the final settlement of all things, the excuses you have used for your spiritual condition will count as nothing before Christ. He will have the last word of judgment upon your condition, for He is the Amen, and He will be the benediction of the whole matter.

WITNESS

Christ is not only the Amen; He is the Witness. There are two aspects of Christ as the witness. First, He is the faithful witness. He knows who you are and what you are. At all times He knows where you are, what you are doing and why you are doing it. He will be a faithful witness either for or against you in the day of judgment. He is not only the faithful witness; also, He is the true witness. He will tell you the truth about your spiritual condition. He will not tell you more than you need to know; He will not tell you less than you need to know; He will not add anything to it. He will not subtract anything from it. He will not flatter your works or exaggerate your condition. He will simply tell you the truth.

CREATOR

Christ is not only the Amen and the faithful and true Witness; He is also the Creator. Colossians 1:15 says, "*Christ is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature; for by Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers. All things were created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church. Who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence.*"

Small wonder David could say, "*He knoweth our frame and remembers we are but dust.*" He recognizes every ailment and affliction you suffer. He understands every flaw, fault and defect you have because He is the Creator.

Now—there He stands at the door—the very person of Christ who is the Amen, the Witness and the Creator.

SHOCKING TRUTH

I want to pause at this point and have you prepare your mind for some shocking truth. Observe the position of Christ. He is standing outside the door of the church of the Laodiceans. Christ, the rightful head of the church is positioned outside the door of the church. Christ who belongs in the midst of the church is shut outside the door of the church. He must have been in this church at one time; otherwise, it would not have been called a church. There is no evidence

they excommunicated Him from the church. Evidently He walked out of His own accord. How long Christ had been absent from this church, we do not know because they did not miss His presence. When the church is not **accustomed** to living **in the presence of the Lord**, then that church is not **aware of the absence of the Lord**. The Laodiceans were going through a **semblance** of religion without the *subject* and **substance of Christianity**; namely, the **Person** and the **Presence** of Christ.

They were performing all of their religious services, activities and functions without Christ. In the light of this shocking truth, I am prepared to make a shocking statement. Most of the churches today can do ninety percent of all they are doing now without Christ. Before you take exception to this statement, let the record show the church of the Laodiceans was performing one hundred percent of their religious exercise without Christ. When Christ departed from this church, the members did not leave. They continued attending the church even though Christ was absent.

II. VOICE OF JESUS

In view of this shocking truth, we need to earnestly heed the **Voice of Jesus**. There are three phases of our Lord's voice we must listen to. Note first **His voice of clarification**. Jesus said, "*I know thy works.*" This is something the Laodiceans did not know. They were ignorant of the condition of their works. To clarify their works, Jesus said, "*I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold.*" That is a strange statement coming from the Savior. There is some significant truth in that statement. We will come back to it. Next, Jesus said, "*I would thou wert hot. So, then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.*" The only incident of record where Christ ever became ill happened when he was confronted with a lukewarm church. It made him so sick to his stomach, He had to vomit.

To clarify the wretched condition of their works, Christ employs the figure of drinking a beverage. If the beverage is cold, it is **refreshing**; if it is hot, it is **stimulating**; but, if it is lukewarm, it is **nauseating**. So Jesus is saying, "Your works are not refreshing; they are not stimulating. They are lukewarm. Your works are sickening. They are nauseating. They are displeasing to me."

STRANGE STATEMENT

Let us go back to the **strange statement** of the Savior. He said, "*I would thou wert cold.*" Some have misinterpreted the Lord to mean He would prefer that we be cold and formal rather than be lukewarm. This is not what Jesus meant at all. I cannot envision Christ preferring that any of us be cold and formal. What did the Savior mean when He said, "*I would thou wert cold?*" The Greek text will help us. It indicates we are to be cold to the freezing point. It simply means we are to be freezing cold in our **actions, attitudes and affections** toward the sin of this wicked world. To use an expression, you have to give the sin of this world the **cold shoulder**. Next, Jesus said, "*I would thou wert hot.*" The Greek text indicates we are to be hot to the boiling point. I searched for a word in the English language that would be an equivalent. I came upon the word **fervent**. The dictionary definition of the word means **to boil**. There are several specific areas in the scripture which require that we be **fervent**.

CHARITY

I Peter 4:8 requires that we be fervent in our **charity** toward one another. Can you

characterize your charity as being fervent toward others? Can you say you are long-suffering, patient, kind and forbearing with others? Do you truly rejoice in the success and prosperity of others? Do you respect their achievements and honors? Or has the temperature dropped to a lukewarmness until now you are short-tempered, impatient, unkind, discourteous, rude and jealous of others?

LABORS

Colossians 4:12 requires that we be fervent in our **labors**. Paul spoke of his work for the Lord as a labor of love. Would you say your labors for the Lord are motivated by love? Do you delight in doing His will? Or have you become so lukewarm until now you regard these labors as a duty, a drag, even drudgery? Do you perform these labors just because you have been elected to an office, and it is expected of you? Do you carry out these labors for the sole purpose of receiving honor and credit?

LOVE

I Peter 1:22 requires that we be fervent in our **love** toward others. It has been recorded when the world observed the early Christians, they said, "Behold how they love one another." Would that be a proper assessment of your love today? Or has the love that was once boiling hot become lukewarm so that now you criticize, gossip and begrudge one another?

PRAYER

James 5:16 requires that we be fervent, boiling hot in our **prayer life**. Can you claim your prayer life is spontaneous? Do you pray always with all prayers and supplications in the Spirit? The Apostle James said, "*Elijah **prayed** in his prayer.*" He didn't simply mouth words. He became earnest and passionate in his praying. Can you say your prayer life is marked by concern, compassion and intercession for others? Or has your praying become so lukewarm until it is just a collection of words and phrases to impress the people who are listening? Do you only pray when you are called upon in a worship service? Have you ceased the practice of secret prayer? How much of the twenty-four hour day do you give to praying? If you were called upon to give a public account of how much you have prayed for revival, would it be embarrassing?

SERVICE

Romans 12:11 requires that we be fervent in our **service**. The major portion of our service is performed in the sanctuary as we assemble for worship. Do you enter each service with the fervent expectation of receiving a blessing from the Lord? Do you truly approach the service anticipating spiritual things from God? Or do you come in and sit down like a mechanical robot, having programmed your mind to tolerate the service with the sequence of a hymn, the choir, a prayer, the offering, a sermon, impatiently waiting for a doxology that is as impersonal and technical as a readout on a computer?

SPIRIT

Acts 18:25 requires that we be fervent, boiling hot in our **spirit**. Call to remembrance the time when you were converted. Do you remember the excitement and thrill of it all? Do you remember when you embraced the **first love** of your salvation?

Do you recall the joy of soul and the deep settled peace that calmed the turmoil within your heart? Do you remember the praise that flowed freely from your lips?

Look at what you were then and compare it with what you are now. Have you moved at such a distance from the Lord you no longer sense the nearness of His presence? Has the Lord found it necessary to say, “*I have something serious against you because thou has left thy **first love**?*” The peace you once possessed, has it passed away? Has the joy disappeared? Has the expression of praise become silent?

If you have become lukewarm in any of these areas where you are required to be fervent, then Christ counts you as a member of the Laodicean church. Furthermore, you are a willing participant in the prophecy of this materialistic, worldly-minded, Christ-forsaking lukewarm Laodicean church age that is hastening this wicked world to the judgment of God.

VOICE OF CHASTISEMENT

Notice next our Lord’s voice of **chastisement**. In His chastisement, He said, “*You are wretched.*” They professed to be righteous, but they were self-righteous. Jesus said, “*You are miserable.*” They claimed to be satisfied and secure. It was a self-satisfaction. They had a false security.

Next Jesus struck a sensitive area. He said, “*You are poor.*” They retorted, “*We are rich.*” They were rich in the wealth of this world, but they were poor in the treasures of heaven. This church measured success by the amount of money raised for all purposes. This is a false measuring stick for any church. When will we realize we cannot win the lost with the gold of this world? It takes the God of heaven to convict and convert the sinner to Christ. Jesus said, “*You are not only poor, but also you are naked.*” They replied, “*We are increased with goods. Can’t you tell by the high fashion and fine fabric of our apparel that we are prosperous?*” They measured their success by the accumulation of worldly goods. The early church evaluated their success by the addition of souls that were saved. Acts 2:47 says, “*The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*” We add another building, another piece of equipment, another committee and boast of our success, even though we haven’t added a single convert to the church. Jesus said, “*You are not only wretched, miserable, poor and naked, but you are so spiritually blind you can’t see your lost condition.*” How did they react to this chastisement? They assumed an attitude of arrogance as if to say, “Now, Lord, our people have been educated in the highest institutions of learning. They are very perceptive. They have an insight into the contemporary affairs of the world. And, Lord, we have analyzed and reviewed your ministry of rebuke and chastening. It is the consensus of the committee that it is negative and counter-productive to our strategy of growth. It is embarrassing to new people who attend our services. It injures our image in the community. So, Lord, as of this moment, we are terminating your ministry of rebuke and chastening. Also, your message of repentance is irrelevant. How dare you come and preach repentance to us. We are the church. Take your message of repentance to the slums and preach it to the downtrodden and the outcasts. We are the church; we don’t need your message of repentance.” In that attitude of arrogance, they terminated the ministry of our Lord saying, “*We have need of nothing.*” What a pretentious claim. John 15:5, Jesus said, “*Without me you can do nothing.*” This church boasted they had everything. But since they didn’t have Jesus, so far as God was concerned, the Laodicean church had absolutely nothing.

VOICE OF COUNSEL

Note next our Lord’s voice of **counsel**. He said, “*I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire.*” This church became so worldly-minded that they were completely commercial in

their thinking. In order to get their attention, Christ had to make a commercial appeal to them. He said, *"I counsel thee to buy of me."* This commercial appeal presents a real problem in the matter of the exegesis of the scripture because you know you cannot buy salvation. Remember Peter said, *"We are redeemed not by corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus."*

In Acts, Chapter 8, Simon, the sorcerer saw the mighty works of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of the Apostles. He offered to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit to be used for commercial means. Peter rebuked him saying, *"Thy money perish with thee for thou has thought the gift of God may be purchased with money."*

How are we going to resolve the problem of the commercial appeal of Christ saying, *"I counsel thee to buy of me."* The prophet can help us. Isaiah 55:1, He says, *"Ho, everyone that thirsteth come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price."* How can you buy something without money and without price? Consider Christ's appeal in the Greek text.

It reads, *"I counsel thee to buy from me."* Salvation comes directly from the Lord. Christ is the ultimate source for salvation. It is written, *"There is no other name under heaven whereby men can be saved but through the name of Jesus."* So the thought here is this; with your gold you can go to the city and barter with the merchants for your worldly goods, but salvation comes from me. I volunteered to give my life as a ransom for your sins. With my blood I purchased your salvation. I am the only source for your salvation. I gave myself completely for you. Therefore, if you receive salvation from me, you must in exchange give yourself completely to me. Without money and without price, the transaction of salvation is just that simple. Jesus said, *"I counsel thee to buy from me gold tried in the fire."* This is not the corruptible gold of the world. It is **salvational faith**. This is indicated by Peter. He said, *"The trial of your faith is more precious than gold that perisheth though it be tried by fire."* The Lord can resolve the problem of spiritual poverty by transforming your impoverished soul with the bountiful riches of His grace.

Next Jesus says, *"I counsel thee to buy from me white raiment that thou mayest be clothed and the shame of thy nakedness doth not appear."* In the scriptures, nakedness is the symbol of a sinful and undone condition. White raiment represents the robes of salvation. We are to be clothed in His righteousness. The Laodiceans stood proudly before the Lord, as if to say, look at our garments. Their fashionable garments were as filthy rags of self-righteousness and couldn't cover their spiritual nakedness. Jesus said, *"I counsel thee to accept my anointing for your eyes that thou mayest see."* The Laodiceans were so proud of their doctors and the invention of eye salve, but they could not restore the sight of the blind. Jesus said, *"I stood before them as the Great Physician."* He had at his disposal the "healing balm of Gilead." It will resolve your plight of spiritual blindness.

EXPRESSION OF LOVE

In His voice of counsel, Christ endeavors to explain the purpose of His ministry of rebuke and chastening. In so doing He expresses an aspect of His divine love that is seldom recognized and accepted. He said, *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."* To fully appreciate the extent of the Lord's love, you need to consider the character and the conduct of this church.

They were wretched, miserable, spiritually poor, naked and blind. They were proud, boastful, and self-righteous. They were dishonest and hypocritical. In an irreverent manner they talked back to the Lord. What a contemptible crowd! What a despicable congregation!

What an unlovable church! And yet, Christ said, *“I am rebuking you; I am chastening you because I love you, and it is not my will that any of you perish.”* What was the response? With a haughty attitude they said, *“We have need of nothing.”*

To fulfill the responsibility of His ministry to them, Christ said, *“Be zealous.”* The Greek word is earnest. Until you get in earnest about your lukewarm condition, you will never be delivered from the Laodicean syndrome that Satan has seduced you into accepting.

REPENT

Next Jesus says, *“Repent.”* Christ will never remove the **requirement of repentance** to accommodate a lukewarm church because **repentance** is the only road to recovery that leads to **victory in Jesus**.

VICTORY IN JESUS

Before we consider the **victory in Jesus** promised in the text, we need to be made aware of an **alarming** point of prophecy. In His letters to the other churches, Christ made His appeal to the **corporate** church, the collective body of members. For the most part, they responded to His ministry of rebuke and chastening. They returned and repented. They were restored, but when the Laodiceans said, *“We have need of nothing,”* Christ, who knows the future, saw their decision was final. Consequently, it became fatal. It is a tragic fact in church history when a denomination, a local church, a minister or member finally rejects the love of the Lord in His ministry of rebuke and chastening, **they never return to the Lord**.

Jesus knew the Laodiceans would never repent and return to Him. **And they didn't**. So from that point on, Jesus changed His appeal. Instead of appealing to the corporate church, Jesus limited His appeal to the **individual**. You can see that in the text. Jesus said, *“If any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in.”* A man is not a corporate body of church members. A man is an individual. This limited appeal to the individual is reinforced by the use of the personal pronoun throughout the text. Listen to it carefully. *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man will open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me.”*

The point of prophecy is this. In the last days of this lukewarm Laodicean church age, Jesus knows that they will not receive His ministry of rebuke and chastening. They will not repent and return to Him. Therefore, Christ is no longer making His appeal to the corporate church. The lack of the manifestation of a revival spirit in most of the churches in your city is evidence. The Lord is no longer making His appeal to the corporate church. Instead, Christ has limited His appeal to the **individual**, the man or woman who has not finally and forever shut the Savior out of their life. If you are among the merciful to whom Christ is making His appeal, then you can experience the victory in Jesus promised in the text. Jesus said, *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in.”* The Savior has made it so simple. All you have to do is say, “Lord, the door of my heart is wide open. So come in and take your undisputed right as the Lord of my life.” “Lord, the door is open, come in and make any modification in my lifestyle you deem necessary.” “Lord, the door is open, so come in, not just for a hurried snack to get by, but come for a time of fellowship and relaxation.” The Greek word for “sup” really means “supper,” the final meal of the day. So the thought is this, “Lord, the weary labors of the long day have ended. There is no rush, no hurry, so come in for a time of nourishment and fellowship.” The fellowship that we experience with the Savior now is the appetizer for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb that we will enjoy throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity.

Now if you will **embrace** the **preciousness** of that **promise**, I will show you the **possibility** of the **promise** indicated in verse 21. Jesus said, *“To him that overcometh.”* Here Christ implies it is possible to be an overcomer in the midst of this materialistic, worldly-minded, Christ-forsaking, lukewarm Laodicean church age. You can overcome to the extent that you can say a loud “Amen” when the minister preaches the truth. If the Spirit comes upon you, you can stand and express joyful praise to the Lord. As the Lord leads, you can give a spontaneous testimony to being saved and sanctified.

I refuse to allow this lukewarm Laodicean church age to stifle my “Amens,” subdue my joyful praise, silence my praying, suppress my emotions or suffocate me spiritually. By the grace of God, I am determined to be an overcomer!

If you will **express** the **possibility** of the promise, determined to be an overcomer, then you can **experience** the **possession** of the **promise**. Christ has presented the possession saying, *“Just as I have overcome the world, sin and Satan, death, hell and the grave and am now sat down with the Father on the throne, likewise if you will be an overcomer, I will grant you the privileged possession of sitting down with me in my throne.”*

Consider what the **possession** of the **promise** consists of. Revelation 21:5 says, *“He that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new. And He said unto me, write; for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, it is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that **overcometh** shall inherit all things; and I will be His God; and he shall be my son.”*

SERMON TWO

HALF-BAKED RELIGION

“Ephraim is a cake not turned.
Strangers have devoured his strength,
and he knoweth it not.”—Hosea 7:8, 9

HALF-BAKED RELIGION

Text—Hosea 7:8, 9

“Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people. Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not.”

INTRODUCTION

It is downright disgusting to take a big anxious bite into a cake fresh from the oven and discover it is half-done. A cake that is half-baked. This was the deplorable condition of Ephraim, a tribe of Israel who once made a covenant with God they would serve Him faithfully. Now Ephraim is in a backslidden condition. This unique description by the prophet suggests the title for this message:

HALF-BAKED RELIGION

Half-baked religion is the resultant state of an improper development. It portrays a person who had a perfect beginning, but developed improperly and suffered a perverted ending. Demas, a co-laborer with the Apostle Paul is a tragic example. Demas had a perfect beginning with Christ, but developed improperly. He defected from the Kingdom of God back to the kingdom of the world. In a statement of grief, Paul is forced to speak of his latter end as follows: *“Demas hath forsaken me having loved this present world.”*

DEFECTION TO THE WORLD

Defection to the world is the first step downward that led to Ephraim’s demise.

I. DEFECTION

The prophet said, *“Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people.”* Ephraim had unusual charm and charisma to mingle with the people of the world. In the process of mingling, he forfeited spiritual life. Ephraim made alliances with heathen nations and associations with people who were foreign to the ways of God. He made agreements with people who were strangers to the Word of God. This eventually led to his downfall.

SPIRITUAL ADULTERY

Hosea, the prophet, said, *“Ephraim committed whoredoms daily.”* When any church flirts with the pleasures of this world, courts the ways of the world, carries on an affair with the world, God Almighty charges that church with committing spiritual adultery. James 4:4 confirms this. He said, *“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not friendship with the world is enmity with God and whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”*

ECCLESIA

The Greek word for church is ecclesia. It literally means the called-out ones. The true church consists of people who have been called out of the sin of this world, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and sanctified holy. They stand without blame or blemish before God in

holiness.

STATELY SHIP

The church has been described as a stately ship cutting the waters of the sea. The ship is designed for the sea. It is built to survive the storms of the sea. The ship in the sea is proper and right. But when the sea gets into the ship, that is wrong and will end in tragedy. Likewise, God has ordained the church, the good ship Zion, be in this world of sin. Christ has crafted the church to overwhelm the storms of sin and the threatening waves of worldliness. The church in this world of sin is proper and right, but when the sin of the world gets into the church, that is wrong and will prove to be disastrous. Jesus prayed for the church. He said, “*Sanctify them, they are not of the world even as I am not of the world. I pray thou shouldest not take them out of the world, but keep them from the evil thereof.*”

RELIGIOUS HUMBUG

Some college students decided to play a prank on their old college professor who had made a lifetime study of bugs and insects. They took the head of one bug, the body of another bug, the legs of another bug and glued them together as if nature had formed it that way. They took their fabricated species of bug to the professor. They said, “We have discovered a strange species of bug. Can you classify it for us?” The professor looked at the bug. A puzzled expression came on his face. He adjusted his glasses and looked intently through his bifocals. A sly grin spread across his lips. With a twinkle in his eyes, he said, “Gentlemen, this is a humbug.” A religious humbug is one whose head belongs to the church, whose heart belongs to the world, whose hands and feet are instruments of the devil... just a religious amalgamation.

OPEN HEARTH OVEN

The prophet said, “*Ephraim is a cake not turned.*” According to Palestinian custom, they baked their goods in open hearth ovens. They poured the dough in the oven, then watched it carefully. At the proper time, they turned it over so it would bake evenly all the way through. If they failed to turn it at the proper time, it became hard and crusty on one side and soft and mushy on the other side. This is what the prophet meant when he said, “*Ephraim is a cake not turned.*” This is typical of many church members who had a righteous beginning with Christ, but failed to turn to holiness at the proper time and have developed improperly. They have become hard and crusty toward holiness. Soft on standards. Mushy toward true doctrine.

HALF-BAKED RELIGIONISTS

These people deserve to be labeled half-baked religionists. Half-baked religionists promulgate half-truths. The most damnable heresies Satan has foisted upon the church contain half-truths.

DISCUSSION OF HALF-TRUTHS

II. DISCUSSION

At this point I want to discuss in depth some of the half-truth I have encountered in my ministry.

1. FAD OF RELIGIOUSNESS WITHOUT FORCE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Half-baked religionists favor a mere fad of religiousness without a moral force of righteousness. Neo-orthodox theologians, liberal ministers, and compromising churches have debased Christianity to a religious fad. Hollywood celebrities, television entertainers, and politicians profess to be born again Christians, but continue in their lifestyle of sin.

Hollywood has commercialized this fad of religiousness by producing religious films entitled, "David and Bathsheba," "Samson and Delilah," "Jesus Christ Superstar," "The Last Temptation of Christ," "The Prodigal Son." The acceptance of these films by the public, emboldened Hollywood to make a comedy out of God. They produced films entitled, "Oh, God," "In God We Trust" featuring a comedian. Dr. Paul S. Reese, commenting on these films in *Christianity Today* said, "They are historically inaccurate, distorting scriptural facts." They are sacrilegious and border on blasphemy.

This fad of religiousness has influenced the music and singing in the church. It is called "religious rock and roll," "Gospel rap." A church in Phoenix sings a song entitled, "Holy Ghost Hop." It is a sad indictment against the church when the world cannot distinguish between the music in the church and the music at the disco night club lounge. Prominent personalities stand on the stage in Las Vegas spewing forth obscenities, singing lyrics that suggest immorality, then turn about and accept a guest appearance to the super church, stand in the sacred pulpit, put on a pious act and sing, "Amazing Grace." Jesus said, "***Blessing and cursing cannot come forth from the same fountain.***" This fad of religiousness has produced a pseudo born-againism that is devoid of any spiritual life. Bishop Werner of the Methodist church said, "We have reached a time when God is optional in our religion. We have exchanged success for righteousness, comfort for holiness, the Pearl of Great Price for costume jewelry."

The Tyndale Publishing House has released a statistic indicating over fifty percent of Americans profess a born-again experience. This statistic would be encouraging if it were not compared with the criterion of *I John 3:9* which reads, "***Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin. And he that doeth unrighteousness is not of God.***"

2. PROGRAM OF EVANGELISM WITHOUT THE POWER OF A HOLY GHOST REVIVAL

Half-baked religionists prefer a program of evangelism without the power of a Holy Ghost revival. They frown with disapproval upon the preaching of sin, restitution, repentance, holiness, the second coming, unpardonable sin, death, hell and the judgment. Instead they solicit preaching that is soothing and satisfying. They scorn the preaching that is searching and scorching. They seek a ministry that will amuse the humor of the people. We need preaching that will arouse the sinner with conviction. They care more for the church's pleasurable happiness than for its personal holiness. Therefore, they have taken out the upper room and brought in the supper room. They have turned the prayer room into a play room. They are more concerned about winning the game than winning the lost. They attempt to glamorize the Gospel. We need galvanized truth that will penetrate the comfort zone of the members that are at ease in Zion.

In the early days of the church, we did not have many members. Out of necessity, every minister became an **evangelizer**. As our membership increased, then came the **organizers**. Eventually the organizers, fearful of losing control, subdued the evangelizers. The organizers seemed to forget had it not been for the evangelizers, there would not be anybody to organize. When the organizers became outdated, in came the **promoters**. After the promoters exhausted their catchy slogans, then came the **motivators**. When the fantasies of the motivators came

crashing down to a hard world of reality, it created a vacuum. This opened the door for the opportunists. They invaded the church with **entertainers**. The church is now in the throes of an entertainment craze. What a sad departure from the model revival and pattern of evangelism recorded on the day of Pentecost. The church, consisting of one hundred twenty members met in the upper room for a ten-day holiness convention. The record indicates they were all sanctified holy. That is the only time in church history when one hundred percent of the members were entirely sanctified. They burst from the upper room into the streets. They preached in the Spirit, prayed in the Spirit, testified in the Spirit, witnessed in the Spirit, and when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together. The manifest presence of the Holy Spirit is the greatest crowd-getter. This was evident in the early days of the church. When the multitudes came together, they did not call a church board meeting and send to Rome to procure a renowned personality to come and entertain them. Instead God selected a simple, ordinary fisherman named Peter. According to the educational world of academia, he was ignorant and unlearned, but he had been converted, sanctified holy and called of God to be a minister. As Peter stood before the multitudes, he didn't crack jokes until the crowd bent over with belly laughter. Instead he assumed a serious posture. In solemn tones he preached repentance. God always honors the preaching of repentance with conviction. The record says they were pricked in their hearts. Peter's preaching made them feel miserable. His preaching made them feel uncomfortable. To put it in the words of a contemporary critic, Peter's preaching laid a guilt trip upon the heart of every one of those sinners. It concerns me when unsaved people come into our services and leave comfortable and secure in their sins. Peter shouted to the crowd, "**repent.**" They were under such heavy conviction they cried, "***Men and brethren, what shall we do?***" Can you imagine Peter saying, "Just a minute, let me check my appointment book and see what hour I have free and we will arrange for a psychological consultation"? When will we ever realize you cannot counsel sin? If you have not repented of your sins, don't waste your time or money going to a psychiatrist. There is only one remedy to resolve sin. It is repentance. As a result of Peter's preaching that made them feel miserable, uncomfortable and guilty, the record says ... that is what I look at. I don't listen to evangelism propaganda. It is usually exaggerated. The record says three thousand souls were converted. If anybody has a better method than that, please explain it to us. We don't want to waste time in evangelizing the lost. As a result of that model revival and pattern of evangelism, we must conclude any program of evangelism that is not propelled by the power of the Holy Ghost revival is but an empty echo of the real thing.

3. A HEAD DECISION WITHOUT A HEART CONVERSION

For church membership, half-baked religionists accept a head decision without a heart conversion. **Decision Day** is popular with the modern church. They make an annual drive for prospects to join the church, then on a designated Sunday, they decide to become Christians and join the church. The whole procedure is nothing more than a mental exercise. They decide to become Christians in the same way they decide to become a Democrat or a Republican. Jesus encountered a similar crowd. **John 2:23**. At the feast of the Passover, many believed **IN** His name when they saw the miracles He performed. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them for He knew what was in man. Christ realized they believed **IN** His name because of the miracles, but Jesus recognized they were still clinging to their sins so He did not commit Himself to them. James also accosted a similar crowd. **James 2:19**, "***So, you say you believe in only one God. The devils also believe and they tremble.***" You can believe **IN** the name of Jesus Christ, His virgin birth, His deity, resurrection and ascension and His second coming. You can believe all of this and lose your soul and go to hell. The Phillipian jailor enquired of

salvation. In response Paul said, ***“Believe ON the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”*** There is a difference between believing IN the name of Jesus with your head and believing ON the Lord Jesus Christ with your heart. As much difference as there is between your head and your heart. ***Romans 10:10 says, “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”***

DR. E. STANLEY JONES

Dr. E. Stanley Jones said he accepted church membership as a substitute for conversion. In his own words, he said, “My church membership was a half-conversion that resulted in a whole failure.” A revival meeting was scheduled in the Memorial Methodist Church in Baltimore, Maryland. Robert Bateman was the evangelist. As he preached each night, Stanley Jones, a teenager, moved with fear and guilt, went to the altar, even though he was a member of the church. One night at the altar his Sunday School teacher, Nellie Logan, knelt alongside him. She showed him in the scripture he was a lost sinner on his way to hell. He became desperate in his praying. To put it in his own words, Stanley Jones said, “I prayed **clear through.**” I mentioned this in one revival and a man approached me afterwards. In mockery, he said, “What is this stuff about praying clear through?” responded, “It is praying clear through your arrogance, your rebellion, your selfishness and sinfulness until God in forgiveness saves your soul.” We used to use that phrase before we got some critical intellectuals in our midst. Stanley Jones said, “When I prayed clear through, I jumped to my feet, grabbed the man next to me and shouted ‘I’ve got it!’ ‘I’ve got it!... Dr. Jones said, “Later I learned it was not IT that I got. It was HIM. I got Him and He got me.”

4. A FORM OF CONSECRATION WITHOUT THE FACT OF ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION

Half-baked religionists fake a form of consecration without the fact of entire sanctification. Consecration is committing everything you are or ever will be, all that you have or ever will have, to be used of God. God cannot consecrate you. You must make the complete consecration. This is the foundational requirement pursuant to being sanctified holy. Entire sanctification is the divine act whereby God removes the sin nature from your heart. In this sense, you cannot sanctify yourself. Only God can do this for you. Now—these half-baked religionists who claim they are completely consecrated but express no evidence of being cleansed from original sin, (some cases going so far as to say it is impossible)—you can mark it down, their consecration is a fake.

5. A SUBSTITUTION OF HOLINESS WITHOUT A SEPARATION FROM WORLDLINESS

Half-baked religionists simulate a substitution of holiness without a separation from worldliness. Dishonest men simulate glass for diamonds, fool’s gold for pure gold, counterfeit dollars for genuine dollars. The Spirit of Holiness and the spirit of worldliness are diametrically opposed. They cannot co-exist with each other. When ministers attempt to popularize holiness to make it palatable for a worldly church, they compromise the experience and corrupt the doctrine.

6. SECULAR THINGS OF THE WORLD WITH SACRED THINGS OF THE SANCTUARY

Half-baked religionists stoop to sacrilege in mingling the secular things of the world with

the sacred things of the sanctuary. In an irreverent society that has become so secularized, the church has a responsibility to provide a sacred sanctuary where the people of God can worship the Lord without being interrupted by the secular things of the world. Profaning the sanctuary with secular fun and games is desecration that grieves the Spirit of God.

III. DECEPTION

The prophet said, “**Ephraim, strangers have devoured his strength and he knoweth it not.**” This reveals the deception of Ephraim. He knoweth it not. You can usually detect a stranger by the way he talks.

REVIVALS AND EVANGELISTS

I have overheard some strange talk in our midst. A stranger has said, “We finally voted in the church board never to schedule another revival or call an evangelist. That is strange talk designed to devour our strength. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were evangelists. Would you vote to no longer use their recorded ministry because they were evangelists? Paul in writing to Timothy said, “***Do the work of an evangelist.***” Would you discard the use of *I* and *II Timothy* because he was instructed to be an evangelist? *Ephesians 4:11* says, “***God gave some to be prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints... edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come unto the unity of the faith.***”

There are several facts here that need to be publicized. First, the evangelist is not a novice invented by the hierarchy of the church. The scripture declares the evangelist is called of God. The ministry of the evangelist is for the perfecting of the saints. It is for the edifying of the body of Christ. The church that does not use the ministry of the evangelists is lacking in these matters. The scripture declares there will be evangelists till we all come into the unity of the faith. Therefore, there will be evangelists until Jesus comes. Any church that does not engage the ministry of an evangelist is not counted as a New Testament Church. If you are tempted to think what I have said is self-serving because I am an evangelist, it might help you to know I have had offers to pastor some large churches. Also, I declined to be appointed as a District Superintendent. God called me to be an evangelist, and He has not released me from that call.

OPEN ALTAR

There has been some strange talk concerning the open altar. It sounds like this. “We have eliminated the long, embarrassing, emotional altar call at the end of the sermon when they sing frightening songs such as “Almost Persuaded,” “Pass Me Not,” “There is a Great Day Coming.” Instead, in the forepart of the service, we sing a contemporary chorus and open the altar to all that choose to come. They pray a few minutes and return to the pew. When church members go to the open altar, ask forgiveness for sins they have committed the past week with the intention of continuing in those sins, coming week after week to the open altar ... this is an abuse of the open altar. It is an abomination to God. A General Superintendent says the abuse of the open altar has become the Protestant equivalent to the Roman Catholic confessional.

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

I have heard some strange talk concerning the gifts of the Spirit. There has been a disproportionate emphasis of what they call speaking in an unknown tongue. The unknown tongue is a misnomer. The word “unknown” does not appear in the Greek text. The translators inserted the word “unknown” for clarification. The Charismatics through misinterpretation have used it, creating confusion. The Greek word for tongue is “glossila.” It always means

language. It has no reference to the unintelligible sounds uttered by the “Charismatics.” In the scripture, the words “tongue” and “language” are synonymous and are used interchangeably. You can see that interchange in *Acts 1 and 2*. In the New Testament times the mark of being learned was the ability to speak in many languages (tongues) and dialects. This indicates what Paul meant when he said to the Corinthians, ***“I speak in tongues more than you all.”*** Paul could speak fluently the various languages of that age. What Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning the speaking in various languages (tongues) was a rebuke. They were proudly showing off their education by speaking in many different languages. Because there were some present who were unlearned in some of the languages, Paul prohibited them from speaking unless there was someone present who could interpret the language that was being spoken.

PRAYER LANGUAGE

Because speaking in an unknown tongue as defined by the Charismatics has no basis in the original Greek text, some have concluded the unintelligible sounds are a “prayer language.” The disciples said to Jesus, ***“Lord, teach us to pray.”*** He gave them a model prayer. You are familiar with it. It begins by saying, ***“Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name...”*** There is no mention of a prayer language. If there is a prayer language, don’t you think Christ would have mentioned it on this occasion? The Charismatics base their prayer language on the misinterpretation of *Romans 8:26* which reads, ***“Likewise the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”*** You will note it is not you, but the Spirit making the intercession and the groanings. The term Charismatic comes from the Greek word “Charismata.” The word “Charismata” does not appear anywhere in the New Testament. Therefore, the Charismatic movement has no scriptural basis. The following incident proves this. Two seminary students who were majoring in the Hebrew language of the Old Testament heard about a Charismatic church where the people claimed they were speaking in unknown tongues. Out of curiosity, they decided to attend a church service. When the service got underway, people would stand up and utter unintelligible sounds. When the person sat down, a man who said he had the gift of interpretation would stand up and tell the congregation what the speaker said. When this went on for some time, one of the seminary students stood up and recited the Twenty-third Psalm in the Hebrew language. As he sat down, the interpreter stood and allegedly told the congregation what the seminary student had said. What the interpreter claimed the seminary student said had no similarity with the Twenty-third Psalm. This incident, related by Dr. E. Stanley Jones exposes all who claim to speak in an unknown (unintelligible) tongue as being spurious.

DOCTRINE OF HOLINESS

I have been confronted by some strangers in our midst claiming we are saved and sanctified simultaneously. Therefore, they claim there is no second definite work of grace. I have challenged these strangers to show in the New Testament where anybody was saved and sanctified holy at the same time. On the other hand, in the *Acts of the Apostles*, there are several incidents where persons were saved, and at another distinct time, they were entirely sanctified. Just as the strangers devoured Ephraim’s strength, likewise the strategy of the strangers in our midst is to sap our spiritual strength. If they are successful, it will result in our desolation.

IV. DESOLATION

Let me show you the desolation of Ephraim. The prophet said, ***“Gray hairs are here and there upon him and he knoweth it not.”*** This is not the silver hair of wisdom and maturity refined by the fire of adversity. This is the gray hair of decadence and degeneration. It is the precursor of death and desolation. What is meant by desolation? The dictionary definition of desolation means to be left alone, to depart from, to be abandoned, to be rid of inhabitants.

HOUSE OF DESOLATION

In one of our largest cities, I arrived at a church to begin a revival. The church was nearly full. The attendance increased each night. The church made a concentrated effort to get unsaved relatives and friends to the revival. On Sunday night the church was full. When I preached and opened the altar, they came forward from every direction. They filled the altar and front seats. Some were praying in the aisles. Testimonies of the converted were spontaneous. The rejoicing of all was an impressive sight. Some time later I returned to this large city for a revival in another church. The District Superintendent asked me to meet him for lunch the next day. During the course of the conversation, he said they had to close one of their churches. He arranged for some men with lumber to be at the church. He asked me to ride with him to the church. When we pulled up to the church, it was familiar to me. This was the same church where we experienced the tremendous revival. One of the double doors at the entrance was dangling on one hinge. We entered the sanctuary. Every pew had been overturned. Nazarene hymnals were scattered across the floor. They had been thrown against the walls. There was chalky plaster on the carpet. The pulpit and communion table were overturned. Every stained glass window had been broken. I said to the District Superintendent, “What happened here?” He said the vandals have destroyed this church. I said, “I can see that—but what happened to the people?” He said a worldly crowd got on the church board. They cancelled the revivals. They turned the mid-week prayer service into socials. They eliminated the Sunday night service. The spiritual members went to other churches. That left the worldly crowd. The finances went down. The bills were unpaid. He said, “You know, worldly people don’t tithe or make sacrificial offerings. They couldn’t pay the pastor’s salary, so he resigned. I sent a supply pastor for several weeks. One Sunday morning, he called and said there was nobody there but his wife and children, and so we closed the church.”

I watched as the men nailed plywood over the windows. We walked out the door. They raised the dangling door to its proper position. They nailed lumber across the doors. As we left, I turned and took a final look. With a broken heart, I said, “We ought to get some red paint and write across the front door **ICHABOD** which means ‘the glory is departed.’” The worldly crowd said, “Goodbye to God, His glory and holiness. Welcome Ichabod, worldliness and, formality.” What was once a house of salvation became a house of desolation. ***Matthew 21***, Jesus went into the temple. He overturned the moneychangers’ table and chased out the religious racketeers. Christ said, ***“Ye have made my house”***—whose house?—the Lord’s house. Jesus said, ***“Ye have made my house a den of thieves. It is written my house shall be called the house of prayer.”*** Now—turn over two chapters. Jesus is sitting on a ledge overlooking Jerusalem. With a weeping voice, Jesus said, ***“O, Jerusalem, how often I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but ye would not. Now your house—whose house?—your house is left unto you desolate.”***

DETAILS OF DESOLATION

Consider now the details of Ephraim’s desolation. Hosea said, ***“Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone.”*** With these words the desolation of Ephraim is determined to be final. Hosea said, ***“Ephraim shall be desolate among the tribes of Israel. That which I have made known***

shall surely be. Their glory shall fly away like a bird. I will bereave them of their children so there shall not a man be left. Woe unto them when I shall depart from them. Ephraim is smitten. Their root shall dry up. My God shall cast them away because they did not hearken unto Him.” Isaiah 7:8—Isaiah prophesied the desolation of Ephraim. He said within sixty-five years Ephraim shall be broken, that it be not a people. Ephraim had a perfect beginning. Numbers 1:33 says, “Ephraim’s tribe numbered forty thousand five hundred people.” But Ephraim developed improperly.

Remember the heathen, strangers and foreigners with whom Ephraim mingled. They influenced the Ephraimites to march into the north country and fight against God’s people. When the Ephraimites returned from the battle they discovered the Gileadites captured the passageway back to Jordan. The Gileadites devised a password to detect any Ephraimite who tried to pass through. An Ephraimite disguised himself in an attempt to get through. The Gileadite said to him, **“Say the word *Shibboleth*.”** The Ephraimite said, “Sibboleth” for he could not form his mouth to pronounce the “h” in Shibboleth. The record says, **“Forty-two thousand Ephraimites were slain.”** Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled at that spot. Now for the rest of the story, turn to **Revelation Chapter 7**. Multitudes are in white robes before the throne of God. Among them are the tribes of Israel listed by name. Read the list carefully. There is one name that is conspicuously omitted. It is the name of Ephraim. Ephraim’s name was blotted out forever and never to be mentioned again in eternity.

SERMON THREE

**Forbear Thee From
MEDDLING WITH GOD**

That He Destroy Thee Not

—II Chronicles 35:21

*Read This Carefully To Prevent An Untimely Death
Neither be thou foolish; why shouldst thou die before thy time?*

—Ecclesiastes 7:17

PRELUDE

This message was printed in the manner in which it was preached. Some points have been highlighted for emphasis. Descriptive words were carefully selected to expose the situations that confront us in the church today.

In the many years of my ministry, preaching in campaigns with other ministers, I have never heard anybody preach from this text:

“Forbear thee from meddling with God who is with me that he destroyeth thee not.”

Concerning this matter, I am not aware of any publications in print regarding **MEDDLING WITH GOD**. If this message prevents somebody from meddling with God and becoming the victim of an untimely death, it will be worth the time and effort.

MEDDLING WITH GOD

Scripture Reading: II Chronicles 35:18-24

“And there was no Passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a Passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the Inhabitants of Jerusalem.

In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this Passover kept.

After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him.

But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, ‘What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah?’ I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not.

Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo.

And the archers shot at king Josiah; and the king said to his servants, Have me away; for I am sore wounded.

His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.”

INTRODUCTION

Thirty-one years of righteous character ruined in one meddlesome moment of self-will. Is this possible? Yes, it happened to Josiah, King of Judah. For thirty-one years he reigned over the Kingdom of Judah for the good of man and the glory of God. Then he did an about face. He hung a cloud over his righteous character by meddling with God. Do you find it easy to compliment yourself on your good conduct? Do you pride yourself on your past record of righteousness? Then—remember—just as Josiah was stricken from heaven after thirty-one years of righteous service to God, even so you can be smitten if you are so foolish as to meddle with God. We would be well advised to heed God’s Word that says, **“Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.”**

Let us step out of the shadows and look upon the sunny side of Josiah’s life. Josiah was a:

I. MAGNANIMOUS MAN

His magnanimity is enhanced by the fact he came from an unfavorable paternity. His father was King Amon, one of the worst men that history has known. It is doubtful if his brutality was ever exceeded. Amon died just as he lived. He was murdered.

According to the tradition of lineage, Josiah succeeded his father to the throne at eight years of age. The scripture says, **“He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.”** He kept the traditions of the Holy Fathers, and **“declined neither to the right hand nor to the left.”** When Josiah was sixteen years old, he sought a personal experience with the Lord. At

age twenty, ***“he began to purge Judah from the images of idolatry.”*** When he was twenty-six years of age, he:

1. Repaired the House of the Lord.

The house of the Lord had fallen into disrepair because the people turned to idol worship. Idol worship is a religious form of materialism. The materialistic philosophy of this age can be summarized in the words of the classic fool, ***“Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry, for thou hast much goods laid up for many years.”*** The idolaters of our time will fall into one of three classes: Lovers of leisure, lovers of pleasure, and lovers of treasure. This godless materialism has depopulated the churches.

Also to Josiah’s credit was the fact that he:

2. Recovered the Word of the Lord. The book of the law of the Lord had been lost for sometime. It is hardly thinkable it was lost by accident. It was probably lost through neglect. When the people turned from God to idol worship, the Word of the Lord was no longer read. There is something about the reading of the Holy Word that is a rebuke to sin. Where sin is tolerated, God’s Word is neglected. Since they no longer read God’s Word, it was probably forgotten, misplaced, then lost. It is possible somebody deliberately put it out of sight. During the reparation of the temple, the Bible was found among the furnishings. Now here is a strange fact. The Bible was lost in the church. Is it possible? Yes! How? By failing to read it! By failing to obey it! By failing to preach it! Think of the multitudes entering the temple of God every Sabbath, perishing for a lack of God’s Word, only to hear a current book review, a social essay or a psychological treatise. This accounts for the spiritual decadence of the Lord’s house today. When the Bible was found, Josiah set the example by reading it aloud to the people. Through the ministry of God’s Word, Josiah’s heart was made tender and humble before God. The Lord inclined to him. He gave him the promise of ***II Chronicles 34:28, “Behold I will gather thee to thy fathers and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace.”*** What a precious promise. Are we not all striving for the same goal? At the end of life we embrace the promise of being gathered to the place of the Holy Fathers, going to the grave in peace. Josiah received the promise that at the end of life he would be gathered to the place of the Holy Father going down to his grave in peace. IF—he continued in the will of God. Every promise in the Bible is yours IF you continue in the center of God’s will.

Among other works of righteousness, Josiah:

3. Revived the Worship of the Lord. He is credited with the great revival that swept Judah. He stood personally and ***“made a covenant before the Lord to walk after the Lord and keep his commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in the book” (II Chronicles 34:31).*** It is a serious matter to make a vow unto the Lord. God’s Word says, ***Ecclesiastes 5:4-5, “When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.”*** During this revival Josiah encouraged the priests in the service of the Lord. What a different world this would be if the government heads of the nations would support ministers in the Lord’s work. In reviving the worship of the Lord, Josiah reinstated the Passover. This ceremony had deep meaning to the people of God. In keeping the Passover, Josiah set a record. ***II Chronicles 35:18 says, “There was no Passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of***

Samuel the prophet, neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a Passover as Josiah kept, and the priests and the Levites and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” The Passover, which Josiah kept, was unprecedented.

Now *II Chronicles 35:20* starts out by saying, “***After all this,***” which is a direct reference to the wonderful works of Josiah. “***After all this***”— after repairing the house of the Lord, after recovering the Word of the Lord, after reviving the worship of the Lord—after all this—one wonders how a man could be so foolish to turn around and meddle with God. But he did it, in spite of his past record of righteousness. And he did it to his own destruction.

After watching the sun shine brightly upon Josiah’s life for eighteen years, we see it fade behind the dark cloud of a:

II. MYSTERIOUS MAZE

Why did Josiah meddle with God? The reason is probably hidden between verses nineteen and twenty. Between these verses there are thirteen years of mysterious silence in the reign of Josiah. There is no record of what transpired. Why those thirteen years of silence? If these silent years could speak, undoubtedly they would divulge why this man meddled with God. Since there is no record, we can only probe those silent years with speculation. The silence itself suggests a motive. Could it be nothing of sufficient importance had been accomplished to merit recognition? Not infrequently, silence suggests idleness. People who are doing nothing are never heard of. They are neither complimented or criticized. They are simply regarded as being complacent. It is possible to achieve a tremendous record for the good of man and the glory of God, then settle down to a needed relaxation, but fail to rally from that relaxation and drift into idle complacency, then ride on the tide of previous success, gloating selfishly over past performance, resting on the laurels of other days. Idlers soon become meddlers.

Suddenly this blank period of silence is broken by the appearance of a dynamic personality. Necho, King of Egypt is passing through Judah at the command of God to engage the King of Assyria in battle. Josiah went out to him. At this point we see the first break in Josiah’s character that has tined his untimely death. Josiah went out to Necho. Just how did he go out to him? To give a royal welcome? No! To bid him Godspeed on his divine mission? No! Did he go to him in a spirit of inquiry? No! Verse 20 says he went out against him. Revealed in that phrase, against him is a wrong attitude that prompted a wrong action. Josiah was against Necho even before he learned his intentions. This is prejudice of the worst kind. Why was Josiah against Necho? No justifiable reason whatsoever. Self-centeredness requires no justifiable reason for its envious assaults. It is a matter of record Josiah could not regard Necho as an enemy, because Necho assured him saying, “***I came not against thee this day, thou King of Judah, but against the king wherewith I have war.***” In effect Necho was saying, “Josiah, I am not against you—why are you against me?” While Josiah could not regard Necho as an enemy, it looks like he did regard him as a rival. He would not accept him as a cooperative brother to carry out the Lord’s will. He viewed him as a competitive intruder. Since nothing outstanding had been attributed to Josiah for thirteen years, could it be he feared Necho would draw the coveted acclaim of the people?

Perhaps we could explain his misconduct on this basis. Josiah’s march against Necho was the only military expedition of his career. After doing nothing outstanding for thirteen years, could it be he was tempted to overthrow the King of Egypt for the purpose of being exalted by the people?

Achievement that is selfish solicits applause. Success that is selfish cannot stand being

surpassed. Popularity that is egocentric resents being relegated to obscurity. Envy will trample ethics under foot and even assassinate character to get in the spotlight.

Whatever Josiah's motive was—his attitude was wrong. His action was contrary to the will of God. At the very least he must be charged with the guilt of the **sin of disobedience**. For God's Word says in *Verse 22*, "***He hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God.***" The sin of disobedience is not to be taken lightly. Look at its **enormity**. *Romans 5:19* says, "***By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners.***" Count all the sinners, list all of the sins from the time of creation, and they all slipped through the door of disobedience Adam opened in the Garden of Eden. Consider the **severity** of God toward the sin of disobedience. *Colossians 3:6* says, "***The wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.***"

Let us pass from the period of silence in Josiah's life and consider the:

III. MEDDLESOME MOMENT

That provoked the displeasure of God upon Josiah that prompted his **untimely death**. Necho, at the command of God, was passing through the Kingdom of Judah to go to war against the King of Assyria. Josiah went out against him. Necho sent ambassadors to Josiah to keep the peace. Necho said, "***I have not come against you this day, but against the house wherewith I have war, for God commanded me to make haste.***" Plane geometry indicates the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. I checked the map. The fastest route from Egypt to Assyria was straight through Judah. This explains why Necho was passing through Judah. He said, "***God commanded me to make haste.***" I suppose Necho could have taken a circuitous route and avoided this encounter with Josiah. But I think he reasoned like this, "I am from a Godly nation, Josiah claims to be a Godly king, and he rules over Godly people; therefore, he will help me in this endeavor. He surely won't hinder me." But just the exact opposite occurred.

Now, this whole affair indicates there is a **DIVINE PROVIDENCE** directed by God Himself. For Necho said, "***God commanded me.***" Divine providence is simply the fulfillment of the purpose of God. Divine providence always follows a definite plan. And that plan is predestined to be fulfilled, regardless of who meddles with it. The paramount plan of the providence of God is the divine plan of salvation. Jesus displayed the fulfillment of the divine plan with His crucifixion at Calvary. A man named Herod attempted to thwart God's plan of salvation. He issued a decree all male babies were to be put to death. This would have meant the death of Christ as an infant. But the divine providence of God protected the years of our Lord until He fulfilled the mission for which God sent Him into this world. From the cross Christ placed the final period in the last paragraph of the plan of salvation when He said, "***It is finished.***" The overall plan of God is to establish truth, justice, righteousness, peace and holiness forevermore. There is evidence in the heart of God's people around the world this plan has been carried out in part. When our Blessed Lord comes in the triumph of His glory, that plan will be carried out to completion. Anybody who rejects this plan or opposes it will ultimately be destroyed.

Divine providence is a whole lot like the distant sun; inaccessible, mysterious, incomprehensible, but its demonstration in personal and practical life is much like the rays that fall out of that sun shining upon the just and the unjust. Therefore, if you will subordinate yourself to the pleasurable goodness of God in His divine providence, then holiness of heart will be your experience now, and heaven will be your reward in eternity. If you rebel against the divine providence, you will provoke the wrath of God upon your soul.

It is comfort for me to know my life is a part of the divine providence of God. I am convinced my life is not an affair of chance. Your life is not a jumble of unrelated incidents.

There is a purpose, plan, direction and design in the life of every child of God. Our steps are ordered, directed and ordained by the Lord. The Psalmist says, *“Heaven takes notice of our incoming and our outgoing, our uprising and our down sitting.”* Jesus said, *“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, yet not one falls to the earth without the notice of the heavenly Father. Ye are of much more value than they.”* Jesus said, *“Behold the fowls of the air, how they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than many sparrows? Consider the flowers of the field, how they toil not, neither do they spin, but I say unto you, even Solomon, in all of his glory was not arrayed as one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cut down and cast into the oven, shall He much more clothe you. Wherefore take no thought of what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink or with what ye shall be clothed. Your heavenly Father knows you have need of all of these things. But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. Take no thought of tomorrow, for tomorrow shall take thought of the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”* Blessed be God. His eye is on the little sparrow, and I know He watches over me. He’s got the whole wide world in His hands, you and me brother; you and me, sister; He’s got the little tiny baby in His hands.

I have learned after many difficult years, the divine providence of God does not always follow the **path of popularity**. For instance, Necho came up from Egypt. He left the safety of his land, the security of his home. He came up to face opposition; he came up to struggle; he came up to do battle; he came up to shed blood and even die if necessary for the cause of the Lord. Through it all, he said, *“God commanded me.”* We have been tempted to think so long as the sun is shining brightly and we have a comfortable seat in the ship, all is smooth sailing, and the sea is like molten silver, then we are in the center of God’s will. Not necessarily so! On the other hand, we have concluded when it seems like the sun will never shine and the rain will never stop, and the storm will never let up and the ship starts to come apart at the seams, then we are out of the center of God’s will. Nothing could be farther from the truth. You can be in the midst of fierce opposition and cruel criticism and be in the center of God’s will.

Jesus had to reveal this difficult truth to His disciples. **Matthew Chapter 16**. He told them how He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the Scribes, Pharisees and rulers, then be killed. Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked him. Peter said, *“Lord, surely this will not come upon thee.”* Jesus looked beyond the rebuke of Peter. He saw the sinister hand of Satan attempting to dissuade Him from going to the cross. Jesus turned to Peter and said, *“Get thee behind me, Satan.”* Jesus was not inferring Peter was Satan. Christ was revealing how Satan can use a good man like Peter to obstruct the purpose of God. Jesus said, *“Peter, thou art an offence to me because thou discernest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.”* It is possible to become so carnal that you can lose all perception of spiritual things and become so dull in your discernment you can’t tell the difference between the things that be of God or man. Consequently, you can become an offence to Christ and hinder the divine plan of God.

After many tears, intercessory prayer and agonizing years, I have also learned the divine providence of God does not always follow the **road of regularity**. God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform. He plants His footsteps upon the sea and rides upon the storm. **Isaiah 55:8** *“My thoughts are not your thoughts and neither are my ways your ways. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts and my ways higher than your ways.”* But in spite of this clear word by our Lord, we have been pressured to think any man who does not revolve in the **orbit of the ordinary** must be labeled as a charlatan. A fanatic! Any message that does not remain the **rut of routine** is regarded as

being radical. Any method that does not fit precisely in the **mold of the mediocre** is criticized as psychological manipulation. Consequently, we have become asinine in our attitudes, pusillanimous in our preaching, sentimental in our sermons, soft in our standards, petite in our principals, meticulous in our methods, compromising in our convictions, and devious in our doctrine until instead of where sin did abound, grace doth much more abound, now sin is tolerated and the grace of God is frustrated.

God not only uses irregular plans to perform His purpose, also He uses irregular people. Consider Necho. He came unheard of. You probably never heard of him before reading this book. He came unannounced. He came unadvertised. He came unwelcome. He even came unwanted, but he was God's messenger on a divine mission.

Consider John the Baptist. How irregular can a man be? John was a plain man. He ate plain food. He wore plain clothes. He preached with plain words. In one of his sermons he lashed out at the congregation saying, ***"O, generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come."*** Just a minute, John! What did you call these people? ***"I called them a generation of vipers."*** John, you'd better watch your words! John, you'd better check your pulpit decorum. John, you'd better control your attitude. ***"Forbear thee from meddling with God!"*** Because when you criticize the preaching of John, that is tantamount to meddling with God. Some have argued that John was too abrasive in his preaching. Let us turn to the preaching of Jesus. In ***Matthew 12:34*** Jesus was preaching, and He said to the crowd, ***"O generation of vipers."*** The very same phrase John the Baptist used. Jesus said, ***"O, generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."*** If you criticize John the Baptist for using the phrase, ***"O, generation of vipers,"*** then also you are criticizing Jesus. And that is meddling with God. Jesus received many complaints and criticisms concerning the preaching of John the Baptist. It was not just a few. It was the multitudes. So Jesus came to John's defense. Christ turned to the multitude and He said, ***"What did you go out in the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?"*** John the Baptist was no spineless wimp blown about by every wind of doctrine. He was not only rugged in his personality; also he was rigid in his doctrine. Jesus said, ***"What did you go out in the wilderness to see? A man in soft raiment? They that wear dainty raiment dwell in King's houses. What did you go out to see? A prophet, and I tell you and more than a prophet."*** Listen to this. Jesus said, ***"They that have been born of woman, there hath not risen a greater man than John the Baptist."*** That's what Jesus thought of John the Baptist. Jesus went on to say, ***"From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent taketh it by force."*** Why did Jesus say that? Because the people that criticized the preaching of John, claimed his messages and his methods as being too violent. But we have become so tame and timid we are afraid to employ any forceful means to expand the Kingdom of God as our Lord commanded when He said, ***"Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in."*** We are so scared we will drive people away from the church that we don't get them in. We have departed a long way from the holy boldness that occurred to the sanctified on the day of Pentecost. John the Baptist didn't win any awards in the "Sermon of the Month Club," but he won the approval of Christ upon his ministry, which is far better.

Jesus Himself was irregular. Do you know what the chief criticism was? They said, ***"He stirreth up the people."*** What a shameful contrast to the compromising leadership that cautions us not to make any waves in our preaching today. ***Mark 3:5***, Jesus went into the temple. He overturned the moneychanger's table and the scripture says, ***"He looked round about Him with anger."*** The contemporary church refuses to recognize the angry mood in the ministry of our Lord. Consequently, we have fabricated a superficial love that will not tolerate the

preaching of John the Baptist or permit the entire ministry of Jesus Christ. I am convinced in these modern days, if a minister would dare flash an expression of holy anger in his preaching, he would be diagnosed as suffering from schizophrenia, expelled from the pulpit and boycotted by the vote of the church board. I am convinced if we could find more sanctified church members who would express a holy anger against the modernists and the liberals that are pulling us back from holiness into worldliness, we could pray that bunch of bureaucrats out of control and move the church ahead in spiritual things.

Because our Lord was irregular, you would expect His apostles to be irregular, also. *Acts 5*. They were preaching in Jerusalem. Because the people were responding to them in salvation, the chief priest was filled with envy. He ordered them to be arrested and locked them up in prison. But the providence of God must be fulfilled. So God dispatched some angels to unlock the doors of the prison and told the apostles to go to the temple and start preaching. Word got back to the chief priest—they were out preaching again. The chief priest couldn't believe it, so he sent a committee to the prison to check it out. The doors were locked. The guard was standing there, but the apostles were gone. He ordered them to be arrested again. He brought them before the city council for a swift trial. The prosecutor said, ***“Did we not command you to preach no longer in the name of Jesus Christ?”*** Peter stood up with the others in unanimous agreement and said, ***“We ought to obey God rather than man.”*** Now, if you want to stir the devil, direct that statement to the opposition. The city council started discussing ways they could slay the apostles. One of the definitions of the Gospel is “the good news” Jesus came to save the lost. Consequently, some have the mistaken notion if we preach the Gospel, everybody will love us. The apostles preached the Gospel, and almost every one of them was martyred. Have you forgotten that Jesus said, ***“Marvel not that the world hate you. It hated me before it hated you.”*** There was a man in that city council named Gamaliel. He had a Doctor of Law degree. He had more common sense than all the rest of the council put together. He advised his people, citing some documented cases. Then in summation, he said, ***“Now, folk, if what these apostles are doing, if it be of man, it will come to nothing, but if it be of God, you can't overthrow it.”*** Evidently he believed in the divine providence of God being fulfilled. Then he gave them some sound legal advice. You should take note of it. It could prevent you from an untimely death. Dr. Gamaliel said to the council, ***“I would suggest that you refrain from these men lest you find yourselves fighting against God.”*** He didn't bother to tell what the consequences would be, because they already knew nobody could fight against God and win.

This account not only indicates there is a divine providence, but also there is a **DIVINE PRESENCE**. No sooner had Necho said, ***“God commandeth me”*** until he said, ***“God is with me.”*** The divine providence of God is always accompanied with the **Divine Presence** of the Lord. Necho sent an ambassadorial message to Josiah saying, ***“I am not come against thee this day, but against the king wherewith I have war. For God commanded me to make haste and God is with me.”*** In other words, Necho was saying, ***“Josiah, I am not here by my own choosing. I am not following the lure of my desire. I am secondary in this matter. I am commanded by God, and I stand here to perform God's mission as God's servant, and either you treat me as such or you will be charged with meddling with God.”*** Necho said, ***“And if you meddle with God, He will destroy you.”*** This was no senseless notion on the part of Necho. It was a God-given conviction. Have no fear of the belligerent bully who confronts you in a fit of temper. His rage is but a camouflage for his cowardice. I warn you to look out for the man of God that comes off of his knees from the **presence** of the Lord and looks you straight in the eye and says, ***“God commanded me and God is with me.”*** That is a strong, sacred conviction with which you are not to meddle.

I want you to take a realistic view of the scene. Here is Necho, King of Egypt passing through Judah at the command of God. He clearly said, ***“God is with me and commanded me.”*** But look—here is Josiah claiming to be a godly king. He goes out and he says, ***“I am going to stop you.”*** God never contradicts Himself. Therefore, one of these two men is wrong. Someone here is out of the will of God, and the end result will always reveal who was out of the will of God.

This situation not only reveals there is a **Divine Providence**, accompanied by a **Divine Presence**, it also reveals there is a **DIVINE PENALTY** imposed upon anybody who dares to meddle with God. Necho said, ***“If you meddle with God, He will destroy you.”*** *I Chronicles 16:22*, God said, ***“Touch not my anointed, saith the Lord, and neither do my prophets harm.”***

II Chronicles 36:16 describes in detail the penalty for meddling with God. It reads, ***“But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy.”*** **No remedy!** You can rebel against God and His word until you can reach a point where there is no remedy for you to be saved from perishing; a point where God Almighty will make no further effort to redeem your lost soul. There will be no other recourse but to remove you, because the divine plan of God is predestined to be fulfilled. If you stand in the way, He has no other alternative but to remove you. He will pass the sentence of eternal death upon your soul and let you face the tragedy of an untimely death.

Now *Verse 22* opens up saying, ***“Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from Necho in spite of the clear warning not to meddle with God”*** This provoked a:

IV. MERCILESS MANEUVER

On the part of God that brought about the destruction and damnation of Josiah.

1. Josiah was stubborn.

He would not turn his face from Necho. Stubbornness is sin. Some may disagree with that. It is about time we see sin as God defines it. God’s Word says, *I Samuel 15:23*, ***“Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry.”*** God puts stubbornness in the same class as idolatry. You know how God hates idolatry. He hates stubbornness in the same way. When you stubbornly resist God’s will, when you stubbornly refuse His word, when you stubbornly stand in the way of His divine plan, God’s Word charges you with sin, and He will judge you.

2. Josiah was sneaky.

When he received the clear warning, he appeared to withdraw from Necho. What did he do? He went from him and donned a disguise and came back to fight against him. How sneaky can you become? You will remember David didn’t need Saul’s armor when God was with him. God became his shield and buckler. I submit had Josiah been in the complete will of God, he would not have had to stoop to a sneaky disguise.

How many church members have disguised their criticism toward spiritual matters, against revivals, evangelistic preaching and the command to holiness, stooping to a sneaky disguise because of the sin of selfishness? God looked down and he saw the stubbornness and sneakiness of Josiah, so He turned to the angel of judgment and said, ***“There is a man down on earth in the Kingdom of Judah, and he is thwarting my divine plan; he is obstructing my divine purpose. He is stubborn; he is sneaky. He has***

made his final decision that he won't turn. He won't change but my divine plan must go through; therefore he must be removed So make ready the arrow of death for this meddler must be removed." During the fray of the battle, unknown to anybody in that conflict, the providence of God placed His hand upon one of Necho's archers. He selected an arrow and placed it in his bow. He bent the bow, sighted his target; the bow snapped. That arrow propelled by the providential power of God sped toward its target. There is no military maneuver that can divert this arrow. This is God's arrow of judgment. That arrow continued until it found its target. It ripped into the flesh of Josiah. Josiah was sinful! Josiah was stubborn! Josiah was sneaky! Consequently:

- 3. Josiah was shot.** He cried out, *"Have me away for I am sore wounded."* The implication was he knew in that moment the arrow that pierced his flesh was fatal. It was the arrow of God's judgment for meddling with God. They got a chariot and carried him back to Jerusalem. But there is no hospital or doctor that can recover him from that fatal wound. It was the wound of God's judgment. And Josiah died. Some have argued the arrow that struck Josiah was coincidental because many arrows were flying in that battle of conflict. I submit with these reasons the arrow that struck Josiah was providential. Remember this. He was disguised. They couldn't single him out as being Josiah because he was disguised. They didn't know at whom they were shooting. God sees through your disguise. You will not escape the arrow of His judgment for your meddling. The arrow that struck Josiah was providential because the scripture declares it to be so. *Psalm 7:11 says, "God is angry with the wicked every day."* The next verse says, *"And if he turn not."* Remember, Josiah would not turn. God said, *"If he turn not, then I will whet my sword; I will bend my bow; I will prepare the instruments of death."* God said, *"My arrows are ordained against the persecutors."* The arrow that struck Josiah was ordained of God. Josiah, who once embraced the precious promise that at the end of life he would be gathered to the place of the fathers and go down to his grave in peace, instead he died in disgrace because he meddled with God.

II Chronicles 35:27 says, "Josiah's deeds, first and last are written in the book of the Kings of Israel and Judah." The wonderful righteous deeds in the first part of Josiah's life could not cover or compensate for his last deeds of unrighteousness, such as stubbornness and sneakiness in meddling against God. *Ezekiel 33:13 says, "When I shall say to the righteous that he shall surely live; but if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, ALL HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS SHALL NOT BE REMEMBERED: but for the iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it."*

Josiah heard the warning from the mouth of God through Necho. The warning was plain and to the point. He said, *"Forbear thee from meddling with God who is with me that he destroy thee not."* Josiah ignored the warning; sinfully, stubbornly and sneakily he meddled with God. For his meddling he suffered the tragedy of an untimely death. *Ecclesiastes 7:17 warns, "Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish; why wouldest thou die before thy time?"* If you look at the righteous deeds in the first part of Josiah's life, you could not say he was over much wicked, but he was foolish because he meddled with God. *Proverbs 11:27, "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened."*

Don't die before your time by Meddling with God.

SERMON FOUR

BEHOLD

Man's Greatest Question
"Where Is The Lamb?"

THE LAMB

Prophecy's Greatest Promise
"God Will Provide Himself A Lamb."

OF GOD

God's Greatest Answer
"Behold The Lamb!"

BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

The scriptural foundation for this discourse is recorded in Genesis 22:1-14.

“And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Behold here I am. And he said, take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father; and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering; so they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of and Abraham built an altar there, and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day. In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.”

Two thousand years before the birth of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit inspired this symbolical narrative found in the first book of the Bible. It mysteriously and undoubtedly pointed toward the coming Messiah of the world who was to become the eternal Lamb of God for sinners slain. From beginning to end this Biblical narrative is supernatural, symbolical, and prophetic. In years past God promised Abraham and his wife, Sarah, a “son in whom all the families of the earth would be blessed.” But Abraham reached one hundred years of age; his wife, Sarah, was ninety years of age. It was naturally impossible for them to have a child. They had passed that period in life where the procreation of children was possible by natural means. But God had promised them a son. What God has promised, that will He also do. Therefore, God suspended the law of nature and Sarah conceived; a son was born whose name was Isaac. It is significant to note Isaac was a child of promise. God had promised them a son. Also, his birth was supernatural; he was born of parents too old to bear children. Furthermore, he was named by the Lord before his birth. The Lord said, *“Thou shalt call his name Isaac.”*

In order to prove the faith of Abraham, God said unto him, *“Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest and get thee into the land of Moriah and offer him there as a sacrifice unto me.”* Abraham was heartbroken by that firm command from God; but his staunch faith in the Almighty did not waiver. He made preparation to do as the Lord commanded. Early the next morning he saddled a donkey with supplies. He took two young men and his only son, Isaac, and started the three-day journey to Mount Moriah.

In the procedure of sacrificing a burnt offering unto the Lord, the sacrifice was to be bound to selected wood and placed upon an altar of stone. The sacrifice was to be slain with a knife; the blood sprinkled upon the altar to atone for sin. The remaining body was to be consumed by fire. It was in this manner God commanded Abraham to offer up his only son, Isaac.

After a sorrowful three days' journey, the group approached the foothills of Mount Moriah. Abraham turned to the young men and said, "*Stay here with the donkey; Isaac and I will go into the mount, worship the Lord and come again to you.*" It is significant to note Abraham added, "*We will come again to you.*" Now, Abraham knew fully well, at the command of God he was to slay his son as a sacrifice in the mount; but he tells these young men, "*We will return to you.*" Was this a deceitful statement on the part of Abraham? Indeed not! He was simply exercising faith. He had the faith to believe that even though God commanded him to slay his son, that God would raise him up, even from the dead. We are not stretching the symbolism at this point. For a confirmation, turn to the Hebrew writer who said, Chapter 11:17-19 "*By faith Abraham when he was tried offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. Of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead: from whence also he received him in a figure.*" This incident is significant from this standpoint; this was the first hint of the resurrection of the body from the dead, since the fall of Adam in the beginning.

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it upon Isaac his son. Isaac carried the wood upon which he was to be sacrificed. Abraham carried the torch of fire in one ***hand and a knife in the other.*** ***As father and son ascended the slopes of the mount together, Isaac breaks the suspended silence and says, "My father, we have the wood to bind the offering to; we have the knife to slay the offering with; we have the torch of fire to consume the offering, but where is the lamb for a sacrifice?"*** Abraham's faith remained steadfast in God. In confidence he replied, "***My son, God will provide himself a lamb*** for a sacrifice." So they continued together. When they came to the place where God commanded, Abraham built an altar of stone; he laid the wood in order and proceeded to bind Isaac to the altar of sacrifice. For the first time, Isaac realized, he was to be the sacrifice offered unto God. What heartbreaking silence must have existed between father and son at this point. Isaac suddenly realized he was to be the sacrifice. But he did not rebel. He did not resist. He silently and submissively yielded himself to the will of his father. Chronological historians inform us Isaac was thirty-three years of age at this time. He was in the prime of his youth. He could have easily overcome his father who was feeble and weak with old age, but instead he humbly submitted himself to the will of his father. Everything is in readiness. Abraham raised the knife to plunge it into the heart of his son. The death stroke is on the way. Suddenly the angel of the Lord called out of heaven saying, "*Abraham, spare thy son.*" Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught in the thicket by its horns. He offered that ram in the stead of his son. Having pleased God, father and son descend from the mount together.

After arriving back home, a servant was instructed to seek out a bride for Abraham's only son, Isaac. The servant was instructed the bride was to be one of their own kind. The servant said unto Abraham, "*Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me into this strange land, must I needs take thy son back to the land from whence we have come?"* Abraham said, "*Nay, if the woman will not be willing to follow thee into this land, then thou shalt be free from my oath; only my son shall not return to the land.*"

The servant saddled down ten camels with the master's goods; fragrant perfumes, fine apparel, and tokens of silver and gold. He started toward the city of his destination. As he reached the outskirts of the city, he caused the camels to kneel in reverence. Then he prayed for divine guidance. He prayed, "*O lord God of my Master Abraham, let it come to pass that the*

woman that shall come from without the gates of the city and offer me drink and my camels drink also; let she be the appointed bride for my master's only son Isaac." Before he had ceased praying, a young, attractive lady by the name of Rebecca came from without the gates of the city. She offered him drink, and his camels drink, also. He knew from the providential answer to his prayer, she was the appointed bride for his master's only son, Isaac. He made known his mission. They went into the home of the family and informed them. The family did not object to Rebecca becoming the bride of Isaac, but they insisted she delay the event for a year, or at least ten months. But the servant was there for an immediate decision. He displayed some of the master's goods he had brought along; fragrant perfumes, fine apparel, tokens of silver and gold. He reminded Rebecca this was but a sample of the master's wealth and splendor, and that Isaac was an heir to it all; and if she became the bride of Isaac, then she would become joint heir to all the master's boundless riches. Then the servant put the kind and tender proposal to her. In the language of the scripture, the servant said unto her, "*Wilt thou go?*" She answered in language that is equally beautiful, and she says, "*I will go.*" Having accepted that kind and tender proposal, the next day we see the servant and the bride on camel back, crossing the burning desert sand, back to the father's house. She had no fear of being lost on that trackless desert, for the servant was nearby to see her safely through. After all, he came from the father's house, and he certainly knew the way back. Neither did she become despondent with the hardships of the journey, for the servant was by her side to comfort with all the joys that awaited her at the end of the journey. As the servant and bride continued side by side, in the meantime, Isaac went out into the field at evening time as it was his custom to pray. He lifted up his eyes and he saw the caravan of camels coming in a cloud of dust. As they came closer, Rebecca caught a glimpse of her bridegroom. In excitement she jumped from the camel, ran to meet him and fell into his open arms. Needless to say, all of the trials, toils, temptations and heartaches of the journey were overcome with everlasting joy, as bride and bridegroom embraced each other and walked arm in arm in the father's house.

Now, keeping in mind this symbolical narrative, I direct your attention back to the words of the text. Little did Isaac realize when he inquired, "***Where is the Lamb?***" that he uttered **man's greatest question**. That was the greatest question that ever fell from mortal lips. Ere since the day sin made its dastardly intrusion into the human race, Adam and Eve and all of their posterity had been hoping for a Messiah that would restore a fallen, depraved human race back to the moral image of God's holiness. We get the first vague glimpse of the Messianic hope in Genesis 3:15 where God, in executing temporal punishment upon Satan said, "*I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*" Herein lies the hope of a coming Redeemer who would crush the power of sin and Satan by bruising the head of the old serpent, the devil, once and for all. While this was the predominant hope of humanity, God in the early days of the curse arranged an animal sacrificial system to atone for sin. Ere the first pair, Adam and Eve sinned, they lost their garments of light and beheld themselves shamefully naked before God. What did they do? They made themselves aprons of fig leaves. God was displeased with their man-made cover for sin. God commanded that they be clothed with coats of skin which required the slaying of animals and the shedding of blood, thus illuminating the New Testament scripture Hebrews 9:22 which reads, "*Without the shedding of blood there is no remission for sin.*"

To further prove the introduction of the animal sacrificial system to atone for sin, you will recall Adam and Eve had two sons; namely, Cain and Abel. Cain offered a sacrifice unto God from the fruit of the ground. God rejected that sacrifice. Abel offered a sacrifice unto God. What was his sacrifice? A little innocent lamb without spot or blemish, the firstling of the flock, and God accepted his sacrifice, thereby proving the animal sacrificial system to atone for

sin. So, year after year, the Old Testament saints, priests and patriarchs had to offer up the blood of bulls, heifers, oxen and sheep upon an altar of sacrifice to appease a wrathful God who hates sin with an infinite hatred. This compulsory legalism only served to deepen the heart-cry for the Eternal Lamb of God who would come and blot out sin once and for all. So upon the heart of every Old Testament saint there were written these words: Where is the Redeemer? Where is the Savior? When will the Messiah come? Where is the Lamb? This heart-cry was partially satisfied when there was spoken from the lips of Abraham **prophecy's greatest promise** in these words, "*My son, **God will provide himself a Lamb for sacrifice.***" Ere since the day sin made its deadly inception into the world, the coming of the Lamb of God was foreshadowed in the law; symbolized in the animal sacrifices and promised throughout the prophecies.

Let us digress our minds once again to Genesis 3:15 where we are informed of the struggle of the ages—a struggle that is going on this moment—a struggle between Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, and Satan, the destroyer; a struggle that will eventually consummate in the perfect redemption of penitent mankind and the destruction of sin and Satan forever. It was prophesied in Genesis that the Messiah was to come through the seed of the woman and not of man. Such was the manner of his conception and birth. He was born of a virgin, the Holy Spirit responsible for the conception. It was further prophesied Satan would bruise the heel of the Savior. The bruising of the heel symbolizes temporary injury. Satan did bruise the heel of the Savior on Friday at Calvary. But, on Easter Sunday morning, Christ came forth triumphant over death, hell and the grave! And some day, not far distant, Jesus will take that once bruised heel and place it upon the head of the old serpent, the devil in crushing power, thus signifying permanent injury, casting him into the lake of fire and brimstone forever, while God's people enjoy the delight of the New Jerusalem. Jesus Christ, the Redeemer will yet triumph over Satan, the destroyer, for prophecy has declared it.

Seven hundred years before Christ appeared upon the arena of time, the prophet Isaiah climbed to the mountaintops of glory. His silvery white locks were blowing in the breezes of heaven. He was so close to the Eternal City he could breathe in the fragrance of Paradise. He squinted his prophetic eye in the direction of Calvary. There he visualized a man of sorrows. He saw one that was despised and rejected of men. He looked upon one who was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. He saw one that was led as a **lamb** to the slaughter and he opened not his mouth. It pleased the Lord to allow Him to be bruised as an offering for sin. Who did the prophet Isaiah see? He saw Jesus hanging on the cross of Calvary. He saw it seven hundred years before it actually took place.

The prophet Zechariah picked up his prophetic telescope and looked across the pages of time. He beheld the Calvary scene. In excitement he turned to his people and exclaimed, Zechariah 13:1, "*In that day there shall be a fountain open for sin and uncleanness.*" What did the prophet Zechariah see? He saw Jesus nailed to the cross of Calvary. He saw the riven side of the Savior and the blood pouring forth as a fountain of cleansing for sin. He saw it five hundred years before it transpired. In my imagination I like to think Zechariah lifted the sights on his prophetic telescope, adjusted the lens and looked beyond the Calvary scene across the blue oceanic waters, through the smoke of modern industry, into a Christian church, there to behold a congregation of redeemed saints worshiping the resurrected Christ through the glorious blessings of the out-poured Spirit. They were not crying, "**Where is the Lamb?**" as Isaac did. They were not promising, "My son, **God will provide himself a Lamb**" as Abraham did. They were not prophesying, "In that day there shall be a fountain open for sin and uncleanness" as Zechariah did. Instead they are heard singing the words of the old redemption song:

There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day,
And there may I, as vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.

Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Are saved to sin no more.

Ere since by faith I saw its stream,
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.
(William Cowper, 1731-1800)

Hallelujah for Jesus Christ, the conquering Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world! In Matthew's gospel the angel of the Lord prophesied unto Joseph saying, "*Fear not to take unto thee Mary as thy wife for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins.*" When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son made of a woman to redeem them that were under the law. It is significant to note the prophetic points of parallel between Isaac and Christ; for the Hebrew writer has indicated Isaac was a figure of the Christ who was to come.

Isaac was a child of promise. God had promised them this son. Likewise, Jesus was a child of promise. He was promised throughout the prophecies of the scriptures. Isaac's birth was supernatural. He was born of parents too old to bear children. Likewise, the birth of Christ was supernatural. He was born of a virgin. The Holy Spirit was responsible for the conception. The Lord named Isaac before his birth. Also, the angel of the Lord named Jesus before His birth. The angel said, "*Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.*" Jesus grew into manhood; He increased in wisdom, stature and favor among men and God. At the youthful age of thirty years, Jesus was ordained to the priesthood. Then one day John the Baptist was peering over the Judean hills. He lifted up his eyes and saw Jesus coming afar off. Pointing to the Savior, he turned to the people and in excitement, he exclaimed, "***Behold the Lamb of God*** which taketh away the sin of the world." Man's greatest question back in the corridors of the centuries was, "***Where is the Lamb?***" Here was God's greatest answer in the words of John the Baptist, "***Behold the Lamb of God*** which taketh away the sin of the world." Here was the answer to the sin problem. For more than three years, Jesus walked the dirt roads of earth, ministering to the suffering, the sinful and the sorrowing. Now at the youthful age of thirty-three years, we see Him ascending the slopes of Mount Calvary, carrying the wood upon which He was to be sacrificed; that is, bearing the cross upon which He was to be crucified. Just as Isaiah prophesied, "*He was led as a Lamb to the slaughter, and he opened not his*

mouth.” Tradition indicates they had just vacated the stable by taking an innocent lamb and offering it upon the altar of sacrifice. Now Jesus was born in that same stable to be eventually taken out like an animal and sacrificed; that is, crucified for the sins of the people. Truly, he was led as a lamb to the slaughter and opened not his mouth. Christ could have called ten thousand angels to deliver Him from that cross. Instead He silently submitted Himself to the will of His Father, saying, “*Not my will, but Thine be done.*” No voice was heard at Calvary saying, “Spare this Son,” for this Son must die if we are to inherit eternal life. As the end was approaching, Christ bowed His devoted head and said, “*It is finished!*” That was not an admission of defeat; that was a shout of triumph. When Jesus said, “*It is finished!*” what He meant was, the glorious plan of salvation that started to unfold way back in the centuries, had now finally been finished by His redemptive work at Calvary. When Jesus said, “*It is finished!*” it reverberated from the highest heaven to the deepest hell. It echoed across the hills of glory, and up and down the golden boulevards of the New Jerusalem. Today, it is being proclaimed from every Christian pulpit around the world. It is finished! It is finished! Whosoever will can come and be saved!

While Christ was hanging on the cross, a Roman soldier passed by and thrust the spear in His side. In that precise moment the five-hundred-year-old prophecy of Zechariah was fulfilled to the utmost detail. He said, “*In that day there shall be a fountain open for sin and uncleanness.*”

I have often heard people express a sincere desire to have lived in the days of prophets, having walked alongside Abraham, Isaiah, Zechariah and the rest. I have thanked God providence has placed me on this side of the cross. If we were living on the other side of the cross, instead of hearing the gospel preached in our worship service, we would see the slaughter of animals upon an altar of sacrifice. Instead of our children hearing a Christian teacher tell of the resurrection of Christ, they would witness the slaying of heifers, goats and sheep, the blood dripping from the altar sacrifice. We are privileged people to live on this side of the cross. The prophets looked forward to the cross but never fully realized it. You and I have a backward glance at the cross. We can enter a worship service and join in with the hymn writer, (*Phoebe Palmer Knapp, 1839-1908*) and sing:

O now I see the crimson wave,
The fountain deep and wide,
Jesus, my Lord, mighty to save,
Points to His wounded side,

Amazing grace, 'tis heaven below
To feel the Blood applied,
And Jesus, only Jesus know,
My Jesus, crucified.

The cleansing stream, I see, I see,
I plunge and, oh, it cleanseth me!
Oh, praise the Lord, it cleanseth me!
It cleanseth me, yes, cleanseth me!

I made my way to a revival that was being conducted in a one-room schoolhouse that had been remodeled into a church. The minister preached. I felt a peculiar pull upon my heart. During the altar call, I joined the others in singing:

Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!
(Charlotte Elliott, 1789-1871)

I stepped into the aisle toward the altar. I did not have to lead a lamb to the altar for a sacrifice. Jesus had already made the sacrifice for me. I simply knelt at the altar and pled the shed blood of Jesus to atone for my sins. I stood to my feet and discovered I was living in a different world. Old things had passed away and behold, all things had become new. The Old Testament animal sacrifices were only sufficient to reconcile the sinner to God in a legal status. They could not remove the remorse and guilt that was embedded in the conscience. Had the animal sacrifices been sufficient, it would not have been necessary to repeat them year after year. Furthermore, had they been sufficient, it would not have been necessary for Christ to die on Calvary. I can best show the insufficiency of the animal sacrifices, and the all-sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice with a supposition. A man is confined to prison for life by the law for committing murder. Because of good conduct, in due time the governor issues him a pardon. That pardon is legal, having the sanction of the law. It restores the convict to his citizenship. He is a free man to walk outside the gates of the prison. But, even though that pardon is drawn up by the law and handed out by the governor, restoring the convict to his citizenship, that pardon cannot remove the guilt and the remorse of the crime with its condemnation remaining upon the conscience. Likewise, the animal sacrifices which were holy and performed by the law of God could reconcile the sinner to God in a legal status, but they could not take away the condemnation of remorse and guilt. For a confirmation of this, turn to the Hebrew writer, Chapter 10:1, 4 *"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."*

This same theological note has been struck on a poetical scale. The words are especially significant if you will recall at the dedication of Solomon's Temple, they sacrificed twenty-two thousand oxen and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. With the animal sacrifices in mind, the poet, *Isaac Watts*, wrote these words:

Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altar slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace
Or wash away the stain.
But Christ, the heavenly Lamb
Takes all our sins away,
A sacrifice of nobler name,
And richer blood than they.

The blood of Jesus Christ goes deeper than the blood of bulls and goats. It goes deeper than the stain of sin has gone. It will not only reconcile you to God in a legal status, but it will take away the remorse, the guilt, the condemnation, and make you as innocent as a new-born baby, as if you had never committed a sin all the days of your life. There is power in the blood of

Jesus to save you that completely.

Let us go back now to the symbolical narrative and follow the figure through to its fulfillment. Jesus Christ, our Passover Lamb, was resurrected the third day. He went back home to heaven to be with the Father. After arriving home in heaven, a servant was instructed to seek out a bride for the Father's only begotten son! The servant is the blessed Holy Spirit. He made His appearance in this world on the day of Pentecost. He is oath bound to give every person an invitation to become the bride of Christ. Jesus will not return to walk the streets of earth to seek out a bride for Himself. This is the mission of the servant, the Holy Spirit. He is in the world today extending the invitation. Shut out the rush and the busyness of life and incline your ear to the striving voice of the Holy Spirit as He says, "*Wilt thou go? Wilt thou be saved?*" Oh, that you would answer as others and say, "I will go!" Having accepted that kind and tender proposal, as you start the journey of life across the desert sands, there will be times when all will be darkness before you, and you will not know which way to turn. But remember, the Holy Spirit came from the Father's house, and He certainly knows the way back. It is written, "*When the Holy Spirit is come, He will guide you into all truth.*" As you continue in the Christian journey, there will be occasions when sorrow will come in like a flood. Remember, the Holy Spirit is the Comforter. He will be there to comfort you with all of the joys that await you at the end of life's journey. In the Greek New Testament, He is called the "Paraclete." That literally means "one alongside to help in time of trouble." He did not promise we would be exempt from trouble in our Christian journey. But He did promise the Heavenly Servant, the Holy Spirit, the Heavenly Guide, the Comforter, the Paraclete would be right alongside to help us through every trouble. Therefore, if you will be faithfully led by the Spirit (for they that are led by the Spirit are the children of God), one of these days the trumpet shall sound, the dead in Christ shall rise first, and then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord. Just one glimpse of our glorious bridegroom will recompense for all of the sorrow and ridicule we have suffered in this ungodly world. In the meantime, let us rejoice with the lyrics of Dr. Raymond Browning. (*The Homecoming Week 1927*).

Upon our journey here below we meet with pain and loss,
Sometimes there is a crown of thorns, Sometimes a heavy cross,
The dreary road to Calvary, the bitter goad and sting,
But what's inside those gates of pearl will be worth everything.

The shadows now begin to fall, the time is drawing nigh
When Christ, our Lord, shall come again like lightning from the sky.
And while we wait and suffer here, praise God, we'll shout and sing.
For one glimpse thro' those gates of pearl will be worth everything.

The precious blood of God's dear Son has saved and sanctified
A wondrous people for His name and they are called the bride,
Tho' here neglected and despised, one day the Lord will bring
His chosen ones within the gates, and that's worth everything.

When we're inside those gates of pearl, we'll learn a lot of things,
We'll have a harp that's made of gold, perhaps a thousand strings,
We'll sing and shout, without a doubt, the Lamb will dry our tears.
We'll have a grand homecoming week the first ten thousand years.

I am glad that I received an invitation. I'm glad I accepted the invitation. I have put on the wedding garment of holiness and am looking for His appearance in the clouds of glory. "*Wilt thou go?*" Will you be saved?

SERMON FIVE

CHRIST'S ULTIMATUM TO THE CHURCH

REVIVAL OR REMOVAL

Scripture Reading: Revelation 2:1-7

Text verse: Revelation 2:5

REPENT OR ELSE BE REMOVED

REVIVAL OR REMOVAL

PRELIMINARY

I am going to structure a text by selecting some of the words of the Savior in verse 5. The text reads, “*Repent or else be removed.*”

This text is an ultimatum. An ultimatum is the offer of a last chance. It is a final notice. Christ issued this ultimatum to the church at Ephesus. Psychologists vehemently oppose the issuance of an ultimatum, because an ultimatum leaves no room for compromise. Compromise is the leverage needed to negotiate a reconciliation. But—theology grounded in the infallible Word of God takes precedence over psychology. Theologically speaking, the Kingdom of God is not a democracy. The Kingdom of God is an autocracy. This simply means God has the final word in the affairs of the church. Therefore, the principles of the Kingdom of God are not negotiable. Consequently, the church board has no right to demand a vote to decide if they will approve the command of Christ to repent. Christ never apologized for preaching the authoritarian principles of the Kingdom of God. He does not offer a compromise to the church. Neither does He seek to negotiate a reconciliation. Instead, He presents the church with an ultimatum. It is **repent** or else be removed. Today Christ confronts the church with an ultimatum. It is **revival** or it is **removal**.

INTRODUCTION

Contrary to contemporary thinking, the last word of Christ to the church was not the Great Commission, even though world Evangelism must continue to the end of the age. The last word of Christ to the church is **repent**. Christ is the head of the church. He knows the condition of the church from beginning to end and everything in between. His letters to the seven churches in Revelation contain the characteristics of every church that has ever existed. The deficiencies He discovered in the churches caused Him to command five of the seven churches to repent. Many churches have conveniently circumvented the command of Christ to repent. They do this by placing a disproportionate emphasis upon the Great Commission. This has resulted in a superficial surge of personal and mass evangelism. Certainly the church is to be commended for any effort of evangelism to save the lost. But—the evangelism is not the same as revival. Christ evangelized the multitudes, but only a dozen qualified to become disciples. It is regrettable the terms “Evangelism and Revivalism” have become synonymous in our thinking. They do not mean the same thing. Evangelism is the proclamation of the Gospel to the lost—the unchurched. Revival is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the members of the church, whereby they settle matters with God and each other. Charles G. Finney says, “Revival is the renewal of the first love of Christians, resulting in the conversion of sinners.” Therefore, effective evangelism and real revivalism are interdependent. The one cannot exist without the other.

REJECTS REVIVAL

When the church rejects revival, the members become engrossed in a splurge of religious activities. They contend the regular activities of the church are sufficient to meet the spiritual needs of the congregation. Too many churches assume the entire membership is always in a

peak spiritual condition. When the church increases statistically, but the members decline spiritually, this produces a malignant growth that becomes terminal. The imperative need of the church is not more members, more buildings, or more money. The present crisis is not missions or evangelism. The desperate need of the church in this day is repentance and revival. D. L. Moody was asked, "Would you place live chicks under a dead hen?" Real revival is when the church hatches and mothers her own chicks. It is written, "*When Zion travails, children will be born.*" It is next to impossible to win to the church those who are not won through the church. Many new converts, the products of personal and mass evangelism, have been misplaced in an ecclesiastical environment where most of the staff and members are uncommitted and unconcerned. Eventually, they lose out. Worse yet, they become apathetic as the members with whom they associate. Tragically, they continue as professing Christians, congesting the church membership roll.

CRITICAL MEMBERS

Some critical members object to the high concentration of revival preaching. They argue it will frighten some prospects away. And—it probably will. When God, in judgment, struck the hypocritical Ananias and Saphira dead in the early church, the pretenders who planned to join the church were scared away. On the other hand, the record shows many who were honest and sincere repented. They were converted and added to the church.

SELF-RIGHTEOUS MEMBERS

In every church some self-righteous members assume they are spiritually superior and above the need for revival. They demonstrate their opposition by refusing to attend the services. They attempt to conceal their backslidden condition by boasting they are followers of the meek and lowly Christ, the humble Galilean teacher who went about doing good, performing miracles and teaching with parables. But—much has transpired since the Savior walked on this earth. There has been a cruel crucifixion, a rapturous resurrection, an amazing ascension, and a powerful Pentecost.

SUNDAY MORNING CHURCH MEMBERS

Many "Sunday morning only" church members sit piously in the pew. Their arms are folded in a defensive posture, desiring to hear a mild discourse concerning the Teacher of Galilee. The truth of the matter is, just as John, we need to have a close encounter with the crucified, resurrected and glorified Christ. John said, "*When I saw Him, His hair was as white as snow, His countenance was bright as the sun, His eyes were as a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished brass, His voice was as the sound of many waters, and out of His mouth came a two-edged sword.*" John said, "*When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though I were dead. And He laid His right hand upon me and He said, Fear not, I am the first and the last. I am He that liveth and was dead and behold I am alive forever. And He said unto me, write the things which thou hast seen, the things which are and the things which shall be hereafter.*" So, under the inspiration of the Glorified Christ, John wrote these words, "*Unto the angel of the church at Ephesus write: These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand and who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.*" These mysterious figures are explained in Revelation 1:20. The seven stars are the messengers; i.e., the ministers of God. The seven candlesticks are the churches. Therefore, the clear meaning of the verse could read like this... "*These things saith the Risen Lord who holds the ministers in His right hand and walks*

in the midst of the churches.”

CONSIDER THE CONSOLATION

I wonder if you have ever taken time to consider the consolation contained in these words. It is a comfort to know so long as the Blessed Lord tarries, there will always be a messenger—some ministers who are held in the protection of His right hand; true messengers who will enjoy the privilege and experience the power of His right hand intercession to the Father; faithful ministers who are the special beneficiaries of His right hand blessings. Furthermore, there will always be a church, and He will walk with His presence in the midst of it. I don't mean some little religious clan, clik or cult. He has a true church that is invincible and He has promised His presence will be with that people, and He will minister to that church by the mouth of His messengers until the time of the end when we will be gathered out of this wicked world, brought together in the rapture to rejoice forevermore in the triumph of His glory. Blessed be God, it is a consolation to know we are included in that number. It is a consolation to know we are a part of His Divine Plan.

CONTINUATION OF THIS MINISTRY

Now—to assure the continuation of this ministry to the church, it is significant to see how God delegates His divine witnesses to speak the eternal truth to us. In the brief scenario of these seven verses, He features four divine witnesses. The first witness is Jesus, the Savior, who spoke the truth. The second witness is John, the servant of God who recorded the Revelation. The third witness is the sacred scripture. John was commanded to “write” and what he wrote is the infallible scripture. The fourth witness is the Spirit. Verse 7 says, “*Hear what the Spirit saith.*” In the mouth of these divine witnesses, the truth of the Eternal God is established. The Savior speaks to convince us of the truth. The servant speaks to convey the truth to us. The scripture speaks to confirm the truth of God. The Spirit speaks to convict us of the truth. All of these divine witnesses minister in harmony, corroborating one another speaking the truth of God—the same truth we shall meet at the judgment.

SERVANT OF GOD SPEAKS

John, the servant of God speaks. He says, “*These things saith the Risen Savior.*” The things the Savior said are not vague. They are simple and straightforward. All the things the Savior spoke focus upon one central theme: namely, the supreme love of God. There are three things the Savior said in particular. The first thing the Savior said is seen in verse 2. He said, “*I know thy works and thy labor.*” With these words, the church is commended by the Savior's —

I. PERCEPTION OF THEIR LABOR

First, the Lord looked with favor upon the —

1. Foundational work of their labor.

Paul founded the church in Ephesus in the midst of severe persecution. He preached for three months in the Synagogue. His preaching was rebuffed by rejection and rebellion. The listeners hardened their hearts. The Gospel will either humble or harden the heart. Concerning Ephesus, Paul said, “*A great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.*” Opportunity is always accompanied with opposition. Out

of this opposition came a great revival. The report says, *“The name of the Lord was magnified and mighty grew the Word of God and prevailed.”* As a result of this revival, all of pro-consular Asia was evangelized. This included the territory of the other six churches in Revelation.

Next, the Lord praised the —

- 2. Practical work of their labor.** Jesus said, *“I know thy works, how thou hast borne, been patient and hast not fainted.”* They gladly carried the burden of the work, refusing to faint under the load. The tribulation they suffered produced in them the virtue of patience to remain steadfast and consistent.

The church at Ephesus was devoted to the —

- 3. Doctrinal work of their labor.** Jesus said, *“I know how thou canst not bear them that are evil.”* They did not lower the standard of belief and practice to accommodate a compromising policy of church growth. They tried them who said they were Prophets and found them to be liars. Jesus said, *“Thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.”* The Nicolaitanes were a dissident group who infiltrated the church. The Nicolaitanes were cunning. They said they were not destroying Christianity. Instead, they said they were presenting an improved version. It is a Satanic mentality that would have the audacity to say they can improve upon the principles and teaching of Jesus Christ. The second thing Jesus said in particular is recorded in verse 4. He said, *“I have somewhat against thee.”* The word “somewhat” does not appear in the original letter. Perhaps the translators put it in to soften the reprimand of Christ. But the sternness of the Savior’s statement is seen in the Greek text. It really means, “I have something serious against you.” Christ does not generalize this matter. He is talking about something specific. He said, *“I have something serious against you.”* And that something serious is this, *“Thou hast left thy first love.”*

With this rebuke, Christ condemned the —

II. PROFESSION OF THEIR LOVE

The Lord said, *“Thou has left thy first love.”*

- 1. First love.** What is meant by the term **first love**? The Greek word for first means something that is first in order and rank. Something that is first in time and place. It means something that is preeminent. The love of God is preeminent. It is preeminent in the sense it is absolute and above any love known unto man. The Blessed Lord makes the first proposal to bring us into a love relationship with God. Romans 5:8 says, *“God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* The first overture of love is made by God. I John 4:10 says, *“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us. We love Him because He first loved us.”* John said, *“God is love.”* This is the most comprehensive definition of God. Love is among the highest attributes of God. All that He is in His being, all that He does in His doing, all that He says in His saying, all that He thinks in His thinking proceeds from His divine love. I John 4:7 says, *“Beloved, let us love one another for love is of God.”* God is the creator of love.

The presence of God's love is recognized in the —

A. Creation of Adam and Eve.

Genesis 1:26: God said, *"Let us make man in our image, in our likeness."* So God created man in His own image. *"In the image of God created He him, male and female created He them."* Because God is love, He created Adam and Eve as the objects of His love. They had the capacity to reciprocate their love to God. From this we can conclude they were created with the freedom of choice, because love cannot be legislated. Love is the voluntary expression of a free choice. The law commands us to love God with all our heart, soul and strength. But we cannot fulfill this law unless the love of God dwells in us. Romans 13:10 says, *"Love is the fulfilling of the law."* John 14:23, Jesus said, *"If a man love me, he will keep my commandments."* The love relationship of God with Adam and Eve was conditioned upon their obedience to God's command. God commanded them, saying, *"If you eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden, thou shalt surely die."* They chose to disobey God. Their disobedience dissolved their relationship to God, their right to the tree of life, and their residence in the paradise of Eden. They were expelled from the Garden. An angel with a flaming sword stood guard, preventing their access to the tree of life. The judgment of sin and death was put on Adam and Eve and passed on to all of Adam's posterity. This was the greatest tragedy to befall the human race. But, terrible as this tragedy was, it did not exhaust the infinite love of God. John 3:16 says, *"God so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but should have everlasting life."* Consequently, the preeminence of God's love is revealed in the —

B. Crucifixion of Christ.

We know God's love is absolute. But I am convinced if there were degrees in God's love, it reached its zenith in the crucifixion of Christ. Referring to His crucifixion, Jesus said in John 15:13, *"There is no greater love than that a man lay down his life for others."*

I John 4:9 says, *"In this was manifest the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins."* Every wound the Savior suffered, every drop of blood that flowed from His veins, every tear that He shed, every groan that He uttered was a manifestation of the preeminent love of God. The Apostle said, *"We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. And the life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me."* Therefore, the provision of God's love is realized in the —

C. Conversion of the sinner. Romans 5:5 indicates that conversion is a personal and subjective experience whereby *"the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit."* I John 4:14 says, *"The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him and he in God. God is love and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in Him. Herein is our love made perfect. And we know that we dwell in Him and He in us because He hath given us of His Spirit."* From the cross, Christ demonstrated the transforming power of

conversion. If there ever was a time when the power of God could have been made weak, if there ever was a time when His love could have failed, it was while Christ was hanging, bleeding and dying on the cross. But in that hour of His most intense suffering, a common thief, a rabble-rouser, a sinner hanging next to Christ turned to the Savior and said, “*Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom.*” Jesus said, “*This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.*” I believe the Savior, in His dying breath, could have said, “The Heavenly Chariot with its angelic chauffeur that has been dispatched to bear me to the Holy city will also wait for you. Together we will be transported to the Paradise of God. There I will present you as my first trophy of grace. You will stand forever as eternal evidence before men, angels and devils that I have touched the bottom of hell; I have penetrated the uttermost parts of perdition, and I have the redemptive power to lift the vilest sinner out of the depths of his misery into the heights of My Glory.” The provision of His redemptive love reaches all the way from Calvary to the conversion of the lost sinner. For His love is **incomparable!** His love is **incomprehensible!** His love is **indescribable!** His love is **impartial!** His love is **immeasurable!** His love is **immortal!** His love is **immutable!** His love is **inseparable!** God’s love is absolutely pure and unfeigned. It cannot be tainted by the sin of this world. It cannot be corrupted by evil men. It cannot be diminished by the devil. Whatsoever you do, or whatever I do against that supreme love will not change it. In our rebellion we may throw ourselves against it, only to fall back broken and bruised, but we will not change God’s preeminent love. For His love is **unchangeable!** His love is **unsparing!** His love is **unselfish!** Glory be to God, His love is **unshakeable!** But—there is coming a time of judgment when He will shake the heavens and the earth until they quake and tremble with fear. Every mountain and every island will be moved out of their places. The mountains will crumble and become as dust blown by the angry wind. The rivers will be overturned in their courses. The oceans will spill over and weep themselves into deserts. He will shake the heavens until the stars will be flung from their silvery sockets. The moon will turn red, reflecting the blood of the slain. The sun will burn itself into charcoal upon the grates of eternity. He will shake this wicked world until the hordes in hell are turned into turmoil and the damned wail in their lostness. He will shake the whole universe until everything man has proudly built in space and on earth will come crashing down about his head in ruins. But, blessed be God, he who has been converted by His redemptive love, all who have been rooted and grounded in that supreme love will remain steadfast, immovable, and unshakeable as the everlasting Kingdom of God. And—we shall rejoice in the eternal realities that will remain forever when everything else has been removed. Now—the perplexing question that baffles the mind is this— Why would anyone who has experienced and embraced that precious First Love ever choose to leave it? Jesus said to the church, “*Thou hast left thy First Love.*”

Having left that First Love, they suffered the sorrow of a—

2. Forsaken love.

The scripture does not tell why they left their First Love. Neither does the Savior indicate why they left their First Love. When any man or when any woman walks away from the love of God, he or she knows when it happened, and they know why they did it. I Kings 20:40 tells of a **careless servant** who neglected his Lord. As an excuse for his neglect, the man said, “*Thy servant was busy here and there.*” The Lord rejected his

excuse. And he was given the death penalty. Likewise, the members of the church at Ephesus were also very busy. But their busyness did not compensate for the fact they left their First Love. You may not be mindful of the love you have forsaken while you are busy rehearsing with the choir, preparing sermons, serving on the church board, calling for the Sunday School, organizing socials, stacking up statistics—but when you are alone and away from the labor of the church, in the darkness of the night, the sobering voice of the Savior shatters the silence and He says, *“You have been busy doing good works for the church, but I have something serious against you because thou has left thy First Love.”* And this matter He has against you never will be settled until you acknowledge you have forsaken that First Love. What you do about this matter is your decision. In the case of the careless servant who neglected his Lord, the Lord said, *“Thou hast decided, so shall thy judgment be.”* Likewise, whatsoever you have decided about forsaking that First Love, God will judge you accordingly. He created you with the freedom of choice. Therefore, if you decide to forsake His love, He will continue to love you, but He will not compromise the requirements of His Kingdom to restore you. Neither will He negotiate a reconciliation with you. He will not deny you of your free choice. If you have decided you no longer want His love, He will not force you to stay. He will let you go. The Lord made a passionate plea to save the **rich young ruler** from perishing—but he loved the possessions of the world more than he loved the precious Lord. He went away sorrowful for he had great possessions. And—the Lord never went after him. He let him go his way. And Jesus preached his funeral sermon before he was out of sight. Have you become so worldly-minded as to forsake His love? I urge you to stop and consider the stern statement of the Savior. He says, *“I have something serious against you because thou hast left thy first love.”* When it comes to the matter of your salvation, I know the world is against you. I know the powers of darkness and hell are against you, but in spite of this, you can still be saved. On the other hand, so long as the Lord has something against us, what hope do we have for salvation now and heaven hereafter? Because—a forsaken love becomes a —

- 3. Fallen love.** Jesus said, *“Thou art fallen.”* The term “fallen” is precise in its meaning. To put it plainly, it means you have fallen from the grace of God. When you left that “First Love,” the conversion you once experienced was cancelled.

Judas is a case in point. Christ chose him as a disciple. This implies Judas was once converted and loved the Lord at the first. Judas left that “First Love” for the lust of the world. He forsook the Savior for a few shackles of silver. Acts 1:25 says, *“Judas by transgression fell and went to his own place.”* All of the fallen have their own place in eternity. It is the place of perdition. When some of the Galatians fell from grace, Paul said, *“O, foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth of God. Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye made perfect by the flesh?”* They left the love of Christ, then attempted to justify the loss of love by busying themselves with the religious works of the law. Galatians 5:4, Paul said to them, *“Christ is become of no effect unto you.”* Christ, who effectuated their conversion at the first, no longer had any effect on them. Jesus said to those who left their first love, *“Thou art fallen.”*

Fallen from grace is a condition if persisted in to its final conclusion will prove to be fatal. This warning is sounded in Hebrews 6:4, *“For it is impossible for those who were*

once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify unto themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to open shame.” The third thing the Savior said in particular is recognized in verses 5 and 7. He said, *“Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works or else I will come unto thee quickly and remove thy candlestick out of His place, except thou repent, hear what the Spirit saith.”* With the warning of these words, we are constrained by the Spirit to respond to the —

III. PERSUASION OF THE LORD

The Lord is persuasive in His plea for you to return. He has condescended to come to the point where you have fallen. There He has patiently provided three steps for your recovery. You must complete each of these steps or face a final removal from the Kingdom of God. The first step the Lord requires for your recovery is —

1. Remember.

An aroused memory is your best hope for being restored. It was remembrance of the Father’s house that prompted the prodigal son to return from the far country of sin. Revive your memory and remember you once enjoyed a love to the Lord that was —

A. First

In every part of your life—**remember**—you joyfully committed yourself to obey the commandments of His Kingdom, stated in Matthew 6:33 which reads, *“Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.”* **Remember** when the Lord was the “First Love” in your life, He graciously added all the things that are essential for living. **Remember**—you were amazed and your friends were astonished how the Lord provided for you—all because you put Him first. Do you **remember** the love that was first? **Remember** that first love was —

B. Forsaken by you.

Do you **remember** the Lord’s precious promise? He said, *“I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”* He didn’t forsake you. **Remember** you forsook Him. He didn’t leave you. **Remember** you left Him. The Lord said, *“Thou hast left thy first love.”* **Remember** the love that was forsaken by you is now a—

C. Fallen love.

The Lord said, *“Thou art fallen.”* You fell because you allowed the secondary things of the world to replace the first things of the Lord. **Remember** Christ must have first place in your life and your love, or He will have no place at all. The second step the Lord requires for your recovery is —

2. Repent.

But you cannot take this second step until you have finished the first step, because the distance between these three steps is such that you cannot omit any one of them and rise out of your fallen condition. To make sure you have completed the first step, you must acknowledge you have fallen from grace, or you cannot ascend to the second step. You

must humbly confess, “Lord, I have fallen from grace.” Then from that point you can reach the second step which is **repent**. Some have stumbled over this step and fallen back because they have attempted to substitute consecration for repentance. The Lord didn’t say, “consecrate.” He said, “repent.” Initially you had to repent to establish a first love experience with the Lord. Likewise, you must repent in the same manner to reestablish that “first love” relationship. Repentance demands honesty. The prodigal said, *“I will arise and go to my father and say, I have sinned against thee and heaven and am no longer worthy to be called thy son.”* Repentance is admitting the blame is yours. It is simply saying, “I have sinned against thee and heaven and I am no longer worthy to be called your child.” The third step Christ requires for your recovery is —

3. Redo.

He said, *“Do the first works over.”* This means returning to the first principles of Christ and laying once again the foundation of repentance. The leakage of love out of your life has resulted in a loss of your conversion. What you did at the first to be converted, you must **redo**. The Savior persuades you to remember, return and repent. The Spirit pleads with you to **redo** the first works, be recovered and resume the “first love” relationship you once enjoyed with the Lord. But—He requires that you do it now. He said, *“Repent or else I will come unto thee **quickly** and **remove** thy candlestick out of His place.”* He confronts you with a choice. You can receive the truth, repent and be recovered to salvation, or you can reject the truth, refuse to repent and be removed to damnation. He said, *“Unless you repent, He will remove you out of **his place**.”* His place is the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God guarantees you a reservation in The Heavenly City. In the midst is the **tree of life** that insures immortality. We lost that **tree** in the Garden of Eden through Adam’s disobedience. It has since been transplanted in The Heavenly City. Revelation 22:14 says, *“Blessed are they that do His commandments that they may have right to the **tree of life** and enter through the gates into the City.”* You must repent now or He will remove your right to the **tree of life**. Unless you repent, He will remove your reservation from the City of God. Jesus said, *“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen. Repent and do the first works or else I will come unto Thee quickly and remove thy candlestick out of His place except thou repent.”* Does the Lord carry out His threats? Let’s see if he does. Look at verse 6 in the Book of Jude. He says, *“The angels which kept not their **first** estate, but left their own habitation He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the day of judgment.”* Look at II Peter 2:4. It says, *“For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment—and spared not the old world, but brought the flood upon the world of the ungodly, and turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemning them with an overflow of hellfire and brimstone, making them an example to all that should afterward live ungodly,”* neither will He spare the unrepentant church member. These are records of threats that have been carried out. They have been confirmed by the science of geology and archaeology. Now consider this—if He spared not the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell; if He spared not the ungodly in Noah’s day, but destroyed them in the great flood; if He spared not the unrighteous in Sodom and Gomorrah, but destroyed them with hellfire and brimstone—neither will He spare impenitent church members who have forsaken the love of the Lord. Backsliders who have fallen from grace, excusing themselves, refusing to repent, He will also deliver into chains of darkness reserved unto judgment. Christ confronts you with an

ultimatum. It is repent or be removed. The removal will be final in this world, and it will be forever in eternity.

SERMON SIX

BORN TO BE CRUCIFIED

Exposition of Galatians 2:20

BORN TO BE CRUCIFIED

INTRODUCTION

It is written *“Be ye holy, for I the Lord God am holy.”* All of the redeemed are required to respond to the command to be holy.

One of the most profound profiles of Holy living is personified in the life of Apostle Paul. This is especially exemplified in his personal testimony. His testimony is significant if you will remember. I Corinthians 2:2, Paul said, *“I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus and Him crucified.”* This determination is disclosed in his testimony. Galatians 2:20, Paul testifies, *“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved and gave Himself for me.”*

In his testimony and supplementary scriptures, Paul endeavors to show there are supernatural similarities between the earthly experiences of Christ and our spiritual experiences in the Lord. Paul beheld the birth of Christ believing we have a spiritual birth having some of the supernatural elements of our Lord’s birth.

Next, Paul considers the crucifixion of Christ and concludes we must experience a spiritual crucifixion with our Lord.

Finally, Paul reviews the resurrection of Christ and reveals we are to experience and enjoy the power of a spiritual resurrection with our Lord here and now in this present world.

THE NEW BIRTH

Look at the first statement of Paul’s testimony. He testified, *“I am crucified with Christ.”* This is a definite declaration of a death because crucifixion always culminates in death. But the same phrase implies another significant truth. Bear in mind the implication of scripture is just as valid as the declaration of scripture. Paul says, *“I am crucified with Christ.”* This is a declaration of a death. But the implication must of necessity be birth, for how can a man die unless he has first been born? Birth always precedes death. Furthermore, birth and death cannot happen simultaneously. Also, there is a distinctive time element between birth and death, whether it be a second or a century.

Now, the scriptures teach the **FIRST** work of salvation is a birth. John 3:3, Jesus said, *“Ye must be born again of the Spirit.”* On the other hand, holiness is described as a death. Romans 6:8, Paul indicates **all who have been made free from the sin nature are “dead with Christ.”** Since birth and death cannot occur at the same time, it follows— before you can experience the crucified death with Christ—first you must be born of the Spirit with Christ. Consequently, this makes holiness a **SECOND** definite work of grace.

Colossians 2:13, Paul says, *“You hath He **QUICKENED** together with Christ.”* The word **QUICKENED** conveys the idea of begetting, making alive, or bringing to birth. Paul is simply saying, *“We have an experience of the **NEW BIRTH** that has the same identifiable characteristics of our Lord’s birth. This being the case, we need to examine the method and manner of our Lord’s birth. St. Luke, a recognized physician, can help in this matter. Dr. Luke recorded the details of our Lord’s birth. He inserted into the record the words of the angel as they were given to the Virgin Mary. The angel said unto Mary, *“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee. Therefore, also, that Holy**

Thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” From this record we see the birth of Christ was **accomplished** by the Holy Spirit coming upon the Virgin. It was **achieved** by the power of the Highest overshadowing Mary. The only human element in the birth of Christ was Mary becoming a recipient of the divine seed implanted by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the birth of Christ was not by human conception. It was by Divine impartation. It was not in the **ordinary** realm of the natural. It reached the **peak of the supernatural**.

Likewise, our experience of the **NEW BIRTH** is performed by the Holy Spirit coming upon us. It is made possible by the power of the highest transforming us. There is nothing human about the **NEW BIRTH** except as you become a willing recipient of Divine life infused into your soul by the Holy Spirit. The experience supersedes all that is natural and human. It is supernatural in the sense it cannot be compared with any experience hitherto known to man.

Consequently, church membership, water baptism, religious ritual, creeds and ceremonies are mere humanistic mechanics of the institutional church. They cannot beget or produce any spiritual life within the soul. Jesus said, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” Therefore, the necessity of our Lord’s command, “Ye must be born from above.”

Now—I have taken the scripture and shown we have a supernatural share in our Lord’s birth when we experience the new birth. The next experience in Divine order is the crucifixion with Christ.

CRUCIFIXION WITH CHRIST

As repugnant as it may sound, we are born of the Spirit so we can be crucified with Christ.

Consider once again the first phrase of Paul’s testimony. He testifies, *“I am crucified with Christ.”* Crucifixion as a mode of capital punishment was as commonplace in that day as the hangman’s noose in our time. Therefore, it was common for a man to be crucified. Please note Paul personalizes this crucifixion by identifying it with Christ. While it was common for a man to be crucified, it was quite uncommon for a man to be crucified with Christ.

Let us pause for a moment and **cross-examine** the first phrase of Paul’s testimony with the expertise of an attorney. He testified, *“I am crucified with Christ.”* But—was he? There is an historical document recorded in Matthew 21:38 that will refute this testimony. Let the record show there were three crosses at Calvary. Christ was on the middle cross.

Two thieves were on the other crosses. There is no mention of a man named Paul present with Christ at Calvary. Has Paul perjured himself by his own testimony? Who is this imposter attempting to steal the honor of being crucified with Christ?

Of course, Paul did not mean to infer he was literally crucified with Christ at Calvary in the physical sense. Instead, he is talking about a spiritual crucifixion all of us must experience if we are going to follow the Lord from here to eternity.

Now—it is a curious thought to me, elsewhere in describing the experience of holiness, Paul simply uses the term “dead.” Colossians 2:20, “Dead with Christ” is the precise terminology he uses. Colossians 3:3, he simply says, “Ye are dead with Christ.” But in his personal testimony, he changes the terminology to read, *“I am crucified with Christ.”* Why didn’t he simply say, *“I am dead with Christ”* as he did on other occasions. It appears elsewhere in describing holiness, he simply mentions the fact of being *“dead with Christ.”* But in his personal testimony, he is emphasizing the **method** of that death which is **crucifixion**.

CRUCIFIXION OF THE OLD MAN

When Paul said, *“I am crucified with Christ,”* exactly, what did he mean? To ascertain

what Paul had in mind, we need to see how he uses the term “crucified” in other scriptures. An equivalent is found in Romans 6:6. It reads, “*Knowing this that our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should serve sin no longer.*” Therefore, when Paul testified, “*I am crucified with Christ,*” he meant the old man of carnality within his heart had been put to death. He meant the **indwelling** sin which is the **progenitor** of all committed sins, had been destroyed. This is not an **intellectual** experience of the imagination. It is a heart-changing experience whereby we are made free from the **power** and the **presence** of indwelling sin. No born-again Christian can truly testify, “I am crucified with Christ” until he knows the old man of carnality has been put to death within his own heart.

CRUCIFIED FLESH

Turn now to Galatians 5:24 and see how Paul uses the term “crucified.” It reads, “*They that are Christ’s have **crucified** the flesh with its affections and lusts.*” The word **flesh** in the Galatians epistle poses a real problem in the matter of interpretation. Let me show you how serious the problem is. Paul uses the word **flesh** in his testimony. He says, “*The life which I now live in the **flesh**.*” Now if you will turn to Galatians 5:19, you will read where he says, “*Now the works of the **flesh** are manifest which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, and revellings.*” This apparent problem has caused some religious extremists to conclude sin resides in the flesh. They contend so long as the soul of man inhabits this physical **corporeal** body, it is impossible to live a life of Holiness. They support this theory by quoting Romans 8:8 which reads, “*They that are in the **flesh** cannot please God.*” Since it cannot be argued a Holy God will admit unholy people into the Holy city, they **accommodate their theory by claiming that Christians are sanctified holy at the time of their physical death. They refer to this experience as “dying grace.”** Their error lies in the fact they fail to recognize the physical body is not an agent, but an **instrument**. Romans 6:13, Paul says, “*We are to yield the **members** of our body as **instruments** of righteousness unto God.*” An instrument is incapable of any moral evil. Only an agent can commit evil. To illustrate—you are familiar with an instrument known as a hammer. Have you ever heard of a man driving a nail with a hammer and accidentally hits the wrong nail. I mean the thumb nail. With excruciating pain he throws the hammer as far as he can. What is wrong with that instrument known as a hammer? Absolutely nothing. The problem is the agent; i.e., the person who is using that instrument. Likewise, your body is an instrument. There is nothing sinful about your physical body. The sin problem is with the agent or person who is using that instrument; namely, the physical body.

The theory that sin resides in the fleshly body leads to some ridiculous conclusions. For instance, a 300 pound person would be a worse sinner than the person who only weighs 100 pounds. If sin resides in the flesh, then the **means** to holiness would be to go on a crash diet. The thinner you become, the holier you will be. If you starve yourself to death, you will achieve **absolute** and **final** holiness. Furthermore, if we cannot be sanctified holy until we experience physical death, this would imply death is our sanctifier. Paul says, “*Our last enemy is death.*” Surely, that which is our enemy cannot sanctify us holy. Christ is our Sanctifier. Hebrews 13:12 says, “*Jesus suffered without the gate that He might sanctify the people with His own blood.*”

DR. J. O. McCLURKAN

Dr. J. O. McClurkan was a Cumberland Presbyterian minister. He was sanctified holy

under the preaching of the great Methodist Evangelist C. B. Caradine. Dr. McClurkan pioneered the holiness work in the Nashville area. He founded Trevecca College. Dr. McClurkan's wife disagreed with her husband's doctrinal position of holiness. She was of the persuasion sin resides in the flesh and that it is impossible to live holy in this life. She believed we are sanctified holy at the time of our physical death. She referred to that experience as "dying grace." Sister McClurkan became ill. When it appeared she was going to die, she asked her husband and others to gather around her deathbed and pray for her to receive "dying grace." To her, that meant to be sanctified before passing into eternity. As they prayed, the glory of the Lord descended and filled the room. The Lord sanctified her holy. But her physical body refused to cooperate with the theory of "dying grace." Instead, the Lord healed her, raised her up as a living witness to second blessing holiness. She testified to the experience well beyond ninety years of age.

While we rejoice in the credibility of this confirmation of holiness, we have not resolved the problem of the word **flesh**. The problem cannot be cleared up in the English text of the King James version. Paul wrote the Galatians epistle in the Greek language. In the Greek text, the word "flesh" has a dual meaning. When Paul uses the word "flesh" to mean the physical body, he uses the Greek word **soma**. When he uses the word **flesh** to mean the carnal nature, he uses the Greek word **sarx**. With that in mind, Paul's testimony would read, "The life which I now live in the soma; i.e., this physical body, I live by the faith of the Son of God. Galatians 5:19 would read, "*The works of the sarx; i.e., the carnal nature are manifest which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and etc.*" Galatians 5:24 would read, "*They that are Christ's have crucified the sarx i.e., the carnal nature with its affections and lusts.*" Romans 8:8 would read, "*They that are in the sarx; i.e., a carnal state, cannot please God.*" Vs. 9 goes on to say, "*But ye are not in the sarx; i.e., a carnal state if so be the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.*" Therefore, when Paul testified, "*I am crucified with Christ,*" he meant the carnal nature with its affections and lusts had been put to death.

CRUCIFIED UNTO THE WORLD

To establish further what Paul meant when he testified, "*I am crucified with Christ,*" turn to Galatians 6:14. It reads, "*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*" To be crucified with Christ means to be dead to the world. Paul is not here referring to the external system of the world. **This is conquered in the experience of the new birth.** I John 5:4 says, "*Whosoever is born of God overcomes the world.*" What Paul has in mind is the internal spirit of the world that finds a sympathetic sanctuary within the carnal nature. It is that spirit of the world that is self-seeking. It seeks **position, power, prestige, and prominence.**

The spirit of the world glories in **self-assertiveness, self-exaltation, and self-honor.** And it does this to provoke the envy of others. Galatians 5:26, Paul says, "*Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*" This internal **spirit of worldliness** is in direct opposition to the **Spirit of holiness.** To be crucified with Christ means we are dead to the internal spirit of the world that **glories in self.** Not only that, but the spirit of the world is dead unto us because it finds **no sympathy for self-glory within the soul of the Holy Sanctified. Instead, we glory in the cross of our crucified Lord.**

DR. E. STANLEY JONES

Dr. E. Stanley Jones, Missionary to India, revealed the greatest obstacle to evangelism was among his own staff. Many of them had given up America with its comforts and conveniences.

They had given up luxurious homes, lucrative salaries, professional careers to become missionaries. But he said they hadn't given up themselves, because they were constantly clamoring for positions of power and competing for places of prominence. They became touchy, irritable and sulky toward others who were more talented and better qualified. Dr. Jones said, "They had gladly given up the world that was **without**, but they hadn't given up the world that was **within**. Had they been crucified with Christ, they would have been dead to the world and the world would have been dead unto them.

EVENTS OF CAPTIVITY AND CRUCIFIXION

If we are going to fully comprehend what Paul meant when he testified, "*I am crucified with Christ,*" we **must follow the DEATH ROUTE with Christ to Calvary**. The death route will take us to the events that lead to the captivity and crucifixion of Christ. Beginning with the **betrayal**, Judas used one of the most affectionate expressions of love to betray Christ. He kissed Christ in the garden. That was the signal Christ was the one they were to apprehend. How did Christ react to the **betrayal** kiss? **His heart was broken with grief**. When Christ was apprehended, they led Him away to the Palace of the **High Priest**. Peter, who boasted, "*Lord, I will go with thee all the way, into prison and death if necessary,*" was standing outside. When Peter was accused of being a follower of Christ, he cursed and denied having any association with Christ. How did Christ react to this **denial**? He cast a **sorrowful glance** in the direction of Peter. Christ was taken to Herod's **judgment hall**. He was mocked! He was falsely accused! He was interrogated with controversial questions. What was the **reaction** of Christ? With a meek and quiet spirit, He held His peace and answered them not a word. As Christ was hanging on the cross, the howling mob spit upon Him. They struck Him. They cursed Him with blasphemies. What was the reaction of Christ? He humbly bowed His head and prayed, "*Father, forgive them.*"

Summarizing all of these incidents, Paul condenses them into the first phrase of his testimony. He is simply saying, "*When the traitorous Judases betray me behind my back, and with a smile, kiss me to my face, I will **react** as Jesus did, for I am crucified with Christ. When the braggarts, such as Peter, support me when all is calm and peaceful, but cursingly deny me in the crisis, I will **react** as Jesus did, for I am crucified with Christ. Although I be boycotted from the pulpit, ignored by the institutional church, ostracized by the ecclesiastical brethren, I will **react** as Jesus did and sincerely pray, "Father, forgive them" "for I am crucified with Christ."* **Now that we know what Paul meant when he testified, "I am crucified with Christ," where do we really stand with the Savior in this matter of being sanctified holy?**

In the time of our Lord's agony, they took vinegar mingled with gall and pressed it to the Savior's lips. Even so, we must expect to drink the bitterest concoction the cup of human hate can force upon us. When the Roman soldier thrust the spear into the Savior's side, forthwith came blood and water. Physiologists insist blood mingled with water is evidence the subject died of a broken heart. It was not the crown of thorns; it was not the rusty nails; it was not the jagged spear that killed our Lord. It was the hateful attitude of the people. He died with a broken heart. When the ruthless soldiers of the world shove the spear of hate into your heart, do they see water and blood, the evidence of a broken sanctified heart, or do they get anger and revenge, the offspring of a carnal heart. When the spear entered the Savior's side, His **silence** proved to them He was already dead. Likewise, we must die so completely to the sin nature, when the spear of sarcasm pierces our innermost being, there shall not develop any manifestation of the carnal nature.

At Calvary, the fickle crowd shouted, "Release unto us Barabbas, but crucify Jesus."

Barabbas was the epitome of evil. Christ was the Paragon of holiness. Even so, we must submit in meek silence to see Barabbas popularized while we are crucified. Just as our Lord was buried quietly out of sight without **ostentatious attendants**, likewise we must be willing to disappear from the **social circles**, the **prominent conferences**, and **prestigious committees** where we were once a welcome guest. We must consent to be separated from worldly associations and ambitions as if we were buried out of sight. **It is one thing to profess holiness, but it is something else to go with Jesus into the Gethsemane of sorrow.** It is one thing to profess holiness, but it is quite another to go with Jesus into the garden of betrayal. It is one thing to profess holiness, but it is something else to go with Jesus to the judgment hall of injustice and hatred. It is one thing to profess holiness, but is something different to go with Jesus to the **cross of shame and cruelty**. It is one thing to profess holiness, but it is something else to go with Christ to the silent grave of obscurity. Once again, now that we know what Paul meant when he testified, *“I am crucified with Christ,”* where do we stand, you and I, in the matter of denying our little pitied, petulant, pampered self in order that Christ might be manifest in our mortal body?

DENIAL OF SELF

Thus far we have emphasized the experience of holiness is an instantaneous **crisis** wrought within the heart of the born-again believer. Beyond the experience is the fact that holiness requires a perpetual **maintenance**. This is revealed in the grammatical construction of the first phrase in Paul’s testimony. He testifies, *“I am crucified with Christ.”* **I am** is present tense. Some translations have changed the tense to read, *“I was crucified with Christ.”* That tense is inconsistent with the remainder of Paul’s testimony and related scriptures. I prefer the present tense in the King James version because it blends with the context. Paul said, *“I am crucified with Christ.”* “I am” is present tense. “Crucified” is past tense. Here we have the combination of both the present and past tense in the same phrase. The past tense of the term “crucified” means the old man of carnality has been put to death. This is something that is to be done and put into the past. The present tense “I am” indicates there is a continuous crucifixion in the life of the sanctified. This continuous crucifixion is suggested in Romans 8:36. Paul says, *“It is written for thy sake we are **killed** all the day long.”* Paul had this continuous crucifixion in mind when he said in I Corinthians 15:31, **“I die daily.”** He does not mean he is dying to the sin nature daily. Romans 6:10 says, *“For in that Christ died unto sin once ... **I** likewise reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin.”* When Paul said, *“I die daily,”* he was referring to the many situations he was confronted with each day that make their appeal to the self nature. Paul clarifies this continuous crucifixion in II Corinthians 4:10. He says, *“We are **always** bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus that this life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake.*

This continuous crucifixion enables us to practice the principle of self-denial. Self-denial is a vital part of the perpetual maintenance of holiness. The scriptures plainly teach the sin nature is to be **destroyed** but self is to be **denied**. When we sing, “May all **self be slain**, my friends see only Thee,” this makes pretty poetry, but it is inaccurate theology. **Self** is not to be **slain**, **self** is to be denied.

The **perpetual maintenance** of holiness is recognized in the fact there is a daily discipline of self-denial. The **pattern** of self-denial is **presented** by the Savior in Luke 9:23. He said, **“If any man will come after me, let him DENY himself, and take up his cross DAILY and follow me.”** The carnal nature says, **ASSERT THYSELF**. The holy nature says, **DENY THYSELF**. The **principle** that governs our self-denial is practiced by our Lord in Luke 22:42. When facing

the prospect of the cross, Jesus said to the Father, *“Not my will, but thine be done.”* Each day of your life you will encounter situations and circumstances that will make their appeal to your self-nature. These things may not be sinful in themselves, but if they come between you and the complete will of God, you must deny yourself of them. **The rule that regulates your choice in these matters is simply, “Lord, not my will, but thine be done.”** Call to mind the things that confront you each day. Do you always apply the Savior’s principle and say, “Lord, not my will, but thine be done?”

It is in this matter of self-denial many have failed. The perpetual maintenance of a state of holiness has been terminated. Many can testify, “I was crucified with Christ, meaning sometime in past years they were sanctified holy, but because they failed the perpetual maintenance of holiness in performing the daily discipline of self-denial, they cannot presently testify, “I **am** crucified with Christ.”

RESURRECTED LIFE

Paul testifies, *“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live.”* Holiness is more than a crucified death, also it is a **RESURRECTED** life. Paul said, *“I am crucified with Christ; that is, I am dead.”* Then in the next breath, he says, *“nevertheless I live.”* The fact that he just said, *“I am dead”*—then says, *“I am alive”* indicates he is speaking of resurrected life. It is not the future resurrection of the body from the dead made possible by Christ’s triumph over the tomb that Paul has in mind here. He is talking about a spiritual resurrection we are to receive here and now in this present world. In Colossians 2:2, Paul says, *“Ye are **risen** with Christ.”* Had these Colossians been bodily resurrected from the dead? Of course not. Paul is talking about a spiritual resurrection that is enjoyed by the sanctified in this present life. Colossians 3:1, Paul said *“If then ye are **RISEN** with Christ, seek those things which are above.”*

The **RISEN** life does not take place in the **NEW BIRTH**. The Savior’s birth did not take place after His crucifixion. It occurred before His crucifixion. His resurrection did not take place at the time He was born. It took place **AFTER** His crucifixion. The **RISEN** life does not follow as a result of the new birth, but as a result of crucifixion.

What does it mean to be risen with Christ? Remember Jesus had certain limitations in His ministry before He was resurrected from the dead. But after His resurrection, Christ displayed a more transcendent life. The disciples were assembled in a room out of fear. They were behind locked doors. Christ walked through the locked doors as if they did not exist; Christ appeared unto His disciples. Locked doors were unable to stop the resurrected Christ. Likewise, when we have experienced this comparative spiritual resurrection, the barriers of opposition will be powerless to stop us. The doors of defeat that once turned us back to failure will become open doors of victory. Revelation 3:8, **“Behold, I have set before thee an open door and no man can shut it.”** When Paul went to preach the Gospel to Ephesus, he said, I Corinthians 16:9, **“There are many adversaries. But a great door is effectually opened to me.”**

Finally, when we are called upon to walk the last mile of the way, through the valley of the dark shadows, as we come to the heavy doors of death, we will pass through victoriously and never once feel the sting that sin yields, because we have experienced the power of His resurrection here and now.

HOLINESS AND HUMANITY

Paul testifies, *“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live.”* The word “live” suggests another truth. It is the truth concerning the human aspect of holiness. There is a definite harmony between the experience of holiness and our humanity. This harmony is expressed in II

Corinthians 4:7 which reads, “*We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.*” In other words, Paul is saying we have this holiness in physical bodies.

When Paul said, “*I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live,*” he was simply saying, “I am sanctified holy, but holiness did not dehumanize me; I am still a man. I am sanctified holy, but holiness did not deify me and make me an angel.” **We have been made free from the sin nature, but we are still in bondage to the physical consequences of the curse. We have a bit of heaven in our souls, but our souls are not yet in heaven.** I am sanctified, nevertheless my memory frequently fails me; I am sanctified, nevertheless I suffer sickness. I am sanctified, nevertheless, I disagree with the methods of some people. I am sanctified, nevertheless some people disagree with my methods. **In the sanctified life, you can disagree and be agreeable at the same time.**

SEVERE SITUATIONS

I don't think anybody would question the fact that Paul was sanctified holy. Consider some of the **SEVERE SITUATIONS** he had to contend with, in the sanctified life. II Corinthians 4:8, he says, “*We are troubled on every side.*” Some have supposed when we get sanctified our troubles are over. The fact is Satan multiplies the troubles of the sanctified. You can be sure if the devil is not troubling you, it is because he already has you, and now he could care less. While the sanctified are troubled on every side, please note Paul does not mention any trouble on the **inside**. That troublemaker on the inside, the old man of carnality, has been put to death.. The unsanctified have to wage a **two-front** war. They have to fight against the sin of the world and also fight against the principle of sin indwelling within the heart. Even though the sanctified are troubled on every side, Paul says we are not **distressed**.

Paul says, “*We are perplexed.*” Some have thought if they get sanctified, they will know the answers to all the questions. Sanctification doesn't give you more sense. It just gives you the ability to use what sense you do have. Even though we are perplexed, we are not in **despair**. The Greek text says, “*not altogether without help.*” Paul says, “*We are persecuted.*” Some have thought after they are sanctified, everybody would love them. **Your holy life is a rebuke to the carnal life of others, and they will resent you for it. They will persecute you and say all manner of evil against you.** But Paul says, “*even though we are persecuted, we are not forsaken.*”

He says, “*We are cast down.*” Some have thought the sanctified are always living on the mountaintop. There are circumstances of life that will cause you to become cast down, but even though we are cast down, Paul says, “*We are not destroyed. For which cause, we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*” The paradoxical mysteries of holiness make us more than conquerors through Him that loved us. If you are willing to suffer the severe situations of the sanctified, eventually you will enjoy the sanctified satisfactions of the holy.

SANCTIFIED SATISFACTIONS

Paul said, “*When I am weak, then I am strong.*” I am unknown, and yet I am well known. I am dying, and behold I live. I am sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. I am poor, yet making many rich; I have nothing, and yet I possess all things. Now a person who has these satisfactions refuses to be defeated. All of this sounds like a contradiction. But holiness has always been a contradiction to this wicked world.

YET NOT I — SUBMISSION OF SELF

Paul testifies, *“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I.”* It sounds like Paul is contradicting himself. He says, *“I am dead.”* Next he says, *“I am alive.”* Then he says, **“YET NOT I”** The phrase **YET NOT I** indicates the egotistical “I” has been conquered and brought into submission to the sanctifying Spirit of God. The egotistical “I” becomes the sanctified “I.” This is expressed in Paul’s testimony. Before we consider Paul’s testimony, let me give you some testimonies that expose the egotistical “I.” Isaiah 14:13, *“**I** will ascend into heaven; **I** will exalt my throne above the stars of God. **I** will sit also upon the mount of the congregation. **I** will ascend above the heights of the clouds. **I** will be like the Most High.”* This is the testimony of Lucifer, the fallen angel who became Satan.

Listen to another testimony. Luke 12:1, *“What shall **I** do because **I** have no room to bestow **my** fruits. This will **I** do. **I** will pull down **my** barns and build greater and there **I** will bestow all **my** fruits and **my** goods. And **I** will say to **my** soul, Soul, thou has much goods laid up for many years. Take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry.”* That is the testimony of the rich fool.

Take another testimony. Luke 18:9 *“**I** thank thee, God, **I** am not as other men are. **I** fast twice in the week. **I** tithe of all **I** possess. **I** thank thee **I** am not like this publican standing next to me.”* That is the testimony of the self-righteous Pharisee. Did you notice how obnoxious the egotistical “**I**” is emphasized in these testimonies?

For a contrast, listen now to Paul’s testimony. He says, *“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.”* Eight different times Paul refers to himself in this testimony using the personal pronouns “I” and “me,” but you don’t notice it. Why? Because this is the sanctified “I.” I will tell you what is noticeable in Paul’s testimony—the exaltation of Christ.

The authority of the Holy Scriptures cited in this discourse leads to a searching question. After you experienced being born again of the Spirit, have you since that time sought and received a crisis experience of holiness whereby you can presently testify with the Apostle Paul, **“I am crucified with Christ”**?

SERMON SEVEN

**THE SIGN OF HIS COMING
AND
THE END OF THE WORLD
THE KING IS COMING!**

FOREWORD

“In 1970 a good friend stopped by our house and told us of a preacher named James Crabtree who had been speaking about the return of the Lord. The preacher closed his message by walking through the congregation as though he were Paul Revere or a town crier alerting the people at the top of his voice, “The King is Coming! The King is Coming!” When I first heard that phrase, I thought what a great (idea) for a song! Gloria and I began to ruminate about “The King is Coming.” I took the thought, “The King is Coming” and put it into a simple chorus. Gloria took it from there and wrote some of the most powerful lyrics ever put to music. I’m convinced that “The King is Coming” is one of those ‘God things’ in our lives.”

(Excerpts from Bill Gaither’s book “It’s More Than the Music”)

INTRODUCTION

I preached this message in a revival at Lynn, Indiana. I had previously preached this in several churches. This time I experienced something that had never happened before or since. As I was preaching, I came to the conclusion of the message. I was emphasizing the sobering facts of the prophecy of Christ’s coming. The Spirit of the Lord came upon some of the saints. They stood rejoicing over the prophecy Christ is coming again. I stepped from behind the pulpit and walked off the platform. I went to the middle aisle and marched to the back of the church repeatedly shouting, “The King is Coming! The King is Coming!” When I reached the back door of the auditorium, I turned around and most of the congregation had merged to the front about the altar. Some were standing and weeping for joy. Others were kneeling and praying to get ready for Christ’s coming. A few days later some friends related the experience to Bill and Gloria Gaither. Bill embraced the phrase, “The King is Coming.” He wrote the chorus:

“The King is coming! The King is coming!
I just heard the trumpet sounding, And now His face I see.
Oh, the King is coming! The King is coming!
Praise God, He’s coming for me!”

Gloria put lyrics together for the verses:

“Happy faces line the hallways
Those who lives have been redeemed,
Broken homes that He has mended,
Those from prison He has freed ...

For the last verse, she penned the stirring words:

“I can hear the chariots rumble,
I can see the marching throng.
The flurry of God’s trumpets
Spells the end of sin and wrong.”

The lyrics were matched to a melody. Multiplied thousands have been blessed with the encouragement of this gospel song. This song, among many others, reinforces the title of Bill Gaither’s book, *“It’s More than the Music.”* As we enjoy the music and the lyrics, we also

experience the Spirit's ministry with the presence of the Lord through this gospel song.
To God be all the glory! —J. C. Crabtree

THE SIGN OF HIS COMING AND THE END OF THE WORLD

Matthew 24:1

This summit conference took place on the top of the Mount of Olives in the year 30 A.D. The Apostle Paul was a delegate to this conference. It is interesting to read his remarks concerning it thirty-three years later. He begins by saying, *“The Lord hath shown me I must shortly put off this earthly body. Therefore, I want to stir up your minds so you will remember these things when I have deceased. We followed not cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. I was an eye witness to His glory. I was in the mount and heard the voice from heaven saying, ‘This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.’” Peter went on to say, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy. Knowing this, that no prophecy of the scripture is of private interpretation. For the prophecy came not at any time by the will of men: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”*

Here Peter affirms the prophecy of the scripture is inspired by God, the Holy Spirit. I think I know what Peter had in mind at this point. He was a fervent student of the Old Testament scriptures. There are 200 Old Testament scriptures which predicted centuries ahead of time, Christ would enter this world by being born of a virgin, betrayed by His own people, put to death by crucifixion, resurrected the third day and ascend back to the Father in heaven. No honest historian will dispute the fact Christ came the first time in accordance with the scriptures. But—there are 318 scriptures, both in the Old and New Testament which prophesy Christ will come a second time. Since the scriptures were correct in prophesying His first coming, you can be sure they will be accurate in prophesying His second coming.

We have an example of the sure word of prophecy in the verses that were read. Christ had just come out of the temple. He startled His disciples by saying, *“See ye not, all these things: Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.”* Here—Jesus predicted the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. This prediction was fulfilled forty years later. Secular history documents it. In 70 A.D., a Roman Emperor named Titus entered the city, destroyed the temple and had it burned. He ordered the foundation stones to be dug up. Then a man named Turnus Rufus plowed up the site upon which the temple stood, thereby literally fulfilling our Lord’s prophecy when He said, *“There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.”*

In this same conference Jesus not only predicted the destruction of the temple—He also prophesied He would come a second time and the world would come to an end.

TWO PHASES

There are two phases to our Lord’s second coming. First, the rapture, described in *I Thessalonians 4:16* which reads, *“The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God; the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”*

Then—the unsaved will be left in this wicked world to go through a seven-year tribulation period under the bondage of the Anti-Christ who will become a world dictator. Jesus said, “Then shall be Great Tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the

world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” The Anti-Christ will exert power over all nations and tongues (languages) so nobody can buy or sell unless they receive his mark. This will be world socialism in its most oppressive form. The Anti-Christ will command all who oppose him to be slain. **Revelation 6:8** indicates this will be one-fourth of the earth. According to present population trends, over one billion people will be slaughtered in the space of seven years. At the conclusion of the great Tribulation period, which is but an introduction to hell—the whole world will witness the **revelation** of Jesus Christ described in **II Peter 3:10** which reads, ***“The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat and the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Nevertheless, we according to His promise look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.”*** This will inaugurate the grand millennial reign of our Lord on this earth for a thousand years of peace, which is the prelude to heaven.

Concerning these events, the disciples raised the question, ***“What shall be the SIGN of Thy coming and end of the world?”*** We will consider some prophecies that will confirm we are living in the last days.

DECEPTION

Christ warns us saying, ***“Take heed that no man deceive you.”*** There is a policy of deceit that covers the earth like a blanket. For decades the political rulers of the world have governed by deception. Daniel prophesied the Anti-Christ would rule with a policy of deceit and craftiness. Deception is preparing the acceptance of the Master Deceiver; namely, the Anti-Christ.

INCREASE IN KNOWLEDGE

Daniel also prophesied, ***“In the time of the end many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased.”*** In 1680 the great scientist, Sir Isaac Newton read Daniel’s words.

“Personally, I can’t help but believe these words refer to the end of the times. Men will travel from country to country in an unprecedented manner. There may be some inventions which will enable people to travel much more quickly than they do now.” The sudden explosion of knowledge has confirmed these are the last days. It is revealed in the area of **transportation**.

Sir Isaac Newton speculated speed might exceed fifty miles per hour. Eight years later, Voltaire, the atheist read Newton’s words and said, *“See what a fool Christianity can make out of an otherwise brilliant man. Here is a man like Newton, writes man may travel 30 to 40 miles per hour. Has he forgotten if man traveled this fast, he would be suffocated? His heart would stand still.”* The increase in knowledge has made a fool out of Voltaire. Compare the genius of man’s knowledge of modern transportation with the fact from the time of Adam and Eve in the Garden until the 19th century, the only mode of transportation for nearly five thousand nine hundred years was a horse-drawn buggy. King David was not chauffeured from country to country with a limousine. He was transported with a horse-drawn carriage. Compare that with the fact today you can fly from New York to Paris in three hours.

There has been an increase in the knowledge of **telecommunication**. Until about the 19th century, mail was delivered from city to city by pony express. Contrast that with the FAX machine and e-mail. An I.B.M. computer can register one trillion characters per second. Connected with Telstar, a man in any country of the world where a mechanical device is within reach of his hand can register his own number, send a message to Telstar and on to his local

bank and receive it back in his corner of the world—all in ten seconds of time. Look at another prophecy that confirms these are the last days.

TWO WITNESSES

Revelation Chapter Eleven prophesies God will send two witnesses from heaven to declare His truth during the tribulation. The wicked will put them to death. Their bodies shall lie in the streets of Jerusalem three and one-half days. The prophecy says **all the nations shall see them**. For years prophetic scholars were mystified how all the nations could see this. Today **satellite television** provides the answer. It will fulfill this prophecy.

666

The prophecy of *Revelation 13:18* confirms these are the last days. It indicates the number of the Anti-Christ is **666**. The number originated out of the ancient city of Babylon. It comes from a **sexagesimal** number system using 60 for a base instead of ten. It was introduced by the Babylonians about 2000 B.C. It was used instead of the decimal system. If you miss the **rapture**, you will be left behind to go through the **tribulation**. In order to buy or sell anything, you will be required to receive the mark of the Anti-Christ on your forehead or your right hand. It will be an invisible mark tattooed by laser. Every commercial transaction will be scanned and recorded on a computer. The Head/Hand scan machine is ready according to banking official Lowell R. Brisben. He added that the machine eliminates the need for cards, but identifies the person's "secret number" as it electronically scans the hand or forehead. This will produce a cashless society. In a subtle way, the number **666** has entered the world of commerce. The code number for the World Bank is **666**. Arab-owned vehicles in Jerusalem are required to have license plates prefixed with **666**.

The gradual increase of the usage of the number **666** in commercial transactions will be accepted as being necessary for the computers. This will set the stage for the Anti-Christ to completely control the world monetary system.

BABYLON

The prophecy of the literal destruction of the City of Babylon foretold in *Revelation 18* is a confirmation these are the last days. The ancient City of Babylon was regarded as the most magnificent city in the world. It was laid out as an exact square fifteen miles on a side. It was surrounded by a brick wall 87 feet thick and 350 feet high. There were 250 towers on top of the wall. Six chariots could drive abreast on the wall. Twenty-five avenues 150 feet wide ran across the city from north to south—the same number from east to west. There were two palaces with banquet rooms made of brass. Near one of the palaces stood the tower of Bel or Babel. It was **660** feet high. On the top was a chapel. It contained images. One was 45 feet high made of solid gold valued at seventeen million dollars. The sacred utensils were worth 200 billion dollars. Isaiah referred to Babylon as the City of God.

In about the sixth century, B. C., Belshazzar sponsored a feast of celebration to the pagan gods. The feast turned into drunken revelry and sexual lasciviousness. The guards forgot to lock the gates of the city. During the night the Persian Army sneaked in and captured the city. The inhabitants were so drunk they didn't know the city had been overthrown and the king slain until three days afterwards. Subsequent wars that followed left Babylon which had been known as the most magnificent city in the world in ruins. It has remained in rubbles through the centuries.

But the prophecy in **Revelation 18** proclaims a literal city named Babylon will be destroyed forever. This prophecy has perplexed scholars because there is no city named Babylon existing anywhere in the world at this time. Some scholars have concluded the prophecy must be **symbolic**. But the record in **Revelation** clearly indicates the destruction of a **literal** city named Babylon.

Now—the ancient city of Babylon was located about 55 miles south of Bagdad. An article in the New York Times on November 16, 1989 said Saddam Hussein desires to restore Babylon. According to the Iraqi press office, the work has been in progress since the late 1970's and has proceeded in three phases. The first was completed in 1987. It included the restoration of several temples and an amphitheater. The rebuilt City of Babylon will be destroyed by God with an earthquake and fire from heaven near the close of the tribulation period. This prophecy is a confirmation these are the last days.

ARMAGEDDON

The prophecy of the battle of Armageddon is a confirmation these are the last days. It will be the final conflict between the forces of good and evil. It will be fought at the close of the **tribulation period**. The prophecy of Zechariah says, "***Behold the day of the Lord cometh when I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle. Then the Lord shall go forth and fight against those nations.***" One of the nations participating in the Battle of Armageddon comes from the east. **Revelation 9:16** says, "***The army from the east will be 200 million soldiers.***" When John wrote this prophecy, there were not yet 200 million people in the whole world. Red China has boastfully publicized they can now place a 200 million army into battle. **Likewise** this prophecy is a confirmation we are living in **the last days**.

CONDITIONS

After presenting prophetic **confirmations** indicating these are the last days, we will consider some **conditions** that will exist as the end approaches.

Jesus said there would be **wars** and rumors of wars. There have been more wars in the past ten years than any previous decade in history. CNN, in a special report, said 120 wars have been fought since World War II. Presently forty wars are being waged in various areas of the world.

Also, Jesus said there would be **famines**. In one recent year twenty million people perished from hunger in Communist China. Three million five hundred are reported to be starving in Africa. **Revelation 6** declares one-fourth of the world will die of starvation.

Jesus said there would be **earthquakes**. As many as 30,000 earthquakes have been recorded in a single year. The earth is now in a constant tremor. Every 35 seconds seismologists record a tremor. The number of earthquakes continues to increase from year to year.

Continuing this prophecy, Jesus said many Christians would be **martyred**. When the Communists took over Korea, thousands of Christians were killed. In one incident, 250 pastors were taken. Holes were punctured in their hands. A wire was strung through these holes binding them together. They were led off and shot to death. The Communists entered a church, took out 83 worshipers—doused them with gasoline—then burned them to death.

Dr. Thomas Dooley gave his life in Vietnam setting up hospitals. In one of his books he tells of two Communist guards storming into a school. They took seven small children into the courtyard. They bound their hands and feet, then they brought the teacher out. The charge? After school hours the children were going to hear the teacher tell about Jesus Christ. They told

the children they would never **hear** the name of Jesus Christ again. Then one guard held the head of a child while the other guard shoved a chopstick into each ear, bursting the eardrums. The children squirmed and squealed, writhing in the dust trying to work the wood out of their ears. Then one guard took a pair of pliers and pulled out the teacher's tongue, telling him he would never teach in the name of Jesus Christ again. The other guard took scissors and cut off the teacher's tongue, leaving him to strangle—drowning in his own blood.

Jesus warned us—Christians would be hated in the last days. The worldwide hate campaign is the result of a Communist directive. Lunacharskey, while head of the Soviet educational system said, *“We hate Christians; even the best of them must be considered our worst enemies. They preach the love of one's neighbor, which is contrary to our principles. Christian love is an obstacle to the development of the revolution. Down with the love of one's neighbor. What we need is hatred We must know how to hate. Only then will we conquer the universe.”* You may be alarmed to learn there have been more martyrs in the past century than in **all** of the previous centuries combined. (*“Herald of Holiness”*)

Jesus said, **“Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many (majority) shall wax cold.”** These are the cold, formal church members who resent revivals, boycott Bible preaching, eliminate evangelists, become hostile toward evangelism methods, and antagonistic toward the altar call of repent or perish.

In His prophecy, Jesus indicated before the end comes, the gospel must be preached to all of the nations. When Billy Graham observed his twentieth anniversary as a worldwide evangelist, one newspaper carried the headline which read: *“Billy Graham preaches the gospel around the world.”* In detail he has preached the gospel to fifty nations on every continent. There is not one known area of the world that has not heard the gospel.

REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Next, Jesus confirms a prophecy from Daniel. He says, **“When ye shall see the ‘abomination of desolation’ (spoken of by Daniel the prophet), stand in the Holy Place, the end is near.”**

The abomination of desolation is a descriptive phrase for the Anti-Christ. The “Holy Place” is the **Holy Temple** in Jerusalem. Both Daniel (centuries before) and now Christ are saying when the Anti-Christ stands in the Holy Temple, the end is near. But there has been no temple since 70 A.D. remember, it was destroyed.

Now—during the six-day war in the Holy Land in June 1967—the Jews recaptured the site of the old temple. After nineteen centuries, they control that location for the first time. Jewish historian, Israel Eldad, announced plans for rebuilding the temple. Time Magazine quoted him as saying, “We are now at the stage where David was when he liberated Jerusalem. From that time until the building of the temple by Solomon—one generation passed. So shall it be with us.” Israel Eldad has promised the temple will be built in our generation. I mentioned this in the Portland, Oregon District Camp. Afterward, Dr. McGraw told me of a Nazarene businessman who was flying across the nation. For conversation, he asked the passenger next to him what his occupation was. The man beamed proudly and said, “I have the most unusual job in the world—I am the chief architect for the Holy Temple that is to be built in the Holy Land. I mentioned this architect in the Northern California District Camp. Several people in the congregation indicated they saw the architect interviewed on national television.

Remember, it took Solomon only seven years to build the original temple. Therefore, Christ could come in the next split second, rapture the Christians, and the Anti-Christ can attend to the reconstruction of the temple—because, the Anti-Christ is not prophesied to

dictate out of the temple until mid-way through the tribulation period. Parts of the temple have been allocated to Jews in various places of the world. At a given signal, they will be shipped to Jerusalem. With modern methods in a matter of weeks, months at the most, the temple will be built. This means Christ can come now and the Anti-Christ can attend to the building of the temple.

I met a man in Atlanta, Georgia, who was connected with the Holiday Inns of America. He said they sent a committee to Jerusalem to purchase a plot of land on the top of the Mount of Olives to build a luxurious Holiday Inn and restaurant. Everywhere they went they encountered strange silence on the subject. Finally, a Jewish official told them land on the top of the Mount of Olives was not for sale at any price. He said seismologists have determined there is a fault line down the middle of the Mount of Olives and the slightest disturbance or tremor could cause it to cleave asunder. Upon returning to my room, I started searching the scriptures. I turned to *Acts, Chapter One*. Jesus was on the top of the Mount of Olives. He said, ***“Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon you.”*** When he had spoken these words, He was taken up from them into heaven and a cloud received Him out of sight. The disciples stood there bewildered. Two men appeared in white apparel saying, ***“Why stand ye here gazing into the heavens—this same Jesus that was taken up from you into heaven will also come again in like manner.”*** **Right back to the top of the Mount of Olives.** I then turned to the prophecy of *Zachariah Chapter 14*. It reads, ***“Behold the day of the Lord cometh and He shall gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle. In that day His feet shall stand on the top of the Mount of Olives and the mountain will cleave in the midst, half of it going to the north, half going to the south, thereby destroying the armies of the Anti-Christ, bringing this world to an end.”*** The prophetic stage is set on the top of the Mount of Olives for the greatest drama this world will ever witness. When heaven sounds the trumpet, the clouds will unfurl as a curtain, and Christ our Lord will appear the second time.

COMPARISONS

I have presented prophetic confirmations and conditions that will exist as the end approaches. Next Jesus makes two significant comparisons. He said, ***“As it was in the days of Noah, so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be.”*** *Genesis Chapter 6* gives us a vivid description of Noah’s days. It reads, ***“The earth was corrupt before God, the earth also was filled with violence.”*** God said, ***“The end of all flesh is come up before me because of the violence that is in them.”*** It was moral corruption and brutal violence that brought the world to an end in Noah’s time. We have reached a similar condition in our society.

II Thessalonians 2:7 reads, ***“For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work, but the Holy Spirit restrains.”*** But when He (the Holy Spirit) is taken out of the way, (meaning He will go up with the raptured church), then shall that **lawless one** (namely the Anti-Christ) be revealed. The Anti-Christ is prophesied to be revealed during a climate of lawlessness. Today this earth is an explosive globe of disorder. The flagrant fires of chaos are smothered, left to smolder, only to flare up fiercely again. But the worst is yet to come. *II Timothy 3:1* says, ***“This know also in the last days, perilous times shall come.”*** Among the conditions listed is disobedience to parents. We’ve never witnessed it on such a scale as now. From where did these sex corrupters, pornography peddlers, drug abusers, baby killers, school shooters, property looters, street fighters suddenly emerge? Go back a few years. Dr. Benjamin Spock introduced a new child psychology restraining the parents from disciplining their children. These undisciplined children have grown up and reached the sidewalks. The result? Gang wars in the streets, drive-by shootings, car hijackings. They have invaded the schools with drugs,

alcohol and murder.

In Noah's day, there was riotous drinking. CNN has estimated eighty million Americans use marijuana. The *New York Times* says over 100 million Americans use some form of mind-altering drugs.

In Noah's day they were marrying and giving in marriage, meaning they desecrated the vows of holy matrimony with divorce. Just to show how far we have declined as a nation, in the year 1900 less than one out of every 50 marriages ended in divorce. Today, one out of every two marriages ends in divorce.

In Noah's day they reached a period of religious apostasy. They ruled out the rules of God, confiscated the commandments and scrapped the scriptures, as it were. The church is now in a comparable condition. The Rev. Joseph Fletcher, Professor of Ethics at Cambridge Theological School has advocated amending the Ten Commandments to read:

Thou shall not kill, ORDINARILY.

Thou shall not steal, ORDINARILY.

Thou shall not commit adultery, ORDINARILY.

Rev. Fletcher has been identified by the F.B.I. as an active Communist.

Newsweek Magazine sent a reporter to the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches. He returned and printed these shocking statistics:

"One-third of the delegates did not believe in God." Think of it—Atheists sealed as delegates. Of the delegates that expressed some form of belief in God, forty percent did not believe Jesus was the Divine Son of God. Seventy-five percent did not believe in the virgin birth of Christ or that God was powerful enough to perform any kind of miracle. Eighty-five percent did not believe in the Bible doctrine of the sinful nature of man—and nearly fifty percent did not believe in heaven or hell or any existence after death. These are the religious leaders of the National Council of Churches.

In making another comparison, Jesus said, "***As it was in the day of Lot, so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be.***" In Lot's day, there was an immorality of a different sort. Homosexuality was practiced with the approval of government and religious leaders.

A group of clergymen in San Francisco, the homosexual capital in America, organized a fellowship for homosexuals. They sponsored a dance for them. The men arrived dressed in dazzling evening gowns. Men dancing with men. Men embracing men. The behavior became so lewd the police moved in and broke it up. The sex perverts angrily assailed the police and charged them with police brutality. San Francisco has become the modern Sodom and Gomorrah in America.

The English parliament repealed all laws against homosexuals. England has become a haven for sex deviates. Canada followed suit with England.

Ninety Episcopal priests in a conference sponsored by the dioceses of several states put their approval on homosexual acts between consenting adults. They said, "Where genuine love is expressed, it is good for the participants."

Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas wrote, "It is common knowledge that in this century homosexuals have risen high in our public service, both in the Congress and the Executive Branch, and have served with distinction."

ONE SIGN

The prophetic confirmations, conditions and comparisons correspond with the

ungodliness of this present time. But—remember the disciples asked Christ for **ONE** particular sign, saying, *“What shall be the SIGN of Thy coming and the end of the world?”* Besides the **confirmations, conditions and comparisons**, Christ gave them one **definite** sign. He reveals this sign in a parable. *Verse 32, He says, “Now learn a parable of a fig tree, when his branch is tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know summer is nigh. So ... likewise, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.”*

Now—the fig tree in this parable symbolizes the Jewish people. Biblical scholars agree on this. So—really Jesus is referring to the Jews and especially their return to the Holy Land.

In the Old Testament it was prophesied the Jews would be scattered to the ends of the earth because of their sin and unbelief. *Deuteronomy 28:64 says, “And Jehovah will scatter thee among all people from the one end of the earth, even unto the other.”* That scattering was fulfilled in 70 A.D. God not only cursed the Jews; He also cursed the land of Israel which He had given them. God kept the early and latter rains from falling on the Holy Land. Consequently, the fruit dried upon the vine. The crops withered away. The gardens became parched. The wells dried up. The abandoned cities became ghost towns. Because the land received no rain for centuries, it became desolate as a desert. This God-forsaken land became the habitation for outlaws and cutthroats.

But—there is another prophecy for the Jews. God promised in the last days He would gather them back to their own land. *Amos Chapter 9, Verse 4, God said, “I will bring back the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build their waste cities and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine thereof; and shall also make gardens and eat the fruit of them and I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them, saith Jehovah thy God.”* Just as it is an historical fact God scattered the Jews to the ends of the earth—today it is an **historical** fact He has gathered them back to their own land. For centuries the Jew was a man without a country. Then in 1947 Great Britain returned the land of Israel to the Jews. **May 14, 1948** the State of Israel was established. From all the nations of the world thousands of Jews migrated back to their homeland. The population today numbers in the multiplied millions. This is especially significant because in the year 1870 there was such an intense hatred against the Jews there was a written ordinance stating no more than 300 Jews were allowed in the area at the same time.

In 1950 the *Jerusalem Post*, a secular magazine explained the phenomenal growth of the Holy Land. This article said, *“Palestine today is more than a British, Jewish and Arab achievement. For nigh on 1900 years the Jew remained outside his own country, a country which had become desolate waste without the early and latter rains, unproductive and barren, though once it flowed with milk and honey. Then a remarkable thing happened at the beginning of the century, within the memory of some now living; the rains began to fall upon the Holy Land after 1900 years of drought.”*

Today the desert blossoms as a rose. Just as Ezekiel prophesied in *Chapter 36:33, “And the land that was desolate shall be tilled. Whereas it was a desolation in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, “This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.”* Jesus said, *“Now learn a parable of a fig tree. When his branch is tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know summer is nigh. Likewise when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily, I say unto you this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.”* What **generation** shall not pass? The generation Christ was talking to face to face on the top of the Mount of Olives in 30 A.D.? NO—because that generation has passed. They are

dead and buried—and have been for centuries. Well then—what generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled?

THE FIG TREE GENERATION

And—who is the **fig tree generation**? The people who populated this earth at the time the Jews returned to their own land on May 14, 1948—and anybody who has been born since. This is you and me. Jesus said, *“Verily, I say unto you, **this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.**”* And—“all these things” includes the **Second Coming of Christ**.

Christ prophesied He would come back bringing this world to an end sometime during the generation that witnessed the return of the Jews to the Holy Land. What shall be the sign of Thy coming and the end of the world? The sign the disciples asked for was fulfilled May 14, 1948 and has been preserved in Holy writ for all posterity.

The words of our Lord are more than a worn out religious cliché when He said, *“**Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.**”*

Will Christ come in the century of 2000? I say unto you—this generation shall not pass until He comes.

ADAM CLARKE

Dr. Adam Clarke wrote his commentaries on the Bible in the year 1750. That is more than 250 years ago. In his comments concerning the prophecy of Daniel, he wrote the State of Israel would be established in the Holy Land in **1947**. He missed the date by one year. They actually returned in **1948**. Adam Clarke wrote the Jews would recapture the site of the old temple in **1966**. He missed this date by one year. It was captured during the six-day war in **1967**. Adam Clarke’s dates were not guess work. It was calculated from the chronology of the scripture. My curiosity was aroused how he missed these two important dates by one year. I mentioned this to my brother, Dr. Robert Crabtree who was on the faculty at the Nazarene Theological Seminary. They researched the matter and came to the conclusion Dr. Adam Clarke failed to factor in the year zero coming from B.C. to A.D. Had he used the year zero he would have been exactly on target for these dates. Remember he recorded these dates in the year 1750.

BIBLICAL NUMEROLOGY

Biblical numerology reveals we are living in the last days. Biblical numerology is divinely inspired into the Holy Scriptures. A significant example is recorded in **II Peter 3:8**. It reads, *“**Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing. One day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.**”*

Some who have been educated beyond the capacity of their intelligence insist **Peter’s** statement was rhetorical. But I am convinced Peter’s statement was prophetic, for these reasons. First, he said, *“**Be not ignorant of this one thing.**”* What was the **one** thing he did not want us to be ignorant of?

He tells us in the next statement. He said, *“**One day with the Lord is as a thousand years.**”* Then he reinforces this statement saying, *“**A thousand years is as one day.**”* Furthermore, he makes this statement in connection with the **“Day of the Lord”** which is the Millennial Sabbath consisting of one thousand years.

With this in mind, the Biblical number for man is six. Seven is the number for **completion**. According to chronological historians from the creation of Adam and Eve until the birth of Christ, 4000 years have passed. And we know for a fact from the birth of Christ until now

another two thousand years have been expended. Two thousand years, plus four thousand years equals six thousand years. Six—the number of man. Therefore, man has nearly exhausted his six **one thousand year days** on this earth.

After the six days there must follow a seventh day. The seventh day is necessary to complete the **prophetical week**. The seventh day is **the Lord's Day**. Prophetical scholars refer to it as the **Millennial Sabbath**. And **the Lord's Day** will be one thousand years in duration. So—prophetically speaking, we are now living in the Saturday night of time. We are on the threshold, the eve of the dawning of **the Lord's Day**. There are just a few more hours remaining in the Saturday night of time. As the Prophet Malachi has said, ***"The Son of Righteousness, the Lord Himself, shall arise with healing in His wings ushering in the dawning of the Lord's Day."*** On the seventh day, the **Millennial Sabbath**, the raptured saints will have become immortal. We will return to this earth with our Lord. He will establish His **millennial throne** in Jerusalem which will be the capital of this world. The policy of His government will be "Holiness unto the Lord." ***Revelation 20 indicates, "Satan will be bound a thousand years."*** We will have no tempter then. We will reign as priests of God with Christ for a thousand years on this earth. All of the prophecies of man's sojourn on this earth you have read about in the scriptures will be fulfilled to completion in the seventh day, the Lord's Day, the Millennial Sabbath. So—it appears from the standpoint of numbers, we are very close to the end.

BIRTH OF CHRIST

Now—just to reinforce the credibility of this biblical numerology, dispensational scholars have pointed out every two thousand years some great event takes place surpassing all other events. What was the last great event to take place in world history? It was the birth of Jesus Christ into this world. His birth made such an impact upon this world until now all time is calculated from His birth. The events before His birth are marked B.C. meaning "before Christ." Events after His birth are marked A.D., the Latin abbreviation for Anno Domini, which means in the year of our Lord. This is amazing! Communists, atheists, agnostics, heathen nations and the vilest of sinners who take the name of the Lord in vain in their cursing—all of them date their social correspondence and legal documents in relation to the greatest event that has occurred in the history of mankind; namely, the birth of Christ into this world.

Every two thousand years some great event takes place. The last tremendous event to take place was the birth of Christ. How long ago was that? It has been two thousand years. This means the world is scheduled for another great outstanding event. What is the next great event that is prophesied to take place in the history of mankind?

It is the SECOND COMING OF CHRIST!

Once again, from the standpoint of numbers, we are very close to the end. Will Christ come next year? ***"Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass until all these things be fulfilled."*** Will Christ come next month? ***"Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass until He comes."*** Will Christ come next week? ***"Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass until He comes."*** Will Christ come tomorrow? ***"Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass until He comes."*** Will Christ come tonight? ***"Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass until all these things be fulfilled."*** And—"all these things" includes **The Second Coming of Christ**. As you retire for the night, if Christ should come before the sun comes up tomorrow morning, would you be raptured to meet Him in the clouds of glory? ***Verse 26 says, "As the lightning shineth from the east to the west so shall also the***

coming of the Lord be.” He will come as quick as lightning. No time to get to a revival service. No time to go to the altar. No time to make things right with the one you have wronged. He will come as quick as lightning. Christ has warned us saying, “Ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.” “In an hour that ye think not, the Lord will come!”

The disciples asked, *“What shall be the sign of Thy coming and the end of the world?”* The sign which Christ gave them has been fulfilled. Christ, who is the Lord of Lords and King of Kings will come again!

The King is Coming!
The King is Coming!!!
The King is Coming!!!
The King is Coming!!!
The King is Coming!!!
The King is Coming!!!

About the Author



Dr. J. C. Crabtree devoted his entire ministry to full-time evangelism. He held an earned doctorate degree in theology. An honorary doctor of letters degree was conferred on him for literary excellence. He developed a methodology of preaching the doctrinal tenets of Christian theology derived from the implications disclosed in the narration of the Holy Scriptures. Dr. H. Orton Wiley referred to him as “The Theologian Evangelist”.

Dr. Crabtree was featured as the nightly speaker in the largest Indoor Camp in America with 200 churches cooperating. The crowds exceeded 60,000 in attendance. Dr. Crabtree’s unique “Voice of Evangelism” was heard in churches, camp meetings, colleges and universities in the Holiness Movement for sixty-five years.

Dr. Nelson S. Perdue, his friend and colleague in ministry, states:

“Dr. J.C. Crabtree traveled across our nation as an itinerant evangelist heralding the Gospel. He excelled in the presentation of scriptural holiness. He was not only clear in his teaching, but also cogent in his logic. His lifelong passion was to proclaim entire sanctification, which cleanses the heart from inbred sin and fills it with divine love.”