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*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
Colossians 2:8*

Issue #64

www.livingspringsinstitute.org

January & February 2013

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

We ended our last segment talking further about Genesis chapter 11 verse 7 and the fact God had confounded man's language so people would not understand each others speech. We talked about how this did not change the individual but did put an end to the ability of a few to obligate and lead the whole of mankind in one particular direction. In the closing part of that discussion we touched on a specific and crucial point, which is that this meant it was still up to each individual as to whether they wanted to stay and work on the tower or not.

This point is important as we go into verse 8, because verse 8 tells us two facts. One, it tells us God scattered the people across the face of the entire earth; and two, it tells us the people left off building the city. However, it is wrong for us to look at this as a list of things which happened as if they were stand alone items. Going from verse 7 into verse 8, what we are seeing is truth and consequences. So often when God does something, it is not as direct as many humans would choose to act upon a given

situation. For instance, when God determined in Noah's day, the end of all flesh had come before Him, He did not strike dead every sinful person living on the earth. Instead, He gave the world notice over one hundred years ahead of time, and then sent the flood. God also left the choice of boarding an ark of safety as a way of escape for anyone who would take it, and only eight people did so. The fact God often does not take direct and immediate actions, which would overcome our ability to make our own choices in any given situation, is why we often do not recognize the hand of God at work in our personal lives and situations. This can be true even when the outcome of something we have been specifically praying about is positive, and it's especially true when the positive result can be seen mostly or only in the long term.

Now, when Jesus walked the earth, He laid hands on people at times and healed them. However, other stories about how He healed show us this was not necessary.

P.O. Box 271, Loveland, CO 80539



(970) 593-9468



(Matt. 8:5-13) All Jesus really had to do was will the healing to happen and it would have. Thus, what Jesus was giving in many situations was a physical point of reference to see and understand He had, in fact, healed the individual. This was going above and beyond the fact the healing being instantaneous should have been the obvious point Jesus had done the work. The truth is, we often need, and even more often desire, to see this kind of direct connection and confirmation that God has done a work in our lives before we will credit or accept it. When we do not see it, at least in the way we would like to, we are tempted to doubt, or outright believe the events simply unfolded in our favor and God did not actually have anything to do with answering our prayer(s). This is a sad thing we do, because God cares for us each day and we just have no idea how many things we never even run across because God had His hand on us and the events surrounding our lives! This is why we should always recognize God is great, and we should never cease to give thanks to The Lord, for His mercy endureth forever. (Ps. 136) We also should not blame God for the things that go wrong in our lives. (Ex. 20:7) Things go wrong for many reasons, not the least of which can be our own choices, and very much because of the general sinfulness of this world. We just don't know how much worse things could be, nor do we often understand things are not as bad as we think, we just aren't privy to where the other outcomes or possibilities would have taken our lives.

God simply allows man to make his choices; and when God acts, it is not in a way that takes our free will from us. Thus,

what we see here in verse 7 going into 8 is a cascade of action and reaction. Of course, God confounded man's language; but as we covered last time, not in a way that made man entirely unable to communicate with one another or even learn how to stay in constant communication. In spite of this, God's confounding of their language caused men who previously had "wanted" to stay together, to be scattered across the face of the earth. This, as with the language itself, was not necessarily an immediate thing, but it is the reason we see people living all across the earth, in spite of the fact man had originally chosen to live in close proximity. This is one of those times when we should make no mistake about it or have any doubt. This happened because God acted directly on the situation in confounding their language, but He did not specifically scatter them! The fact man no longer spoke a common language caused them to choose to separate. This freewill choice of man is also why we should be clear that where the people went was not something God demanded or had pre-ordained. Man's movement across the planet was by his own personal choosing, and that is what God had originally desired men to do. (Gen. 1:27-28, 8:15-17)

Verse 8 also points out a truth that should be obvious once we understand man spread across the earth, and that is the fact they also chose to leave off building the city. This is where we come to that important discussion of - we should not see this as a one hundred percent thing. As we have talked about before, many people look at this event and think the confounding of the languages caused people to drop

their tools where they were and walk in almost a mesmerized state away from the tower and out into the world. I know I'm being a bit dramatic, but in many ways a form of this is what many people believe, whether they've taken the time to consider it or not. However, we must understand the events that followed the confounding happened on the basis of choices individuals made one by one. What verse 8 means is that man (as in mankind), acting as a group, left off the tower and city project which they had taken on - as a group! This is why the verse specifically mentions the city and only the city. The city, as it was suppose to be seen by all mankind, was to be the capital of the world. This was no longer the case in the minds of all the people. However, that does not mean the idea altogether died out.

When we believe that suddenly every last person walked away from the tower and city, we see the story as complete and final, and this causes some serious problems in how we understand the rest of the Bible and its prophesy! If we think of the tower and city's abandonment as being by every last man, especially in both the physical ways as well as the mental, we misunderstand two things. First is that point we have been hammering at through this segment, we misunderstand how much God's action in confounding the languages was not to take away man's free will, but to protect it. One of the reasons we have trouble looking at it this way is that when you maintain man's free will, you have to take the good with the bad. That's how it

works in the here and now. (Matt. 5:43-48) Thus, in protecting it, God did not directly change the minds of those who believed these ideas were useful and/or the pentacle of man's ability to achieve great things. God did not change the will of those who desired to rule men from one central governing power and location. God certainly showed them that if He had taken such a drastic step to put a stop to their plan, it was a bad one. However, many people just aren't convinced of their own failure or that their plan is not what they should want just because God shows them it's wrong. People even love to come up with excuses as to how that is not what God is showing us. The sin in man's heart is that we often still believe our ideas are, at the very least, good enough to continue. We can even think the way Eve did in the garden: and that is the idea God is trying to hold us back in some form. (Gen. 3:4-6) We just don't get the point or acknowledge God is working for our good, and if He says something is wrong it is not just a rule He made up. God says things are wrong because they are destructive, and/or have destructive consequences for us personally and/or mankind in general!

Simply put, in only doing something which showed man this city was not God's will, there would still have been those who strove to directly continue the project. However, as a smaller group, it would not have been practical if even possible for them to continue the exact tower everyone had been working on; and the city, of course, was no longer able to rule the entire

world. As a much smaller group they would have understood how much their lives would be completely consumed by the idea of building on such a large scale. However, the concept of this city, or a city, being the central point of rule and bringing together all of mankind someday, remained in the minds of many who did stay in that same area where the tower had first begun. We see this clearly in the fact the next empire of significance to the Biblical storyline does, in fact, arise from this same area of the world. Assyria was that re-arisel of the beast Revelation shows us eventually grows seven heads, and Assyria is the head which grew after the deadly wound had brought down the beast originally. This wound was the confounding of the languages, but man in his insistence healed it. (Rev. 13:1-15) We see this in the fact Assyria's capital city was Nineveh, which is mentioned as one of the cities Nimrod specifically went out and built as part of his growing kingdom in a time before such a thing as a kingdom had ever existed. (Gen. 10:8-11) Certainly, we should see in this the fact the tower and city were not completely abandoned!

Now, the second thing we misunderstand, if we believe the story of what started at the tower ended there, is not everyone who physically left the Tower of Babel, left the idea behind with it! The fundamental social ideas the tower and its purpose grew out of were actually the same thoughts as Cain and his city building, long before the flood. It's just that it had been greatly expanded at the tower and made all inclusive. To these people the location of the tower may have been significant, but

not as important as the idea. Those who believed these ideas were good did not simply leave them as they left the Mesopotamian valley. The fact these ideas were powerful in the minds of men is exactly why God had to step in and do something that would not allow men to, as one large group, make this the way of life for all mankind. The religious belief of one man being a great leader, and in some form or another a god, followed people as they moved on across the earth. The ideas of looking into the heavens and worshipping the sun, moon, and stars would persist and take on many forms and variations, leading to the practice of all-out idol worship, which we see everywhere across the globe. However, it is simple to see how all these ideas at their core remained and remain the same even to this day!

Now, the fact God maintaining man's free will causes us to still have the good along with the bad, brings many people to not only refuse to recognize God was showing us our ideas are faulty, but go so far as to blame God for a multitude of the consequences they bring to the world. Many people just don't understand the negatives of being on the path we were on, or we could be on, if God had not steered us in another direction; and it leads them to believe they know better. For example, some would argue the confounding of our language brought one of the worst things we see in the world: and that would be war! Instead of realizing it is our constant insistence on the same failed ideas that cause the trouble, and which God has tried over and over again to show us were bad from the very start, we blame God for taking actions

A Matter Of Life And Death

Part VII

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

“Does the spirit leave the body at the time of death? Then Jesus comes at the end of time and takes the soul home to heaven.”

In our last segment, we discussed the heart of the question in talking about the possibilities of where we could go upon death. We also covered the truth of exactly where we do go! Now, more about how the resurrection happens, why it happens, how some false teachings in the church can confuse our understanding of what happens, along with a few other things that go hand in hand with all this, is what we are going to discuss in this final segment of “A Matter Of Life And Death.”

To really put the issue of death, where we go, and why, all together, we need to be clear on two facts. First, we should realize the Scripture tells us there are two resurrections. Second, the Scripture tells us there are two deaths. In talking about the sacrifice Christ made for all of us, Hebrews 9:27-28 tells us, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” The death which man is appointed to face is the one God warned Adam and Eve we would surely be deserving of the very day we chose to take on the knowledge of good and evil. After man's fall into sin, the judgment of death was placed upon us all whether we desired to serve God or not. However, because there are those who still desire to

serve God, after we face that death, all will be judged. This is how we end up with two resurrections and why there must be two deaths!

The first resurrection is the one we just covered. It will gather all those who have served God, from all previous and current generations, unto Jesus, to that point in the time sequence where Jesus returns. Make no mistake about it, those who take part in this resurrection will do so only by the judgment of God, because only God can judge who has truly served Him and who has not. (I Sam. 16:7) Now again, the place Jesus went to prepare for us will not be ours until after the Day of Judgment, and God could resurrect us all at that point. However, the Bible makes it very clear, those who seek to serve The Lord, who have lived prior to the Second Coming of Christ, will do some more living here, before Judgment Day!

For God it is simple. He can put us back into the time sequence which exists here, at any point He desires. A man such as Lazarus was put back into the time sequence just days after he had left it. He did not really live those days, he just jumped over them and came back into the time sequence at the command of Jesus. With the exception that Lazarus was returned to the same body he had previously lived in, this is not too dissimilar than will be the case for all those who will take part in the first resurrection. The point we need to understand is, there has to be a very good reason for God to put us back

in this time sequence. In Lazarus' case it was to glorify Jesus and show God has this kind of power. The reason those who are part of the first resurrection will be resurrected is because God desires to use them in furthering exactly what Jesus told us we should pray for all the time. "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:9-10

The reason for re-entering the time line will be to rule and reign with Christ on this earth. The reasons for doing this could fill a whole other book, but in truth, it has to do with all the same things we have been talking about. Because of man's free will and the fact God does not simply reach down and change the way we were created to live, God is working with man day by day in this time and physical creation He put us in. He is also working with us in the ways and mode we have chosen to build in this time and physical creation.

Now, the second resurrection will not come until right at the end of the world. This is done so that everyone from every generation who has ever lived can stand before God for judgment. (Rev. 20:10-15) None of those, throughout all generations and times, who have rejected God in their lives, will be reinserted into this time sequence. There is simply no point in it! There will also be no point in generally reinserting even those who have desired God, out of those who have lived after the first resurrection took place. Those humans who make the choice to serve God, after the first resurrection has taken place, will die in the way we all die now. Upon death, all those who were not

judged worthy to be a part of the first resurrection, along with all who have lived after the first resurrection, will simply jump to the second resurrection, where we will all stand before God for judgment!

All those who were part of the first resurrection will also come to this point and place. However, this will not be because they died and jumped forward to it. Because they will never die again, they will simply arrive at the Day of Judgment by following Christ. The beauty of being part of the first resurrection will be that you already know what you will be told on Judgment Day as to where you will spend eternity. This will be true, because you have already been redeemed! "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power,..." Revelation 20:6 If you are part of the first resurrection, you will, on Judgment Day, be welcomed into that place Jesus went to prepare for all those who desire Him, along with all those who lived after the first resurrection who were also judged worthy on that day!

The second death will be the final judgment of God placed upon all those who have not desired Him and the life He prepared for all humans from the foundation of the world. This is because those who do not want or care for the things of God, cannot be allowed to affect the place where those who desire God go for eternity. This is for two main reasons. The first reason is a point which will be proven during the reign of Christ on this earth. Revelation records that even after a thousand years of having no devil to tempt them, and having the perfect administration of God, using the very systems of government leadership which man

chooses to set his life under, man will desire to have God out of the picture. (Rev. 20:7-9) If these kinds of individuals were allowed into the place Jesus is preparing, there would be no point in going there! In not caring for the things of God, they would make the new place much like this place; and without death, we would all be stuck with what that created for eternity. This would be diametrically opposed to why God separated us from the Tree of Life here!

The second reason God can not allow these individuals into heaven is the simple fact it would be a violation of our free will for God to automatically take us to that new place, when we have shown we do not care to be a part of the purpose it is created for. The way we are told those not in The Lamb's Book of Life will be informed they are not going to be welcomed into the place Jesus is preparing is with the words from God, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matthew 7:23 Many people do not understand, the purpose of this new place is not just so we may live forever in comfort. The true purpose is to live in the presence of God, and by His will! If God took even all "good people" to heaven, it would be God forcing Himself on us. By allowing us to live in the here and now - especially in the freedom He allows - God has proven, forcing Himself on us is something He does not desire and He will not do! If you did not care enough in this life to sacrifice the little pleasure sin can bring for a season, for the sake of serving God and His righteousness, (Heb. 11:24-26) God is not going to force you into doing it for eternity.

Remember, it does not matter if you de-

sire to serve God or not, your physical form will die, but your mind and spirit will not. The problem is that by the Day of Judgment, those who do not desire God cannot even hope to be like Jack with his lantern, even if it were previously possible. All humans will be at the Day of Judgment, because all possibilities for the survival of this time sequence and the physical world which it runs on will have been exhausted. Because of this, everything here will simply cease to exist. (Rev. 21:1) While those who serve God will be granted eternal life by having their bodies replaced with an eternal form and welcomed into a place where God's original purpose for humans can be fulfilled, those who do not desire God will be left without a body. They will also be cast into a place which was originally prepared for the devil and those angels who followed him. (Matt. 25:31-46) This will be the second death; and to be quite literal, this state of existence will truly be hell!

Now, because we live on this side of the first resurrection, it is only prudent that we take a look at a couple more things about the first resurrection, before we close this study. In going back to what Paul said, we know that "...the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God:..." I Thessalonians 4:16 Simply put, the time of the resurrection for those who serve The Lord and desire His purpose is that moment of Jesus' Second Coming to this earth. This brings us to yet another very bad, false teaching in the church!

Because it confuses so many people, it really saddens me that so many ministers

propagate the false doctrine of a rapture! First, we can point out the word “rapture” is never used in the Bible. This, in and of itself, does not make the teaching wrong. However, we should be clear, this term is used specifically to separate the event of Jesus' literal coming a second time to set His feet on this world, from the events Paul is describing about the first resurrection. If these two events are separate, Jesus never told us about it. Jesus only speaks of His return! The book of Revelation warns those who would add to the book! Teaching Christ's Second Coming is nothing more than a time in which He will catch away all those who have served Him, without ever doing what the Bible tells us Jesus is coming back to do on this earth, leaves only one logical conclusion, and that is the idea that Jesus, coming back to set His feet on this world, is His third coming. This is definitely adding to the Bible!

I bring this up because it affects our question. Again, there are only the three places we can reside. Jesus went to prepare a place for us, that where He is, there we may be also. He is coming back to receive all those who have and do serve Him, unto Himself. If you teach there is a moment where Jesus comes back and “raptures” His children away before His actual return to this earth, you are opening an entirely new theology! Unless you believe the dead are in someway still living among us, why would the dead in Christ need to be raptured? They're already gone from this world. Why would they not simply go to the point where Christ actually does return? If you believe between the rapture and the “third” coming of Christ that humans go to that place Jesus went to prepare for us, which is our true

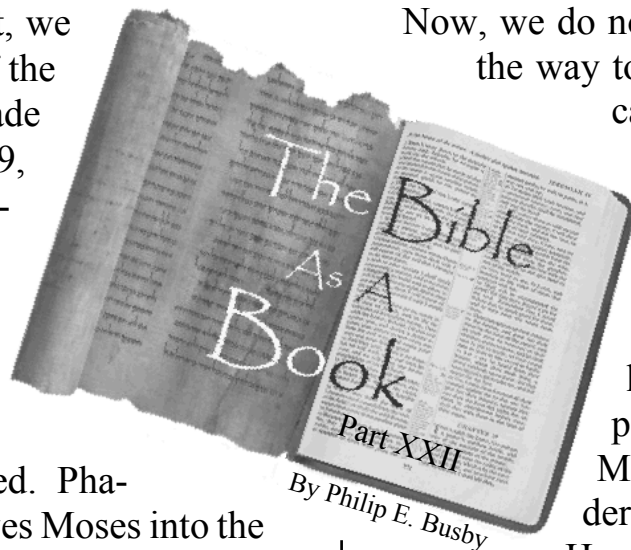
eternal heaven, you have to believe people can go there without having to stand before God The Father on Judgment Day and have their name read from The Lamb's Book of Life. In doing this, you are also teaching that people go to heaven, and later get sent back to rule and reign with Christ on this earth, only to be welcomed back to that same place on Judgment Day. Does that sound like a philosophy supported by the Word?

Jesus told the man on the cross next to Him, that very day the man would be with Jesus in paradise. If you do not believe people go to the actual place Jesus is preparing eternally for us, then you must believe there is a holding place of some sort. If you believe the dead in Christ go to some holding place after death, which is just for them and a good place to be, do all those who are part of the first resurrection simply return to that holding place after the resurrection, or is there yet another place? If such places exist, why did Jesus have to leave in order to prepare a place for us, that where He is, there we may be also? I suppose there are those who believe they have answers which can be used to somewhat satisfy these questions. However, in truth, the only reason to try and answer them at all is because you want the “rapture” idea to be true, and what is really sad about all this is the fundamental reason people want this theory to be true. Simply put, it is because they just can't bring themselves to believe and trust in The Lord for their life and needs during whatever tribulation occurs before the Second Coming of The Lord!

Some would argue this is not what they are doing because of yet another false teaching Christians hold to, which is the idea

In our last segment, we began our overview of the book of Exodus and made it to chapter 2 verse 9, which tells of how Moses was found by Pharaoh's daughter and thus, spared from Pharaoh's edict that all the male Hebrew babies should be killed. Pharaoh's daughter also gives Moses into the hands of his mother as his nursemaid, affording Moses the opportunity to be well acquainted with his own people as well as the house of the Egyptian Pharaoh. This point is made clear as we go into verse 10 of Exodus chapter 2.

Moses would grow from being an infant who needed true nursing and constant care, into a toddler able to run and play with his siblings as well as interact with others of his community. It is a pretty well known fact that a child in those years from birth to about five years old are in their most impressionable period. What a child experiences in those years has a great deal to do with what kind of person they will be throughout their life. This knowledge is why it never use to be a question in society as to whether we should or shouldn't expect children to go to organized training or "school" until some point after the age of five. Those first years should be spent very organically learning human interaction and life skills through time spent simply living with family and those whom our family associate with, without the rigid daily educational and social environment of group activity, such as a school provides.



Now, we do not know if Moses grew all the way to the age of five before he came to be with Pharaoh's daughter on more of an everyday basis. However, we also do not know that Moses ceased to interact regularly with his true family after that point. What we are told is Moses grew and learned under the care of his true family.

He would have taken part in the day by day life of his family and learn their customs and history. Then, when the time was right, Moses' mother did in fact bring him to Pharaoh's daughter, where he would be known and raised as her son. It would even be Pharaoh's daughter who would give Moses the only name we know him by. She would pick the name Moses because it literally means, "drawn out of water," which, of course, is how she first met the child. Moses would truly begin his life, not as a Hebrew servant, but as part of the Egyptian royal family, with all its wealth and privilege. This means, while still young he was also exposed to the educational opportunities afforded a child born to the highest level members of society, in what was almost without argument the most sophisticated society in the world at the time! Moses would truly be comfortable in both worlds, having all the social skills and education to navigate everything from the basic household tasks of a common person all the way to diplomatic encounters with people from all over the world.

This truth is shown as Moses is grown and goes out among the events of his day,

where the Hebrews were being put under hard labor for the sake of Pharaoh's desires. Knowing full well both sides were, at the very least, equal in their humanity, it greatly angered Moses to see the Egyptian taskmasters lording over the Hebrew workers. One day as he watched, he became fed up with these taskmasters; and as he saw one of them physically abusing a Hebrew worker, Moses took action. The encounter would result in the death of the Egyptian and Moses would bury his body in the sand. Moses believed no one, who at least cared to do anything about it, had seen what he had done; but when Moses went out the next day, he was met with a rude awakening! Moses came upon two of the Hebrews fighting with each other, and attempted to reason with them that righting wrong was the way to go about things instead of being cruel to each other as the Egyptian taskmasters were to them. What Moses got in response was a hateful attitude from the man Moses felt had done the true wrong in the situation, asking Moses what made him think he had any right to judge them or say anything in the matter? Then snidely the man asked if Moses intended to settle the matter by killing him as Moses had killed the Egyptian? In this, Moses found his people did not see him as any special hope to relieve their suffering. This understanding came in no small part due to the realization that Moses' killing of the Egyptian was not a secret; and instead of being glad Moses would stand up for them, they were only hateful and/or fearful towards him becoming a ruler over them.

Now, instead of being a great Hebrew asset as the man who was on the inside of both worlds, Moses felt he had become the man who was on the outside of both! Pharaoh certainly was not going to tolerate Mo-

ses' actions, not because Moses had killed someone, for we already know Pharaoh had no qualm with murder, but because Moses now became that ultimate threat of rebellion against his power, which Pharaoh had worked for decades to put down. Moses did not stay around to be executed by Pharaoh, but fled to the desert area which lay between Egypt and the promised land Israel was to someday come home to. As Moses sat by a well in a place called Midian, he shows he really is a direct son of Jacob. In much the same way Jacob met Rachel, Moses would meet seven daughters of a man who served as a priest of The One True God in that land. This man's personal name was Reuel, which means "friend of God," but mostly, he is referred to by his title/name of Jethro, which means "excellence." As Reuel's daughters came to water their father's herds at the well where Moses was resting, other shepherds of the area also came to the well and drove these daughters away. On a regular basis they did this. These other shepherds would then steal any water the women had already drawn for their flocks, and not allow the women back to the well until their animals had had their fill. However, on this day, Moses shows the incident in Egypt had not swayed his zeal for what is just and right. Moses, once again, steps in and stands up for those who can not defend themselves. Moses ensures the women are able to water their flocks without interruption from the other shepherds; and in no way considering himself above such a common task, he finishes the job for them.

This help from Moses caused the women to finish their chores far earlier than usual, and when they came home that evening their father wanted to know how it was possible they got it all done in such good time that

day! The daughters explain that a man they believe to be an Egyptian stepped in and helped them overcome the problem they faced each day with the other shepherds, as well as did the work of drawing the water for them. Upon learning this, Reuel wants to know where the man is, why they did not invite him to come home with them, and instructs them to go back and get him so they could share a meal! This was the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship between Moses and the family of Reuel. Moses had found himself in a situation among a third group of people, where it seemed he was appreciated for the values he held. This made Moses feel at home in a way he may never have felt in Egypt or Goshen since early childhood, if ever; and it leads to Moses joining this family through marriage. Reuel would give Moses his daughter named Zipporah, which means, "a little bird." Moses and Zipporah have a son together who they name Gershom. This name means "expulsion," and Moses uses it to recognize that he is, as his forefather Abraham, a stranger in a strange land.

Back in Egypt, the children of Israel continue on the course of being slaves to the crown, and this continues all the way to the day the Pharaoh who put them in that situation dies. At this point, Israel might have hoped that a new Pharaoh would change the policy of Egypt and lift the heavy work load the previous Pharaoh had put on them. However, this was not the case. The rise of the next Pharaoh showed there was no end in sight for Israel. It had by that point become a fully accepted reality that Pharaoh was the undisputed ruler of the land, and the people - especially the Hebrews - were his slaves!

As this truth became apparent to Israel, their bondage became more grievous and harder to bear than ever. It is hard enough to be tasked with a national project which consumes your life, but it is another to understand there is no hope for seeing an end to such a situation, even for future generations! This caused them to truly, on a national level, reach out to God for help! God heard this cry from Israel and it signified they were ready to take the next step. Everything that needed to be accomplished in Egypt had been accomplished, and Israel had grown very tired of living in Egypt under the circumstances they now realized were never going to change through governmental policy shift. It was time to start the process of bringing this chapter in Israel's existence to a close, and move them to the next task in the process of becoming the nation God promised would come through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

In Egypt, Moses had been raised as royalty, and had been educated in all the knowledge organized society had to offer; and his people had become master builders, building up great wealth for Pharaoh. In Midian, Moses had come back to his people's roots. For there, Moses settled into the life his ancestors had pursued, and that was the occupation of herdsmen. This was yet another preparation of Moses for what lay ahead of him, as his true calling in life would need him not only to have a passion for justice, which he had already shown he had, but the patience to go along with it. The true leadership instead of rulership qualities Moses needed were honed in the dessert of Sinai. Thus, Moses had also become fully prepared for the next step; and as he herded the flocks

of his father-in-law across that dessert land, he came to a mountain known to be a place where people worshiped and met with the presence of The One True God. It is not likely that this was the first time Moses had come to this place, and even communed with The God of his fathers, but it certainly would not be the last!

In any case, as Moses came to mount Horeb this particular time, God sent an angel to appear as flames of fire in a bush. Moses had no doubt seen lightening strikes or other events cause wildfire, but this was different. The fire did not spread. It also did not burn out! Moses, of course, decides this was something he must investigate. As Moses approaches the burning bush, God calls out to Moses; and Moses shows he is not completely unfamiliar with communing with God: for he immediately and calmly responds. Moses is then instructed to come no further, and to take off his shoes, because the ground he now stood on belonged to God and for His purposes. God continues by making it clear He is the very same God Moses' forefathers had served. Moses was afraid to be in the midst of such a strong presence of God, and he hides his face. God continues by explaining to Moses He has not been deaf to Israel's cry for help, and the time had come to take Israel out of Egypt, to the land He had promised their fathers. Moses would be the man God would send to Pharaoh, to inform Pharaoh of this fact!

Moses, not believing in his preparation, was immediately hesitant to take on the task. However, God explained one of the confirmations to Moses as well as Israel that God had, in fact, been The One to release them, and that everything they had experienced in the process was all part of the course God

had planned, was that Israel would come back to this very mountain where Moses was now, to meet with God as a nation. Now, Moses knew that Israel did not accept him personally as their leader, or a hope of any kind; thus, Moses wants to know how he should go about convincing Israel that The God of their fathers had sent him. By this point in the history of man, the simple understanding that God was the only True God was loosing ground in the minds of men, and the false gods people often served had given forms as well as names. Moses was well aware of this trend, as he had been raised in Egypt where the practice was in full swing. Thus, Moses specifically asks God what name he should use in identifying God to them. The name God tells Moses to use is not really a name perse, but a simple truth each individual could choose to accept or reject. Moses was to tell Israel, "I AM" had sent him! This name would stand throughout the generations as a memorial to the truth, that those who believed in The God their fathers trusted would find He was/is their everything forever! Those who rely on men and the things of this world, find they truly have nothing in this world or the next!

The plan was that Moses would go to the elders of Israel and tell them God had heard the cry of the people and was ready to bring them out to the promised land. God assured Moses the elders would listen to him and together they would come to Pharaoh to inform him God had visited Israel. They would ask for a leave to go three days journey into the wilderness, worship The God of their fathers, and return. Moses was assured Pharaoh would not agree to this, and that would lead to God using great force against Egypt until Pharaoh relented and released Israel. At such time, Israel would not come

out as poor people who had just been released from slavery, but Israel would leave, taking most all of Egypt's wealth with it!

Moses was still worried that Israel would not listen to him, nor believe God had truly sent him. Thus, God gives Moses a miracle to perform to confirm Moses was not merely a man talking big. Moses would lay down his shepherd's staff and it would become a serpent, and when Moses picked up the serpent it would become a staff again. Moses was also told to put his hand inside his robe to his chest and when he pulled it out it was leprous, but when Moses put it back inside and took it out again, it was healed. God said if they did not believe the first sign, nor the second one, Moses was to take water from the river and pour it out on dry ground where it would become blood! These three signs would cover the basics of God being everything they needed. God has power over the external things we fear; He has power over the internal things we fear; He even has power over the ultimate thing humans fear, which is death itself!

Moses then turns from the arguments about what he needed to do to the all out argument he did not believe he could do it! Moses, no doubt, going back to his original failure to convince anyone in Egypt of what was/is right, argues against the preparation he had been given since his life began. Moses argues he was not a good speaker before, and he had not improved recently. God tells Moses he has been prepared for the task and it would be God giving him the words he needed, not his own cleverness, in the first place. However, Moses still desires God send someone else with him to do the talking; and even though it angers God that Moses is unwilling to trust Him, God tells

Moses Aaron, his brother, who is already on his way to meet Moses, would do the talking. Thus, Moses was to instruct Aaron as to what God wanted and Aaron would instruct the people. Together, God would accomplish the work using them both.

After this encounter, Moses, being a good employee, goes first to his father-in-law to ask if he can be let go in order to return to his people in Egypt. Moses does not divulge the full intent of why he wants to go, but just the fact he wants to go check on their current status in the land. Jethro, being a man of God, lets Moses go without hesitation and with blessings of peace! Moses is further told of God that all the people who seen him as a threat and therefore sought to kill him were dead and gone from Egypt. Moses would not have to deal with that issue any longer. With that, Moses packs up his wife, children, his shepherd's rod, which God had told him to keep with him, and they head out for Egypt. As he goes, God further instructs Moses as to exactly how it is all going to unfold. God tells him he is to do the signs God gave him to show Israel he had been sent by God, but that these signs would not convince Pharaoh. Instead, the signs God gave Moses would cause Pharaoh to be more determined than ever to stand his ground. This, in no small part, is because Pharaoh had been raised to believe he was a god, and no man was going to walk in and tell him The True God owned Israel, not him. This process of Pharaoh being more determined instead of yielding to God would prove beyond a doubt that Pharaoh was no god at all! Moses was even told to lay out the end of all this to Pharaoh by explaining to him God considered Israel His first born son, and if Pharaoh insisted on holding God's first born, God would slay Pharaoh's!

As Moses and his family take their journey to Egypt, they stop - most likely for the night - at a place which is an established rest stop along the path they were taking. In that place, Moses was met by The Lord over an issue he had neglected to take care of, and that was the circumcision of his son. Even before the giving of the law, which Moses would receive from God for Israel, there was circumcision. God had told Abraham it would be the sign and the seal God had made a covenant between Himself, Abraham, and Abraham's seed in the first place. Everyone who was to be a part of that covenant had to circumcise every male in their house, and for children born into the house, it was to be done at only eight days old. If this symbol was something you were unwilling to do, then you were not just choosing to not be a part of the specific covenant God made with Abraham and his seed, but you were to be cut off from God's nation altogether! (Gen. 17:1-14)

The truth is, the covenant God made with Abraham had to have willing participants. Israel was to be something special and specific. God would not work as He does throughout the world at large, in that, He works through those here and there who are willing to serve Him. In order to establish a specific nation dedicated to God's purposes, individuals in Israel needed to be willing participants or not part of the mix at all! This is the great violation Moses was guilty of! As the man whom God was sending to be the leader of Israel, in order to make them into the nation which would hold God's oracles, Moses certainly had to be all in or nothing at all! The apparent problem was that Moses' wife was not fond of the practice of circum-

cision, and did not want it performed on her children. Thus, it would seem Moses had, at the very least, put it off for one of his sons. However, the time had come to be all in or all out, and literally it was do or die time for Moses!

Now, we do not know the specifics of how Moses was distressed by God, but it would seem obvious he was in no condition to do the circumcision himself. It must also have been obvious to his wife that Moses' life was at stake here. However, the interesting point is that there is no indication whatsoever Zipporah was mystified as to what had brought all this about. She knew what was going on and she knew what needed to be done to fix it. For her the choice was clear, circumcise her son allowing Moses to go on with the work God had called him to do, or let her husband die and turn back to her father's house. Even if the second choice was one she considered, she surely knew her father was a man who served The One True God; thus, she was not going to be greeted well as the daughter who had let her husband die because she refused to follow God's command! Zipporah would choose the circumcision, and at this point not only would it have to be done, she would have to be the one to do it!

Zipporah would use a readily available sharp stone - most likely a flint stone - to get the job done. She would take the skin she had cut off and cast it at the feet of Moses, with the rebuke that makes it obvious she was very unhappy about having to do it at all. God would release Moses, but he would be met with his wife's continued displeasure. She would mention nothing about Moses'

life being threatened, or the fact they had tempted God by putting this matter off. Ziporah's only focus would be on the fact she had had the misfortune of marrying a husband who made her a part of a people commanded to do such a thing! It is in all likelihood at this point that Moses sends his wife and children back to his father-in-law, and continues on his journey alone. In seeking to serve God, Moses would once again find himself in a very lonely place.

However, we are told it was God Who directly instructs Moses' brother Aaron not to wait until Moses came into Egypt but to go out and meet him as he came. The reunion of these men is said to happen again in that all important area where God had met with Moses at the burning bush. This place would be the launching point for Moses and Aaron to go forward with the task Moses had been given - which was to bring Israel back to this same mount! Moses would take the time to explain to his brother all the things God had instructed him, along with the signs God had given Moses to show Israel and Pharaoh. They would then take their journey into Egypt where they would gather all the elders of Israel, and Aaron would explain to them what had been instructed of God, as well as show them the signs God had given. The people of Israel would believe that Moses and Aaron were truly the proof God had heard their cry, and considered the affliction they were in. This caused them to worship God and be glad. Now convincing Israel was what Moses was most worried about, and it turned out they were very receptive to these opening words. However, as with so many things, receiving the message of what God is ultimately going to accomplish is only the beginning of the journey to see it through!

The next step Aaron and Moses took was to go in to Pharaoh and deliver the news he was to let Israel go so they could take a journey into the wilderness and worship God. Upon Hearing this, Pharaoh showed immediately he was already of an attitude where he did not respect God over what he saw as his own power and authority. Pharaoh even says point-blank, he does not know God. This, as with all humans, is not entirely true; but in spite of how little or much truth this statement held, Pharaoh was about to be well acquainted! Moses and Aaron explain to Pharaoh they were only asking for a three day journey in distance, in order to follow the commandment of The God they serve, so as not to displease God. This is a concept Pharaoh, as well as most all pagans, understand well. Attempting to appease a god in some form or another is at the heart of almost all pagan religion and its rituals! Nonetheless, Pharaoh shows he also has an attitude so typical of people who find themselves with governing power. Pharaoh determines this nonsense is causing the people to slack off from their work as it is, and as far as he's concerned that proves they have the time and energy to do even more than what they've been doing! Thus, Pharaoh proceeds to make it the task of Israel not only to manufacture the number of bricks they were making already, but go out and find their own straw to do it with. This, of course, is not really possible for Israel to accomplish and leads to the officers of Israel being beaten by the Egyptian taskmasters for not fulfilling their tally of brick. In turn, these officers go directly to Pharaoh to ask what the problem is in that they are being punished for not keeping up, when the fact they no longer are given the straw they need is the problem. Pharaoh explains to them he believes they have too much extra time on

their hands and that is what is making them come up with ideas such as going out to worship their God. Pharaoh confirms their getting no straw is not an oversight, and he himself very much so expects them to keep up!

Through this, God revealed the true heart of Pharaoh. If there was any doubt Pharaoh was nothing but an oppressive ruler, instead of a responsible leader, it should have been erased in the minds of Israel at this point. However, we always have difficulty seeing beyond the immediate trouble to the ultimate reward, and the leaders of Israel meet with Moses and Aaron to let them know they were not so convinced anymore that God had sent them. The only thing they could see was that Moses and Aaron's actions had disrupted the balance, and given Pharaoh the excuse he may have always wanted to totally kill off Israel. In this, God revealed the people of Israel did not truly know Him as they should. They wanted to be delivered, but the fact God had already shown He was with them was not the evidence they needed to know Pharaoh was already defeated!

Moses was also going through continuing growing pains as he goes to God with this very same argument. Even asking God why He had sent him to the people if all it was going to do was make their lives worse, and do nothing to deliver them! To this, God explains to Moses He was only giving Pharaoh a chance to make the right choice, and now that Pharaoh had failed that test miserably, God, being a righteous God, now had what was needed to judge Pharaoh severely. Moses, Israel, and Pharaoh had seen nothing as yet! God even points out, in spite of all the

miracles God did and the direct presence they experienced, even Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had not known God in the way He was about to show Himself. God had been The Almighty Maker of everything man knew. From the beginning, He was without question the highest power man had known. However, even in having a direct relationship with God, no man of the past truly understood just how powerful God really was and is! God was about to show them that I AM is not just about being man's everything, but about making it clear while everything man knows has a beginning, God had always been, and nothing was/is going to change the fact He will always be!

God explains to Moses His end plan would not only allow Israel to leave Egypt for a journey, nor just leave, but when God was through dealing with Pharaoh's great arrogance, Pharaoh would be using his "power" to throw Israel out of the land. When he did, it would be known without a shadow of a doubt that God had done it! God would take Israel from the bondage they suffered in Egypt to the land He had promised to give to the seed which came from Abraham, through Isaac, and Jacob. The time of sojourning, which had begun when God called Abraham out of Mesopotamia to the land of Canaan, was coming to a close. Israel would be made God's chosen nation just as the covenant with Abraham had promised, and they would live on a land which would be, through the power of The God of creation, their own!

Let's stay in God's Word!

A Matter Of Life And Death continued from pg. 8

there is a “tribulation” with a set time period, where God Himself beats up on His creation, and thus, man. Many people argue the reason for the “rapture” is that God would not put His children through His wrath. However, the Bible does not support this theory of a “tribulation” engineered by God, anymore than it does a “rapture.” In fact, it is in direct contradiction to what we are told. We should all be clear on the fact that first and foremost God does not want us to have a focus on the here and now, which is something we have trouble with; thus, God cursed the ground. However, God does not desire to harm His creation. God wants us to be saved, which means we will get to go to a place after we have left this world which does not have suffering. As we just covered, suffering will not be there because those who desire sin will not be allowed in. What we must keep in mind is, that's not the case in the here and now. In the here and now, people can do what they want. Again, that is God giving us a free will. It's sin which brings such tremendous suffering, and that is why the here and now has a limit as to how far God will allow it all to go before He steps in and does something about it. This is the mercy and grace which God's righteousness demands!

We see that limit at the time of Noah, and that is why God sent the flood. However, once that was done, God directly told man He would not continue to deal with the limit by destroying all life as He had done with the flood. (Gen. 9:11) In the Word, we are given what was, at that same time, God's full determination on the issue. That determination was not just that He would never again use a flood to destroy all life, or that He

would simply never again destroy all life, all at once, as He had done with the flood; but that, “I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” Genesis 8:21-22

In this statement, not only does God tell us He will not continue to curse the ground for man's sake, God specifically promises He will not allow the destruction of men - or any other force for that matter - to make this planet completely unlivable. Man can have his free will, God will not continue to curse, or in other words harm, His creation in order to get man's attention; but as long as God allows this universe to stand, God's assurance is that this world will never become a place life has to abandon. Thus, we do not see a flood like, catastrophic, physical event ever again in the Word of God. Instead, what we see is God's continual intervention to keep us from going to the limit which would force Him to end it all as He did in Noah's day. One of the final and most drastic of these measures which God will use is the return of His Son, to directly rule and reign over the world. However, God will not take this kind of drastic intervention step until He has allowed man to prove there is no other way. This is what we see in the vials being poured out in Revelation.

II Peter 3:9 points out, some people count slackness, but God is not slack concerning His promises. God is waiting and gauging the destruction of man on this planet. Sure, Revelation talks about man blas-

pheming God for the “plagues,” but man always does this. The fact blaming and being mad at God is man's fall-back position for everything is why God told us, in the third commandment, not to take the name of The Lord our God in vain. (Ex. 20:7) Simply put, man and his actions will cause the time of great tribulation we are seeing and will continue to see leading up to the Second Coming of Christ. When man has pushed it so far God can no longer wait and still keep His promise that this world will remain habitable, He will act! “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.” Revelation 16:15-17

I could write another book on these issues, but the truth is, the Bible's words just don't come together when you believe in things such as a rapture, and a God engineered tribulation. God is not going to, one day, gather up all those who have served Him - both those who are currently alive, along with those who are already outside this world and its suffering - so He can take seven years, or the like, to beat-up on the world! God's wrath on a world filled with sin is His inaction far more than it is His action! We see this all through the Bible. In Revelation we see an illustration much like the parables Jesus gave us, which shows those who have been martyred for the sake of the gospel, asking God how long it will be until their blood is avenged, and you

know what they were told? They were told to wait until those brothers and sisters in Christ, still on this earth, are also killed like they were. (Rev. 6:9-11)

God allows us our freedom; and in doing so, He does not step in at all moments and save us from the suffering our sinful choices and the sinful choices of others create. God will allow man to tear this planet apart and kill each other, for a time, in order to give man the opportunity to open his eyes and see the foolishness of his own ways. However, when enough is enough - which the vials of Revelation demonstrate to us God is calculating - there will be an intervention by God, just as there was when things began to become hopeless in the days of Noah. However, instead of calling a man to build an ark and prepare for a flood, which God said He would never do again, this time the intervention will be the return of The Man, Jesus Christ our Lord!

Jesus said in Matthew 24:37, “ But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” Jesus goes on in those verses to reiterate the point: God did not take Noah out before the flood, and the world was not being crushed by God's hand. People were eating and drinking, marrying and going on with their lives as if life had no end, even right up to the day the limit was truly reached, which was the day Noah entered the ark. Through it all, Noah had to endure whatever the world threw at him until the day God closed the door of that ark. (Gen. 7:11-16) Others could have come in the ark, but like the virgins who did not have the oil for their lamps, and the rich man who did not care to pay attention, while in life, to

anything other than his riches, no one in Noah's day cared either.

Jesus is not bringing flood water, nor is God going to beat up on the planet for man's sake. To believe what we see in Revelation about the grass, trees, water, and the like, being burned, dying and poisonous are God's actions, is to call God a liar! God will deal with this world and its sin. He is already doing it through death, and He will ultimately do it by bringing this temporal universe to an end, and by separating those who desire Him from those who do not. In the meantime, God will continue to do what He does based on His true will, and that will is that none perish and all come to repentance which will lead to their salvation. (II Pet. 3:7-9) That is what God is working toward, and that is why Jesus will return to this world to rule and reign for a time before the end! Believing God is going to take vengeance on this world just before the return of Christ, instead of believing God is allowing man his free will in hopes man will repent of his ways, is to blame and blaspheme God in the same way evil men always do!

We need to understand, Jesus will not come as a humble child the second time, for He has already done that and the world has already shown what it will do with it! This second time, He will return in power and as the rightful King of Kings, and Lord of Lords of this entire world! In Revelation 11:15, we are told when that seventh trumpet shall sound - which is the last one to sound - the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord, and His reign as supreme King over humanity will never end. This will lead us to the Day of Judgment!

It is for the purpose of ruling and reigning with Him that Jesus will gather unto Himself all those, both dead and alive, who have desired to serve Him. (Rev. 20:6) God will reverse the suffering man brings by and through man's inability and lack of righteousness to lead this world. With Jesus as its head, God will put into place a world-governing system supported by people who cannot be bribed, threatened, coerced, or the like. Those who return with Jesus will not be able to be killed or injured by anyone, including those who would try to, in order to get away with wrong doing. Those who have been resurrected by Christ will have no reason to take orders from anyone but The One they have longed to serve, and maybe even given their lives in doing so, once already! This resurrection, for this purpose, is where those who love God and are called according to His purpose go after death. When man chooses to rebel against even this perfectly administered world of peace, the devil will be loosed again to orchestrate the final steps which will prove all possibilities of saving this world have been exhausted, and God will bring this entire universe's existence to a close. (Rev. 20:7-21:1) The rest of the dead will not be seen again until that day we all stand before God to be judged!

Those who attempt to serve The Lord, with all their heart, already see the truth of great tribulation in our world right now. Sadly, the fact so many Christians have been taught Jesus will come and take them out of all this is one of the reasons people are having and will have trouble enduring to the end. (Rev. 2:10) However, the information we have covered in this writing should be a comfort to us all, because while we all walk this earth and suffer from the sin of man, we

should be reassured a fresh and a new, this life is not what we are living for! Jesus told us not to worry when people persecuted us and killed us, for so they did to those who have served God in all time periods before us. (Matt. 5:11-12) Sure, it isn't easy to live in these days of sin, with its sickness and destruction, but that is why God is ultimately taking us out of this place, and will welcome all those who truly desire Him, into a new place which Revelation describes for us!

“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.” Revelation 22:1-5

As I have said a couple of times before, there is much more I could write, but I feel I have written enough for this particular study. It is my prayer this writing has been a blessing to everyone who has taken the time to read it, and, at the very least, that it has caused us all to go back again and study God's Word for ourselves! That is what we must do. We must study to show ourselves approved. (II Tim. 2:15) If you don't believe or agree with what I have written, that's alright; because just as with any man, you

should not simply take my word for it anyway. People believing in man's philosophies instead of knowing the Word for themselves is what has caused so much of the confusion which exists in the church today. What each of you should do is take what I have said and hold it up to the light of God's Word! In doing that, I believe you will find your questions answered in a way they never have been before. It's for this simple reason that I feel in my heart there is no better way to close this writing than to do it by quoting the full wording of a scripture we have already covered, but which was Paul's simple answer to the question we have been dealing with here!

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” I Thessalonians 4:13-18

***Questions submitted to the Institute,
answered by Philip E. Busby.***

FBS continued from pg. 4

that saved us from their more all inclusive destructive powers!

On the argument of war, we can start by simply admitting, it may be very true that if God had not confounded our languages there may never have been war, especially on the great scale we see today. However, that being said, this is a great example of how we arrogantly think we know what is best just because we see the outward appearance of things. (I Sam. 16:6-13) We think it is a great thing to never see war, and in many ways this would be true. However, what we fail to do in judging God's action is acknowledge God put us in a perfect situation to begin with. In the Garden of Eden there was peace, no hunger, no pain. We chose to change all that, and what God is dealing with now is not the idea that all men just need a little guidance for everything to be all better. Man still has a free will to choose sin even at times when we can see how it brings death and destruction to our lives. God is dealing with sinful men who not only fail to be responsible for the knowledge of good and evil, they reject God even as He shows He is still willing and wanting to come and direct us!

What God is dealing with are people such as Cain, who after killing his brother not only tried to dodge the fact, but after failing to get away with dodging, was only worried about how his punishment might affect his ability to do what he continued to desire. God is dealing with a people who becomes so corrupt, only one man and his direct family listened to His voice and boarded the one ark of safety which God

instructed to be built in order to save everyone. God is not dealing with men who have made the right choices from the beginning, nor learned from many of their mistakes. God is dealing with the degraded state continual sin has brought us to. The simple fact there may not have ever been a major war among men if God had not confounded our language may seem great, but as it is a true saying that, "Peace is not the absence of war but the presence of justice." So too, what is good for man all the way around is not simply the absence of war, conflict, sickness, or even pain, but the presence of God and His righteousness in our lives and world!

These are the subjects which confront us with the choice of believing God knows exactly what He is doing, or that we know better! A world with constant conflict is not what God wanted. However, man living in a state where conflict may often erupt is better than a world of peace where people are ignorant to the truth God gave them a free will to explore this universe, think for themselves, and most importantly have a relationship with Him! The truth of the matter is, war is not the result of God confounding our languages. War is still the direct result of man's choices. It is the result of the fact, even after God shows us the right path versus the wrong path, many people refuse to take it to heart! True cooperation, not forced or obligated obedience, is what God asks of us; and if God asks it instead of forcing it, men have no right to force it on other men. Since most of the people at the tower did eventually pick up their belongings and head out across the world, one can easily argue for centuries

upon centuries there was no need for war simply because there was plenty of space for everyone. However, even as the world becomes more crowded there was/is no excuse. If people could live in one valley and believe that could work, how much more possible should it be to cooperate to the extent everyone can find their place? The truth is, war comes not because we have spread across the planet, separated into various groups, or even that we do not all speak the same language. War comes because of the same attitude that created the tower in the first place. Many people bitterly dislike the idea that people are in fact created with diversity, and have been very diverse since long before the confounding of our language!

Before the confounding, men were able to communicate their diversity through a common speech. Evil men used that commonality as a way, not to utilize our diversity, but destroy and suppress it! After God confounded our language, humans showed they still have trouble living as free individuals interacting with each other. We chose to form tribes, nations and empires, with cultures very often not based on cooperation and mutual respect for each others' diversity and free will, but ones that, just like at the Tower of Babel, are defined by an even smaller group within the group. There is power in numbers; thus, we can use our group to go to war against other groups for all kinds of reasons. This aggression is why even peaceful people and/or groups must defend themselves at times, but the starting point for most all our fighting is over diversity. We are afraid, just like

Cain, of changes the natural flow of life, freedom and the interaction of individuals brings.

This truth is why governments over both large and small countries or groups of people are, or become, fearful of their own citizens, and they end up feeling the need to continually pass laws restricting individual's actions, even attempting to conform individual thought patterns. It is one thing to have a rule of law that carries out punishment for those who do crimes against others. This is why God says He ordained government activity, specifying they bear not the sword in vain. (Rom. 13:1-5) It can be a good thing when we use the organization of government to cooperate for the establishment and insurance of provisions common to the needs of us all. Things such as the ability to move by ensuring a reasonable amount of roads and the creation of utilities are all examples of this. However, it is a whole other thing when government attempts to "organize" people's lives, especially through generally restricting people's actions and attempting to direct their thoughts!

In all this, Cain continues to be our clear example. He understood that a city was an attempt to cumulatively build something greater than he could build alone. Cain had separated himself from the others, and the presence of God, because he believed they might inhibit him from getting what he wanted. (Gen. 4:9-15) As an individual, Cain was perfectly free to do this. However, he then built a city to keep his family from going out and doing what they might

want to do, just as he had done. He obligated individuals to take part in the lifestyle he had set up, which directly rejected God in order to serve Cain's desires. He did not want individuals to make their own choice, so he built a city to establish the idea that what he dictated was for the good of the many and it outweighed the individual's free will. This is a selfishness that doesn't just deprive others of something because you took the last of a limited thing. It is a selfishness that specifically tries to deprive others of the very things you want so you can use them to obtain even more of what you want.

The Tower of Babel was a pentacle of success in these ideas. It also came at a time and under circumstances where mankind as a whole was most vulnerable to being completely drawn into them. I know I talk about this quite a bit in this series, but it is so important to understand we did not just go along through various stages of human development and social experimentation, which one day led us to go down or even feel we had no choice to go down the path of implementing the very ideas which are hastening the return of Christ in our time. The Tower of Babel was not about men as individuals living in peace and harmony that led to the culmination of freewilled thoughts and ideas working together to accomplish something great. It was an attempt to solidify a cultural way of life which would intentionally stunt the freewilled thought patterns of individuals and centralize authority. That's what it wanted to do then and that's what it wants to do today. You have to agree with the old saying that the road to hell is paved with good

intentions, because of the fact so many have good intentions they do not follow through with. However, people also can have very good intentions to start with, but they get off track once there is power or other desires at stake. It is hard to see why people believe so strongly in human ability to make it all come out great, when on top of all this is the truth - many people claiming to have good intentions are actually lying in order to draw people to their side of doing things. Even though it is so often just history repeating itself, people don't usually see or understand their folly until it is too late to break the chains we have allowed ourselves to be shackled with!

As it relates to the overall problem of war and conflict, the fact man could even get their plans to work as well as they had it working at the tower is the proof that as separate individuals, or groups of such, we are not obligated to fight each other. What the confounding did was reveal the evil in man's heart, which causes things such as war. War and conflict come because humans have become a paradox. We are enslaved by the selfish desire that we will not get what we as individuals want; but in many ways, we fear being different will take away our ability to obtain things we want as well. This leaves us in a quandary from a very young age of constantly yielding ourselves to "peer pressure," all the while screaming, "I want what I want!"

Now, some will try to twist the scripture by saying Jesus taught us the right way to live is with the thought pattern that the good of the many outweighs the individual, in telling us such things as, love our neigh-

bor as ourselves. (Matt. 22:34-40) However, those who argue this miss the entire point. Jesus' words were about how to be an individual while still respecting the fact others are as well. It is about not obligating others to conform to you or to take part in your specific ideas and/or desires. This is why Jesus said to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We love ourselves and have personal desires. The fact many people see things as not unfolding the way they would like is what drives us to even hate ourselves at times and in ways. However, the fact things not going our way discourage us so much shows we do, in fact, love ourselves. Whether our loving ourselves is in a good way or bad may be a personal question we each have to deal with, but this is not relevant to the point. Simply knowing there are things we would like to see go in certain ways causes us to know we need to respect the fact others have personal desires of their own. It should also be obvious that some of those desires will conflict with ours, at least at times and in ways. Thus, we should only carry out our personal desires in ways which are respectful of others. To involve ourselves with others, we must look for those who willfully understand what it is we desire and choose to partner with us in doing what we do. Even if our group of cooperating individuals becomes very large, or even a majority group in some form, it still does not mean we have the right to force or obligate others to conform to our desires.

Again, the simple truth we see in God confounding our language in order to leave man to do what he would from there is the

point; if God went to such great lengths to preserve man's free will, we as men certainly have no right to take or attempt to take it away. This fundamental truth is why we should have, not a governing system which believes it is its job to design laws on the basis of when and in what ways it thinks freedom is worth having, but a justice system among men that values freedom and seeks to punish the actual acts of those who attempt to take away the free will of others. Of course, the ultimate example of an attempt to take another individual's free will is murder! However, for those who are tempted to judge God for the fact we as humans even have the freewill ability to commit such an act, we should understand and never forget that with God even death is not the ultimate success in taking away our free will. God showed us this by sending His Son to this earth to give His life for the sins of us all! Understanding all we have been discussing is actually very important to the core of sharing the gospel message. Even the gospel is not - as some have wrongly believed - something others can have forced upon them, be obligated to, or be tricked into accepting. Individuals either accept the gospel or they do not. Those who have been called to share the gospel are to do exactly that: share it! Think about it. Even the singular message given among men by God Himself, which contains the answer to solve every problem and save the very souls of men, is to be given to others as a totally freewilled choice!

Until next time, Shalom!