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Shaqah®

"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

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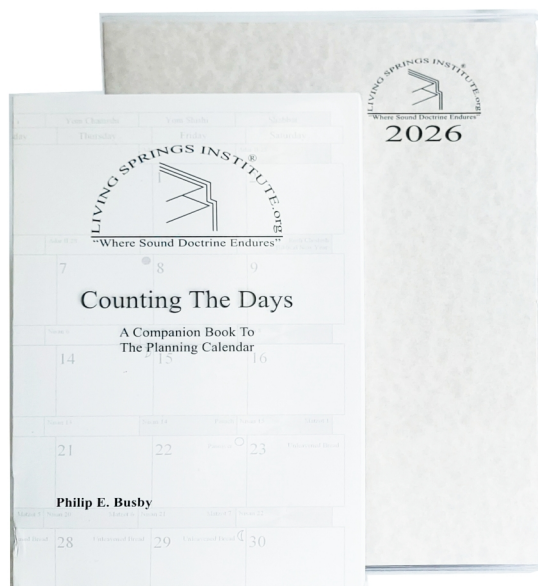
Step Into the Springs!

For the eighteenth year, Living Springs Institute is publishing its daily planning calendar that gives you the Biblical calendar alongside the calendar most of us use every day. Since early 2018 the companion book, titled *Counting The Days*, has also been available. If you're a regular mail subscriber to this publication and don't by then have a calendar, you should receive one with the Nov./Dec. issue of *Shaqah*. We'd also like to send calendars to all of our e-mail subscribers, but we don't necessarily have your current physical mailing address. Thus, to get your 2026 calendar be sure to contact us and put in your order soon!

The planning calendar is a great Biblical education product but even if you don't use/want the calendar, the companion book, *Counting The Days*, is still a book you're going to want to read. With a full example calendar in the back, this book is a great way to learn about the Biblical/Jewish calendar all by itself. *Counting The Days* is an overall teaching about the calendar and feasts God gave in the Law, but more specifically, it teaches the how and why God set up a calendar that contains distinct events, all of which prophesy about God's plan for our existence. It covers what each event prophesies about, why there is a Biblical and Jewish calendar, and much more! Of course, many of you have already received a copy of the book, but if you do not have one you will want to receive a copy when you order your 2026 calendar. If you already have a 2026 calendar, it should have come with a pink card inside that you can simply fill in with your name and address, and for only the price of a stamp you can order your copy of *Counting The Days*!

Living Springs has struggled this year and so I stress it's only by the grace of God we can still offer the 2026 daily

planning calendar and copies of *Counting The Days* for FREE! To order your free copy(s) of the 2026 calendar and/or *Counting The Days*, you can simply write, e-mail, or visit us online. For online orders, just go to www.livingspringsinstitute.org, click on the "Resource Shop" button, order the 2026 calendar and/or *Counting The Days*, and type your mailing information into the lines provided on that form. To order more copies than the form allows, please use the comment box. If you are using e-mail, send your request to: resources@shaqah.com. If you're using regular mail, write to us at: Living Springs Institute, P.O. Box 271, Loveland, CO 80539. Just tell us you would like the 2026 calendar and/or *Counting The Days* and be sure to give us your physical mailing address. Your order will be sent out as soon as we can process it!



For those of you who may never have ordered anything from Living Springs, know that ordering will not put you on any mailing list! Living Springs is happy to send people only what they request. Thus, we want to remind everyone that we also offer other teaching products, and all for free! If you would like a free subscription to this publication (*Shaqah*), don't forget to make that request when you write. We also

produce a PDF version of the calendar, along with many other materials in PDF, which you can download from our website at anytime.

In closing, I just want to say thank you, and please remember to share Living Springs Institute with others so they too may learn and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ! We so much appreciate your support, prayers and, of course, your patience as we continue to strive to get the work done which only God can make possible. May God bless each of you as you strive to serve Him, and as always, we pray you will be blessed by this issue of *Shaqah*!

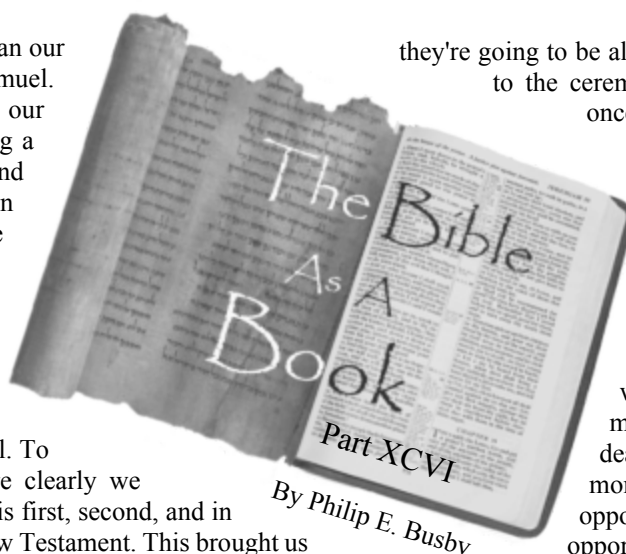
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In our last segment we began our introduction to the Book of I Samuel. However, we very quickly turned our attention to the issue of there being a first and second book of Samuel and why that is true. Since that question has direct connection to how the church arranges the books of the Bible, we looked at why we see this in both the Old and New Testaments. In truth, what we looked at was the contrast to the fact we see this in both but it is not for the same reason(s) at all. To help us understand the issue more clearly we focused last time on why we see this first, second, and in one case, third book issue in the New Testament. This brought us to talk about the way the church itself was started and the fact what calls itself the church did not remain focused on the mission of people knowing the Word of God for themselves and which the Jews have a focus on. We talked about how instead of that, what calls itself the church went forward to focus on teaching people what the Bible said and how to get to heaven. While this might make sense to many who call themselves Christians today on the basis it appears to them that was the focus of The Messiah, this is faulty thinking people only come to by being immersed in what the church has taught as opposed to what it should be teaching!

The reason so many people who call themselves Christians have so many questions about what certain things mean and how we should live is due to this very critical error. When you think about it from that angle it's quite ironic really; very sad but ironic non-the-less. The church wants to teach people what to believe and how they should behave in order to be a Christian and ultimately be saved and yet, the people are filled with worry and doubt. The simple answer to why this is true has everything to do with what we talked about last time. By not knowing the Bible for themselves people don't have much of a chance to understand It. They hear the words of a preacher telling them what certain things mean and what the Bible is telling them overall, but when they read the Bible they find many contradictions to what they've been taught. This does not so much apply to those who are just into Christianity because it's part of what their culture's life is about and/or it comforts them to believe in something and have a church they can lean on for those life moments such as weddings and funerals. These people are just looking for the comfort a religion can bring, and in spite of many more ancient religions being very hard, the premise for following a religion is always the same whether the teaching is about practically killing yourself to make it to some sort of heaven or coasting in on the basis you said the right words and/or performed some easy ceremonies.

People want religion to sooth the call within them The Holy Ghost is responsible for, which is the call to have a relationship with their Creator. That's why I stress the fact that's what the word faith really means! The problem with religion versus true faith is that religion has to be constantly reanimated. This is why the "church" keeps trying to reinvent itself and has looked so different over time. You're never going to bring real life to people by religion, so people constantly need reassured



they're going to be alright. This truth follows its way right to the ceremonies we hold to remember people once they've died. Each generation morphs such ceremonies to their liking, but it's all about taking the opportunity to assure friends and loved ones the person is in a better place and so shall you be if you hold true to the religion you've been taught. However, this is why Jesus didn't hesitate to tell the man who wanted to follow Him that the man should let the dead bury their dead! (Matt. 8:18-22) Especially in that moment the man had a tremendous opportunity in front of him. He had the opportunity to walk with God in physical

form. Wasting a minute of that opportunity to do something like a funeral was really foolish. Now, I'm not saying we shouldn't respectfully handle the body of any deceased human, I'm just pointing out that what most people find important is not so much the work that needs to be done as much as the attempt to make life hold some meaning they don't feel it has.

These are the things that come of teaching a religion and people following a religion instead of having true faith. True faith is a substance of what we hope to have in even greater abundance once we're gone from this sin-filled world and the evidence we're on the right track to gain that which we do not yet see! (Heb. 11:1) It's the comfort we need while trying to gain the understanding we desire to gain in order to move even deeper in faith. We read the Bible for the history It contains and the pieces begin to fall in place as to what was and is really going on in life. All a religion does is cloud one's view and ability to do such a thing by teaching you to look to the religion instead of faith for the answers. Religion gives us a box we want to fit all the pieces in and they just never fit; not all of them and not neatly to be sure! Faith is the only thing that brings the truth that allows us to walk not worrying about our death because death is nothing but the gateway to true uninhibited faith. The most physical thing the man who came to Jesus that day could do was literally walk with The Messiah; watching His actions and hearing His words. However, that kind of physical opportunity was only for a limited time. Not decreasing the importance of the spiritual opportunity we still have to walk directly with The Holy Ghost in our day, the most physical thing we have the opportunity to do is pickup God's Word and know It for ourselves!

That fact is the whole point of why a study like this one exists. We want to help people see how what we call God's Word came together to be the book we know today. It exists to help people understand some of the historical details about why the Christian arrangement of the Scripture (specifically the Old Testament) is different than the arrangement those of the chosen nation have. In everything man does there is a great potential to do more harm than good. Thus, I often stress things like the fact chapters and verses are reference additions to the Bible we must be careful not to get tripped up by. Things like chapter and verse references are wonderful when directing people to a specific subject, story, etc. in God's Word, but aside from that, they should be invisible while reading the words that are there. This is

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment we continued to look at the way Isaac went out from being among the Philistines and further solidified his family's presence on the promised land. This was/is all to emphasize how much preparing the land to be claimed by the chosen nation in later times was not completed with just Abraham. God would use Isaac and most of Jacob's lifetimes to continue the work Abraham had begun. Isaac would do this not just through the restoring of wells his father had dug in the land and which the Philistines had tried to eliminate, Isaac would go out and continue to dig wells which in all the ways important to the day was staking claim on a wider and wider area. The problem was, each time he dug a new well the people in the area would claim it. The righteous would have seen Isaac staking claim to land, but people are not righteous, and this shows us how much unrighteousness existed in Canaan. That said, it is God Who is the rightful Judge of men, and He knew what Isaac had done in spite of man's desire to drive Isaac's house out of the area they wanted all for themselves. Thus, Isaac would not fight for the wells and simply move on digging new wells. Every time the people of the land fought to take what he had worked to build they only caused this forefather of the chosen nation to cover even more ground. Isaac would end up moving all the way to the south end of the land to the point he ended up settling in the exact area the children of Israel would come up into and camp when God was ready for them to begin taking the promised land. All this brought us through Genesis chapter 26 verse 24, and we'll remain in that verse as we begin this time.

Now, as we have talked about over and over, the children of Israel did not obey God and go up from that south end to take the promised land. In talking about that fact we see yet another good example of something God formed the chosen nation to show us. God has to work through and with the individuals who serve Him with a whole heart because large groups of people, even those formed to be the chosen nation of God, can't be depended on to do what God asks. (Ps. 119:2) All this preparation Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had done to give the children of Israel an open legal claim to the land God was bringing them out of Egypt to take as their own was in many ways squandered, and another 40 years would pass before the taking of the true heart of the promised land would begin. This is part of the real miracle, and amazing thing God did by forming the chosen nation. He created a nation that He could continually use to show the world the righteous ways we should be living our lives and hearing God's voice in both our successes as well as our failures. This speaks to that subject I've spent a lot of time on at some points, which is the fact the Jewish religious leadership's rejection of The Messiah was just another one of those points. This means to interpret the actions of the religious leadership as meaning the entire chosen nation was somehow cast aside by God to be replaced by something such as the church, is just ridiculous!

The chosen nation was and still is just a group of people

who more than three thousand years ago swore to follow the commandments of God. At times they've done pretty well and at other times they've done pretty bad. The pretty bad is almost always speaking about the group while there were prophets and ministers of God who still did/do really good and at times amazing! This relates to the understanding of what the Bible tells us happened before the flood when there were "giants." (Gen. 6:1-4) Giants is a description of the very same thing but instead of isolated to the chosen nation, it was a truth among all humanity! These "giants" dwindled in number until the day there was only Noah who found grace in the eyes of The Lord. (Gen. 6:8) So too in talking about the chosen nation these individuals were/are people of faith who in spite of the group doing not so good they continued to hear and heed God's voice. God could use these people to call the chosen nation (and in so doing the world) back to Him. How much success and how much they lacked success in getting people to listen to them as a group was never really the point of God using them. While God always hoped/hopes men will respond correctly to His instructions, keeping those instructions available for men to see has always been the larger point. It's also what continued to create giants in the next generation(s) of the nation. (1 Kings 19:9-18) For the world at large, the nation's very existence serves that purpose in a way the days of Noah did not have! In thinking about what we just covered concerning the chosen nation it should be easy to see the point I just made above about the coming of The Messiah being no different than just about any other time in the chosen nation's history. The Messiah came and as a group the chosen nation, especially its religious leadership, rejected Him. In spite of that, it was those brave men and women of faith within the chosen nation who were responsible for the fact there quickly became an even larger group than they represented which could consider itself the church! As was the case when God brought Israel up out of Egypt so it was at the time of The Messiah and so it will continue to be. God made an everlasting covenant to used the chosen nation for His work and God certainly is not going to break it. On so many levels, it's pure evil for people to claim God has, but just like the people of the land stealing Isaac's wells, that's what people are doing when they teach there was some change in God's relationship to/with the chosen nation after Christ's crucifixion!

Bringing that back to our look at the life and actions of Isaac I will point out the contrast between the chosen nation and the forefathers of the chosen nation. In spite of the fact God knew He would have to use the chosen nation as a group even when they failed to listen to Him and/or follow His commandments to any great degree, God knew He could always use them and that's why He formed the nation in the first place. As a group the chosen nation was and is the value God was creating through these forefathers we're studying now. In saying that I can point to the contrast between the chosen nation, the church today, and those who will be part of the first resurrection. (Rev. 20:1-9) God could use a chosen nation that was made of men and in so many ways ran by the will of men because the

chosen nation is just showing humanity how we all react to God. This continues to be helpful to the world today, especially those who desire true faith in God, whether of the nation or outside it. God can use individuals who make up what is seen as the church today but only if they are true individuals striving to have faith. The church as a group is only as valuable as those individuals can make it or a piece of it. At times individuals of faith will have no choice but to leave the group and go it on their own. This means there is a huge difference between how God can use the chosen nation versus how He can use the cumulative group that considers itself the church!

To understand the church simply cannot, through any long-time period, serve the same purpose the chosen nation has been serving for thousands of years, is to see why the church could never replace the chosen nation. What might be even more lost when it comes to the thinking of those who call themselves Christians is that this fact concerning the church also explains why there must be a first Resurrection at the second appearance of Christ. The true church Jesus is coming back for will be without spot or wrinkle which over the last roughly two thousand years what calls itself the church has clearly not been able to achieve. (Eph. 5:24-30) Thus, the first Resurrection will be a significant number of individuals but it will be possible to have the no spot and wrinkle because that group will be made up of just those individuals of true faith collected from all time periods of human history. They will be those individuals of faith we just talked about above. They will be both individuals who were born into the chosen nation as well as individuals who were not part of the chosen nation. They will never face death so they will never need to be replaced by a new generation as time moves forward. Those who stand with The Lamb at the end of days will be a pure group of faith to demonstrate the fact that's all that really matters in the end of our lives and this world's existence. (Rev. 17:14) Here on this earth, The Messiah will need these individuals as a group because such a group could not otherwise be formed allowing The Messiah to rule and reign on this earth for the thousand years Satan is locked away in the bottomless pit and for however long after Satan is released that it takes for Satan to do his work. When Satan finally convinces enough humans to come against Christ's throne in Jerusalem, it will be at that point God puts a final end to all of this we know here.

To sharpen that point a bit, the first Resurrection will take place because as long as God is working within the confines of the way He created the here and now (which He will continue to do until He brings it all to that final end) God can't depend on any specific group of humanity to follow, at the very least, enough of what He commands in order to rule this world and bring peace to it during those last generations of men. This is a point God clearly proved in forming the chosen nation! That is a point that was emphasized at the first appearing of The Messiah. It's what a vast majority of the Word of God is there to show us and if that doesn't convince you, one would have to be blind to not see what calls itself the church has done no better. Yes, Jesus is God and will continue to be God just like He was at His First Coming. The difference at His Second Coming will be that He won't simply offer Himself to the world; He will take what is rightfully His. All that said, Jesus will still be confined to the single form of His glorified body which they saw after His resurrection. (Luke 24:13-48) Still being in the form of a man

while ruling this earth (meaning not like The Holy Ghost is now Who can be everywhere He needs to be all at once), Jesus will need those He brings with Him to be direct extensions of His leadership. This is why they have to be a group of pure faith individuals!

Now, Jesus will likely need an even greater number than those He brings with Him in the first resurrection in order to handle the basic administrative tasks all governments must do. For that purpose He can first use those who live their lives during that time period and who come to walk in faith. This, again, will be no different than all the other time periods we just covered. These will be the giants of their generations, so to speak. From there Jesus will also be able to use those who are willing to at least honestly obey earthly commandments and instructions. This is exactly what the chosen nation swore to do so very long ago and the knowledge of that imperative will ring loudest in their ears. On top of that, Jesus is coming back to set His feet on the Mount of Olives just as His disciples saw Him go. (Acts 1:9-12) It will be into Jerusalem Jesus will triumphantly enter for a second time, but this time Jesus will act with force no man can stop. He will also have with Him an army that is not able to be killed due to their new bodies! This is the kind of miraculous and powerful way the chosen nation wanted Him to come the first time. At His first appearing even some of His disciples thought at some point Jesus would rise up and be such a king for the nation. They had all been taught that was the purpose of The Messiah's coming on many levels and that's still the teaching in a nutshell today. This means a great number of Jews will certainly be very interested in serving Jesus when He comes in the way He will the second time. To them He will be everything they have been taught The Messiah should be!

In spite of that, it serves to keep in mind that Jesus is still coming a lot like He came the first time. He is coming to be first The King of the Jews just as Pilate put on the plaque of His cross to describe Jesus' crime and reason for being on that cross. (John 19:19-22) Aside from the fact Jesus will be in His glorified immortal human form, the second time will only differ in how He uses His power and authority to administer this earth. Many of the chosen nation will willingly follow Him and Jesus will easily be seen as The King of the Jews. From there it will be easy for Jesus to be The King of the World, not so much because the world's population will willingly follow Him but because they will have no choice just as much of the population now has little if any choice in who governs them. In short, the Jews will have the most incentive, not to mention the first shot, at becoming the bulk of humanity that serves Jesus on levels necessary to administer a one world government. He will come unto His own and it will anger many people, not the least of whom will be those proclaiming Christianity, that He does so. (John 1:6-14) This is the entire reason we have seen the chosen nation gathered back to the promised land and at times even driven by a need for survival to return to the promise land in our modern day! That fact alone should show everyone who knows anything about Scripture how ridiculous it is to suggest the chosen nation has been rejected. Such teaching is only a tool of Satan and evil men to blind those attempting to see the truth from being able to lay out these obvious facts we're covering. It is also ironically part of what has served God's purpose in that the persecution of the chosen nation, which so called Christians have freely allowed and even taken part in at times, is driving

What About God's Chosen People?

Part LXX

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

"Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people."

As we continue our look at the history that shows us how the Roman Empire came to be looked at as a Christian empire, we made some significant advances in our last segment. In that part we continued to talk about the fact decentralizing the government actually led Rome to some great victories. They seemed to be handling the barbarians to the north with a more steady hand, and a new rebellion in Egypt was able to be put down quite quickly which led to advances in making Egypt more "Roman" in their governing principles. Probably the most significant victory we looked at was the fact Rome finally made a more solid move against the Persians in the East which led to greater territorial holdings and leverage over the East which Rome had long sought but almost never had. While we looked at all those victories for Rome we also looked at how much Rome was not really Rome anymore. One significant fact was that the city of Rome was no longer considered a true seat of power. The four rulers of the empire now each had their own cities to rule from and while some would say this was more symbolic than significant, it actually speaks volumes to what would come down the road. The barbarians had already become a heavily integrated people into the empire which is part of why Rome did well defending the North. The empire was no longer the dream of centralized power which is what made handling Egypt and the East better. The question mark just keeps getting bigger and bigger as to if Rome was really an empire anymore or just an idea that influenced a lot of the world.

As we ended last time we also talked about how in taking the land they had in the East, Rome had opened a new front to defend in the South. The empire had not cared for a long time to have any significant dealings with the Arabs but now Rome was beginning to encroach on the territory they lived in; even building roads, which in Roman tradition are all about defending and holding territory. This means fortifications and soldiers to man those fortifications. To the Arabs, Rome and more importantly its way of going about things, was no longer some distant northern entity. It was literally standing on their doorstep! Now, one of the most important issues about Rome building roads is something we haven't talked about in awhile and that's the fact roads greatly enabled the spread of the Gospel. In my thinking the fact Rome's roads were a great facilitator of the rapid spread of the Gospel had nothing to do with the timing of God sending The Messiah. That choice was made on the same basis as the decision to send Christ back to the earth will be. It's about how much are people paying attention to and able to come to God, when people so desire, and does God "need" to do something more to increase that ability on this earth for there to be any point in allowing the world to continue to stand. That might seem like an over simplification of the issue, but we learned this was a key point way back near the first of Genesis

with the flood of Noah's day.

This is why Jesus points back to that event as being a sign for those looking for His return, and I point to it often. (Matt. 24:36-39) There are these incredibly important things shown to us right at the first of God's Word that give us just about all we need to know when asking the question, what is God doing and where is this all going? I stress all the time the fact God's plan is about the individual but that's why so much of the Bible appears to be about groups. Before the flood of Noah's day the world at large was just a single people; as in there were no nations. However, one of the key points that led us to the flood was the fact the world split into two groups, one that followed God and one that did not! The breakdown of these two groups into one singular wash of humanity did not hurt the group that did not follow God but was a catastrophe for the group that did. Why? Because more and more those not very mature in their faith had no place to really allow their faith to grow in more of an unobstructed environment. This continued to lessen the number of people who chose and lived in true faith until only Noah found grace in the eyes of The Lord. (Gen. 6:5-8) This is why I put the word "need" in the sentence above in quotes. In the time period before the flood (and this is hard to put properly since English is such a weak language) God did not act to change things. Between the point God drives man from the Tree of Life and the flood, there are no major interactions of God among humanity as a whole. Sure, there was the incident of Cain killing his brother, and as important to the student of the Bible as that story is, it was not about an action on God's part that interrupted the way humanity was choosing to go about its existence.

Driving man from the Tree of Life was a major interaction by God that influenced humanity as a whole. Sending a flood to wipe out all humans who were not on the ark God told Noah to build in preparation of the event was a major interaction by God that influenced humanity. These are the real keys to understanding what God is doing and what drives His actions. God could have done something great between the removal of humanity from the Tree of Life and the flood but He did not. He let events among men unfold until it finally came to a point that if God had waited any longer to act there would have been nothing left to save! The last man who served God would have died and then who would there have been for God to give instructions to in order to build something such as the ark? Maybe one of his sons would have listened to God, but these ideas are why I also stress all the time the fact we are told Noah, not his family, but Noah as an individual is the only one said to have found grace in the eyes of The Lord! At that point in time God had two choices; He could either allow the last person who listened to Him to pass from this earth and be left with a world that had to be brought to an end or He could act using that one man and give humanity a chance to live on. In spite of what any individual human in our tiny limited view of it all might think God should or should not have done, God chose to act. He didn't

have to but if He wanted to save anything of value among humanity He needed to!

You'll note there I specify "humanity" and not "this world" or "this creation." We do often use more general terms such as world and creation but it's important we keep in mind God's actions were about saving the last remaining value in humanity specifically. This is not to say man is not what God created all this in order to bring about. I'm in no way arguing man is not the absolute top of this creation. The fact man is exactly that is why we see the flood happen and the ark be built in time to save the last eight people on the earth willing to board it! However, after the flood a large part of God's determination that He wouldn't keep destroying the earth "...for man's sake..." was that all the life God created on this planet means something to Him. (Gen. 8:20-22) Understanding that in its fullest is something impossible for our minds to do but grasping even the finite way we can, shows us both why God wouldn't keep letting humanity come to that drastic a state before acting while also showing us another piece of the puzzle of why God will completely end this world when He does! It is in this way we can view and interpret prophecies like Daniel and Revelation properly. I wish I could drill this point home a bit better than I can here because this is what I talk about when I say, understanding Scripture doesn't really come from knowing a handful of verses; it comes from knowing the entire Bible. The entirety is how we formulate the right thoughts about what's really going on and then look up from the specific verse(s) we are reading and know we're right or wrong in how we see them!

This in no way is meant to diminish the work of The Holy Ghost in showing us the truth, but one of the things that is both wonderful and terrifying about our freewill nature is that it matters not if we receive the truth from our own thinking or The Holy Ghost directly, we will seek a deeper understanding or proof it's true before we will really integrate it into our personal doctrine! If we walk close enough to God that we are convinced beyond the shadow of a doubt we are hearing God's voice tell us things, that becomes the evidence we need. This is why faith is and has to be the only path to salvation; the only way we can show ourselves to be part of the value among humanity God is willing to save in the end. You see, in that case it's still not the words themselves that convince us, it's our faith! It's something we have worked to increase and maintain that is the substance of what we hope for and the evidence of what we have not yet seen! (Heb. 11:1) You can try to fake it but without faith unwavering in the conviction we have heard something directly from God, we will seek further proof it's true in other ways. This is how people falter. When the church or those around us who are suppose to be believers don't agree with where God has led us we will often cast it aside. If there's something we desire to incorporate into our personal doctrine we will often do so without concern for if it's true or not, especially if others agree! Until your faith is like Abraham, and probably more like Job and Enoch, the Word of God is where most of the evidence is able to be seen for those who desire to have the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth. The question is, do we look there or to some organization of men to find our "truth."

This is why true believers study God's Word first and foremost to know It. There's that weakness of the English language. Many people's mind will read that and go right to

where most people go when they are told as believers they should "know" the Bible. People very new to the Word of God and/or who have heard stories from It all along the way (even people who have read It from cover to cover) often seek to understand the Bible long before they know It. I'm not saying you have to have every verse or every story memorized, but a subject that has been coming up a lot recently is how few people who call themselves Christians could give you a rundown of the events of the Bible in at least a rough chronological order. This is what we're talking about so often without directly mentioning it! People falter because they read and then immediately seek teachers and preachers to explain the Bible to them. The work of trying to get the basis of the words in their mind is what drives this impulse. This is what creates the kind of churches we have and the teachers/preachers who find the highest success rate among people. False teachers don't exist because they want to be false teachers. Whether they would have loved the truth or not in the beginning, many false teachers become what they are because they will find success by doing so. In short, they exist because people want them! People have itchy ears to hear something that makes them feel good about their lives. (II Tim. 4:1-4) They seek it out almost at any cost. Why do you think these so called mega ministries are so, well - mega?

We have built an entire system that is counter to what true believers need. When we know the Bible for ourselves the understanding becomes more and more obvious. Not just because The Holy Ghost is helping us but because enough of the puzzle pieces begin to come together that mostly on our own we know a lot more of what the picture looks like. Again, we will always need The Holy Ghost but the point of having Him is not to stagnate us like an overly dependent child who never grows up, the point is to grow and learn to take our first steps and from there we learn to walk, then run, jump, etc. The Holy Ghost can always take us higher, and this is what Enoch found out when his faith became so great God just took him from the limitations this sinful world put on him. (Gen. 5:24, Heb. 11:5-6) That said, how incredible must Enoch's faith have been to walk with God so closely that God would do such a thing? We do desire to grow but we can't jump over the beginning steps and make genuine progress. We can't say, I don't want to bother learning to walk because I want to run! However, that's a lot of what the "Christian" system that's been built is trying to do and the motivation for doing it is that true churches are likely very small and a false church can grow beyond limits. If you're following the crowd because it's a crowd you're almost always headed in the wrong direction, but it does make individuals feel good in the short term.

So we come back to the point at hand. If we know the Bible we know God made the determination not to ever again use the kind of destructive force He used at the time of Noah because doing so only benefited humanity while devastating the rest of creation. Man is worth a lot but he's not worth putting all life on this planet through that kind of pain over and over. Thus, we can correctly see and interpret God intervening in different ways and often long before it was truly as it had come to in the days of Noah. Yes, Jesus said that's what we're looking for in knowing His coming is soon, but I don't know if we can truly imagine how horrible a time that really was. As bad as things are now many believers are wondering why God waits; why He hasn't returned in physical form already; why The Holy Ghost

now lets this all go on without God The Father taking Him out of the way so Jesus can return. (II Thes. 2:1-11) Yet, here we are year after year! Are we close? We are certainly closer than we were several years ago when we thought we were close. That might sound stupid in some ways to say but that's the point; we must hold on because we see it heading in the direction that so obviously could bring us to exactly the days of Noah if God allows it to continue long enough. This view tells us we can't be like the servant who said, my master hasn't come yet so I must have time to do bad things and get away with it before he does. (Matt. 24:42-51) We watch it get worse and worse and we hold on because we almost basically cannot imagine the breaking point that will cause The Father to send Jesus back, but it's headed right at us with more force each passing year!

If we know what the Bible tells us (not just man's interpretation of It) we can look at stories like the flood and apply its truths to how we see things like the trumpets, bowls, and seals in Revelation. We can see the destruction of the planet by man is part of what causes God to act. He cares about humanity but He also cares about all of creation, and that's a key point. Now, the very end won't come when Jesus returns but some time after the thousand years of Satan being locked in the bottomless pit. When that end comes God won't destroy the world with a flood, He will take this entire creation out of existence! (Rev. 21:1) By that point man will have shown if God does not end it all, man will. Unless God takes man's free will, which He will not do, man will take it that far. Man is showing us a level of sin even now that could destroy us all. Not just humanity but all life as we know it. What use is there for any of this to exist after that? The answer is, none because evolution is a theory not a fact. New life can't come out of non-life. So God is proving, one step at a time, where sin will take us ultimately but allowing man to take it that far before God puts it all to a merciful end, God will not do. Now there's some doom and gloom, but that's what we're talking about in this segment. God using what He can among men to accomplish what needs to be accomplished so those who still seek faith can find it. Rome was not a good thing even in the idea it built roads across much of the world which accelerated the Gospel going out among all men. However, God would use Rome's roads. Roads man built to get back the Tower of Babel, God would use to continue to hamper man's ability to get back to something that will only harm us all. This is God's mercy!

Long before there were such roads and the world was more shall we say, wild, God called a man named Abraham out of his home to be the forefather of a chosen nation through whom God could continually work. Why did He do this? In part because one day Rome would build roads. When the chosen nation as a cohesive group was not following the Law to accomplish the job God wanted them to accomplish, God revived their work by coming down in the form of a man. Why? In part because Rome had and would build roads. God is ahead of us not behind us. He knows what we will do with our striving to get back to the Tower of Babel, and before it can destroy us He acts. We see the high points of God's interactions like the flood, the confounding of our language, the establishment of the chosen nation, and the coming of The Messiah, but there is a depth to God's interactions with us and for us we don't see that is all running on the same principle and decision making all those tip of the iceberg moments have allowed us to see. Man

continues to insist on a certain direction and God has slowed man's progress because He loved us before we loved Him. (I John 4:19) When it feels like God isn't doing enough, remember He's doing more than you know and it's all about saving as many of us as He can. It's not His will we perish but come to the faith that makes us part of this creation that's worth saving. We can't earn our salvation but we do have to show we want it and are interested in the reason/purpose God offers it. This was the point of using the roads of Rome to spread the Gospel. To tell people the good news that in a world where things didn't seem to be going so well for those people who chose to truly live for God, God was still at work; God still cared and would continue to care all the way to the end!

In all the study we do of the physical events that have unfolded among men there is this parallel of events God is working among humanity and the groups we choose to form; all so the individuals that make up those groups will have a chance at salvation. This is what I was saying about knowing the Bible. Many of Its stories seem like just events of the past, but the reason they happened the way they happened are the same reasons things happen today. The fact man turned from God to the point only Noah found grace in the eyes of The Lord is why God sent the flood. The fact God sent the flood is why humans built a tower in the hopes they could keep God from ever acting against them in such a great way again. The fact man built a tower is why God confounded our language. The fact God confounded our language is why men went out to build nations with their eyes on empires they hoped would hold the power they wanted at the tower. The fact men went out to build nations is why God began building a nation of His own. God building a nation of His own made that nation a lightning rod so to speak, which is to say men identified it as the next interaction of God among men and sinful men set their eyes on destroying it. The struggles and trials the nation would face became burdensome for the same reason the tower, nations, and empires are not good for the individual. People as individuals won't in mass listen to and follow God even if they are part of a nation formed specifically by God.

All these things show us the truth we keep fighting for is not a truth, it's a lie. The fact men even in God's nation wouldn't do as they needed to is why God Himself came down in the form of a man to offer Himself as the solution we couldn't find on our own. The fact God came down in the form of a man made men come up with a plan to dispose of God. The fact man killed The Messiah is why God was able to show us that even if evil kills us - kills even Him in the flesh - He has a plan to handle that. That good news would go out into all the world, and that would cause man to counter that good news by building a false narrative about how to take advantage of that news. A narrative that would lead us away from faith not to it. For that narrative to have the power man wanted it to have it had to include a continual attack on God's chosen nation, which it does and we see it clearly today. The more God uses the actions of men to make His chosen nation more prevalent the more heated the attacks become. There is even a flanking attack going on in our world today that looks like a, if you can't beat them join them, scenario, and this is done in an attempt to join the chosen nation with the beast that looks like a lamb but speaks with the voice of a dragon. (Rev. 13:11) Even then the narrative comes with a false interpretation of Bible prophecy and a future story about

how the chosen nation is so wrong it will greatly fall to an anti-christ Christians are taught be weary of. However, God didn't tell believers to wait and watch for an anti-christ. He told us to watch for all these things humans are doing to fool as many people as possible into believing the point of our human existence isn't exactly the same as it has been from day one!

All of this will cause God to one day come in human form for the second time, but true believers can see why this second time He will not come offering Himself as the solution, He will forcefully be the solution to man's problems whether he likes it or not. God has worked with us and in all the ways man keeps score, God has earned this right. The strong rule over the weak. That's the way we've built this world to run, and up until Jesus' Second Coming the men who desire to make such rules benefit from them. This is why they will be very upset when Jesus returns and this time uses the same power He could have used the first (but didn't) to overpower all of man's forces and become not just The King of the chosen nation but The King of the entire earth! When Satan is released from the bottomless pit he will go out to convince the world there is a way to, once again, counter this move on God's part. As stupid as that sounds, men have been believing since the Tower of Babel there must be some way to accomplish keeping God out of this world. As I've said before, the seeds of false belief Satan will play on are already being taught to what thinks of itself as the church even now! All of this cries loudly to us to know more about what's really going on and to stop following the crowd. If there's one point so obvious in the Word of God that it should be unmissable, it's that the crowd rarely if ever has been headed in the right direction. This is why the Bible uses the term repent so much. Turn away from the crowd, the direction your headed, and start walking that path that leads to everlasting life!

A lot of the reason to study the history we attempt to cover in this study is to show just how much is no longer in front of us when it comes to what we consider prophecy in the Bible. So much of it is behind us now. It's come and gone to such a degree a lot of it is what we would call ancient history. So who cares about the Roman Empire and what it did? Why did God give us prophecy to tell us about it before it came about and how could that possibly have any relevance to now, much less what is in front of us still? All these questions are basically answered by saying, the more things change the more they stay the same. This is why I emphasize how much the same dynamics for why Jesus came the first time and will come again are what we see at the time of Noah. As the preacher of Ecclesiastes said, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun." Ecclesiastes 1:9 We think we live in such a different world, and in many ways we do, but those ways are superficial. As Daniel was told, knowledge has increased. (Dan. 12:4) That was speaking of the more widespread knowledge we have today. Archaeology gives us clues as to how many people understood certain things in the past, but the knowledge wasn't widely known and easily lost. Today we spread and preserve a lot of knowledge longer, and by doing so generations of humans have been able to build on such knowledge in ways that haven't been possible since God chocked down our longevity from being

hundreds of years.

When people lived hundreds of years there was no need to preserve knowledge. The people with it were still alive! God greatly slowed us down by taking that ability from us at the time of the flood, and why? Because we are so stuck on using our knowledge to continue building the same old worn-out end goal we've had since the tower. Through our inventions we have found ways to gain back some of what we had. We don't live hundreds of years but we pass on to new generations the knowledge we now hold. This really should demonstrate to us how futile our attempts to live without God are, but instead we see it as a way to further our deepest desires. This is what God is looking at. Sure our knowledge has increased or our ability to pass on knowledge that can be built upon by each generation, yet there is still nothing new under the sun. All our attempts to show God we can build a utopia without Him have failed. This is why Jesus talked about wars and rumors of wars. (Matt. 24:3-6) We have all this ability we didn't, at least widely, have in the past through the use of machines and technology of all sorts, but all we can think about is how to use it to further our human "empire." Just like the Roman roads, God has used what He desires of it to further the truth, but in studying the past we see how much our technology is not our savior because we use it for nothing truly valuable.

Pulling a lot of what we've been talking about together, it's through the use of computers, printing machines, and an organized postal service that teaching from a ministry like this one goes out to any high number of people. In the past, all I could have done is slowly pen a few words in a book and hope in time accurate copies might be made to reach a few. There are all kinds of ways man's inventions can benefit the Kingdom of God, but just like the Roman roads, in all the ways that's true man builds the things he builds to be without God and it gets far more use in those ways than it does the good. To put that more in place with how and what I intended to get into this segment, we will continue to see how much nothing has really changed by discussing the direct positive consequence to a specific Christian community Rome's victory over Persia had and the counter of how that led to even greater persecution of the church by the empire! There is a constant battle going on between what man wants and what God insists remains in this world. It is really that which we study in all this, but the reason we study it is to understand how much it's all detached from the individual's desires. We can get caught up in the grand struggle, but the reason God is involved in it at all is to give you, yes you, the chance to walk in faith with Him. God was working for the generations before us and He has shown us a glimpse of how He will be working for the generations yet to come, but none of it is to save this sinful world. Maintaining this world is man's ambition. All God wants from it is a relationship with you that can last for eternity!

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

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

FBS continued from pg. 4

the Jews home and strengthening their resolve not to be vulnerable to outside forces ever again. These facts are setting them apart from the world at large on levels they never have been before and it's fascinating to watch it unfold!

Man will just never learn you can't resist what God has said will be. In so many cases through the Bible we see these same dynamics at work. People who tried to stand in the way of God's plan have often done as much or more to further it than those who have served God. It's a sad fact but very true. However, in it all we see the difference between how God can use a group which very often is not on any level sold out to serving Him versus individuals who are! When we look at how God could use His chosen nation versus the men who were the nation's forefathers, we see the same contrast. God could use the nation as a group to accomplish His intent among the larger population of the world. This God has done and will continue to do. However, when it came to these beginning men we call forefathers, they had to be individuals sold out to the will of God in order for the plan to come about! That's what we see in Abraham and in some aspects even more so in Isaac which as we have touched on, is part of why his life was so quiet in many ways. It's why we see God specifically use Jacob but Esau was rejected in spite of likely having far fewer flaws than the average member of the chosen nation coming out of Egypt years later. God can certainly use a life but in what way He can use it is the question. As individuals we want to strive to be the ones He can use because we are part of those sold out to Him. We grow to become that and continue to be that through our faith, and all this is why we can only be saved by grace through faith. (Eph. 2:8-10) It's the entire point of our existence not just to begin with; not just in the here and now but through eternity!

All we have been talking about is why I always find myself stressing the point we can't just be a part of the herd and expect to make it to the place Jesus prepared for those whose names are written in the Book of Life. (John 14:1-3, Rev. 3:5) There almost has always been specific groups who claimed to be serving God but what a lot of those groups represent is not pure faith. It's often more along the lines of just not being the people who refuse to accept the fact God is our Creator, but that's not good enough. Anyone with even a little knowledge of the Word of God should be able to understand that just not rejecting God isn't enough to be part of those whom God will take on into eternal life. However, that fact is why what calls itself the church wants to ease people's thoughts about being saved through a formulation that does not emphasize the need for faith. It's all pretty ridiculous when you realize that if you want your name written in the Book of Life you shouldn't even worry about what level of faith you need to accomplish that goal. Instead we should be striving to grow our faith for the sake of having more faith, which is a closer walk with God. In that way it's not about earning salvation in any way. Salvation is just something that comes to those who desire God and His ways enough to make it the point of their lives. When we teach a formulation we are teaching something that is meant to hide that truth; something easy to obtain and which soothes the mind of individuals who may or may not have originally been desiring true faith. The fact it works on many who otherwise might have strove for true faith is what makes it so very dangerous!

Getting back to Isaac's life more specifically, we truly ended last time talking about the fact Isaac headed to Beer-sheba in order to speak to God. This is a mark of a man with true faith. He would walk with God daily but he would also seek out that prayer closet of sorts to spend more specific time with God. The fact he went to Beer-sheba, and very likely to the grove his father had planted there, caused us to talk some about how man looks at worshipping God and the ways that has influenced the actions of men who chose to worship false gods. This is a fascinating subject that I have spent time on before and we talked about to some degree last time. We spend time on this subject because of the value we find in seeing this truth. You'd think the worship of God would be miles apart from man's worship of false gods, but in truth there is a very fine line between the two. The short-hand truth is that men worship false gods because of the compulsion every human has to know The One True God Who created us. If it were not for that compulsion men would not be worshipping so many false gods and maybe not any of actual idol form. Thus, if we flip this understanding around we see man's compulsion to have religion proves the point every last human is born knowing God which is to say, having a measure of faith great enough to start their walk in faith. (Rom. 12:3) Even evolution is a religion of sorts, and we see that in the fact it tries the best it can to cover the truth we all know God by claiming there is an alternative to how we and the universe we know exists in the first place. This gives us a small hint of the truth that if man simply did not know there was a God Who created it all it wouldn't necessarily mean there would be no false religion, but it would not look like it has and does!

If man didn't know there was a God Who created us, man would never have attempted to worship that God. We might attempt to continually formulate some hypothesis for how it all came to be, but those who came up with such hypothesis wouldn't be so religiously dogmatic about claiming it "proves there is no God or gods." False religion as we know it simply would have no reason to exist. I know some would disagree but that's because most people can only think about what is, not what might have been if circumstances were different. If people weren't born knowing God they wouldn't be compelled to specifically design graven images to call gods and there would be no religions formulated around such gods. From the very start man's "worship" of things and the following of "religion" would be more like we see in our modern day in those people who claim to be atheists and "scientific minded." If by God's design man was actually born without knowing God there would literally be people who did not believe God existed for very legitimate reasons. This is another one of those things that causes me to find it so odd that the church gets away with teaching what it does. That whole idea that a sinner's prayer, or the like, is the first prayer God hears you pray should be called out by anyone who knows even a little about the Bible for themselves. The entire idea that God is in any way not paying attention to you until you pay attention to Him is preposterous and about as anti-Biblical as you can get. It's also anti the belief that we are saved by grace which is about the only part of what Paul said in Ephesians that the church likes to latch onto!

If God's grace was not offering the faith we couldn't have obtained without His willingness, we'd all be lost for eternity. So yes, we are saved by grace but if it didn't require us to take up the faith God's grace is offering, there is just a whole

lot of the Bible that is nothing but useless! God has shown us He is constantly watching all of us and He's trying to speak to us from conception forward. Clearly we are all born knowing God or this would be a very different world with a very different history. As I started saying, there would be legitimately "atheists"; people who actually don't think there was/is a God because they don't feel any evidence there is! In truth, the topic wouldn't even come up that much, if at all. The vast majority of the population simply wouldn't think about there being a God. It would only come up when speaking to the very, very few people who did by some miracle think there might be a God and reached out into the darkness hoping God would respond to them. Sometimes I think this is what the church believes they represent, but I digress. To those who didn't know anything about God, such people would seem very odd; in many cases, truly insane! To believe in something there is no evidence of existing is pretty hard to do when a person is in their right mind. Thus, humans in mass would never have defined much of anything as a god in any way much less reached out to God.

The reason people try to deny God isn't so they can obey some other religious idea. It's to sooth the fact they feel God's tug at their heart and spirit and what they want instead is to have what their flesh likes and enjoys. If that pull of God wasn't there people would still worship the things they desired even when chasing after such things caused pain and hardship. This would in many ways seem to be a religion of sorts, but since everyone has very differing tastes and degrees to which they like and dislike things, there would be no real reason for groups of any size to form with the purpose of worshipping a specific thing. Without that compulsion within us to worship and know our Creator there would be no reason for vast religions across the globe to form that helped people believe they're totally fine because they worship something! This is the point of there being such a fine line between the worship of God and the worship of false gods. Most everything about how man sets up religions is based on, or at the very least effected by, man's compulsion to worship God. Thus, many of their practices literally started by being the worship of The One True God, then got adopted by men wanting to worship false gods. Since there are far more people worshipping the creation rather than the Creator, it was easy for many practices to become known as common pagan ways to worship. (Rom. 1:25) This intermixing and confusion which Satan works hard to create is why God formed the chosen nation and gave them a Law to follow which specified a place and way to worship God in an official way. I say "official" because we should all be walking in faith instead of following a religion but men love official ceremony so God gave the chosen nation specific practices.

The difficulty in maintaining such a system is something we've talked about many times and will again. However, to stress what we touched on at the end of the last segment, Isaac lived long before the Law. He was so far back in the timeline this mixing and mingling of worship practices and religion was still in the process of coming to be the full problem it would become in the lives of humanity. This is why Abraham planted a grove in Beer-sheba as a place to worship God and Isaac goes back to this place. There God did, in fact, meet with

them and as we talked about last time, this is likely the reason Isaac went to Beer-sheba at all. It was a place where Abraham had specifically heard from God and Isaac would go there with the intent of spending some very specific time with God. This is the nature of men and why they seek specific spots. No matter how many places they've heard God's voice or know God was at work, men pick out places they believe are special for that purpose and tend to stick with them. This is the compulsion to return to the Garden of Eden which is yet another subject we've talked about at times. This is why God gave the chosen nation a specified place they could carry with them on their travels (the Tabernacle) and promised to permanently put among them once they settled on the promised land (the Temple).

If there was a true problem of having such a place, God wouldn't have given us the Garden of Eden in the first place. It also would not have meant so much to us that God drove us out of that garden to specifically keep us from the Tree of Life! (Gen. 3:22-24) The Tree of Life we have lost in the here and now because the here and now is no place to live indefinitely long life spans much less for eternity. The garden itself is a bit of a different story. God wants to meet directly with us everywhere at all times but our sin prevents just everywhere from being a place God can be so directly and powerfully with us and thus, felt by us. This is why having a place of worship is a little like the concept behind fasting. The idea is not to say we can't talk to God anywhere we are but the focus of leaving behind the work of the everyday life to separate one's self for a time of communion with God is very special. This is the reason groups of Christians began building physical structures we call churches to be places of "worship." However, even in this we see the fine line between pagan worship and worship of The One True God. This might be something we legitimately desire and which God allows and utilizes among men, but the burning question many people who call themselves Christians don't even bother to ask is, how much of our own thinking can go into these places and they still be places that don't inhibit God's presence from being there due to our sin? This is a powerful thought and one, Lord willing, we can pick up on next time, but we'll end by turning back to Abraham and Isaac because this is why places of worship started out being what Abraham did at Beer-sheba. The thought was more pure and not corrupted by the thoughts of how men worship nature but The God Who caused nature to be and do what it does. Thus, Abraham's ideas of an ideal place to meet with and worship God caused him to plant a grove. Groves take a long time to grow so he was not just planting this grove for himself. He was planting it for his son and his son's sons, etc. The point was to create something long lasting, but instead of showing the works of men at every turn a grove was grown by the power God infused in nature. A grove was something more natural. A place not contaminated with any more of our sinful thinking than it had to be!

Until next time, Shalom!

The Bible As A Book continued from pg. 2

an example of the problems we face as we deal with the way humans think. So many people look at chapter separations as having some significance to the actual words, whether consciously or unconsciously thinking about it. People do this even with verses. They are told to look at a certain verse or set of verses and that's what they read, but do you know what's around the verse(s)? Are you aware of the context that particular verse(s) comes within? These are important details in building your faith and with it the personal doctrine one holds with conviction!

It's why we need to know the Bible and know it well without concern for things like chapters and verses. Then when we are told to look at a particular verse or set of verses, the chapter and verse references can get us there but we already have a grasp on the context and events around that verse or verses. This relates directly to us talking about the Book of Samuel being split into more than one book. It's important to the context and events that we understand the difference between why this kind of thing is something we see in the New Testament as well as the Old Testament. It's an important detail that we understand the New Testament has this for the reasons we covered in our last segment which has to do with literal separate letters or what we call Epistles being written at different times. Thus, in those cases we are reading a complete "book" when we read something such as I Corinthians versus II Corinthians. However, that is not the case when we read a book such as the one we are going into now, which is I Samuel. It's only within the Christian arrangement that the Book of Samuel gets split into two books. We want to cover the reason(s) why this happened and grasp it, but the answer to why is not nearly as important as the simple knowing it's true; I Samuel and II Samuel are one cohesive writing!

One of the most basic reasons this is important has to do with the chronology question we try to answer when talking about each book. When we talked about the Book of Ruth, one of the things pointed out right off was the fact Ruth is where we depart the books of the Bible being in chronological order. In much the same way the Book of Job actually belongs within the chronology covered in Genesis, the Book of Ruth is within the Book of Judges. Lord willing we'll get there one day but understanding how what I said about Job is true takes some theological eyes, and I'll admit not everyone agrees it's true. I tend to blame that last fact on the truth people want to think someone like Job couldn't have existed until at least after the Law of Moses was given. However, the reason people make such arguments is because of something we talk about all the time, people don't actually understand what real faith is. Job existed long before the Law of Moses was given for the same reason a man like Abraham existed; the same reason Isaac existed and Jacob after him. Abraham received the promise that would lead to the chosen nation's existence and the giving of the Law without having the Law because he had pure faith! This is exactly what Paul was pointing out in Romans chapter 4. God didn't change anything about the dynamics of faith in giving the Law, He simply assured the basic understandings necessary to find faith would continue to be available and that availability would have more literal viability in this world.

This was necessary for reasons we've also covered often, and that's the fact the world grows more sinful all the time because men become more carnal minded all the time. This has

required the truth to become more physically and tangibly available than it used to be, and that was accomplished first through the giving of the Law and then the coming of The Messiah. It will take another very large leap in being physically and tangibly available when The Messiah returns! These are the truths knowing the Bible for one's self brings into focus quite clearly, and so we study this Bible we all need so desperately in order to achieve what men like Job and Abraham achieved without It. We also study It in order to see how it's all came to where we are now. Not being clear on simple facts such as these is why I say, not enough people know the Bible or understand It even on a basic level. The really sad part of all this is the fact it's not as hard as most people think it is. When I bring up an issue such as what we're talking about now concerning the Book of Samuel, and do it alongside saying what I've gotten into about needing to know the Bible, people might get a little scared feeling it's all so very complicated. It feels like there is so much to know, an individual who isn't dedicated to lifelong study, such as people believe ministers are or should be, just can't get enough of the facts to achieve the goal! This would seem to strengthen the argument the church should just be a place that teaches people what the Bible means instead of encouraging and growing people's actual knowledge of the words for themselves.

I'll be the first to admit that thought has played very well into the hands of what calls itself the church. Between the fact most people are just looking for an easy ride and the fact those who aren't can feel overwhelmed pretty easily when being taught the truth, the church can appear to be right. The problem is, if you ever achieve the higher understanding every Christian should be striving for in the Bible Itself and then learn some of the church's history, one can see what a problem this has caused. Sure there has been and is no shortage of people who have went off the rails, so to speak, by reading the Bible for themselves; coming up with wild theologies that are troublesome. However, the flip side of this problem is that there is no shortage of bad doctrine within the "church" in spite of most of the doctrine being developed under the circumstances of people not even having the Bible to read for themselves. What's even more troubling is the fact so much of the wrong doctrine was inserted on purpose for the sake of making the religion more appealing to and accepted by the masses! Thus, what the argument really comes down to is, what's best for the individual? The clear answer to that according to the Bible is that it's much better for individuals to know the Bible for themselves. We all have to make our own choices as to what we believe and how to go about our lives. As much as government attempts to sway and control people's lives, people being individuals is still the biggest part of why such actions don't have the success the dreamers want it to have!

When it comes to your faith, that is certainly not something people can have dictated to them by an organization of men. However, a religion can make people believe they have faith by giving them a set of guidelines and ceremonies to follow, but in no case is faith anything but personal. This fact alone is why the right answer to our question is, individuals need to know the Bible for themselves, but as daunting as that might seem at times, it's as easy as simply starting at the beginning which is always a very good place to start. Don't be daunted by what seems to be hard language to understand and, of course, I'm speaking to English speaking people who read the King James Version. It at least has a depth to it the more watered down

pedestrian attempts at translation don't have. In time you will easily get the hang of how the older English is phrased and begin to see truths some things that call themselves translations of the Bible into English have intentionally left out to make it "easier to understand." Probably the best advice I can give on this subject is to read the Bible without trying to fit it into your already established doctrine box. Do exactly what kept the early versions of the religion that calls itself Christian from wanting people to read for themselves. Let the words speak to you without trying to make them what you already believe. It's a process yes, but you don't have to understand all the nuances and details like I and II Samuel are actual one book to get what leads to that fact having more value to it in the end.

You don't even have to have the chronology of the Bible down before you start to make really big strides in understanding! This is why that most basic fact about the Torah (first five books of the Bible) being the core of the Bible is something I point to often. Most of the basics are all right there in Genesis and made quite clear by the time you get through Deuteronomy. It becomes clear that what man has chosen has set us on a path which has required God in His mercy to act in the way He has. We can see the direction He wanted us to go from day one and that explains why the rest happened the way it did. It also explains why what is still to come is coming. If all you do is get a good grip on the Torah you'll have a good understanding of what the Bible is trying to show us along with a fair grip on chronology. From there a lot of the books that are left in the Old Testament are chronological or obvious they aren't. The reason they become obvious is twofold. They either give you direct facts, like the Book of Ruth which tells you the general time period they took place in, or the story they tell just has to be within a certain window of time for their words to make sense. Even that seems like a lot to discern, but not with some time. The reason most people don't think it's true is because they've never put the work in for themselves to know the basic story line. That's the real key, be willing to put in the work without allowing any overwhelming feelings to cause you to give up. If you do that you'll be amazed how many things will open up to you. In the case of believers who have been in the established Christian religion, you'll be amazed how many things you currently believe you'll find yourself looking at and wondering why you ever believed that way.

You can't be afraid to step out in what feels like it's all by yourself in attempting to understand. This is true because you're not stepping out all by yourself. The Holy Ghost is there waiting for you to stop listening to men and start listening to Him! That is your main concern. Those who go off into wild theologies that supposedly scare the church will happen if people reading the Bible for themselves are actually guilty of not listening to anyone. Sure they may not be listening to what calls itself the church but they also aren't listening to The Holy Ghost, and that's the real problem. This is the only thing to be afraid of, but if you want God to guide you He will. After saying that I'll just point out again, don't believe any formula can accomplish even this. The only way it's hard is in the fact, listening to The Holy Ghost is something you'll have to force yourself to do. Most people feel like they haven't heard from God because they simply aren't willing to heed what they've heard. There is no way for

words to express this with enough emphasis. I have encouraged people over the years to do just what I'm encouraging in this writing and I've seen many people decide it was a bad idea because what God tells them is uncomfortable at times. At other times it's just plain lonely because in this world of sin it will make you feel you're all alone, but that's why I talk about Noah so often and even Job. Many times, especially when others are around telling you what to believe, believing the truth can seem like it's you against the world. However, that's why we remember the words of John, "...greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." I John 4:4

When I get off the main subject and begin to teach such things, I often feel like I'm telling those who read what I write that they should prepare for studies such as these to become unavailable. That is not my intent, but you should know, it is my intent to help people go it on their own because we never know what resources will vanish at any time. The entire point of doing these studies is not just to give you all you need to know to get it "right" but to help you begin thinking for yourself, studying for yourself, and understanding for yourself. Some days I feel I've done that well and often I can only hope in some way I have, but it's always the point. What I'm telling you in this segment isn't just a truth of why I do what I do, it's the core truth as to why I and those in this ministry do what we do! As we have already covered pretty well, it's you as an individual who has to take hold of real faith, it can't be handed to you, you have to live it, walk it. A lot of what I say and try to explain won't make any sense at a level that really has value to your faith if you don't seek to understand it because you know you need to understand it and not just believe it because it's what you were taught. That's the basis of faith and why I stress faith is not blind belief, it's what causes you not to be blind! Faith isn't believing in God in spite of there being no evidence He exists. Faith is the evidence He's been waiting for you all along. Faith is what causes you to look at the Bible and understand it along with understanding more and more of why God gave it to us. Faith is the literal meaning of life, and only faith can bring meaning to this existence!

So where have we made it in our introduction to the Book of I Samuel? Probably further than most think considering how sidetracked this segment and the one before it seems to have been. It's easy to tell you I Samuel and II Samuel are one book in the Hebrew Bible and two only in the standard Christian arrangement, but what we are really looking at when we get into the conversation as to why that's true is a church that has not stayed as close to its Hebrew roots as it should have. The reason for Christians splitting the book into two books is something, Lord willing, we will still look directly at and those reasons might seem very legitimate. However, in all the ways that might be true, the reason(s) all come down to the fact sinful men have been attempting to keep individuals from the truth all along the way. From arguments about the chosen nation being rejected so such men could take control of doctrine, to forcing true believers to risk their lives in order to find what they needed to read the Scriptures for themselves, there is a reason for it all but it never had to be this convoluted, and that's why you should never be daunted by how much of this information there is to learn!

Let's stay in God's Word!