

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

Sunday 1/22/2006

SEC: The Bible as a Multi-Stranded Cable

The Bible says God's ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are not our thoughts. The problem we face as human beings is, how do I, as a mortal man who, on top of all of that, is a sinner, with every part of my being and my fiber against what God is, how do I in that state really find God and understand the Bible and unwind that Bible? Now, I know that there are all kinds of theological answers out there, but let me tell you how this thing works. Maybe you will better understand why I teach the way that I teach and why I spend the time doing the things with the Bible the way that I do.

The Bible, in its simplest form, is about 30 very complicated themes running through it. I will tell you what the Bible is like. If you ever went across the San Francisco Bridge or the Brooklyn Bridge or any great spanned bridge that spans a great body of water, you are going to find that what holds those bridges up are those steel cables. When you look at those steel cables, you see that cable as one gigantic cable, and they are huge. But upon closer inspection, you know what you find? You find that each one of those huge cables is made up of a cable about that big, and they are wound together very tightly. They appear to be one cable from a distance, but when you examine it from a close examination, you find out that it is probably 50, 60, maybe 100 individual cables that are wound together in a tight circular pattern that bonds the strength.

What you have there is one cable that is really many, many, many cables. The strength of that cable is the many cables being bonded into the one. That is the way the Bible is. The Bible is 20 or 30 absolute concrete themes that God is putting out through the Bible. God has a number of issues that He is defining in the Word of God. These issues, when you look at them from a distance, look just like that cable. It absolutely looks like it is huge, but when you start to look at it in close proximity, the way we do, my job helping you understand the Bible is simply unwinding that great huge cable one little cable at a time.

If you define each one of those 20 or 30 concepts that God is portraying through the Bible, and you separate every one of those and define those as far as what God is doing throughout the Bible, you learn the Bible. Then it is a matter of just putting it all back together, realizing that each one is separate but also each one is connected. What you have then is an understanding of the Bible that looks complex, but when you break it down one strand at a time or one theme at a time, you come away with an understanding of what God is doing.

God wrote a very complicated book because God is trying to convey a very complicated message, complicated by the very fact that it is God, who is perfect and holy, trying to convey it to us, who are imperfect and sinners. So God took it and gave a way that you and I could grasp those great eternal truths by just breaking it down one strand at a time and looking at the Bible for what it is, not for what it appears to be. It appears to be a very complicated book, and in that sense, it is. But when you follow God's systematic study of unraveling the Bible one strand at a time, and you define that strand, and you know what that strand does and what it says, when you get all 20 or 30 of them lined out, you walk away knowing the Bible. It is as simple as that.

SEC: The Seven Mysteries as Biblical Strands

That is what we are in the process of doing. When we started studying the seven mysteries, you are getting seven strands of that Bible. You are getting concepts that God has written through the Bible. Brian asked me this week about the seven things in the Bible that we as Christians are not to be ignorant of. I told him that these seven things are seven major principles, concepts, subjects, themes in the Bible that when you break them down, you understand they are seven strands in that big cable. As we go through these concepts, we are defining them. We have Thursday night to come back where you can ask what I obviously cannot cover in four hours of preaching on Sunday morning. We try to get everything squeezed out of it throughout the week, so by the time we get to the next Sunday, you understand this strand.

We saw the first three mysteries, and we saw how they applied to you and me in the body of Christ. So now you should have a fairly good concept of who you are in Christ, why you are who you are, and what God wants to do with you. Last week we looked at the fourth one, which was the mystery connected with God dealing with the nation of Israel. That is a major strand in your Bible. Now you should have a fairly good understanding of that. I am not saying you are going to understand it all, but we have something now that we can build on. If you are taking your notes, which most of you do, and you go home and you spend your week looking through those things and re-going over it, or you get the CD and you go through it again, you are building that library for yourself of how the Bible lays out.

SEC: The Mystery of the Rapture: An Introduction

Today we are going to come through the next major strand, and we are going to take your Bibles and turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. If you have not turned there already, we are going to start in 1 Corinthians 15:51. We are going to read two verses here. We are going to be moving through the Bible today. If you do not have a Bible here this morning and you want one, just raise your hand and Jimmy will bring you one. We have copies of the Scriptures so everybody can have one.

Here is what it says:

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

> 51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

> 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You. We thank You for those that are here today, and may everyone leave today with a better understanding of You and Your Word. We love You. Our whole purpose as a church is to take the people that You send our way and to help illuminate them, help show them this great book that You have written to us, to help us break down and lay out in every aspect the message that God has for man, that we might unravel this great book to understand it in its entirety. Lord, we thank You for sending us this book. We thank You for Your Spirit that leads and guides us into all truth, and we would be fools

today, Father, to think that myself or anybody in this room could ever glean anything from this book without the leading and the guiding of the Holy Spirit of God. So we ask You, Father, today to show us, to help us, help me to put it all together and lay it all out. We just pray, Father, that everything that we say and do today would be honor and glory to You. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

This is mystery number five, and mystery number five has to do with the rapture of the church. Everybody knows what the rapture is in a conscious understanding. We know that the Bible teaches it, and it has been taught forever. I do not know of a church that you go to that is somewhat biblically oriented that does not teach the rapture of the church. You would have to find an oddball church, one of the Protestant churches. The Methodist church does not teach it anymore. The Lutheran church does not teach it. The Catholic church never has taught it. You are not going to find it in that sense. But in the churches that still claim to hold true to the Bible, and they may not hold true in all things of the Bible, it is a generally accepted concept that there is going to come a day that God is coming back for His children, His church. It is commonly known as the rapture, even though you do not find the word "rapture" in the Bible. This, you will see, will be part of the problem here of understanding it in just a little bit.

Everybody seems to have that general concept, and there are discussions on it, and we are going to work through some of that this morning. But we are going to take it beyond just a general concept. I want you to understand how it fits into your Bible. I want you to be able to go out of here and, in time, be able to explain it to somebody else because it is something you are going to bump into all the time as you are talking to people, as most of you are.

SEC: God's Overarching Plan: The Fullness of the Gentiles

You remember last week when we started to come through the mystery of the nation of Israel? I defined some terms for you. One of the terms I defined for you was "the fullness of the Gentiles." Remember we talked about the times of the Gentiles, and then I talked about the fullness of the Gentiles. In fact, it was that concept that said, "blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles come in." I defined what that was, and I told you that the fullness of the Gentiles is when the last Gentile person gets saved.

There are three people groups in your Bible, only three. Now, there are lots of different races, but there are only three people groups in your Bible, and every race on planet Earth will come from these three people groups.

1. The first people group addressed in the Bible we know as the nation of Israel or the Jews. That is who much of the Bible is written to.
2. The second people group in the Bible would be the Gentiles. The Gentiles are all the Caucasians; they are all the different races that are not connected with the nation of Israel. You will find that there are portions of your Bible that are written to the Gentiles.
3. The third people group found in your Bible will be Christians, and you are going to find that much of your Bible is written to that.

You are going to find that when God wrote His Bible, He wrote it and recognized three people groups: the Jews, the Gentile, and the church. If you are saved this morning, you are not a Gentile anymore. If you never were Jewish before you were saved, you were a Gentile. If you were Jewish before you got saved, then you were a Jew. But once you trust Christ as your own personal Savior, the Bible says in the book of Ephesians that in Christ, once you get saved, there is neither Jew nor Gentile. You now are a Christian, and that is a great doctrine unto itself. So with that understanding in mind, you are going to find that the rapture is for the Christians.

We talked about the fullness of the Gentiles coming in. Let me tell you what you are getting; let me give you a major strand of your Bible. Very frankly, I have a lot of good things to say this morning, but if you are trying to put your Bible together, if you just go out of here with this one strand today, you are going to get a major piece of the puzzle. Here it is. Your Bible is many, many, many things. But let me give you a major piece of your Bible which explains the fullness of the Gentiles, because there is going to have to be one last person to be saved.

The rapture is on a timetable. That timetable is in the Bible. I do not know that timetable. We are told as Christians that we do not know the day and the hour, but we are to know the times and the seasons. We know from the times and the seasons that the rapture is right around the corner. That is not my message today, but we know that that is true. So this idea of the rapture of the church and the fullness of the Gentiles: one of these days, somebody somewhere on planet Earth is going to open their Bible for the last time, and they are going to speak to somebody about Christ dying on the cross for the last time, and they are going to walk that person down the Romans Road and show them how to be saved for the last time on planet Earth. That person is going to bow their head and ask Jesus Christ to come into their heart and save them.

At that exact moment, when that transformation takes place from death to the newness of life, from darkness to light, when the Holy Spirit of God, through the doctrine of spiritual circumcision, does that spiritual new birth in their life, it is over. Everybody on planet Earth that is saved is going to hear the voice that sounds like a trumpet that says, "Come up hither!" Every unsaved person on this planet that does not know Christ is just going to hear a clap of thunder. That is in the Bible. That rapture is going to take place because finally, after 2,000 years of the church, the last Gentile has gotten saved, and now, as the Bible says, "the fullness of the Gentiles have come in."

Let me show you how this works. Here it comes. You want your Bible? Here is your Bible. You want a main strand in the Bible? Here it comes. You want something that you can walk away and understand everything from Genesis to Revelation in better perspective? Now here it comes. We know this. I do not fully understand everything I am about to say. I understand the concept of what I am saying. I do not necessarily understand the details. I know the order of what I am about to say is 100% correct. If you would ask me the details of all these things, some I could give you, and many of them I could not, because nobody has ever figured them all out.

But we do know this: we know that back in Genesis 1:1, when the Bible says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," we know that that was the original creation. Sometime in the distant past, long before Adam and Eve, long before the first human being showed up on

planet Earth, way back somewhere in the beginning of Genesis 1:1, we know that God had some kind of spiritual kingdom. We know it is in some way related to planet Earth. We know it is in some way related to Jerusalem. We know that when Adam and Eve show up, God says there is a garden called the Garden of Eden, and we know that when Adam shows up, God puts him down in that garden. We know that there is some relationship to that garden back there because way back, long before Adam and Eve ever showed up, you find in Ezekiel chapter 28 and Isaiah chapter 14 that God had a place called Eden, the Garden of God.

Back then, there was no devil. The devil at that point was a cherub, one of the spiritual beings that God created. You find descriptions of those cherubim in Ezekiel chapter 1, Ezekiel chapter 10, and then in Revelation chapter 4 and some of those early places. They are strange beings in the Bible. You have cherubim, you have seraphim. If you would ask me what they look like, I can only give you what the Bible says, and trying to read that, because they are composite. How do you explain it? Clarence Larkin, who was a great Bible teacher back in the early 1900s, probably detailed them out as good as anybody, but even in that, Clarence Larkin was working with the same peanut brain I am working with.

But we know that way back there, there was something that God had. There were no human beings yet. It had to be some kind of kingdom that was filled with spiritual beings that God had created. We know that because in Job 38:7, it talks about at the beginning of that creation in Genesis chapter 1, that there is an angelic choir who is led by a cherub by the name of Lucifer, who in time will become the devil. This great angelic choir seems to be singing and praising God when God is making the original creation of Genesis chapter 1. The Bible says that all the morning stars, whatever they are, are all singing together. That must have been a beautiful thing to see.

Psalms 33:6

> By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

Psalms 33:9

> For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.

I know that God, one of the attributes of God, is the fact that He demands holiness, He demands worship. God has the biggest ego of anything in all of eternity. Now, it is okay for God to have that big ego because He is God. When you are God and you can do the things that God does, You deserve that ego. There is nobody on planet Earth that deserves my worship, my praise, my 100% devotion more than Him, and He demands that because of who He is. I need to give it to Him because of who He is. But man on Earth, he wants to take that for himself, and that is where the problem comes in. God deserves everything He demands because He is the most perfect, holy being that anybody has ever seen. After 35 years of studying Him, after 35 years and probably many, many times through the Word of God, I still have only scratched the surface of not only who He is and what He is, but the little bit I have found out is sure good.

I am sure of many things, and one of the things I am sure of is that God's plan back there when He did that, God had a desire for somebody to fellowship and love. You see, God was not just satisfied with people worshipping Him; God wanted somebody to love Him. Angels cannot love; they do not have the ability to love. Angels do not know the Bible. We get the idea that angels all know the Bible. The Bible says in 1 Peter chapter 1 that the angels desire to know the Scriptures. You know why they do not? They know who God is; they are around Him. They know all that God does, all of those things, they know Him. But angels cannot comprehend Christ coming down and dying on the cross and spreading His love for redemption. You know why? Because angels do not have souls. It is you and me as human beings that have the soul that God gave us that is the only thing that separates us from angels, that now gives us the ability to love God. Angels cannot. Angels either obey God or they do not. They obey Him because of His supreme being. Angels do not love God, and the reason why they desire to look into the Scriptures is because they cannot understand the concept of redemption, the concept of a God so loving the world that He gave. They do not have the ability to do that; that is not their function.

God had an original plan. This is all in God's plan. It was not like, "Well, God started in Genesis 1 and made this and then said, 'Now what am I going to do?'" No, no, no, no, no. God knew the whole concept. He made those angels, cherubim, seraphim; He made them the way that He did for part of His overall plan. But God desires worship, He desires praise, but He wanted somebody to love Him, so He made man. That is how it works. I am getting ahead of my story here, but that is part of my charm.

Back in Genesis 1:1, God had a created being called Lucifer. Lucifer was the anointed cherubim. I do not understand all of this, but here is how it ran: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and then under everything that God did, He put Lucifer. Lucifer was over whatever that kingdom was back there. I do not know everything about it, but I know whatever was back there was on this Earth, and Eden was in Jerusalem, because that is why we have fought over Jerusalem for the next 6,000 years once Adam shows up, because the devil wants it back. That is why when Antichrist shows up, he sets his throne back in Jerusalem because that is where it was back there.

Lucifer comes out of his house one day. I do not know if he had a house, but it is just part of the story. He comes out of his apartment one day and he says, "You know what? I really like being over everything. It is nice to be the king. I really like this. There is God the Father, God the Son, and then God the Holy Spirit, and there is me. God has given me all of this." Then he said, "You know what? It is not enough. I think I want to be God. I think I want to be God. In fact, I know I want to be God." The Bible says that he was perfect in all his ways till iniquity was found in his heart. We commonly think the first sin in the Bible is Adam and Eve sinning in the garden. That is not true. The first sin in the Bible was pride, and that is why that will be the biggest problem that man will have. The biggest problem, the first problem in the Bible, was pride. It was the devil, it was Lucifer, saying, "I will be like the most high God."

So he leads a revolt. This revolt in your Bible takes place between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. The filler material for that thing in the Bible is found in Ezekiel chapter 28 and Isaiah chapter 14, 1 Peter, and a couple of other places. He leads a revolt; he tries to overthrow God. I have to keep

emphasizing this: it is all part of God's plan. God knew that He was going to create man. God knew that He wanted somebody to love Him, but God also knew that He could not force anybody to love Him.

You know, we all grew up in high school, and we all had somebody of the opposite sex that we thought was really beautiful, and we thought, "Wow, I would really like to date that girl or I would really like to marry that girl." We have all met people in our life that we thought, "Wow, I would really like to be married to that person or have a relationship with that person," but we know the chance of that is not very good. She has her world, I have mine, and we have all been in a situation like that. But then, as the old song says, "Love Potion Number Nine." Pam, if I were to sing a few lyrics to that for us. Okay, here is how it works: you can make this little concoction, and you give it to this beautiful girl to drink. She drinks it, and she looks at you totally different. Now she loves you. John, how much of that did you give Betsy before you guys got married?

Here is the kicker: she drinks this, and suddenly you look like you look for Geeks on Call, and now, after she drinks this, you are the most beautiful guy and handsome guy in the world, and she is in love with you, and you are as happy as can be. As long as she keeps drinking it. If she does not get that drink every week, you go back to looking like the toad you really are. Now, would you really want that kind of relationship, where you have got to keep doing something for them to love you? No, you want somebody to love you because they choose to love you. You want somebody to love you because they know you, they like what they see, you have things in common, and then you fall in love with them because you choose to. Well, God is the same way.

This thing is laid out in such a way that it is all in God's plan. God had all the worship that He needed. He had all the praise that He could stand because He is God. But He wanted somebody to love Him, and then through that love relationship, God would have fellowship and return that love. But God said, "I do not want somebody to just do it." So, God allowed Lucifer to become the devil, and when Lucifer became the devil, God started His plan in Genesis 1:2, and He is going to put Adam down here. Now God has the ingredient for man who has to make a choice to choose to love Him or not to love Him.

See how that thing works? From Genesis 1:2 to the end of your Bible, it is all about simply this: men and women having light versus darkness, God versus the devil, and men and women having the choice to choose to love God and accept God and fellowship with God or not. It is as simple as that. But that is not the strand. You just got a free strand. That is not the strand I am talking about. The thing we are dealing with is the fullness of the Gentiles coming in.

Here is the problem: when the devil went up and tried to overthrow God, he obviously put together a little conspiracy here because the Bible says in Revelation chapter 12 that when Lucifer ceased to be Lucifer and became Satan in heaven, he took a third of whatever those sons of God are that were in heaven. A third of the angels back there in Genesis said, "Where was Satan?" And a third of the sons of God left. What happened to them? They became what we commonly call the unclean spirit, the demon, the demonic forces, whatever you want to call it.

You find them wreaking havoc throughout the Bible, and you hear all the stories of the demon-possessed people. That is where they come from.

But now we have a problem. Do not shout it out, but somebody raise their hand if you know what the problem is. Anybody know what the problem is? Oh, Rebekah. Anybody besides Rebekah, my centurion? All right, Rebekah, tell me what has happened. Oh, Rebekah, the first time in the history of your world, you are wrong in the answer. It was a good answer, but it is the wrong answer. It is all right. Anybody know? I will tell you. You know what the problem we have now is? If God, we have studied Him so far, if God is an orderly God, and we know that He is, and God is a mathematical God, and God does everything perfectly, then once those third of those sons of God left, heaven is in completeness, no more perfect. God is a numerical God. We studied it back before. God does everything perfectly. So once a third of the angels left, a third of the sons of God left, heaven is now incomplete. We have a problem. The perfect God with a perfect order now has an imperfect situation in heaven because the perfect number that He started with has been depleted by one third of the sons of God who said, "See you later, we are out of here, we are going with the devil." We have a problem.

So when God put Adam and Eve in the garden, He put Adam down there. You can read it in Genesis 1:26-28. When He told Adam, the Bible says that He made Adam in God's image, after God's likeness. You go to Luke chapter 2, the Bible says Adam was the son of God. Then Adam is a son of God, made in God's image, made in God's likeness. Did you ever see the commission that Adam is given in Genesis 1:26-28? God says, "Adam, be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the Earth." Now, if Adam is the first man in the Bible on planet Earth, what in the world is he supposed to replenish? As Adam, being made in the terms of the son of God and having the ability to have kids as sons of God, Adam's job then was to replace the one third sons of God that fell, that heaven would now be complete again. Am I going too fast for anybody?

What happened? The devil came down, whack! Adam loses the image of God. Adam can no longer produce children in the image of God. In fact, Genesis 5:5 says that now when Adam has his children, he produces them in his own image. You know what that image is? It is the fallen image of Adam. That is why there are no sons of God in your Bible all the way through the Old Testament, all the way through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, other than angels. Suddenly Christ shows up. He brings His kingdom to the nation of Israel. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, they reject it. God has a mystery that He has not revealed to anybody. That mystery plan is the body of Christ, the church. Once we get into the New Testament, after Israel's rejection, God says, "Okay, church, I have a job for you. In My mind, how I have it laid out, it is going to take you about 2,000 years. You know what your job is? Your job is to go around this world and tell people the story of My Son's death on the cross and bring them to a point that they will trust Me as their own personal Savior, because I want to have fellowship and I want to love them."

"I will tell you what I am going to do: when they get on their knees and they ask Me to come into my heart and save them, when they stand up after they have done that, they are now going to be a son of God. Every time you win somebody to Christ, you replace the one third that fell because heaven is incomplete. The whole thing is in God's time frame. The whole thing is in God's time mindset. The whole thing is right on schedule. It all works the way God does it because that is

what He does. The moment the last number is hit and the last son of God gets saved and the fullness of the Gentiles come in, I am out of here, and so are you if you are saved." Hence, "blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles become in."

One of the major strands of your Bible is to understand the process of God's plan. The church has many, many functions. It has many things that it accomplishes. One of the major things it does is it brings heaven back statistically to its perfect form by replacing the third of sons of God that fell with spiritual beings, you and me, born into God's family, restoring the image that Adam lost as a son of God, thereby doing what Adam could not do. When that last number is hit, off it goes.

SEC: Understanding God's Attributes: Omniscience, Omnipotence, Omnipresence

I said all that to say this: there are three concepts of God you need to understand. These three concepts help you understand, because that is pretty mind-boggling. I have to tell you, there are probably some of you young Christians here that lost me a long time ago, and I hope that is not true, but I will work this thing through with you any way you want. You can always put a tent out in my backyard until we get it worked out if you want.

But I know this: when you start to, as I said when we started, when you start to try to figure God out, who is eternal, with our little peanut brains that only work about one percent of what we have, sometimes it gets tough to understand all that God is doing. When you go through the Bible year after year after year after year, God does something that they called in Star Trek the Vulcan mind meld. Remember that, Pam? Are you telling me the truth? I am talking to you, are you telling me the truth? You say yes. Say yes. No, no, you say no. I do not need you to remember anything. We are having a conversation. I am saying you are telling me a story, so you tell me the truth, and you say yes. Okay, now how do I know you are telling me the truth? I trust you, how do I know? Here is how I know: you are lying. No, I know, not for me and you, but in Star Trek, that was Spock, the Vulcan mind meld. Spock could find out if you were lying or not.

What I am saying is this: when you get into the Bible and you learn the Bible, you get God's mind. He melts His mind into your mind, not by doing this. You see, I have said this before: you get into the world, you go to the library, get every book you can. You know what it will do? Some books will conform you, some books will inform you, some books will misinform you. You know what the Bible does? It transforms you. No other book in the world transforms you. You know what it transforms you to do? It performs the Vulcan mind meld that you get God's mind in you, and now you understand what God is doing. It is a process. It is a process, and the more you are in it and the more you study it, the more you understand these concepts.

I am going to give you three things that you need to know about God.

4. First of all, God is omnipresent. What does that mean? It means that God is everywhere.
5. The second concept is omnipotent. What does that mean? It means God is almighty. In fact, the word almighty is all-powerful.
6. Then the third concept is omniscient. Omniscient simply means God knows everything.

You see, when I tell you what I just told you about that big strand coming through the Bible of when the times of the Gentile or the fullness of the Gentiles come in, and there has to be one last Gentile, when we start, the reason that from a human standpoint we say, "How could that be?" The reason it can be is because God knows everything. Let us face it, God knows who will get saved, God knows who will not. Does God intervene in that? God only intervenes to get people saved.

You have a teaching out there that there are some people that God chose before the foundation of the world that you are going to heaven and you are going to hell, and there is nothing you can do about it. They are called hyper-Calvinists, and they think that God, someplace in a distant past, looked down through heaven and He said, "This crowd over here, you are going to heaven. This crowd over here, you are going to hell," and there is nothing you can do about it. So this crowd over here says, "Jesus loves me, this I know." This crowd says, "Jesus loves me, sorry about you, you are not one of the chosen few." See how it works? And there is nothing you people can do to go to heaven. Nothing. David, you want to go to heaven? You are out. John, you want to go to heaven? Cannot happen. Becky, Becky, I am sorry, Betsy, my fault. You want to go to heaven? You are out. Cannot go. Sandy, you want to go? Cannot go. John, forget it. Sarah, no. You want to go? Cannot. God chose you, you cannot.

See, that is stupid. But you see, when they do not understand, they do not know how to put it together. They never can get to that great truth. They do not understand; they cannot comprehend how God can know who will and who will not, but yet not interfere with the process. They cannot get that. They do not understand how God knows, as we speak, that there is a number in His mind of the last Gentile that is going to get saved. They have not got a clue how that works, and yet God knows everything, but He does not interfere with man's free will choice. They cannot get to that, and the reason why they cannot get to that is because they do not believe what they read in the Bible. They do not understand that.

I will tell you what, how can God be everywhere at once? How can everybody in this room pray and God hear every prayer and not get it confused? Forget you guys, we probably have what, four billion people on this planet that are saved? How in the world can millions of people pray to God at the same time, God hear every prayer, not forget a thing, and answer everybody distinctly without giving your prayer to her and getting it confused? That is why He is God. That is why He deserves the praise, deserves the worship. God is all-knowing, He is almighty, and He is everywhere. I keep trying to tell you that.

I will tell you another kicker, try to figure this out. The Bible says in the Gospels that no man knows the day or the hour of Christ's coming, and then it goes on to say, "nor the Son." Now, how did God choose not to know when He was coming back when He knows everything? You want to chew on that for about 30 years and give me a call. The Bible says Jesus Christ, we studied it, God manifested in the flesh. When Jesus Christ came down, He is God, and yet as God, He chooses to forget the date of the Second Coming of Christ when He is God and everything. Now work on that one for a while.

I will tell you something else: how does God forget your sins if God knows everything? Want to work on that one for a while? Any sinners in here? Well, a couple of you are honest. Let me try to get, any sinners in here? Well, we are getting better at it. How can God, who knows everything and knows everything I ever thought, ever did, ever said, once I get saved, can forget it and still be God because He knows everything? See, that is me trying to figure out Him. That is a limited little peanut brain trying to strut around and say, "Well, I know, I know about God." You are nuts. You know what God scraps, God throws about Himself? I am telling you, you start to crack those nuts and you will be a squirrel before you know it. You cannot do that. There are a lot of things I just answer, "Well, that is just God." Somebody says, "That is not a very good answer." It was not a very good question. I do not know how God does that, but I will tell you, it is the secret of your success in your Christian life, because bad things are going to happen to you in life. People are going to hurt you, Christians are going to hurt you, unsaved people are going to hurt you. They are going to do things to try to destroy you. You know what? If you want to have success in your life with the shadow of God, you better learn how to not only forgive, you better learn how to forget it. The key to your forgiving somebody is forgetting what they did, yet still knowing what they did. That is an attribute of God. You can get there, not like Him. I am not saying you will not have bad days, but I am saying you can get there.

SEC: Debunking Rapture Confusion: Pre-Tribulation Explained

So we understand now that when the fullness of the Gentiles come in, that means the last Gentile gets saved, and when that happens, the rapture takes place. You have a major strand of your Bible. Now I want to talk to you about some very important terms about the rapture. You want to write these down. You have in theological circles what they call a post-tribulation rapture. You have what they call a mid-tribulation rapture, and then you have what they call a pre-tribulation rapture. I am going to explain those.

There are some churches in Kansas City today whose pastors are getting up and they are preaching that the church is going to go through the tribulation period, and they are teaching that you and I as the body of Christ are going to endure along with Israel the tribulation period, and then the rapture for us is going to come at the end of the tribulation period. Then you have some other people out there that say, "No, no, no, no, no, no, that is not true. The church is going to go through half the tribulation period." They say there is a mid-tribulation rapture, and this is where the church goes up. In other words, the church goes through the first part, and then they are raptured up before the bad part comes. The tribulation is seven years. They say that the first three and a half years the church goes through it, and then that is called a mid-tribulation.

So then you have God who says, "No, no, no, no, no, no, that is not right. It is pre-tribulation rapture." The Bible teaches that we go out before the tribulation period. Now you may run into one of these guys or gals every once in a while, and I am just going to give you one verse, and I am not going to spend a lot of time with it, but I am just trying to help you out here. The reason I know I am not going through the tribulation is because of one verse found in 1 Thessalonians 5:9. The context of 1 Thessalonians 5:9 will be the times and the seasons and the coming of Christ and the rapture of the church and the tribulation period.

It simply says this in verse 9:

1 Thessalonians 5:9

> For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

You see, the tribulation period is God pouring out His wrath on this planet, and the Bible says in that verse that God has not appointed the church to that wrath. We are not going to get that wrath. Israel is going to get it, the Antichrist is going to get it, the world is going to get it. I am not going to get it. Why? Because my salvation is in the Lord Jesus Christ, and I am going out before that wrath comes. I have a bigger thing to worry about; it is not the tribulation. It is the Judgment Seat of Christ. In fact, when we get to the Judgment Seat of Christ, we may be looking for the elevator back down to the tribulation. I love that, is not that dynamic? You make a statement and then you are quiet, and all you hear are my footsteps. That is called, I do not know what that is called, that is called dynamics. It is mood setting. Look, you guys are learning, learn this. You make a statement and then you are quiet, and then all they hear is footsteps. I love this. I love this because without this, I would have to do something else. I love this. You make a statement and then you just, it is quiet, and it is definitely quiet because they made a statement, and you are all worried about the Judgment Seat of Christ now. Some of you cannot get it; you are saying, "Is there an elevator that takes me back down to the tribulation period?" Hey, look, if you cannot have fun studying the Bible, then go be an Episcopalian someplace.

SEC: The Three-Part Harvest of the Rapture

Here is the reason why there is so much confusion. There is a reason why there is confusion: because there are three raptures in your Bible. I love having fun with people who do not know the Bible, and a lot of people do not know the Bible, but they are nice people. But then you find some of those real idiots who do not know the Bible, who just need a good sticking. I preached in churches before that were really cold, and I could tell that they were a bunch of Pharisees, but they did not know about the Bible. When I was in command in the pulpit, I had a ball with them. I say, "You know the Bible? You talk about you guys all spiritual." Well, I am sitting back there like this, "Yeah, we are spiritual, yeah, we are really spiritual." And I said, "Well," and I come to that thing and I say, "You know what the Bible says? There are three heavens." "So yeah, you are not taking over the first Corinthians where it says Paul was caught up to the third heaven." They never seen that before. So then I work them, "Which heaven are you going to?" Now he is like this still, and he is like this, but his palms are beginning to sweat because he now sees there is a third heaven. He never saw that before, and now there is just an inkling that I got him, and there may be a third heaven. He is not sure which one he is going to.

Everybody, how many people like to walk through graveyards and read tombstones? I love them. I even like them even more now that they put pictures on them. They never did that, but now they actually have pictures of them. There is an identity there. Especially when I was working down in Paola, they have nice, really nice graveyards down there, and I would always eat lunch in them. You get a sandwich and you sit down, and I walk around, and I would read the tombstones, and there are some great things on them. Some of them are really great. You can tell the person was saved by what they wrote. I would read some great things. I walked down

through there one time, I read one. It was the husband that died, and the wife was not dead yet, and she put on, and this is an honest-to-goodness true story, "If I had had a camera that took a picture of it instead of a tombstone to follow you, I am not content because I am not sure which way you went." See, she was not sure which rapture was going to happen. I have fun with them. Then I will switch gears and I will say, "You know, there are three raptures in the Bible. Which one are you going up in?" They would have a hard time.

Now, it is not that confusing. Let me clarify it for you. I guess we could say this: there is only one rapture, but there are three parts to the rapture. What messes a guy up if he does not know the Bible is he will see in Revelation at the end of the tribulation period somebody going up, and he will get in the middle of Revelation and think that is the middle of the tribulation period because he does not understand that you go four times through the last three and a half years. He will see somebody in Revelation chapter 11, which is half of 22, go up, and he says, "It has got to be the church. There is the mid-trib." Then he reads over here in Revelation chapter 19, sees somebody goes up, somebody says, "Oh, no, no, no, there is the, it is at the end, the church goes through." And then somebody else reads the other verses like 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 and those places, and reads what the verses I gave you, they see somebody going up and they say, "No, no, we go out before." You see how confusing it gets? It is not really confusing; they do not know the Bible.

The rapture is likened to a harvest. Anybody who has done any farming knows that there are three parts to a harvest. There are the first fruits; that is the stuff that is ripe early. Then you go back later and get the main harvest. But there is still stuff that is not ripe, so you go back at a later date and get what they call in farming the gleanings. Well, there are three parts to the rapture, and that is what they do not see.

7. The first part is the Old Testament saints.
8. The second part is you and me.
9. The third part is what is left, the tribulation.

Think I made that up? Come over to 1 Corinthians, I will show you. No, I am not above making things up, but I did not make this up.

1 Corinthians 15:22-24

> 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

> 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

> 24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

Here is what he says: everybody died in Adam. We know that Adam lost his image of God, and we are dead in trespasses and sin. But he says in Christ, every man shall be made alive. Now watch this, verse 23: "But," conjunction, disjunction, "every man in his own order." All right, here comes the order. That is what he got. Verse 22 says, "all die in Adam," then it says, "all

made alive in Christ." Verse 23, "But every man made alive in Christ in his own order." Notice the order, there are three of them. Verse 23, "firstfruits," there are your Old Testament saints. "They that are Christ's at his coming," there are you and me. "Then cometh the end," verse 24, there go your tribulation saints. There is your order, three orders.

Now in your Bible, you will find the term "come up hither" three times. Three times, and they will match every one of these three concepts of the rapture.

10. In Proverbs 25:7, you will find where it says, "Come up hither." There go your Old Testament saints. That is a prophecy in the Old Testament saints going up.
11. Revelation 4:1, you will find where it says, "Come up hither." There are you and me going up at the end of the church age. Then starts the tribulation period in chapter 5.
12. We go to Revelation chapter 11, and you find it the last and final time, typified by Moses and Elijah, "Come up hither." Up go the tribulation saints.

When a man does not understand that order, then he will get confused, and he will think that what he sees in Revelation is us. When a man does not believe what he reads, when a man does not understand the Scriptures and have the ability to lay it out, then he will get lost in the shuffle of biblical truth.

The rapture is likened to a harvest. In the Old Testament, in Deuteronomy 16:16, you will find three feasts in the Old Testament that match up to these three. You do not have to turn back to it, but let me read it to you.

Deuteronomy 16:16

> Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty:

The Feast of Unleavened Bread would be the Old Testament saints. The Feast of Weeks would be us. The Feast of Tabernacles is the Jew in the tribulation period. The rapture is likened to a harvest; a harvest has three parts.

SEC: The Rapture of Old Testament Saints

Let us look at it. Let us check these three parts and examine it. One has already taken place. Let me tell you what happened. Christ came to the nation of Israel, and up to this point, every man that died in the Old Testament could not go to heaven. They could not go to heaven because the blood had not been shed. So they went to Abraham's bosom. Luke chapter 16 tells you the story that Abraham's bosom is in the center of the Earth. They die, they go to Abraham's bosom. When they are down there in Abraham's bosom, they are at rest. They cannot go to heaven. Nobody can go to heaven because Christ had not made the final sin payment on the cross and shed His blood. What they did in the Old Testament was just offer up lambs, bulls, and goats. Hebrews tells you in chapter 12 and those places that that cannot suffice God. It temporarily covered it; it got them to Abraham's bosom, but the blood of bulls and goats could not pay for anybody's sin. So when you died in the Old Testament, you went to a holdover spot down in Abraham's bosom.

Then Christ shows up. When Christ shows up, He comes down here, and when He shows up, He presents Himself to the nation of Israel. They reject Him; they crucify Him. The Bible says when He dies, He sheds His blood on the cross for you and for me. When He is on the cross, He says, "It is finished." You know what He was talking about? He was talking about the redemption of every man and woman's soul from past, present, and future. The blood atonement, the death of Christ on the cross, "It is finished" meant it was paid in full for you and for me.

What happens? The book of Ephesians says before He goes up, He goes down for three days. When Christ dies, when He is in that tomb, His soul is down in Abraham's bosom. The Bible says while He is down there, He preaches to the saints that are in prison. Who are they? Your Old Testament saints. You know what He preached? He said, "Boys, the I AM has come, and I just paid the price of Calvary, and I want to show you guys something because I have something that is going to make your day." He whipped out those keys and He said, "I have in My hand the keys to death and hell," and everybody went crazy. I promise you, if they would have had seismographs back at that day, they would have reported an earthquake all around this planet because there was a hallelujah shouting going on down in the center of the Earth. He jangled those keys and He says, "The devil has been defeated, and I have the keys, and boys, you know what I am going to do with those keys? I am going to unlock the gates of hell, and when I unlock the gates of hell, I am going to knock them off the hinges, and I am going to lead captivity captive, and we are going to glory!"

I mean to tell you, there was hallelujah shouting, "Hosanna!" He walks over to that gate, and there were a couple of demons standing by that gate, and they said, "Hey, hey, you! Hey, hey, hey, you! You cannot do that yet! You are not even resurrected yet! You are still down here in death!" And He said, "Get out of My way! I am going home!" And He opened that gate, kicked it open. You know what? They were so excited that before they even went to heaven, they had to run back down to Jerusalem and tell everybody. That is what the Bible says. It says many of the bodies of the saints arose and went down in Jerusalem. You know what night that was? Anybody know? I do not. I want the date. Anybody know? First Sergeant, what is it? Yeah, I guess it is. That is not what I was looking for, but thank you for your concern. That is a great movie, by the way, but let us leave your wife cooking out of this. That is what he said to me before the sermon started. No, I am just kidding. What night is this? Saturday night. Saturday night. I mean to tell you, that is why from that point on, you can believe this or not, I am going to give you this, you do not even have to pay for it: from that point on, the wildest night of the week that the world wants to do to overcome that Saturday night is Saturday night. I think they call it on TV "Saturday Night Live." They have no idea of the "Saturday Night Live" in the Bible. Not a clue, brother. I am talking about running down the street, "Night of the Living Dead." You got it right, probably better fit in what I am going to say. They went out and they are saying, "You are not going to believe what I just saw. Give me a double, give me a double what?" "Double whammy, Pammy." I am glad you are in the front row because it will not take far for you to hit the altar this morning. We do not even have an altar, Pam. Well, we need every head bowed, we need to stop right now and get Pam where she needs. He said, "You are not going to believe this. We buried George yesterday. I was there." "He is walking down the street." "Hey, I saw a friend. The Roman soldiers cut his head off three days ago. I just saw him walking down the street." You

know what he is singing? "I ain't got nobody, boom, boom, nobody got me." Hey, come on, you have got to have fun with it, do not you? That was a wild night. It was a wild night, the wildest night that the world has tried to change it ever since and get you to believe that Saturday night is a wild time. No, that Saturday night was a wild time. The Bible says He led captivity captive, took them out. That one is already gone.

SEC: The Rapture of the Church: Our Blessed Hope

The next one, I thought sure it would be here before I got here this night. Every day of my life, I get up, honest to God, every day of my life I get up, I say, "God, I do not expect to get through this day today." He is coming, man, and we are right there. I will tell you something right now, folks, I do not care what you, and I know some of you, maybe you are not there yet, when you start talking about the rapture, you get those nervous butterflies. I understand that. But let me just say something to you, maybe you cannot even grasp yet: there is not a problem that anybody has got in this room that the rapture would not solve this morning. There is not a problem that any of us has got this morning if the rapture just would not take care of it just like that. I am telling you, it is coming to the point where our rapture is, I mean, it is the most absolutely incredible concept that He is coming.

He says in 1 Thessalonians 4:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

> *13 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.*

> *14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

> *15 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.*

> *16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

> *17 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.*

He talks about Jesus coming and the dead being raised up. Every person that lost a baby, every person lost a granddaddy or a daddy or a mommy or whatever the case, the Lord is going to bring them up. You are going to meet each other, and then the Bible says we are going to be together with the Lord forever.

Proverbs 29:18

> *Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.*

I know we use that all the time. Really, in the context, it is about providing a vision for your child in raising them up, but it is more than that because we are God's child, and God has

provided a vision for us. Every child of God has to have three visions. You know what the first vision is? The fact that the fields are white unto harvest. How would you like to be the last person to win the last person to Christ that triggered the rapture? Can that be a trip? There is a motivation for your soul winning. I will tell you something else, the second thing you need to have a vision for is the rapture of the church, and the third thing you need to have a vision for is the Judgment Seat of Christ. If you just concentrate on those three things in your life and keep that as your vision, you are not going to go too far out of life. It is as simple as that. I am telling you, there is coming a time that He is coming.

SEC: The Rapture of Tribulation Saints: Armageddon

Then after we are gone, the last installment. We have the Old Testament saints, those are the first fruits. We have the main harvest, the rapture of the church. Now, once we are gone, we know what happens: the tribulation starts. The Antichrist shows up. He takes the first three and a half years. He makes the world a better place to live. He gets all the nations together. He makes a bond with Israel, and for three and a half years, everything is just great. Then suddenly, in the mid-tribulation period, it all comes apart. He turns on the Jew. He tries to wipe out the Jew. He cuts their heads off. They, the most horrendous thing, we are going to talk about it in these other last two mysteries. One of them is the mystery of Babylon, the other one is the mystery of iniquity, so I do not want to get into it too deep because we are going to wail it out when we get there in the next couple of weeks.

So he attacks the nation of Israel. They run down there, and the Bible says in Revelation 16:16, he traps them in a place called Armageddon. I do not know if you know what Armageddon is. Armageddon, down through history, has been the place that more battles have been fought than any other place on this planet. Every century, there have been 25 battles down in that place, going all the way back. Every one of them typified the great battle that is coming. Here is what you have in Armageddon: you have a valley that is surrounded by mountains that is 160 miles in circumference, and the nation of Israel is going to get trapped down in that valley, and the Antichrist is going to surround them on all sides for the purpose of wiping them out. He has killed them off, he has murdered them, he has butchered them.

Now, as every Middle East nation, as Iran has said, they want their nuclear weapons that can wipe Israel off the face of the planet because those nations are controlled by Satan, because that is what he wants. That is exactly what is going to happen. All those nations are going to align with the Antichrist, and they are going to trap them down there, and it is just going to be like the old Westerns you saw where there used to be thousands and thousands of Indians, that little wagon train circling itself down there in that valley. The Indians are walking around, they are shooting them, and they are dying. They are trying to hold them off, and they know they cannot get out. There is no way to go. There are more Indians than they have, and there is nothing there, and they are going to be wiped out. Just about that time, in every Western, off in the distance, here it comes, here comes the Seventh Cavalry. There is John Wayne on a front horse, and I am telling, I do not know if he will be in the one coming down, but anyway, there they come. When that Jew gets down there and he gets trapped in Armageddon, and he is going to get wiped out, they lift up their head, and their redemption draws nigh. Here comes the Lord of Glory, and we

are the army in heaven following after Him, and He raptures them out. Then the Bible says He wipes out the Antichrist, and the Bible says in Revelation 14:20 that the blood in that valley goes three and a half feet high for 160 miles around.

Three parts to the rapture, you have got to know it. You understand the main theme of the fullness of the Gentiles coming in, what God is trying to do, God's plan, and then how God takes out the Old Testament saints, how He takes out us any moment, and how then in the future He is going to take out the nation of Israel. I am telling you, there is not a saved person in this room this morning that the rapture would not solve every problem you have got. I will go one step further: if you are an unsaved man or woman here this morning, there is not one thing you have got in your life that God will not forgive you of this morning and take you home to heaven. But once you miss the rapture, it is over. It is over. Once you miss the rapture, it is hell. There is no second chance. There is no, "Well, I am sorry I missed it, so I will get in now." It does not work that way. The Bible clearly says, "until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." It is over for the Gentiles.

SEC: The Mark of Spirituality: Desiring Christ's Return

The greatest Christian ever lived in the New Testament, as far as that type is concerned, we know is the Apostle John. He writes the Gospel of John, which lays out that beautiful relationship of Christ to His Father as the Son of God. But he also writes 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John, which are the beautiful books that talk about our relationship with Christ. But he also writes the book of Revelation. The last thing John says, the last prayer in your Bible, it is found in Revelation 22:20. The last prayer in your Bible, given by the greatest type of what your life and my life should be. You know what the last prayer in your Bible is, given by the greatest type of what you and I ought to be? It was a prayer for the rapture. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

The mark of your spirituality is how you view and how desperately you want Him to come back this morning. I do not know what else to tell you, and I give a lot of you a lot of grace because you are all just young Christians, many of you. You are trying to get there. But I am saying, you want a keynote to look at your spirituality or any relationship with God? It is simply this: get to the place in your life that everything you have got, all the shiny new things, all the nice things you like to do, all the fun things, and I am a fun guy too, I like to do all kinds of things, but I am telling you, there is nothing greater. There is not one thing I have planned today or tomorrow or next week or next month or the rest of my life that I would not give up if I knew He was coming today.

Every head bowed, every eye closed. Here is how simple it is. We laid it all out for you from beginning to end, and it is just this simple: God came and God died and put everything in action in your Bible that you and I have the chance this morning to go to heaven with Him. He will do everything in the world to make that happen, but the bottom line is, it has to be your choice. We said a lot of things today, but I think you have got the point and you have got the message: He is coming. Every child of God ought to take the blessing and the assurance and the rest and the fact that no matter how bad this life gets, it is only temporary. He is coming. You heard me talk about the hallelujah shouting time that went on down there in the center of the Earth when He showed

them the keys of death and hell, and they went out of that city and had a hot time in the old town tonight on Saturday night. You wait till I get home to heaven. There is going to be an absolute spiritual fit. I am out of this old mess, and I am up there with Him, and I am in a place wherever I think, whatever I say, whenever I do, the rest of my eternity will only please Him.

Maybe you are not there this morning. Maybe you are here this morning and you do not share that. Maybe in your heart right now today you would honestly say, "Bob, I do not know if I died today that I would go to heaven." I do not know where you are at. My Bible says you can know. My Bible says that everything that God did, He did so you would know. But the bottom line is, between you and God, with every head bowed and every eye closed, I have said everything that needs to be said today. I am just going to ask you one question, and I am going to pray, and we are going to go home. Is there a man or a woman here this morning who would be honest, and every head bowed and every eye closed, no one is looking around, is there a man or a woman here this morning that would allow me into your world for just a few seconds and say to me, "Bob, I heard what you said today. God spoke to my heart today, and Bob, I do not know for sure if I died right now that I would go to heaven. Here is my hand, Bob, would you please pray for me?" I will not call you out, I will not embarrass you. If you make any decision or whatever, it is between you and God. I just want to pray with you. I want to enter in, if you would allow me, just me and you, that covenant of prayer to pray for your soul this morning after God touched you through this message. Anybody? Just put it up, let me see it, put it back down. "I am not sure, Bob, if I died today, I do not know for sure I would go to heaven." Anybody? Anybody at all? I am not sure. Not going to wait long.