

Romans 11:4-10

Sunday 10/18/2009

SEC: Introduction to Romans and Israel's Remnant

I don't know if you've been enjoying Romans as much as I have. It took me probably eight or nine times to get a good handle on Romans. Romans is one of those books that you think you have it and then you don't. It's a book that shows, by the way it's written, we had talked about that before. Even in all the times I've been through the book of Romans and how much I have labored to get the concepts down and put it into a context, an order that I can understand, there are still many, many things that I don't know about it. Every time I go through it, I learn even more about it. It's certainly been true of this. I've learned as much from this as you have, and hopefully it's something that will make an impact in your life.

Today, we're going to look at yet another aspect of the Nation of Israel. There are three chapters in the Bible that he really focuses on the Nation of Israel for you and for me. It's very obvious that God wants us to understand how the Nation of Israel works and how God views it. In fact, we are told, if you know your Bible—we've talked about this before—that there are seven things that you and I should be stewards of. One of the things that you and I are to be stewards of is the Nation of Israel.

We have been dealing with the concept of Israel as a remnant that God calls back from all the nations that they have been scattered into and then restores them at the Second Coming of Christ. I showed you a couple of weeks ago where the Bible talks about God's going to gather His people the second time. They are gathered two times in the Bible and in history. The first time they were gathered would be back in Ezra and Nehemiah when God brings them back after the 70 years of captivity. The second time that they go back or they're regathered would be in the time period that we talked about from 1918 to 1948, when we see the budding of the Fig tree. We talked about that in great detail a couple of weeks ago out of Matthew 24.

Today, I want to come down through the next section here, and that'll be verses really six down through ten, but we're going to put four and five back in it. Let's begin to read it here, and then we'll go from there.

SEC: Reading and Prayer

Romans 11:4-10:

> *Romans 11:4*

> *But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.*

> *Romans 11:5*

> *Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.*

> *Romans 11:6*

> *And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.*

> *Romans 11:7*

> *What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.*

> *Romans 11:8*

> *According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear; unto this day.*

> *Romans 11:9*

> *And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them:*

> *Romans 11:10*

> *Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.*

Now Father, we thank and praise You for the Lord Jesus today. Lord, we ask You, Father, to take the word of God that You've given us and to help us to grasp it and understand it. We thank You for those that are here today. We pray for the ones that are sick. We pray for Steve and Jane, as most of us have been praying all week. Jane lost her brother this week, and we just pray that You'll be with them. We just thank You, Lord, for him knowing the Lord as their own personal Savior. We just love You, Lord, and we thank You so much for our church and the care that they put out to people that are in a tough time of need. We pray, Father, Your blessings upon them. Bless our time today in Your word. These people have come today to get something from You, and Lord, don't disappoint them. Give them according to the need of their heart, their attitude of their heart, what they need. Lord, there are some great lessons here. Not only do we need to understand the Book of Romans, we need to understand how it all fits together in our lives also, and the great parallels between Israel and the church. Lord, we just thank You and praise You now in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

SEC: Understanding Romans 11:4-7 - Grace vs. Works

Here's a place where verses 4, 5, and 6 really look confusing, don't they? This is what we're talking about in the Book of Romans; you've got to learn how to read the Book of Romans. What he's saying here, and look at verse 6, because verse 6, as you read it, is pretty confusing: "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

If there's nothing more confusing in the world, just like saying "rubber baby buggy bumpers" ten times real fast, that looks confusing. But here again, my goal is to have you understand these places in Romans so you can go back and put your notes in, that you will have everything that you need to basically make it work for you.

Here's what he's saying in verse 6: "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." By itself, that verse looks confusing, but when you put it into the context of these verses—and that's what you've always got to do, and we're big on context around here—watch how this thing begins to work itself through. You can't take verse 6 by itself. Verse 6 goes along with verse 4 and 5. Remember in verse 4, he said, "I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal." "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

Now, here's what he's saying in these verses, and like I said, it looks confusing. He's saying that Jews that are called "the election of grace"—that'd be down there in verse 5—the Jews that are of the remnant of the election of grace, they got that election through grace. He's making a contrast to the 7,000 prophets of Baal in verse 4 that were under the Old Testament Mosaic law, that didn't get it by grace; they got it under the Old Testament law, which is a system of works. This is what he's saying: he's making a contrast in verses 5, 6, and 7 between the Old Testament prophets of Baal who got it under the Old Testament law, which we know is a system of works, versus the remnant that comes out of the church age in 1948 that goes into the Tribulation, that goes into the Millennium. That remnant, that election of grace, that remnant is called out under a New Testament time, which is under grace. He's making the parallel between those two people groups, and that's what you've got to see. You just need to put a very quick little note along there that verses 5, 6, and 7 all go together, and that when he's talking about the grace versus the works, he's talking about the Old Testament prophets in 1 Kings 19 that were under the law of works versus the New Testament times where the remnant of Israel, even though they're not part of the church, they're called out in the period of grace. We talked about how Israel was called out between 1918 and 1948, and they're in the church age. Even though they're not part of the church, God is calling out His elect, and He's doing it under an age of grace, not under the Old Testament works. That's very important to get and see, but that's exactly what you're dealing with there, and it kind of helps put it into perspective.

Now look at verse 7: "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." Here's another verse that you've got to get in the right aspect, in the right context. To me, this is the whole idea here, and this is the whole study. This whole concept breaks down around three groups in verse 7. Let's see if we can find them.

Verse 7: "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded."

Three groups out of the nation of Israel:

- > 1.) *Israel as a nation*
- > 2.) *The election (a remnant within that nation that finds the Lord and believes in God and does what's right)*
- > 3.) *The rest (who the Bible says were blinded)*

This is the way to understand what we're talking about here in this whole concept of the nation of Israel. You have Israel as a nation. Within that nation, you're going to find a remnant that finds the Lord and believes in God and does what's right. The rest of them, the Bible says, were blinded. This is what we want to talk about today.

When he says, "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for," what is he talking about? What's Israel seeking for? Israel is seeking for the promises that were given to Abraham back in Genesis. They're seeking for the promises of being in the land. We talked about how that for 1,800 years, the nation of Israel was out of the land. They had no claim to it. They knew it wasn't even anywhere near it. They were living in Europe, living in America, living all around the world, but they were not in the Middle East. Why? Because Israel hath not obtained what it was looking for. But then he says, "but the election hath obtained it." That is the group that God is going to call out. And the rest, he says, is going to be blinded. That's the concept we're going to work with today and help you understand from another angle the aspect of the nation of Israel.

SEC: Israel's Spiritual Blindness and Deafness

I want to talk to you today, and we're going to talk about how Israel went spiritually blind and spiritually deaf. How could a whole nation that was raised up on the concept of God from the very beginning, a very nation that God wanted to give everything to and orchestrated everything in their history for the positive that God could give them and call them out to be His nation, how could somebody like that wind up spiritually blind and spiritually deaf? Of course, that's what we're going to talk about today.

We use the word "backsliding" a lot, and we all know—I don't have to give you a definition of backsliding—because if you're saved here this morning, we've all been backslidden at some point or the other, and we know what backsliding means. It kind of means that you're walking with God and then you start sliding backwards. Backsliding is a term that we use a lot, but I don't know if you know this or not: you realize that that word is never used anywhere in the New Testament for New Testament Christians. The word "backsliding" is always used in the Old Testament for the nation of Israel. It's a term that is given about Israel's condition, and never one time in the New Testament does Paul ever make a reference to you and I being backslidden. It's okay to use that; there's nothing wrong with saying, "Well, so-and-so is backslidden," or "I'm backslidden," or "Everybody understands the term." But I want you to understand these terms from a Bible standpoint. Of course, Israel is in a backslidden condition today as we speak and has been for a long time. I want to talk to you today about how they got that way and how they went spiritually blind and spiritually deaf. I mean, a nation that could not hear the things of God nor could they see the things of God.

Somebody—I forget where it was, it was during one of our softball league games—I would try to go to the devotions and just kind of listen to the people because I really enjoy hearing you guys talk about when you get a chance to preach. Oh, by the way, let me just say this: I'll tell you, I was never more proud of our young men than I was yesterday when we did our final Bible Basics. I had four young men that got up to take a segment and to put in the details, and it was one of the most joyous times of my whole month, simply because it was a time where, you know,

a lot of times in the ministry with all of its issues and all of its problems, many times the problems overshadow the stuff that God is doing, and that's what the devil does. But to sit down there and watch those guys, every one of them, and the thing that was absolutely incredible to me was the fact that each one of them felt where the other one had left off, had picked up on it, and it just flowed through the whole thing. The thing that I really enjoyed was every man that taught was different, and everyone was different in their—they all had the right truth, and they all said the right things, but they all said it in their own style. One of the things that was instilled in me with Dr. Subaka is the fact that you never take away a person's style and how they do. I don't want you getting up and just mimicking what I say. I want you to get up and put together the truth that I give you in the format by which that you use it and how it works for you, and you let yourself be in that.

A lady said to me afterwards, she said, "You know what?" She says, "That was—it really spoke well of the church to see four young men do that." The real blessing to me is—and I told her this back—I said, "You know what? That's—but the real blessing to me, I could replace those guys probably four times over, maybe five times over, and have the same quality of men: some of the older guys, some of the guys that have been around for a shorter period of time." But there's no shortage of men in this church that could get up and do that job. I could have picked out of a whole bunch any other four guys, gave them the same task, and they would have done it. That is the beauty. The strength of this ministry, or any ministry at all, will always be the men and the women behind them, nudging them along gently, the women behind them that have the ability to get up and to teach the Bible. This church has its fair share. We could have went, if we'd have had the time and the ability, I could have had—we could have went all day long, and I could have given 28, 30 sections to 28 guys, and they could have carried that thing out. That's exactly what I'm talking about there is the—and you notice that how it all flowed together. That is because the ministry that they're all in together, they all work together, and there's a common bond in that that carries that thing all the way through.

I was getting ready to tell you about what at the softball games. I sat over and listened to somebody—I can't even remember who it was now—but they were preaching out of Psalms 1. They were giving their devotion; it was more of a sermon, a very good sermon. In fact, I think he stole it from me. Anyway, in fact, there might have been a lady, I don't remember. I just remember it was really good, and I remember when they were talking, they were in Psalms 1, and they were talking about:

Psalms 1:1

> *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*

> *Psalms 1:2*

> *But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*

Now, what they were doing with that was absolutely correct. They were making a spiritual application, and they were saying something like this: "Once you stop walking for God, the Bible

says, 'walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.' The minute you start walking with God, you start walking with the counsel of the ungodly." And they said, "Notice the word 'counsel of the ungodly,' because that means once you start walking with them, you start listening to what they say." Then the next step, they said, was "nor standeth in the way of sinners." The progression was great: walking, standing, and then sitting. The last thing was "sitting in the seat of the scornful." They made—it was a great analogy, and they made the analogy that there's a picture of a Christian who stops walking with God, starts taking counsel from the ungodly, and then the process goes down that pretty soon a person who loved God, loved the Bible, now sits in the scorn of the Bible and the things that they once believed. I thought to myself, "That's an incredible application and was very good."

But the truth of the matter is—and I agree with everything that they said—but the truth of the matter is, you put that verse in the context, that's talking about Israel. Israel had stopped walking with God and started walking in the counsel of the ungodly. They started listening to people like Ahab, Jezebel, the kings and the people that were driving them away from God. They started—they ceased walking with God and started walking with the ungodly. Then pretty soon they're standing in there, and by the time you get to the captivity in 606 BC, you cannot tell the nation of Israel from all the Baal worshipers that are around. You know why? Because that automatic progression took place in the nation of Israel, and that is the process for Israel in a backslidden condition.

I've heard people preach, and it's a great verse, on Proverbs 13:

Proverbs 13:20

> He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

There's no truer verse than that. I would not have a problem if somebody used that as a sermon or used that in a devotion; that's absolutely true.

SEC: Personal Story and Wisdom

Remember what your mother used to say, or my mother used to say? My mom, in my mind, was probably—she was never maybe the spiritual giant that she could have been, but she went through a lot in life. She's having a tough time right now, and it looks like she's going to have to go into an assisted living situation, and she's really having a tough time with it. My sister called me the other night. In fact, I was in a counseling session with somebody upstairs; I had to break out of it for a few moments. You know, she was really having a tough time, and my sister wanted me to call her and try to convince her of what she needed to do. I understand how tough it is when you've lived by yourself for so many years and been self-sufficient, the idea of giving up your home, giving up your animals, giving up your freedom. I was left with a dilemma because I know where my sister's coming from, who is the greatest gal in the world as far as I'm concerned, takes care of my mother back in Ohio and just does a great job. But I understand her frustration, but I also understand my mom's.

Hey, let me tell you something: if somebody came to you tomorrow and said, "You're going to be taken out of your house, and you're going to go over here, and you're going to have to change

your whole world upside down," none of us would like it. That's got to be a hard thing. I tell you, I didn't—I had to tell my sister I'd call my mom, and I had to get back to my appointment. But after I was done, I called her, and all that rest of that appointment, I did not know what I was going to say. Finally, God gave me the words when I finally got her on the phone, and I remembered back, and this is what I told her. I said, "Mom, you know what? There comes a time in our lives when we've got to do what we've got to do, and it may not be what we want to do. You can't go home by yourself. If you do, you're going to fall, you're going to break a hip, you're 86 years old, you're going to break an arm, you're going to go in the hospital, and you're going to lie in a hospital bed, you're going to get pneumonia because you're susceptible to it now, your lungs are going to fill up, and you're going to die."

"Now, I'm telling you this: everything I've learned about not quitting in life, I learned from you and Dad. You and Dad went through the Depression. You and Dad went through World War II. Dad had a motorcycle accident, lost his leg, they reattached his leg back on. He walked with a limp the rest of his life, but he never gave up. He died working in a steel mill, 26 years in Republic. I watched him go to work and come home. I watched him work. I watched my mom work three or four jobs. I said, 'There were times when we didn't have enough to eat. There were times when we didn't know what was going to happen, times that Dad was laid off, times that you didn't have a job. You worked two jobs, three jobs at one time.' And I said, 'In all of my life, my example that has gotten me through where I'm at today, when I wanted to quit, when I thought it was too overwhelming that I couldn't go on, it was that that you instilled in me, that you never quit.'"

"And I said, 'You know what? I've never told you this, but you and Dad did me and Sharon the greatest favors that we ever had, and that is you gave us a legacy of staying with it when the odds were against you, when your back was against the wall, you never quit.' Now, I want to publicly thank you for that today, but at the same time, I want to teach the lesson back to you: you can't quit now. You're at the time of your life, we want to have you around as long as we can. You've got to reach down in and pull it up again, just like you have all of your life. You've got to fight this thing, you've got to stay there, you've got to do what you've got to do, you've got to deal with the way it is, and you cannot quit when you want to quit, because you've never quit in your life." You know what she said to me? She said, "Okay then, I'll go."

I'm telling you, most of your mothers and fathers, whether they were perfect parents or not, probably had a lot of wisdom we could have gleaned from them when we don't. What are you crying for now? Again, I thought when you got married this crying stuff would end. Oh man, I'm not telling any more stories, I'm going to tell jokes. You know what my mother used to say? Everybody probably heard this. All mothers say a couple of things. They all say when you ask them how they found out about something, they always say, "A little birdie told me." Remember that one? How many heard that one? Yeah. You know what my mom used to say? My dad used to say, "You know, my dad's favorite joke was, 'You know, my wife always gives me the last word in our family.'" And somebody would say, "Really?" He'd say, "Yeah, she says, 'Shut up,' and I say, 'Yes, dear.'" I mean, that was his joke. You're going to cry at that one? No, okay, we're not.

But you know what my mother used to say? She used to say, "Show me your friends, Bob, and I'll show you your future," because she understood that the things that we put in our life are going to affect the outcome of our life because they're going to shape the views that we have. We take these verses and we put them in a context for you and for me, and it's great and it works. But the real context for all of this is the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel had quit walking with God, and they've started to hang out with the ungodly. They started standing out with the sinners, and pretty soon they're sitting out with the scornful. You know what they're doing? The very Messiah that God sent them, they're now scorching Him, crucifying Him, allowing Him to be beaten on His back, the same ones for whom He did everything just four or five hundred short years before that. You know why? Because they were backslidden, backslidden, backslidden.

Of course, when you begin to look at all this, you begin to see this. He says in Romans 11:8:

Romans 11:8

> According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear; unto this day.

Of course, I want to take this now and I want to look at this in the context of those three groups. You want to remember our three groups: Israel, the elect, and then the rest.

SEC: Christ's First Coming and Israel's Rejection

With the first coming of Christ, God sent His Son to the nation of Israel. Now that's our first group. Remember, He sends His Son to the nation of Israel. We're just going to take this from the first coming on. We could do it through the whole Bible, but we don't have time for that. Let's just do it in the first section. At the first coming of Christ, God sends His Son to the nation of Israel, and He sends Him to the nation of Israel as their Messiah.

Now, there's a lot of misunderstanding today about Christ and His titles and all of that. The word "Messiah" is a Hebrew term which means "anointed one," and it's from the word "anointed one" that we get the word "Christ." Most people don't even know that. I've heard Christians go around, and they talk about Jesus being their King and Jesus being their Messiah. Jesus is neither your King nor is Jesus your Messiah if you're a New Testament Christian. The word "Messiah" is never used by Paul in any way, shape, or form. It's not a term given to the church. The word "Messiah" is a term that has always dealt with and relates to the nation of Israel. Every Jew knew that when Christ showed up as the Messiah, and they're looking for the Messiah, they understand that that means a King over a political system and a religious system. We know it as the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven, which the Christ was going to bring in, or the Messiah was going to bring to the nation of Israel. Of course, that's something you have got to understand. The terminology in the Bible is absolutely crucial to be able to have the terminology between what people say things are and then, of course, how the Bible lays them out. You want to remember that the word "Messiah" means "anointed one," and the word "anointed one" means "the Christ."

The thing that you've got to know, the next step of that, is you've got to realize that in the Bible there are two anointed ones. Satan is called the anointed cherub that covers the throne back there

in the Old Testament, I think it's in Ezekiel 28:14. And Christ is called in Psalms "the Lord's anointed" in Psalms 2:2. There are two anointed, then there are two Messiahs. If there are two Messiahs and there are two anointed, then there are two Christs. This is why you find the Bible, especially in the Book of Revelation, makes it very clear in Revelation 11:15 and Revelation 12:10 that it talks about "His Christ," "God's Christ," or it says "the Lord's Christ," like it does over in Luke 2:26, because there are very clearly two Christs. There is the Lord's Christ, and then there is the Antichrist, who is the false Messiah or the false anointed one. We know that it always works this way. We know that before the true Messiah shows up, the false one is going to show up. We know that because before the true first King showed up, David, who showed up first? Saul. And he's the type. You see, we know that because it's not your first birth that gets you to heaven, it's your second birth. See, we know that because it wasn't Abel that brought through the line, it was Seth. It's always going to be the second. And it wasn't Ishmael, it was Isaac. That's just the way it works all down through the Bible.

Now, the Book of Matthew makes this concept so very easy. When we're going to talk about how that Israel gets blinded and then a remnant comes out and the rest get blinded, we want to see the process that she goes deaf and blind. We have to follow through the Book of Matthew, at least for a short period of time, to see how this thing works. To me, the Book of Matthew—I understand why it's the first book in what we call your New Testament—the Book of Matthew is an incredible book. It's absolutely paramount for a child of God who's going to figure out the whole concept of things to understand the Book of Matthew. In the Book of Matthew, Jesus Christ is portrayed as the King of the Jews. There's no question about that. In Mark, He's portrayed as a servant. In Luke, He's portrayed as the Son of Man. In John, He's portrayed as the Son of God. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But the first book you have is Matthew, and in Matthew, He's portrayed first and foremost as the King of the Jews, the Messiah to the nation of Israel. Everything in Matthew helps us understand what we're reading in the Book of Romans.

You know what you have in Matthew 1? In Matthew 1, you have a passage there, it says, "These are the books of the generations of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." In chapter 1, we find a genealogy. Every Jew knew about genealogies. The nation of Israel is built on genealogies. It's everything about them goes back to the line and the genealogies within that line. You're going to find as you come down through that, you're going to find that in Matthew 1, you're going to find that every Jew was following that line or should have been. That line takes them from Abraham up through David, up through His birth, and it shows every Jew in chapter 1 that Jesus Christ was the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, and the Son of God. He was the right Messiah in the right line. Every Jew understood that. Most people don't realize that the average Jew in the Old Testament, or at the time of Christ's coming, knew more about his Bible than the greatest Bible scholar today that you could find or the greatest Bible student you could lay your hands on. Their whole life revolved around that Old Testament and the stories in the Old Testament and the things that were happening in the Old Testament. That's what they had. That's what they were looking for. They were looking through the Scriptures. They were following those things that came down the line. In Matthew 1, he purposely wrote Matthew 1 to introduce them to their Messiah, the King of the Jews, and brings them through the right genealogy, through the line of David, right back to Abraham, and every Jew who knew who that was.

You know what he does in chapter 2? He does something amazing in chapter 2. In chapter 2, he records a time period right around His birth. Now, we know that Matthew 2, and many times at Christmas you get this all out of whack. You see the stables and the wise men and the star of Bethlehem on a nice Christmas card or some nativity scene. The truth of the matter is, the wise men never came to the manger. The star was never over the manger. If you read Matthew 2, you realize that at this particular time when the wise men come, they're coming to a house. The Bible says He's not called a baby here; He's called a young child. The truth of the matter is, He's probably two or three years old here at this time. You can't figure it out for sure, but He's certainly not in a manger anymore, and He's certainly not a baby. These wise men, the Bible says, come from the East, and I think probably prophetically that is one of the greatest single lines in the Bible, that they were from the East. Now, keep in mind, Israel was scattered all around everywhere. Christ had come, and He had come in a manger, and now He's in a house, and on one clear night come three wise men, and the Bible says they come from the East. You know what their question is? The first question in the New Testament, you know what their question is? "Where is he that was born King of the Jews?" First question in the New Testament. You know why? Because they're coming looking for a King.

Now, how did they know that? The average Christian thinks they knew that because they all had their New Testament Bibles, and they were looking it up there, and they were reading Matthew. They didn't have the New Testament. One of the greatest single truths you'll ever find within this lesson this morning—there were a lot of hidden things that'll occupy the rest of your life when it comes to learning the Bible and taking up rainy afternoons when they have nothing to do—I'm telling you, you know why they knew where He was? Because the Bible says they came from the East. The East is Babylon. You know who was in Babylon? Daniel was in Babylon. You know what Daniel wrote in Babylon? He wrote the Book of Daniel. You know what the Book of Daniel says in Daniel 2 and Daniel 9? It gives you the exact time period that Christ is going to show up. It tells you in Daniel, in the Book of Daniel, that from the building of the temple the second time, 490 years later, the Messiah was going to come to the nation of Israel. You know what those old boys were doing? They were reading their Bible, studying their Bible. They realized what they had in Daniel. When somebody found out, God revealed Daniel 2 and Daniel 9 to them, they put a pencil to it, and they figured out that this had to be the time of His birth.

Now, you know how I know they knew that? They knew that because when they showed up to Him, they brought Him three gifts. Now, they may have brought Him a whole truckload of gifts, but there are three that are mentioned. They bring Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Now, why gold, frankincense, and myrrh? Everything in the Bible is there for a purpose and there for a reason. I'll tell you why: because those three gifts brought by those three wise men guarantee that you know who He was, and they knew who He was, and they are coming because of the Book of Daniel to find the Messiah that was prophesied to come 490 years after the rebuilding of that temple in Jerusalem in Ezra and Nehemiah. They know almost to the exact year when He's going to be born. They know what city to come from because of the Old Testament passages. They have everything at their fingertips to understand where their King is at the first coming of Christ. They bring Him gold, why? Because gold represents His deity. They bring Him frankincense, why? Because frankincense represents the priesthood. And they bring Him myrrh. Myrrh

represents the fact that He is the prophet. Those are the three offices that Christ holds: He's King, He's Priest, and He's Prophet. No other man in the Old Testament that was king had all three of those offices except one: that's David. David was a king, David was a priest, and David was a prophet. You know what got Saul killed? Saul was a king and Saul was a prophet, but Saul wasn't a priest. When he offered a sacrifice because he just felt like he had to, he violated that concept, and God killed him because he was a king and he was a prophet, but he didn't hold the office of priest. You know what that tells me? It tells me the Antichrist is going to be a king and he's going to be a prophet, but he'll never be the priest, because God's going to kill him at the Second Coming of Christ.

Now, that's an incredible chapter, chapter 2. I just talked about this for a moment. Prophetically, it tells me this: if the wise men—and I love the Christmas cards that I get every year, and a lot of them are biblically tainted, you know, a star, whatever. Somebody sent me one one year, and I thought it was cute, and I like it, and it—you know what? I wouldn't have this illustration if they wouldn't have sent it to me. But it had a star of Bethlehem over the manger, and it had three wise men—you know, you always see them, three camels—and they come over there, and then a little thing under the thing that says, "Today, wise men still seek Him." I thought, "That's neat." Not too biblical, but it's okay, I liked it. But the truth of the matter is, that is a great saying, because today, just like the wise men could go into the Book of Daniel and find the first coming of Christ, you and I can go into the Old Testament and find just about the same time for the Second Coming of Christ. See, now what the wise men back there didn't know, they didn't understand that concept of Daniel's 70th week and the Messiah being cut off in the 69th week and then the last week. They didn't get that. See, they couldn't have got that, but I can get that because after the facts, it all starts to make sense. Matthew introduces Him to the Jew. There was no question about it.

In Matthew 3, you have the ministry of John the Baptist. You'll find this in Luke 1, Matthew 3, Mark 1. Who was John the Baptist? Well, John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ. You see, and John the Baptist was prophesied in Isaiah 40 and Malachi 3. Those Jews knew that. Those Jews read Isaiah and read—hey, let me ask you a question: when Philip went to the Ethiopian eunuch, and he's got scriptures, and he's reading, what's he reading? Isaiah. Those Jews, every one of them, they were much more versed in the Scriptures than you and I are. That was their whole life. We use it as a punch line when we need it, but to them it was real, and they knew exactly, exactly, exactly who John the Baptist was. John the Baptist came six months ahead of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was His PR man, let's put it down now. He was the advanced man. He was the warm-up band. He was the guy that heralded the fact that the King was coming. Of course, every Jew knew who he was. Every Jew knew that, and this is why the importance of Matthew, Mark, and Matthew setting the stage. Of course, the stage, the theme here, is the King Jesus coming to the nation of Israel. That's why you'll find in Matthew 52 times the "Kingdom of Heaven." How many times do you find the term "Kingdom of Heaven" in Mark? Zero. How many times in Luke? Zero. How many times in John? Zero. Why 52 times in Matthew? Because Matthew is about the King coming to establish the Kingdom, a Messiah who is over a King, over a political system, over a nation called the Kingdom of Heaven. That's why, and every Jew knew that.

Now, remember now, so we don't get caught in all this minutia I'm throwing at you today, we're talking about the nation of Israel. We're talking about the nation of Israel, how did they go deaf, how did they go blind? In Matthew 4, we deal with the temptations of Christ. Christ had to be tempted, and the Bible says in Hebrews 2:16-17 that He was tempted on all points like us, yet without sin. He had to be tempted on all points of the law because the Bible, as we've already studied this in Romans, Christ had to fulfill the law, and He could not fulfill the law if He did not keep the law. So when He comes up here in Matthew 4, this is where He's tempted. Notice that He's tempted for 40 days. He's alone in the wilderness 40 days. 40 in your Bible will always be the number of testing. When it rained back there in Noah's time, when God was judging the world, it rained for 40 days and 40 nights. Israel wanders for 40 years. Elijah preached for 40 years. Samuel judged for 40 years. Saul reigned 40 years. David reigned 40 years. Solomon reigned 40 years. Moses was 40 years on the backside of the desert.

Let me just stop that for a moment. Allow me to inject here practical things that I think will help some of you. I hear this all the time from so many of you, and I understand it, and I sympathize with you, but at the same time, I won't allow you to be in it too long because it's not healthy for you, and you need to understand the principle. We've got a lot of people in our church that are in their 50s and their 60s, some of them even older than that. A lot of them, you know, they come to me, and they see all you young people out there, and you're all doing a great job, and you're all excited about it, and they're excited about it, and they want to grow. But because they're good people and because they're really honest people, they feel a tinge of regret that maybe they didn't pick this up quicker. You know what I'm saying? I've had older people all the time. I was preaching one time, and I've told you this story before, preaching sometime one place, and we had a great revival, and people just were getting right with God and saved and the whole nine yards. At the end of the night, before my last sermon, I was finished, and I'm going back the next morning. A guy, about his maybe 70, early 80s, he came over to me, tears running down his face that night, and put his arms around me. He hugged me. He said, "You know what?" He says, "This has been a life-changing event for me." He said, "I just wished God would have given me this material 40 years ago."

Now, I can understand that, and I can appreciate that, and I can sympathize with that. Well, you know what I told him? See, I'm sympathetic to him, but now I'm going to slap him. Well, you know, you have it. God gave you two hands, you know that? One to pat you on the back, I'm going to slap you with. I'm going to pat him on the back, then I slapped him. I'm not literally, but you know what I said to him? I pulled him out of that because you don't want to stay there. You know what I said to him? I said, "You know what? I can understand that, and I said, 'Maybe your life would have been different if you'd have heard what I preached this week 40 years ago. But let me ask you this: what are you going to do with it now that you have heard it? Are you going to go back to sleep?'" Then I told him this, and I always tell people this: "You realize that Moses spent 40 years out of fellowship with God before God was ready to use him? Is there anybody here that can equal that?" I spent the first 19 years of my life wasted it. Some of you may be 19, 20, maybe 25. I don't think there's probably too many people in this world to say, "You know what? I wasted 40 years of my life." Maybe somebody that just gets saved. But my point is this:

it's not about what time you went to work, it's about when you went to work, where you wanted a job. That's what it's about.

Now, I wish in a perfect world, here's how it ought to run: you ought to get born, you ought to grow up with good parents, and you ought to get taught about the Lord all your life as a young kid. By the time you're four or five years old, you ought to start to learn about Jesus and love Jesus, sing little songs like a little kid did up here this morning. By the time you get to be eight or nine, you ought to get really close to your parents, to the Lord. By the time you get 10 or 12, somewhere in there, you get saved. Then about 14 or 15, you really get consecrated. Then about 16 or 17, you just really get it all together, and then the rest of your life you serve God. Wouldn't that be great? It ain't going to work that way. The devil's going to make sure it doesn't work that way. You know, the Bible says that it doesn't matter how much time you screw up before; it only matters where you're at now. I never look at where a person has been or what they've done; that means nothing to me. That means absolutely nothing to me. I only care where they're at now, where they want to go from here. You know what? Sometimes people want to get things off their chest that they've done or where they've been or things they've messed up in life. You know what? And I allow them to do it because maybe they need to talk about it and get it off their chest. But you know, at the end of the day, I forget it five seconds after they're gone. You know what? But that doesn't matter to me. Why do I care where you've been or what you've done? All I care about as your pastor is where you're at from here and where you want to go. I'll tell you, that's all God cares about. That's all God cares about. God wants to know where you're at this morning, not where you were 10 years ago. Maybe you weren't ready 10 years ago. Moses wasn't ready for 40 years. Now, if anybody could make the case, "Boy, I don't know if I could go do this, but you know, I just don't know if I could do this. You know what? I've been—boy, I've been backslidden for 40 years, Lord. I don't know if I can even—" You know why would you want to do that? I mean, 40 years is a long time. "Boy, I've been out in the world and messed around and did all kinds of stupid stuff." You know what? He wasn't ready in those 40 years. We have a joke when we preach about Moses, we talk about the fact that before God could use Moses, Moses had to go to school. Somebody said, "Where do you get that?" The Bible. He went to school. Where did he go? Wilderness University. Ever been there? We've all been there. You know what you had to thank God for? You had to thank God it didn't take you 40 years. You're smarter than Moses. Well, maybe not smarter than Moses, but at least it didn't take you 40 years. Of course, he lived to be 120, so you've got to balance that all out. But the bottom line is this: don't ever say it, don't ever cut yourself short, don't ever deny, don't ever let the devil hurt where God wants to take you because you keep focusing on where you've been. When you confess it and get it right with God, it's done, and don't let anybody else beat you up with it. You move on with your life, and you go where God wants you to go.

Hey, you know what? There was another good one my mother used to say: "He who lives in glass houses should not throw rocks." God love her. I got some other ones she used to say, but I can't tell you what those are because you ask me privately, I'll tell you, they're good ones.

Moses, backside of the desert for 40 years. Now, when the devil comes to him to tempt him—and here's another great principle, and I'm going to get hung up on these, there are so many in

here—another great, you know what the devil does? The devil tries to get him to do three things. Now, if you're paying attention to your Bible, these three things the devil tries to get him to do are three things he is going to do at the Second Coming of Christ. Now, this is the first coming of Christ, and the devil tries to get him to do these three things that he talks about here. But the devil knows that they're going to actually be done when He comes back the second time. You know what that tells me? That's a great principle. You know what the devil will get you to do? He'll get you to do the right thing at the wrong time. He'll get into the details every way he can. But in chapter 4, he goes through his temptations to fulfill the law.

Then Matthew 5, 6, and 7. Now, here's where He preaches a series of messages to Israel. We call these today the Sermon on the Mount. Now, the Sermon on the Mount, let me give you both sides of this. The Sermon on the Mount today is used by the people who teach social gospel, and the Sermon on the Mount is the do-gooders, "do unto others before they do it to you," or, you know, somehow they think—and this is where it comes from—they think if you want to crack down on crime and problems in our schools, give more money for more education, bring more programs in. That's not how it works. You can't fix this country or any country or any society by bringing in more education to legislate morals. The only thing that fixes any country, the demise of a country, is in a society is based on the demise of the individuals, and the only thing that's going to change an individual is not more education but a heart transplant. He's going to have to get saved and have a new spirit, a new heart, that he doesn't do those things anymore. But they'll never get that, and they walk around, and if you were in a Methodist church this morning, or a Catholic church, or a Presbyterian church, or a Lutheran church, or an Anglican church, or a Papalian church, or one of those guys, you'd hear the guy get up there and he'd say, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God." That's not true. You know what he's saying? He's saying that if you've got a—if you're poor in your attitude today, or you're under some kind of pressure, or you're poor in your spirit, that you're automatically going to get salvation. He says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." You want to know why Jimmy Carter goes around trying to get hostages out of here and fixes things over there? You want to know why these guys run all over the world and try to fix places in parts of the world that they ought not to be dealing with? You know why they're doing that? Because they believe from what they hear when they go to church that if they're peacemakers, that makes them children of God. It always bothered me that the greatest people who used to preach that killed more people and caused more people killed than probably any nation or government on planet Earth. It doesn't mean that. The Sermon on the Mount is the constitution and the way things are going to be run when Christ comes back, and He's giving to Israel in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. He's giving to the nation of Israel the understanding that this is what is coming. Yes, Israel is oppressed, and they're poor in spirit right now. When I come back, they're going to be rich because the Bible says, "What? The last shall be first, and the first shall be last." Israel was last right now; they're going to be first. The guys that are first, the Roman Empire, they're going to be last. He asks all these things make sense when you put them into the nation of Israel. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Absolutely. Through the millennial reign of Christ, Israel, who is now the meek one, is going to be in control of the earth, and on and on and on it goes. What we have in Matthew 5, 6, and 7 is Christ coming to the nation of Israel. Every Jew knew this, and He's coming to them laying out to them, "I am the Messiah. Here's My

credentials. I have been tempted. Here I am. Now, this is the Kingdom that I'm bringing you." Remember our three people groups: Israel, the remnant according to election, and then the rest.

In chapter 8 and 9, this is where He puts forth again His Old Testament credentials that every Jew understands for sure that He's the Messiah, and this is where He does the gifts of healing. Now, these are called the gifts of healing, and no charismatic knows what I'm about to tell you. I mean, I've never met a charismatic in the world who knew anything about the Bible at all. You show me a charismatic, and I'll show you somebody who has absolutely no idea of church history, a total disregard for the Bible as final authority, and doesn't know his Bible from the back end of the moon. They just don't. These are called the gifts of an apostle. In 2 Corinthians 12:12 and 1 Corinthians 14:22, we're told that these healing things are for a sign to the Jew. We're also told in 1 Corinthians 1:22 that it's the Jew that requires a sign. Now, why is that? Why, when the Jew saw Jesus healing and a little bit later, He sends out His 12 and they heal, why would a Jew see that and equate that with the true Messiah? I'll tell you why: because every Jew knew his Old Testament, and every Jew knew what happened in Exodus 4 when He called Moses out and He brought Moses out and He told Moses, He says, "Take your hand and put it into your bosom." And he put it into his bosom, and He said, "Now bring it back out." When he brought it back out, it was leprous, white as snow. Then God said to Moses, "Now put it back in again." He put it back in again. This is Exodus 4, down around verse 6. He pulls it again, and it's clean, and it's healed, and it's as perfect as it was before. You know what God says to him? "You want to know how Israel's going to know I'm your God? You want to know how Israel knows that I'm the truth? By these signs." So He gave those signs to Israel. Every Jew knew that story. Every Jew on this planet at the first coming of Christ knew exactly what it meant when he saw Christ heal somebody or bring him back from the dead. He related it right back to Moses. So you have in chapters 8 and 9, you have the sign gifts being displayed.

Then in chapter 10, we have the sending out of the 12. If you're paying attention now, you'll find that He calls them out in Matthew 10:1-4. Then He sends them out in verse 5, and when He sends them out in Matthew 10:5-6, He tells them very clearly, "Don't go to the Gentiles. Don't go to the Samaritans"—those are half Jews, half Gentiles—"go only to the nation of Israel." And He says, "When you go, heal the sick, raise the dead, give eyesight back to the blind." I'm stopped up here. He could have factored in "spitting bullets and leaping tall buildings in a single bound." He gives them all of the gifts that have to go that Israel are looking for, and that's what they do. That's what they do. Why did He pick 12? 12 tribes. Everything He did shows the Jew everything they needed to know about the first coming of Christ. And might I say, everything that you and I have today shows us everything we need to know about the Second Coming of Christ. I haven't got here yet, but I'm going to show you just a little bit how that not only Israel is the only one that is spiritually blind and spiritually deaf. Thank you, dear sweetie. Did she say, "Grandpa, oh, he don't like the sermon, either"?

SEC: Israel's Official Rejection and Blindness

Matthew 11 and 12. Now, Matthew 11 and 12, this is where the problem begins, and you've got to see this progression to understand how they go blind and how they go deaf. Put it in the context of Romans 11 here, because they've got three groups: the nation of Israel—that's what

we're looking at right now, we're looking at the nation of Israel, God is coming to them as a nation—the second group is going to be a remnant, and then the third group is going to be the rest to get blinded.

Now look at Matthew 11 and 12. Here's where the nation of Israel makes the official rejection of the Son of God, and it's led up by through the scribes and the Pharisees and the Sadducees, which represent the nation of Israel. Of course, the accusations against Him in Matthew 12:24 is that the spirit by which He did the things that He was doing was the spirit of Beelzebub. We talked about this a couple of nights ago. Of course, we have in Matthew 12, by the time we get to verse 32, what the charismatic calls the unpardonable sin, which is not really an unpardonable sin. There is no such thing as an unpardonable sin; God will forgive anything, but you've got to put it in the context. Here's what Israel's problem was: God revealed Himself to the nation. Within that nation, there was a religious constituency that wanted nothing to do with God, much like the Bible scholars and the high elite of the churches today. These scribes and Pharisees—the Pharisees and the Sadducees, anyhow—we talked about this a couple weeks ago, they were made up, they were never intended to be part of anything with Israel. They were never part of the original scheme. They come in after 606 BC, and they literally take over the nation of Israel.

May I make a parallel between the scribes or the Pharisees and the Sadducees and what we have today? The bottom line is this: the custodianship of your Bible and the New Testament has always been the church, never scholarship, never some educated jackass that gets up and got Greek and Hebrew and so he feels he's smart enough to correct the Bible. Never happened. The true word of God was always with the church, the true church and the true believers. In the Old Testament, it was always with the nation of Israel through the scribes, and when the scribes got corrupted by the Sadducees and the Pharisees, they lost the Bible. When the common man got corrupted by our scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees, Bible educators and all of the great scholars who want to take you, you lose your Bible. When that begins to happen, you know what first thing takes place? You go deaf and you go blind. This point in history is the single greatest point in history, or one of—there are eight points in history, eight places in history that you just can't miss to figure out how this thing is going. This is the eighth one. Israel becoming a nation in '48 was the eighth one. You know what number eight in your Bible means, don't you? New beginnings. So that means in 1948, we started a new beginning. It just hasn't got here yet.

So we find in Matthew 11 and 12 the official rejection of Him as their Messiah, and they equate that rejection based on the fact that the spirit by which He does these great miracles is not the Spirit of God but the spirit of the devil, Beelzebub being lord of the flies, head of the devils. Of course, that is their downfall. Here's exactly the next chapter, Matthew 13. Here's where they go blind. If you're paying attention, look at Matthew 13:1:

Matthew 13:1

> *The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.*

What same day? The same day they said the spirit by which you do these things is Beelzebub. The same day. Not the next day. He didn't wait 24 hours. He didn't wait a month. He didn't wait

six months. The same day, immediately, the same day, Jesus went out of the house and sat by the seaside.

Matthew 13:2

> *And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.*

> *Matthew 13:3*

> *And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;*

Now, immediately His sermons, which up to this point were clear, understandable, forthwith, everything you could grasp was right there. Now they go into a mystery form called parables, and nobody can understand them. Notice that there are 12 parables, one for each tribe. Notice He says in Matthew 13:9, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." There are people who still have ears to hear, but the majority of them are now deaf. You know what? Let's make another assumption over the church age: there are people today in this Christianity that can still hear what God says, but the majority of them are deaf and dumb. I'll throw that in just for good; it fits. I mean, when you lay this thing out, this thing is so clear a blind man can see it, pardon the pun.

But they make their official rejection immediately in Matthew 13, and this marks Israel's official rejection of Christ as their Messiah, in spite of the first 10 chapters that He gave them everything they were looking for. But the bottom line is, they had been walking with the wrong crowd. They started out as Psalms 1, that great passage that we all talk about that somebody used as a great devotion: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." We can use that as an application: if you as a child of God quit walking with God and start hanging out with the ungodly, pretty soon you're going to be standing with them, and then pretty soon you're going to be sitting right in the middle of them, and you're going to do what every ungodly person does, saved or lost: you're going to make scorn of the things you once loved. No question about that. That's Israel's problem. They hung out with the ungodly, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They hung out with the scribes who had gotten themselves corrupted. They allowed them to take them from the word of God, and yet when that took place, they began to walk as a nation. As a nation, they began to walk with the ungodly. They began to stand around with the sinners, and pretty soon, by the time Christ shows up, they are seated with the scornful, and the scribes and the Pharisees and the Sadducees and all the leaders of Israel, and all the up-and-ups, say now that the very Messiah, the very Messiah that God had sent them, the very one that they knew full well had been prophesied in the Old Testament, who gave them everything they needed to understand who He was, now say He got the spirit of the devil. Wow.

Look at Matthew 13. Pick it up in verse 9:

Matthew 13:9

> *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

> *Matthew 13:10*

> *And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?*

> *Matthew 13:11*

> *He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.*

Ah, here we get our second group. Remember the three groups: nation of Israel, and then the election of grace. Now we saw the nation of Israel reject Him, but out of that nation, He's got a remnant that's going to hear. Watch how this thing goes:

Matthew 13:12

> *For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.*

> *Matthew 13:13*

> *Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.*

See that thing? He says, "They see, but they don't see what I'm doing. They hear, but they don't hear what I'm saying." Now, I want to again, as a child of God, your number one goal in life ought to be never to find yourself in this position, because there could come a time in your life, in my life—and I'm going to show you how in a minute, because this picture is Israel—there can come a time in your life when you as a born-again child of God cannot see God in anything anymore, or you can't hear what God is saying, and you're going to get really screwed up. Happened to Israel, happened to us.

Matthew 13:14

> *And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:*

> *Matthew 13:15*

> *For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.*

See the problem? The problem was their heart. When they hung out with the wrong crowd, remember what your mother used to say, "Show me your friends, I'll show you your future." Remember that? When they started walking with the ungodly, standing with the sinners, and hanging out—when they started to be a companion not of wise people anymore but started to hang out with fools, their destruction was sealed, and God shut their ears that they could not hear and closed their eyes they could not see.

Then look what He says:

Matthew 13:16

> *But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.*

> *Matthew 13:17*

> *For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.*

There's your remnant. That remnant starts with the 12 apostles in the church age. It comes up through the church age, and even today, even though they're not saved and they don't follow the New Testament, they're still orthodox Jews. Somewhere within the concept of the Jewish nation of Israel, even though the nation did not get what it sought for, the election did. Somewhere out there today is a remnant that is going to go into that Tribulation period and come out of that Tribulation period into the Millennium and going to get the blessings and the promise. The rest have been blinded, and the people are going to be saved. Wow.

I've got to confess to you, and I told Bob this, we were eating lunch after the Bible Basic classroom, I told him yesterday, I said, "I had never seen this in all the times I've been through Romans. I never grasped that concept until I came through it laying it out for you." It just kind of knocked me over like that. Israel now is in a backslidden condition, and now because they're in that backslidden condition—and like I said, we use that term for Christianity, but in reality, it's a term for Israel—the book is closed to them, and the remnant makes up the people who God is going to take and going to use, and God is going to bring them through.

Just for a second here, look at Romans 11:17. I didn't read the whole thing.

Romans 11:17

> *And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;*

Now from this point on, Israel as a nation can't hear God or can't see God. The only thing that they see and understand is their own deception that they built themselves in. Take your Bible and quickly turn over to Isaiah 29. Here's a great verse again to go right along with this. I think this is one of the greatest Bible verses. You ever notice how many greatest verses I have in the Bible? I guess I just might say the whole Bible is a great thing, and just take me with it. But I just can't. Look at Isaiah 29:11:

Isaiah 29:11

> *And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed:*

> *Isaiah 29:12*

> *And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.*

See that thing? You know what God did with them? He gave them the Old Testament. He gave them the prophets. He gave them everything they needed. The wise men read it, believed it, understood it, went to find Him in Matthew 2. The common ordinary people, starting the apostles who believed on Christ, they got it. Their ears were opened. But the problem was, as the nation of Israel, God shut the book and sealed the book. They get nothing out of it. Get nothing out of it.

You know what that verse just tells you? The key to learning your Bible is not your education and how much you know or how stupid you are. Now, I tell you all the time, the dumber you are, the better chance you have with the Bible, but not in this sense. What I'm saying is this: the thing that determines whether you read the Bible is not how much education you have or how little education you have. That's concealed in both cases. You know what the thing is determined to get that Bible learned or not learned? Your attitude of heart about that book. Israel had the wrong attitude of heart because they had a wrong attitude of heart. God sealed the book. As long as you and I have the wrong attitude of heart about the things of God and the word of God, you know what God does? God seals the book. Boy, I'll tell you what, God, when it came to the nation of Israel, He sealed the book.

I had a friend of mine that was a missionary to the nation of Israel a number of years back, and he was telling me that he was a missionary to the—he was trying to get Bibles to give to the nation of Israel, the Jews, and he'd have to go through the rabbis, you know, and the leaders of the church to get them to take these things. And the rabbis said, "Well, we'll be glad to take them, but we would like to request that you give us Old Testament Bibles," and they were off the Masoretic text. What he was trying to do is get the Scriptures back to the people because I told you last couple of weeks ago how they've done that, taken out of their hands, and now they use the other stuff. And he said, "We would—we would accept these, but," he says, "could you have us have ones that do not contain Isaiah 53 or Psalm 22?" Now, you know why a rabbi doesn't want his people having an Old Testament that's got Isaiah 53 or Psalm 22 in it? Because they are the two clearest passages in all the Old Testament that show you Christ dying as a suffering lamb on the cross for the mankind of the world. They don't want it. They don't want it.

SEC: Parallel to the Laodicean Church and the Remnant Today

Yet at the same time—and I can't pass this up, I can't show you this with Israel without, and we better get it, without the parallels of the nation of Israel and the church today. Turn over to Revelation 3. Let me show you something. Now, we know from our Bible studies—and we had it laid out very clearly for us yesterday, I've laid it out many, many times, some of the older guys that are around here preaching have laid it out many, many times when they preached or when they've talked, so everybody knows it—but we know that we're living in the Laodicean church period. That's the last one, and that's also the worst one. Look at the parallel here. Look at the parallel between the nation of Israel, now that we have a clear understanding of it, and look at the parallel between the Laodicean church. Look at Revelation 3:14-18:

Revelation 3:14

> And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

> *Revelation 3:15*

> *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.*

> *Revelation 3:16*

> *So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*

> *Revelation 3:17*

> *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:*

> *Revelation 3:18*

> *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*

The parallels are the same. Because the Laodicean church today, God sealed up the book for them for the same reasons where Israel lost the book because of the scribes and the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The church lost the book because of the Bible colleges and the pastors and all the people out there that want to go somewhere else except the Bible itself, and God sealed the book. You know what you've got? It is an amazing thing, and I don't have time to develop it this morning, but what you've got is simply this: as to the nation of Israel and to the church, you both have a remnant. I'm telling you this morning, on the authority of the word of God and what I've said, that if you're here this morning and you believe that Bible is the word of God—I'm not saying you have to be perfect because nobody is—I'm saying if you believe in your heart that the King James Bible is the word of God, and you're committed to learning it, loving it, and using it, and letting God use you, I've got some news for you: in the world of Christianity, you are a remnant today, just like there was a remnant of Israel back in the first coming of Christ. The farther we go, the more the screws are going to come down on the remnant.

I foresee in this country some coming down the line in a few places. Like I say, everything out there is a sign for what's coming. You know, they have a new religious czar now, had him for quite a while, the religious czar under the Obama administration. He's going to set the decrees and what churches should teach and what they should preach. Now, let me ask you a question, and I'm not real bright here: how do you think we're going to fit into that mold? I've already been measured for a robe. I'm going to start wearing a robe, but that's going to be part of it. That's my old buddy I work out with. He says, "Well, my pastor, you're not a real preacher." And I said, "What do you mean?" "You don't wear a robe when you preach." I said, "My preacher is a real preacher; he doesn't even wear a robe." And I said, "Well, I'll get me a robe down." See, the bottom line is this: you realize, probably, maybe not this year, maybe not next year, but if Jesus tarries His coming, you probably realize and understand that we'll probably lose our tax status here at this church. Right now, we're under a 501(c)(3) or something that we have tax—we don't have to pay taxes or anything. You realize that we're probably going to lose that in the next couple of years. You realize that we're the only country in America, only in the world, that does

that for churches? They don't get that in Germany. They don't get that in Spain. They don't get that. The only one that gets that over there is the Roman Catholic Church. We get it over here because of the way this country is founded. But you know what? Can't you see it? Can't you see that everybody—you don't—you know, they're going to push you onto the same health care, which is no health care now. But you know, if you haven't got it yet, you ought to go rent the movie this afternoon called *Soylent Green*. How many has ever seen the movie *Soylent Green*? Let me tell you, it's about a futuristic society that when you hit 80, they kill you, and then they made you into a food compound, and they eat you because there's no food on Earth. How old are you now? Oh, you're close to an age. Man, I'll tell you, I am too. You know your life's bad when you go to the movie theater and the person gives you the senior assistant discount without asking how old you are. They did that at the bar the last time we went. You know, they do it to me all the time. Like me and Jimmy, one place we're down there, John was there with him, remember? We were down there eating. We went from Joplin, we pulled into the Hardee's down there, wherever it was. He gets something to eat, and the lady said, "You guys are senior citizens, aren't you?" And I said, "Get out of here! I said, 'I'm paying full fare!'" It's coming. You're going to be a remnant. You are a remnant; you just don't know it yet. You're going to be the odd man out.

I tell you that for what I'm going to say here in just a few moments, but I'm telling you that now: this church is going to be marked. This church is going to be targeted. This church on a grand scale, and every church like it, because we won't fit into the mold. At least I won't. We won't sign something that says where you can't preach this or preach that. You're going to come down the line in the next couple of years, and if you say the word "homosexual" in anything other than a nice way, you're going to be liable, and you're going to be—you're going to—it's going to be hate preaching. It's already heading that way in just about everything. If you can't look out there on the horizon and see what's coming, you know what? You better have somebody help you cross the street, sweetheart, because you're going to get run over by a truck. It's there everywhere you turn.

We—you know, a thing that I worry about is—and I say these things because when it happens, I don't want—I want you to be prepared for it. I want you to understand there's going to be some hard choices. There's going to be some things you're going to—it's going to—and I think in the long run, it's the best thing that could happen because I think for a long time, American Christianity needed a line in the sand because that line's been blurred. I personally believe—and this is just me—I personally believe that there's enough hard heads in here that when that comes, we'll all just say, "Stick it," and we'll just do what we're doing. I know some of you guys are as hard-headed as a piece of granite. That can be a good thing or a bad thing. But I—I—you know, we may have a few waiver off, you know, and fold up, but I don't think so. Meticulously as I planned what I wanted to do in building this church, I look for a certain kind of person, and you know what? I love guys with military background. Semper Fi. You know what? You're going to quit? Heck no. You can say the other if you want, I'll amen it. You're going to quit? You're going to quit? I ain't going to quit. You're going to quit? You'll quit, won't you? I ain't going to quit. Don't care. You say, "Well, they'll throw us all in jail." Well, then we'll get about 165 missionaries out there. I mean, I'll show you where this is going, but I've got to get going here.

They're the same. I showed you last week how the rabbis have deleted the word of God, the Old Testament, into private interpretation to take out Christ and therefore have destroyed them. The church today has done exactly the same thing with the New Testament by corrupting all the same passages in the Bible and taking passages in the Bible and taking them out. He says, look at Revelation 3:17:

Revelation 3:17

> Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

Now, that is the true condition of the church, but the church doesn't think it's that way, you see? Because they've got Starbucks, they think God's in it. "We've got a McDonald's in it, God's blessed us." They've lost the sight of what the real church is. They have stopped hearing God and seeing God so many years ago. They're just like Israel. You go over to Israel, they've got everything going on over there, and they think God is here. God is a million miles around, but where is God? He's with the remnant. He's with the remnant. My advice to you is to make sure you, when He comes, you're in the remnant.

Now, let me show you the best counsel God ever gave you, and this is scary. Revelation 3:17:

Revelation 3:17

> Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

> Revelation 3:18

> I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

You know what the counsel He gives you and me? Oh, this is rough. You know what the counsel He gives you and me today, if you're a New Testament Christian, if you're saved this morning, if you're here running under the sound of my voice and you are saved, He gives you this advice. This is the counsel He gives you in the church age that we live in: "Go buy yourself some persecution." You like that? I thought sure He'd say, "Go buy yourself a new suit because you look so good." "Go buy your new car or your favorite little miss or that because you deserve it." You know what He said? He says to us, He says to the remnant, "Go buy to yourself gold tried in the fire." That's persecution. You know what you do with gold when you put it in a fire? It purifies it. If there's ever a time that a church—and a church is made up of individuals—needs to be purified by the fire, it's the time that we live in today.

SEC: Conclusion - God's Faithfulness and the Remnant

All right, back to Romans 11 here. Before you go there, come to Psalms 69. Here's another one. Now you have a pretty good picture of it now, and this is the aspect of Romans. Romans is—I have taken my time to lay out every detail of Romans because it is an absolutely concept book. It

is a book that is absolutely the bedrock of the Christian faith. You know who—you know, it was always amazing to me, the people that don't like the Book of Romans. You know who Origen was? Origen detested the Book of Romans. He detested the Book of Romans because the Book of Romans lays down the foundation, and Origen was what we call a Christian philosopher. He was steeped in the Greek and in Egyptian mythology. He was a philosopher after Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates. He liked their—his whole world was reconciling the philosophy of the world with the Bible, which you cannot do. He's what we call in history the first Christian philosopher, and a Christian philosopher is somebody who likes to take the damnable heresy of philosophy and then bring the Bible into it and then make it not certain doctrinal truths but makes it a nice big mishmash of nothing. It doesn't mean anything. That was Origen. You know what? Origen hated the Book of Romans. You know why he hated the Book of Romans? Because you can't philosophize the Book of Romans. He hated the Book of Romans because the Book of Romans—and Martin Luther loved the Book of Romans. You know why? Because when Martin Luther wanted to get saved, that priest in the Roman Catholic Church and all of its philosophy, where did God take him to show him how to be saved? It was Romans 1:17, "The just shall live by faith." Romans is an incredible book, and that's why I've taken the time to detail it out in such a fashion that you could get everything out of this. I don't ever want to have to teach it again. If somebody else says down the line, "I'd like to get the Book of Romans," go back and get the tapes, everything on it there. I probably won't be able to do it as well again. I'll be dead by then. But anyway, you go ahead and take it because I want you to get it.

But look at Psalms 69:20-23. Here it is again, Christ speaking:

Psalms 69:20

> Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.

> Psalms 69:21

> They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

There's Christ on the cross. You see that thing?

Psalms 69:22

> Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap.

> Psalms 69:23

> Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake.

Boy, that's a great prophecy. You know what that thing says? That says the last thing Christ said about the nation of Israel was that thing right there. I know you don't find it in the New Testament other than you find it made some reference to in Romans. He's talking it here, and this is one of the last things that He's saying while He's on the cross. They've already given Him the gall, they've already given Him the vinegar, and in His mind, this is the last thing He thinks about

the nation of Israel. You know what He says? He says, "Let their eyes be darkened," and He says, "Let their loins shake." You know what that means? For the next 1,800 years, brother, you ever know what it means for your loins to shake? It means your knees are knocking. You know why your knees are knocking? Because you're scared to death somebody's going to put a bullet through your head. For the next 1,800 years, wherever they went, their knees were knocking. Let me tell you something: in Auschwitz, Treblinka, their knees were knocking. When Spain put them through the Inquisition in the 1500s, their knees were knocking. Their loins were shaken. No peace to Israel. It's going to be blood, sweat, and tears all the way down the line for them.

And then He says this: "Let their table become a snare." The table is where they're eating, with who they're following. You know what that says? A great, another great principle: the trap you lay for somebody else is usually the trap you get taken in. I like the video that was on TV a while back when the Muslims were burning flags and blowing things up. There's a couple of them. I got a video that if you ever want to watch it, it's called *Buried in the Sand* or something like that. *Buried in the Sand*, or *Love Letters in the Sand*, something like that. Anyway, but it is the most brutal, absolute atrocities that you have ever seen in your life that Saddam Hussein did, not only his people but the people they caught. I mean, I don't know who put this together, but it is one—if you want to—I mean, it is, I can't even speak about some of the things. It is absolutely incredible. It is absolutely beyond belief what goes on in this video. My favorite one in there is, here's a guy—I don't know who he is, he's one of the Saddam boys—he's burning an American flag, and he goes over and he lights the American flag, and he must get too close, and he—you know, they've got them big old robes they wear—he catches his own self on fire, and the flag burns, and he's running around screaming while he's on fire. I love that. You know what happened to him? He got caught in his own trap. You know what happened ultimately to Saddam Hussein? There are pictures of him taking his prisoners upstairs on an eight-story building, put their hand behind their back and throwing them off, and you watch them come down and splat. There are pictures over there of him cutting off people's heads. You get to see everything. Saddam Hussein gassed the Kurds. He did everything in the world, and he was one of the wickedest people in the world, and he had a plan. That plan was to destroy everybody out there and to destroy everybody that got in his way. He thought he was Nimrod recreated. You know that over there in Baghdad was where Babylon was? You know they still have a piece of the Babylonian—whatever it is—over there in some architectural thing. You know what happened to Saddam? Yeah, we killed—no. You know what really happened to Saddam? He got caught in his own trap. I mean, the greatest, biggest guy in the world who's going to take over the world, hiding in a little spider hidey-hole down in a tunnel three inches by four inches. That's Israel. They're going to get caught in their own trap.

So Israel as a nation rejected God's Son, and God gave them the blindness and spiritual deafness. David saith, he says in Romans 11:9, "Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompense unto them." A couple of months ago, I took you through the whole aspect of Christ being the Rock of God, becoming the Rock of Offense, then becoming a stumbling stone. Remember that? Remember I ran you through those verses in Isaiah 8:14 and 1 Peter 2:8 and Matthew 21:42 and Romans 9:33, and that whole thing lays itself out and shows you how that they stumbled over the very Rock that God gave them.

Let me give you a great verse, and again, this verse is used many times for you and for me, and it's true, but it's used—turn over to Job 9. It's talking about the nation of Israel, and this is Israel's biggest problem right here. This sums it up, and many times you've heard me probably quote this verse. I've heard you guys quote it. I've heard even somebody here use it one time in one of their devotions, and it works well for you and for me, but the context of this is the nation of Israel. You always want to see the context. Look at Job 9:4:

Job 9:4

> He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?

Now, that's the ten thousand dollar question right there for Israel. You're not going to harden yourself against God and His word and continue to prosper. I don't think—and I've known, you know, I think George Bernard Shaw was probably the greatest, one of the greatest atheists that ever lived. He hated God every day of his life. Somebody gave him a Bible one time, and after he died, they found the Bible that somebody had given him, and on the front of that flyleaf of that Bible, he had written this: "This is the most undesirable book that anybody has ever given me. I must find time to get rid of it someday." That's what he thought about the word of God. All of his life, he was the most practical atheist you ever saw in your life. You know what? I think he lived to be about 98 years old, something like that, before he died. I don't think he was ever sick one time in his life. He made all kinds of money. He had all kinds of popularity and all kinds of notoriety, and he had everything going for him that the world could ask until he died. So it doesn't always—it doesn't always come true in this life. The recompense in the hand of God, judgment, doesn't always happen now. Sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn't. For Israel, they pay the price, but oh my, the price that's coming when they enter into the Tribulation period. You know what their problem is? They have hardened their heart against God, and yet they're foolish in their own deception, in their own trap. Israel has hardened themselves against God, and in the foolishness of their heart, they really think they're going to—never happen.

God came to the nation of Israel, and they rejected Him, and then after that rejection, we saw them go spiritually blind and spiritually deaf. Yet out of that, God calls a remnant of the elect under grace, and God brings that remnant up through the church age. God brings that remnant of election up through the Rapture, brings them back somewhere over there in Israel right now as we're speaking. God only knows. God has the 12 tribes identified. God has the remnant identified, and God in His plan knows exactly what He's doing on the course of how He's going to do it. But God has His remnant, and the rest were blinded. That's what He's talking about in Romans 11 and those great verses. It goes back to the great concept that God always gets the job done with a faithful few.

I don't ever expect this church to run 500. Don't even expect it to ever run 400. I told somebody a while back, I think we talked about it when I gave you that example back in the Old Testament, the cave of Adullam, where David had 400 people that came to him, all halt, lame, messed up, and he was their guy that took care of him. I thought to myself—I told you—I said, "In my mind, that's always been about probably the max of a church could get that a pastor could actively do

what he has to do without shorting himself out." In my mind, if this church ever got to four or five hundred people, it'd probably be a good idea to split it down to 250 and get some guy that's ready to go to take the other half and start over again. But you know why I don't ever think about that? I don't even have anybody in mind to do that. You know why? We'll never hit 400. Never hit 400. Never happened. Never happened. This church, as all Bible-believing churches wherever they're at, will always be a remnant, and it'll be a situation where the price, as it gets closer to it, the more the screws come down, the bigger price you have to pay, the harder it is for you to function in society when your friends begin to laugh at you because all the other churches have signed on and your church hasn't, the more pressure you get from work and the things that you do and all of the things that happen and all the things that the devil is going to put on you. Hey, let me tell you something, I personally believe—my personal belief is—that most of you don't give a flip. Man, God's put a lot of good people in here that have a lot of guts and a lot of hard-headedness. But I'm telling you this: God always gets it done with a faithful few.

Three groups we looked at today, and that's how you want to remember this passage. The nation of Israel never got what God had for them. They never got what they were after because of the fact how they went blind and deaf. But God called out a remnant called the election of grace, and the rest got blinded. I'm going to say again, and I'm done here now, but I want to say this again: I can't tell you how overwhelmed I was yesterday, not just the fact that we had a good day and those four guys did well. I told you earlier on, the thing that makes me feel so good and keeps—you know, when you're in the ministry and you're dealing with everything and you've got problems of people you've got to work through and your own problems you've got to deal with and everything else that goes on in the world, it's easy sometimes to focus on that. But yesterday was like—it was just like—it was like somebody focused the camera that I was looking through that was out of focus, and it wasn't just the four guys that taught. It was the fact that looking back and thinking back in this church, I thought to myself, "You know what? I could take those four guys, pull them out, put four more guys in, then take them out, put four more guys in, then take them out, put four more guys in, probably take them out and probably get four more guys in. They could do the same thing." This church will only be as strong as the individual men and their wives and their families that understand where we're at, what we're doing, and build themselves to that end. It's the only thing that's going to get you through. You see, I'm not just interested—I'm not just interested in you being able to teach the Bible, but I am interested in you knowing the Bible and being able to teach it, that when push comes to shove, you have the wherewithal to use what you do know to stand. That's where it's at with me.

I was never more proud yesterday. I'm never more proud than I am today. I—you know, I could take—I could just pick some guys out of here and send you just about anywhere. If I had somebody call me up tomorrow and says, "Hey, our pastor died. I need a pastor to come over or a couple of guys to come over and teach and preach for a couple of days, could you, or a couple of Sundays, or a couple of months, could you do it?" I'd say, "You know what? I'll send you a different team every week." You know what? Maybe out of that team that comes over, your church will fall in love with some guy and call them to be the pastor. You know what? I could do that this morning with the older guys and the younger guys and the people who have done. I could do that without any reservation this morning because of what God has done in many of

your hearts with that book. That's why I don't care what comes. Take away our tax status, take away this, take away that. It doesn't matter. If there's anything I'm sure of in life, I'm sure of this—and I think all of you, but I might be wrong, but I like to think that way—I really believe that the majority of you will be found standing when He comes. Maybe not here, maybe someplace else, maybe we'll be all gone, maybe we'll be sneaking around and being shot at. I don't know. I hope it's a two-way game that we can shoot back. Anyway, the bottom line is this: I appreciate the men in this church who know their Bibles. You can teach their Bible, and my goal is to keep building more, add more to it, and that's why I said all the things that I said. I know we talked about Israel today, but the parallels are so great.

God doesn't care. Did you ever stop and look what Israel's done to God down through history? Crucified His Son, just for starters. Equated the spirit by which He did the things of the spirit of Beelzebub. Persecuted all of the true remnant back there. Went after Baal in the Old Testament to the point where it was just unbelievable. And yet God, God in a heartbeat forgives them, loves them, takes them back. That's some God you've got. Say it one last time, and I'm finished: God doesn't care when you go to work. What God cares about is when you finally get to work, are you doing the job? Father, we thank You and praise You for today. We love You.