

## I. The Triumphal Entry and Biblical Patterns

Last week, we came across in our study what I told you then, and it was true: the high point in Christ's earthly ministry. That would be His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. You are seeing where that began the tradition of what we call Palm Sunday, the Sunday that He went into Jerusalem and they laid the palm branches down.

This last week, I think Wednesday was Ash Wednesday. If you had a coal furnace, that's when they called and came and hauled out your ashes. But essentially, it went to gas, and now it's a religious holiday where you put the little ashes on your forehead as preparation for the mark of the beast, which will be coming around here after a while. When we get to Easter, I always have our traditional Easter message, "A Letter from Hell."

We put everything here in this church in perspective from the Bible. I am not interested in tradition. I am not into what some pastor has believed or some Christian has believed. Our final authority is the Word of God. The triumphal entry into Jerusalem had nothing to do with Easter. Easter is the pagan word "Astarte," and nobody in the New Testament church up to around 400 or 500 A.D., and then in the Catholic Church, nobody celebrated Easter. Easter is a pagan holiday that was brought in by Constantine to merge Christianity and paganism together. We will get into all that when we get to it.

His triumphal entry into Jerusalem is significant. It is the high point of His earthly ministry. I also showed you all the studies that come out of this one study in John chapter 11 and John chapter 12. These are the things that I want you to see. I want you to learn from it, but I want you to see the depth of your Bible and the patterns of the Bible, and how you use these things in unlocking all of its material.

I mentioned last week, and I didn't have time to get into all of it, but I mentioned how that in the Bible there are some people who die one time. There are some people who die twice. There is a reason for that. That's a pattern of something that God wants to teach you in a greater study. You remember I showed you the two cleansings of the temple. The first time, in the beginning of His ministry, He threw them out and said, "My Father's house." The second time, three years later, after He goes into Jerusalem in a triumphal entry, He calls it "My house." There is a reason for that. That's a pattern of study. That in itself is a great study.

I showed you the two anointings of His feet. One again at the first coming where she just does His feet. The one three years later, right before He is crucified, she not only does His feet, but she puts the oil on His head, signifying that He is now the King of the Jews. Then He goes right into Jerusalem in the triumphal entry. All great studies that you can unearth out of the Bible. Then I showed you the ass and her colt, and how that they picture Israel and her spiritual condition at the first coming of Christ and the Church Age coming to the Gentiles. It is incredible stuff.

## II. The Simplicity and Authority of God's Word

I told you last week that the real key to getting anything out of the Bible or getting anything from God is one word: simplicity. It is all right there in the Word of God in fourth-grade English for you and for me. It is a very simple book. I call it the common Bible for the common man. No education needed, no Greek, no Hebrew needed, just a fourth-grade reading level and a heart to really find God. You give me those two aspects, and you will learn your Bible.

Now, learning the Scriptures, let's talk about that for a moment here. My goal for all of you is a very simple plan, and that is for you to learn the Word of God. Everything that I do, every message I preach, every Bible study I open up, every institute, no matter what we do, one-on-one or however it may be, I follow a very simple plan.

The first aspect of that plan is lifting up the Word of God. You have to see the Word of God as it really is: the absolute final authority and the greatest book this world has ever seen. I told you Thursday night in Bible study that Baptists traditionally have the pulpit in the middle. You go to other churches, it's on the left or the right or up in the air someplace, but in Baptist churches, for time and eternity, it's been in the center with a pulpit of wood. The reason for that is because they wanted to make sure that everybody out there realized that the central thing of that church was the preaching of the Word of God.

The next aspect of it is to show you it's God's Word, and it's all that you need. In any church scenario, in any group of people, there are all kinds of people here. Some of you are on a good, high spiritual level. Some of you are on a mid-level. Some of you are on a lower level. Some of you are just going through some struggles in life. You have some issues in life. The bad choices that you have made have put you in the circumstances that you are in. Now, I am not somebody that's going to stand up here and beat you up for bad choices. We have all made bad choices. You are not alone in that. But I am going to tell you this: you don't have to stay in that condition that you are in. The Bible is the one book that will solve every problem you have. It will fix whatever is broken with you. It will fix whatever you have to fix in your life.

I don't care, I tell people all the time, I don't care where you have been, what you have done, what you have come through, or where you are at. I only care where you are at now and where you want to go with the Word of God. That's all that matters. What are you going to do with the Word of God in life to fix what's broken? Because I am here to tell you right now, I will lift up the Word of God as the greatest book that's ever been seen, and I will show you that it's God's Word. But you have to decide you want that.

## III. The Church's Divine Purpose: Finishing God's Work

When you decide you want that, my next step is to give you the tools. Put the people in your life that you need. Give you the tools to do what God has called you to do. Then, not just giving you the tools, sitting down with you one-on-one if need be, or people in this church show you how to use those tools. The real goal of this is then putting you by my side in the ministry of this church to teach and to train you to use what God has given you, to get you ready to do something for

God in a world that nobody really wants to do anything for God through the biblical patterns of building people. That's what a church does.

You talk about, "I am going to start a church, and I am going to build a church." You build a church by building people. You can build a building all you want; that's not a church. What makes it work, what makes it powerful, what makes it for God to use, is the people that are in it and how committed they are to what God has called them to do.

Now, I must confess to you that we have in our church, as all churches do—I can't be responsible for whether they recognize it or not—but I do in this church, we have a God-given, holy, divine purpose and calling. This is not just some social event that we have. That's not some social gathering where we all get together and just have a kumbaya time. I know we play volleyball, we play softball, but I have explained that to you already. It's a measure, it's a means to an end. We want to reach our culture. We want to use those tools to reach out to people that are hurt and that are broken, that are busted and need the Word of God to fulfill and finish what God started with His Son.

I think that's probably the most glaring, misunderstood, or totally misunderstood concept of Christianity today: that we are here today after the death of His Son. He was the Son of God. He was sent down here to do the work of God, and He says it over and over, "I was sent to do the work of My Father." But He only lived 33 years. His real ministry didn't even start until He was 30. He never, never finished that work. He never got outside the little sphere there in the Middle East where He traveled and where He lived. Then after three short years of public ministry, He goes to the cross and He dies. Then in Acts chapter 1 and 2, He goes back to heaven, and that ended His work temporarily with the nation of Israel because the ass now was unrideable last week.

But now something changes, and this is what God's people don't see. This is what they are oblivious to. But now He turns His attention to the Gentile, the ass is colt, and He now establishes His church. He does that because now we, after you and I get saved, we become the sons of God. We now, as the sons of God, need to finish the work that God's Son started. God's people are oblivious to that.

We saw this last week in John chapter 12, verses 23 and 25, where He says:

*John 12:23-25*

*And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.*

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

*He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*

He was the corn of wheat. He is talking about Himself. He was the corn of wheat that fell to the ground and died. Then it says, if He does die, He is going to bring forth much fruit. You know who that fruit is? You, me, the coming Church Age. You see, God expected—I hate to say this, I

hope we don't expect God to expect too much—but God expected for you and for me, once we got saved, once we understand God's dying for us, and understand hopefully the plan of God, that we would see that it is our now responsibility to pick up the work that He never got finished and take that work to the world and finish the work of the Father.

#### IV. The Wise Master Builder and Levels of Commitment

There are key words in the New Testament for you and for me as a Christian. One of them is "a watchman." We are going to be a watchman for other people. We are going to be a watchman for each other. My job is to be a watchman for your soul. We have talked about the two aspects, God's will and God's plan, totally lost today. But then the Bible tells us that we are to be a wise master builder. Now, heavy emphasis on "wise" because a wise master builder, found in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 10, will recognize what Christ has done for him. He sees his salvation as the foundation of his Christianity, and then he understands that the rest of their lives they build on that foundation for a purpose: to finish God's work.

Now, I look at God's people today, and I see two kinds of wise builders. Many of you got saved and you never looked back. You got saved, you got in the Word of God, and you began to lay on that foundation the Word of God, and you now are building gold, silver, precious stones versus wood, hay, and stubble. You went right to work on it. You are a wise master builder.

Some of us did not do that. Some of us complicated our lives so much, didn't we? We did a lot of dumb things, didn't we? Notice I am not saying "didn't you." I am saying "didn't we." We made a lot of mistakes that put extra baggage in our life, and maybe we were saved or we got saved, but we could never overcome those obstacles. Then there comes a time in your life when God will give you your chance because He wants you to be productive. So He will bring you to a place like this or a church that preaches the Bible with a pastor who understands how to help you, with people who are more than willing to be there for you. Then what He does is He rebuilds in your life.

What you will have to do, folks, in some cases, is you will have to scrape everything off down to the foundation because you built it wrong. You have wrong concepts, you have wrong thinking, you have wrong friends, you have wrong relationships, you have wrong everything. For you to be a wise, you cannot be a wise master builder, but you can be a wise master rebuilder. We help you with this; we have done it with so many of you. We clear it off down to the foundation. We take it right back to the day you got saved and rebuild right, wisely putting the things in your life that you need for only one purpose, one purpose only: to get you to the place where you can finish the work that God started.

Some 19 years ago now, my family and I started this work, and there were about 12 or 13 or 14 of you that were with us back then. We met in our kitchen and organized our church. Pastor Waylon came and preached that morning and sent us out of his church. I follow a simple, basic format that was taught to me years ago by the old boys that are all dead now in the concept of building a church. When you preach the Bible and you make that the center of attention, God will use it to bring people who God has put into their heart the burden to serve God.

He said it in John chapter 12, verse 32, He said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me." That's the principle by which I work. There are people out there that need this church. This church needs the people that are out there if we are going to finish the work. You don't get it by putting a big ad in the newspaper. You don't get it by buying a billboard. You don't get it by... you know how you get it? You just simply get in a book and lift up Christ.

Having said that, it's no accident that you are here today. The church's job, the pastor's job, is to build the people God sends him, that we together can finish the work that God started. Understanding the anatomy of a New Testament church, there's no accident you are here today. You are here whether you know it or not, whether you believe it or not. You are here by divine appointment. God wanted you here today, whether you are a visitor, whether you are somebody checking it out or whatever. You got to this church because God got you here. I know so-and-so may have invited you, but that's only because God put them in your heart, and that's how it works. He put us together to prove us. That's what He says in Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2: to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

You see, God wants to see... God brought you to a Bible-believing, Bible-teaching, Bible-preaching church. Well, you don't have any excuses now. You can't blame your going forward on where you have been because it doesn't matter anymore. You can't blame the struggles that you may have, the bad choices that you made, and keep you now from serving God because I have eliminated all that. You may not be able to be a wise master builder, but you certainly can be a wise master rebuilder because wherever you are at in your life, when you decide that you are going to do what God wants you to do, that slate is clean. You are in a place where you can get everything that you need never to go back to the world again.

The biggest enemy will not be your ex, male or female. The biggest enemy won't be your past, your jail time. The biggest enemy won't be the bad choices that you made. The biggest enemy that you face will not be the people you hang out with. No, no, no. The biggest enemy you face will be you in deciding what you are going to do.

Our church is an incredible blend of people, blessed with people that God has given us here. We have the old guard, the older ones that are solid in the faith and the book. Some of you and me, we go back what, 30 years. You know me, you understand how I work, my burden. You understand how I take my calling seriously, and you have totally made it yours too. You have been with me now for so many years that I am amazed that you could put up with me for that long. But you have been by my side no matter what comes. Some of you were out doing other things, and God has brought you back, but you are the same old guard that always was. No matter what comes our way, you will always be faithful to the work of God and the ministry here. From COVID-19 to communism, it doesn't matter.

I look at what's going on over in Ukraine right now. I am amazed, but I am also angered. I am not in the position to do anything about it. I tried to call Biden; he didn't take my call. I am just a little podunk preacher up here that just gets on to YouTube, and 1,500 people listen to me every week. I don't have any clout with anybody that's changed anything, but I want to tell you something. I look at that over there, and I look at Russia wanting to come down and take over a

country. I watch these Ukrainians, who are incredible people. I watch them, men in their fifties and sixties and their seventies, women in their sixties and their seventies, taking up arms to stop them. I watch civilians filling the streets, stopping the Russian tanks, daring them to crush them under their treads to keep them out of their city. I watched an army that is well overwhelmed, well overgunned, well over-tanked, well over-aircraft, everything, hold them almost to a standstill.

I look at that, and I think to myself, why can't God's people do that? Why can't God's people take a stand against the world, the flesh, and the devil like those good people over there are willing to lay down their life for their country? I think that's admirable, but it bothers me that God's people in Christianity today, when it comes to the work that we have in the opposition, which is greater than the next 5,000 Putins you could put together, that wants to stop, kill, maim spiritually people across this world, and we just stand by and let it happen.

I look at the president of Ukraine, and when I see him, I see what a good leader does. A good leader has the ability to rally his people, a whole country, to a cause. You know what the tragedy is? Pastors today not only do not have the ability to rally their people to the cause of Christ, they don't even know what the cause is.

Then I have them also who are invaluable, the folks that we have picked up in the last 18 or 19 years since we have been here. You are still here, you are part of this ministry, you do the work. The blessing is that I watched you come here, I watched you check it out, I have seen God take you and build you, and watched your heart yield to God, and I have watched God develop you. You came in through softball, some of you. Some of you volleyball. Some of you Bible study. Some of you, somebody invited you to church. Some of you were watching on YouTube, but actually you were far out in another state, and you moved all the way here just to be part of what we are doing here. I have watched God develop you. I have watched God develop your families, and your kids now are by your side in this church, working in the Timothy, working in the Bible Explorers. They are helping Zach and Jenny in the high school. They are doing by your side what God has called us all to do. God has grown you to the point that you too now understand the work and the calling and the ministry that God has called me to. You now, as the old guard, are by my side, and we are getting it done together by the grace of God.

Then we have what I call all of the new folks who just keep coming in. I want to say this: a couple of weeks ago, I preached the salvation message really hot and hard out of here. We had like five people get saved. I want to tell you something, those five people that got saved haven't missed a church service ever since. They are here. Most people, they get saved, they get saved on Sunday, and by Wednesday of that week, they have been talked out of it and got a better deal. That's not New Testament Christianity. It changes you. I watch you come in that door, and I just want to hug you and hold you forever because I am so proud of you guys and what you have allowed God to do in your life. You will come, and you will get the vision in time for what God has saved you for and brought us together for. You are going to see that your job in any New Testament local church, but let's talk about this one, is to find out what the pastor's burden is, get his vision, and then let God develop you and grow you that we together can finish that work that Christ started.

On whatever spiritual level you are today, you guys do what you can do to make this thing the work that God needs it to be. You young folks that just got saved, you young singles that have come in and done a phenomenal job with the ministry that I cannot even, I can spend hours on. You are the future of this church. You now are the lifeblood of this church. You don't cause problems; you solve problems. You folks, on whatever level you are, and some of you just got saved and you are willing to do whatever. You want to do whatever you can do on your level. You guys have the most willing attitude of heart of anybody I have ever seen in the world, all because you have allowed God to do the work in you.

From our nursery with Jesse and the ladies who work in there, from our Bible Explorers with Jim and Kathy, from our Timothy ministry with Danny and Jamie, to our high school with Zach and Jenny, to our single ministry, to our adult ministry, and all the leaders who lead on all many levels of working and helping with people. We all work for one goal. It isn't, "Well, this is my ministry, and this is my ministry, and I do this, and I do that." No, that's not the way you look at it, but that's the way it's looked at many times. All of us work together as one concerted body to finish the work that He started.

As a pastor of a New Testament church, overall I have one goal for myself, and that is to do the best job I possibly can to do with what God gives me to work and to finish the work and to finish what He started here, but doing it by the book. Yet I understand in dealing with people in ministry—this is not my first rodeo. I have been in this business for over 50 years now—and you will know you will find those who all they want from you is what they can get from you. They want all the good Bible, but they are not really interested in helping me build this church. I have experienced this in my life and ministry all my life, as all pastors do. I am certainly not alone in that, but they are the takers in Christianity, but they are never the givers. You will grow fat with all the Bible that I put out, but you will never help me do what God has called me to do. You will never lift a finger. You will never do one thing. You will never get past being a spiritual potato couch Christian. You just sit there and absorb. You are just a spiritual sponge in the bucket of water of the Word of God. You are willing to lay there in the bucket and soak up everything you can, but you will never let God take you and wring you out that somebody else can get a drink of that water. That's the reality of ministry of working with God's people.

## V. The Palm Tree Christian: A Model for Life

Today, I want to talk about some things we talked about last week, but in particular, and I think this is great, I want to talk about palm trees, but an inspirational application. Another great study in the Bible will be the study of trees. Back in Mark chapter 8, verse 24, there is a story of another blind man, and he is blind, and he meets Jesus. You don't have to turn to it; just listen to the story. I am going to be turning some places here in a minute. He meets Jesus, and he is blind. The first thing Jesus does is He makes some spittle and puts it on his eyes, and He asks him, "What do you see?" The man makes a classic statement, which really becomes a definitive for us, where he says, "I see men walking around like trees." That's one of the greatest keys in the Bible that shows you that men in the Bible are like the trees.

- Trees are made up of cells, so is your body.

- Trees have families, so do you.
- Trees have limbs, so do you.
- Trees bear fruit.
- Trees build families. We call them an orchard. You take an apple tree and put one apple tree there. 40 years later, you have a hundred apple trees, all from one tree. They build their families. We call it, "I am going to study my family tree."
- Trees will get their roots down and be unmovable. Most of God's people do the same thing. I got my roots down in Kansas City in 1976, and I am not going anywhere. My roots are here. Most of you, your roots are here. You were born here, you will live here, and you will die here.
- Trees get diseases and die, and some trees bear fruit, and some trees don't bear fruit at all.

Christ in the Bible is likened to an olive tree in Romans chapter 11. Christians in Romans chapter 11 are likened to the wild olive tree, like the wild ass last week, colt. The Antichrist in Psalms chapter 37, verse 35, is called the great bay tree. Interesting study. Israel is likened to a fig tree, Matthew chapter 24. In the book of Judges chapter 9 and Ezekiel chapter 31, you have laid out for you the seven trees that were in the Garden of Eden back in the beginning. Every one of them represents a different person. What a study that is. And on and on it goes.

When Christ dies on the cross, He is crucified on an oak tree. You say, "Now Bob, the Bible doesn't say that." Sure it does. You just don't know where to look or what to look for. I bet you somebody would say, "Well, I don't, that's not in the Bible, that can't be." You couldn't give me the definitive passage on the oak tree in the Bible if somebody put a gun to your head. You never want to throw things out in the Bible when you don't know enough about the Bible to find what a definitive passage is because that's where you start. Remember, I said it last week, God will teach you just as much by what He doesn't say as He does about what He says. That will be one of the great studies in the Bible. You will get there in time. You just keep staying with the book, keep growing, and you will get there. You will get there.

When God made the temple, the house of God, He used cedar wood from a cedar tree. People are likened to the cedar tree. They call them the cedars of Lebanon. When you look at the cedar wood and why God picked that to build the house of God, you will find that there are five characteristics of a cedar tree that will represent the Word of God in your life and my life that will help us to be everything that God wants us to be.

1. The first aspect of it is that the cedar tree will put its roots in rocks. The Bible says in John chapter 1, verse 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Word of God has its beginning and its roots in the rock of God.

2. The second thing about it, the cedar tree, is that it's an evergreen. It never dies. It bears fruit and leaves all year around. When you want to look at this, you want to also know that there is also a counterfeit evergreen tree that represents the Antichrist and the devil. You will find that in Jeremiah chapter 10.
3. The third thing you will find is that it represents long life. It doesn't rot. It doesn't degenerate like some trees do. That's the promise of God in Ephesians chapter 6, Deuteronomy 21, Deuteronomy 18, Leviticus 24, that if you do what's right with the Word of God, you will have long life.
4. The fourth thing is the fact that the cedar, unlike most trees, never really gets diseases because it repels bugs. In 1 Corinthians 11, verse 19, and in Titus chapter 1, 2, and 3, we see that there is no fear in the church of God or the Word of God with heresy or heretics. That book repels bugs.
5. The fifth thing is it's sovereign to the core. I am going to tell you again, no matter where you are at or what spiritual level you are in, no matter what your struggles are today, no matter what your defeats are today, I am going to stand here and tell you that that book will make you sovereign to the core. It will fix every problem you have. It may take some time. You may have some battles of quitting doing it your way and starting doing it God's way, but it will get the job done, believe me.

Now then, when we come to palm trees in the Bible, inspirationally, we have now a picture from a practical application of what you and I should be for God in doing the work that God started, stopped with His Son's death, and then gave the commission to you and me. It's a picture of what we should be. So let's go back first of all to Psalms chapter 92, and you can turn to this. I am going to begin reading in verse 12, 13, 14, and 15. It says this:

*Psalms 92:12-15*

*The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*

*Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.*

*They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;*

*To shew that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.*

Let's pray. Father, we thank You today for the Lord Jesus. Thank You for the folks that have come out today for the Word of God and His power. We pray now, Father, that You will open up our hearts and our minds, help us see ourselves in this. Lord, may You reach out to everybody here today that they see and understand the burden, the calling of what we have to do. Now, Lord, we can't just sit at home and glean out of the Bible. We can't just get spiritually fat. We have a job to do. The reason why You started this church is to get the job done. God, we need men and women who will commit to that. We will thank You and praise You now in Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it. Amen.

Now, doctrinally, I told you last week that this is the millennium in the kingdom of heaven, God establishing it with Israel. But inspirationally, this is the picture of what our lives should be as

God's people. I want to, first thing I want to do is I want to show you five things here in this verse that will be in your life and my life, or should be.

6. The first thing he says in verse 12 is that the righteous shall flourish. How is your flourishing going today? Many of God's people, not people who are just new people, but have been saved for years and years and years, their life is such a screwed up mess because of bad choices they have made. They are not flourishing anywhere. So he says, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree." That's going to be our study now.
7. The second thing he says is that we need to be planted in the house of God. I know the house of God back there is the temple, but I am going to make an inspirational leap here and tell you that that's the church in the New Testament. You need to be planted if you are saved today and you want to flourish in this church, not on your couch, but in this church. That's how it works.
8. Then the next thing, verse 14, "They shall bring forth fruit in old age." It's a simple concept. The older you get, the better you should be. The older you get, the wiser you should be. The older you get, the more in touch with God and the more depth you should have with the Word of God, and you ought to be touching people's lives in a greater way. It's just that simple. I know that that is foreign today. This whole message is foreign today, but I don't care. This church is foreign to most churches, and I just stick with the book.
9. Then the next thing he says, "They shall be fat and flourishing." That means, it goes along with the line he just said, that you continue to grow, get depth to you, and continue to flourish.
10. Then verse 15, he says, that will be the blessings of God. Then in verse 15, "To show that the LORD is upright." The end result of this is for you and me to be a witness that the way you are living your life is the right way to live it. That's what people are looking for. People who have a lot of problems in their life, people who have made a lot of bad decisions in their life, people that have made a lot of bad choices in their life, they don't need the influence of Christians who have the same bad choices. They need to see that there is something different about a man or a woman's life if you follow the principles of the Word of God. That's what he is saying here.

Now, when it comes to Christianity, you will find in Matthew chapter 13, one of the favorite parables that people like to talk about, called the parable of the sower, found in Matthew chapter 13, verses 18 through 23. I would like to read that for you as it fits right into where we are going today.

*Matthew 13:18-23*

*Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.*

*When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.*

*But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;*

*Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.*

*He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.*

*But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

In this story, he goes through and lays out how men will be blinded by the devil when they are first given the Word of God. These are the excuses of why people don't accept the Word of God and don't get saved. Some of the seed falls by the wayside, carelessness. Some falls on the stony places, that's the hardness of their heart. Some falls into the thorns, that's the things of the world, grow up and choke you so you can't get the job done, and you reject it. It takes the Word of God from them. But then in verse 23, it says that some fell on good ground, and it brings forth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold.

That is an incredible study in the Bible as I am going to try to lay out for you today, and it's one of the incredible things that shows you God's people today. You will see this same pattern in the 12 apostles if you study them, and also it is a picture of New Testament Christianity. With the 12 apostles, you had 12 men. One of them was a phony, Judas, a picture of an unsaved man, showing you that in every church there is going to be unsaved people. Let's get him out of the way. Then you have 11 left. Out of that 11 left, you have one that goes the hundred percent, that's John. You have two that will go, we will say 60 percent, that's Peter and James. Then you have the remaining eight that you never read anything about, never hear anything of them really doing, that will be your 30 percent.

God's people today will fall into the same three categories. I have watched this thing for 50 years. When you start a church, I work to finish what God has started. You will see this is so true in the lives and the hearts of God's people. It's a thing where, let's talk about the 30 percent group for a moment. I have always thought, I always knew God had a sense of humor, and sometimes God plays great tricks on people in the world. I have always thought to myself, when you look at the 30 percent crowd, these are people who don't do anything. They don't ever really come to church. They will get on the website, they will get in there. I cannot tell you how many texts or phone calls I get in a week's time from people out there that want to know some deep thing about the Bible. The first thing I ask them is where they are going to church. One guy told me the other week, he says, "Well," he says, "I quit, we quit going to church when COVID hit." And I said, "Well, COVID's over." Yeah, silence.

I have often thought to myself, what an amazing thing it is. Most of these people are in a political world. I am not political. I am not a Democrat, nor am I Republican. I could care less. But most of these people, they hate the Biden administration. They love the conservatives and all that stuff. I have always thought it, and I have heard them say, "Well, Biden's approval ratings are in the tank. He's down in the 30s." But I thought to myself, "You idiot, when it comes to you and God and God's approval rate, that's where your ratings are. You are in the 30s." They never get it. They never get it.

In any church, you will find God's people who will never get involved to do anything for God. There is absolutely no commitment in their life to help the pastor, any pastor, do what God has called him to do and what the church is called to do. They will sit, get on the website, or they will sit in church or listen all the time, and they will glean everything that they can. They will just take everything they can get, and they will never do anything with it. They will take everything a pastor can give them, but never one time will they lift a finger to help him. They don't care about what the plan of God is. They don't care about the work of God. All they care about is what they can get so they can stay spiritually fat, go around and impress everybody with what they know about the Bible. I am telling you right now, you will never build a church with that kind of people. It's just that simple. They would never think to get involved to help the pastor do what God has called us to do.

I have a message I preach. I have never preached it to you guys because I didn't need to. But I was out preaching years ago and going all kinds of places. I had a message I put together, and I don't usually title my messages, but sometimes you have to put a title to it to make it impact. The name of this message was, "What's the Difference?" In the sermon, I would build it around some things, and then I would ask the question. I would say to God's people, "What's the difference between an atheist who would never go to a church and a Christian who won't go either?" I would say, "What's the difference between a Christian who won't open and read his Bible and an agnostic who won't do it either?" Then I would ask them, "What is the difference between an unsaved man who will never support a church and never do anything to be part of it and never do anything to help it grow, between a Christian that won't do it either?" You know what the answer is? There is no difference. There is no difference. As a pastor, you will never build a church or work of God with a 30 percent crowd.

As I said, I have guys send me stuff all the time. I have guys, you know, "On the third day of creation, God made duct tape, and on the fourth day of creation, He made a delete button on your computer." I thank God for the delete button. I get it all the time. I get texts, I will get phone calls, I will get this, people out there. Let me explain this. We have a lot of people across the country, and you do not have a church, and you can't find a Bible-believing church. You want to learn the Bible, and you are a member of this church, even though you may live someplace else. You support this church financially, you are always sending letters of encouragement, you are always getting it, and you are doing something with it. I am not talking about you. We are here for you. I am talking about the people in this city. I am talking about the people that are all around us that just don't really care. They don't care what's going on. They don't see that we have a job to do.

I watch some guys who try to build a church, and they will never learn this lesson, and it's so simple. They are at it for years, and they never see any real growth. The church is, you know, you get people that are mad at this church, and they go to your church, and then pretty soon they get mad at your church and go to another church. Your church is just a highway station. It's a Motel Six. This will be the mixed multitude, and I am telling you right now, you will never build a church with a 30 percent crowd.

Then you will have the 60 percent crowd. These people, they are good people, and they are all good people. But they are only a little over halfway. They will come and they will get involved in some things, usually the fun stuff. But when the real action takes place, they are nowhere to be found. They are there for a while, and then they are out for a while. You will find different variations of this crowd. Sometimes they are in a year's time, you know, they will come five or six months out of twelve, and then they are out four, and then they are back in two, and it's just the way it works. They schedule God, they schedule church, they schedule Bible study, they schedule the things of God around their social life, around ballgames, around the cabin at the lake, around their boat, around the fishing season from May to September, or the boating season, or the cabin season, or the lake season, whatever you call it. All the things that they enjoy more than they do ever doing anything for God. They are the lukewarm Christians talked about in Revelation chapter 3. They are neither hot nor cold. No real commitment. They will do for God as long as it doesn't interfere with what they want to do. They serve God out of convenience, not out of commitment. To them, the word sacrifice is something that God did for them, but oh my, don't ever ask me to do that for God.

For years, almost 20 years, I worked for a pastor here in Kansas City, his name was Truman Dollar. I learned a lot from Truman. I always looked at him as my friend. We didn't always agree on everything, but he was always good to me. He allowed me to ask him questions, and it was invaluable some of the stuff that he taught me. He was very high up in the fellowship, and he was very well dialed in, but yet he understood the fallacies of it. He may have not talked to everybody about it, but I would drive him when he went to Springfield or someplace, and I would be his driver, and we would talk and spend the night, and drive him back. I had a lot of time to ask him questions because I wanted to learn. He gave me some incredible insight. One of the things that he told me that I have never forgotten, and boy, this is so true. I may not have fully understood it at the time because I was just getting my feet wet in it, but here was a guy that had been in it for a long time, and he knew the political side of it. He knew the Bible side of it. He knew the whole side of it, and I could glean from him. He said something to me one time, and I will never forget it. We were driving down the thing, and I forget what I was saying, and I can still hear him saying, "Bob, you are going to find out that in Christianity, everybody will forget what you did for them yesterday, and all they want to know is what you are going to do for them today." That is so true. I can't tell you how invaluable that was to me. Maybe I didn't see it at the time, but boy, years later gone by with some mileage stacked on these tires, I get it, man. I get it.

Then you have the 100 percent crowd. These guys, when the Bible hit them between the eyes, it changed them forever. They came, got saved, or got in the book, or began to rebuild, and grew, and never looked back. This can be for everybody in here. All you folks that have just got saved, all you folks that are just at the entry level of God and the Bible and this church, this can be you. This is not unattainable. This is not something that you can't get to. This is something that if you truly give your heart to God, He will change everything about you. Yeah, you may have some struggles, but you will never have to go through those struggles by yourself again. You know why so many people get messed up in the things? Because they have nobody to help them when they are going through it. That ends at this church. You have now everything that you need,

everything that at our disposal is here to get you from wherever you are at, whatever your issues are, whatever your problems are, whatever level you are on, to the place that you never look back. These guys are the textbook Christians that Paul writes about them all the time. We just, we don't focus on it.

## VI. Characteristics of a Dedicated Christian

Then there are another great study. It's people that he addresses like Timothy, people like Apollos. He's a good one. Apollos got messed up in Acts chapter 19 with bad doctrine. They straightened him out and got it right. He got on fire and was there at the end. You had guys like Titus, Philemon, the husband and wife team who had a church in their home, Aquila and Priscilla. You had the great men like Barnabas and Silas and John Mark, who again started out kind of weak, didn't he? But he came on strong at the end. You have the church at Antioch where the first missionaries and Bible teachers are found. You have the church at Ephesus, the last church Paul talks about in Acts chapter 20 that is solid and really going to town. You have the book of Philippians, which was written to the church at Philippi. It's the only church that Paul writes to that he doesn't have to correct them on anything. They got it going. You know what you find in that book? 10 of the greatest biblical Christian principles that if you didn't have anything else in your Bible, you didn't have any Bible at all, and you just had those 10, you could get through life. Incredible stuff.

He says in Philippians chapter 2, verse 25, he talks about another one. He says:

*Philippians 2:25*

*Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.*

That's the 100 percent crowd. I want you to see there are six things that Paul lists in his guy, what Paul was looking for to help him get the job done that God called him to do. I am going to tell you right now, these are the same six things that I look for in every person that God sends me. Maybe they are not there when you first come in, maybe it isn't all, but you can develop them.

11. The first thing he says is he's my brother. Proverbs chapter 17, verse 17, "A brother is born for adversity." There's an old saying, "The blood is thicker than water." Did you ever hear that? When families get into fights and all these things, people say, "Well, blood," and they take sides, people say, "Well, blood is thicker than water." That's turned around the wrong way. Because the blood of Christ is what bonded us together when we got saved. Water is your physical birth. We always say, "Blood is thicker than water," thinking that your family blood is thicker than water when that's not the way it is. Water is your physical birth. Once you get saved, the blood of Christ should bond us together more than anything else on this planet. Because there will be times when your family will turn against you. There will be times when your family will try to hurt you. There will be times when your family will do the wrong things and try to get you to do the wrong things. Ah, but a Bible-believing church based on the blood and the bond that we have with the blood of Christ will never hurt you. A brother is born for adversity.

12. Then he says, "my companion." That's the fellowship that he had with these guys. Fellowship around, not ball games, not NASCAR, not this or not that. It was fellowship around the Word of God and the job God had called them to do.
13. Then he says, "my fellow soldier." That's being in the same foxhole together. If you know anything about the military and anything about guys who have been in combat, combat soldiers have an affinity for each other that most people can't understand because they have been through things together. Real Christians that have steel in their backbone, that take the fight every day of their life and get in the same foxhole with me and with each other, there's a bond there that most people will never understand. Paul saw it, the ability to be a fellow soldier.
14. Then he says, "my messenger." Paul gave them the word. They took the word and gave it to others. They helped get the word out.
15. "My minister." They did what Paul did. They helped people.
16. Then he says, lastly, "my laborer." They understood that the work that they were doing was the work that God had given them that they were finishing, that Christ started, never finished, and then gave it to us.

That's what I look for in the people that God sends me. I have an abundance of them. I know, I know you are always in any church. You have got people who are problem people, not, you know, wherever you have light, you have bugs. I understand that. But the bottom line is we have an abundance of men and women, young singles, young couples, older couples, midlife couples, people who are committed.

Now, when we look at palm trees in Psalms 92:12, it says, "The righteous shall flourish as a palm tree." Back in Christ's day, this particular species or type of palm tree is called in a technical term, "Tamar phoenix, Diatai alacakar." That's a hundred-dollar word that means palm tree. They do the same thing with this like they do with the Bible. In our neighborhood around us, we have coyotes. They all go down my backyard. I see them down the street. They eat the little neighbor's dogs out of the yards, and they do all those things. We call them coyotes. But if we were professional, we would call them "canine leotards." That's the professional word for it. Say raccoons. They will get your trash, they will eat your chimney. They will do all kinds of mischievous things. I would always like to have a pet raccoon. I thought it would be neat, but they tear everything up. You would come home, and he would eat his way through the couch, the refrigerator, the bed, and everything else. Raccoons, "prochion leton." See? Now if you went down south someplace in Alabama or Georgia with the old hill boys down there, and they like to go nighttime hunting with raccoons, and you said, "Let's go out and get some prochion," they wouldn't know what you are talking about. That's the world, you see.

These trees, they are gone today. But I have been told, I read a book one time back, it was written around the 1900s. It was called \*The Land and the Times of the Bible\*, I think, and \*The Story of the Middle East\*. I think that was the name of it. They talked about these trees among other things. He says that back in the day when these trees flourished, there were three different types of palm trees. There were some that grew to 100 feet. There were some that grew to 60 feet. And there were some that grew to 30 feet. When you look at them in their day, you see how

absolutely vital and useful they were to the people to fulfilling a need. For these, for in these are six characteristics out of this tree that no matter how you grow, the goal is to get to 100. They will be the six things that will change you, that will get you to the point where God gets everything out of you He wants. Those who have committed to build a church with me or any pastor, you see it in their hearts and their heads and their hands, how they get the job done.

17. The first thing you find about these, like real Christians, these trees are impossible to find today. It's hard to find a real Bible-believing Christian. I get people calling me, texting me all the time from different cities, different states, wanting to know if I know any good Bible-believing churches. They are out there. I am not saying they are not, but there are not very many out there. Even less than churches are God's people. God's people ought to be the salt of the earth that is holding the line against everything that's going on in this world. Instead, we are putting our tail between our legs, and we are just standing by where the world goes to hell and everybody in it.
18. The second thing, these trees back in the day, they had over 360 uses that a man could put to use in his life, from food to rope to building materials. That's what a Christian ought to be, a real one should be. The thing I love about so many of you working with me is that I feel comfortable with dropping you in any scenario when a couple calls me or somebody calls me or somebody has an issue and I need somebody to help me with it. There are many of you out there that I don't think twice about you. I know I can drop you into any circumstance, any situation, and you will get the job done the right way. You have so many uses in the ministry just like that palm tree did.
19. Then the third thing. They said in that book that its roots would go down deep into the desert sand to find water that was necessary to survive in the desert heat and the dry land. I am going to tell you as a palm tree Christian, there will be times of spiritual drought in the Christian world. There will be some tough times that will come. For you as individuals maybe. For all of us as a church. But no matter how tough it gets, that 100 percent crowd, that palm tree of 100 feet, stays by my side, and we get the job done. We just went through a terrible two years. It changed the dynamics of everything. Yet we went through it. As we stand here now, you would have to be an absolute fool to say we are not stronger and better having gone through it. Because it makes people.
20. Then the next thing, the tree produced fruit, things, very nutritious, highly packed with all the ingredients to help you stay healthy. But like the Bible teaches us in Luke chapter 3, verse 23, on these particular trees now, according to the book, it produced the best figs after 30 years. Picture Christ starting His public ministry after 30 years. I am not saying God won't use you till you are 30 years old. I am not saying that at all. But what I am saying, the more you grow, the more you get to find, the more you allow God to use you, and the more you add to it, and the more you get depth to you, the better you are to be used of God.
21. Then he says, most of the palm trees you see, they kind of have a curve to them. But this particular species of palm trees grew straight. That's a great, great, great biblical principle, at least I think, because it's no good if you grow tall if you don't grow straight by the Word of God. It's not enough just to have the right Bible. It's not enough even to know the right Bible. It's not enough to, you have to apply it. Then you have to apply it to use it for what God has called us to do. The bottom line is this, if God's people out there, if they are saved and on

your way to heaven, and you are not 100 percent invested in a New Testament Bible-believing local church and working to get that work done, I am telling you something, man, you have some issues. You can grow tall, but you have to grow straight. That book is clearly laid out the fact that we need to get the job done.

22. Then the sixth thing, the wood from this tree also was solid to the core. We have studied it before. I have laid it out to you before. What I try to do here, there's a process to it to make you solid, solid in your family, solid in your individual life, solid in your marriage. I build in you, first of all, sound doctrine. That sound doctrine will lead to a sound mind. When it gets into your mind, it will be able to sound faith, it gets into your heart. It will produce sound words. That will produce sound speech. That will give you sound wisdom. Then you are rock solid. You have a rock solid sound life, family, ministry, church. You now, like the palm tree and the cedar tree, you are solid to the core. Nothing will stop you. You may face some challenges in life. You may have some disappointments in life. You may have some tragedies in life, but nothing will stop you because you are solid to the core. That's the key. That's the key.

## VII. The Urgency of the Work and Personal Commitment

I don't want you to miss this, and I am just about done here. Don't miss this, that all this material about palm trees, inspirationally, it's about you and me in our Christian life, but doctrinally it's about the millennial kingdom. I am going to tell you right now, the two go together because your work right now of what you do or what you don't do is going to show up at the millennial arena of Christ with your inheritance.

O.R.G. Lee was an old Southern Baptist preacher, long dead now. I got the privilege of hearing him preach probably four or five times. He was famous for a message that he would preach, that he preached way back in the 20s and became an icon with this message. It was a message that I actually heard him preach at least once. The message was called "Payday Someday." Someday God's going to have a payday. A 30 percent crowd and a 60 percent crowd, they are living their life like they are in the millennium right now. Never understanding the millennial inheritance is based on us being a wise master builder or a wise master rebuilder. You know what that really means? It means that you get the wisdom to figure out what God did for you, and then you build yourself so you can finish the work that God started, finished, and then gave to us.

Matthew 7, verses 24 through 27, another great story, story of a wise man, two men. One's a wise, one's a fool. One builds his house upon a rock. The other one builds his house upon the sand. God's people will build two ways. You either build on the rock or you build on the sand. The 30 and the 60 crowd, they are always on the sand. The 100 crowd, you are on the rock. You are on the rock, and you are sound and you are solid. Either way, this church has the tools to help you get the job done, and we need to do it together.

Let me speak to you personally for just a minute. I am 71 years old. I am in the final stretch of my life. I have more days behind me than I have ahead of me. I understand that. The finish line for me is just over the next couple of hills. I get that. We all have fun, and we all enjoy it, and we all have a good time, but there will come a day when you walk through it, and there will be an

empty chair in that office. The older I get, there are many things that I have more patience for now than I did when I was younger, understanding the things of God. But having said that, the older I get, the more impatient I get with God's people who should know better.

God saved us to do a work. God saved us that we might finish. You are not going to get it done with a 30 crowd. You are not going to get it done with a 60 crowd. I am not interested in laying out Bible for people who just want to do nothing with it. I am past that point in my life. We have to raise and feel the urgency of the time that we live in. What is going on around this world in Russia, in Ukraine, and going to happen in Europe and spill over into America, is exactly what the Bible says has to happen to get us to the point where we get out of here. If we react to that like we did to the COVID, we are done.

We have to understand that we have got a job, and if the price that has to be paid is standing out in the street and letting the Russian tanks run over us, then that's what we do. If every man 18 to 60 has to pick up a weapon and man it to stop everything that's coming our way, then that's what we do. If we get to the point where I am speaking spiritually now that we have to pay that price, whatever it may be, just as the Ukrainians are stopping, trying to stop the flow from Russia that's going to crush them, take from them their country while the rest of the world stands by and waves flags and cheers. That's all you are going to get from most churches and most Christianity is a lot of flag wavers and a lot of cheering. Nobody's going to get down in the mud, in the foxholes, and in the dirt and fight this thing to the end. I am. But it's going to take everybody getting on board and understanding the price that's going to have to be paid. The price is what are you willing to give up right now to build in your life everything you have.

You have no excuses anymore. We are here for you. We have everything you need. I don't care what you are facing. I don't care what you are up against. This is your way out through this church to this book, and God will take you on whatever level you are and make you everything He wants you to be. My job is to steer the course. I love all of you. You are my friends. You are my buddies. We have been through a lot together. But honestly, if it comes down to me and my family, we will stay the course. If everybody else leaves, if everybody else says, "I am not doing it, I can't do it. I am running here, I am going here. It's too hard. It's too this. I am afraid." Hey, God bless you. I will still be here and get the job done. I am finishing the work. Nothing's going to stop me. I need God's people who are going to say, "We are going to finish it together." Because that's what God called us to do in this church. We have fun. We do things. We eat a lot. We pound around doing all kinds of fun things. That's what we are supposed to do. But at the end of the day, it's where the rubber meets the road. We get the job done.

Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. Thank You for today. Thank You for the good people of this church. Thank You for so many of them are on board and will be here till the end. But Lord, there are so many new ones that we need to bring in and help. Lord, many of them probably listen to me today, and they are a little confused and don't understand. That's okay. You keep coming. You keep growing. You keep letting us put the Word of God into your life, and you too will get there where God wants you to be. The world has done you no favors, but the Word of God has all the favors. The world has no blessings, just curses, but the book will make you flourish and bless you even into your old age. Thank You, Father, for allowing us, me, us,

this church, to hold the line in these last days. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it. Amen. God bless you. You are dismissed. See you Thursday.