

I. Understanding Christ's Instructions and Our Role

Well, if you have your Bibles this morning, let's start back in John 14. We're basically going to stay with the same text that we had last week because of what I want to do today. You remember last week, we saw the instructions. We kind of focused on the instructions that Christ is giving His apostles right before He gets crucified and He goes back to heaven.

Today I want to add to last week so you can better understand our past lessons in pulling everything together. When it comes to the Bible, many times when you come through the books of the Bible, some of these things are really connected. If you just simply look at it as a sermon and a sermon and a sermon and a sermon, though there may be some good stuff in it, the real key is beginning to understand the connection to get the overall picture of what He's trying to give you.

I might tell you this morning that today is going to be another major piece of your Bible. John 14, as John 13, has been a great lesson for us that you want to get all of this in your Bible. You certainly want to have at least a beginning of a good understanding of it and then work on it from there. There is a lot of material, and you'll want to keep it all. I want to give it to you all within the right context. You know how I am with context.

You'll remember that John 13-18, first of all, all takes place in the upper room at the Last Supper. So everything that we're leading here now before He is crucified is kind of like an interlude. I cannot impress upon you the importance of what He's saying to them and the instructions that He's giving and everything He's trying to lay out for them. It's incredible. These are their final marching orders. When you look at it that way and you try to put it into what's really happening here, you begin to see it and get a better understanding of what our job is.

So let me read for you again, as I did last week, John 14:4-12.

John 14:4-12

And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?

Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

Now I want you to focus on what he just said there because this is Jesus talking and he's saying, "Look, the words that I speak unto you, they're not my words because the Father's in me, I'm speaking the words of Him to you." I want you to translate that into your own life today. If you're saved here this morning, Christ is in you and you're in Him. What you speak to others about the Word of God or whatever is not your own words. It's the Holy Spirit of God speaking through you because the Father is in you. So there's no difference between what He's saying to them and what I am saying to you. It applies across the board.

Sometimes when we read things like this, we get disconnected from our own selves. We look at it as something He said to them, but we don't make the connection to us. I guess that's really what I want to try to do today. I want you to see how all of this not only was given to them, but how it impacts us. It's an incredible thing. Yet most of God's people go through their whole life—and I'm talking about good people, I'm not talking about idiots, I'm not talking about Claire the Loon—I'm talking about good people. They never, never see and understand on this level. The proof of that is how they live their lives, what they invest their lives in, what they give themselves to, what they hold up as priorities in their lives. That's the key.

So he goes on here and he says, "Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me or else believe for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also and greater works than these shall he do because I go unto my Father."

Let's pray. Father, help us today to really understand and to apply this. Give us pause this morning. Take all the thoughts out of our minds about what we got to do, where we got to go. Lord, just let us focus today on what He's saying here and the magnitude of all this being pulled together for an understandable perception of our own lives. We'll thank you and praise you in Jesus' name for the sake we ask it. Amen.

II. God's Way and Our Addiction

Last week formed for us a clear and understandable picture of what Christ now expects of us. I have been building on this over the last several weeks and I showed you the two things that He tells them as far as them continuing His work. There's no misunderstanding now. What He's giving them here is their final instructions before He goes back of what He expects them to do. If we make the disconnect that we don't see it to us, then we just flounder through our Christian life, which unfortunately most Christians do because they don't get the connect. They get the disconnect.

He told them first of all that they should know where He's going. This is His way. I cannot impress upon you the magnitude of that two little words: His way. Then based on His truth, we find, or they find, their life in Christ through His way to know exactly what they should be

doing. I'm just going to be honest with you today and I don't want this to be a mean message. I'm not intending it to be, but I'm going to tell you, I mean, I'm around this thing all the time. I've been in it for many, many years. Many of you have been around it for a while and you know as well as I do, in God's people there is an absolute blank when it comes to what God really wants them to do. They are completely out of touch with reality.

There's a great principle found in Genesis 24:27, which by itself is a great verse for life. But it fits completely into what we're talking about today because he says back there in this great verse, "I being in the way, the Lord led." That is so crucial to our understanding. Yet when you go back and you look at the context of Genesis 24, it's Isaac looking for a bride, a Gentile bride for, excuse me, Eliezer looking for a Gentile bride for Isaac, Abraham's son. You have all the pieces there. You have Abraham was a type of God the Father. Eliezer is a type of the Holy Spirit. Rebekah is a Gentile picture of you and me and Isaac as Christ. It's a great picture of how the Holy Spirit of God works and how He wants to work with you and me: being in the way, getting in the way and then letting the Lord lead.

We saw how He told them that they are to finish what He started. When you stop and think about it, and I don't know, I don't have all of the record. I just got to go about what I have. But out of the 12 apostles, one was a phony. But when you begin to look at the guys that are left, you know, recorded for you and I get it. A lot of things maybe aren't in there, but there's basically only three out of the other 11 that seem to ever find what they're supposed to do: Peter, James and John. The rest of them, you just never hear from them all yet. I don't know what they did or what they didn't do. It may be just didn't get recorded. But it looks like that even out of that 11, after everything He gave them, the majority of them couldn't figure it out. I think to myself, boy, that's just like today. The people of God who figure out the way and really get into that way is a minority. They're a remnant because the majority of God's people, unfortunately, as it looks like here, just like the apostles, they never get it.

Then He tells them that they will do greater things. We explained this last week, that they will do greater things than Christ did. I went into great detail with that last week. This is all, as I said last week, based on our building our lives on sure things of God. Our sure salvation, first of all. Then the Bible talks about, last week I gave you His sure Word and then His sure calling for you and for me and then the sure reward.

I look at Christianity, you know, I talked about we're going out to the boats to see Top Gun 2. It always amazes me when I go out there, you know, and I watch the people in there. They have every machine that will get whatever money you have all the way down to the penny machines. You can find machines that you can pop in \$100 a pop. You can find the quarter machines. You can find blackjacks where you can put as much on it as you want all the way down to the old ladies and gentlemen out there that are, you see them sitting on those stools playing the penny slots. Every one of them, every one of them remind me of most of God's people. You know why? Because they're gambling away everything they have on something that is rigged against them first of all. And something that is a gamble in life that is not sure. It's the very illusion that not maybe one person in a thousand wins the mother lode out there, maybe one in 10,000 is the drama that drives people that you think you might be that one. Of course, we see them in many

cases out in Las Vegas and I'm sure here too where they drop the kids' college endowment, they drop the house payment, they drop the car payment, they spend every dime they got on something that isn't sure.

For you and for me, I know for me, I can't really speak for you, but I hope I'm speaking for you. I want to build my life on sure things. I don't want to be a casino Christian. I don't want to be a riverboat Christian. Because for them, gambling then when it gets into your blood, when it gets into what you're doing, it becomes an addiction. I mean, you can drive down the street and you see billboards, "Gambling is an addiction. Call this number," because it truly is. I've told you many, many times that most of the things in the world are a bad imitation of the real things with God. Where a gambler goes out there or a drug addict or an alcoholic or whatever the case may be, and they become addicted to whatever their choice, drug or alcohol is. Well, I want to tell you something. When you invest your life in the sure things of God, you too will become an addict with an addiction. You'll be like 1 Corinthians 16:15, the house of Stephanas.

1 Corinthians 16:15

I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints;)

What addiction do we have in our lives today? Is it going to be something that we get addicted to the world or is it going to be something that we get addicted to with God, i.e. the ministry? It's a simple question and I'm not necessarily asking you, but you know I am. What's your addiction today? What's your family addiction? I've known, and that's just a tragic thing to say, I've known young men that got addicted to drugs, marijuana, and then as a gateway drug to all the other stuff. They weren't introduced to drugs by somebody at school. They weren't introduced to drugs by some drug. They were induced to drugs because their father was a drug addict and he bought them drugs. They became an addict based on him.

Your children are either going to, they're going to be addicted to something. Their addiction most likely will be based on what your addiction is right now. Hey, I've seen Christians who claim to be Christians. Maybe they are, maybe they are. I have no idea. But I've seen their kids addicted to alcohol. I've seen their kids addicted to drugs. I've seen their kids addicted to video games. I've seen them addicted to sports, addicted to gambling, addicted to cigarettes, addicted to all of the things that, you know, the things of life or money. Or I've seen them addicted to the Word of God. The question is simple today. What is your addiction? Whatever your addiction truly is will become the addiction of your family. You can put it off, lie about it, pretend, but the bottom line is you have passed on whatever your addiction is and your kids have it today. I don't know what else to tell you.

For us, the key of what He's saying here in John 14:4-12 is the same for us as it is for His apostles. It's finding out you and me and understanding this thing called His way and getting in His way and allowing Him to lead you, Genesis 24:27.

III. God's Way in History

Now you would think that that would be really complicated and it really isn't. I tell people, I've taught people all my life about how to learn the Bible. I say, you know, there's two ways to learn the Bible and I always use the illustration that there's two ways to get to St. Louis. You can go down here and get on I-70 and go east to St. Louis and you'll be there in about three and a half, four hours. But if that's not your choice, you can go down to I-70 and go west. You can go out through Denver, on out through the Rocky Mountains, all out through Las Vegas and all out through those places and get to the west coast and then you'll have to get on a big ship and then go all the way over to China and then go all the way drive through China, go all through Middle East and then get over there and make another one to Europe and then go all through Europe and then get back on to Europe, another boat and come over to New York and then get to New York and pick up I-70 and finally come to St. Louis that way. You know, that's exactly what people do with the Bible. God has given you the easiest, simplest plan for you to learn your Bible and it's just like getting in your car and going to St. Louis. Why does God's people just insist on going through Chengkang, China? God didn't make it hard.

I told you last week in Genesis 1:2 is the first time you find the Spirit of God and the Bible says, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the water." The first time you find the Spirit of God in the Bible it's moving and it never stops. You're going to find that as you study it through the Bible that Holy Spirit of God moves east to west through the whole Bible. You're going to find that every good move in the Bible will be a move east to west. When Israel came out of Egypt in the east they went to the west. When a priest went into the Holy of Holies on the day of the, offered a sacrifice he went into that Holy of Holies from the east to the west. When Adam and Eve got kicked out of the garden they went the opposite direction. It's a simple formula that you can follow through the Old Testament to find God's way. The Old Testament has for us a breakdown of His way as He goes, the Spirit of God moves east to west. That's why you find five simple phrases of Israel:

1. From the formulation, Genesis to Exodus
2. To the calling out, Exodus to Joshua
3. To the establishment, Judges to 1 and 2 Chronicles
4. To the demise, Chronicles to the Minor Prophets
5. And then the captivity times of the Gentiles.

Every one of those moves that is a good move takes them from east to west. When they go into captivity they go from west to east. See? Now how hard is that? You know what I find when I can trace that through? I find out what God's doing. I find out His way. Somebody said, "Why east to west?" Well that's simple. East to west is the sun coming up in the east going to the west and the earth in rotation. It's the sun coming across the sky. That Bible's always been against the world. Even the way He created the sun coming up going to east to west with the earth revolving in the opposite direction against the coming of the Lord. It's not hard. You don't have to be Wally Canan the weatherman to figure that out. Where He's going.

Somebody says, "Well what's the real key to that?" Well the real key is that do you understand the magnitude of ancient history? Will Durant, most people don't know who Will Durant was. He was an unsaved historian. He wrote 11 volumes which is called The History of Civilization. 11

volumes, each one of those volumes is about that thick. I have read all 11 volumes. The most interesting one he did was comparing Caesar, the Roman Caesar, to Christ. Boy did he have that one off beam. I looked at those books and read those books and he talked about every empire that was developed during this time that when you go to school and you study history, ancient history, they'll put the emphasis on all those. I was amazed at a fact that when God gave us His way, He cared nothing about these nations being started. He didn't give them hardly any print at all unless they were connected with Israel. He never cared about the passive-thonophily. He never cared about the rise of the Greeks. He never cared about the great battles of the Medes or the Persians. Why? Do you know what was going on in the world all during this time? I mean the world and every nation in it. He never meant one thing about that. You know why? That wasn't His way. His way was His nation coming out of Egypt and even the study of how they got to Egypt and then moving east to west. You see, you've got to be able to separate where God is at in this world in history from where all your professors want to tell you what is really history.

In the New Testament, dealing with us, Christ, the body of Christ, you'll find it in Revelation 1:3. God even made it simpler. He broke the church age down into seven sections. Kind of give us a snapshot view of church history by breaking it down. It starts around 60 AD with the church at Ephesus and runs us right up to Revelation 4 with a rapture of the church. Everything that God is doing, the way God is going in the New Testament is laid out as clearly as the way He went in the Old Testament. East to west. In each one of these sections, you will be able to see where He's going the way in the New Testament as the Old Testament, but in the New Testament through every church period, it will show you the development of God's way in the New Testament and the end result of that way. Not only just the way, where's He going? What's the purpose? Is God just marching down through history saying, "My eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord?" That's me. Is that what He's doing? No, no. He has a purpose. But He wants you to understand that purpose because you'll never do the work for Him until you understand His purpose and you'll never understand His purpose till you get in His way.

We got a little puppy. Arphy's her name, named after Barb's aunt, Arphy. Arphy is just a little girl and every time you get up in the morning or throughout the day, she is all over you. She's biting your shoestring. She's biting your pant legs. She's scratching your legs. She's just up all the time and you try to take the other dog out. She blocks the door. You can't walk without stepping on her. What she does, she just continually gets in my way. I got upset with that the other day and then I thought to myself, that's exactly what God wants me to do with Him. He wants me to chase His pant legs. I don't know if He's wearing pants. He wants me to undo His sandals or He wants me to, everything that that little dog is doing to me, that's what God wants me to do with Him. Run after Him. She'll chase you. You know, she'll go all one room. She'll come in that room looking for you. That's what God wants us to do with Him. We got to find His way and God's people today don't have a clue of that.

IV. The Parable of the Laborers and Church History

It's one of those things where, you know, He broke church history down into seven periods and then to make it even easier. You want to add to that Matthew 20:1-16. This came in as a Bible

study question a couple of weeks ago from one of our people who follow us down in, I think it was Georgia or someplace down south there. If I got the state wrong, I'm sorry, but I waited now because I wanted to use that here. In Matthew 20, He takes that church history and breaks it down into even a smaller component for you and for me. Let me read it for you. We've read this before, but I'm coming at it a different way today.

Matthew 20:1-16

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house,

Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?

Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

Now you want to take your yellow marker and mark out verse 16. We're going to come back to that in just a minute. This is God breaking His way. The seven New Testament periods of church history, it's God breaking His way down even in a finer way that we can know where He's going.

Now He breaks it down into a 12-hour workday. This workday is laid out that we, in whatever hour we live in, that would be fit into John 13 and 14. You and I are in this, in this parable.

The breakdown is:

- In verse 1, He sends workers into His vineyard.
- Then the next thing in verse 1, He says early in the morning.
- Then verse 3, some go out the third hour.
- Verse 3 again, the sixth hour.
- Verse 5, the ninth hour.
- And then verse 6, the 11th hour.
- Then verse 8, the Lord comes back, the 12-hour workday is over. He comes back at even. It's six o'clock in the morning to six o'clock in the evening.

I have laid this out before. I know that, bear with me. Yes, even you may learn something new today, but I've never laid it all out using our simple formula that we have used before with a 12-hour day. We know that church history is 2000 years approximately. If you divide that into six and 2000, you know now that every one of these hours is approximately in our history, 166 years. That would put the early morning in Acts 20 at Ephesus, 60 AD. Follow me now. Of course, this is a church at Ephesus in Revelation 2 and Acts 20.

Then you have some people going out the third hour using our formula. That would bring us up to around 500 AD with the start of the Dark Ages in history. Then He says the sixth hour using our formula again, that would bring us up to around 1000 AD to the middle of the Dark Ages. Then the ninth hour around 1500, that would bring us up to the start of the Reformation. Then the last workers we were told go in at the 11th hour using our formula now. That means somewhere around 1837 in God's great workday called the church age, that the last workers go to work. In this one, you will have the Zionist movement around 1880. You will have World War I, you'll have World War II, you'll have Korea, you'll have Vietnam, you'll have the Cold War. Then you'll have Israel becoming established as a nation in 1948, which are clearly detailed out for you in Matthew 24.

Now this will be us. This last workers going in will be you and me. I want to be very clear about that. So we are the last shift of this 12-hour workday. To finish His work, you and I were born by God's design, not only in the last shift, but the last minutes of this shift. Like the apostles in John 14, we should know His way. There shouldn't be anybody here that's been saved 10 years or more that you clearly don't know His way, where He's going from Old Testament to the New Testament and your life part of it. Where He's at, what He's doing in this 11th hour and how it pertains to you and to me, to this church and the work that we're supposed to finish for Him. I know from His way, you know, and know from His way what we should be doing.

Not only that, you'll find in these last set of workers, you'll find the seven great awakenings in this country. You know what? They move east to west. Along with that, you'll find the seven great counterfeit religion, American cults that start with the devil to countermand this. You'll find them coming into being. God, for whatever reason, in the 11th hour, we'll find that reason in a minute, God ramps it up. He's got someplace He's going. This is the 11th hour. He's coming back

one hour later. Boy, the devil ramps it up. Of every church period in church history, seven of them, each one dealt with the spirit of heresy that came up against the true church that they had to deal with. Now these heresies, these oppositions were to stop them. The devil knew in the church age he couldn't just kill them like he did in the Dark Ages. He knew as the last workers went in, he was going to have to come up with something that was going to isolate the church of Jesus Christ, breach the walls, get on the inside, and stop God's people. You and me, stop churches from ever figuring out His way. We're understanding where He's going and most certainly not figuring out where we figure into it.

Yet, we call ourselves Christians. We got churches today that are up there praising the Lord, singing this and doing that, dancing all over the place and having a great time. If you pinned one of them down and had them taking a Bible and show you the way of God and where they're in and what work they're doing, this is modern day Laodicean Christianity. I know you're all good people and I know you love the Lord, but I'm going to tell you right now, you're up against it and you've got to fight it every day. Your kids fight it every day because the devil will find out our weakness. He will find out the walls that we have built around us. If they're not built on the walls of Isaiah 27, he will breach those walls.

V. The Price of Discipleship and Unity

Then in Matthew 20:8-16, the Lord comes back and deals with His workers. He gives every man his pay. Now we find in our little story here that there are some folks that think that they should have gotten more because of what they went through. So they think that they should have more than others. This is a great study and illustration of looking at things from a human perspective and not seeing it from God's perspective. The real matter is that every point of church history paid a price. You may have done this over here and back in the early church time work where somebody else did this and to you it doesn't look like they suffered as much. I'm going to tell you. It's a lot easier. I know, you know, we talked about our 49th anniversary today and yet we have been in the ministry going to be 51 years this year. You know, it's easy. I don't say this for any glory or gratification. I say this so you can learn some things. If you think there wasn't a price that we paid for you to have what you have today, there was opposition.

Anytime you open up the Word of God, there's opposition. The devil didn't want you sitting here this morning with the Word of God. He wanted you to stay with whatever addiction you had before you got the real good one. It was where we found ourselves alone. I'll never forget the first time I came to Kansas City and I had my first Bible study and I taught these high school kids, I was dumb and stupid back then. You know, I thought that, you know, coming out of Canton, Ohio, the Mecca, you know, a Bible that everybody, you know, believed that. I'll never forget after that first Bible study, we got into a rip-roar session on the King James Bible. I got a phone call from the preacher that night. I learned very quickly, it was going to be a battle and we were going to have to take a stand in it. If you go back to 1988, 1975, if you can find them, and when you go back and you'll find my tapes that I taught back then, I've taught just about everything I'm teaching now, you will find that I haven't deviated one thing from when I preached. Nobody bought me off. You know why? Because we understood that there was a price

that had to be paid. If we were going to have anything for God, if God was going to do anything with us in our last fleeting minutes, there was a price that was going to be paid.

Like God always does, praise the Lord for this, as you build that work and you take your stand alone in time, God brings other people. They fall in love with the Word of God. They make it their addiction. As time goes on, you don't have to stand alone. God builds a core. God builds a core of people around you that will stick with you like you had to stick with each other when you had nobody. God, that's the way He does it. He'll bring another couple in. He'll bring another family in. He'll bring singles in. He'll bring this person in. He'll bring that person in. They will stick with you through thick or thin. Why? They got the right addiction. Somewhere in the process, they figured out God's way and where they fit into it and where God is going. And off you go.

So the idea here is that He comes back. He gives every man a penny. Some people think, "Well, we suffered more." No, it only appears you did. Let me tell you something. Now you listen to me. If you don't hear one other thing I say, you hear this. Maybe back in the first four or five periods of church history, they were tortured for their faith and they died and they were become martyrs because they would not deny the Lord Jesus Christ and they were killed for it. I'm telling you right now, it's a lot harder sometimes to live for Jesus Christ today than it was to die for Him back then. Death is quick. I don't think for a moment when you read Fox's Book of Martyrs or the Waldensians, when they burned them at the stake. I mean, you know, you'd think people screaming and yelling and well, they're singing songs. They're praising the Lord. The flames are up against their body. They're smoking and they're on fire and they're singing hymns. God's people today, you can't take the stand that you need to take. They died and would never sell Him out. Nobody's threatening your life. Nobody's going to burn you with the stake and God's people still denying today. You know why? In a lot of ways, it's tougher to live today for Him than it was back then. Back then you knew who were the real Christians were. Back then you know who was willing to pay the price. It's all a big gray mush today. It's all conglomerated together today. It's all a big mess today.

So when He comes back, He says, "You know what? I'll do with what's mine, what is right. They agreed with me for a penny." You think you suffered more, but in reality, when you see it from my standpoint, everybody suffers. No matter what church period of time you're born in, whether it's the first one or you're in the fleeting moments of ours, if you take your stand, my friend, you will pay a price. The key today is not only unity in the Word of God with your life, but unity within this church with the Word of God. We don't have time for the petty little things, "Oh, I don't like this person," or "I don't like the way they dress," or "I don't like this." We don't have time for that. We have the last sands going through the hourglass. We have to take a stand for what the real stand should be. The real key, the real key is not what time did you go to work, did you go in the early shift, or the three shift, or the six shift, or the nine shift. It's not about what time you went to work. The real question is, were you on the job? See? But isn't that God's people? We get so caught up with the surrounding things around us. "Well, you didn't have what I have." "Well, you don't do what I did." "Well, you're this and that," or "I don't like this person," or "I don't like that person." It isn't about that. It's about, we have a job to do. The only thing

that's going to get it done is a unity around the book. But that's gone today. You don't find that in Christianity very often today.

VI. The Kingdom of Heaven, Kingdom of God, and the Times of the Gentiles

Now note, this parable that I read in Matthew 20, it's about the kingdom of heaven, verse 1. Let me explain this, and you'll want to get this down. This is what ties it together. This is what I've never given you before. The man who's a householder, we know that is God. In the other parables, He goes into a far country, and He leaves now somebody to do the work that He started, church age. Now Bible theologians, we know that Israel is the kingdom of heaven, but the church age is the kingdom of God. So some folks may get confused and wonder why you have a parable about the church age when He's talking about the kingdom of heaven in verse 1 and Israel in the parable.

Now here's what you got. This is why you need to get John 14:1-3 down and get it in the right context. This is why John 14:1-3 is not about any stupid mansion that God has for you. Now you remember John 14:1-3, God says He's preparing a place for them. That's during the 2000 years of the church age. I laid this out for you. God getting the land ready to bring Israel back and regather them in 1948 through the process of the Zionist movement, World War I, World War II, and in 1948 in the last shift. You'll find this in Ezekiel 36, 37, 38, and 39. You'll find it in Romans 9 and again in Romans 11. You'll find it in Hebrews 8. You'll also find it in Isaiah 50:17. Amos 9, Ezekiel 11. Oh, I can't read that one, but it's there. It's a good one.

So now look at Matthew 20:16, going back here. You have a reference to the Jew and the church in this passage and this parable. Right now, if you know your Bible, we are in a transition period out of the church age very clearly into what's going to be the tribulation period once the rapture takes place. You know that from the order of the books in the Old Testament. I don't have time to get into that. So Matthew 20:16 says, "So the last shall be first and the first last." That'll be a reference to not only the nation of Israel at the second coming who are last right now, but are going to be first. It's also a reference to you and me in the church age that you're last right now if you believe the book, but oh, are you going to go ahead and shoulders above the Bible scholars at the judgment seat of Christ?

Then He says this, "for many be called, but few chosen." Now you have a reference to the called and the chosen. The called will be the nation of Israel. They are called out through Abraham, Genesis 12-15. They're called out of Ur of the Chaldees to go to a land that God promised Abraham east to west and they are called out. The chosen will be New Testament Christians. You and I have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.

Ephesians 1:1-4

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

We are chosen in Him. We see how that one little simple insignificant verse will be the key to all of this, the called and the chosen. So now hopefully you can see the kingdom of heaven may have been postponed in Acts 7 in the book of Acts, which it was. In Acts 8, the kingdom of God came in under Paul and it did, but John 14:1-3 now tells us that God's way that we are to be understanding and be part of Romans 9, Romans 11. He's still dealing with a nation of Israel and we are in a transition period. If you know the books of the New Testament, you see that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John translate and Acts translate, translate, send you into the church age. Once you get through Paul's books, then you get into James, Hebrews and those books, they transition you into the book of Revelation, tribulation and the second coming of Christ. You should know that.

Even though technically speaking, we are in the kingdom of God. God is still preparing Israel for the kingdom of heaven, John 14, where He said during the church age, "I go to prepare a place for you." That wasn't your goofy mansion. That was the land that God in the last shift is going to begin to use you and I as workers and our understanding of our stewardship to the nation of Israel to get that Jew back in the land. You see they're both connected. There's two terms in the Bible that you need to understand.

6. One of them is called the times of the Gentiles. That's in Luke 21:24.

7. The other one will be the fullness of the Gentiles. That'll be Romans 11:25.

They're both connected, but they're both totally different. Again, this is completely unknown today. So we see the called and the chosen in the parable showing us that during the church age, the times of the Gentiles, God is still working to establish the kingdom of Israel preparing a place, the land, John 14. I would say this, I'd say this based on the book I'm going to give you very quickly here in just a moment. I'd say this without getting into all of it based on the book of Esther, based on Matthew 24 and many other places in the Bible, I would say in God's mind, in God's mind now, His way, where He's going and the reason He's going this way, that the times of the Gentiles were probably in God's mind over maybe around 1918, certainly by 1948 as we see the coming up of the fullness of the Gentiles. Now I know we're still in the church age and we're still in the kingdom of God. I get that, but I'm telling you right now, God is preparing the nation of Israel to restore them to the kingdom of heaven and you see it both at work now.

When I understand that and see it as the way of God through His truth and my life being in the way of that, I can be a better workman. I now understand that in my life, in my church, we only have a few minutes left on God's timetable. We last workers went in an 1837 man and we're a long way down the line and I'm telling you right now, praise the Lord if you got saved because now you're in, but I'm telling you there's a job to be done. The problem with God's people, we are at Disneyland instead of on the job. I need to be a better workman to finish this.

For us, it will be understanding His way and how we will fit into that for our work. Again, I want you to note it's not enough that we do the work, but it's vital that we do the right work. I asked the question, not to you necessarily, but to you necessarily, where is God at today? What is the prevailing spirit in the world that's against God's work today? Are you even on the right side? Each church period, as I said, had to fight against a prevailing spirit of the time. We experienced it the moment we got into the ministry and we had to make a decision. There will be defining moments in your life. I really believe that all of the Christian life is built around defining moments. In those moments, you're going to define who you really are by what you do.

I was told when I first came to, before I even left, I was told that I would flop in Kansas City and never make it by a pastor if I continued to preach the King James Bible and believe what I believe. He said, "You're going out to a place where they don't believe that and you're going to fall on your face in front of everybody and you're going to be a failure if you think you can go out there and preach the King James Bible is the absolute word of God." He says, "You're not going to get any results." I looked at him and I said, "Well, I appreciate the advice. I really do, but you need to know I'm not interested in results. I'm interested in the truth. The truth will produce the result." You know what? We came to Kansas City. We preached the truth. We had defining moments. We had times when we were faced with giving up. We were faced with times where we were told we needed to compromise. We were faced with people who hated us and hated the book and took it out on, hey, everybody is going to pay the price. You know, as God built you around us and God brought you in and you became part of what we do and you got your own addiction, you pay the price. There's people that don't like you. There's people that don't want to have anything to do with you. It's not because you're a bad person. It wasn't because we were bad people. You know why it is? It's because you got a book that they hate.

I read a book one time, this is years ago. I can't even remember the book. I don't even remember who wrote it. The guy said that the job of every Christian in whatever age he lived, he understood this thing that I'm giving you. He wrote this in 1800 someplace. He said the job of every Christian is to find out the prevailing spirit of the devil against the work of God and then with all his strength go against that spirit. That was one of the most amazing things I ever read. I'll tell you right now, that was a defining moment for me. I was really young at that point in time, but it just cemented into me that I had to find His way and I had to find my way in His way and then get in the way of His way so I could go His way.

I'm telling you, every period of church history, there was a spirit of heresy they had to deal with.

- In the early church at Ephesus, the heresy of did Christ really resurrect? They had to fight that.
- In Smyrna, it was the virgin birth. Was He really virgin birth? They had to fight that.
- In Pergamos, once the Roman Catholic Church got coming on the deal, it was baptism for salvation. They had to fight that.
- In Thyatira, it was all-millennial and post-millennial. They had to fight that.
- In the Sardis church period around the Reformation, it was Calvinism. They had to fight that.
- In the great Philadelphia Church Age, it was the eternal security aspect and they had to fight that.

For you and for me, those things have already been established and dealt with. You know the thing that we fight up against, the spirit of our time? Is that book you have in your lap the word of God or is it not? That's our fight. There's a spirit in America that take the Bible out of the hands of every Christian by telling you what the devil told Eve back there in Genesis 3, "Yea, hath God said," meaning God didn't know what He was talking about. You know what? All down through church history, you found some people that held the line, they took the stand and they banded together and you found a lot of them went the way of the new teachings. Some things never change.

The reason I personally know that we're done and we are at the end and all God is doing right now, He's moving this thing along in the world to establish He's got them back in the land. Somebody asked me the other day, "You know, what's the next sign for Jesus to come back?" I told him, there are no more signs. The last sign you were given was Matthew 24. There are no more signs that He's coming back. I'm not looking for a sign, brother. I'm listening for a sound. He's coming back. It's over. It's done. Now you may not agree with that. You may not even believe that. I don't care. All that tells me is you have no idea where He's at, where He's going and how you fit into it. It's over. There are no great revivals anymore across this country or anywhere in the world. Don't get the idea that gleaning a few grapes out of a disease-ridden vineyard is a revival. He's moved on, but He's left little pockets of resistance, night fighters, men and women who will take the stand, men and women who will find His way, get in that way, be part of that way and then realize where He's going and say, "I'm going with Him." Then take your stand in these last days to fight with everything you've got.

I've had guys say, "You know, you need to back off on the King James Bible a little bit. You know, every time you get up, you'll take a shot at some Bible scholar or a shot at something about another translation." You know what? I need to turn it up a little bit because that's the spirit of my day. I'm not going to the judgment seat of Christ. I have a lot to give an account for, but I'll tell you one thing I'm not going to have to worry about, taking my stand for that book. You don't like it? Take a long walk off a short pier. I don't care. I'm not going to stand before you. I know that book is true. I've seen it in my own life. When we stood together, it was all we had. When you guys came in and we were a team in the church, it's all we have. I got some news for you. It's all we have today. No finding moments, pal. No finding moments.

VII. The Book of Esther and God's Hidden Hand

Then I got into the book of Esther. Now for me, this was the key of it all. I'll just quickly go through this. I don't want your roast to burn in the oven. But keep in mind, there's five pizzas downstairs. You can just forget the roast and grab yourself a Papa John's. You know what really ruined my day the other week when I went down there to Jason's Deli? That little pizza place down there, that was good stuff. They closed it. It's moving to Warnell. Now that was good pizza. You know that dough was blessed by the Pope? That was some good stuff.

The book of Esther is a strange book. Strange book. Because God seems to be nowhere in the book, yet He's everywhere. You just have to know where He's at, the way. The book of Esther is only one of two books in the Bible where I don't know if you even know this, that the word God

or the person of God or Lord is not mentioned. The book of Esther and also the book of Solomon. Now there's a reason for both. I'm going to give you Esther. I don't have time to solve Solomon today.

I remember 30 some years ago, that really bugged me. I was coming through my Bible really detailing it out. The book of Esther just, boy, it hit me right between the eyes. I remember I was on one of my trips around the world someplace with a team of people. Boy, can I get a lot done in my Bible. You'd wheels up and 14 hours later you'd land someplace and you had complete time to just work on your Bible without any interruptions. I remember one time there was a book out there called The Kings of Israel and Judah that I've tried to tell you that you really need to get your hands on. I'm sure it's out of print. But I wanted that down. Had laid every king of Israel and Judah out and gave him the verse in Proverbs that goes on. I just had to have that. But it was so... So we were on a trip and it was like a... We had a 20-hour flight. Wheels up, man, I started as soon as you can put your tray tables down. Twenty hours later we landed wherever we landed. I had all 33 in the Northern tribe, 33, 66 total. Number of the books of the Bible. We'll get into that sometime. But I had them. I got them done. The book of Esther was the same way. So I tackled the book of Esther. Wheels up, man, and boy I'll tell you what, that I ever learned some things where God is really at and really began to define me of understanding where His way was. Because no other book in the Bible helped me put the way, the work of my life in a better understanding of perspective.

There's a few things that I found. The book of Esther is a key part of the way of God. I've told you this before. But the book's out of chronological order. It should be 2 Chronicles, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah. But God put it 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, then Esther. Now He did that to catch my attention. I know Bible scholars tell you that that's a mistake. Well Bible scholars are a mistake. So let's just deal with it right now. But the thing is Jesus did that for a reason. He wanted to catch my attention. He wanted me to sit there like I tell you, you see something in the Bible that doesn't fit. You don't throw it out and say it's a mistake. You realize immediately God is showing you something in His book and you ask why?

Now Jesus, excuse me, the Jews go back to the land. I don't know if you even know this. But in history they go back to the land two times. Look at Isaiah 11:9-12. You want to get this.

Isaiah 11:9-12

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

You see that? God brings the Jew back two times. The first time Ezra and Nehemiah under Persia. The second time 1918 to 1948 under England. That's a type of Persia in the Bible. So the book of Esther will be historically the first going back but doctrinally it'll be a picture of the second time they go back in 1948. Esther will be a picture of the Laodicean church age where God is behind the scenes bringing Israel and orchestrating and preparing a place to get them back.

The second thing I saw in this book, there's absolutely as I've told you there's no mention of God or the Lord anywhere in the book. Now God did that for a reason. He's trying to show me something. His way where He's at when He doesn't really look like He's there. That ought to bug the daylights out of any real Bible student. Boy, you get a book like that where there's no mention of God or the Lord or anything in it at all. That ought to drive you crazy till you figure out why. It won't.

The third thing I found and then this hit me like a ton of bricks, boy. This was the key. Now the storyline here of Esther is Ahasuerus. He's the Persian king. He has controls of the Jews through the captivity now they have been Babylon got defeated. Persia now is in and this is Ahasuerus. He's on the throne and he has a queen whose name is Vashti. Now in our spoke here looking at this doctrinally, Vashti will be a picture of the Gentile nations under Ahasuerus. Now watch this. Through the story and you know what happened through the story, some events take place. Vashti will not bow down to the king and the king dethrones her and then puts Esther who is the Jewish woman on the throne as king. You know what you got? You got a picture of the end of the times of the Gentiles. You got the Gentile Vashti nation being dethroned and God putting the Jewish Esther on the throne. That's what you got. That's what the book of Esther does for you. It shows you the times of the Gentiles. That's why I said in God's mind this thing is over. He's taking the Gentile nations off the scene. Oh they're still there. What messes they're all in? And behind the scenes, behind the scenes, He's now taking through the Zionist movement World War I, World War II and now He's focused His attention on bringing the Israel back to the land and Vashti is off the throne and Esther is now on the throne. He's just around the corner from coming back.

Then I saw a man named Mordecai. Mordecai. He's a type of the Jew in the church age. Then I found a man named Haman in the book and he's a type of the anti-Christ. He's one of the 18 types in the Old Testament. How did they miss that? You know what Haman does? Up against Mordecai, a Jew in the church age, he sets a trap for him. He sets a trap to get him destroyed. You know what happens at the end of the story? Haman gets taken in his own trap. Mordecai, the nation of Israel, they all get to go back and Haman gets hung. He gets hung, my, my, my. Just like Judas in Acts 1:25, just like Judas in Matthew 27:5, just like Judas did in Acts 1:11-20 and just like we saw in John 13, 14, Judas is the anti-Christ. You can't beat it.

Then, the next thing, man, I'll tell you what, I'm sure glad it was a smooth flight because turbulence would have put me all over that cabin. Then I saw that all of this takes place in Esther

6 at a wedding feast. That there's a wedding now in the king's garden seven days and seven nights. Picture of the rapture of the church and us at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Then I saw Haman's there. Now I saw, that's a picture of over there in Matthew 22 with the great Marriage Supper of the Lamb, somebody shows up without a wedding garment on. Haman in our story, the devil and the anti-Christ after your true future event, and he's cast into the lake of fire or cast into the bottomless pit. You have all the elements, Esther, then through her influence over the king, she gets the Jew to go back for the first time. This will bring us up to Ezra and Nehemiah and Israel going back to be established in the land the first time.

If that wasn't enough, in Esther 2:2, Esther is called and connected with one of the virgins, tribulation saints. Like Matthew 25 tells us. So the book of Esther brings you to the end of the times of the Gentiles right now in the last shift that the workers are working. The Jews go back under Persia, just like they go back the second time under England, who's a type of Persia, and they get the land back. So if God would have put the order of the books the way they should be, we'd miss one of the greatest teachings on the doctrine of the pre-millennial eternal, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Watch now. Watch, stay with me. In 2 Chronicles 36, they go into captivity. In the book of Ezra, they go back, just like they did the second time in 1918. In Nehemiah, they rebuild, just like they did in 1948. Esther now was put in after Nehemiah, and in Esther, we see the last part of the church age, the Laodicean church age. We see where God doesn't appear to be anywhere and doing anything, but He's behind the scene preparing the place, John 14, for Israel when He comes back. You got the Antichrist, the wedding, you got everything there. The next book, you know what you have after Esther? It's Job. Job's a picture of the tribulation period. Job's in the land of Uz, exactly where the Jews are going to be. There's 42 chapters in the book of Job, 42 months in the great tribulation. Job gets back double, everything that he lost, just like Israel does at the second coming. You know what the next book is in the order of books? Psalms, the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, Christ on the throne. You know what the next book is? Proverbs, eternity, the mind of God, all because God took one little book here and put it here that every scholar on this planet tells you is a mistake, but they don't believe the pre-millennial return of Christ, and they don't even believe the Bible. You stick with the book God gave you.

VIII. Our Final Moments and the Call to Action

Now, that's how we'll all go together and shows us where God is at today, puts us right in His way, in His mind. I'm telling you, the church age is over, even though it's still going on. As we speak, we are in the transition out of the church age, moving up to the rapture and then going into the kingdom of heaven. That's why you find them both in that parable.

As I said, He has a few pockets of people who are still doing the work. I can't speak to you, but me and my wife are one of them. You have to answer that question for yourself. My family, with me, we stand together. I know there's many, many out there that would say, "Bob, I'm with you. I've been with you for 30, 40, 50 years," and I appreciate that. But that has to be your choice. I do appreciate it. But the bottom line is, I'm taking my stand. I know where He's at. I know where He's going. I know that as I stand here and if there was an hourglass here that was God's

hourglass, you'd see the last few grains of sand falling through that thing. Where is God's people today? You see, they think that Jesus Christ is on the stage at the mega church doing the twist today, whether we're all break dancing and talking about this and talking about that. That's not where He's at. He's in the book and He's behind the scenes just like in Esther orchestrating, letting the Gentile world do their damage to each other. You think He cares about the war in Ukraine? You think He cares about what's going on in the world? You think He cares about what's going on in Washington? You think He cares about who's president or vice president? He doesn't care. To Him, it's looking over the rim of heaven, watching Israel be established and watching all the Gentile nations and like little kids in kitty cars bumping into each other on the parking lot. His focus now is original, but we got a job to do. We're left to do the work and we'll never do that work if we don't understand His way. We don't understand where He's going and we don't understand where we fit into it. We'll never get it done. We'll never get it done.

We need to be fighting against the spirit of deception that is out there to destroy the word of God, which has destroyed this country, which has destroyed the church and in these last days. I'm not out there to win the world. I know that's impossible, but I am going to tell you this. To the last breath of my body, to the stand that I took and I'm going to take, I'm going to do it to the very end to reach everybody I can. And so should you.

Now as far as the church, let me give you a 20th century phrase that will put it all in perspective for you. God is simply saying what I've heard some of the bullheadedest people on the planet say, but God is right to say it when God sends this life, "my way or the highway." There's no other way with God. You have to go His way. If you don't, then you wind up in the mega church doing the twist and you think God is up there. You think God is enjoying it. You think God likes the smoke coming out the lights and the thing and the people break dancing and the women wearing animal costumes. You think God is really into that. Now He looks down and He says, "You know what I'd do if I was back here? I'd sacrifice that gal. She looked like a cat and we'll put her on the spit and see what happens." It's a mess.

Christianity is filled with people who claim to be saved, but have never invested their life in one of the sure things of God, other than maybe salvation. They don't last very long in this church. They will leave. They will blame me. They will blame you. They will blame the church, but wherever they are at today, it's the same old thing. No ministry, no work, no depth to the Bible. They're in a church with a pastor who has no clue, but they go there so they can justify themselves so he doesn't put them on the spot. I say, look in the mirror. Look at you. Look who you are right now and you always think that you're right and everybody else is wrong. Take a good look in the mirror of the Word of God.

- You stand for nothing.
- Except your own indifference to the work of God.
- You have no ministry with people.
- Your own family's a disaster.

You puff yourself up like the Goodyear blimp, but in both cases, you're both filled with just hot air. You've been saved, so you say, 20, 30 years and yet not one time have you ever won a soul to

Christ. You've never got into the Bible past a baby level. You couldn't explain where God's at today if somebody put a gun to your head. Absolutely no fruit because absolutely no real work. You know, you're great on Facebook, you're great on Twitter and all the social media, but you couldn't find God's way in the Bible with a laser beam or a flashlight. Yet everybody pretends, "This is God. Here He is." No, no, no, no, no. That's not where He's at. His way is in this book and He's headed in a direction east to west and He detailed out that direction that even a blind man could see it. The reason is simple. God's people today, they're addicted to the wrong things.

You and me, this church are in the final moments of our work. Everybody ought to be on their toes. Everybody ought to be about their Father's business. Everything you see going on in the world and the Christianity is the final phase of God's work and we're in it. We're here. Instead of nitpicking all the things that we don't like about people or like about this or like about that, it's bigger than that. Do you understand where we are? The time we waste fooling around with goofy stuff is the times that we lose doing the work. Every man or woman needs to shoulder the work of God and realize the hour that we are in. The last workers went in in 1834. We are standing at the last end of it and there's a lot of work to be done and yet God's people are playing at it. They're going to work, they're doing their life, they're doing this, they look at that so I don't like that or I don't like this. Let me tell you something. You're going to like it a lot less at the judgment seat of Christ.

We got a job to do. We ought to work together. We got to pull together. We got to realize that, hey, this church here, I can't speak for anybody else but I'll speak for this one. This is Custer's last stand and the Indians are all around us. We're going to stand to the end, at least I am. I know it's going to get a lot tougher before it gets any better. This is why through everything we have come up through this time, maybe you see it a little better now. This is why I never let anything in this world of the devil divide this church in any way, shape or form. We are going to have to stand together and we'll all fall apart separately. We just stay here and reach as many of them as we can in these last days and then one of them glorious morning, we're going home. No more battles to fight and we'll walk down those golden streets at the throne of God and we'll take that old sword or the word of God with all of its nicks and cracks and all of its rust and all of the things from the battles we fought with the nicks and we'll lay it at the feet of Jesus and just said, "Lord, we figured out your way. We knew where you were going and we got on board and we as a church got in the way for the Lord to lead us." That's going to have to end. As long as I am your pastor and as long as I have breath to preach, that's what I'll preach. I'll take a cheap shot at anybody I can when it comes to that book. I don't care. I have one rule, no quarter asked and no quarter given because the book stands and we have to stand.

It started a long time ago with two people who decided we're going to build a church and then God blessed it and we built it and then God brought you, many of you, some of you 20, 30 years ago. Remember how it was when you first came? I look over and I see how you were when you first came in. You didn't know anything. Look at you now. Look what God has done. Look where God has brought you. You knew people. Some of you just got saved in the last couple of weeks. You're at prime time. I said it last week, whatever level spiritually you're on, you're valuable to me because we have to work together. We have to put our little petty differences aside. We have

to realize that when push comes to shove, that same person that you may not like or you may not like this or you may not talk to or you not want to be around, that same person may hold your life in their hands at some point or you're theirs. Let's do the work.

So see, I wanted to pull it all together today and I'm done now. We'll move on and something else next week but I couldn't do it justice without just moving through and out giving you what I needed to give you. Let's pray. Father.