

THE SCARLET THREAD THROUGH THE BIBLE

Dr. W.A. Criswell

New Year's Eve Sermon

12-31-61 7:30 p.m.-12:00 a.m.

This sermon tonight is not like a message that is prepared in which the minister, within twenty or twenty-five minutes, will have presented his appeal and come to the climax of the sermon delivered. It is not that kind of a message. The sermon is as if a man stood on the top of a great height and looked over the whole creation of God. As Moses stood on the top of Mount Pisgah and saw from afar the Promised Land, so this message tonight. We are standing as it were on a great and lofty eminence. And we are looking over the entire story of human history from its beginning in the eternity of the eternities, in the unknown distant ages of the ageless past, and as it reaches forward to the great incomparable consummation of the ages of the ages that are yet to come.

Now we begin. Some time, before time was created, God – the Spirit, God, the Almighty Jehovah God – created His infinite heavenly hosts. He created them in angelic orders. Some of them are called angels; some of them are called seraphim; some of them are called cherubim; some of them are called archangels. But in the celestial, spiritual, heavenly world, God created a great and heavenly host. And in that host of God's created angelic beings, living in the heaven of heavens where God lives, there was the great covering cherub, the ruling archangel that God named Lucifer, or the "Son of the Morning." That was the first great creation of Almighty God in the timeless ages before time was.

The second thing that God Jehovah did was this: He created the physical universe. And when I hear ministers and preachers try so to spiritualize religion as to take the material and the physical out of it, they're getting more religious than God. God likes materiality. He created it. God likes corporeality. He created it. God likes these planets and these rocks and seas and stars, and He likes people, and He likes eating. He created it. He likes living. He created it.

The second great creation of God was this material universe, and the Book opens in Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning," in the beginning of God's material creative ability,

producing this world that we see, “in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” When that was, nobody could know. Mind could not extend itself to enter into it.

In the beginning of the beginnings, God unged these great universes out into space, placed them under His great almighty laws, and everything that God did was beautiful and perfect, filled with light and glory and gladness. His creation in the celestial world was beautiful and perfect. And His creation of the material world was beautiful and perfect; every orb according to the celestial ableness of Almighty God, everything beautiful.

Then sometime in that beginning, in the ages of the ages past, sometime before time was, there came into the heart of the great covering cherub in the celestial world, there came into the heart of the “Son of the Morning” what we call sin. I read it, first from the prophet Ezekiel. God describes him:

Thou sealest up the sun, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, the topaz, the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship prepared in thee was perfect and beautiful.

Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I say the Lord God have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God, and thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity, till sin was found in thee ... Therefore, I will cast thee out as profane ... Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by the reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee down ... Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities. Therefore, will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, and it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes.

[Ezekiel 28:12-18]

And the second passage describing Lucifer, the Son of the Morning, is in Isaiah 14:12: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut

down to the ground ... For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit upon the mount of the congregation ... I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High God” – taking God’s place. “Yet shalt thou be brought down to hell.”

Somewhere in the in nite, timeless ages of the past, sin was born in this covering cherub, this archangel of the Lord God Almighty, under whose care God had placed the heavenly hosts.

And when Lucifer fell and when sin was found in him, one third of the angels of heaven fell also. And in the fall of Lucifer, God’s created, corporeal world fell apart.

Sin always destroys. Sin plows under. Sin wrecks. Sin grinds. Sin destroys. And somewhere in the timeless ages of the past, after God had created the heavenly hosts and after God had created the heavens and the earth, sin was found in Lucifer. He was cast out. One third of the angels were cast out with him, and in that sin and in that transgression, God’s great universe fell to pieces – the planets, the suns, the stars wracked with re, with mists, with water, destroyed by the searing blast of wind. God’s beautiful world fell into emptiness, into a void, into formless mass, into ugliness and darkness.

And then God did a miraculous and a marvelous thing. In six days – in six days, a day with a morning and an evening, a day of twenty four hours – in six days, God recreated this planet and this universe, our sun and our planets, and this planet earth. In six days, God recreated it, bringing it out of its formless, empty void; out of its darkness and its mist and the watery grave; and God, in six days, recreated this universe. On the rst day, God said, “Let the light penetrate it.” And God’s heavenly and celestial light poured into this formless void, when the earth was “without form and void, when darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” [Genesis 1:2]

“Preacher, how do you know all those things?” From the Bible. It says here in the Book: “And the earth became *tohu wa bohu*, translated here, “void and formless, empty and uninhabitable.” I turn over here to the prophet Isaiah, chapter 45, verse 18, and the great prophet saith: “For thus saith the Lord that *bara* – created out of nothing – the heavens and the earth; God himself that formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not *tohu* or *bohu*.”

God never made this universe formless, and void, and empty, and dark, and destroyed. God made it beautiful and perfect. His material, corporeal creation, His

physical universe was as perfect as His celestial universe was in glory. But sin destroyed it and plunged God's universe into chaos and into formless darkness.

And Isaiah the prophet says God did not create it that way. Satan did that. Sin did that. Iniquity did that. Transgression did that. And now, God is recreating His universe. And on the first day, He pierces it with the glory of His light. God said by at, "Let there be light."

Some people come along and say, "Well, that's an eon of ve hundred thousand billion years." Listen. That's by at. God said, "Let there be light," and the first day, God's light penetrated the dark mass of this lost and chaotic and watery, buried world. Then on that second day, He created the firmament. He raised the waters above from the waters beneath.

And then on the third day, He created on the third day – a day like your day – on the third day, He created the seas, put the waters together and the dry land appeared. And then on the fourth day, God made the marvel of the sunset. Why a sunset? That's the most extraneous, useless piece of work that I know of. God loves things that are beautiful and colorful.

And on the fourth day, God cleared out the darkness and cleared out the mist and took away the clouds, and God made the beautiful sunset and the sunrise on the fourth day, and the moon appeared to shine by night. They'd been created in the beginning. That wasn't when God created the sun and the moon and the stars. This is the recreation of God, when God kicked away the chaotic darkness into which this earth was plunged. And He made the phenomena that you call sunset, sunrise, and the moon that shines and glows, the queen of heaven by night.

Then on the fifth day, He created animal life. All of the things that we see living in this earth, He did it in a day – in a day, not in a million thousand trillion years, but by at; God created them by His spoken word. And on the sixth day, He created the man and his wife. Let us, *Elohim*, plural, "let us make man in our image after our likeness, and let him rule over the seas and the dry land and the earth and all of the things God has placed in this universe; let him rule over them." [Genesis 1:26]

Every once in a while, I'll meet somebody who looks with great theological askance upon a trip to the moon. Why, man, that's part of God's universe He's given into the hands of the man to have dominion over. If anybody is smart enough – and we're

getting to be – to find our way to the moon, and if they'll promise me a safe return, I'm ready to go on the first ship. I'd like the experience. I'd like it.

All of God's creation – the fowls of the air, and we can out-fly them; the fish of the sea, and we can out-swim them; and everything that God has made, did He create this man to have dominion over it, and to rule over it, and to be God's son as the highest regent under the Almighty, ruling over God's dominion.

Then in the Garden of Eden where He placed the man – and the Garden of Eden is located in the southern part of the Mesopotamian Valley. I know that because, in the naming of the four rivers that poured through that beautiful garden, one of them is named the Euphrates, and the other is named Hiddekel or the Tigris River. Those two rivers flowed through the beautiful Garden of Eden, and there God began anew and again with His recreated world.

Now, the serpent – the serpent, the serpent, you know him after he was cursed, crawling on his belly, licking up the dust of the ground. But the serpent was the most beautiful, the most beautifully adorned, the most gifted of all of the things that God had made in this world except the man. And the serpent lent himself, whatever he looked like and whatever abilities he had, the serpent lent himself to Satan.

Satan is spirit. And a spirit has not body or corporeality. Spirits get into people. "Ah," you say, "that's medieval, old fogey, theological baggage, preacher." Listen, I see evil spirits enter into the hearts of people – the spirit of lying, the spirit of deception, the spirit of violence, murder, meanness, iniquity, all kinds of things enter into the hearts of people.

And Satan chose this most beautiful and gifted of all of God's creation outside of the man and his wife. And in that serpent, he did a phenomenal and amazing thing. He began to speak in language to the beautiful woman – perfect, glorious, fashioned by the hand of God out of these sides. You have it translated "ribs." The only place that word is translated "rib" in the entire Hebrew Old Testament is right there. Everywhere else it's the "side," the "side" of the ark.

You wouldn't say "the 'rib' of the ark"; the "side of the ark," "the side of the tabernacle." Out of Adam's side God took Eve. And He looked upon her and said, "This is bone of my bone, and this is flesh of my flesh," [Genesis 2:23] and he loved her and took her unto his heart.

And Satan saw it. And Satan began to speak to that beautiful woman. Now you have the great conflict of the ages. What is it? Well, it must be the conflict, the struggle unto death between the freedom of our democracies and the tyranny of ideological totalitarianism. Before that, it was the wars that swirled around Germany. Before that, it was the awful campaigns that wracked Europe under Napoleon, under the Caesars. And before that, it was the awful wars of the Mesopotamian and Nile Valleys. Through the ages – no – the great conflict is in the heart of Satan and the mind and love of God. For you see, in glory, Lucifer looked upon the pre-existent Lord God Christ. And Satan said in his heart, “I would be first. I would reign. I would rule.”

And he hated Jehovah Jesus Lord Christ in heaven and decided to supplant Him and to destroy Him. You see, heaven loved the Lord Jesus. It’s hard to say these things because He was only Jesus in His incarnation, but in the beginning of the beginning, before time, before the ages, there was the uncreated God and the uncreated Christ.

And when God said, “Let us make man,” that is God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, the personality of God into which a man cannot enter. Our minds cannot understand it. We cannot fathom it. But in heaven, in that spiritual world, was the Lord Christ, and Satan envied Him and hated Him and lifted up his heart against Him to supplant Him. And, and it is against the Lord Christ that Satan, in all of his subtlety and his wiles, wages war day and night, for Satan chooses to take God’s world away from Him. And Satan has avowed to rule over God’s world in place of Him. And when God made the universe, Satan said, “I was the second.”

And when God recreated this universe, Satan said, “I will seize it,” and when Satan saw the man and the woman in the Garden of Eden in the perfection and beauty of the Almighty, Satan said, “I will destroy them.”

“For they are made to rule,” says God, “over My universe under Christ.”

“And I am going to seize the power for myself,” says Satan, “and I am going to destroy the man. I am going to reign and to rule over this creation.”

And in the beginning sometime, all of this known to the sovereign God, in the beginning, the Lord Jesus came forward and volunteered to be the redemption and the forgiveness and the sin bearer and the Savior of Adam’s fallen race. And when Jesus met the tempter in the wilderness of Judea, that was just one tiny segment of the conflict between those two – between Lucifer, Son of the Morning, and the Lord Jesus Christ,

the Lord God – that was just a small segment, a small leaf of that awful conflict between Jesus and Satan.

It started up there before the worlds were. It started there before time was – the hatred of Lucifer for Jesus, and the love and compassion of the Lord God Christ for His creation and for His people. So in the garden, in the beginning, the serpent is used by Satan to speak to the woman whom God had made. And how does he do it? He doesn't have anything new. Every approach is old. We know what he's going to say before he begins. There's not any new attack on God by Lucifer. We know exactly what he's going to say. First, he's going to put a question mark after the Word of God. "Yea, did God say that? Did God tell you there's a hell? Did God say to you there's a judgment? Did God say to you if you sin you'll die? Did God say that?"

Question mark, and then a lie. And the first lie: "You won't die. You won't die. You won't die." And then he presented to Eve the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. And the woman ate, enticed and deceived by the serpent. And she took the fruit to Adam, and Adam was not deceived. Adam knew in the moment that he ate he would die. Satan deceived the woman, but he didn't deceive Adam. And when Adam saw Eve partaking of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam made a choice. He so loved her and he so found his soul bound with her that Adam chose to die by her side rather than live without her.

I cannot help but speak words of infinite admiration for the first federal head of our human race. He chose to die with Eve whom he loved rather than live without her. God could have made another Eve. He could have made half a dozen Eves. It was Adam who chose to die by the side of that beautiful and glorious created woman that the Lord placed in his arms and in his heart.

And when God came in the cool of the day, He couldn't find them. And He raised His voice, "Adam, Adam, Adam, where art thou? Adam, Adam?" And out of the covering of the trees in the garden, Adam raised his voice, "I heard you coming and I was afraid." God said, "Afraid? Who made thee afraid? Who taught you that word 'fear'? Afraid?" Afraid.

"Yes," said Adam, "I was afraid, for I'm naked. And my wife is naked." And the Lord said, "Who taught thee thou wast naked?" [Genesis 3:11] And then the story is recounted to the Lord Almighty, and when they sat in the presence of God, they had made themselves g leaves to cover their shame and their nakedness. And

when the Lord looked upon them, He said, "But it won't do, not what human hands can weave, it won't do."

And somewhere in the Garden of Eden, the Lord took an innocent animal, and before the eyes of Eve and of Adam, God slew that innocent animal, and the ground drank up its blood, **The Scarlet Thread Through the Bible**, and with the life sacrifice of an innocent animal, God took coats of skin and covered over the shame and the nakedness of the man and his wife; the first sacrifice offered by the hand of Almighty God. And I've often thought when Adam saw the gasping, spent life of that innocent creature and saw the crimson stain the soil of the ground, that was his first experience to know what it meant to die; sin and death. And so the story of atonement and sacrifice begins to unfold through the Word of God, until finally in glory you will see the great throngs of the saints who've washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; The Scarlet Thread through the Bible.

As you know, this is the first time that I have ever attempted anything like this. I have no experience. I have no precedent. I have nothing I've ever done to go by. Now, we're going to have to change. I'm going to have to stop preaching, and we're going to have to start going through this Bible. So, just as rapidly as we can, now, we're going to follow through the unfolding of this purpose of God in the Holy Scriptures.

In the Garden of Eden, as the Lord covered over the nakedness of the man and the woman, He turned to the devil, He turned to Satan, He turned to Lucifer, and He said something to Lucifer. He said, "In this woman, whom you have deceived and through whom you have destroyed the federal head of the human race, in this woman I will create out of her, I will create that One who will crush your head, out of the woman." [from Genesis 3:15] Now the old rabbis for centuries pored over that word of Jehovah God to Satan. "The seed of the woman," and as all of us know, seed is masculine. Seed belongs to the man. A woman doesn't have seed. It belongs to the man. And the old rabbis pored over that word and that promise of God, "The seed of the woman shall crush your head."

Finally, as the Scriptures will unfold, we'll know what that means, what that refers to. That is a part of that age-long conflict and struggle between the hatred of Lucifer and the love of God in Christ Jesus. But now we begin in atonement, in blood, in sacrifice: "The seed of that woman whom you deceived shall crush your head." So, driven out of the Garden of Eden, the Lord placed on each side of the gate cherubim and an altar.

Wherever in the Bible you find cherubim, they are always symbols of the grace and love and mercy and forgiveness of the Lord God.

And He placed the cherubim there and the altar there for the man to come to in repentance, in faith, to draw nigh to God. And He guarded the Tree of Life, lest the man eat of it and die. It was a merciful thing for God to do; for had our parents eaten of the Tree of Life and been confirmed in this body of death, it would have been the most tragic of all of the imaginable things that could have overwhelmed the human family.

I don't want to live forever in this body of death, my eyes gone, my hearing gone, my back stooped, my frame disintegrating, and yet confirmed in this body of death, and never be able to die. God put away and guarded out of sight the Tree of Life, lest the man eat thereof and live forever. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption." [1 Corinthians 15:50] God has made it possible for us to exchange this old house of clay with its infirmity and its senility – God has made it possible for us to exchange it for "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And that's why He put away and guarded the Tree of Life. Someday, of course, as you'll see, through the Book, we'll find it in glory in the paradise of heaven.

So, the Lord drove out the man and his wife, and she bore two sons. One was named Cain, and the other was named Abel. Cain brought to that altar the first fruit of the fields. Like a displayer at a county fair, he was so proud of himself: "And look what I have done." And he laid it at the feet of God in his pride.

Abel, by faith, feeling himself unworthy and undone – Abel brought a lamb, the first slain of his flock, poured out its blood and offered it upon the altar. And God respected Abel for the faith in his heart and received the sacrifice. But God respected not Cain because of the pride in his heart – like Lucifer, lifted up, thought well of himself. And when Cain saw he was rejected, he lifted up his hand, and there was the first mound in the earth, and underneath it lay a boy. And Adam and Eve knew what it meant to die in the loss of that boy, Abel. And their tears watered the soil above his grave.

And in the goodness of God, the Lord gave her another son, Seth. And Seth was a man of God; and Cain, driven out from the presence of the Lord, was a blasphemer. And then you have the progeny of those two: the line of Cain and the line of Seth, the children of God. And as long as the children of God were separate, God blessed the earth, and the world, and the families.

Then, in the sixth chapter of Genesis a tragic thing came to pass. The sons of God, the children of Seth, looked out into that world and they liked the glamour of the nightlife. And they liked the drunken orgies of the world. And they turned aside from their separateness and their dedication and their holiness, and they began to marry into the families of the sons of Cain. And God looked upon them, and His children had forsaken His altars and forsaken their devotion and had forgotten their consecration, and the whole earth was filled with violence and evil and iniquity.

Whenever a girl comes to me and says, "I'm going to marry a worthless drunkard, but I'm going to reform him. You don't understand, pastor. I'm going to make a Christian out of him," don't you ever think that when God's people intermarry with the vile and the iniquitous of the world you're going to lift them up to God. They're going to pull you down to hell. That's exactly what happened in the earth. The children of God began to marry in the line of Cain, and the earth was filled with violence and blood and murder and blasphemy. And God said, "It's enough, it's enough." And He looked over the whole created family of the Lord God, the children of old man Adam, and there was only one righteous man in this earth, just one. And that man's name was Noah.

And God said to Noah, "It's enough, it's enough. One hundred twenty years from now, I'm going to destroy this world by flood. You make for yourself an ark and bring your family in." And then out of His compassion for the world that He made, the Lord God told him to bring seven into the ark of the species that was clean and two of a kind into the ark of the species that was unclean.

So he built that great ark, made and fashioned after the most nautical symmetry known today. And then God shut him up. When the rain began to fall and the floods began to rise, and those people beat on the door of that ark, why didn't Noah open the door to let them in? Because God shut that door. There's a day of grace beyond which a man can't trade with God. Known to Him, there's a time, there's a line. When a man goes beyond it, he'll never be saved, never. No. In the New Testament, we call that the unpardonable sin. God shut the door. And that race and that generation were destroyed.

And then after God opened the door and Noah came out, you have the beginning of all the nations of the earth described here in the tenth and the eleventh chapters of the Book of Genesis. All the nations of the earth are divided into three parts; the sons of Noah were Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

The sons of Japheth are what you would call the Aryans, the Indo-Europeans, that great family to the north and to the west, of whom we here tonight are a part. God shall enlarge the tent of Japheth. Japheth is the great, multiplied wing of Noah's family, Japheth.

The second: Ham. Ham is the father of the Canaanites, of the Egyptians, of the Africans, of the Philistines, and all of those people who live in Africa. And the Canaanites and the Philistines who were the enemies of the people of God, they are the children of Ham. And God said they should be a servant people.

The third great wing of the Noaic family is Shem. And Shem is the father of the Shemites: the Elamites the Chaldeans the Assyrians the Syrians the Hebrew family all of those people the Elamites, the Chaldeans, the Assyrians, the Syrians, the Hebrew family – all of those people, the Arabians, the Arabs – all of those people who lived in that great, vast section of country from Ur of Chaldea through the fertile crescent down to the River of Egypt. That was the home of the Shemites, the Semites.

Anti-semitism is a vicious prejudice of people against those that God exalted in the revelation of His love and grace. And those families were all one, and they all sought to be together, just like families do. But God had said to inhabit the whole earth and to have dominion over the whole creation, so when all of those families came together in chapter 11 to build a great central monument that would hold them together. And if they ever had another ood – which God said they wouldn't have – they were going to have a tower that would reach up to heaven in which they could escape from it.

When God looked down and saw the pride again in the human heart, He confused their speech – Babel, Babylon. And being unable to understand each other, those that could speak this language went over in that direction, and those that could speak this language, automatically gathered in that direction. And those who could speak this language automatically went in this direction.

And they divided up according to the speech, according to the family tongue, according to the mother language, and then they separated from Babel over the face of the earth, and the nations grew up from those three great sections of the family of Noah. Now, that is God's introduction to His Bible.

The first eleven chapters of the Book of Genesis concern the whole family of the human race. Now, beginning at chapter 12 in the Book of Genesis, beginning at chapter

12, we come to see one family that God has chosen through whom He will keep that promise. "I will give thee a seed that shall crush Satan's head."

In the twelfth chapter of Genesis, God says to Abram, who lived in Ur of Chaldea, down there at the bottom of the Mesopotamian Valley where those Tigris and Euphrates rivers flow into the Persian Gulf, God said to Abram, "Get thee out from thy father's house, thy father's people." [Genesis 12:1]

He lived in an idolatrous city, and his father was an idolater. His father's name was Terah. They say he manufactured idols and sold them. God said, "Get out, and I'll make of thee a great nation, and I'll bless them that bless thee and curse them that curse thee. And in thy seed shall all the families and nations of the earth be blessed." [Genesis 12:3]

So, out of the family of Shem, God chooses Abraham from Ur of Chaldea. And he didn't leave his father's house and his father's family at first. From Ur of Chaldea he went up to leave his father's house and his father's family at first. From Ur of Chaldea, he went up to the northern part of the Mesopotamian Valley in a place called Haran. Abram, Nahor his brother, Terah his father, and Lot, his brother's son, they all moved up to Haran. In the Bible, you'll also find that to be Padan-aram – Haran, Padan-aram. There Abraham got a wife for Isaac – Rebekah – and there Jacob lived, and for 20 years was a servant of Laban, and married Leah and Rachel up there in the northern part of the Mesopotamian Valley in Haran.

But after Terah died, the father of Abraham died – after Terah died, then Abraham took his wife, Sarah, and took his nephew, Lot, and left Nahor his brother there. And Abram moved down into the Promised Land. He came to Shechem and then to Bethel and then to Hebron, then down to Egypt for awhile because of famine, and then back to Hebron. And there at Hebron, he and Lot divided, and Lot went down into the cities of the plains and pitched his tent toward Sodom and became the mayor of Sodom. And the angel of the Lord came and said to Abraham, "If the sin and iniquity of that awful city is as it has come up unto me, we shall destroy it."

And when the angels had left, Abraham stood yet before the Lord, knowing that Lot – righteous Lot, vexing his soul with the filthy living of the Sodomites – knowing that Lot was in that city. He prayed to God, "If fifty righteous can be found, would you spare it for the sake of fifty, if forty, if thirty, if twenty, if ten?" [from Genesis 18:22-32] Had he asked for Lot, I think God would have granted his request, but he asked for ten.

The angels couldn't descend, and there as Abram looked on from Hebron, the fire fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah after Lot, his wife, and two daughters were snatched away. Jesus says a picture of His coming is as it was in the days of Lot. First God's people must be taken out before the fire and the brimstone can fall. And at Hebron, Abraham looked and saw the destruction of the cities of the plain.

Then Abraham moved to Beersheba. Then follows the story of Isaac, which is intertwined with Abraham, and the story of Jacob; Isaac's life intertwined first with Abraham and then with Jacob.

Now, the story of Jacob. In Beersheba, where Isaac is living, Rebekah loved Jacob and Isaac loved Esau. Jacob is very shrewd, and Esau is a fine specimen of an animal. You'd have liked Esau. He'd have been the captain of the football team. He was a hunter, he was a sherman, he was out with the dogs – yup, whoo, whoo, whoo! He liked that. That's Esau.

You'd have liked him. All the way through, Esau is splendid. But he was carnal; he was of this world. He liked the things of the flesh. And Isaac liked that because he ate of his venison. So, upon a day when Esau is returning from a hunt perishing to death for hunger, he sells his birthright to Jacob for a mess of pottage – for some soup.

Then, with Rebekah, Jacob cheats Esau out of his birthright – out of the blessing, having already purchased from him his birthright. And Esau said, "I will kill you." And Jacob fled away to Padan-aram, up there where Nahor lived in Haran at the north of the Mesopotamian Valley. So, Jacob flees away, and he stops at Bethel, and there God confirms to him the promise of the seed and of the land of the Savior who was to come. From Bethel and his vision of angels, he goes to Padan-aram to Haran. Up there in the grandson's house of Nahor, whose name is Laban, the brother of Rebekah, and he works for Laban seven years for Rachel. And then of all things, when he woke up the next morning and looked over there at the woman whom he'd been married to that night, she wasn't Rachel at all.

I've always thought that that was one of the stupidest things that a man ever did in my life, that he couldn't tell in the nighttime whether it was Rachel or not. He should have known her better than that. So, he worked seven more years. Having Leah, he worked seven more years for Rachel. Then he worked six more years for Laban, and at the end of twenty years came back when God said, "Go back to Palestine."

So, Jacob comes back on the east side of the Jordan, then crosses over to Shechem. And living there in Shechem, Simeon and Levi do a cruel and awful thing in destroying the men of Shechem. Then, finally, Jacob comes to Bethel and renews his vow to God, and from Bethel down to Hebron. And while he's on the way to Hebron, Rachel dies at Bethlehem.

And down at Hebron, this boy, Joseph, is sent to Dothan, which is about ten miles north of Samaria, in order to find the flocks and the brothers who are keeping them. And when Joseph appeared they said, "There's that boy that our father dotes on, and spoils with that coat of many colors." They propose to slay him. Finally, Reuben persuades them to just spare his life, and they sell him to the Ishmaelites, who take him down into Egypt. And in Egypt, Joseph becomes the prime minister under Pharaoh.

There is a famine in the land of Canaan, and the story of the brothers going down into Egypt. And they come back for their father, and in Egypt in the time of famine, they are given Goshen. As you look at Egypt, it had a triangular delta where the different rivers pour out into the Mediterranean Sea. On the right side of the delta, between the right side of the delta and the desert is a little country that is named Goshen – very fertile. And there Pharaoh and Joseph settled Israel and his family.

Then we come to the death of Joseph – that his bones be carried back into the Promised Land when God visits them. There arises a Pharaoh who doesn't know Joseph, and he sees those Israelites prospering, and God is blessing them. And they are afraid of them, so Pharaoh uses them to make bricks without straw, to build cities in slavery.

And as they groaned under that heavy oppression, God bowed down His ears to hear, and there arises a man who was Pharaoh's son, an heir apparent to the throne, whom she took out of the waters when the cruel Pharaoh decreed that all the male children should die, learned in all of the arts and sciences of the Egyptians, whose heart was with his people, taught by his mother Jehovah God and the choice of Israel.

Having fled away from Pharaoh on the back side of the desert at Sinai, he is tending sheep. And while he's tending sheep on the back side of the desert at the foot of Mount Sinai at the bottom of the Sinaitic Peninsula, there God speaks to him out of a burning bush. And God says, "I've heard the cry of My people."

"Ah, said Moses, anybody but I, anybody but I."

But the Lord says, “No, it is you. My people through whom this promise is to be made and kept inviolate, My people.”

Moses goes down, and after the ten plagues on a night of nights, isn't it amazing how these things are done without any meaning whatsoever except as God gives them meaning? Why, on that night of nights, why should they take a lamb and slay it? Pour out its blood, sprinkle it with hyssop – which is a common, ordinary mistletoe type of a thing, a parasite of a thing, a common plant that grew on the walls and everywhere in that country – take a hyssop, dip it in the blood and sprinkle it on the door posts and on the lintel in the sign of the cross, on the door posts on either side. On the lintel here at the top, in the form of a cross, sprinkle the blood and when the death angel passes over that night, “When I see the blood, I'll spare your house and your home.” And in all the other homes and families, there's death, and the wailing and lamentation of all of Egypt, except to those who are under the blood, under the blood, “The Scarlet Thread through the Bible.”

THE SCARLET THREAD THROUGH THE BIBLE (PART 2)

Dr. W. A. Criswell

12-31-61 7:30 p.m.-12:00 a.m.

That night, Israel goes out with a high hand. And they cross over the Red Sea by the providence of God and turn down south until in the third month of the exodus they stand there at the base of Mount Sinai. And on Mount Sinai, forty days and forty nights, Moses is with God, and the Lord gives to Moses – first, first, God gives to Moses the moral law, chapters 19 and 20. Then God gives to Moses the civil law, chapters 21 to 24. Then God gives to Moses the ceremonial law, chapters 25 to 40, with its tabernacle and its priesthood and its sacrifices.

Then in the Book of Leviticus, we have, first, chapters 1 to 7, the sacrifices. There are five of them – the burnt offering, the meal offering, the peace offering or the thanksgiving offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering. The difference between the sin and the trespass offering is the sin is done volitionally. A trespass is an inadvertence, a thing a man didn't mean to do. And those five sacrifices are given here in the first five chapters of the Book of Leviticus.

Then, in chapters 8 to 10, we have the consecration of priests; in chapters 11 through 15, ceremonial holiness; in chapter 16, the Day of Atonement; chapter 17 to 23, all of the festivals; and chapters 24 to 27, the vows and the tithes and the laws of obedience.

Every convocation of Israel is a happy one. It is a festival, it is a feast – except one. And that is the Day of Atonement. They observe it now, calling it Yom Kippur. A Jew may not be a Jew any other time of the year, but on that Day of Atonement, if he's a Jew, he's a Jew then. That's the Day of Atonement in the sixteenth chapter of the Book of Leviticus.

Then the Book of Numbers – first, from chapters 1 through 10, the events at Sinai. There's a census taken, there's a consecration of Levites. There's the altar dedication and the observance of the Passover. Then the second part of the Book of Numbers, they're on their wandering march through the wilderness; chapters 11 to 21, they make it from Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea.

At Kadesh-Barnea, they send spies into the land in order to see how to conquer it, but instead of coming back with faith and dedication, they come back saying, “There are giants over there, and there are walled cities over there, and we were just like grasshoppers in their sight. We can’t conquer that land.” Caleb and Joshua said, “But God, but God is with us. Let us arise and inherit it, for God has promised it to us.”

“No,” said those other ten. And all Israel wept. And they turned back from Kadesh-Barnea, and for thirty eight years, they wandered aimlessly in the wilderness until all that generation had died. And at the end of the thirty eight years, they’re back again at Kadesh-Barnea, and then they make their way to the plains of Moab. There, you find the death of Aaron. There, the story of the fiery serpents and the defeat on the east side of Sihon, the king of Gilead, and Og, the king of Bashan.

And there on that side, Moses gave all of that territory on the east side of the Jordan, he gave it to Reuben, to Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh. And on the plains of Moab, you have the story of Balaam and the sin of Baal-peor.

Balaam was hired in order to curse Israel, but God wouldn’t let him curse Israel. So, Balaam had to do something to win his hire from the king of Moab, so he whispered something in the King of Moab’s ear, in Balak’s ear, and brother, did it work. Do you know what he whispered in his ear? He said, “Come here, shhhh, come here, shhhh, come here, shhhh,” and he said, “You get all the pretty women in Moab together and take them over there and put them in that camp and let’s see what happens.” Law me, it happened. Man, it’s awful what pretty women can do, and they did it.

Then you have that final preparation for Canaan. Now, the Book of Deuteronomy is made up of five great addresses of Moses. The first address is on the history of the forty years, chapters 1 to 4. The second address is on the law, 5 to 26. The third address is on the blessings and the cursings, chapters 27, 28. The fourth address is on the second covenant, chapters 29 and 30, and the fifth address is his song and his last words.

Deuteronomy means – Deuteronomy is a Latin word meaning the second giving of the law, made up of five addresses of Moses on the plains of Moab before the children of Israel went into the Promised Land. So, after Moses had sung his song, the Song of Moses, and after he had delivered his soul of these five addresses, then God said to Moses, “Get thee up, get thee up from the plains of Moab, get thee up to the top

of Pisgah.” And Moses went up to the top of Pisgah, called Nebo, and the Lord said to him, “Look, this is the land, this is the land.”

All through the Bible you’ll find the land, and the people, and the seed – the Savior Christ – and the kingdom. “This is the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob say I will give it under thy seed forever and forever. I have caused thine eyes to see it, but thou shalt not go over it.”

So, Moses, a servant of God, died there in the land of Moab on Mount Nebo, and God buried him in a valley. No man knoweth of his sepulchre until this day. And after the death of Moses, God said to Joshua, “Arise, arise, arise. My servant is dead. Moses is dead. Arise, thou and all this people, and inherit the land that I give unto Israel.”

Isn’t that amazing? God says He gives it to us. And they have to fight for it with their lives. They are contested by every inch just like God says to us today, “Go, make disciples,” but it’s hard. “Go, preach the gospel,” but it’s difficult. “Go,” says God, “and make every man conscious of the laws of Jesus. Preach to him.”

“Ah, Lord, but that’s a hard assignment.” Doesn’t matter. Doesn’t matter.

God has those that He’ll give us. Whenever a man preaches the gospel, somebody will be saved. When a man builds a church, God will add to it. They won’t all be saved until Jesus comes again. There’ll always be people here that will reject, but there will also always be people here that will respond whatever the difficulty, whatever the discouragement, whatever the clouds, “Go over,” says God. There are victories for us. The Lord will give us somebody. He’ll give us you; He’ll give us you.

So Joshua goes over. And there you have the wars of the conquest. He made three campaigns, first in the center of the country. He took Jericho. Then he took Ai, which was the military outpost and bastion of Bethel.

Then the Gibeonites deceived them, and they made a truce with them. So, they won all of the central part of the country. Then Adonizedek who was the King of Jebus, later Jerusalem, with four other kings, those five warred against Joshua, and Joshua won the southern campaign. But when he prayed to the moon over – to the sun and the moon over Ajalon, “Don’t you go down and destroy the light,” and there was a long day. Remember that story? That’s against the five kings in the south.

Then up in the north against Jabin, who was the king of Hazor, up there above Galilee, that was the third great campaign, and then the conquest ceased. And the last part of Joshua is the story of his death and of his appeal to the people to be true to the Lord.

Then we come to the Book of the Judges. The difference between a judge and a king is this: A king gives to his son in succession his throne, but a judge was raised up according to a crisis and endowed with special gifts from God.

Now, first in the days of the judges, the hoards out of Mesopotamia between the Tigris and Euphrates Valley, they'd come and oppress Israel, and Othniel, who is the younger brother of Caleb, is the judge raised up to deliver them. Then the Moabites oppressed Israel, and Ehud – you know, he was left-handed, and that's one of the funniest ways to deliver a people I ever saw in my life. This man, who was the king of Moab, was named Eglon, and the book says he was very, very fat. And Ehud was left-handed. So, when you see a man, why, you watch his right hand. You don't think about his left hand. You watch his right hand. So, Ehud came to Eglon to bear the tribute, and he laid the tribute down with his right hand.

But he had his left hand back of him, and when Ehud put the tribute down with his right hand and the big, fat king looked at it in greed and avaricious gladness, then Ehud, who was left-handed, whirled around with his left hand and had a dagger in it, and he plunged it. And I want you to know, when the fat of Eglon covered over the dagger, he couldn't pull it out, so he just left it in him and ran away. Isn't that an amazing thing?

Then you have an invasion from Philistia, and Shamgar delivers it with an ox goad. Then you have the great invasion from the north under another Jabin in Hazor, and Sisera is his captain of the hosts. And there's not a man that will fight him, not a one, all of them scared to death, not a man.

And God raises up a woman. Thank the Lord for Deborah! God raises up Deborah, and she encourages Barak, and they defeat Sisera and the hosts of Jabin in the vale, in the valley of Esdraelon. Then you have the Midianites and the story of Gideon. Then you have the Ammonite oppression and Jephthah, and last of all, you have the Philistine oppression and the story of Samson.

And now we have come to the ministry of Samuel, the reign of Saul, and of David, and of the kings of Israel and of Judah. Now, the last of the judges was Samuel.

Samuel marks the beginning of a great departure in Israel. There is only one religion in the world that is characterized by the phenomenon of what you'd call a prophet.

No other religion in the world has ever had a prophet, nor has there ever been a religion in the world that foretold the future or that spoke of things that God was going to do in times to come. And Samuel, the last of the judges, is also the first of the prophets. And in his ministry and in his life, Samuel instituted what you call a seminary, a school of the prophets. And from now on, you will find the prophetic ministry more and more coming to the fore in the life and the development of God's people.

This man, Samuel: first, the book. The ministry of Samuel is in chapters 1 to 7, and then the reign of Saul is in chapters 8 through 31. Now, to go as rapidly as we can – Samuel, as you know, was given in answer to prayer of a godly woman named Hannah, who was sterile. And in her prayer, God placed in her arms this little boy, whom she called “Asked of God” – Samuel.

And when she weaned him after three years, she brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh, to the pastor of the church, to the high priest named Eli. And there before Eli, the little lad ministered unto the Lord, being a Levite, dressed in a linen ephod, the plain white garment of a priest. And Samuel grew up unto the Lord, and even in childhood, the word of the Lord came to Samuel, and no message that he delivered did God let fall to the ground.

And after Samuel's ministry, in which he went around with a Bible in his hand and taught the people the Word of God, he made his circuit year after year teaching the people the law of Moses. And after Samuel's age, the people said, “We want to be like the nations around us. We want a king.” And God said to Samuel, “Give them a king. The thing comes out of the vanity of their heart,” but God had willed even in the Book of Deuteronomy that they have a king.

So the Lord said to Samuel, “You go ahead and obey their desire.” And he chose a godly, handsome, humble, marvelous young fellow by the name of Saul. Isn't it a shame he could not have continued that way? Chose Saul, the son of Kish, and after the anointing of Saul, he is presented to the people. So humble is Saul, so self-effacing, that when they gathered to crown the new king, he's not even there. They find him hidden away.

And they bring him out, and he stands before the people, head and shoulders taller than any of the other of Israel. And they shout, "God save the king." Isn't that a marvelous thing? They still say it over in England. "God save the king." And they crowned Saul.

In his beginning ministry, oh! Saul was a great man and a powerful influence for God. For example, those Ammonites came from the east. The Ammonites were a kind of a Bedouin, nomadic group living over there at the head of the Arabian desert where it juts against Trans-Jordania. The Ammonites came and said to the men of Jabesh-gilead, "Come out. We're going to put out your right eye, every man, just to show our contempt for Jehovah God and for you."

And the men of Jabesh-Gilead sent word to Saul that the Ammonites had come and they were going to put out their right eye just to show the Ammonite contempt of Jehovah God and for God's people. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul, and he slew his oxen and cut them up into pieces and passed the pieces throughout Israel and said, "Thus may God do to every man in Israel who doesn't meet me at Bezek near the Mount Gilboa in order to fight for God and to fight for His people." [from 1 Samuel 11:7]

Oh, it was a day of revival! It was a day of commitment. It was a day of victory and triumph. Saul led that army over there, and they routed the Ammonites, and the Jabesh-gileadites never, never forgot. And then every successful campaign crowned the work of Saul. His wonderful boy, Jonathan, attacked the Philistine garrison at Geba and at Michmash, and then he fought the Moabites and Edomites and the Syrians. And in every way, God blessed Saul.

And then something happened I've never understood. And then something happened. Instead of being that self-effacing, wonderful, humble man who was filled with the Spirit of God and the power of conquest, when he went to fight against the Amalekites, he looked at the treasures of the Amalekites. He looked at their flocks and their herds, and greed seized him. Every once in a while, don't you see a man like that? A fine man, and he succeeds out in the business world and it turns his face, and it turns his head. And Saul looked at all of the spoils of the Amalekites, and he decides then out of the pride of his life, he thought he'd chain Agag to his chariot and ride back through Judea and through Israel with Agag, the king, tied to his chariot out of the vanity of his life and disobedience to God. "It's better to obey than to sacrifice," said the Lord God.

And then in the second Philistine campaign, an overwhelming calamity destroyed Saul. On one side of the vale of Elah were the forces of Philistia, and on the other side were the forces of the children of Israel. And there came out a big giant by the name of Goliath. And he said to Israel and to Israel's God, "You come out here and fight me. If you win, we'll be your servants, but if I slay you, you're our servants." And all Israel cowered and trembled. Shows you what happened to Saul. Instead of Saul being out there in the might and power of the Lord Jehovah God, he was back in the camp scared to death, scared of Goliath. You see, his heart had caved in on him. He'd lost his unction and his power with God, and he was afraid.

And in those days, there was a boy, there was a boy, whom Saul didn't know, and didn't anybody know him. Even his own father didn't call the boy to the feast when Samuel came to the house and said, "Jesse, in order to anoint a new king, here's Eliab, here's Shammah, here's Abinadab." When he had gone through all seven of those boys, Samuel said, "I don't understand. God sent me here to your house to anoint a new king, and you say these are all your boys, and God's rejected every one of them because God doesn't look on a man's countenance. God looks on a man's soul. He looks at a man's heart." Samuel said, "I don't understand. I can't understand."

And then the father happened to remember. "Well, wait a minute. I got another boy." Now, isn't that a sight? "Yeah, I got another boy. But, my land, he's herding sheep on the back of the pasture. He's just a boy, he's just a boy. You don't want him. We never thought to ask him to the feast."

Samuel said, "Listen, Jesse, we won't sit down until that boy comes." There the feast is all prepared and everybody is standing around with their mouths watering and everything going on, and Samuel says, "We won't sit down, even, until that boy comes." And when the boy came, he was ruddy, red-headed, of a fair countenance, and the glory of the goodness of God was in his eyes and in his speech. And when Samuel looked on him, God said to His prophet, "Arise, anoint him. That's he; that's My king," a ruddy-faced, red-headed lad from the sheepfold. That's God. And he anointed him. What an amazing thing.

Well, the next time that little boy appears, oh, he's sixteen years old, fifteen years old. He's in his teens, he's growing up to be a young man. And law me, he's walking down the hill to the dry wadi in the middle of the valley called Elah. Some of you have done that. I have, and picked up those stones; but I sure was glad there was no Goliath glaring at me on the other side. He walked down into that valley, and he picked out five

smooth, round stones. You know, there's an old gag. Did he lack faith that he picked out five stones? If he had believed in God, one stone would have been enough. Why did he pick out five stones? And the answer is, "Man, Goliath had four brothers." Yes, sir. Goliath had four brothers. There was one for Goliath and one for each one of the other brothers.

And that little boy, that teenager down in that valley, stooping over, picking up those stones and putting them in his satchel, in his lunch bag that he took out when he fed the flock. He'd stay out all day and he'd take a lunch with him, and he had a little bag. And he put those four stones in there, and then he walked up on the other side to that glowering giant, nine feet six inches tall. Man, what a center on a basketball team he'd have made. Think of him. There he was with his staff, with his spear like a weaver's beam, with his armor bearer carrying a shield higher than a man's head.

And the giant looked down, and there was that unshaven, ruddy-faced, slender boy with a shepherd's staff in his hand, and something else in his right hand coming out to fight, and Goliath was insulted. He didn't even get up. He sat down and he looked at him, and he said, "If you come to me, I'll feed you to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field."

And Goliath stood up and started to walk towards that boy, I presume just to get him by the nape of his neck and shake the daylight out of him. And lo, me alive, that boy reached down into that satchel and got out one of those stones, and as he walked toward Goliath, that thing was swinging around his head, and when he got close he let it go, and it went right into the middle of his forehead and sank into his brain. And Goliath fell down dead, and David, the boy, took out his great sword and stood on the top of his carcass and hacked off his head. Now, there, now there was a victory.

Ah, but here's what happened. Oooh, that old green-eyed monster! When the women of Israel came back to Jerusalem singing about the victory and praising God for the deliverance, this is what they were singing: "Saul hath slain his thousands, but David, but David hath slain his tens of thousands." [1 Samuel 18:7]

And Saul heard them sing. All the women, all their lives, loved David. Wasn't that a remarkable thing? David must have been one of the handsomest, and one of the finest-looking, and one of the most personable, and one of the best specimens of mankind that the Lord ever created. God loved David, the women loved David, and the men who were with him. He said one time, when he was behind the Philistine lines

when he was hated and hounded, David happened to say one time: “Ah, I remember, the well at the gate of Bethlehem out of which I drank when I was a boy.” He just happened to say that.

And some of those great, big, strong, fine men jeopardized their lives, went beyond the enemy’s lines, to get a drink of water for David. They loved him. You can’t say too much about David, the man after God’s own heart. And the women loved him, and they sang that song, and Saul heard it. And the Book says, “And from that moment on, Saul began to eye David,” and he began to hate him, and he began to seek for his life until finally, David fled the country and was assigned a city in the south of Philistia named Ziklag. And there he was in the third Philistine war.

And the book closes in the battle of that third Philistine war. You see, Saul is oppressed, and the Philistines are gathering by the thousands and like the sands of the sea, and they’re spread there on the plain of Esdraelon, Meggido. How many of these battles will you find being fought there on the plains of Meggido? And the Philistines are there by the thousands. And Saul with his army – with Jonathan, Abinadab, Malchishua; Saul is up there on the height of the Mount of Gilboa. And he’s oppressed. And he goes over on the other side of the valley in the midst of which is a tall – it looks like a loaf of bread. It’s called the Hill of Moreh.

And on that hill is a village named Endor. And in Endor is a witch. And in the dead of the night, Saul oppressed, finds his way to the witch of Endor, and he says, “Find me Samuel.” My goodness alive, no witch is able to bring up the dead, no spiritualist, no anybody can bring up the dead. But God let that old hag, that old witch, bring Samuel up because it was for a purpose.

And when that witch saw Samuel rise from the dead, her hair stood straight up – it scared the living daylights out of her. She knew she’d been a hoax, just like all the rest of them. Scared her to death. And Saul said to Samuel, “I’m oppressed, and the Philistines are gathered like the sands of the sea, and God doesn’t answer me anymore, and I pray and He doesn’t answer, and I inquire, and He doesn’t answer. And God has forsaken me. What shall I do?”

Samuel said, “There’s not anything you can do when God’s left you, not anything, not anything. When God has left you, there’s not anything to do. And this time tomorrow, you and your sons will be with me, be with me.” People often ask, “Was Saul a lost man?” No, sir, Saul was not a lost man.

Saul was the kind of a man that lost his ministry. He lost the great ableness of his life. But he was saved, for Samuel said, "Tomorrow at this time, you'll be with me, you and your sons." Jonathan was one of the flowers of Israel, and wherever Jonathan was, Saul was going, and wherever Samuel was, Jonathan and Saul were going.

Saul is the type of a man who was called of God, who was endowed with great talents from God and instead of using them for the Lord, success turned his head, and he lost his kingdom and he lost his children, and he lost the great open door that God set before him. So, the next day, Saul joins the battle, and the Philistines come up the side of the mount, and Israel rushes down the mount to beat them.

And in that day, they slew Jonathan. He was the first one to fall. They slew Jonathan. Then they slew Abinadab. Then they slew Melchishua, and then the archers got the reins, and they began to strike the armor of Saul. When he saw he was going to perish, he took his sword and put the butt end of it on the ground and put the point of it in his abdomen, and he fell with all of his great weight on that awful sword and lay there in a pool of blood.

When the Philistines found him, they cut off his head and took off his armor, and they fastened his body to the wall of Bethshean, a Caananite city down at the bottom of Jezreel. And they took his armor in the house of their goddess Ashtaroth. And when the men of Jabesh-gilead heard about it, they went at night and took down the body of Saul and buried his body in Jabesh-gilead on the other side of the Jordan River.

Then an Amalekite came. Now, we're in 2 Samuel. Now, first the outline of 2 Samuel: 2 Samuel is the reign of David, chapters 1 to 4, his reign in Hebron; chapters 5 to 11, his reign over all Israel until his sin. The third part, chapters 12 to 20, the penalty for his sin, and chapter [21-24], the concluding of the life and ministry of David.

Now, an Amalakite came, and running up to David said, "I slew Saul, I slew him, and here's his crown and here's his bracelet." He thought he'd be rewarded, but David refused for years to take advantage of the iniquity and the rejection of God against Saul. And David waited upon the Lord, and he took that Amalekite and he slew him.

And then David made this beautiful, beautiful elegy regarding Jonathan and Saul, and then he leaves Ziklag, and he's crowned king in Hebron over Judah. David was crowned three times, privately by Samuel, at Hebron over Judah, and then finally, all the tribes crowned king over Israel.

So, Ishbosheth, who's the son of Saul, is put on the throne by Abner, the captain of the hosts of Israel, and David reigned over Judah. But Abner turns aside from Ishbosheth and gives his loyalty to David, and when Joab, the captain of David's hosts sees that, he's afraid that Abner will take his place, so he privately slays Abner, one of the most dastardly deeds that anybody ever did.

Then two murderers slay Ishbosheth. Then David is crowned king over all of Israel. And the first part of David's life over Israel is magnificent. God gives him every victory on top of victory after victory. He is never defeated. On and on David rises in glory and in power as he extends the empire.

Then, in the prime of his life, at the very height of his glory, instead of being out leading the hosts of God like a king ought to do, standing at the forefront of God's people, he goes soft, and he stays at home and lets Joab lead the army. And while he's at home on a couch in the evening, from the top of his palace, which is on the hilltop in old Mount Zion, he sees down in the city over the wall a beautiful woman bathing.

He didn't even know her name. That's not love. He didn't even know who she was. That's not love. He didn't know whether she was married or not. That's not love. That's lust. That's downright, unadulterated carnality; David, whom God had given the world, David. And he watches that beautiful woman. He asks who she is. And he sends for her, and then she sends word to him, "I'm with child. What shall I do? For Uriah, my husband, is with Joab fighting against Rabbath-ammon." And David says, "This will I do." And he got him a pencil and he wrote a note.

And say that Joab put that note in his pocket and keep it. Ah. And he wrote a note, and he said to Joab, "You have a man in your army named Uriah. He's been down here to Jerusalem." See, David tried to get him to go and live with his wife. Uriah said, "I won't. The armies of Israel are fighting for God, and I'm not staying at home."

He sat out in the street, and he wouldn't go in his house because the armies of God were at war against Rabbath-ammon. And then David got him drunk and he wouldn't go in. So, he writes that note to Joab, and he says, "Joab, you go ride up there next to the wall. Ride up there next to the wall. And then when you get right up there at the wall, with Uriah in front, then the rest of you fall back. Leave him there by himself, all the blaspheming infidels of the Ammonites to slay.

That's what David wrote in that letter. And then he said, "When the report is made what you've done, I won't castigate you for your strategy. I'll understand." And Joab did that. He took his army, pressed against the walls of Rabbath-ammon with Uriah at the front. And then in the midst of a battle, he gave that secret command and all of the other soldiers withdrew, and Uriah stood there, one soldier, fighting God's battles.

And the Ammonites slew him, and he died there at the hands of the infidels. And Joab wrote back to David and said, "The war's going like this. We went up, and then we withdrew, but before you say anything, Uriah, the Hittite, is dead." Ah. Then the next sentence says, "But what David did displeased God."

And the next day, Nathan, God's prophet – the next day, Nathan, God's prophet, comes in. And he says to David, "Sir, there is in this kingdom a man who has vast flocks. And across the way, there is a poor man who has one little lamb, and he nourishes the lamb, the only pet and the only love and the only thought that he has, that one little lamb, and that rich man, that man with great, expensive flocks and herds had a visitor. And instead of taking up his own flock, he went across and forced from that man that little lamb. And he dressed it." And David was angry and said, "Why, that scoundrel, he'll; he'll restore it fourfold."

Nathan looked at him and pointed his finger and said, "David, thou art that man. Fourfold." And the sword never left his hands. Fourfold. First, first, the lad died, born to Bathsheba. God said he will not live. Fourfold. First, the lad died.

Second, that beautiful son Amnon: Amnon looked upon Tamar, the full sister of Absalom, and he forced her, and Absalom kept it in his heart, and after two years, he slew Amnon. Fourfold. Two of them.

And then Absalom, the most beautiful prince the world ever saw with his flowing, golden hair, with his marvelous, scintillating presence and personality, and all Israel loved him so much – they chose him instead of David, and they rebelled against David and David fled for his life, because all Israel loved Absalom, the beautiful prince and son of the great king.

And over there on the other side of the Jordan River, there is a battle fought. And when Joab sees Absalom, caught in an oak by that beautiful hair, he takes a dart and

thrusts him through, and thrusts him through, and thrusts him through. Number three. David cries, "Oh, Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would God I died for thee, oh, Absalom, my son, my son." [2 Samuel 18:33] Number three.

Number four. Fourfold shalt thou restore. Adonijah. Adonijah was like Absalom – beautiful, personable, gifted. And when he sought to subvert the kingdom of Solomon, Solomon had him slain. Fourfold. And the sword never left his house.

Throughout the story of the kings of Judah, bathed in David's blood. And 2 Samuel's closes with the tragic story of the pestilence. God says to David, "Choose, choose. Shall it be seven years famine? Shall it be three months before your enemies or shall it be three days pestilence?" Ah, what a choice! What a choice! Seven years famine, three years to be pursued by my enemies or three days' pestilence. He said, "Three days' pestilence. I cast myself on the mercies of God. Maybe He will remember." And thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of God's poor people began to die, to die, to die.

And when David arises one morning, he sees the destroying angel with his sword raised over the city of the great king in Jerusalem to destroy it, and David falls in the presence of the Lord God and says, "O, God, O, God, against me and against my father's house, O, God, O, God, but not these sheep." And the Lord says, "Get thee up." Mount Moriah, I've heard of that before, where Abraham offered Isaac, "Get thee up."

Araunah's threshing floor on the top of Mount Moriah, go, build an altar, sacrifice, the scarlet thread through the Bible. "When I see the blood I will pass over you, I'll spare the city." David goes up, and Araunah sees him coming, "Oh, my king."

"I've come, Araunah," says David, "to build an altar to God and to sacrifice lest the people be destroyed."

And Araunah says, "My, lord, oh, king, I give you the place, I give you the instrument, I give you oxen for sacrifice."

"Nay," says David, "I'll buy it. I won't offer it to God that which costs me nothing." He bought the threshing floor, and he built the altar.

And God, when he saw the blood, forgave and saved; and there they built the temple of Solomon, and there they erected the great altar. And there the prayers and intercessions arise unto the Lord for these years and years, and someday when they

rebuild that temple, the songs and praises of God will go up again from that same and sacred place.

Ah we have been going about forty five minutes this time. Let's do this. We are going to have an intermission in Coleman Hall from 10:30 until 11:00, isn't that right? Isn't that right? From 10:30 until 11:00; let me go on until 10:30. Let me go on and we'll just take thirty minutes off. Now, oh, just as rapidly as we can. Ah. All of you who are standing in the back, there are seats up in that topmost balcony if you want to go to them.

Now, until 10:30, just seventeen minutes, just as rapidly as we can, so we come to 1 Kings. First Kings is divided like this: The first eleven chapters describe the reign of Solomon. The second part of it, chapters 12 through 22, give the story of the divided kingdom to the days of Ahab, king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.

Now, about Solomon: apparently, this is the pattern of life. Solomon began gloriously. God loved Solomon, the Book says, and crowned him with every gift. At Gibeon in the dream God said, "Anything, Solomon?" And Solomon asked for wisdom in order to rule his people well. And God said, "Because you've asked that, I'll give you everything else. I'll give you fame, and I'll give you fortune, and I'll give you victory, and I'll give you a kingdom. And if you'll be faithful to Me, I'll give you length of days."

Well, what did he do? Solomon began gloriously and triumphantly, and the Lord extended his kingdom and blessed him on every hand. And then, and then, Solomon fell into the most tragic decline of any king that you could read of. God said, "You shall not multiply unto you gold and silver." And Solomon did that until it was as common in Jerusalem as stones on the street.

And God said a second thing, "And you shall not multiply unto you wives." God hates that thing. Malachi says, "God hates that," and – and Solomon multiplied 700 wives and 300 concubines. The little Sunday school boy said, "Solomon sure did like women and animals." And they said, "What do you mean he liked women and animals?"

"Well, he said, "he had 700 wives and 300 porcupines."

And the closing ministry of Solomon is tragic, tragic. There is rebellion on every side. He didn't get length of days because of his disobedience to God. And his empire

fell into disunity and disorder, and Solomon died one of the most abject failures in all human stories.

On his death, Rehoboam is the king. And because of his cruel attitude, you see, he was reared in Solomon's court. And when you hear Rehoboam speak, you hear the speaking of a young man who grew up in Solomon's day. Instead of being young men of great dedication and great commitment to God, all they love is pleasure and the things of the likeness and the gladness and the emptiness and frivolity and foolishness of this world.

That's Rehoboam, so that his kingdom divides then, Jeroboam to the north, king over the ten tribes of the north, and the lion of David over Benjamin enmeshed in David in the south. In the two kingdoms, there are 19 kings in the south and 19 kings in the north, though the south and the kingdom of Judea lasted 135 years longer than the kingdom in the north.

In the upper kingdom, there are nine different dynastic changes. In the southern kingdom, of course, there's no change at all. The line of David goes all the way through. And the Kings closes with the idolatry of Ahab and Jezebel and the rising of Elijah, the prophet of God.

Now, to 2 Kings. 2 Kings is divided like this: From 1 to 17 is the history of the two kingdoms to the fall of Samaria. And the last part of it, 18 to 25, is the history of Judah to the fall of Jerusalem. Now, we come to one of the great principles of the Word of God.

Over here in the book of Isaiah, chapter 10 and verse 5, Isaiah says, "Oh, Assyria, the rod of Mine anger and the staff of Mine indignation." And in the Book of Habakkuk, which I had planned to speak of and haven't time to read, the same thing God says about Chaldea, the kingdom of the Babylonians. So, these prophets now are beginning to prophesy.

There is coming the destruction of Israel, and they prophesy, "There is coming the destruction of Israel." And they are describing that bitter and ruthless and merciless nation, Nineveh and Assyria, but they are coming. "The rod of Mine anger and the staff of Mine indignation," says the Lord God, and Tiglath-pileser and Nabopolassar and Shalmanezar and Sargon and Assyria, Samaria, Ashurbanipal and Esarhaddon. They come down from the Lord, and they carry away Israel into captivity and destroy the kingdom forever and plow under Samaria.

“The rod of Mine anger and the staff of My correction.” That doesn’t mean that Assyria was any better than Samaria, and it doesn’t mean that Soviet Russia is any better than the United States. It just means that God raises up these empires that chasten God’s people. That’s why we tremble today in the presence of Soviet Russia, not that God favors them or loves them, but the favor and blessing of God is upon His people, and if His people don’t get right and if they don’t draw nigh and if they don’t serve God, the Lord raises up these bitter and merciless and cruel nations in order to chasten His people.

That’s what the prophets were preaching to Israel: “If you don’t get right, if you don’t get right, if you don’t get right,” then the great Assyrian hoards came down and carried away the northern ten tribes in 722 BC, and then that left Judah alone. And down there in Judah, there was Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.

And the great Assyrian invasion came in the days of Hezekiah. And Sargon finally took Samaria. And then his son, Sennacherib, came down to take Judah. How do you have a fight, a war? Well, you do it with armies and a battle array. That’s how you fight a war.

Sennacherib absolutely surrounded Jerusalem and took all of Judea. Hezekiah, the king, who was a godly man, made it a matter of prayer, and while he was down on his knees talking to God, the word of the Lord came to Isaiah, the son of Amos, saying, “You go tell Hezekiah, you go tell him that I’m going to put a up fort, I’m going to put a fort, I’m going to put a ring in Sennacherib’s nose. Send him back by the way that he came; for this is My battle. This is My war,” says the Lord God.

The next morning, there were 185,000 corpses when the angel of the Lord got through with the armies of Sennacherib, all in answer to good king Hezekiah’s prayer. America may be delivered somewhat by her armies and her air force and her men in uniform, but the imponderables of God either say life or death to a nation. Whether we live or die is in the hands of Almighty God.

Then after King Hezekiah, there follows – until finally we come to the last great revival, Josiah. Josiah was one of the Lord’s anointed, the good king Josiah. And he did one of the most foolish things in this world, one of the most inexplicable, one of the most un-understandable things in this world. In the days of Josiah, there was a great revival, one of the great revivals of all times. Josiah repaired the house of the Lord, and on the inside of the house of the Lord he found the Bible. And wherever the people read the

Bible, you'll have a revival. And when the people read the Bible, they had a great stirring of the devoted love of their souls to God.

And the people began to live right and to do right and to love God and to serve God, and it was a marvelous thing. And the prophets prophesied, and everything was blessed of heaven. And right in the middle of that, Pharaoh Necho who was the king of Egypt, Pharaoh Necho, made an agreement up there with the remnant of the Assyrian hosts from Nineveh.

We're going to find out if we have time, Nahum prophesied the destruction of Nineveh exactly like it was going to be. The remnant of Assyria – Pharaoh Necho, was going up there to join hands with the Assyrians in order to stop forever the rise of those Babylonians under Nabopolassar and his son, Nebuchadnezzar.

And when Pharaoh Necho took up his army at Megiddo, there we got that same place again, Armageddon, where the battles of the world are fought. When Pharaoh Necho brought up his army there on the plain of Jezreel and at Megiddo, to go up there and to join the armies of Assyria to fight against Nabopolassar and his son, Nebuchadnezzar, Josiah – the good king, Josiah, who had sworn allegiance to Babylon – Josiah took his little army and there on the plains of Megiddo, he tried to stop Pharaoh Necho in his onward march up there to the north. And what Pharaoh-Necho did was what you'd think he'd do; he ran over the little army at Judah, and he slew Josiah, the good king, and never was there a lamentation in the world as Judah and the prophets of God lamented over King Josiah.

First, the rest of it: Pharaoh Necho joined the Assyrian up there at the head of the Mesopotamian Valley in a little place called Carchemish, and at Carchemish was fought one of the great battles of all time. Nebuchadnezzar – who was one of the ablest generals and one of the greatest kings who ever lived – Nebuchadnezzar was in charge of the armies of his father, Nabopolassar; and there, in 605 BC, the armies of Nebuchadnezzar overwhelmed the armies of Assyria and of Egypt. And they were never great powers anymore, not Egypt, not Assyria again.

And there, riding across the civilized world, stood that great colossus of a man, Nebuchadnezzar. And in those days, Jeremiah lifted up his voice and he preached to Judah, saying, "Repent ye, repent ye, get right with God." And Judah never repented, and Nebuchadnezzar came in 605 from the battle of Carchemish, and he seized

Jerusalem, and he took Daniel and the fairest of the land to his kingdom in Babylon in captivity.

And Jeremiah lifted up his voice, and he said, "Repent, repent, get right with God." They never repented and they never got right with God, and Nebuchadnezzar came back the second time in 598 BC and he took Ezekiel and ten thousand of the fairest to that captivity in Babylon. And Jeremiah lifted up his voice once again and cried, saying, "Repent, oh, repent, get right with God, turn ye, turn ye."

And they didn't repent, and they never got right with God. And Nebuchadnezzar came the third time in 587 BC, and he didn't have to come back anymore, for he destroyed Solomon's temple, and he beat down the walls of the city. And he plowed under the holy city of God and sowed it down with salt.

And he took the people into captivity into the land of Babylon, and the whole face of God's earth turned dark in fear, bathed in tears and in sorrow.

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning.

If I prefer not thee, O Jerusalem, to my chief joys, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.

By the waters of Babylon, there we sit down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion

For they that took us away captive, required of us a song and they that wasted us asked of us,

How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land. [Psalm 137:5, 6, 1, 3, 4]

Israel wept and they cried, and they got right with God. And out of that Babylonian captivity came the three great institutions by which God has blessed our world. One, they were never idolaters again, never, never. No Jew's been an idolater since that time.

Second, the synagogue was born, and this is a synagogue, the services of Judah are the services we have today. The synagogue was born. And third, out of the captivity came the canon of the Holy Scriptures. The old rabbis began to pour over the books and began to read the prophets and began to teach their people the Word of God.

And in those days, came Jesus with the scroll of the prophets in His hands, the same today. Today is this prophecy fulfilled in your ears! Ah, the wonder of the blessing of God as He guides through human history to that ultimate and final consummation!

THE SCARLET THREAD THROUGH THE BIBLE (PART 3)

Dr. W. A. Criswell

New Year's Eve Sermon

12-31-61 7:00 p.m. – 12:00 a.m.

At the way I am now going, I have prepared at least two hours of the interbiblical period between the close of the Old Testament and the New Testament. And there is no understanding of the New Testament without a thorough knowledge of that interbiblical period, but I have no opportunity to go into it, which breaks my heart. So we'll all be back tomorrow night, at the same time, do the same thing again – really finish this.

Now, in 587 B.C., the southern kingdom was destroyed, and Nebuchadnezzar, one of the ablest, one of the mightiest, one of the most capable, one of the most unusually endowed of all the kings of all time and all – of all the empire builders of the world, Nebuchadnezzar, who's mentioned more times in the Bible than any other heathen king – Nebuchadnezzar took into Babylon all of those who lived in the country of Judea and in the city of Jerusalem.

And Jeremiah was forced by the remnant to go into Egypt [Jeremiah 43:1-7] and there Jeremiah died. The prophet Jeremiah had predicted that after seventy years the people of the captivity would have opportunity to return [Jeremiah 25:11, 29:10].

Now, Nebuchadnezzar [634-562 BCE] was a tremendously able king. He made Babylon one of the most beautiful cities of the world. The terraced gardens of Babylon that he made for his Median wife, who was reared in a hill country – in order for her to be at home, he built those beautiful terraced gardens, one of the seven wonders of the world.

But Nebuchadnezzar had this tremendous weakness. All that he did, he did in his own self, in his own ingenuity, in his own planning, and he never trained anybody to succeed him. So the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar disintegrated quickly and easily. And in 538 B.C., [Darius], the Mede, took Babylon without a battle. It just fell into his hands. And Daniel, as you know, describes that fall in his book [Daniel 5:1-31]. Belshazzar [d. 539 BCE] was the regent who was on the throne under Nabonidus [d.

539 BCE], his father. And in that night, [Darius] took the city of Babylon without a war, without a battle, without a fight [Daniel 5:30-31].

Now, when we come to King Cyrus, the Mede who founded the Persian empire, we have named one of God's anointed men. In Isaiah 44:28 and in Isaiah 45:1, hundreds of years before he was born, Isaiah called Cyrus by name, and God called Cyrus His anointed.

And Cyrus was one of those magnificent, understanding, sympathetic empire builders who changed the policy of Nineveh and Assyria altogether and who changed the policy of Nebuchadnezzar. And Cyrus gave opportunity to all of the captives to return home wherever they lived. And it was then that the decree went out from Cyrus, who founded the Medo-Persian empire, that the Jew had opportunity to go back to his homeland in Palestine to rebuild his city in Jerusalem and to rebuild his temple [Ezra 1:1-3]. That gave rise to the beautiful Psalm number 126:

When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, "The Lord hath done great things for them whereof we are glad."

Turn again our captivity, O, Lord, as the streams in the south.

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

[Psalm 126:1-2, 4-6]

That was a song that the captives sang when they went back to their holy city and their holy land of Judea and Jerusalem.

Now, in the Book of Ezra, the first six chapters of Ezra describe the return of Zerubbabel with about forty some-odd thousand Jews. And then chapters 7 and 10 in Ezra describe the return of the priest, Ezra himself. It covers a period of about eighty

years from 536 to 457 [BCE]. Then Nehemiah comes back to Palestine and to Jerusalem a little while after Ezra, and then a while after Nehemiah comes Malachi, who is the last of the prophets.

Now, for a brief word concerning the prophets. The first and the oldest prophet is Joel. He flourished about 825 B.C. Then from about 800 to 750 B.C. were three prophets and the only three in the northern kingdom. They are Jonah and Amos and Hosea.

And then about 700 B.C., there were, under Uzziah and Jotham and Ahaz and Hezekiah, there were Isaiah and Micah. And then from about 650 to 600 B.C., there is Zephaniah and Nahum and Obadiah and Habakkuk. And then in the lifetime of Jeremiah, some of those I've just named. And then in Babylon, contemporary with Jeremiah, is Daniel and Ezekiel. While Jeremiah is preaching in Jerusalem, Daniel and Ezekiel are prophesying in Babylon. Then you have three prophets of the restoration.

Haggai, apparently was an old, old man who had seen the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem, who had been taken into exile, and who had returned back to Palestine with Zerubbabel and Ezra, and he was encouraging the people to build the temple. The optimism of Haggai, the old, old man, is wonderful to behold.

When Haggai looks at the rubble and the debris and the impossible assignment of those few ragged Judeans to rebuild the temple and rebuild the city and to rebuild the kingdom, it's one of the most hopeless prospects in the world. But Haggai, that old, old man who'd seen Solomon's temple destroyed, who had lived through the entire captivity and who had gone back with Zerubbabel, Haggai said: "God says that this second temple you build will be more glorious than the temple of Solomon" [from Haggai 2:9]. How could it be? Because the Lord Jesus walked into that second temple built under Zerubbabel.

Then a young man, Zechariah came with Zerubbabel and Ezra [Ezra 5:1-2]. And as the old man Haggai preached his last messages, the young man, Zechariah, stood up to deliver the Word of God. And of the three restoration prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, Zechariah is far and away the greatest. If we had another hour, we would look at the incomparable prophecies of Zechariah who spoke so much about Israel and the end time and the conversion of the people of the Lord.

Then the last prophet, of course, is Malachi. Malachi preached about 450 to 425 B.C., and Malachi closed his prophecy with the coming of the Lord: “Behold, He comes to His temple . . . and He will sit as a refiner’s fire. Who may abide the day of His coming” [from Malachi 3:1-3].

And then, in the last chapter, Malachi prophecies: “Behold, behold, I send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” [Malachi 4:5]. So the Book closes with the people expecting Elijah the prophet to come and to announce the great king Messiah, the seed of the woman [Genesis 3:15], the seed of Abraham [Galatians 3:16], and the king promised to David who would sit upon his throne forever and forever [2 Samuel 7:12-13; Luke 1:31-32].

Then we come to the interbiblical period which saw the rise of the Hellenistic Empire. Alexander the Great [356-323 BCE], who was a pupil of Aristotle [384-322 BCE], Alexander the Great had a passion for Hellenizing the world like Paul had a passion for Christianizing it. And God used the great Hellenistic Empire to spread abroad one culture and one language that made possible the preaching of the Gospel of Christ to the civilized world.

When Paul wrote the letter to Rome [c. 55 CE], which was the capital of the Latin empire, he wrote that letter in Greek. Wherever a man lived in the days of the Roman Empire, if he could read, he read Greek. If he was educated, he knew Greek, and Greek language, and Greek customs, and Greek culture, and Greek philosophy and art and science and literature – everything Greek. [Alexander] covered the whole world with his Hellenizing missionary work.

When Alexander the Great died [323 BCE], the kingdom broke into four parts. Cassander [350-297 BCE] took Helen, took Greece; Lysimachus [360-281 BCE] took Asia Minor; Seleucus [358-281 BCE], whose father was Antiochus Antioch [4th century BCE], took Syria, and Ptolemy [Ptolemy I, 367-283 BCE] took Egypt. For the first part of the interbiblical period, Palestine was under the Ptolemies, and it was very quiet and the high priests ruled.

But in 198 B.C., Antiochus III [242-187 BCE] overwhelmed the Ptolemies, and Palestine passed into the hands of the Seleucidae, the Seleucids, and they were cruel. One of them, Antiochus Epiphanes [Antiochus IV Epiphanes 215-164 BCE], took his army and he offered a sow on the great altar there in the temple court before the

sanctuary, and he took the juice of that sow and he poured it all over the sanctuary to defile it. And he dedicated it to Jupiter Olympus, to Zeus, the Greek name of the god, and he interdicted circumcision, and he interdicted the observance of the Sabbath, and he interdicted the Jews' religion.

Upon a day, there was a cowardly Jew in the little town of Modin, about seventeen miles northwest of Jerusalem. And that cowardly Jew was about to bow down and to worship at the shrine of Jupiter Olympus, and when he did, there was an aged priest by the name of Mattathias [d. 165 BCE]. He lifted up his arm and he slew that cowardly Jew, and he lifted up his arm and he slew the emissary from Antiochus Epiphanes who was demanding the worship of the Hellenistic heathen god. Then this man, Mattathias, took his boys, and they lived in the mountains and they carried on guerrilla warfare.

The first boy of that aged priest Mattathias was named Judas Maccabaeus [d. 160 BCE] – Judas the Hammer. And Judas Maccabaeus, leading that guerrilla band, to the amazement of the world and to the astonishment of any student of history, he won Jewish independence from Antiochus Epiphanes. And when Judas lost his life, Jonathan [Jonathan Apphus, d. 143 BCE], the son of Mattathias, the younger son, carried on.

And when Jonathan was killed, Simon [Simon Maccabeus, d. 135 BCE] carried on. And Simon the Maccabaeus founded the Hasmonean, the Maccabaeus dynasty. His son was John Hyrcanus [164-104 BCE], and his son was Alexander Jannaeus [127-76 BCE], and his wife was Alexandra Salome [141-67 BCE], and her two boys were John Hyrcanus II [d. 30 BCE] and Aristobulus II [d. BCE]. And they were fussing and fighting in a civil war over who would reign and rule over Judea, and Pompey [106-48 BCE], in 63 B.C. came with his Roman legionnaires into Judea and before Jerusalem. And he listened to the quarrel between John Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, and then he just took the thing into himself and made it a part of the Roman Empire. The Hellenistic Jews were called Sadducees, and those who were very much opposed to Hellenism were called Pharisees.

So when Jesus comes upon the scene, there is Herod the Great [37-4 BCE], an appointee of Rome, who is the king of the Jews. And there are the Pharisees who are very strenuously devoted to the law and against any kind of foreign oppression. And there are the Sadducees who love to do business with Rome or with anybody who will

provide them the emoluments of their office and keep them as rulers and leaders among the people.

And in those days, when Herod the Great was the king of the Jews and when Augustus Caesar [63 BCE – 14 CE] is the Roman emperor and when Rome has the entire world in her hands, the great prophecy of Isaiah [Isaiah 9:6], and the great prophecy of Micah [Micah 5:2], and the great prophecy of Jacob to his son, Judah [Genesis :8-12], and the great promise of God Almighty to Eve, the woman [Genesis 3:15], that great prophecy comes to pass [Matthew 1:22, 2:6; Luke 2:4, 11].

In the seed as of one, in the seed of Abraham, shall all the families of the earth be blessed [Genesis 22:18], and our Savior is born into the world [Galatians 3:16]. Why does He come?

Dr. White, the other day, mentioned to me after one of our services a very famous theological book by Albert Schweitzer [1875-1965]. Now, Albert Schweitzer, the doctor in the French Cameroon in central Africa, he is a great scientist without doubt. He is a great musician, without doubt. He is a great philosopher, without doubt. He is a great humanitarian, without doubt, but he is not a Christian as I call a Christian. Albert Schweitzer's great theological book is entitled *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* [1906], and the thesis of that book is this: that Jesus Christ came into this world and that He lived in His ministry, and He expected the apocalyptic kingdom messianic of heaven to come down. And when it didn't come, He died disappointed, in despair, of a broken heart – dejected, outcast, disowned, denied. Now, *that* is the thesis of Albert Schweitzer. To us who believe the Bible and to us who preach the Word of God, it is the exact and diametrically the opposite.

Our Lord came into this world to die for us sinners [Romans 5:8]. That's why He came, according to the Word of God [1 Timothy 1:15]. And his death is not one of those cheap burlesques, nor is it a divine comedy, nor is it one of those infinite tragedies like the nemesis that follows after those in the Greek gods and in the Greek world who are to be destroyed. But the death of Christ was planned from before the foundation of the world when He gave Himself at the beginning to be the redemptive means of God for the purchase to Himself of Adam's lost and sinful race. He came into the world to die. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sin" [Matthew 1:21].

And as He began His ministry, He began His ministry under the shadow of the cross. John raised his hand and introduced Him: "Behold, behold, the Lamb of God" [John 1:29]. Think what that meant to any Jew: "Behold, the Lamb of God" – every morning, every evening, there was a sacrifice with the blood poured out and the lamb offered unto God for the sins of the nation, for the expiation of all of the iniquity of the people. "Behold," said John, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" [John 1:29].

And in His ministry, early, He began to teach His disciples that He should suffer and die [Luke 9:22]. And when He was transfigured, there appeared Moses and Elijah talking to Him about His death in Jerusalem [Luke 9:30-31]. And when He was anointed by Mary of Bethany, it was to His burial, He said [Matthew 26:6-13].

And when the Greeks came to see Him from afar: "I, if I be lifted up," He said, "will draw all men unto Me" [from John 12:32]. And in the Last Supper, He said: "This is My body, eat in remembrance of Me; and this is My blood, drink in remembrance of Me" [from Luke 22:19-20]. And when He went to the cross, He gave Himself at Gethsemane, the travail of His soul [Luke 22:39-46]. And when He bowed His head and died, He said, "It is finished" [John 19:30].

When we preach the cross and when we preach the blood and when we preach the sacrificial death of Christ, we are preaching the meaning of His coming into the world and the great redemptive plan and purpose of God.

And on the third day, He was raised from the dead, and He appeared to Mary Magdalene first [John 20:11-18]. Then He appeared to the rest of the women [Matthew 28:1-10]. Then He appeared to the two on the way to Emmaus [Luke 24:13-31]. Then He appeared to Peter alone [Luke 24:33-34]. Then that night, that Sunday night, He appeared to the ten disciples, Thomas being absent [John 20:19-24]. Then the next Sunday night, He appeared to the disciples, all eleven of them [John 20:26-29].

That's the reason, one, that I like to have church on Sunday night. The Lord met with His disciples at *night*, and He revealed Himself to His disciples at *night*, and He spake to them out of the book of Himself at *night*. He met with his disciples at night.

Then He met with the seven at the Sea of Galilee [John 21:1-2]; then five hundred at one time [1 Corinthians 15:6] on the appointed mountain in Galilee; then with His disciples down in Jerusalem; and then as He ascended up to heaven on the top of

Mount Olivet [Acts 1:1-11]. And it was then, at that ascension, that the disciples came to Jesus and said: "Lord, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" [Acts 1:6]

And the Lord said: "It is not for you to know the time or the season" [Acts 1:7]. God has a kingdom, and it's coming. "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth" [from Matthew 6:10]. "Thy kingdom come." It is coming. There is a kingdom coming. "Lord," said the thief who died by His side: "Lord, when Thou comest into Thy kingdom, remember me, remember me" [from Luke 23:39-42].

There's a kingdom coming, but in the meantime, the Lord has placed a great intermission, a great interlude, a great parenthesis. That is a *mysterion*. In the third chapter of Ephesians, that's a *mysterion* that the apostle Paul says the prophets didn't see, and the Old Testament never refers to it or mentions it [Ephesians 3:3-6]. There is to be a parenthesis between the rejection of the King and the kingdom and the time when King and kingdom shall come from God out of heaven. And in this period of time, we call it the Age of Grace. We call it the Age of the Holy Spirit. We call it the Age of the Church. And in this dispensation – this time of grace – Jew, Gentile, male, female, bond, free, all of us are invited to belong to the household of faith in the church, the church of Jesus Christ [Galatians 3:28].

And the Lord said to His disciples: "You are to be witnesses of these things" [from Acts 1:8] – not to bring in the kingdom. He will bring in the kingdom. There'll be sin here and violence here. Daniel said: "Wars are determined unto the end" [Daniel 9:26] – until the Great Armageddon. Men will be dividing up. They'll be preparing for war. They'll be in conflict [Mark 13:7].

We'll never bring in the kingdom, but we're to be witnesses of the great announcement [Matthew 28:18-20], "Come, come! We all are invited in the love and grace of Jesus to belong to the same household of faith. Come, come, come" [Matthew 11:28-30; John 6:37]. We're to be witnesses of the grace of God until that great and final denouement [Matthew 28:18-20].

And so they began. First, the Gospel is preached by Peter to the Jews, only to the Jews, at Pentecost [Acts 2:14-41]. Then second, the Gospel is preached by Phillip, a Hellenist, to the half-Jew, to the half-breed, up there at Samaria [Acts 8:4-8]. Then third, the Gospel is preached to a temple proselyte, a full Jewish proselyte in Gaza, to the Ethiopian eunuch [Acts 8:26-39].

And then next, the Gospel is preached to a proselyte of the gate, to a centurion at Caesarea [Acts 10:21-48]. And then, in the eleventh chapter of the book of Acts, the Gospel is preached to out and out idolaters, to heathen worshipers – to Greeks who come out of their idolatry into the glorious faith of the Son of God [Acts 11:19-21].

And finally, the Lord says: “Separate Me Paul and Barnabus for the work whereunto I have called them” [Acts 13:2]. And Paul goes out and proclaims the Gospel message to the whole, wide, civilized world.

So the Gospel begins to expand over the then-known earth, first by Peter, who is an apostle to the circumcision, who delivers the message to the Jew [Galatians 2:8]. Then the bridge between Stephen, a Hellenist, who says God was worshiped by Moses on the back side of the desert [Acts 7:30-32] and by Abraham who built altars, along with Isaac and Jacob [Acts 7:1-8]. And God can’t be contained in this temple here on Mount Moriah [Acts 7:48-].

And they slew him [Acts 7:54-60], the Hellenist who bridged between Simon Peter, preaching down there to the Jew, and the apostle Paul, the apostle to the Gentile, who proclaims that a man can be saved without ever having anything to do with the Jewish religion [Galatians 2:15-16]. He doesn’t have to keep the ceremonial law. He doesn’t have to be circumcised. He doesn’t have to keep the Mosaic commandments. All a man has to do to be saved is to turn, to repent, to give his heart and love to Jesus, and God will save him forever: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that He lives, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart one believeth unto a God-kind of righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" [from Romans 10:9-10]. Come "for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" [Romans 10:13]. That’s the gospel of Paul.

So he went on his first missionary journey, went from Antioch down to Seleucus, the port city at the mouth of the Orontes, then crossed over to Cyprus [Acts 13:4], there to Salamis [Acts 13:5], then to the capital city, to Paphos [Acts 13:6], then about a hundred and seventy miles across the sea to Perga in Pamphylia [Acts 13:13], then up to Pisidian Antioch [Acts 13:14] and then down to Iconium [Acts 13:51], then to Lystra and to Derbe [Acts 14:6]. Then they went back down to Attalia and to Antioch again as their first missionary journey [Acts 14:25-26].

But they had trouble on their hands because they were preaching that a man could be a Christian just by trusting Jesus [Acts 13:37-39]. Then came the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15 when the Jews said: “You’ve got to be circumcised before you can be saved [Acts 15:1]; you’ve got to keep the law of Moses before you can be saved [Acts 15:6]. A man can’t be saved just by trusting Jesus. You got to be baptized, you got to keep this, you got to do that.”

“No!” said Paul. “A man’s saved by faith and not by works – just by trusting Jesus” [Acts 15:2]. And they had that big conference in Jerusalem [Acts 15:1-29], and that’s what the Holy Spirit said – just like Paul was preaching [Acts 15:13-29].

So he went back up there, and on the second missionary journey, Paul and Silas, they go by land and retrace their steps to all those other churches they’d already organized in Galatia [Acts 15:36-41].

Then the Holy Spirit sends them down to Troas [Acts 16:6-8], and they don’t know where to go. And that night, Paul sees the Macedonian in a vision: “Come on to Macedonia and help us” [Acts 16:9]. So he crosses the Hellespont. He goes through Neapolis. He goes to Philippi [Acts 16:10-12]. He goes to Apollonia and Amphipolis and then to Thessalonica [Acts 17:1], then to Berea [Acts 17:10], then Athens [Acts 17:15], then to Corinth [Acts 18:1]. And then he crosses over to Ephesus [Acts 18:19-21], then to Caesarea [Acts 18:22]. And he goes up to Jerusalem and then back to Antioch. And the second great missionary journey is done.

And then after a while, he starts on the third one. He goes by land again, retracing his steps in Asia Minor [Acts 18:23], and then goes to Ephesus where he has his greatest ministry at Ephesus [Acts 19:1]. And the whole world is turned upside down, or right side up, in his great, marvelous ministry at Ephesus [Acts 19:11-20]. And all Asia hears the Word of God [Acts 19:9-10]. Then he goes to Macedonia [Acts 20:1], and then to Corinth again [Acts 20:2], and then back around to Macedonia [Acts 20:3], and then down to Miletus [Acts 20:13-15], and then down into Jerusalem [Acts 21:17], and there he’s arrested [Acts 21:27-33].

And when he’s arrested, for two years he’s placed in prison down there in Caesarea [Acts 24:27]. And at the end of two years, having preached to Felix [Acts 24:10-27], having preached to Festus [Acts 25:23-27], having preached to Herod Agrippa II [Acts 26:1-32], he’s taken by Julius, the centurion, to Rome [Acts 27:1].

And there in Rome for two years, in his own hired house, he preaches the Gospel of the Son of God, no man forbidding him [Acts 28:30-31]. That was about 63 [CE]. About 64, he was liberated, and from the few years that remained until 67, he preached the Gospel. He was with Timothy at Ephesus and left Timothy at Ephesus and went up to Macedonia and wrote First Timothy [1 Timothy 1:1-3].

And then he was with Titus in Crete, and he went up to Nicopolis on the western side of Greece and wrote the letter to Titus [Titus 1:1-5]. And then about 67 [A.D.] he was arrested. And just before Nero died [68 CE], he was beheaded on the Ostian Way, the road down the Tiber from the City of Rome to the sea.

And he closed his life with that triumphant word: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me . . . and not to me only, but unto all them that love His appearing" [2 Timothy 4:7-8].

Before I come to the Revelation and the final denouement of God's purpose and plan in human history, may I say a word about the epistles? Isn't it a shame? All of the epistles of Paul – just this one little word about them – they are divided into four great groups. First, the first epistles that he wrote on his second missionary journey at Athens and then at Corinth, he wrote First and Second Timothy; he wrote First and Second Thessalonians. Then on the third missionary journey, while he was in Ephesus, he wrote First Corinthians. And then somewhere going from Ephesus to Corinth, he wrote Second Corinthians up there in Macedonia. Then somewhere, either in Antioch or going back, he wrote Galatians and Romans – those four somewhat together, centering around the city of Ephesus: First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans. Then the third group of epistles, he wrote from the prison in Rome, his first Roman imprisonment: Philippians, Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians.

And then the last four – the fourth and last group of his epistles were after his first Roman imprisonment – Timothy, Titus, and Second Timothy.

Now, each one of those epistles has to do with a very definite thing. The first group, First and Second Thessalonians, has to do with the second coming of our Lord.

You see, Paul had preached the Gospel and he delivered his soul of the great hope that we have in Jesus, and some of the people died and the Lord hadn't come. "And what about our beloved dead? What about them? Will they share in the kingdom

when it comes? And will they live to see the face of Jesus, for they've died and the Lord hasn't come?" So he wrote First and Second Thessalonians about the coming of the Lord. Then the next group, that second great group of First and Second Corinthians and Galatians and Romans, has to do with the great Pauline theme of the just shall live by faith [Romans 1:17]. We're saved by trusting Jesus and not by the works of our hands [Galatians 2:16]. That's the great central theme of the second group of letters.

Now, the third group of letters have to do with the Gnostic philosophy that tried to discount the deity and the glory and the person of Jesus: Philippians, and then the first sweet little letter of Philemon, then Colossians and Ephesians – those four letters. As he exalts our living Lord, oh, what a message!

And then, of course, the fourth group of epistles, First Timothy and Titus and Second Timothy, have to do with the ordinances of the church, with the doctrines of the church, and with the offices of the church, and with practical matters.

Now, we come, finally, after the general epistles [James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude] to the Revelation. All of the other apostles are dead – all of them. The apostle Paul was slain just before Nero's death either in the fall of 67 or the spring of 68 [CE]. Simon Peter was crucified just about the same time in the other part, in the eastern part, of the empire. And all of the other disciples have been dead years and years – thirty, forty years. And only one of them is alive and that is the aged pastor of the church at Jerusalem. For the Lord said to His disciples: "When you see the legions standing at the gates of Jerusalem, flee" [from Luke 21:20-21]. So they fled to Pella on the other side of the Jordan, and in about 69 A.D., John, the aged disciple that Jesus loved [John 21:20-24], came to Ephesus, and at Ephesus was his great ministry.

When he wrote his Gospel, when he wrote his three epistles [1 John, 2 John, 3 John], and when in exile under Domitian [51-96 CE], he wrote the pocalypse [Revelation], the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him [Revelation 1:1] – the unveiling of the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory and in His majesty and in His kingdom.

"Thy kingdom come" [Matthew 6:10], and it is coming. And the Apocalypse, the unveiling of our Lord, is the reward of God to Jesus for giving His life for the sin of old man Adam [1 Corinthians 15:22], conquering Satan and destroying Lucifer [Colossians 2:15], and the power of death [1 Corinthians 15:55-57] – the seed of the woman [Genesis 3:15]. And because He hath done this, "God hath also highly exalted Him, and

given Him a name which is above every name: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and every tongue should confess that *He* is Lord, to the glory of God our Father [from Philippians 2:9-11]. The unveiling, the Apocalypse, the uncovering of Jesus Christ in His glory, in His majesty, and in His kingdom is the reward that God gave to Jesus for saving us, Adam's fallen children, from our sins.

So on the Isle of Patmos, a rocky little point about twenty miles in diameter, several miles southwest from Ephesus, there to die of exposure and starvation and want and hunger and need, there does the Lord appear to John in an incomparable and glorious vision, the voice as of a trumpet [Revelation 1:9-11].

And when he turns to hear and to see, there he looks upon his risen and glorified Lord whom he last saw as He ascended into heaven. But this time, oh, how triumphant and how glorious! His face above the shining of the sun, and His feet as if they burned in a furnace, and the majestic robe gird with a golden girdle, and His hair white like the snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire [Revelation 1:13-16]. And as much as John loved Him, when he saw Him, he fell at His feet dead, dead – the very life taken out of him [Revelation 1:17].

In the old familiar way, His heart never changes. He's still the same Lord Jesus in the old and familiar way, He puts His right hand on the shoulder of His beloved and sainted disciple and says: "Don't be afraid – nothing to fear, not to the child of God. Don't fear death. Don't fear the grave. Don't fear the judgment. Don't fear eternity, not to the child of God. Fear not, fear not. I am He that was alive, was dead, am alive for evermore; and I, and I, I have the keys of the grave and of death. They're in My hands. I've got them. Don't you be afraid. Don't you tremble" [from Revelation 1:17-18]. Then He said the great outline of the book: "What you see, write, write." Then He gave the threefold outline of the Apocalypse: "Write the things that you have seen, and write the things which are, and write the things which shall be after these things that are" [from Revelation 1:19].

So John took up his pen, and he began to write. He wrote the things that he'd seen, the vision of the glorified Lord walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, Jesus among His churches [Revelation 2:1]. And he wrote the things that he'd seen.

And then second, he wrote the things that are – His churches. Here they are. Here's a church; there's a church; yonder's a church – just as it was in the days of John, the things that are: His church at Ephesus [Revelation 2:1-7], and His church at Smyrna [Revelation 2:8-11], and the one up there at Pergamos [Revelation 2:12-17]. And then there was one at Thyatira [Revelation 2:18-29], and there's one at Sardis [Revelation 3:1-6], and here was one at Philadelphia [Revelation 3:7-13], and there's one at Laodicea [Revelation 3:14-22].

"Write the things that are, and then write the things that shall be *meta tauta* – "after these things" [Revelation 1:19], after the churches are no more. So John wrote down the things that are. And the things that are, they are a preview of all God's churches to the end of the age. There is an Ephesian period in the church. There is a Smyrnan period in the church. There is a Pergamean period in the church. There's a Thyatiran, there's a Sardian, there's a Philadelphian, there's a Laodicean period in the church.

The Ephesian period of the Church is that period of the apostles when the church was persecuted; and the Smyrnan period was that period when it began to extend over the Roman Empire, and it was the church of martyrdom and of suffering. Then you have the Pergamean period when the church was married to the world. Ah. Then you have the Thyatiran period of the church when she speaks with gold and silver and a chain around her neck and dressed in gorgeous robes, and she speaks as the infallible, as the infallible – as the infallible oracle of God. That's in the Bible. I don't manufacture these things. I'm not talking about anybody. I'm just telling you what the Book says – the Thyatiran period of the church. Then comes the Sardian period of the church, the church of the Great Reformation, where they have a few names that are standing out for God: Balthasar Hubmaier [1480-1528] and Felix Mantz [c. 18-1527] and John Calvin [1509-1564] and Martin Luther [1483-1546] and John Knox [1513-1572] – those great men, a few in Sardis who stand out for God.

Then you have the Philadelphian period of the church, the period of the great open door. And that's the reason why I think we're coming to the close of the Philadelphian period because the doors are beginning to shut. We can't preach the Gospel in China. You can't preach the Gospel in Cuba. You can't preach the Gospel in Soviet Russia. You can't preach the Gospel in Poland or in Latvia or in Lithuania or in Estonia. And you can't preach it in Yugoslavia or Romania or Bulgaria. The doors are

beginning to close, and Philadelphia, the church of the open door, we're getting to the close of the age.

And the last age is the Laodicean age of the church where the church comes to its final consummation in the earth. Where they do live and where they are, there do they go soft, do they go easy. They are at ease in Zion [Amos 6:1] with the world on fire, and they don't care. With the world facing its great climactic day, and they're not praying. They're at ease in Zion – the Laodicean church.

Then in the fourth chapter of the Revelation comes that final and awful and tragic denouement – that end time, that day of the Lord, that great tribulation that is spoken of by Joel [Joel 2:30-31], by Zechariah [Zechariah 13:8-9], by Jesus [Matthew 24:21]: that great day of the Lord.

First, the Lord comes, between the third and the fourth chapters of the Revelation, and the Lord comes secretly, clandestinely, furtively like a thief in the night [1 Thessalonians 5:2-3]. He's coming to steal away, to steal away His jewels, His pearl of price for whom He gave His life and did die – you, the redeemed of the Lord. He's coming without announcement. There is no sign. There is no token. There's no harbinger, there's no announcement, there's no anything – any moment, any day, any hour, any time, our Lord can come. There's no prophecy remaining to be fulfilled. There never has been anything between the imminence of the appearing of our Lord and His coming for us – nothing. He may come any day, any time, and take His people away. He's coming as a thief in the night.

It may be at midnight –

in ten minutes –

It may be at twilight.

It may be, perchance, that the darkness of midnight

Will burst into light in the blaze of His glory,

When Jesus comes for "His own."

[from "Christ Returneth," by H.L. Turner, 1878]

That's the first thing, the first thing: He comes for us. His beloved dead are taken up and these of us who remain are taken up [1 Thessalonians 4:16-17]. That's the first thing. And we go away to be with our Lord, and there, before the judgment seat of Christ, we receive the deeds done in the flesh [2 Corinthians 5:10]. Our judgment for sins already past: that was on the cross [Colossians 2:13-14]. Our judgment before Jesus is to receive the rewards of our lives.

That's why you can't receive your reward when you die because your life still lives on. Paul is still living in the Book out of which I preach. And these old infidels such as Voltaire [1694-1778] and such as Tom Paine [1737-1809], they're still living also! And every once in a while, you'll run across a young fellow reading Tom Paine or Voltaire and learning to curse God in the language of Paine and Voltaire. They're also living on. You don't die when you die, so you can't get your reward when you die. That's why the rewards are given at the end time. Our lives go on and on and on, and only God can unravel the scheme and follow the strand until, at the end time, we receive our reward [2 Timothy 4:8].

And when the Lord comes and our beloved dead and all of us are changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump [1 Corinthians 15:51-53], when all of us are taken to be with the Lord, we go with our Savior into glory. And there we stand before the Lord to receive our reward, what we've done in the flesh [2 Corinthians 5:10], at the end time – not when you die, but at the end time [2 Timothy 4:8].

And then up there in glory is the marriage supper of the Lamb [Revelation 19:7-10]. And while God's people are up there, oh, this world down here – this awful and tragic world down here. In the turmoil and in the awfulness and in the terror of the world down here, there arises a man who presents himself as the great deliverer of the earth. *He* will bring peace, and *he* will bring victory, and *he* will bring glory and triumph. Oh, what he promises! And to Israel, going back to their homeland, he promises them their land, their nation, their house, their temple, their people. He promises everything [Daniel 7:25, 8:25, 11:36; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10].

He's the antichrist. For three and a half years, he goes along, and then in the middle of that seven-year period, that tribulation period, he turns into a fiend [Revelation 13:5-18]. And then comes the most tragic and awful wave of world anti-Semitism this earth has ever known.

And that antichrist, the beast that rises out of the sea [Revelation 13:1], he has by his side another beast, a false prophet [Revelation 13:11-18]. She is arrayed in all of the glory and splendor of the ecclesiastical system itself. And that false prophet makes a covenant with that beast – the ruler of the world, the great dictator of the end time – who presented himself as the fuhrer and the triumphant leader of all the nations of the world. He's going to lead them to peace and to glory. Ah! And when he breaks that covenant with God's people [Daniel 9:27], then all the terror and the bloodshed – the horror.

And God reaches down in His mercy, and He seals twelve thousand out of Judah [Revelation 7:4-8].

"Why, I didn't know there's any Judah!"

There's a Judah, and God knows them in Judah. And He seals twelve thousand out of Judah, and He seals twelve thousand out of Simeon.

"Why, I didn't know there's any Simeon!"

God knows. He knows exactly where each one of those Judeans, those Simeons, those Reubenites, those Gadites, He knows where everyone of them is. And in the days of that awful and tragic trial, He's going to seal twelve thousand out of each one of those tribes, and they're going to preach the Gospel of the Son of God. And in the midst of that blood and that furor and that horror, you're going to have the greatest revival the world ever saw [Revelation 7:9-14].

And they're going to be killed. They're going to be persecuted, but they don't love their lives unto death [Revelation 12:11]. "These are they who are coming out of the great tribulation, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" [Revelation 7:14]. Isn't that an unusual thing? The more terrible the tribulation, the more God's people suffer unto death as these Jewish evangelists preach the Gospel over the earth.

Well, those seven seals and the judgment thereof [Revelation 6:1-17, 8:1-5], and those seven trumpets [Revelation 8:6-9:21, 11:15-19] and the judgment thereof, and those seven vials [Revelation 16:1-12, 17-21] and the judgment thereof, and those seven personages and the judgment thereof.

The beast; the false prophet; the woman in scarlet, Babylon, the system; and this antichrist who professed to be the leader of the nations of the world, he is gathering the armies of the entire earth together, and they are converging from the north in Russia and from the east in China and from the south in Africa and from the west. They are converging at that great day of the Lord, and that is the Battle of Armageddon [Revelation 16:13-16].

And in the midst of that awful holocaust, the last great war of the world that's going to be fought, where'd I say? In that same plain from the beginning of time – Megiddo, Esdraelon, Jezreel, the heart of Megiddo, the Mount of Megiddo. As the armies of the earth by the millions and the millions are converging to that great rendezvous of God, there is then the intervention of heaven. Revelation 19:11-13:

And I beheld, and lo, heaven was opened. And I saw a white horse, and He that sat upon him was True and Faithful.

His eyes were as of a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns;

He was dressed in a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God.

And in righteousness does He come to make war.

And He hath a name on His thigh, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

[from Revelation 19:11-16]

And they that follow Him are the saints of glory. And that is the intervention of God in human history. And He delivers His people shut up in the holy city, and He takes Satan and binds him for a thousand years in the bottomless pit [Revelation 20:1-3].

What about the people that enter the Millennium? You got a twofold judgment there.

First, you got a judgment of the Gentiles. You have it translated "nations." You have a judgment of the Gentiles [Matthew 25:31-46]. And all of those Gentiles who befriended God's preachers, his brethren preaching the message, all of them shall enter

into the Millennium, for they received them and were kind to them, their actions exemplifying their character, and they go into the Millennium.

And then, according to Ezekiel [Ezekiel 20:37-43], there'll be a judgment of Israel. And those that are rebellious and refuse to receive their Messiah when He appears, they shall be cast down, and those that receive the Lord Jesus shall enter into the Millennium. And for a thousand years, they shall reign with Christ upon this earth when the kingdom comes and God's will is done in this weary world as it is in heaven [Revelation 20:4-6].

At the end of the thousand years, Satan is released [Revelation 20:7] – one of the most inexplicable things in prophecy. Satan is released. And some of those in the Millennium who didn't find in their hearts a complete subserviency and love for God, they will rebel. There'll be that final conflict which ends forever with the intervention of God [Revelation 20:7-9].

Then is the great and final resurrection of the wicked dead: the White Throne judgment [Revelation 20:11-15]. The books are opened. Their names are not in the Book of Life, and they'll be rewarded there according to their deeds. You're going to be rewarded when Jesus comes for us [2 Corinthians 5:10]. They're going to be rewarded, the lost, at the Great White Throne judgment, according to their deeds. And death shall be cast into hell, into the fire and flame and the grave, and Satan shall be cast in that fury where the false beast and the false prophet have already been for a thousand years.

Then will come the renovation. There'll be a new heaven and a new earth, remade according to the fullness and the glory and the wonder of God. There'll be a new heaven and a new earth like it was in the beginning when God created the heaven and the earth. "And I John, I John, saw come down out of that new heaven, I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, adorned as a bride for her husband. And I heard a great voice saying, 'Look, look, the dwelling place of God is with men'" [from Revelation 21:2-3].

And God shall be with them, dwelling among us, like He intended in the beginning of the Garden of Eden, walking in the cool of the day [Genesis 3:8; Revelation 21:3]. "And God shall be with them . . . and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; there shall be no more sorrow and no more crying. And there shall be no more death" – be no more pain, be no more sorrow [from Revelation 21:4]. These things have

all passed away – no graves on the hillside of glory, no funeral wreaths on the doors of the mansions in the sky. And He that sat upon the throne: “Look, look, I make all things new. I will give to him that is athirst of the water of life freely” [from Revelation 22:17].

And He showed unto me a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb

And on either side of the river was there that tree of life –

from the Garden of Eden in the Garden of God’s paradise –

and the leaves are for the healing of the people.

[from Revelation 22:1-2]

We shall see His face, and His name will be written on our foreheads [Revelation 22:4], and we shall reign with Him forever and forever [Revelation 22:5].

He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly.

Amen. Amen. If I know my soul, I am ready. Amen –

Even so, come, come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

[from Revelation 22:20-21]

Oh, bless your hearts. I cannot imagine your faithfulness in staying. Now, it is twelve o’clock. There are so many of us here, I don’t know how we could kneel. If you can and would like to, kneel between the bench, in the aisle, here at the front – anywhere. Let’s face the New Year on our knees and then after the prayer, we’ll go home.

Close Sermon