

# WitnessKit 3

## God and Religions

Integrating the Worldviews of the Old and New  
Testaments,

Guided by the Book

*Letter to the Hebrews*

Class 21

Hebrews Chapter 8—Messiah's  
Priesthood Now in Heaven,  
Implications

# Messiah is our forever Priest.

Messiah is presented in the Hebrew Scriptures as both Priest and King, and as Son of David, and as Prophet like Moses.

Being from the house and lineage of David, Messiah could not meet the requirements of the Levitical priesthood.

He is presented in Psalm 110:4 as of the order of Melchizedek, to whom Abraham gave tithes.

# Messiah is our forever Priest.

- Hebrews chapter 8 begins to explain where Messiah's forever priesthood is centered, and what that means for us.
- Hebrews chapter 8 describes this as the main point of what has been said so far. Think about why that would be the main point.
- The theme of today's lesson is trust in God. Hebrews chapter 4 gave us reason to trust Him, because of our Priest in heaven.

A verse to read together:  
Hebrews 4:14-16

<sup>14</sup> Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens,  
Jesus the Son of God,  
let us hold fast *our* confession.

<sup>15</sup> For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses,  
but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*,  
*yet* without sin.

<sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace,  
that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in  
time of need. (NKJV)

# Priest

- It is a priest's duty to care about people and their struggles. It is a priest's duty to intercede for people in prayer.
- Because Jesus Christ was both fully human and fully Divine, He has unique qualifications for the priesthood. He can sympathize with our weaknesses, without being compromising. He was tempted as we are, and He never sinned. Instead, He paid for our sins. He wants that payment to count.

There are 3 commands in the verses we just read. What are they?

# We can understand the main point

Information  
about  
Messiah's  
Priesthood

Of “The Letter to the Hebrews”  
by gaining information about  
Christ's Priesthood....

- **Where it is centered**
- Why it is centered there
- Why that is important for Israel and for us.

# Hebrews Chapter 8

**<sup>1</sup> Now *this is* the main point of the things we are saying:**

**We have such a High Priest,  
who is seated at the right hand of the throne  
of the Majesty in the heavens,**

**<sup>2</sup> a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true  
tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not  
man.**

# Why do we need such a Priest?

- All of us are sinners. We need our Priest in heaven to intercede for us with God the Father.
- Our distance from God is not due to physical separation. It is due to moral distance.
- We can come boldly to God in prayer because we have such a Priest who intercedes for us all the time—even when we cannot express ourselves.



# Romans 8:26-27

<sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

<sup>27</sup> Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of* God.

Romans 8:26-27 (NKJV)

# Direct Communication

- Romans 8:26-27 says the Holy Spirit intercedes for us on earth. We have a direct communication link with God.
- We don't have to depend on other human beings to pray for us, because God has us in His sight and thoughts all the time.
- We can trust God enough to pray directly to Him, through Jesus Christ's intercession. He loves us. He is holy. His holiness is satisfied with Jesus Christ's righteousness on our behalf.

# His Part and Our Part

- His part in keeping the communication open was being “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world,” and is being our High Priest in heaven interceding for us now.
- Our part is repentance of sins and willingness to trust in God for our salvation, and willingness for God to be the King in our lives.
- Throughout the Old Testament, God clearly wanted His people to call on His name in prayer. He still wants that from us. He loves us. He wishes our conversation.

# Where Messiah's Priesthood is Centered

- We are secure in Messiah's Care because He is our Priest, who intercedes for us **in heaven**, by continually speaking on our behalf to God the Father.
- There is a tabernacle in heaven where our Priest serves, made by the Lord for all our benefit.
- Therefore we CAN “come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

# Prayer is Life-Sustaining.

Our High Priest in Heaven makes prayer available to us. We are not orphans alone in the cosmos. We can communicate with our Heavenly Father. He loves us and He wants us to talk to Him.

# This tabernacle in heaven Gives added meaning to Psalm 84:1-4, &12.

“How lovely *is* Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts!

<sup>2</sup> My soul longs, yes, even faints

For the courts of the LORD;

My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

<sup>3</sup> Even the sparrow has found a home, And the swallow a  
nest for herself, Where she may lay her young—

*Even* Your altars, O LORD of hosts, My King and my God.

<sup>4</sup> Blessed *are* those who dwell in Your house;

They will still be praising You.

<sup>12</sup> O LORD of hosts,

Blessed *is* the man who trusts in You!” (NKJV)

# Psalm 84:1-4

“<sup>4</sup> Blessed *are* those who dwell in Your house;  
They will still be praising You.”

- If God’s tabernacle on earth was beautiful, think how much more lovely His eternal tabernacle, and His house for us will be.
- Revelation 13:6 calls God’s tabernacle in heaven “those who dwell in heaven.” Revelation 15:5 calls the tabernacle in heaven the “tabernacle of testimony.”

# The Finale of Psalm 84:12

“<sup>12</sup> O LORD of hosts,

Blessed *is* the man who trusts in You!”

- Trusting in the LORD is one of the keys for that eternal home.
- Judaism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has to grapple with a sense of abandonment by God due to the genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is my great hope to encourage trust in God, and to point out verses that encourage trust in the face of such difficulty.



# Isaiah 49:14-18

Isaiah 49:14-18 discusses Zion's feelings of abandonment during the time while Messiah is bringing Gentiles into God's salvation. (verse 6)

- The passage insists that God has never forgotten or forsaken Zion.
- The end of the chapter promises Redemption for Israel—and in a way where all human beings will know that the LORD is Israel's Savior.

# Isaiah 49:14-17

<sup>14</sup> But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, And my Lord has forgotten me."

<sup>15</sup> "Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb?

Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.

<sup>16</sup> See, I have inscribed you on the palms *of My hands*;  
Your walls *are* continually before Me.

<sup>17</sup> Your sons shall make haste; Your destroyers and those who laid you waste Shall go away from you. (NKJV)

# We can understand the main point

Information  
about  
Messiah's  
Priesthood

of the first chapters of Hebrews by  
learning more information about  
Christ's Priesthood....

- Where it is centered
- **Why it is centered there**
- Why that is important for Israel  
and for us.

# Hebrews Chapter 8

- <sup>3</sup> For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore *it is* necessary that this One also have something to offer.
- <sup>4</sup> For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; <sup>5</sup> who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things,

# Hebrews Chapter 8

as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle.

For He said, "*See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.*"

# Why Messiah's Priesthood is Centered in Heaven:

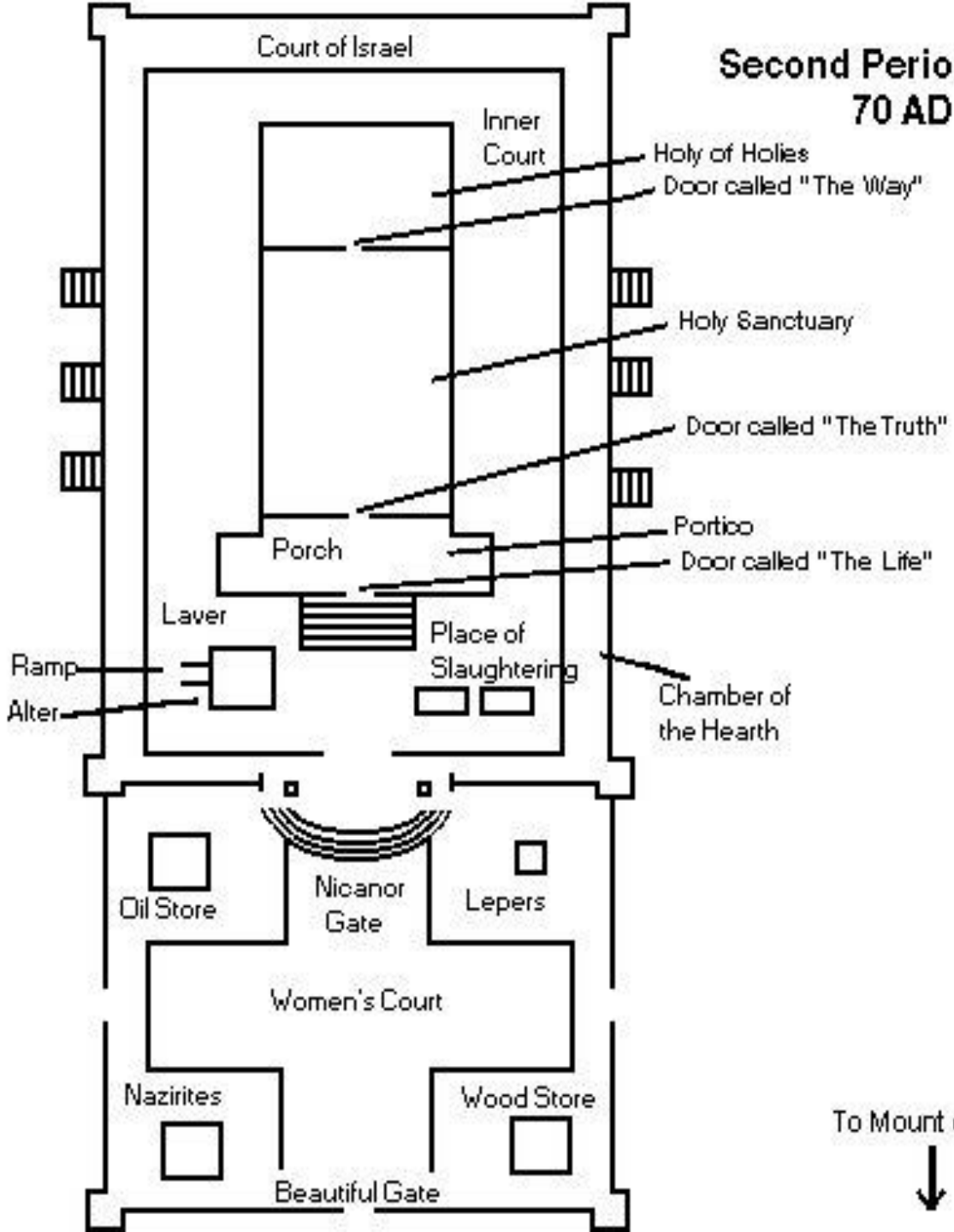
1. The lineage of Aaron, from the tribe of Levi, had the calling of an earthly priesthood. Messiah is from David's lineage, from the tribe of Judah rather than Levi. So Messiah would not be a priest in that system.
2. Messiah's Priesthood is the heavenly prototype for Israel's temple system.
3. Messiah's Priesthood is for the New Covenant—which fulfills prophecy.

# Messiah's Priesthood is the prototype for Israel's temple system.

- The tabernacle in heaven is the prototype for the tabernacle Moses designed according to its pattern—and the tabernacle floor-plan became the floor-plan of the temple of Solomon.
- The gifts and offerings of the tabernacle were symbolic of Messiah's offering in the tabernacle in heaven.
- The system on earth was the copy—the particular. **The system in heaven is the real thing—the ideal—the universal.**

# Second Period Temple 70 AD

Court of the Gentiles



Found in  
*Easton's  
Illustrated  
Dictionary* from  
Bible Explorer 4  
software

To Mount of Olives  
↓



# This passage also tells us

Something about the time when the Letter to the Hebrews was written.

The temple system in Jerusalem was still functioning. The Romans destroyed the temple in 70 AD. So Hebrews was written before 70 AD.

Hebrews 8:4 says “since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law...”

# Hebrews Chapter 8

- 6 But now He (Messiah) has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.
- 7 For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.

# We can understand the main point

Information  
about  
Messiah's  
Priesthood

of the first chapters of Hebrews by  
learning more information about  
Christ's Priesthood....

- Where it is centered
- Why it is centered there
- **Why that is important for Israel and for us.**

# We can be secure in Messiah's Priesthood because He is Perfect.

He has a more excellent ministry than a merely human one.

- Therefore He is qualified to be the Mediator of a better covenant
  - ▣ Based on better promises.
- The earlier covenant was limited due to human limitations. The New Covenant is released from those limitations.

# Hebrews Chapter 8/ Jeremiah 31:31-34

- <sup>8</sup> Because finding fault with them, He says: *"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—*
- <sup>9</sup> *not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD.*

# Hebrews Chapter 8/ Jeremiah 31:31-34

<sup>10</sup> *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. <sup>11</sup> None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.*

# Hebrews Chapter 8/ Jeremiah 31:31-34

- <sup>12</sup> *For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.* "
- <sup>13</sup> In that He says, "*A new covenant,*" He has made the first obsolete.
- Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.
- Heb 8:1-13 (NKJV)

# What was getting ready to vanish away?

- The temple system on earth—
- The letter to the Hebrews was written before the Romans destroyed the temple in 70 AD.
- The author of Hebrews was preparing his readers to know that the eternal temple in heaven was the one that really matters.
- The loss of the earthly temple was going to be a grief, but not a hopeless grief. Losing the temple did not negate the truth of God's word.
- God provided atonement through Messiah's priesthood in heaven.



# The Loss of the Earthly Temple

Was **not** cause to doubt God's word  
**nor** to doubt His care for Israel.

The provision had already been made in heaven,  
long ages before. **The pattern already existed  
in heaven in Moses' time.**

The Priesthood of Messiah is **eternal**. He is our  
Priest forever, according to the order of  
Melchizedek.

Messiah is forever Priest for Israel and for us.

# We can see the consistency of the entire Bible

## Changes in Temple Service

as we look at the changes in temple service.

- **1. The temple service in heaven is universal and available for all.**
- 2. The change does not revoke the gifts and callings of God.
- 3. The gifts and callings have present and future responsibilities.

# Joel 2:28-29 is for us.

- Messiah's priesthood extends Messiah's covenant to **all humankind**. The New Covenant is universal, just as the temple in heaven is the pattern.
- "**Joel 2:28-29 (NASB77)**  
<sup>28</sup> " And it will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions.  
<sup>29</sup> "And even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

# The New Covenant is available to all.



- The extension of the covenant to all humankind was marked by the gift of the Holy Spirit to believers.
- Believers become the temple of the Holy Spirit on earth, just as the tabernacle was God's dwelling place on earth.
- (The New Covenant is universal in that it is available to all, but not universal in the sense of being automatic for all—we have to come to God on His terms, individually.)

# The New Covenant is available to all.

- No longer is birth or social status or age or gender any barrier to serving God. The New Covenant is for Israel and for all humankind, for men and for women, and for the lowliest servant, for young and for old.

# The promises for Messiah as Priest Forever are for all of us.

- We can all find Him if we search for Him with all our heart.
- Messiah's atonement is available for all who will repent of sins and receive it.
- He will be King forever, and is Priest forever, and we can have His good kingdom in our hearts now.
- His kingdom begins one individual at a time when we open the door of our hearts.

# The promises for Messiah as Priest Forever are for all of us.

- When we open the door of our hearts and receive His forgiveness, we also receive His Holy Spirit.
- Jesus Christ's death on the cross made that forgiveness possible. The Holy Spirit seals us and makes us secure in His kingdom— Ephesians 4:30— “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, **by whom you were sealed** for the day of redemption.”

# The promises for Messiah as Priest Forever are for all of us.

- Romans 8:9 indicates that having the Holy Spirit in one's life is necessary for salvation.
- “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”
- So we can see that **this inward change is necessary for salvation, and having the Holy Spirit in our lives is evidence of God's work in us.**
- When the Holy Spirit enters one's life, He provides the power to do what is good. He teaches us and opens our understanding as we study God's word.



# The promises for Messiah as Priest Forever are for all of us.

- The necessity of the indwelling Holy Spirit is one distinctive of the New Covenant.
- Prior to the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit ministered through individuals who had a special calling and a particular purpose,
- but people could receive God's salvation without asking for the Holy Spirit in their lives.
- Now we ALL need Him all the time—and especially if we want to witness to others about Jesus Christ in a hostile world.

# Joel 2:28-29 is for us.

- "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out **My Spirit on all flesh**; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.  
<sup>29</sup> And also on *My* menservants and on *My* maidservants I will pour out *My* Spirit in those days. Joel 2:28-29 (NKJV)

# We can see the consistency of the entire Bible

## Changes in Temple Service

as we look at the changes in temple service.

- 1. The temple service in heaven is universal and available for all.
- **2. The change in temple service does not revoke the gifts and callings of God.**
- 3. The gifts and callings have present and future responsibilities.

# This brings up another question--

--a side issue--which I believe the Bible answers.  
What about the ministry of the Levitical priests in the absence of the temple?

- Romans 11:29 “For the gifts and the calling of God *are* irrevocable.” (NKJV)
- The temple on earth is gone, yet the gifts and callings of the Levitical priests are irrevocable. Jeremiah chapter 33 affirms this.
- To resolve this issue, some understanding of future prophecy is needed.

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## Changes in Temple Service

as we look at the changes in temple service.

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# Jeremiah 33:14-16

- <sup>14</sup> 'Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah:
- <sup>15</sup> 'In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.
- <sup>16</sup> In those days Judah will be saved, And Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this *is the name* by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.'

Remember that Jeremiah 23:6 tells us one title of Messiah is

*The LORD Our Righteousness.* Jeremiah 33:16 applies that to Jerusalem—to people. The truth of Messiah as The LORD our Righteousness, including the Trinity, including the idea of the Indwelling Holy Spirit—all those threads are woven together in these words. The LORD is our Righteousness. And yet, that idea is immediately followed by the irrevocable nature of the Levitical priesthood.

# Jeremiah 33:14-22

- <sup>17</sup> "For thus says the LORD: 'David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel;
- <sup>18</sup> nor shall the priests, the Levites, lack a man to offer burnt offerings before Me, to kindle grain offerings, and to sacrifice continually.' " (NKJV)



# Jeremiah 33:14-22

- <sup>19</sup> And the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, <sup>20</sup> "Thus says the LORD:  
□ 'If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season,  
□ <sup>21</sup> then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levites, the priests, My ministers.

# Jeremiah 33:14-22

- <sup>22</sup> As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the descendants of David **My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.** "

# Jeremiah 33:23-26

Moreover the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying,

<sup>24</sup> "Have you not considered what these people have spoken, saying,

'The two families which the LORD has chosen, He has also cast them off'?

Thus they have despised My people, as if they should no more be a nation before them.

# Jeremiah 33:23-26

<sup>25</sup> "Thus says the LORD: 'If *My* covenant *is* not with day and night, *and if* I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth,

<sup>26</sup> then I will cast away the descendants of Jacob and David *My* servant, *so* that I will not take *any* of his descendants *to be* rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

For I will cause their captives to return, and will have mercy on them.' " (NKJV)

# This set of prophecies implies

An eventual restoration of the Levitical priesthood.

If you are a student of the prophetic Scriptures, **two** times of restoration of temple worship are predicted.

The first one takes place during the end-times before Messiah returns as King and Judge,

and the second after He returns as King and Judge to reign for 1000 years.

# The earlier end time restoration

Is implied in Joel 2:17 and in Revelation 11:1-2, and in Daniel 9:27.

The later 1000 year reign restoration, following the resurrection of the righteous, is described in Ezekiel 44:23-24. Verse 15 of that chapter describes specific resurrected individuals who will serve Messiah as priests—they will live forever and will serve Him.

# A Side Issue

Occasionally I have heard of people who think Christians are supposed to be involved in internal political matters within Israel for the purposes of end time beliefs.

I don't see that in Scripture.

I do see a need to support Israel's existence in a hostile world. I strongly believe God wants us to bless and love Israel for many reasons—not the least being their commitment to the rule of law and representative government in a part of the world needing their example.

# A Side Issue

A major problem in modern Judaism is finding **reasons to trust in God**, in the aftermath of the holocaust. Our support for Israel, as Bible-believing people who trust in God, is an encouragement for them.

- Other worldviews do **not** have adequate reasons to trust in God. Modernism, postmodernism, existentialist Christianity, Marxism, and Islam all fail to have good reasons to trust in God.



# A Side Issue: Why should we trust God?

- Some of the inadequate answers of other worldviews are: because trusting God makes us feel better,
- because nobody can really know about these things, so trusting in a theoretical good God helps us be better people.
- Or, alternatively, there is no god.
- Or there is no necessarily good God—only His **will** can be known by what happens.

# A Side Issue: Why should we trust God?

The Bible promises that it IS possible to find God, and that He is good—that He is not the author of evil.

Psalm 11 says that “God’s eyelids test the righteous and the wicked.” When God seems not to see our suffering, it is a test—both for us and for those causing the suffering. If we look at Psalm 5, the test has consequences depending on how we pass or fail it. It has eternal consequences because “No evil dwells with God.”

# Jesus Christ has an important role in that trust!

Romans 15:8-9 says “For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, And for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written...”

# Even after the horror of Babylonian captivity, God held out hope.

- Jeremiah 29:11-14. <sup>11</sup> For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.
- <sup>12</sup> Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.
- <sup>13</sup> And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

Even after the horror of Babylonian captivity, God held out hope.

**<sup>14</sup> I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive. (NKJV)**

# A Side Issue: Why should we trust God?

- A Biblical worldview has the only answers—a good God who always has our **eternal** best interests at heart, who gives us the power to make real choices, who intervenes through the responses of people to His good leadership.
- A good God who is able to intervene in drastic ways, but who seldom does so **because** He wants every possible person to come to repentance and find eternal life.

# A Side Issue: Why should we trust God?

- A God who **optimizes for eternity**, and sees every heart, and who loves people.
- In fact, without eternal life as our potential, the problem of evil makes no sense at all.
- A God who is not a deterministic puppet-master, but who wants us to freely choose and trust Him, for eternity.
- We should encourage others to seek Him through the Bible.

# In the meantime...

God's priests have a responsibility to declare His glory among the nations. That responsibility extends beyond the first resurrection, as well—Isaiah 66:18-24.

- Jesus talked about the scribes, whose task was to learn and teach the Scriptures in Matthew 13:52. Then He said to them, "Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure *things* new and old."



# Isaiah 66:18-24—End Time Extension of Ministry

<sup>18</sup> "For I *know* their works and their thoughts. It shall be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory.

<sup>19</sup> I will set a sign among them; and those among them who escape I will send to the nations:

*to* Tarshish and Pul and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and Javan, *to* the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory.

**And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles. ...**

# Isaiah 66:18-24—End Time Extension of Ministry

<sup>20</sup> Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the LORD out of all nations, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem," says the LORD, "as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. <sup>21</sup> And I will also take some of them for priests and Levites," says the LORD. <sup>22</sup> "For as the new heavens and the new earth Which I will make shall remain before Me," says the LORD, "So shall your descendants and your name remain. ...

# Isaiah 66:18-24—End Time Extension of Ministry

<sup>23</sup> And it shall come to pass *That* from one New Moon to another, And from one Sabbath to another, All flesh shall come to worship before Me," says the LORD. <sup>24</sup> "And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, And their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh." Isaiah 66:18-24 (NKJV)

# Isaiah 66

- Gentile believers are pictured as a grain offering. This connects to Jesus' words describing the Samaritans as potential followers of His in John chapter 4. "The fields are white unto harvest."
- The Isaiah 66 passage describes Hell as a destiny for the wicked. In eternity, justice will be served where mercy has been rejected. The problem of suffering is sorted out in eternity by our Judge who is totally fair. We can trust Him here for that fairness.

# Malachi 1:11

- " For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name *shall be* great among the Gentiles; In every place incense *shall be* offered to My name, And a pure offering; For My name shall be great among the nations," Says the LORD of hosts.
- We know that the more traditional churches all around the world offer incense to God's name. This prediction from 400 BC is being fulfilled.

# The past and future temples...

- Once again, the loss of the temple in Jerusalem is not cause to doubt the Scriptures. The Scriptures resolve the issue in unexpected ways. The temple in heaven is the one that really matters. The earthly temple and its service will resume later on. The calling of God is ongoing, with or without an earthly temple.

# The Resurrection of the Righteous

- Both the Old Testament and the New Testament predict a resurrection of the righteous just before Messiah returns from Heaven to earth, to reign for 1000 years. The righteous Levites who have already died will serve in the Millennial temple, because death is not permanent. Jesus conquered death at the cross for us, and it is the last enemy that will be completely defeated, after all evil is defeated.
- All of us need that victory. Trusting in God is required in order to have that victory. Receiving His righteousness is necessary, too. We must receive His kingdom in our hearts.

# All of us have responsibilities

- Before God. Our **first responsibility** is to seek Him with all our hearts, and to love Him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength.
- Because Jesus Christ is Messiah and the *LORD our Righteousness*, His identity is tremendously important. We each have a responsibility **to search for the truth** about who Jesus Christ is.
  - God commands us **to love peace and truth**—Zechariah 8:19.



# Priority=truth Zechariah 8:19

## □ Zechariah 8:14-23 (NASB77)

<sup>14</sup> "For thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Just as I purposed to do harm to you when your fathers provoked Me to wrath,' says the LORD of hosts, 'and I have not relented,

<sup>15</sup> so I have again purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear!

<sup>16</sup> 'These are the things which you should do: speak the truth to one another; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates.

<sup>17</sup> 'Also let none of you devise evil in your heart against another, and do not love perjury; for all these are what I hate,' declares the LORD."

# Priority=truth Zechariah 8:19

## □ Zechariah 8:14-23 (NASB77)

<sup>18</sup> Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me saying,

<sup>19</sup> "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'The fast of the fourth, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth *months* will become joy, gladness, and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah; so love truth and peace.'

<sup>20</sup> "Thus says the LORD of hosts, '*It will yet be* that peoples will come, even the inhabitants of many cities.

<sup>21</sup> 'And the inhabitants of one will go to another saying, "Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts; I will also go."

# Priority=truth Zechariah 8:19

## □ Zechariah 8:14-23 (NASB77)

<sup>22</sup> 'So many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD.'

<sup>23</sup> "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."'"

# Truth

- The Bible is an amazing book. It was written over the course of about 1500 years, on three continents, with human authors whose lives varied widely. Yet it speaks with one voice about many important topics.
- Each addition to the book had to meet the test of truth, and had to be consistent with the previous message. **The test of truth is the key to the validity of any religion.**

# I Thessalonians 5:21



But examine everything carefully;  
hold fast to that which is good.



# Homework

In 3 sets (The colors in the tabernacle were blue, purple, and scarlet, along with metallic gold and silver and white fine linen—for glory and for beauty.)

# Homework Class 21 Set 1

- Often Christians will recite the Lord's Prayer together in unison. Jesus gave that prayer as an instruction about how to pray. Repeating it is an agreeable thing to do, and it was repeated by our Lord on a different occasion in Luke's gospel.
- The Lord's Prayer can be used effectively as a springboard to talk to God sincerely regarding one's most intense concerns.
- Think about it line by line, and bring your own concerns before God between each line.

# Homework Class 21 Set 1

- The attitudes and topics found in it should be taken to God in prayer according to the needs of the moment. Jesus Christ has held out to us the gift of friendship, and that involves sincere and open communication.
- Once again, read Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4.
- What are the attitudes in prayer regarding God Himself?
- What are things you need to remember about God to hallow His name in a hostile world?



# Homework Class 21 Set 1

- What are the topics covered in the Lord's prayer?
- What are the attitudes toward those topics?
- God sees the heart of each of us, and He loves us, and He is concerned about our concerns.
- The Apostle Paul gives us examples of his prayers in Ephesians 1:15-19 and Ephesians 2:14-21. You can visualize and call by name individuals who are important to you as you pray these verses.

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

We want to look at prayer from the perspective of seekers first. Then we want to look at it from the perspective of believers. All of us who are now believers were seekers at one time. Prayer was part of our journey. Prayer is one of the most complex subjects we can address, because we as finite human beings are attempting to communicate with Infinite, Holy God.

The assignment is to **read all the scripture passages** in the following essay, over the next two days.

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

## Prayer and Seekers

**Hebrews 11:6** “And without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”

This is the first and most basic requirement for answered prayer—to seek God, believing that He is and that He will reward those who seek Him.

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

## Prayer and Seekers

It is a decision to address this matter, a choice. A starting point is to tell God you have decided to believe He is real and good and you want to know Him. You can pray silently or out loud or even in written form. God is aware of your concerns.

I believe this is a promise from God to listen to seeking prayers, even though it does not say that in precise terms. He is pleased with our search for Him; He wants us to pray to Him.

Even if you feel silly doing this, that feeling has nothing to do with God's Presence and awareness. Persevere.

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

(Prayer and Seekers, Continued)

This same principle of seeking God is applied to prayer in **Ezra chapter 8, especially verse 22** –“The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him.”

An example of prayer and seekers is found in **2 Chronicles chapters 29 -31**. Israel was divided into two kingdoms, the northern kingdom called Samaria, and the southern kingdom called Judah.

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

The setting was Jerusalem, before the fall of Samaria to the Assyrians, which occurred in the sixth year of Hezekiah's reign in Judah. However, the Assyrians had already taken people captive from the northern kingdom.

The people of Samaria had abandoned the temple worship of God many generations before, and had drifted further and deeper into idolatry. At first they had worshipped golden calves set up by King Jeroboam I. Later they adopted idol worship that included violence and murder toward innocents.

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

- The need for a return to worship of the one true God was very serious indeed. God sent prophets to return the hearts of the people to Him. Eventually He allowed the majority, who refused to listen to those prophets, to be taken captive by Assyria.
- Hezekiah was king of the southern kingdom, but he was related to the kings of Samaria because of an arranged marriage in an earlier generation of his family. Hezekiah's own father had been involved in the terrible idolatry of those times, and he had murdered some of Hezekiah's own siblings.

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

- The first thing King Hezekiah when he became king of the southern kingdom, was to open the doors of the temple again. He arranged for the Levitical priests to be purified and to reestablish the worship of the true God.
- He and his supporters removed the terrible idol worship from the southern kingdom. “And thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good, right, and true before the LORD his God. And every work which he began in the service of the house of God in law and in commandment, **seeking his God, he did with all his heart and prospered.**” (II Chronicles 31:20-21)



# Homework Class 21 Set 2

- The temple and priests were not ready in time for Passover in the first month of that first year of his reign, so King Hezekiah arranged for Passover to be held in the second month, as allowed in the law of Moses. (**Numbers 9:9-14**)
- King Hezekiah extended an invitation to people in the northern kingdom to return to Jerusalem for Passover. Most people refused and mocked the invitation, but some accepted and came to Jerusalem for Passover.
- However, they had not met the purification requirements of the law to be allowed to participate.

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

- Hezekiah interceded for them and encouraged them to seek God with all their hearts. He promised them, “If you return to God with all your hearts, your brothers and your sons will find compassion before those who led them captive, and will return to this land. For the LORD your God is gracious and compassionate, and will not turn His face away from you if you return to Him.”

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

- This implies answered prayer based upon seeking God with all their hearts – since they would be praying for their captured relatives.
- “For a multitude of the people, even many from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than prescribed. For Hezekiah prayed for them saying, ‘May the good LORD pardon everyone who prepared his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though not according to the purification rules of the sanctuary.’ So the LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people.”

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

- Note that purification was required, but the seeking heart was the most important thing. Hezekiah's intercession for God to overlook their failure to be purified was in agreement with God's wishes for them. Their failure to meet the purification requirements may have been part of the reason for needing healing – the text does not explain that.
- The law required that the clean, perfect animal sacrifice system of temple worship demonstrate atonement for sins in order for sins to be forgiven. Many years before, when dedicating the temple, King Solomon interceded for those not able to participate in temple worship due to being taken captive by enemies.

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

In **I Kings 8:46-53**, Solomon asked God to hear the prayers of those who repent, return to God with all their heart and soul, and who pray toward Jerusalem and the temple. Praying toward the temple would then symbolize the atoning sacrifice system that they needed for forgiveness.

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

- In **Daniel chapter six**, in Babylon, Daniel prayed with his windows open toward Jerusalem for this reason. Clearly throughout the book of Daniel, his prayers were answered in miraculous ways, because of his faith in the atonement God provided, and his willingness to follow God's law even when difficult. He continued to keep his windows open toward Jerusalem for prayer after the temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, and God continued to hear his prayers.

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

- Similarly, Christians pray in Jesus' name, because we believe His atonement for our sins is the thing that makes possible our forgiveness, thereby making possible our approach to God in prayer. To ask us not to pray in Jesus' name would be like asking Daniel not to pray toward Jerusalem. (This matches **Jeremiah 30: 21-22**, which reveals Messiah as the One who can freely approach God. He intercedes for us and we pray in His name. See also **Isaiah 53:12** and **Hebrews 7:25**.)

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

- In the Sermon on the Mount, **Matthew chapters five through seven**, Jesus encouraged His disciples to pray.
- Near the beginning, he said “blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied...blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”
- He continues for three chapters with explanations of the thoroughness of the law as applied to the heart. In **chapter 5:17-18** He said “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.”



# Homework Class 21 Set 2

- In **chapter 7, verses 7 through 11**, Jesus promises, “Ask and it shall be given to you. Seek and you shall find. Knock and the door shall be opened to you.” He is encouraging them in the strongest terms to pray. They did not understand His atonement at that time, but they did realize that He was from God.
- The verb tenses for “ask, seek and knock” are progressive tenses, meaning to ask and keep on asking, seek and keep on seeking, knock and keep on knocking.

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

- Does the promise of **Jeremiah 29:12-14** apply to answered prayer before becoming a believer? “I will visit you....Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. And I will be found by you, declares the LORD.”
- Seeking prayer comes before finding prayer, and God promises to listen, but He also initiates the situation—“I will visit you.” This matches the idea in the New Testament that we cannot find God unless He draws us toward Himself through Jesus as our Messiah, and we are responsible to seek Him in response—**John 6:37 and 44.**

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

- **Romans 10:12-13** says that God abounds in riches for all who call upon Him. Calling upon Him implies a degree of belief and a search for Him and His righteousness, and in the context, a belief in Jesus as Messiah. The emphasis is on the need to hear who Jesus is and to understand the good news of His gifts of salvation and righteousness to us. Specifically in **Romans 11: 1-2** the Scriptures state that God has not rejected His Jewish people, but the succeeding verses indicate that they must individually seek His righteousness, because in **Romans 10** they were trying to establish their own righteousness instead of seeking His.

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

- This pitfall of depending on our own righteousness rather than seeking His righteousness is common to all people. We want so much to believe that we are inherently so good that we can meet God's perfection on our own merits. Unfortunately, our own righteousness is not perfect, and God's perfect justice demands moral perfection.
- Do non-Christians need the atoning work of Christ? Yes. Hebrews reveals that the sacrifice system of Solomon's temple was preparation for the atonement accomplished by Messiah – and that there is a temple in heaven that is the prototype for the one on earth built so long ago. The heavenly temple is where the infinite atoning blood of Christ was presented to pay for the sins of the whole world.

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

- The righteousness of God is a gift purchased through that atonement. That gift is received by seeking God, **Psalm 24:5-6**, and by recognizing that the King of glory - - Messiah who enters through the ancient gates— is the Lord of Hosts, **Psalm 24:9-10**. He is worthy to be our King. **Psalm 25** includes more information – that we must trust in God, and that we must repent of sins and ask His forgiveness, with the intention of keeping His covenant and His testimonies.
- The New Covenant of **Jeremiah 31:21-40** is applied to individual hearts through the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit. **Hebrews chapters 8 through 10** explain that the death and resurrection of Messiah, as the ultimate atonement for sin, ushered in the New Covenant.

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

- **Joel 2:28** reveals that the work of the Holy Spirit is available, in the new covenant, to all mankind. **Joel 2:27** revealed that God with us – Messiah – would be in Israel before the Holy Spirit was poured out on all mankind. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, **Acts chapter 2**, validates that Jesus is Messiah, and that He visited us to suffer for us back then. That allowed Gentiles to receive the salvation of God, as well as Jews. Jeremiah applies the New Covenant to Jews as well as Gentiles. All the details fit together precisely.

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

- The requirements to receive God's righteousness in **Psalms 24 and 25** match the requirements of the New Covenant, except the New Covenant as applied in Hebrews involves understanding Who Messiah is and why He had to die and rise victorious over death. It makes sense that both the Old Covenant and the New Covenant were covenants by sacrifice, and that the Old Covenant prefigured the New.
- **Psalm 50:4-5** talks about God as Judge gathering His godly ones to Himself— and His godly ones are those who made a covenant with Him by sacrifice.

# Homework Class 21 Set 2

- The New Covenant has Messiah's infinite sacrifice in place of all the burnt offerings of bulls and goats and lambs in the Old Covenant, so that His sacrifice was a once for all event and is not repeated. Because He is infinite God, His sacrifice is sufficient for atonement for all of us.
- God sees the future, and He knows the heart. If we are seeking Him, He is pleased.



# Homework Class 21 Set 2

- Our starting point for seeking Him is less important than the whole-hearted honesty of the search. We are equal before Him and beloved to Him. Our ending point – finding Him– is vitally important. Because Jesus really is Messiah, and His atoning sacrifice really does matter, a search for the truth about Him and how to respond to that truth is part of the search for God. We must search thoroughly and not give up.
- Continued tomorrow ...

# Homework Class 21 Set 3

- **Read the references in this essay...**
- Another way to look at prayer is to categorize people in three groups: Those who reject God, those who seek God, and those who have found God. Each group has different promises from God.
- People who reject God do not have promise of answered prayer. The New Testament describes them as having a veil over their hearts that prevents them from understanding the truth of Scripture.  
**(Isaiah 25:7, 2 Corinthians 3:15-18)**

# Homework Class 21 Set 3

- The promise is that when they turn to the Lord, that veil is taken away, and they begin to have an understanding of Scripture. Other passages indicate that the Holy Spirit guides people into all truth, so **turning to the Lord** begins a process where the Holy Spirit ministers to their understanding as they search the Scriptures. (**John 14:26, John 16:7-15**) This promise indicates that the Scriptures are the appropriate place to search for God.

# Homework Class 21 Set 3

- Does God care about people who reject Him? **Yes!** God is not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance – **2 Peter 3:9**. Will He judge those who continue to reject Him? **Yes. Revelation 20:11-15**
- People who are seeking God must seek the truth about Him. The promise to those who seek Him is that they will find Him if they search for Him with all their heart. The wholeheartedness of the search is key. The promise of finding Him is found more than one place in Scripture. (**Jeremiah 29:11-14, Deuteronomy 30:1-10, I Kings 8:35-55, Matthew 7:7-11, Psalm 9:7-10, Psalm 21:1-4**)

# Homework Class 21 Set 3

- In **Psalm 9:10** God is described as One who has not forsaken those who seek Him.
- The outcome of that search will be trust in Him. **Psalm 22: 26** says that eternal life is available to those who seek Him.
- **Psalm 21:1 and 4** indicate that asking God for eternal life is involved in salvation.
- **Psalm 24** indicates that those who receive God's forgiveness also receive righteousness from Him and blessing. **Verse 6** indicates that seeking God is part of that process.

# Homework Class 21 Set 3

- Being willing to do God's will – receiving His kingdom in our hearts – is also a key to discovering if Jesus is Messiah. (**John 5:22-24, 39-40, 46-47, John 7: 16-18.**)
- The required wholeheartedness of the search means that *if one learns that Jesus truly is Messiah during his search, he must respond appropriately.* Otherwise the search is not with all his heart. So searching for the truth about Jesus is really important.

# Homework Class 21 Set 3

- In the Sermon on the Mount, **Matthew chapters five through seven**, Jesus promises that those who seek will find, those who ask will receive, and those who knock will have the door opened.
- The context is seeking righteousness from God.
- The whole sermon describes the absolute perfection God demands of us from the heart, and the promise is that seeking will lead to a solution of what seems impossible to us.

# Homework Class 21 Set 3

- The verb form of ask and seek and knock is progressive, meaning to ask and keep on asking, seek and keep on seeking, knock and keep on knocking. The sermon tells us to seek His kingdom in our hearts. “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things (temporal needs) will be added to you.”
- Faith is very much involved in receiving righteousness from God. “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”  
**(Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:3)**



# Homework Class 21 Set 3

- Because the Sermon on the Mount encourages in the strongest terms that people pray, I believe God hears the prayers of seekers, although He may not answer as we would imagine.
- He draws us to Him before we seek Him, and awareness of our prayers is part of that process.
- He is pleased when we seek Him.
- In my case, He heard and answered two prayers during that time of seeking Him, that I can remember, and the answers were part of seeking and finding Him.

# Homework Class 21 Set 3

- That same sermon promises good answers for God's children. God answers prayers for what He knows will be good for us, as a father gives good things to his children.
- People who have found God, and who have become His children according to **John 1:12-18**, have very strict requirements they must meet to have answered prayer. God is a strict and kind Father.
- They must hold no grudges. (**Matthew 6:14-15, Leviticus 19:15-18**)

# Homework Class 21 Set 3

- They must have all sins removed through repentance and asking God's forgiveness, (**Leviticus 5:5-6, Psalm 66:18, I John 1:8-9**)
- They must pray according to God's will, which is always good. (**I John 5:14-15**)
- They must pray in faith, believing God will answer. (**Matthew 21:22**)
- Prayers are done in Jesus' name, because His atonement provides the way of salvation for us. He paid for our sins on the cross – **I Corinthians 15:3-10, John 14:14**. He intercedes for us in heaven with God the Father. He is our Advocate. (**1 John 2:1-2**)

# Homework Class 21 Set 3

- At any given time, the percentage of people meeting all those requirements, and therefore able to pray effectively, may be small. This set of requirements is not easy to meet.
- When needs are very urgent, praying in faith that God will answer “yes” is sometimes difficult. One of the keys to that kind of faith involves praying according to what one knows of God’s character.
- His character does not change. We can confidently ask for answers to requests that line up with His character.

# Homework Class 21 Set 3

- **Psalm 103:10-19** shows the eternal value of God's forgiveness, and keeping His covenant and precepts – for ourselves and for our children. “His loving kindness is from everlasting to everlasting for those who fear Him.” He loves us from eternity past, and His loving kindness will belong to us in eternity future if we meet His requirements.

# Homework Class 21 Set 3

- Prayer is not a wish machine with automatic response to the right formula, although God approves childlike faith that may see it so at first.
- We grow in grace the longer we are pursuing these good things. Prayer is honest communication with Almighty God, the King of glory, perfect in holiness. That He has made a way for us to approach Him is awesome.

# Homework Class 21 Set 3

- Should we allow a form of “spiritual perfectionism” to keep us from praying? No. We are told to “Pray without ceasing.”
- When we trust God fully, His perfect love will drive out that kind of fear, and we will talk to Him about everything. Loving Him involves wanting to talk to Him.
- So we need to consider where we are spiritually and pray right where we are. And we need to persevere in prayer, including God in our ordinary thoughts.

# Homework Class 21 Set 3

- One of the major issues in every life is discerning the difference between good and evil, as the previous lesson discussed. Prayer is part of that process along with Bible study. Bible study is improved when we pray as we go. “Open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things from Your law!” Psalm 119:18
- Has the organized church always been right about these things? No. Churches are made of human beings who make errors. The more a church drifts from the Scriptures, the more likely those errors will be codified in church practice.



# Homework Class 21 Set 3

- Whenever Churches abandon the Bible they also lose their ability to distinguish between good and evil, and they fail the test. They usually fail it in a passive way, by refusing to take a stand against evil.
- There have been occasions in church history where the organized churches were directly involved in evils, such as religious coercion. Those eras were marked by the organized church's persecution of Christians who believed the Bible, and by the organized church's attempts to keep the Bible under wraps. The common denominator in forms of Christianity that lose sight of right and wrong are that they abandon the Bible first.

# Homework Class 21 Set 3

- So if you are searching for a church, check out their beliefs about the Bible.
- Tradition is good, but only if it does not drift away from God. Tradition may or may not appropriately address new cultural concerns as they arise. So it is important for all churches to go back to the Bible as the main reference for faith and practice. That includes both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The book needs to be understood as a whole. The principles in it provide an integration point for addressing societal change and right and wrong.

# Homework Class 21 Set 3

- One of our purposes as human beings, originally created in God's image, is to glorify God. That is, we are to reveal His glory to the people around us.
- To be able to even notice His glory, we have to hold on to some concepts that are true about Him. Not just any ideas about God will do. They have to match His real character.
- If our view of God is that He is a puppet-master who does not care about people, that false idea will hide His glory. If the problem of suffering in this world makes you blame God as puppet-master, your idea about God is wrong.

# Homework Class 21 Set 3

- We must hold a number of ideas about God simultaneously, in order to remain aware of His glory. One of those ideas is that He is completely good. Another is that He is completely powerful, that evil will not win, even when it seems to be gaining ground in this world, because God stands against evil. Another idea is that our choices are real—that God is not to blame for terrible human decisions. Even when the Bible tells us God sometimes hardens people's hearts, if you read about those situations, you will see that they had already hardened their own hearts first. He hardened their hearts to reach other hearts.

# Homework Class 21 Set 3

- God optimizes for eternity. Each person's decisions ripple out from him or her to the people around and to the generations that will follow, and to eternity itself.
- God delays judgment to allow more people to repent of sins and be saved for eternity. Our decisions as human beings are eternally important. When we see things we wish God would stop, sometimes He is waiting for key individuals to repent and find Him. It is His glory to want people to find Him.