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“Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” - 1 John 4:11

“Responding to God’s Love”

1 John 4:7-21

I. Only those who know God through faith in Jesus Christ understand what true love is, for *“God is love.”*

1) Love is an integral part of His nature (8, 16b), evident in all His actions, even in discipline (Hosea 5:12, 14-15; Hebrews 12:4-13).

2) Because God is just, His love is sacrificial (9-10; Heb. 10:28-31).

3) God’s love is unconditional (10, 19; Romans 5:8).

II. Our response: We are to love others as God has loved us (11, 21).

1) Our love must be based on the truth of God’s Word; love and truth go hand in hand (Ephesians 4:14-15; 1 John 3:18).

2) Love that is expressed not just with *“words or tongue, but in action and in truth,”* (1 John 3:18) gives confidence on the day of judgment (17-18).

3) If we say we love God, but have hatred for others, we deceive ourselves (20-21).

“This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome...” - 1 John 4:3

“Burdensome Commands?”

1 John 5:1-5

I. Our love for God is demonstrated by obedience (3). This obedience:

1) Is not burdensome (3b).

2) Demonstrates that we are born of God (1,4).

3) Shows that we have overcome the world (4-5).

II. Because obedience to God’s commands reveals our love for Him (John 14:15) we are to strive to be obedient by:

1) Running from temptation (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22; James 4:7).

2) Maintaining fellowship with God’s people (Hebrews 10:25).

3) Focusing on Jesus (John 14:15, 21, 23-24; Hebrews 12:2).

“They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink...”

1 Corinthians 10:2-4a

“The Sacraments’ Picture”

1 Corinthians 10:1-13; Lord’s Day 25

I. The sacraments paint a picture for us of the gospel:

1) In the Lord’s Supper the bread and wine represent the body and blood of Jesus sacrificed on the cross for our sins (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

2) The water of baptism represents the washing of sin by the blood of Jesus (Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 2:38-39).

II. Our response:

1) Through the sacraments we focus on Christ (Romans 6:3-4; Titus 3:4-7).

2) If we are truly united with Christ we must show it by our lives (Romans 6:1-4, 11-14; Colossians 3:1-17).

III. Application: The sacraments do not guarantee salvation. They only paint the picture of how we are saved. Our salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone (Acts 4:12; 16:30,31).

“This is the One who came by water and by blood - Jesus Christ...” -1 John 5:6a

“By Water and By Blood”

1 John 5:6-13

I. Verse 6 has three main interpretations:

1) The baptism and death of Jesus (most commonly held view).

2) The sacraments (Calvin and Luther).

3) The water and blood from Jesus’ pierced side (Augustine).

II. We know that Jesus’ life on earth was real by:

1) His public ministry, represented by baptism (6a; Matt. 3:13-17).

2) His crucifixion, represented by blood (6b; John 19:34).

3) The testimony of the Holy Spirit (6c; 1 Corinthians 2:14).

III. Applications:

1) Those who don’t believe in God make Him out to be a liar (7-10).

2) Those who believe in Christ have everlasting life (11-12), with assurance (13)!

“We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” - Romans 6:4

“Buried With Him Through Baptism”

Romans 6:1-14; LD 26

I. Baptism pictures for us the washing away of our sins (3-10; Q&A 69).

II. We are washed by Jesus’ blood and His Spirit (Q&A 70), meaning:

1) We are forgiven through faith in Christ’s sacrifice for us on the cross (Eph. 1:7).

2) We are renewed by the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-8; Titus 3:5-7).

3) We are united with Him (4-7).

III. Applications:

1) Baptism is a sign, - a picture, - not the reality (Acts 4:12; 16:31).

2) If we are truly united with Christ by faith, and cleansed by Him, then we will show it by how we live (4, 11-14).

“If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying he should pray about that.” - 1 John 5:16

“The Sin That Leads to Death”

1 John 5:16-17; Matthew 12:22-32

I. There are many views on what the “the sin that leads to death” (16) is:

1) The Roman Catholic concept of mortal and venial sins (Numbers 15:22-31).

2) Apostasy (16; Hebrews 6:4-6).

3) Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which reveals a heart so hardened by sin that the work of God is ascribed to the devil (Matthew 12:22-32).

II. Applications:

1) If you think you’ve committed this sin, you can be sure you haven’t, because no remorse would be felt (2 Corinthians 7:10).

2) Continue to pray for the unsaved, for Jesus came not for the righteous, but sinners (Matthew 9:10-13).

“... The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home.” - Acts 16:14b-15a

“God’s Work in Baptism”

Acts 16:11-15; LD 27

I. The sacrament of baptism doesn’t wash away our sin (Q&A 72), but it does (Q&A 73):
1) Reveal the cleansing power of Christ’s shed blood (1 Cor. 6:11)

2) Serve as a divine pledge and sign from God (Romans 4:11; Colossians 2:11-12).

II. The sacrament of baptism has divided sincere Christians:

1) There is division as to who should be baptized:

a) Many believe that only a professing Christian may be baptized (Mark 16:16).

b) We believe that baptism is for our children as well as professing Christians
(Acts 2:39; 16:15,33; Q&A 74).

2) There is division over the mode of baptism:

a) Many believe there must be full immersion (Romans 6:3-4).

b) We believe sprinkling is also sufficient (Hebrews 9:10,13,19,21).

III. Application: What God signifies and seals in baptism is far more important than what we do, therefore, we are to focus on God’s promises signified in baptism (Titus 3:4-7).

“We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know Him who is true.” - 1 John 5:20

“Great Christian Certainties”

1 John 5:13-21

I. As Christians we know these certainties:

1) That we have eternal life through faith in Christ (13).

2) That we have all that we ask according to God's will (14-15).

3) That sin will not be the habitual pattern of our lives (18).

4) We know Him who is true, the Son of God (19a, 20).

II. Applications:

1) Knowing the greatness of God we are to keep ourselves from idols (21).

2) Knowing these certainties we have great reason to rejoice!
(See 1 John 1:4).

“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, ‘Take it; this is My body.’” - Mark 14:22

“The Lord’s Supper”

Mark 14:12-26; LD 28

I. The Lord’s Supper is a sign, pointing to what Jesus did for us (Mark 14:22-24; Q&A 75a).

II. For those who take the Supper with true saving faith, it is also nourishment (John 6:53-57; Q&A 75b).

III. When we take the Lord’s Supper properly, it:

1) Strengthens our faith (John 6:35, 40; Q&A 76a).

2) Unites us more fully with Christ (Ephesians 4:15; Q&A 76b).

3) Unites us more fully with each other (1 Cor. 10:16-17; Q&A 77).

“To the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in the truth...”

2 John 1

“A Letter to the Chosen Lady”

2 John 1-13

I. The “chosen lady” - whether an individual or a church - is told to:

1) Have a Christ-like love for others (5).

2) Not to lose what she had already attained spiritually (8).

3) To be on guard against false teaching (7-11).

II. Applications:

1) We must know the truth in order to love (1-3) and obey (4).

2) Our love for the Lord is proved by obedience (6).

3) There is great joy in Christian fellowship (4, 12).

“To my dear Gaius whom I love in the truth... I wrote to the church but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, would have nothing to do with us... Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone...” - 3 John: 1...9...12...

“Personalities In the Church”

3 John: 1-14

I. In this brief letter three people are described:

1) Gaius, “whom I love in the truth” (1), is:

a) Faithful to the truth - in theology and in practice (3-4).

b) Faithful in hospitality (5, 7-8).

c) Faithful in love (6).

2) Diotrephes, “who loves to be first” (9), is described as:

a) A malicious gossip (10a).

b) Inhospitable (10b).

c) One who drives people from the church (10c).

3) Demetrius, “well spoken of by everyone” (12), is commended.

II. Application: Imitate those who do good, not evil (11). Follow the example of those who follow the example of Christ (1 Cor. 11:1).

“... Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.” - 1 Corinthians 11:27

“The Warnings and Invitations of the Lord’s Supper”

1 Corinthians 11:17-34; Lord’s Day 30

I. In its teaching on the Lord’s Supper, Lord’s Day 30 gives:

1) A warning to those who misuse the Supper:

a) The historical context in Corinth (17-22, 30-34).

b) The historical context of the Mass (John 6:53-57; Q & A 80).

2) An invitation to repentant sinners (28, Q&A 81).

3) A warning to the unbelieving and ungodly (27,29; Q&A 82).

II. Applications:

1) Church leaders must properly guard or “fence” the Lord’s Table (17-32).

2) We who partake must examine ourselves and take the sacrament in repentance and faith (27-29).

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from saving Me, so far from the words of My groaning?” - Psalm 22:1

“A Psalm of the Cross - Part 1”

“Why Have You Forsaken Me?”

Psalm 22:1-5; Matthew 27:45-54

I. Psalm 22 is distinctly Messianic as it describes how Jesus was forsaken by His Father (1-2) even though the Father:

1) Had power to deliver Him (3; Matthew 26:53).

2) A history of delivering those who call to Him for help (4-5).

II. The Father forsook His Son so that:

1) The full penalty of our sins would weigh upon Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21).

2) Jesus would bear the curse we deserve (Galatians 3:13).

3) We would be able to enter “*the Most Holy Place*” (Matthew 27:51), heaven itself (Hebrews 6:19-20; 10:19-25).

III. Application: Only when we believe that the Shepherd has laid down His life for the sheep (John 10:11), can we know that He is our Shepherd (Psalm 23), who will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5).

“I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.” - Revelation 1:18

“You are Peter, on this rock I will build My church... I will give you the keys of the kingdom...” - Matthew 16:18a, 19a

“The Keys of the Kingdom”

Matthew 16:13-20; Q&A 83

I. Christ Himself holds the “keys of the kingdom” (Revelation 1:18), but He gave them to us through Peter (Matthew 16:19).

1) Roman Catholicism interprets this as Peter and his successors (popes) having power to admit or exclude people from church.

2) Some Protestants see the promise of Matthew 16:19 as fulfilled in Acts 2 and 10.

3) The Heidelberg Catechism teaches that the keys of the kingdom include:

a) The preaching of the gospel (Romans 10:14-15, 17).

b) Church discipline (Matthew 18:15-17).

II. Our response:

1) Faithfulness in preaching (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

2) The proper exercise of church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:12-13).

3) Receptive hearts that joyfully acknowledge Christ as our Savior and Lord (Matthew 16:13-16).

“Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.” - Psalm 22:11

A Psalm of the Cross - Part 2
“No One to Help”
Psalm 22:4-11; Matthew 27:32-44

I. Psalm 22 is distinctly Messianic as it describes the thoughts of Jesus while He was being crucified. He realized that although others were delivered (4-5), He would not be delivered from the cross. Instead He would be:

1) Scorned and despised (6; Matthew 27:39-40).

2) Mocked and insulted (7, Matthew 27:41-42).

3) Ridiculed for His trust in God the Father (8, Matthew 27:43).

4) Destined for crucifixion (9-10), and there was no one to help (11).

II. The suffering and death of Jesus was done for our salvation:

1) He shed His blood to cover our sins: The reference to “*worm*” (6) refers to the Hebrew “*Tola*,” a worm which was crushed and used for red dye.

2) While there was no one to save Jesus from crucifixion (11), He is the only one who can save us from our sin (Acts 4:12).

III. Applications:

1) We are always to “*fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*” (Hebrews 12:2; Colossians 3:1-4).

2) We are not to grow weary and lose heart as we run with perseverance the race marked out for us (Hebrews 12:1-3).

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” - 1 Corinthians 1:18

Keys of the Kingdom - Part 2
“The Message of the Cross”
1 Corinthians 1:18-24; Q&A 84

I Preaching is a “key to the kingdom,” and includes:

1) A proclamation and public declaration of forgiveness (salvation) for all who believe in Jesus (John 3:36a). Preaching must:

- a) Contain the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:16).

- b) Be by the Spirit’s power, not by human wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

- c) Be faithfully proclaimed, even though compared to other methods it may seem like foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:20-24).

2) A proclamation and public declaration of eternal condemnation for hypocrites and unbelievers (John 3:36b).

II. God’s judgment is based on our response to the preaching of the “gospel testimony.”

The message of the cross is:

- 1) Foolishness to those who are perishing (1 Corinthians 1:18a, 23).

- 2) The power of God to those who are being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18b, 24).

- 3) Unheard by some who, although unsaved, receive a lighter judgment (Luke 12:47-48).

III. Application: We must respond to the gospel proclamation with true repentance and saving faith (2 Corinthians 6:1-2; Hebrews 3:7-15).

For further study: Every detail of the crucifixion was foretold in the Old Testament:

- 1) The betrayal by a friend - Psalm 41:9
- 2) Being forsaken by the disciples - Psalm 31:11
- 3) The silence of Jesus before earthly judges - Isaiah 53:7
- 4) The innocence of Jesus declared - Isaiah 53:9
- 5) Being numbered with transgressors - Isaiah 53:12
- 6) Being crucified - Psalm 22:16
- 7) Being mocked - Psalm 22:7-8
- 8) Prayer for His enemies - Isaiah 53:12
- 9) Casting lots for His undergarment - Psalm 22:18
- 10) Being forsaken by God - Psalm 22:1
- 11) Being given vinegar - Psalm 69:21
- 12) Yielding His spirit to the Father - Psalm 31:5a
- 13) His bones not being broken - Psalm 34:20
- 14) His side being pierced - Zechariah 12:10
- 15) His burial in a rich man's tomb - Isaiah 53:9a

“What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. ‘Expel the wicked man from among you.’”
1 Corinthians 5:12-13

Keys of the Kingdom - Part 3
“The Key of Discipline”
1 Corinthians 5:1-13; Q&A 83, 85

I. The purpose of church discipline includes:

- 1) Preserving the honor of Christ, the Head of the church (Ephesians 1:22).

- 2) Maintaining the purity and well-being of the church (2 Corinthians 11:2).

- 3) The salvation and restoration of the one being disciplined (1 Corinthians 5:5).

II. The proper steps of church discipline include, on a personal level:

- 1) Gently approaching one who has sinned (Matthew 18:15; Galatians 6:1).

- 2) If they do not listen, bring along another person (Matthew 18:16).

- 3) If they still do not listen, tell it to the elders (Matthew 18:17).

III. Steps of discipline by the elders include, in addition to the above steps, (Q&A 85):

- 1) Barring a communicant member from the sacraments (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

- 2) Asking prayer for the person, first without the person being named, then with the name announced (James 5:16; 1 Timothy 5:20).

- 3) If the person refuses to repent they are to be excommunicated (1 Cor. 5:2, 5, 13).

IV. Applications:

- 1) Discipline must always be motivated by love (Hebrews 12:6).

- 2) Repentant sinners must always be welcomed back joyfully (Luke 15:11-31; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11).

“They will proclaim His righteousness to a people yet unborn - for He has done it.”
Psalm 22:31

The Psalm of the Cross - Part 4
“He Has Done It”
Psalm 22:17-31

I. Psalm 22 was undoubtedly cited by Christ on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:27), for it describes:

1) His intense suffering as He was crucified (1-18).

2) His deliverance, that is, His resurrection (19-24).

3) The ones for whom He suffered, died, and rose again (v. 22 as quoted in Hebrews 2:12). Christ died for the elect:

a) Among the Jews, “the descendants of Jacob” (23).

b) Among the Gentiles, “all the families of the nations” (27).

c) The future generations of all who have saving faith (30, 31).

II. Our response: Praise and adoration (23-30) for the One who has “done it,” that is, purchased our salvation (31; John 19:30).

“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.” - 1 Peter 2:9

“Gratitude!”

1 Peter 2:4-12; Q&A 86

- I. Good deeds cannot save us, but are done to express gratitude to God (Ephesians 2:8-10) for:
- 1) It is He alone who has redeemed us from our sins (1 Peter 1:18-19; Acts 4:12; John 14:6).

 - 2) He is building us up into a “spiritual house” (5), that is, putting us into the true church which is the body of Christ (9-10; Ephesians 1:22-23).

 - 3) He will not allow those who believe in Him to be put to shame (6; Ephesians 5:25-27; Colossians 1:21-22).
- II. Application: When we do good deeds out of gratitude, we:
- 1) Are given assurance that we are God's elect (9a; 2 Peter 1:5-11).

 - 2) Become a vibrant witness to others (9b; 2 Corinthians 3:2-3).

 - 3) Bring glory and praise to God (12; Matthew 5:16).

“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Psalm 118:25a, 26 as quoted in John 12:13

“Hosanna!”

Psalm 118:19-29

- I. Psalm 118:25, 26 is used by each one of the gospel writers when telling how Jesus entered Jerusalem on what we call “Palm Sunday.” “*Oh Lord, save us*” (25a) is “*Hosanna*” in Hebrew (John 12:13).
 - 1) The Jewish people were looking for a political king to save them from Roman rule. When it was apparent Jesus would not be an earthly, political king He was rejected (22; Matthew 27:22).
 - 2) Although rejected by many (22a) Jesus has become both the cornerstone (22b, KJV, ESV) and capstone (NIV). Both words stress the supremacy and crucial importance of Christ.
 - a) The church is built upon Him as the cornerstone (Eph 2:20).
 - b) He is worthy of all praise as the capstone (26; Phil. 2:9-11).
- II. Applications:
 - 1) Christ is the gate through which we enter into righteousness, as we are justified by faith in Him (19-20; John 10:7-9).
 - 2) He is the cornerstone, the foundation on which we must build (1 Cor. 3:10-13).
 - 3) He is the capstone, the source and focus of our praise (19, 21, 26, 28, 29; Revelation 5:9-14).

“Put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature....” “As God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, gentleness and patience.”

Colossians 3:5, 12

“Two Parts to Conversion”
Colossians 3:1-17; Q&A 87-90

- I. True conversion consists of two distinct parts (Q&A 88):
- 1) The dying away of the old self (Q&A 89), which means we must:
 - a) Be genuinely sorry for sin (2 Corinthians 7:10).

b) Hate sin more and more (Psalm 51:17; Joel 2:12-13).

c) Run from sin (Genesis 39; 1 Timothy 6:11).

- 2) The coming to life of the new self (Q. 90) includes:
 - a) Wholehearted joy in God through Christ (1 Peter 1:8).

b) A delight to do good, as God desires us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

II. Applications:

- 1) Without conversion we cannot be saved (Q&A 87; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

- 2) God gives us new birth (John 3:5-7), but He also commands us, as part of our conversion, to put to death our old sinful nature (Colossians 3:5-8) and to “clothe ourselves” with Christ (Colossians 3:12-14).

“Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.” - 1 Corinthians 4:5

“The Motive Behind Good Works”

1 Corinthians 4:1-5; Q&A 91

I. What do we do that is good? - Only that which:

1) Arises out of true faith (Hebrews 11:4, 6).

2) Conforms to God’s law with love (John 14:15), not just duty (Luke 15:25-30).

3) Is done for His glory (Psalm 115:1; 1 Corinthians 10:31).

II. Applications:

1) If our faith is real, it will be evident by deeds (Matthew 7:20; James 2:17).

2) We are to use God’s criteria, not ours, in actively doing good (Deuteronomy 12:32; Colossians 2:20-23; Matthew 15:7-9).

3) We are to remember that God will expose the motives behind all deeds (Acts 5:1-10; 1 Corinthians 4:5).

“For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord as spoken by Elijah.” - 1 Kings 17:16

God’s Provision
for
Elijah and for Us
1 Kings 17:1-16

I. Elijah sets a good example for us in:

1) Obedience (5, 10).

2) Patience (7-8; Psalm 27:14).

3) Faith (3-4, 9, 13-14; Hebrews 11:1).

II. We are to follow Elijah’s good example by:

1) Taking one step at a time (5, 8; Proverbs 3:5-6).

2) Recognizing God’s hand in hard times - “the drying brook,” realizing that God:

a) Uses trials to sanctify us (James 1:3-5; 1 Peter 1:6-7).

b) Will always provide (16; Matt. 6:25-34; Philippians 4:19).

“...an expert in the law tested Him with this question, ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’” - Matthew 22:35-36

“The Division and Purposes of God’s Law”

Matthew 22:34-40; Q&A 93

I. Biblical laws can be divided into three specific areas:

- 1) Ceremonial law, fulfilled in Christ, no longer used (Leviticus 1-7; Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:8,9).

- 2) Civil law, as given to Israel as a nation (Exodus 20-21).

- 3) Moral law as comprised in the 10 commandments, still applicable to every person (Exodus 20:1-17; Matthew 5:17-18; 19:16-19).

II. The purposes of God’s moral law (the 10 Commandments):

- 1) Restrains sin in unbelievers (Romans 2:14-15).

- 2) Leads true believers to Christ (Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:24).

- 3) Serves as a rule of gratitude for true believers (Exodus 20:1-3; Romans 12:1-2).

III. The moral law is divided into two sections (Matthew 22:37-39; Q&A 93):

- 1) Our relation to God (Matthew 22:37-38).

- 2) Our relation to our neighbors (Matthew 22:39).

IV. Application: We endeavor to keep God’s law, motivated by gratitude and love (Matthew 22:40; Romans 13:9-10).

“Arab, son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those (kings) before him.” “... Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead said to Ahab, ‘As the Lord, the God of Israel lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.’” - 1 Kings 16:30... 17:4

“God’s Judgment on Wicked Nations”

1 Kings 16:29-17:4

- I. Elijah’s pronouncement of judgment (17:1) was based on the principle of Deuteronomy 28: There are blessings for obedience (1-14) and curses (judgments) for disobedience (15-68).

- II. The principle of blessing and judgment applies to all nations, including our own, which has striking parallels to Israel under Ahab’s rule (30-33; Isaiah 60:12).

- III. Applications:
 - 1) When God warns, He follows up on the warning (34; Joshua 6:26).

 - 2) God is able to protect His people, even when bringing judgment on their nation (1 Kings 17:2-3; 2 Peter 2:4-9); if it is His will (Daniel 3:17-18; Hebrews 11:35b-38).

 - 3) God calls His people to pray (2 Chronicles 7:13-14; 1 Timothy 2:1-2), and to hold out the light of the gospel in the darkness of a corrupt culture and political system (Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:15-16).

“He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then he said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.’” - Exodus 32:4

“No Other Gods”

Exodus 32:1-14; Q&A 94, 95

I. The first commandment, *“You shall have no other gods before Me”* (Exodus 2:3; Deuteronomy 5:7), requires:

1) That we avoid and shun idolatry, magic, superstitious rites, and prayers to saints (Leviticus 19:31; 1 Samuel 28; John 14:6).

2) That we:

a) Acknowledge the one true God (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; John 17:3).

b) Trust Him alone (Jeremiah 17:5, 7).

c) Look to Him, humbly and patiently to provide (James 1:17), as we love, fear, and honor Him wholeheartedly (Matthew 22:37).

II. Applications:

1) The way we keep the first commandment will affect the way we keep all the others (Matthew 22:37-39).

2) We must give up whatever interferes with our worship, or goes against the will, of the one true God (Joshua 24:14-15).

3) Since we have all broken this commandment we need the only Mediator, Jesus Christ, to forgive us (11-14; 1 Timothy 2:5-6).

“I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah’s time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon.”
Luke 4:25-26

“God’s Grace and a Widow’s Faith”

1 Kings 17:7-16; Luke 4:25-26

I. God’s use of the widow at Zarephath teaches us that:

1) God chooses by electing love (Luke 4:25-26; John 15:16).

2) God uses the unexpected (1 Corinthians 1:26-31).

3) No one is too insignificant to be of service to God (Exodus 4:10-17).

II. By God sending Elijah to Zarephath we are reminded:

1) God knows our situation (7).

2) He has a plan for our future (8-9).

3) He uses trials for our sanctification (9; 1 Peter 1:6-7).

III. Our response must be like Elijah’s and the widow’s:

1) Faith that God will provide what we need (10-15; Heb. 11:1,6).

2) Obedience to the Word of God (8-10; 15b).

3) Praise for His provision (1 Corinthians 10:31).

“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.” - Exodus 20:4

“No Idols”
Exodus 20:4-6; LD 35

I. Idolatry takes many forms, including:

- 1) Worshipping nature (Deuteronomy 4:19)

- 2) Seeking direction from mediums and spiritists (Lev. 19:31, 20:6)

- 3) The worship of man-made gods and idols (Ex 32; Acts 17:16ff)

- 4) Impure thoughts (Colossians 3:5)

- 5) Erroneous mental conceptions of God (Acts 17:22-23)

- 6) Portraying God by imagery (Q&A 97; Isaiah 40:18).

II. Application: The first commandment explains *who* we are to worship, the second commandment explains, *how* we are to worship:

- 1) We are not to visibly portray God in any way because God “wants His people instructed by the living preaching of His Word” (Q&A 98; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:21; 2:4-5).

- 2) We are only to worship the Lord as He has commanded us to worship in His Word (Q&A 96; Leviticus 10:1-3).

III. The warning and the promise: God has a proper jealousy for His bride, the church (Exodus 20:5-6; 1 Corinthians 11:2-3).

“Then the woman said to Elijah, ‘Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth.’” - 1 Kings 17:24

“The Purpose of Miracles”

1 Kings 17:17-24

I. Miracles -

- 1) Are still performed in answer to prayer (22; James 5:17-18).

- 2) Were performed in biblical times when new prophecies were received from God (24; Psalm 74:9; Hebrews 1:1-2).

- 3) Can be counterfeit miracles, therefore great care must be used in evaluating miracles, signs and wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9).

II. Other applications from this passage:

- 1) God may allow trial to bring confession of sin (17-18), but we can never presume that (John 9:1-3), for there are many other reasons why God allows trials (Psalm 119:67,71; James 1:2-4).

- 2) A gentle answer turns away wrath (18-19; Proverbs 15:1).

- 3) The reality of death often leads to true life (17-24; 1 Corinthians 15:55-57).

“You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name.” - Exodus 20:7

“The Misuse of God’s Holy Name”

Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 24:10-16, 23; LD 36 & 37

I. The Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name (Exodus 20:7).

II. The Lord's name is misused many ways, including:

1) Cursing (Leviticus 24:15-16)

2) Lying in God's name, either by a false oath or by teaching heresies (Jer. 14:14)

3) Hypocrisy (Romans 2:23-24)

4) Failure to give thanks in all things (Colossians 3:17)

5) Having an inconsistent prayer life (Psalm 14:4; James 4:2)

6) Giving lip service to the Lord without meaning it in our heart (Matthew 6:7)

7) Being silent when we should be witnessing (1 Peter 3:15).

III. Application: The law reveals our sin (Romans 3:20); the gospel reveals our Savior (Romans 3:21-24; Acts 16:31).

“Honor your father and your mother as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” - Deuteronomy 5:16

“Honoring Your Father and Your Mother”

Deuteronomy 5:16; Ephesians 6:1-4; LD 39

- I. The fifth commandment, telling us to honor our father and mother, is the first commandment of the second table of the law because:
 - 1) Our family relationships have a direct bearing on how we relate to God and to others (Psalm 145:4; 2 Timothy 1:5).

 - 2) Children are to obey their parents, which:
 - a) Is obedience to the Lord (1)

 - b) Leads to a long life (2)

 - c) Includes being patient with their failings (Heidelberg #104)

 - 3) Fathers, - and mothers - are also given responsibility:
 - a) Not to exasperate their children (4a)

 - b) To raise their children in the training and instruction of the Lord (4b)

- II. Application: We are to thank God for godly mothers and wives (Proverbs 31:30).

“There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God.”

Hebrews 4:9

“The Lord’s Day, Everyday”

Exodus 20:8-11; Hebrews 4:1-11; LD 38

I. The Lord’s Day is a “festive day of rest” only if we keep it properly, which includes:

1) Faithfulness in attending worship services which:

a) Teach God’s Word (Psalm 119:105; 2 Timothy 4:1-5)

b) Properly observe the sacraments (1 Cor. 11:23-24)

c) Have public prayer and praise (1 Tim. 2:1, 3:15; Col. 3:16)

d) Have offerings (Malachi 3:8-10; 1 Corinthians 16:2).

2) The catechism also teaches that everyday we are to:

a) Rest from evil ways (Romans 12:21)

b) Be submissive to the Lord’s will (Romans 12:1,2)

c) Begin “the eternal Sabbath” which points to our eternity with the Lord (Hebrews 4:9-11).

“Now the famine was severe in Samaria, and Ahab had summoned Obadiah, who was in charge of his palace. (Obadiah was a devout believer in the Lord...)”
1 Kings 18:2b-3

“The Test of Faith”
1 Kings 18:1-16

- I. Within the Christian community we often hear the exact opposite views about another Christian. That is also the case with Obadiah:
- 1) Some question how one who is described as a “*devout believer in the Lord*” (3) could be the right hand man of wicked king Ahab.

 - 2) Others see Obadiah’s position in Ahab’s court as an example of a Christian being light in a very dark world (Matthew 5:14-16).
- II. Applications:
- 1) We are not to judge others in these areas (Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 4:15). But when we see a professing believer living in sin we are to confront them using the guidelines of Matthew 18:15-17.

 - 2) As Christians we cannot be of the world but we must be in the world in order to be salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16; John:17:15).

 - 3) A devout believer (3) may still have doubts and fears in this life (9-14), yet the true believer will remain obedient to the Lord (16).

“You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13)

“Murder In the Heart”

Exodus 20:13, Matthew 5:21-24; LD 40

- I. The sixth commandment, *“You shall not murder,”* applies “internally” as well as “externally:”
 - 1) Hatred is a form of murder in God's sight (Leviticus 19:17; Matthew 5:21-22; 1 John 3:15).

 - 2) Words and actions can assassinate another’s character (Psalm 55:12-14, 20-21).

- II. Therefore, we must guard our:
 - 1) Heart (Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 15:18-19)

 - 2) Words (Proverbs 12:18, 18:21)

 - 3) Deeds (H.C. Q&A #105).

- III. The sixth commandment does not apply to:
 - 1) Capitol punishment (Genesis 9:5-6; Romans 13:4)

 - 2) War for a just cause (Genesis 14:14; Joshua 6:1ff; Acts 10:1-2).

- IV. Application: We are to seek reconciliation:
 - 1) With one another (Matthew 5:23).

 - 2) With God through faith in Jesus Christ (John 1:12-13; 14:6; Acts 4:12; 16:30-31; Romans 3:20-26).

“I will put My Spirit in you and you will live....” - Ezekiel 37:14a

“Spiritual Life for Dry Bones”

Ezekiel 37:1-14

I. Ezekiel’s vision of dry bones teaches us that:

1) The proclamation of God’s Word won’t bring spiritual life unless the Holy Spirit applies that Word (5-8; 1 Corinthians 2:14).

2) It is only by the Holy Spirit’s power that we are given spiritual life (9-10; John 3:3-8).

3) The resurrection of “the living and the dead” is a certainty (11-14; Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

II. Applications:

1) Pray for the Spirit’s power through the Word to transform lives (9; 1 Corinthians 2:10b-16).

2) Do not resist, grieve, or try to quench the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20).

3) Actively cultivate the “fruits of the Spirit” in your life (Galatians 5:22-23; Matthew 7:16-20).

“Elijah went before the people and said, ‘How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal is God, follow him.’”

1 Kings 18:21

“How Long Will You Waver?”

1 Kings 18:15-21

I. This passage teaches us:

1) God’s people are often blamed for the world’s problems (17; Acts 17:6).

2) Trouble comes when God’s Word is disobeyed (18; Gen.18:16-33; Prov. 14:34).

3) False religions often gain wider acceptance than the true worship of the Lord (19; Matthew 7:13).

II. Application: We cannot waver in our whole hearted commitment to the Lord (21; Joshua 24:14-15; Matthew 6:24).

“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality...” - 1 Thessalonians 4:3

“God’s Will and Our Sanctification”

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; LD 41

I. God’s will is that we are sanctified, which includes living pure, holy lives (1,3,7; Q&A 108). To do so requires:

1) Self control (4)

2) Being chaste, whether single (1 Cor. 7) or married (Heb. 13:4)

3) Living differently than heathens and pagans (5).

II. The seventh commandment not only forbids adultery, but also “everything which incites unchastity, whether it be actions, looks, talk, thoughts, or desires” (Matthew 5: 27; Q&A 109). Therefore, we must:

1) Guard our heart (Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 15:18-19)

2) Shield our eyes (Job 31:1; Psalm 101:3; Matthew 6:22-23)

3) Focus our thoughts (Philippians 4:8; Colossians 3:1-2).

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.” - James 1:17

“The Father of Heavenly Lights”

James 1:16-18

I. God is the perfect Father:

1) He is the giver of every perfect gift (17a)

2) He does not change (17c)

3) He chose to give us birth, both physical (Psalm 139:13) and spiritual birth (18a; Malachi 2:10).

II. Application to the Lord’s Supper: The greatness of our heavenly Father’s love is demonstrated in the giving of His only begotten Son, who is revealed in the “*word of truth*” - the Bible (18b; John 3:16).

III. Our response:

1) We take the Lord’s Supper believing Christ died for us personally (Luke 22:19,20; Galatians 2:20)

2) We gratefully put the Lord first in our lives (18c; Leviticus 23:9-14).

“You shall not steal.” - Exodus 20:15

“Thief!”

Exodus 20:15, LD #42

I. There are many forms of stealing:

1) Outright theft (Joshua 7:1ff)

2) False weights and measures (Proverbs 11:1; Deut. 25:13-16), and all deceitfulness aimed at getting what belongs to another (Deuteronomy 19:14; Proverbs 23:10)

II. Deterrents to theft:

1) Legitimate work (Ephesians 4:28) so that the temptation to steal is reduced (Proverbs 30:8-9)

2) Moderation in regard to worldly goods (1 Timothy 6:8)

3) Contentment with what God has given us (Philippians 4:11-13)

III. Applications:

1) Apart from saving faith in Christ we are all guilty of breaking the eighth commandment in numerous ways, including:

a) Not utilizing our time wisely (Ephesians 5:15-16), and by doing just enough to get by (Colossians 3:23)

b) By coveting, which is a form of theft within the heart (Joshua 7:21)

c) By robbing God of what is rightfully His (Malachi 3:8)

2) This commandment, like all others, will puncture the self righteousness of the true Christian, driving the repentant believer to Christ (Rom. 3:20ff; Gal. 3:24).

“Elijah went before the people and said, ‘If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal is god, follow him.’” - 1 Kings 18:21

“Confronting False Religion”

1 Kings 18:15-42

I. False religion:

- 1) Has great popularity (22)

- 2) Has no answers even though it pretends to (24, 26,29, 37)

- 3) Is cruel (28), as sin (and false religion) always puts people into bondage (John 8:34; Romans 6:16; 2 Peter 2:19).

II. False religion also:

- 1) Brings contempt and trouble for true Christians (17)

- 2) Seeks to displace the One true God of Scripture (18)

- 3) Brings judgment on the land (1 Kings 17:1; 2 Chronicles 7:13-14).

III. Application: We need the same whole-hearted commitment that Elijah had (21), which comes from a proper perspective (36):

- 1) He had a consuming passion for the glory of God (36c)

- 2) He knew that, by grace, he belonged to the Lord (36d)

- 3) He desired to know and do God's will (36e).

“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.”

Exodus 20:16

“Speaking the Truth in Love”

Exodus 20:16; Ephesians 4:22-32; LD 43

I. Rather than bearing false witness against our neighbor we are to:

1) Speak truthfully (25), doing so in love (15)

2) Guard against unwholesome talk (29a; Psalm 141:3)

3) Speak words that build others up (29b; Hebrews 3:13).

II. Observations:

1) Bearing false witness is a trait of the devil, who slandered God in order to exalt himself (Genesis 3:1ff; John 8:44).

2) The words of our mouth reveal the condition of our heart (Luke 6:45; Matthew 15:19).

III. In our effort to keep the ninth commandment we are to:

1) Get rid of bitterness, rage, and anger (31a; Proverbs 15:1)

2) Forgive others as we have been forgiven (32; Matthew 18:21ff)

3) Follow the example of the only One who ever perfectly controlled their tongue and kept this commandment (1 Peter 2:21-23).

“Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.”

James 5:17-18

“God’s Promises and Our Prayers”

1 Kings 18:36-46; James 5:17-18

I. James tells us that the great drought described in 1 Kings 17 and the rains of 1 Kings 18 came because of the prayers of Elijah, who:

1) Was just like us (James 5:17a)

2) Prayed earnestly (James 5:17b)

II. Elijah’s prayers:

1) Were based on faith in God’s promises (1 Kings 18:36; Deuteronomy 28)

2) Focused on God’s honor (1 Kings 18:36-37; Matthew 6:9-10)

3) Acknowledged the power of God (1 Kings 18:37,44)

III. Elijah’s attitude was marked by:

1) Faith (1 Kings 18:41)

2) Humility (1 Kings 18:42)

3) Persistence (1 Kings 18:43)

IV. Application: We are to follow Elijah’s good example in prayer, for all things, including prayers for our nation (2 Chronicles 7:13-14; 1 Timothy 2:1-2).

“...I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, ‘Do not covet...’”

Romans 7:7

“Why Preach the Law?”

Romans 7:7-26; Q&A 114-115

I. Since no one can obey God’s law perfectly (Ecclesiastes 7:20), why does God want His law preached so pointedly?

1) Through the law we see how sinful we really are (7-13).

2) When we see our sin in the light of the law we are led to Christ by the conviction of the Holy Spirit (24-25; Romans 8:3-4; Galatians 3:24).

3) The law brings stability and blessings to individuals and nations who adhere to it (Deuteronomy 28:1,15; Psalm 19:7-11; 119:18).

II. Application: Although we cannot keep God’s law perfectly, we are always to strive for obedience to every command (John 14:15, 21, 23; Philippians 3:12-14; 1 John 5:3).

“Elijah was afraid and ran for his life.... He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. ‘I have had enough, Lord,’ he said, ‘Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.’ Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.”

1 Kings 19:3-5a

“Discouraged?”

1 Kings 19:1-18

I. We, like Elijah of old, can become discouraged when:

1) God doesn't take the route we expect Him to take (2)

2) We don't see our purpose in life as God sees it (2; 15-18)

3) We forget God's power (1 Kings 18:33-38; 19:11-12)

II. Dealing with discouragement:

1) Don't host any pity parties (10, 14)

2) Seek out the company of other believers (18)

3) Encourage others and you will be encouraged yourself (2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Hebrews 3:13).

“One day Jesus was teaching in a certain place. When He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.’”

Luke 11:1

“Lord, Teach Us to Pray”

Matthew 6:5-15; LD 45

- I. Learning to pray the way God wants us to (Luke 11:1) is vital to our relationship with the Lord. Jesus teaches us how not to pray:
 - 1) Not like hypocrites who pray for the praise of men (5)

 - 2) Not like pagans and scribes who babble “vain repetitions” (7)

- II. Jesus teaches us a “model prayer” which we are to pattern our prayers after:
 - 1) We are to pray for God’s name, will, and kingdom first (9-10)

 - 2) We are to pray for our needs afterwards (11-13)

- III. Jesus emphasized that we have the proper attitude in prayer:
 - 1) Humility, for we are on earth, God is in heaven (9)

 - 2) The realization that we can only reach the Father through faith in His Son (John 14:6)

 - 3) Confidence that God will listen and answer our prayers because they are offered on the unshakable foundation of Christ (Philemon:22; Hebrews 6:19-20, 7:24-25).

“... Take my life, I am no better than my ancestors...” (1 Kings 19:4)
“... Now one greater than Solomon is here... Now one greater than
Jonah is here...” (Luke 11:31,32)

“Christ and Elijah”

1 Kings 19:1-5a; Luke 11:29-32

I. Elijah admitted he was no better than his ancestors (1 Kings 19:4), but Christ is far greater than His human ancestors (Luke 11:31-32):
1) Elijah faced Jezebel’s fury and wilted (1 Kings 19:2-3); Christ faced the fury and schemes of the devil victoriously (Luke 4:1-13).

2) Elijah fled the battle (1 Kings 19:3); Jesus persevered until He could declare: “*It is finished.*” (John 19:30).

3) Elijah lost courage because He thought he was alone, (1 Kings 19:10,14,18); Christ did not waver, even though He knew He would be all alone (Matthew 26:31,53,54).

II. Applications:

1) Repentance of sin and faith in Jesus is crucial (Luke 11:31-32).

2) There is no quitting in the fight of faith (1 Kings 19:4,15; Matthew 10:22; Hebrews 3:6,14).

3) Like Elijah, we are often frail and afraid, yet we must trust that Christ will strengthen us (Philippians 4:13) and that although we often lose our courage, we are yet “*more than conquerors through Him who has loved us.*” (Romans 8:37).

“You are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ... and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.” - Galatians 3:26...4:7

“Our Father in Heaven”

Galatians 3:26-4:7; LD 46

- I. Jesus instructs us to pray, “*Our Father in heaven...*” (Matthew 6:9), so that:
- 1) We have a proper understanding of what it means to be children adopted into God’s family through faith in Christ (Galatians 4:5-6)

 - 2) We do not view God's majesty as something earthly (Isaiah 66:1-2)

 - 3) We have confidence that God, as our heavenly Father, will give us what is best for us:
 - a) In this life (Matthew 7:9-11; Luke 11:11-13)

 - b) In the life to come (Galatians 4:7; Romans 8:17; 1 Peter 1:3-4).
- II. Applications:
- 1) We can only come to our heavenly Father through Jesus the Son (26; John 14:6)

 - 2) We are to pray with great expectation (Philippians 4:19; Ephesians 3:20-21)

 - 3) If we truly understand the power of praying to our Father in heaven, we will pray with more frequency and fervency (Ephesians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).

“After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.” - 1 Kings 19:12

“A Gentle Whisper”

1 Kings 19:9b-21

I. This passage reminds us that:

- 1) God has a plan even when it doesn't seem that way (15-17)

- 2) God has a remnant of believers on earth and always will (18) for He takes care of His own, body and soul (5b-6; Psalm 23:6, 116:8).

- 3) We are to follow the Lord's call, regardless of the cost (19-21).

II. Applications:

- 1) Instead of using the spectacular, God often speaks “in a whisper,” through His Word (11-13).

- 2) In the busy pace of life we must take time to “*be still and know that (He) is God*” (Psalm 46:10).

- 3) God's question to Elijah, “*What are you doing here?*” is also asked of us (9b, 13c). No matter where we are in the journey of life we are to examine our relationship to Him (2 Corinthians 13:5).

“My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord. Let every creature praise His holy name for ever and ever.” - Psalm 145:21

“Hallowed Be Your Name”

Psalm 145:1-21; LD 47

I. Why we are to hallow (reverence, glorify, praise) the Lord’s name:

1) He is great (3-4)

2) He is gracious (8, 17-20)

3) He is faithful (13b-14)

4) He is righteous (17)

II. How we are to hallow God's name:

1) By living daily in such a way that God’s name is honored by our conduct (1-2)

2) By the words of our mouth (1, 21)

Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah... “Go down to meet Ahab, king of Israel... Say to him, ‘This is what the Lord says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?’ ... This is what the Lord says: ‘In the place where dogs licked up Naboth’s blood, dogs will lick up your blood - yes, yours!’” - 1 Kings 21:18-19

“God Is Not Mocked”

1 Kings 21:15-29

I. This passage reminds us that:

- 1) God is not mocked: You reap what you sow (19; Galatians 6:7), if not in this life, then the life to come (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10)

- 2) When God warns of judgment, it will happen (19-24, 1 Kings 22:37-38; 2 Kings 9:30-37)

- 3) God is merciful and patient, for a time, even with the wicked (27-29), which will make their judgment greater (Luke 12:47-48)

II. Applications:

- 1) There is a difference between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow (27; Psalm 51; 2 Corinthians 7:10)

- 2) There is a difference between being “*sold as a slave to sin*,” (Romans 7:14), and “selling yourself” to sin (20, 25)

- 3) Since God was merciful, for a season, to one who only repented outwardly (29), how much more will He be eternally merciful to those who truly repent (Psalm 51:17) and believe in His Son (Romans 8:1)!

“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”
Luke 22:42

“Your Will Be Done”

Luke 22:39-46; LD 49

- I. When we pray: *“Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,”* we are praying that:
- 1) God will enable us to do His will as we submit to Him (42)

 - 2) We will obey God’s *“good, pleasing and perfect”* will (Romans 12:2), even when it is God’s will that we:
 - a) Bear a cross (Matthew 16:24-26)

 - b) Are tried and purified by trials (James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7)

 - c) Face discipline (Hebrews 12:5-11)

 - 3) We will carry out our work as willingly and as faithfully as the angels in heaven (Psalm 103:20-21; Colossians 3:23)
- II. Application: When we pray this petition from the heart we are asking God to help us accept His will for our lives, - and to do His will - joyfully, willingly, and faithfully (Romans 12:1-2).

“Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?” - 2 Kings 1:3

“Is There No God in Israel?”

2 Kings 1:1-18

I. This passage reminds us:

1) We must seek guidance from God’s Word, not from false gods or worldly wisdom (Lev. 19:31, 20:6; Prov. 3:5-6; 1 Cor. 1:20)

2) The hardness of the human heart will always rebel against God and His people (3-13; Matt. 24:9; John 15:20; 2 Tim. 3:12)

3) God’s fire will either punish (10,12) or purify (13-14)

II. Applications:

1) We must always be prepared to meet the Lord, for death can come when least expected, even in the safety of one’s home (2; Ecclesiastes 8:7-8)

2) Rather than morbid reflections on death, we need to concentrate on how to live (2d; Ephesians 5:15-16)

3) That which angers God should anger us, with a proper, righteous anger (9-12; Romans 12:9)

“Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.” - Proverbs 30:8b-9

“Our Daily Bread”

Matthew 6:25-34; Lord’s Day 50

- I. There is significance in the placement of the fourth petition of the Lord’s prayer, *“Give us this day our daily bread”*
 - 1) It reminds us to pray God-centered prayers, focusing on God’s name, God’s kingdom and God’s will, before praying for our own daily needs (Matthew 6:9-13).

 - 2) It reminds us that we are given “daily bread” (which includes all the basic necessities of life) in order that we may honor God’s name, work in His kingdom and do His will (Matthew 6:33).

- II. We are taught to pray for “daily bread” in order that we put our trust in God alone:
 - 1) With an over abundance we might disown the Lord (Proverbs 30:9a)

 - 2) Without the necessities of life we might be tempted to dishonor the Lord (Proverbs 30:9b)

- III. To pray this petition from the heart we need to:
 - 1) Trust in God’s provision (Matthew 6:25-34)

 - 2) Live in obedience to His Word (2 Thessalonians 3:10)

 - 3) Learn to be content with the daily bread God gives us (Philippians 4:11-13, 1 Timothy 6:6; Hebrews 13:5)

“As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.” - 2 Kings 2:11

“Chariot of Fire!”

2 Kings 2:1-18

I. Elijah’s ascension to heaven was granted by God:

1) To validate Elijah’s message and encourage believers (1 Kings 19:18)

2) To point to the ascension of Jesus (Luke 24:27; Acts 1:9)

3) To remind us of our own transport to heaven (Luke 16:22)

II. Application: Elijah walked to four towns, each one significant for every true believer. Every believer needs:

1) Gilgal (1) - a starting place (Joshua 4:19-20)

2) Bethel (2) - a place of worship and prayer (Genesis 12:8)

3) Jericho (4) - a place of victory over sin through faith and obedience (Joshua 6)

4) The Jordan River (7) - the symbolic place of departure from this life to the next (John 5:24; Hebrews 9:27).

“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” (Matthew 6:12)

“Forgive Our Debts”

Matthew 18:21-35; Lord's Day 51

I. When we pray *“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors,”* we are acknowledging that:

1) Our debt of sin is too large for us to pay (Matthew 18:23-25; Psalm 49:7-8)

2) Our debt of sin includes our actions (Psalm 51:3) and our original sin (Psalm 51:5) as well as sins of omission (James 4:17)

3) Only through faith in the shed blood of Jesus can we be forgiven (Isaiah 53:5-6; Acts 4:12)

II. Application: When we know what it is to be forgiven by God, then we must forgive others (Matthew 6:14-15; 18:32-35; Ephesians 4:32).

“For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. He who has ears, let him hear.”

Matthew 11:13-15

“The Elijah Who Was to Come”

Matthew 11:1-19

I. John the Baptist is described as *“the Elijah who was to come”* (14). Elijah had been a fore-runner of John the Baptist. Both of them:

1) Proclaimed a message of repentance (1 Kings 18:21; Matthew 3:1-2)

2) Pointed to Christ (2 Kings 2:11; Matthew 3:11-12)

3) Encountered great blessing, yet experienced discouragement and doubt (1 Kings 19:4; Matthew 11:2-3)

II. Application: Although both Elijah and John the Baptist were greatly blessed, we have a greater blessing in the sense that we live this side of Calvary (11). To know this blessing we must have:

1) Faith in Christ (14) *“if you are willing to accept it”*

2) Ears tuned to hear the gospel message (15)

3) Responsive hearts revealed by our actions (16-19)

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” - Matthew 6:13

“Lead Us Not Into Temptation”

James 1:12-16; Q&A 127

- I. The Lord’s relationship to sin and temptation:
 - 1) God cannot tempt us, for He never sins (James 1:13)

 - 2) God allows Satan to tempt us (Job 1:1-2:11) because:
 - a) The Lord can cause good to come from evil (Genesis 50:20)

 - b) Temptation, when overcome, strengthens us (Daniel 11:35)

 - c) Our commitment to the Lord needs to be tested (1 Peter 1:7)

- II. The petition, *“Lead us not into temptation,”* presupposes that:
 - 1) We have a profound sense of our own weakness in the face of temptation (Q&A 127)

 - 2) We have confidence in God's ability to lead us (Psalm 48:14)

- III. *“But deliver us from evil,”* presupposes that, while confident of the Lord's leading, we also:
 - 1) Guard our thoughts (Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 15:18-19)

 - 2) Stay away from places and people who would tempt us (Psalm 1:1)

 - 3) Rely on the Lord:
 - a) Through prayer (Matthew 26:41)

 - b) Through the promises of God's Word (1 Corinthians 10:13)

 - c) Through the fellowship of believers (Hebrews 3:13)

“While He was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.’”

Matthew 17:5

“This Is My Son, Whom I Love”

Matthew 17:1-13

I. The transfiguration of Jesus teaches us, not only that believers are in glory (3), but also it teaches us about:

1) The glory of Jesus (2; Revelation 1:12-18)

2) The love the Father has for the Son (5), - and us (John 3:16)

3) The voluntary death of Jesus (9, Luke 9:31-32; John 10:17-18)

II. Application to the Lord’s Supper: We recognize that Jesus alone can save us and reconcile us to God the Father:

1) Moses represents the law, but the law cannot save us (Exodus 32:30-35; Romans 3:19-20)

2) Elijah represents the prophets; their message warns of judgment (10-13; Matthew 3:1-2; Romans 11:2-4)

3) In Christ love and justice meet (Psalm 85:10, 89:14); He fulfills the law and the prophets (Matthew 5:17) as He alone can save us from our sins (John 14:6; Acts 4:12)

III. Our response: Faith and obedience (5) *“Listen to Him.”*

“Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and in earth is Yours.” - 1 Chronicles 29:11

“The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory Forever”

1 Chronicles 29:10-20; Q&A 128, 129

I. When we conclude the Lord's prayer by saying, *“Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever,”* we acknowledge:

1) All things belong to the Lord (11b; Psalm 50:9-10)

2) God perfectly governs all things (12; Daniel 4:17):

a) For His Kingdom

b) By His power

c) For His glory

II. When we realize that the kingdom, power and glory belong to the Lord alone, then we should have:

1) Genuine and humble gratitude expressed through giving (14-16; Romans 12:1)

2) Integrity of heart (17-18; Proverbs 4:23)

3) Wholehearted devotion to the Lord's commands (19; John 14:15)

“I will extol the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips.” - Psalm 34:1

“His Praise Will Always Be on My Lips”

Psalm 34:1-22

I. David promised to praise God always (1-3), for He:

1) Hears and answers prayer (4a, 6a)

2) Delivers us from our fears (4b)

3) Saves us out of our troubles (6b, 19)

4) Redeems us from sin (22) through the sacrifice of His Son (20; John 19:36)

II. Our response:

1) Praise (1-3)

2) Spiritual growth by “feeding” on the Lord (8a; Matthew 5:6)

3) Awe and wonder, praise and adoration (the Biblical meaning of fear) for who He is, shown by our lips (1-3) and lives (11-14).

“Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer (elder) he desires a noble task.” - 1 Timothy 3:1

“A Noble Task”

1 Timothy 3:1-7

I. The office of elder (overseer, bishop) is described as “a noble task” (1) with many qualifications (2-7). This noble task involves:

1) Guarding the church (Acts 20:28a)

2) Overseeing and shepherding the congregation (Acts 20:28b)

3) Setting an example (1 Timothy 4:12)

II. Applications:

1) Because of the importance of eldership, the qualifications for elders must be met (2-7), though none of us can fully measure up (2 Corinthians 2:16b)

2) We are to respect and obey those who labor among us as elders (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13a; Hebrews 13:17)

3) There is a great blessing in serving as an elder (1 Peter 5:1-4).

“Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.” - 1 Timothy 3:8

“Worthy of Respect”

Acts 6:1-7; 1 Timothy 3:8-16

I. Acts 6:1-7 explains how the office of deacon came into being.

From this we see that deacons are to:

1) Look out for the needs of others

2) Oversee funds that they may be able to help those in need

3) Encourage the down-trodden

II. 1 Timothy 3 lists a deacon’s qualifications (8-10, 12). He must:

1) Be a man worthy of respect, sincere, and tested

2) Not indulge in much wine or pursue dishonest gain

3) Have a clear conscience regarding the deep truths of the faith

4) Be the husband of one wife and manage his household well

III. The faithful deacon is rewarded with:

1) An excellent standing (13a)

2) Great assurance of his faith (13b)

IV. Application: Through the faithful work of elders and deacons the work of the church is conducted properly (14-15).

“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have within you. But do this with gentleness and respect...” - 1 Peter 3:15

“Always Be Prepared”

1 Peter 3:13-15

I. All of us are to be witnesses for Christ, yet often we are afraid to witness our faith to others (14). We overcome our fear by remembering:

1) Our witness is effective by the Holy Spirit’s work, not by our eloquence, or lack thereof (Luke 12:11-12)

2) God’s Word will never return to Him void (Isaiah 55:10-11)

3) God has His elect waiting to hear the gospel (Acts 13:48, 18:9-10)

II. In order to find opportunities to witness (1 Peter 3:15):

1) Focus on Christ in all things, setting Him apart as Lord (15a)

2) Listen for opportunities to present the gospel (15c)

3) Always be prepared to give an answer, gently and respectfully, for the hope that is within you (15b, d).

“...the righteous will live by faith...” - Habakkuk 2:4c

“The Five ‘Solas’ of the Reformation”

Habakkuk 2:1-4

I. Habakkuk 2:4c, which is quoted three times in the New Testament, is a verse that changed the world as it brought about the Reformation of the 16th century. A Roman Catholic monk, Martin Luther, realized from this verse that:

1) We are righteous in God's sight by faith alone (Romans 1:17).

2) The works of the law can never save us (Galatians 3:10-11).

3) Even in the face of great opposition, we must persevere (Hebrews 10:36-39).

II. The Reformation brought the church back to New Testament Christianity as summarized in five “*solas*” (Latin for “alone” or “only”):

1) Scripture alone is our foundation (Matt 7:24-25; 2 Tim. 3:14-17)

2) Christ alone is our Mediator & Savior (John 14:6; Acts 4:12)

3) Grace alone is the only method of salvation (Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:7)

4) Faith alone is the only means of salvation (Habakkuk 2:4c)

5) God's glory alone is our goal & focus (Rom. 11:33-36; Eph. 1:5-6)

“Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

Psalm 124:8

“Our Help is in the Name of the Lord”

Psalm 124:1-8

I. God’s people today face, as did David and Israel:

1) The hostility of the world (1-3)

2) Floods of many troubles (4-5)

3) Snares when least expected (7)

II. Our comfort is in knowing:

1) The Lord is on the side of believers (1, 2)

2) The Lord protects His people (6)

3) The Lord is the source of our help (8)

III. Our response:

1) Remember (1-5)

2) Praise (6)

3) Trust (8a)

“On the Lord's day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said, ‘Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches...’” - Revelation 1:10-11a

“A Letter From Heaven”

Revelation 1:1-20

I. Every letter has a postmark. Revelation, along with all the Bible, is a letter post-marked from heaven, written by the Son of Man (9ff).

II. How we are to respond:

1) We, like John, must be filled with awe and wonder (12-17).

2) We should be encouraged, knowing that Christ is among the churches, represented by lampstands (20).

3) We must take the letters to the seven churches (Rev. 2:1-3:22), along with all the Bible, seriously, being doers and not only hearers of the word (James 1:22-23; Luke 6:46ff).

“Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also...” - John 15:20a-c

“If They Persecuted Me...”

John 15:18-16:4

I. Jesus taught that those who follow Him would be persecuted just as He was.

Christians are persecuted because:

1) We are not of this world (9a,b)

2) We are chosen out of the world by God (19d,e)

3) As believers we are identified with Christ (20-25), who, by His very nature is light, and exposes the sinfulness of human hearts (John 3:19-21).

II. Applications:

1) Be faithful in praying for the millions of believers who are persecuted severely for their faith (Hebrews 13:3).

2) Make sure your life is godly and that others know you are a Christian (27; 2 Timothy 3:12).

3) Trust the Lord to bring blessing out of persecution (Matt. 5:10-12).

“I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance.... Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.” - Revelation 2:2a...4

“Returning to Your First Love”

Revelation 2:1-7

I. The church at Ephesus had good deeds, sound doctrine, and perseverance (2-3), yet had forsaken her first love, Jesus Christ (4).

II. Our love for Christ can also grow cold. When it does we are to:

1) Remember the height from which we have fallen (5a)

2) Repent (5b)

3) Return (5c)

III. The motivation:

1) The punishment (5d)

2) The reward (7)

IV. The application: Love for Christ must always be our number one priority (Matthew 10:37-39; Ephesians 3:14-19).

“When Kenan had lived seventy years, he became the father of Mahalalel.”

Genesis 5:12

“God Knows You By Name”

Genesis 5:1-32

I. The genealogies of the Bible remind us that in this impersonal world:

1) God knows each one of us by name (Exodus 33:17; Isa. 45:3; Rev. 20:10-12, 15)

2) The Lord has His remnant of believers on earth (1 Kings 19:18)

3) The length of our life is determined by God (Psalm 139:16)

4) Families are important to God, for He established marriage and is the One who blesses us with children (Genesis 2:21-24; Psalm 127:3)

5) Generation by generation, the Lord is faithful and patient (Psalm 135:13-14)

II. Our response: We are to walk with God by faith in His Son, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 11:5-6).

“I know your afflictions and your poverty, yet you are rich!” - Revelation 2:9a

“True Riches”

Revelation 2:8-11

I. Although poor in the eyes of the world, the church at Smyrna had true riches because they were faithful to God through all circumstances (9-10). They were faithful in:

1) Suffering (10a; John 15:18; Philippians 1:29)

2) Testing (10b; Job 1:1-2:10; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Peter 1:6-7)

3) Perseverance (10c; Mark 13:13; Hebrews 3:14)

II. Incentives to remain faithful include:

1) The example of Jesus Christ (8-9a; Hebrews 12:1-3)

2) The promise of the crown of life (10d; 1 Corinthians 9:25)

3) Victory over the “second death”(11b; Revelation 20:14, 21:8).

“Praise the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, You are very great; You are clothed with splendor and majesty.” - Psalm 104:1

“Praise the Lord, O My Soul”

Psalm 104

I. This Psalm declares that God is worthy of our praise for:

1) He is the Creator of all (1-9)

2) He cares for His creation (10-18)

3) He provides for all (14-30)

II. Applications:

1) We are to meditate (mull over and think about) God’s glory (34)

2) His creative power leaves man without excuse (35a; Rom. 1:20)

3) Our praise is to be continual (33, 35b)

“I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.” - Psalm 2:6

“Gold for a King”

Matthew 2:11; Psalm 2:1-12

I. The wise men recognized that Jesus is truly King as they presented Him with gifts of gold (Matthew 2:11).

II. The kingship of Christ is denied not only by earthly kings, but by humanity in general (Psalm 2:1-3; Acts 4:25-27).

III. Wise people today still recognize Jesus as King and:

1) Heed His warnings (Psalm 2:10, 12)

2) Serve Him with awe and joy (Psalm 2:11)

3) Love Him and take refuge in Him (Psalm 2:12).

“I know where you live - where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name...” - Revelation 2:13a

“Satan's Throne”
Revelation 2:12-17

I. Satan's throne, then and now:

1) Disguised as an angel of light he lives in the visible church (2 Cor. 11:14-15)

2) Disguised as scholarship he walks the halls of higher education (Luke 17:1-3)

3) Disguised as an entertainer he has worldwide influence (Ephesians 2:2)

II. The challenge:

1) Remain faithful (13b)

2) Do not renounce your faith (13c)

3) Don't compromise by allowing false teaching (14-15)

III. The motivation:

1) The punishment (16)

2) The reward (17)

“...They opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold, and of incense and of myrrh.” - Matthew 2:11b

“Incense for the Great High Priest”

Matthew 2:11; John 17:1-26

I. The gift of incense presented to Jesus (Matthew 2:11) represents His High Priesthood. Jesus did what the Old Testament high priests could not do as He perfectly:

1) Represents those who believe in Him (Hebrews 4:14-5:6)

2) Offered Himself as the sacrifice of atonement (Hebrews 10:1-10)

3) Intercedes and prays for His people (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25, 9:24)

II. John 17 gives us a glimpse into how Jesus prays for us:

1) He prays for our salvation (1-2, 6, 20, 26)

2) Our sanctification (13-19), including our joy (13) and unity (23)

3) Our protection and perseverance (11-12, 14-15)

III. Application: Like the wise men, we must gratefully thank the Lord for His work as our Great High Priest (Matthew 2:11; Hebrews 13:8).

“... You tolerate that woman, Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she leads my servants into sexual immorality..”

Revelation 2:20

“Twenty-First Century Jezebel”

Revelation 2:18-29

I. Although the church at Thyatira had many good deeds (19), they also tolerated Jezebel, a self-proclaimed prophetess who encouraged them to condone sexual immorality (20).
God's response:

1) The Lord gives time for repentance (21)

2) Those unwilling to repent are punished severely (22-23, Rev. 21:8)

II. Our response:

1) Remember that the Lord searches our hearts and minds (18, 23b)

2) Be thankful that the Lord gives time for repentance (21, 22b)

3) Guard against compromise by holding on to what you have (25) and doing God's will to the end (26).

“...They opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold, and of incense and of myrrh.” - Matthew 2:11b

“Then they offered Him wine mixed with myrrh, but He did not take it.” - Mark 15:23

“Myrrh in the Life and Death of Jesus”

Mark 15:16-32

- I. Jesus began His earthly life with a gift of myrrh (Matthew 2:11) and ended His life entombed with myrrh and aloes (John 19:39).

- II. In Biblical times myrrh was popular (Genesis 37:25; Revelation 18:13) and had many uses, including:
 - 1) Gift giving (Genesis 43:11)

 - 2) Beauty treatments (Esther 2:12)

 - 3) Perfume (Psalm 45:8)

 - 4) Pain killer (Mark 15:23)

 - 5) Burial (John 19:39)

- III. Application to the Lord’s Supper:
 - 1) Jesus did not take the wine mixed with myrrh (Mark 15:23), in order to experience the full effect of death for us on the cross. Instead, He accepted wine vinegar to fulfill Scripture (Mark 15:36; John 19:28-30).

 - 2) We must, like the Magi, always see beyond the manger to the cross (Matthew 1:21; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

“No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made Him known.” - John 1:18

“Jesus Christ: Our Chief Prophet and Teacher”

John 1:1-18; H.C. Lord’s Day 12

I. Jesus is not just a baby in the manger, but our prophet, priest and king. We have seen His position as King and High Priest through the gifts of the Magi (Matt. 2:11).

II. John 1 describes His qualifications as our “chief prophet and teacher who perfectly reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God for our deliverance” (Q&A 31):

1) He is the eternal “Word” (1)

2) He is God, one with the Father and Holy Spirit (1-2)

3) He is the true light of the world (3-5, 9)

4) He is divine, yet also human (14)

5) He is at the Father’s side, and has made Him known (18)

III. Our response:

1) Recognize Him for who He is, God in human flesh (10, 14), and receive Him as Savior and Lord (11-13).

2) Serve as “prophets,” “priests,” and “kings” (Q&A 32).

“...They opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold, and of incense and of myrrh.” - Matthew 2:11b

“The Greatest Gift of the Wise Men”

Matthew 2:1-12

I. The wise men brought Jesus gifts of gold, incense and myrrh, but the greatest gift they brought was the exercise of God’s gift to them of saving faith (Eph. 2:8-10):

1) Because of their faith they worshipped Jesus, even though it involved great personal sacrifice (1-2).

2) Because of their faith they worshipped Jesus even though it wasn’t the popular thing to do (2-8).

3) Because of their faith, even though they were prestigious and powerful in the eyes of society, they bowed down and worshipped Jesus (11).

II. Application: We are to always exercise the gift of faith God has given us, following the example of the Magi in wholehearted worship and service (Romans 12:1; Ephesians 2:8-10).

“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” - 2 Corinthians 9:15

“Beyond Description!”

Matthew 1:18-25; 2 Corinthians 9:15

I. The gift of God’s Son, Jesus, is so great that it is called the “indescribable gift” (2 Corinthians 9:5). Although we have partial knowledge about the wonder of this gift we cannot fully comprehend the magnitude of:

1) The virgin birth (20, 23)

2) The plan of salvation in all its depth (21; Romans 11:33-36)

3) Why a holy God would dwell among sinners like us (23)

II. How we are to thank God for His indescribable gift:

1) With prayers of praise (Luke 1:46-55; 2:20, 38)

2) With deeds of gratitude (Romans 12:1)

3) By telling others about the “indescribable” gift we have received (Luke 2:17-18).

“Being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.” - Matthew 2:12 (ESV)

“Leaving By Another Way”

Matthew 2:1-12

I. The wise men left the home of Jesus by another way, geographically and figuratively. They were on the way of faith in Jesus, which:

1) Is the only way of salvation (John 14:6)

2) Leads to a straight and narrow way (Matthew 7:13-14)

3) Is a guaranteed way (Isaiah 43:1-3a, John 10:28)

II. They left by another way because:

1) They had been willing to seek the Lord (1-2)

2) They were obedient to the Lord, bowing down before Him (11)

3) They worshipped the Lord, presenting Him their gifts (11b,c)

III. Application: Only when we seek, obey and worship the Lord, as the wise men did, can we leave Christmas as changed people, returning to our normal schedules *“by another way”* (12).

