

# Keys to Answered Prayer I

## How Not to Pray—#1

Fred R. Coulter—August 26, 2006

Now recently we've been covering an awful lot on prophecy—and it's good to understand prophecy the best that we can. However, let's understand something that is very important concerning prophecy. **Knowledge of prophecy will not save you.** Now that should be evident when you read Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel, because didn't they make known the prophecies of God as to what would happen?—and they heard it! And they had another problem: They didn't believe it.

I saw this Protestant 'expert' on prophecy being interviewed on television. And, oh by the way, I think we need to understand something concerning the History Channel and all the religious things that they do there, which is important to understand: The History Channel is owned by guess who? *It's owned by Disney.* So that's how they have the actors and do so well with the renditions that they do. They already have the equipment, they have the people, they have the money and everything to do it. However, if you will notice what is happening when they do anything Biblical, you never get the Truth. And you get it all mixed in, mixed in, mixed in, mixed in with all the interpretations of men and all the legendary things that men have come up with.

Now, I've also discovered something else that is flabbergasting to me. Remember when (it was 1995), I got the *Inclusive New Testament* where they went in and they literally changed what the Bible meant. And the most blasphemous one was calling God the Father, 'Father-Mother.' And that's when I said if we let that stand, God is going to judge us for not doing what we need to do. Even though I had a lot of the New Testament translated in study translations, that's when I knew that we had to do the New Testament. And you've heard me mention down through the years that the only commentary I use is the *Word Biblical Commentary*. And the reason is that the *Word Biblical Commentary* was exactly what the title said. It would examine the words in the Bible in Hebrew and Greek and so forth, and then they would give you commentary on that without too much of an interpretation. Well, what they are doing is gradually revising it. Now I might not be correct in my recall here, but I think Zondervan owns the copyright to the *Word Biblical Commentary*. So what they are doing now is having it revised. I just got two commentaries on Psalms and one other commentary—*Word Biblical*—and they bring in other religions, so now they are watering down and confusing the commentaries, making it more and more impossible for people to really discover the Truth. So you watch that when

you have the commentaries; how much they bring in other religions; how much they bring in the Nag Hammadi Library; how much they bring in the Dead Sea Scrolls; and so forth; and how much they bring in the Apocrypha. Now the Apocrypha books can be good from an historical point-of-view. You can learn some lessons from it. But it is not Scripture, never recognized as Scripture until Jerome did his thing in translating from the Septuagint and the Hebrew into his Latin.

So with all of this out there, what is the most important thing that we need to concentrate on? **We need to concentrate on a relationship with God, because God is the only One Who's going to save us!** And the most important thing that we need to realize in our relationship with God is **how important prayer is.** So I'm going to do a series on the *Keys to Answered Prayer*. Now we're going to start out with some basic things and then we will get into more detail going into the series as we go along. So the first one is going to be: *How Not to Pray*—the things not to do. So therefore that'll sort of "clear the deck" so that when we get into it—how to pray—then we'll take it from there.

Now let's come to Hebrews 11 and let's see the whole basis for our relationship with God, and our relationship to God with prayer, etc. Hebrews 11:6—and here is the whole key in everything in our relationship with God. "Now without faith *it is impossible to please God...*" In mentioning this we have to understand this: **The spirit of true faith comes from the Holy Spirit of God.** One of the biggest problems that people have today in Christianity is they are developing a carnal-minded, religious, emotional approach to it, and they are calling that *faith*. If you feel good it is *faith*. Now *faith*, as we know, 'without works is dead.' We'll cover that a little bit more concerning answering prayer, but this is the key thing:

- Unless you love God, keep His commandments, and unless you believe God, it's impossible to please God.

Now let's add a little bit more to it with this:

- The faith that you need to have is the faith that is defined by God! NOT personal opinion.

Very important, because the first thing that a person does when they want to find out about God is come to God to find a way to justify your own behavior and justify what you already believe.

Let's add another one here:

- If you have a belief-system, which rejects the Old Testament, you do not have true faith. If you have a belief-system, which rejects the New Testament, you do not have true faith. You may have a faith. You may have a religion.

But we're going to see that when you have your own ways and you try and mix that with what God wants you to do, then you don't have the faith necessary to please God.

Now continuing, v 6: "...For it is mandatory... [And God is the One Who makes it mandatory.] ...for the one who comes to God..." Jesus expects us to come to Him, because He said what? "*Seek and you shall find, ask and you shall receive, knock and it shall be opened.*" But, it has to be on God's terms. Because the whole book of Job is a testimony that unless it's on God's terms it isn't going to be.

Now another thing: If you've never read the book of Job, read it, and I think you will experience the same thing I did when I first read it. I thought God was unfair when I first read it. And then with that thought in my mind, no, God isn't unfair, I just need to understand what it's saying. So God is the one Who sets the rules. Now why is that? *Because He's God.* And if man comes to God and man sets the rules, and God has to obey what man has dictated, then man becomes God—and God becomes a servant. So that's why it's mandatory.

"...For it is mandatory *for* the one who comes to God to believe that He exists..." (v 6) That you have to prove. You have to *prove* does God exist. You do that by studying the Bible. You do that by examining the laws of the creation that He has put out there and understand there can be no such thing as evolution. When you do that, then you start coming to God on His terms. A lot of people like to say, 'Well, I believe God, but I also believe it's possible that God used evolution to create.' ***Never happen!*** You don't believe God; you have an opinion. We'll talk about opinions a little later on. But what we are doing here is we're analyzing exactly what it says, so that we get a bearing of why prayers are not answered. Because how many people literally do this in the way that we're describing here? *Very few!* He exists! If you believe He exists, then

- you have to know He's true
- you have to know that God does not lie
- you have to know that His Word is the Word of God
- you have to believe that God has the power to inspire the men He has chosen to write His words, to faithfully write it,

faithfully record it, and that God has the power to preserve it.

Now in today's world, you may have to search out which is the right Bible, that's true. But He has still preserved it. He's left the 'searching out' up to us. He's left the proving up to us. God has already proved Himself by the creation of heaven and earth and us.

Now notice: "...and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (v 6) So this has to be our attitude. Not just to prove an intellectual or philosophical argument. Not to just have God on our side like a rabbit's foot. But to *diligently seek Him*—which means what?

- *It means you have to seek Him with the whole heart.*
- *It means you have to repent to Him.*
- *It means you have to obey Him, and all of those things are wrapped up into it.*

So now, with that in mind—and *diligently seek Him*—in this also you have to understand this: If you believe God, if you believe His Word, and you say you believe His commandments, then you better believe His commandments and you better keep His commandments; because we're going to see the biggest problem in the world and religion and people in prayers is that they don't believe God and they don't believe the first four commandments—though a lot of them profess that they do.

Let's come to Matthew, the sixth chapter. And again, Jesus tells us how *not* to pray. Now, if you don't have the series on *Why God Hates Religion*—you can draw them down if you're online; if not, write in for them and we'll send them to you. Now what I want you to do is think about the religions of the world as I read this. I want you to think about also the people who give great sums of money to churches, and especially those who have it reported on the news;

Matthew 6:1: "Beware... [Here's a warning from Christ] ...*that* you do not bestow your alms... [Now 'alms' is anything that you give toward helping people, helping ministers, helping priests, whatever that you do in the name of God.] ...in the sight of men in order to be seen by them... [So every time you see the Dalai Lama or the Pope or an Imam of the Muslim religion and so forth do these things in the sight of men, they have no reward.] ...Therefore, when you give *your* alms, do not sound the trumpet before you..." (vs 1-2).

Now, I'll tell you something that's more effective than a trumpet: television coverage—right? *Yes!* Go on Trinity Channel, or a religious channel, and what do you find? Well, first of all you can't get on there unless you sign that you believe in the

trinity, which is already a false doctrine, so the whole basis of it, regardless of how many times they use the name of God the Father and Jesus Christ, is wrong. But you watch them, and when they come to the end of what they're doing or maybe right in the middle of it, they have some sort of sanctimonious prayer. Now think about Praise the Lord Channel with Pat Robertson. They don't have a trumpet, but what do they have when they get a big donation? They give the name out over the television. They have the drum rolls for a \$10,000 donation. People give so that it will be noticed on television. What a thing, your name mentioned for \$10,000 on Pat Robertson's or Gerald Falwell, whatever.

"...as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets... [Now, do you think God is going to listen to hypocrites? This also tells us what? How are we hypocritical? Because we can look at other people and judge and say, 'Okay, they're hypocritical because they're doing this.' But how are we hypocritical? *Well, we're hypocritical when we come to God to pray to seek our will and have Him endorse our will.* Now the reason they do these things publicly is] ...so that they may have glory from men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward. But *when* you give your alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, So that your alms may be in secret; and your Father Who sees in secret shall Himself reward you openly" (vs 2-4).

Now here's another way not to pray. "And when you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues... [or in a church assembly, or whatever] ...and on the corners of the streets, in order *that* they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward... [because they have been seen] ...But you, when you pray... [So we'll get a little bit on how to pray—we'll come back to this a little later when we get in to some of the other sermons.] ...enter into a private room; and after shutting the door, pray to your Father Who *is* in secret; and your Father Who sees in secret shall reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions, as the heathen *do...*" (vs 6-7).

Now the Tibetan Buddhists, even though they have a lot of prayers, they get tired of speaking, so they invented a new way to get prayers to heaven. They write them on round cylinders, and they have them all stacked along the sidewalks so as you go, you just reach over and wheel one of these cylinders that's on a pole and that prayer is wafting up to heaven. Well, that's kind of like a computer prayer today—you have a computer prayer and you send it out everywhere. Well, that's the same thing—it's not going to God. Then you also have the chants, where they just chant: 'Daaa, daaaa, daaaaa'—that's what

it sounds like. That's not the way to pray. Or, as the Jews do at the 'wailing wall.' Oh by the way, you can get a prayer sent to God if you pay enough and send it to Jerusalem where some helper or Rabbi will take it up there and will stuff the prayer in one of the cracks on the 'wailing wall.' Where does that prayer go to? *The wailing wall.* It doesn't go to God. Or the Catholics. Now, you can turn on the Catholic Hour, which is only 15-minutes long. And you can hear them pray. And it's all in monotone. They do 'hail Marys'—'Hail Mary, mother of God, blessed be the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Hail Mary, mother of God, blessed be the fruit of your womb, Jesus'—over and over and over again. Everybody says, 'Amen.' *Vain repetitions!* Now you may have it memorized, but it's not from your heart. And think about the Muslims. They pray religiously five times a day. And they pray vigorously—don't they? They go into the mosques, and what do they do? They have carpets on the floor and they go in with their shoes off. Because you don't want to desecrate it with shoes, because there's something with Muslims, there's something with the sole of the shoe is a great insult. So if you bend down and pray with the soles of your shoes on and God can see the soles of your shoes, then you're insulting God I guess would be the thing. And they have their ready-made prayers and they bow down more rigorously than almost any other people. And bow with their forehead on the ground and pray. But, they've got to face Mecca. So if you don't know which way Mecca is, you better get out your compass.

Now here, "...they think by multiplying their words they shall be heard. Now then, **do not be like them...**" (vs 7-8). That's what Jesus said. Now accompanied with this, what also do they have? *They have prayer beads, prayer shawls, prayer tassels, whatever convenient thing that they have which is suppose to add to your prayers.* But unless you come to God with a right heart, and unless you believe that He is, all these other devices, why is it going to make God hear you?

Let's come to Matthew 23:13—let's see what else Jesus said about praying. (Actually in the *King James* it's v 14, because in the Greek v 13 comes first—it's reversed)—let's come back here to v 4, because there are many religious things that people do. And somehow they can sacrifice this or sacrifice that and some of them believe in beating themselves on the back, even some go through mock crucifixions—because "Jesus suffered, I suffer; Jesus bled, I bled—then I have access to God." No! It doesn't work that way. For He says of the Scribes and the Pharisees—they were religious leaders and we can see religious leaders today. Think of this if you've seen a report on Opus Dei—what they require them to do on Opus Dei. They dedicate

themselves to God, but you have to dedicate what you make to the Opus Dei. And the more that you get involved in it, the more that you get into corporal punishment and self-flagellation. Not much different than the Muslims. Now there's a Muslim holy day, which they will probably show, where great columns of men chanting and carrying some sort of back-flagellation and they give a chant and then they all sling it over their left shoulder and it inflicts wounds on their back. And then they bring it forward and they walk along and they give a chant and they sling it over their right shoulder. All self-flagellation and things like that.

So just think about this, Matthew 23:4: "For they bind heavy burdens and hard to bear, and lay *them* on the shoulders of men... [Now, the opposite of that is this: Well, you come to this Christian Church and you have grace and you have nothing that you need to do, all you need to do is believe and profess the name of Jesus. So you've got the easy works, you have the heavy works.] (now notice): ...but they will not move them with *one of* their own fingers. And they do all their works to be seen by men. They make broad their phylacteries and enlarge the borders of their garments" (vs 4-5). Almost like—I get a kick out of this—when you see the generals in the various armies of the world, especially looking at the Iranian army and the North Korean army. The generals have got at least ten rows of medals. For what? Same way with the religious garment. If you're a religious person, you have to wear this garment. How about the monks who give up everything; go live in a monastery.

I heard a report on soybeans. Soybeans are very high in estrogen and cause great problems with health. Especially if you take a soy-powder to lose weight, you will for a while. But afterward you start gaining weight because you will be taking in too much estrogen. And they were discussing why soybean was so popular among the Buddhist monks living in these monasteries—you can't have any sex. God said, 'Let a man have his own wife and women have her own husband.' That's what God said, but 'No, we're more righteous.' But in order to cut down on the lust and in order to cut down on the sex-drive, they eat a lot of soybean because the estrogen takes away the sex-drive. All right, now that's not a phylactery, but it's something else.

Verse 6: "And they love the first place at the suppers, and the chief seats in the synagogues... [Oh yes, must be exalted, be recognized] ...And the salutations in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' [or Reverend or Right Reverend or Cardinal or Pope—never found the 'Left Reverend' yet, or to be called Imam and everybody sort of bow down to them and give them deference. They must be recognized with their

collars on backwards or the way that their hair is cut or the clothes that they wear, or something. And everyone is supposed to give way to that.] ...But you are not to be called Rabbi; for one is your Master, the Christ, and all of you are brethren" (vs 6-8). That's what we need to understand concerning those who teach and those who are brethren. We're all brethren together. And the whole goal of any minister ought to be: *Teach people to 'love God with all their heart, mind, soul and being.'* And whatever knowledge that God imparts to anyone who's teaching, He must impart that to all the brethren, because we're all brethren so that we can all grow and grace and knowledge and fulfill what Jesus said, "That it's sufficient that the disciple become like the teacher." Not to set up here some great exalted, religious position. And this all comes into answered prayer or why your prayers are not answered.

Verse 9—key verse: "Also, do not call *anyone* on the earth your Father... [that is in a religious sense. Now obviously, you have your father and mother—you can call your father 'father.' But you're not calling him 'father' in the sense you would God the Father. So this is what it's talking about here.] ...for one is your Father, Who *is* in heaven." But you have how many supposed Christian religions you have to call the religious leaders 'father'—father this, father that, father the other thing. And how can they be a father when they are supposed to be celibate? It reminds me of the joke:

Man was standing there and here came by a Catholic priest. "Good morning, father."  
*Good morning.*

He went on down and he was waiting for some other of his religion come to him. And here came by Mother Superior. So he said, "Good morning, mother." So she went on down and was standing there by the priest, and here came a couple of nuns. And he said, "Good morning, sisters."

And there's someone standing there watching all of this go by. And then there came some of the Franciscan monks. And he said, "Good morning, brothers."

*Good morning.* Now, all of them have taken vows of celibacy.

So the man who was watching all of this, he turned to the man who was greeting them, and said, 'My, that's a lovely family, isn't it?'

You have to think on that a little bit. I'm not very good with jokes, but that's the way it goes.

"Neither be called Master... [which *guru* is You go to one of the Eastern Oriental religions and

you have a ‘guru’—he is master.] ...for one is your Master, the Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever will exalt himself shall be humbled; and whoever will humble himself shall be exalted.... [Now that’s a key to answered prayers we’re going to see a little later.] ...But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows’ houses...” (vs 10-13).

Now, I found this: whenever people reject God’s way of tithes and offerings, they have to have a substitute way of financing—right? *Yes!* So what do they do? *They have pledges.* Mormons have inspection of your income tax; reconciliation with the local elder there to make sure that you have paid your ‘fair share.’ And when I was on the plane going to Tulsa, here was a man on the plane and he’s reading *The DiVinchi Code*. And I struck up a conversation with him and found out that he worked for Oral Roberts University. I thought to myself, well, that’s interesting, he’s reading *The DiVinchi Code*. I didn’t talk to him much about that. But I said, ‘Well, what do you do?’ And he says, ‘My territory is Southern California.’ And I said, ‘Oh, what do you mean by that?’ He says, ‘I go out and contact those on the mailing list to make donations to Oral Roberts University and get them to commit so much to the University.’ And I imagine the ones they love to get are the widows so that when they die they give it all to Oral Roberts University—when that should stay in the family or next-of-kin of the family. It should NEVER be donated to a church. Now if there’s no one to give it to and you want to do that, of your own free will, that’s one case.

“...they devour widows’ houses...” Oh, and another one. When Delores worked for—this was years ago when she worked for this investment company in Gilroy—they were all Catholics. And they were in high-level real estate dealings where they dealt in millions and millions and millions of dollars every year. And all the commercial ground around Gilroy, they owned the land-lease. And all of these businesses pay into their firm every month. So guess who comes down in his limousine, driven by a chauffer? *The Arch-Bishop*. He has a private meeting in the office, and all three brothers cough-up a 100-thousand dollars. “...devour widows’ houses...”—you can put in there whatever you want.

“...and as a pretext you offer prayers of great length...” Now, you read this: Any public prayer in the Bible is short, with the exception of the one that is recorded that Solomon gave at the dedication of the temple. Every single one is short. We’ll see that in just a little bit. “...Because of this, you shall receive *the* greater judgment.... [Because of this]: ...Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven before men; for neither do you yourselves enter, nor

do you allow those who are entering to enter” (vs 13-14). It’s exactly what they do. If someone comes to their Sunday-keeping minister and says, ‘Oh, I read my Bible, we should be keeping the Sabbath.’ *Oh, no, no, no, we keep Sunday. Don’t worry about that. That’s just Old Testament.* What did they just do? *Shut up the kingdom of heaven.* Or a Jew comes to a Rabbi and says, ‘Rabbi, I’ve been reading the New Testament and I believe in Jesus.’ *Oh, no, no, no He’s a fraud. He’s born of fornication and all this sort of thing. No, no, you don’t need that.* Then they load other things on top of them.

Now, let’s come back here to the book of Isaiah and see some things concerning idols. So we can basically say this: outside of the Bible, if you need to use the Psalms to pray, you do not need any other physical thing. Now if you have bad knees, you may need some knee-pads. But we’re going to talk about idols here in a minute.

(go to the next track)

Let’s come to the book of Isaiah, chapter 44. Now as we’re going there, let’s remember the second commandment. You have it all memorized? Which is: “You shall not make any graven image of any likeness of anything that’s in heaven above, that’s on the earth beneath or that’s in the waters under the earth.” You’re not even to make them. Next, you are not to “bow yourselves down to them, for I the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting upon the children the iniquities of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me.” Beyond that we need to understand this: ***If you have an idol of any form, regardless of the profession of your lips, you hate God to a certain degree, though you may profess you love Him.*** Now, we’ll talk about this in just a minute. But, the last part of it is because He’s a jealous God He does that: ***“and showing mercy to thousands of them who love Me and keep My commandments.”*** That’s the whole second commandment.

Now, with that in mind, Isaiah 44:9: “They that make a graven image *are* all of them vanity... [Now, we’ll talk about vanity a little bit later on and prayer and so forth.] ...and their delectable things shall not profit; and they *are* their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who has formed a god, or molten a graven image *that* is profitable for nothing?... [There’s one problem with idols that people really don’t understand. If you think there’s power in the idol, it is nothing. It is the demonic and satanic power behind it, because wherever there are idols, there is where Satan and his workers will be, because they want to get you into idolatry.] ...Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they *are* of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; *yet* they shall fear, *and* they shall be

ashamed together.... [That is when God begins to deal with them.] ...The smith with the tongs both works in the coals, and fashions it with hammers, and works it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength fails: he drinks no water, and is faint.... [In other words, he's just dedicating himself to the nth degree of the ability of his strength and body to do this. So they just got a helper.] ...The carpenter stretches out *his* rule; he marks it out with a line; he fits it with planes, and he marks it out with the compass, and makes it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house" (vs 9-13).

Now as I'm reading this, what I want you to do, since we have in our minds, just give yourself a mind's-eye of all of the pyramids of old, the burial places of the Pharaohs, all of their idols, all of their things, all of the gods of Greece, all of the statues and idols today in every cathedral or basilica, regardless of the religion, and think about it. How much work that men have put into making these things! ***And it profits absolutely nothing!***

Now then, he goes on, v 14: "He hews him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengthens for himself among the trees of the forest: he plants an ash, and the rain does nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindles it, and baketh bread; yea, he makes a god, and worships it; he makes it a graven image, and falls down thereto. He burns part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eats flesh; he roasts roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warms *himself*, and says, 'Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire.' And the residue thereof he makes a god, *even* his graven image: he falls down unto it, and worships it, and prays unto it, and says, 'Deliver me; for you *art* my god.'.... [That's quite an amazing thing, isn't it—huh? *Yes!*] ...They have not known nor understood: for he has shut their eyes..." (vs 14-18).

Now what happens is this—a true thing to remember: ***Whenever you do something contrary to God's will, it can lead to blinding—spiritual blinding, not physical blinding, spiritual blinding.*** You can't see or understand the Truth of God. Now, if you have for yourself a beautiful statue of the virgin Mary and you have a little 'prayer place' in your house where you go pray, or in a cathedral and you go in there and you do your 'hail Mary's' and 'our fathers' and you light candles and that's supposed to be your prayer going up to heaven, just realize this: it hasn't gone any further than the words out of your mouth. And you are blinding yourself. Now, here's what happens when God shuts your eyes spiritually "...that they cannot see; *and* their hearts, that they cannot understand" (v 18).

Now, let me tell you how I know you don't understand, which is this: If you're mad at me for saying what I just said, and if you're offended because of it, ***you do not understand and you are spiritually blind!*** So I challenge you to find out what the truth is and let God remove the spiritual scales from your eyes. Verse 19: "And none considers in his heart, neither *is there* knowledge nor understanding to say... [Don't even think about it.] ...I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten *it*: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?.... [So He says]: ...He feeds on ashes: a deceived heart has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, '*Is there* not a lie in my right hand?'" (vs 19-20).

All right, let's come over here to Isaiah 45; let's see something else. We'll see this again. Now this is why it's important to understand. If, as I said recently, when you change the nature of God you change everything. When you have idols you change everything, too—don't you? You cannot worship God and use idols of any form—the ***true*** God. Now you may worship a god, but then you better check out in the Bible and find out there is Satan the devil, who is called 'the god of this world.' ***So if what you do is accepted by the world, you better be pretty sure that it's not of God.***

Now Isaiah 45:20: "Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, you *that are* escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god *that* cannot save. Tell you, and bring *them* near; yea, let them take counsel together... [All right, let's see what you have done.] ...who has declared this from ancient time? *Who* has told it from that time? *Have* not I the LORD? And *there is* no God else beside Me; a just God and a Saviour; *there is* none beside Me. Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else" (vs 20-22)

Now, I give you another challenge, if you don't believe it: Next time there's a fierce storm or flood coming, or hurricane or tornado, and you don't believe what I'm telling you, then you go out and you shake your fist in the air at God and demand that He stop it. Won't happen, because you cannot serve Satan and God, you cannot serve idols and God. And that's evident all the way through. So you cannot use any physical thing to help answer your prayers.

Now, v 23—here's what God says: "I have sworn by Myself... [Now, God doesn't need to swear at all. But just to make sure that every person understands it, He swears by Himself, which means He's swearing by His very existence. 'Since I've created heaven and earth and everything therein,'

God says, ‘I swear by Myself. Now, if you want to take Me on with your idols, have at it. If you don’t believe in Jesus, have at it!’ Because He says: ...I have sworn by Myself the word is gone out of My mouth *in* righteousness, and shall not return... [He’s not going to take a word back.] ...That unto Me every knee shall bow... [It says in Phil. 2 that ‘at the name of Jesus Christ every knee shall bow.’ And bow on His terms. You need to understand this: If you come to God with any idol, prayer beads, any physical thing, or you have memorized, ritualized prayers, it’s all in vain, because that’s not how to pray to God.] (v 24): ...Surely, shall *one* say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: *even* to Him shall *men* come; and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory” (vs 23-25). Not in idols, not in men, not in methods, but in God.

Now, let’s come down here to Isaiah 46:1: “Bel bows down, Nebo stoops, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages *were* heavy laden; *they are* a burden to the weary *beast*. They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity.... [So what He’s saying here: He’s going to send them off into captivity. Look at all the lands that have idols and false religions. What do they have constantly? *War! Killing! Death! Jihads!* All of these things continually. And Muslims don’t think they have an idol. Yes, they do! In Mecca they’ve a big black stone. That’s their idol! They have another idol: Mohammad the prophet. His words do not agree with the words of the Bible, therefore he’s a false prophet.] (Now, God says, v 3): ...‘Hearken unto Me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne *by Me* from the belly, which are carried from the womb: And *even* to *your* old age I *am* He; and *even* to [gray] hoar hairs will I carry *you*: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver *you*” (vs 1-4). He’s giving an option here: What do you want? Idols that are going to be carried away into captivity and the people with them, or do you want the Truth of God? Do you want God and His way?

So He gives a challenge: “...To whom will you liken Me... [very important] ...and make *Me* equal, and compare Me, that we may be like? They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, *and* hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place... [Think of this the next time you see any religious procession with idols. They carry Buddha: he’s not a God—he can’t walk, he can’t hear, he can’t talk. The virgin Mary: great processions of the virgin Mary; and everybody falls down and worships. Well, it’s just an idol.] ... They

bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place and he stands; from his place shall he not remove: yea, *one* shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble” (vs 5-7). Now think of that every time you watch a documentary on ancient civilizations and look at their gods and look at all of their religious things. Did it save them? Did it change anything? *No, because they rejected God!*

“Remember this, and show yourselves men: bring *it* again to mind, O you transgressors.... [So He’s calling them to repentance here.] ...Remember the former things of old: **for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me,** Declaring the end from the beginning... [Now you read in Rev. 1 and 21, where Jesus said: ‘I am the First and the Last, I am the Beginning and the Ending, I am Alpha and Omega.’ Same God. You want to know what God is doing, then you better come to God His way in repentance. You better forsake your way. You better forsake your idols. You better pray to Him with a repentant heart, have your sins forgiven, have Him give you understanding of what you need to do to come to Him. And then you will begin to understand. But you have to forsake your sins and your ways first, because God is not going to answer your prayers as long as you live in your sins and live in your idols and hold your way and try to cleave to your Sunday and your Christmas and your Easter and your New Years and all of the pagan holidays of all the other religions—whatever it may be—because you’re rejecting God!] ...Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (vs 8–10). **God** is going to do it. **He** is going to take care of it. And this whole world is destined to see the return of Jesus Christ in the time that God has said. And it’s going to be an awesome thing indeed when it happens.

Now, let’s come back here to 1-Kings 18. Let’s see that personal opinion has nothing to do with the Truth of God. Personal opinion; anyone can have a personal opinion, and you know, it wasn’t invented with Fox News—‘we report, you decide.’ What is your opinion? Well, if anyone’s opinion is not based upon Truth, your opinion is worthless, especially when dealing with things concerning God and the Bible. Now, the reason that you need to read the Old Testament—and you might take that underhand in case you’ve been told you don’t need to read the Old Testament. Read it from the beginning. The parts you don’t understand, just put off to the side, because there’s plenty you will understand.

Now here’s what we can understand here: This is the days of Elijah. Ahab was the king of the

ten northern tribes up in Samaria, and God said that there was going to be drought because of the sins of the children of Israel. Now, you think about it today. Think today, right while I'm bringing this sermon today, we have forest fires; we have floods; we have drought; we have heat; we have cold; and now there's another hurricane churning down in the Caribbean—heading for where? *Don't know*. But all of these things God says He brings upon people because of their sins. So you need to think about it. And because I mention that people say, 'Well, why do you say that?' That's exactly what they said of Elijah. Now, I'm not claiming to be Elijah by any means or any stretch of the imagination, but I'm saying that those who tell the truth are accused of causing trouble. So that's exactly what happened to Elijah.

Now, 1-Kings 18:17: "And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, 'Are you he that troubleth Israel?'.... [You're the cause of the problem. That's why we have the drought.] ...And he [Elijah] answered, I have not troubled Israel; but you, and your father's house, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and you have followed Baalim.... [Now, Baalim is plural for 'other lords, other gods'—statues, idols, Astorah is the goddess. And of course, what are they promoting today? They're promoting goddesses—aren't they?] (v 19): ...Now therefore send, *and* gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty..." (vs 17-19).

And that's about the number—I don't think that's the number of denominations today; there are thousands of denominations today. Now remember this: Baal is a sun-god. And what is his day of worship? *Sunday!* Now if you don't have the book *Occult Holidays or God's Holy Days, Which?* where we clearly enumerate that, if you're worshipping the god of this world, the sun-god, you worship on Sunday. They may call it Christian, but it is a false Christ, a false Christianity and God is not there regardless of how good you feel when you go to Church; or how good you feel when you go to mass. That is a false security. Now look at the comparison: 450 to 1. How's that for odds? People think: the more people you have who believe like you, the better you are with God. Not so! It's just the opposite. So there's Elijah and he said, 'Gather them.'

"...and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.... [state-supported, because Jezebel was the wife of Ahab and Jezebel was the daughter of the priest of Baal at Sidon. So you need to have the complete picture here.] ...So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount

Carmel. And Elijah came unto all the people, and said..." (vs 19–21).

Now here's the message that he gave, which is true today: "...**How long halt you between two opinions?**... [That's important to understand. People like to have opinions which fall on both sides of the middle. So, if it goes one way they'll be right, or if it goes the other way, they'll be right. Like a lot of people today, they have just enough religion that the world accepts them, and just enough religion so if trouble comes, they think they can run to God and He'll save them. The truth is, *if you don't have the true God and you're not right with Him, it doesn't matter what your opinion is.* A lot of people will say, 'Well, you know, maybe there's something to this Buddha thing. Karma and destiny. And people bow down in Catholicism and worship the virgin Mary—a statue of her, a statue of Christ. Or if you're a Greek Orthodox, you have icons—even weeping icons.] ...'How long halt you between two opinions?'..." (v 21).

Now, what's going to happen is this: the day is coming and God's judgment is coming and people are going to have to choose, and they're going to find that if they have an opinion that is not a belief in God, that opinion is going to be worthless and is empty as a bag of wind in the day of trouble.

"...**if the LORD be God, follow him...** [That's a challenge for today, too. If the Lord Jesus Christ is God, and God the Father is God, *follow Them!* Because God here is 'Elohim'—which means *the two*: God the Father and Jesus Christ.] ...but if Baal, *then* follow him.'.... [Now let's have a contest!] ...And the people answered him not a word.... [Now Elijah had to get in his complaint.] ...Then said Elijah unto the people, 'I, *even* I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men'" (vs 21-22).

So he said, 'Let's have a contest. You get all the prophets of Baal and you build an altar, you bring two bullocks, you choose one for yourself, you go ahead first, put a fire under it, you call on the name of your gods. When you're all done, I'll call on the name of the Lord' (vs 23-25 *paraphrased*).

Verse 26—now notice what they did: "And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, 'O Baal, hear us.... [And if you listen to Mendelson's *Elijah*, it's a very catchy tune for Baal: 'Hear us oh Baal, hear us oh Baal, dadada'—you know, lovely song—doesn't prove it's from God. And that's about all I remember of it. I didn't want to hear the whole thing through, because I didn't want that thing scattering through my head. So they did it from morning till noon.] ...But *there was* no voice, nor any that



answered.... [So they had to get in action—‘We’ve got to stir them up!’] ...And they leaped upon the altar which was made.... [So they were jumping up and down on the altar.] ...And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for *he is* a god; either he is talking... [not paying any attention to you] ...or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, *or* peradventure he sleeps, and must be awakened.... [So they took drastic action. ‘Let’s get his attention!’] ...And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them” (vs 26–28).

So all these things of beating the flesh, suffering for Christ, all a bunch of pagan transfers and has nothing to do with suffering for Christ. If you suffer for keeping the Sabbath and the Holy Days; if you suffer for not bowing down to idols, then you’re truly suffering for Christ. But if you cut yourself and bleed and make yourself suffer that way, you’re not suffering for Christ one bit anymore than suffering for Baal made him answer.

“And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice... [Now, ‘evening’ sacrifice is not there. This has nothing to do with the time of the ‘evening sacrifice.’ But of the time coming to when Elijah would bring his sacrifice, which was a little past mid-day.] ...that *there was* neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.... [I imagine after the yelling and screaming and bloodletting and leaping and jumping and everything there was deadly silence. And only one man—just one man—whom everybody despised, and said: ‘You brought this drought upon us. You said there was going to be a drought. You brought it upon us!’] (Now v 30): ...And Elijah said unto all the people, ‘Come near unto me.’ And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD *that was* broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones... [after God said, for an altar that was not at the temple] ...according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the Word of the LORD came, saying, ‘Israel shall be your name.’ And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of [wheat] seed.... [Now I don’t know what that is. But that’s probably like two 150-pound bags of wheat.] ...And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid *him* on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water...” (vs 29-33)

Now, at the end of drought, where water is hard to come by, imagine what they thought. “...and pour *it* on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.... [Let’s make this an impossible situation.] ...And he said, ‘Do *it* the second time.’ And they did *it* the

second time. And he said, ‘Do *it* the third time.’ And they did *it* the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.... [Now, I want you to notice how long Elijah’s prayer was.] ...And it came to pass at *the time* of the offering of the [oblation]... [or the offering of the oblation—referring to what Elijah as going to do. Remember ‘time of an evening’ are not there in the Hebrew—not there at all.] ...*evening* sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near... [I want you to time this prayer.] ...and said, ‘LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that You *are* God in Israel, and *that* I *am* your servant, and *that* I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You *are* the LORD God, and *that* You have turned their heart back again” (vs 33–37). **Twenty seconds!** That’s why Jesus said long prayers, vain repetitions, that’s not it. It has to be based on belief in God and a repentant heart and praying directly to God. **Twenty-second prayer!** Notice what happened. Now compare twenty-seconds with almost the whole day with the prophets of Baal.

“Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that *was* in the trench” (v 38). Now if you think that’s quite a demonstration, I want you to think about when Christ returns. It’s going to be more than that. He’s going to shake the heavens. He’s going to shake the earth. He’s going to shake the sea and everything in it. And the mountains will be leveled and the valleys will be raised. It’s going to be quite different. **God is going to show and prove that He is God!** Right? So this confrontation with Elijah is only just a miniscule little confrontation that’s going to happen between the world and the return of Jesus Christ—which is going to be a profound thing.

Now, notice, v 39: “And when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces: and they said, ‘The LORD, He *is* the God; the LORD, He *is* the God.’” Notice, the God, not a God. So an opinion about God is worthless! A religious supposition and philosophical belief or opinion about God is worthless, because God *is* God based on the very fact that He exists. And unless you come to Him with that attitude in your prayer:

- it doesn’t matter what you pray
- it doesn’t matter how many times you beat the flesh
- how many times you encircle the rosary beads
- how many times you bow down to an idol of the virgin Mary or an icon
- or how many times you go to Mecca
- or how many times you spin the Buddhist prayer wheel

- or how many times you put a prayer on a piece of paper and stick it into the wailing wall

—***God is not going to hear!***

FRC:bo  
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Now notice what else Elijah did, and Christ is going to do this when He returns. If all of these false priests and prophets and ministers that survive through all the tribulation till Christ and His saints put their feet on the earth, if they do not repent they're going to be slain! It's that simple. ***No more opinions about God when Christ returns.*** No room for opinion, that's when every knee is going to bow to Christ—right? *Yes, indeed!*

“And Elijah said unto them, ‘Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape.’ And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there. And Elijah said unto Ahab, ‘Get you up, eat and drink; for *there is* a sound of abundance of [water] rain’” (vs 39-41).

And you can read the rest of the story. Elijah got up there and prayed seven times and his servants said, ‘OOO, I see a cloud in the west.’ Elijah said, ‘Run!’ And out of that little cloud came a great fire, and then Elijah’s humanness showed up—after this great confrontation, after his simple 20-second prayer, after the destruction of all the prophets of Baal in the grove, Elijah got discouraged and feared Jezebel and ran for his life down to Mt. Horeb and hid himself in a cave. So even the servants of God have their weaknesses.

Old Testament Scripture from the *King James Version*  
New Testament Scriptures from *The New Testament in Its Original Order—A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

#### Scriptural References

- 1) Hebrews 11:6
- 2) Matthew 6:1-8
- 3) Matthew 23:4-14
- 4) Isaiah 44:9-20
- 5) Isaiah 45:20-25
- 6) Isaiah 46:1-10
- 7) I Kings 18:17-41

#### Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Philippians 2
- Revelation 1 & 21

#### Also referenced:

##### Books:

- *The Inclusive New Testament*
- *Word Biblical Commentary*
- *Occult Holidays or God’s Holy Days—Which?* by Fred R. Coulter

##### Sermon series:

- *Why God Hates Religion*