

Bible Answers to Questions I

Ezra 6 & 7/Nehemiah 13; John 5; Luke 16; James 2

Fred R. Coulter—January 17, 2009

We have many, many more new people coming on line and requesting literature, so here are some questions:

Ezra and Nehemiah

Q: Since Ezra and Nehemiah didn't use 'the Lord says...' when Ezra asked the people to do, like close the gate to the city on the Sabbath, did he have the right to do it?

Some people believe that these things and these books should not be in the Scriptures. However, I can only reconcile these thoughts with what Paul said in 2-Timothy 3:16^[transcriber's correction]: "All Scripture *is* God-breathed..."

They came out of captivity from Babylon and when you read the book of Ezra—and Ezra and Nehemiah are considered one book—the first part of it is the first contingency that comes back to Jerusalem led by Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the governor.

Then when we find that without much effort and difficulty they finally had the foundation for the second temple ready to go.

Ezra 6:14: "And the elders of the Jews built, and they were prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built and finished *it* according to the command of the God of Israel, and according to the decree of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia."

So, the decree had to be repeated three times because of the enemies that were there.

Verse 15: "And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar..." There's a very interesting point here that we can come to in John 10, which is that Adar is the last month of the winter. When they finished it in Adar they also had the dedication of the house of God:

"...in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity kept the dedication of this house of God with joy" (vs 15-16).

Adar is the month before Nisan, which is when they have the Passover. Now, John 10 will also fit in here, because people like to come along and give their opinions and interpretations. One of

the things that many Messianic Jews like to do is come to John 10:22 and read this and say that Christians ought to keep Hanukkah. {Note sermon: *Should Christians Observe Hanukkah*}

When you read the Book of Maccabees (Apocrypha) it's nothing like the Jews say that they get out of the Book of Maccabees. There was not command by the Maccabees to keep a dedication at the time that they cleansed the temple. But the Jews have also paganized and perverted it, because the tradition was that there was only enough oil for one day, but one of the sockets of the candelabra—where they lit the lamp—had oil for only one day, but it lasted seven days. Therefore, they keep Hanukkah!

But what they do—and even many of the Jews don't realize it—is have eight candles, not seven. The middle one is raised. In pagan Judaism, that is to the Queen of Heaven. So, Hanukkah is just as pagan as Christmas. But they like turn to John 10 and read:

John 10:22 "Now it was winter, and the Feast of Dedication was taking place at Jerusalem." In reading that, they say that Jesus was there and He kept Hanukkah. The question is:

- Which dedication was this?
- Was it the dedication of Maccabees after they cleansed the temple?

or

- Was it really the dedication of the temple when it was rebuilt from Ezra 6, completed in the month of Adar in the winter?

I would prefer to say that Jesus would not be there on a Jewish pagan day! But He would be there on the day that Josiah and the governor and Haggai the Prophet were there at the dedication.

Ezra 6:15: "And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity kept the dedication of this house of God with joy. And they offered at the dedication of this house of God a hundred bulls, two hundred rams, and four hundred lambs. And for a sin offering for all Israel, twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. And they set the priests in their sections, and the Levites in their divisions, for the service of God, which *is* at Jerusalem, as it is written in the book of Moses" (vs 15-18).

So, the key to help answer the question—because Ezra and Nehemiah do not say, ‘Thus says the Lord...’—they were following the writings of Moses, which it says, ‘Thus says the Lord’ to Moses.

Verse 19: “And the children of the captivity kept the Passover on the fourteenth *day* of the first month.” {Note book: *The Christian Passover*}

The covenant that God made with Abraham actually happened on the 14th day of the 1st month and could be called a *proto-Passover* or a first Passover (Gen. 15). I explain in the Passover book in great detail and somewhat in the book: *The Day That Jesus the Christ Died*.

We can verify that because when the Passover in Egypt took place, it says on the night that they left, it was ‘the very same day 430 years later’ that they left Egypt, as God had promised Abraham (Gen. 15), which was the first day of Unleavened Bread beginning at night.

The 14th day of the 1st month is the correct day for Passover. The Passover book covers every question, heresy and problem that we possibly know about the Passover: Jewish, Christian, communion and all of that sort of nonsense.

Verse 20: “The priests and the Levites *were* purified together, all of them pure. And they killed the Passover *lamb* for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. And the children of Israel ate the *Passover lamb*, all who had come again out of exile, and all such as had separated themselves to them from the uncleanness of the nations of the land in order to seek the LORD God of Israel” (vs 20-21).

They had just gone wild into paganism, and that’s why God sent them off into captivity. Read Jeremiah and Ezekiel and you see how absolutely corrupt that they had become. We’re reaching that point right now in America, too. We have blatantly corrupt, lying, cheating politicians and religious figures who are being accepted as wonderful and great.

Verse 22: “And *they* kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy...” What does this show? *When they came back after captivity, they were keeping the Passover correctly, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread!*

“...for the LORD had made them joyful, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them to make their hands strong in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel” (v 22).

We start with Ezra, and then it brings up his

return. Ezra 7 will help answer the question: **What authority did Ezra, the priest, and Nehemiah, the governor, have to tell the children of Israel what to do on the Sabbath Day without saying ‘Thus says the Lord...’?**

Ezra 7:6: “This Ezra went up from Babylon. And he *was* a ready scribe in the Law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given. And the king granted him all he asked, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.” *Then it lists all those who went up, and so forth!*

Verse 8: “And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, in the seventh year of the king.” *It took Ezra four months to get there from Babylon!*

Verse 9: “Now, on the first *day* of the first month he began to go up from Babylon, and on the first *day* of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him, For Ezra had set his heart to seek the Law of the LORD... [which he had been doing in Babylon before he came back] ...and to do *it*, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel” (vs 9-10). So, when Ezra came up, he came with:

- the hand of God
- the power of God
- the authority of God

One of the things that the Jews were doing was intermarry among the heathen around them, which was one of the things that God had sent them away for to the captivity of Babylon. *That’s why He sent them, among other things!*

When we come the Nehemiah let’s read what Ezra did when he got there.

Nehemiah 8:1: “And all the people gathered themselves as one man into the street before the Water Gate. And they spoke to Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month” (vs 1-2).

- What day is the first day of the seventh month? *Trumpets!*
- Were they following the Law of God? *Yes!*

In this case you don’t have to say, ‘Thus says the Lord...’; it’s understood!

Verse 3: “And he read from it in the open square in front of the Water Gate from daybreak until noon... [so this is an all-day service] ...in front of the men and the women, and those who could

understand. And the ears of all the people *were attentive* to the Book of the Law.”

It’s not like we have today; we all have Bibles and open them up. When we have Bible studies and Sabbath services, we all have our Bibles open and take notes and mark our Bibles and things like this, which is a tremendous blessing in this age. It didn’t start to become this way until Tyndale translated the New Testament and hence the whole Bible into English. Since that time, the Word of God has become more and more readily available. Now every human being that has a Bible is held accountable to God, whether they will read or not, obey it or not, and will be judged on that. That’s just people in the world. For those of us in the Church of God who have the Bible:

- Do we treat it with love and zeal?
- Do we learn from it?
- Do we study from it everyday?

or

- Do we treat it with laziness and contempt when we have it all before us?

It’s kind of like when Jesus went to pray just before He was arrested. What happened to the disciples? *He went to pray and came back an hour later and found them sleeping!*

There’s something that human nature does when there’s trouble. You have to realize that in this age with everything going on, that we better guard against. When there are so many things coming upon you and it’s overwhelming, you turn everything off! When you do that, you get into a stupor! Notice that when you’re down and depressed and don’t feel like doing anything, what happens? *You get tired!*

That’s what happened to the disciples right at the beginning of the greatest crisis and they went to sleep! Right here with us, when we are right on the cusp of the greatest crisis in America and the world, how many are going to sleep at the switch? *Even within the Church!*

This is why it’s important that we understand thoroughly what’s in the Bible. We will never, never again have the opportunity to do it as we do now, so we better take full advantage of it.

Verse 4: “And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose”—*almost like the beginning of what church services should be like*, and the beginning of what synagogue services would later become.

“...And beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaijah, and Urijah, and Hilkiyah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand,

Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchijah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people. And when he opened it, all the people stood up.... [here’s and opening prayer]: ...And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, ‘Amen. Amen,’ lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with *their* faces to the ground” (vs 4-6). *Very humble after coming out of that!*

Then came all the different ones and verse 7: “...**namely the Levites caused the people to understand the Law**.... [they were given understanding] ...And the people stood in their place. And they read distinctly from the Book of the Law of God.... [when you read the Bible there are no wasted words] ...And they expounded the meaning and caused *them* to understand the reading” (vs 7-8).

The people had learned the Semitic language in Babylon, and the Law was written in Hebrew, which was just a little different; like the difference between German and Dutch. If you hear Dutch and you’re a German, you can pick up certain words, or visa versa. What they did was they gave them the correct understanding.

Verse 9: “And Nehemiah, the governor...” He was responsible for carrying out the laws as they pertained to the functioning of the physical city of Jerusalem and the environs around.

“...and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people, said to all the people, ‘This day *is* Holy to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep,’ for all the people wept when they heard the words of the Law. Then he said to them, ‘Go, eat the fat and drink the sweet...’” (vs 9-10)—*and keep the day!*

Verse 14: “And they found written in the Law, which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month”—*the Feast of Tabernacles!*

So, they were told to go out and do that, and that’s what the Jews today in Israel. Most of the houses there have flat roofs. They put up a temporary dwelling and they get palm branches and other branches to put up there, as well.

Did Ezra and Nehemiah—in particularly Nehemiah—**have the right to tell them what to do on the Sabbath without having to say, ‘Thus says the Lord...’? Of course, and they understood it!** So, when it was said, ‘Do this...’ or ‘Don’t do that...’ it

was well understood that it was from the Word of God.

Neh. 9 is very important, because it shows that they were repenting. Nehemiah 9:1: “And on the twenty-fourth day of this month, the children of Israel were gathered with fasting and with sackcloth, and with earth upon them”—*because they had all the intermarriage and it was going to cause God to send them off into captivity again!*

Nehemiah 13:10—Nehemiah is writing this: “And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given *to them*; for the Levites and the singers, who did the work, had gone back, each one to his field.”

God didn’t want them out there doing their own work; they were to do the work at the temple. It requires a living to do so.

Verse 11: “And I contended with the rulers and said, ‘Why is the house of God forsaken?’ And I gathered them together and set them in their place. And all Judah brought the tithe of the grain and the new wine and the oil into the treasuries” (vs 11-12)—*as well as whatever monies and good that they could produce!*

Verse 13: “And I made treasurers over the treasuries... [and he lists all of them] (v 14): Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds which I have done for the house of my God and for the offices of it. In those days I saw in Judah *some* treading winepresses on the Sabbath...” (vs 13-15).

If you’ve never treaded out grapes, you don’t know what a great chore that is. Several people would get in a wine vat and they would stomp the Jews out with their feet. They were doing this on the Sabbath, a great deal of work! What they were doing was *conducting regular workday work and business on the Sabbath!*

“...and bringing in sacks of grain, and loading donkeys and also wine, grapes, and figs, and all kinds of burdens which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath Day. And I admonished *them* on the day in which they sold food. And men of Tyre dwelt therein, who brought fish and all kinds of goods, and sold them on the Sabbath to the children of Judah and in Jerusalem” (vs 15-16).

In other words, it was just like we have in America today, the Sabbath Day—Saturday—became the day of shopping and sales.

Verse 17: “And I contended with the nobles of Judah and said to them...” He was the governor and he also helped oversee the priests and the

Levites to make sure that they received their portions. Not in a doctrinal way to tell them what to do, but to make sure they did their prescribed duties.

He was also over all the princes who were to enforce the Law of God within Jerusalem and Judea. What is the Law of God concerning the Sabbath? *Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it Holy. Six days you may work and do all your labor, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings, and in it you shall not do any work!*

When you’re in Jerusalem, it’s a very small area, a very small city. They probably had, at this particular time, less than 20,000 people in the confines of Jerusalem itself. Everything is very close.

In talking to people who have been over to the Holy Land—I’m not going there because I don’t think it’s Holy at this particular time... Jesus said that if you’re outside of Judea and Jerusalem, ‘Don’t go in.’ So, I’m going to do what He says!

What they were doing was just ignoring the Sabbath! So, Nehemiah did not have to come out and say, ‘Thus says the Lord...’ because they already heard the Law of God and they knew what the Lord had said. But what were they doing? *‘Hey, I can make some money!’*

Verse 16: “And men of Tyre dwelt therein, who brought fish and all kinds of goods, and sold them on the Sabbath to the children of Judah and in Jerusalem. And I contended with the nobles of Judah and said to them, ‘What evil thing *is* this that you do and defile the Sabbath Day?’” (vs 16-17). They knew exactly what Nehemiah meant when he said that!

Verse 18: “‘Did not your fathers do this, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us and upon this city? Yet, you bring more wrath upon Israel by defiling the Sabbath.’ And it came to pass when the evening shadows fell on the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut and that they should not be opened until after the Sabbath. And I set *some* of my servants at the gates, so that there should be no burden brought in on the Sabbath Day. And the merchants and sellers of all kinds of goods stayed the night outside Jerusalem once or twice. And I warned them and said to them, ‘Why do you stay around the wall? If you do *so* again, I will lay hands on you.’ From that time on they did not come any more on the Sabbath. And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come *and* keep the gates, to sanctify the Sabbath Day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of

Your mercy” (vs 18-22).

You can read the rest of it about the intermarriage and so forth. They did not have to say, ‘Thus says the Lord...’ because they were in charge and teaching from the Law of Moses.

We’ve cover how we keep the Sabbath today, because we’re not living in a closed environment in a walled city. We all have to travel on the Sabbath Day and so forth, so there are different aspects of it.

Verse 25: “And I contended with them, and cursed them, and struck *certain* of them, and plucked off their hair...”—and took heathen wives.

John 5:

Q: Concerning John 5:3-4: Sometime ago I corresponded and told you—I’m told you are a pastor who never dodges a question—some of us have discussed this one. Some of the commentaries and translations I have read leave out John 5:3-4. It has always troubled me that the angel that supposedly troubled the waters would give healing to whatever elbow is shoved or who trampled his fellows out of the way. Not God’s way at all! I’m sure you will agree!

Some of the commentaries state that it was only a belief that an angel troubled the waters. Some say that some sort of regular disturbance of the waters—perhaps like an underground spring convulsing—may have made people think it was an angel.

Hence they theorized the legend arose. Verse 5, the commentaries add, may only be the impotent man referring to the legend and not fact. In v 8 Jesus did not even address the so-called troubling of the waters.

In your translation of the Bible, you do not delete vs 3 & 4, nor do you address the issue in any footnotes or comments. Could we get you to do something on this point. *Thank you!*

So, we’ll do it! Let’s add this: All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, or is God-breathed. However, it does not necessarily mean that the writers of commentaries believe in God or are even converted. So, their opinions really do not matter. Your belief in the Bible should not rest upon what commentators may or may not say, ***but what the Truth of Bible actually is!***

I don’t know what supposed or alleged proof they give that vs 3 & 4 shouldn’t be there. They should be there and are there. Also, remember that the very last warning in Rev. 22 says that ‘if anyone

adds to the words of this book’—referring to the whole Bible—‘God shall add to them the plagues that are listed’ in the book of Revelation and the whole Bible. If they take away from the words of the Bible, God will take their name out of the Book of Life!’

We’re dealing with some very important issues, not just casual comments by some commentator

- who doesn’t believe it
- who doesn’t believe in angels
- who does not believe in God
- who do not believe the Word of God is true

So therefore, those kinds of commentaries and commentators I suggest you get rid of. Read and study the whole Word of God and put it together properly. You cannot rely on commentaries to give you the Truth.

John 5:1: “After these things *there* was a Feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And there is in Jerusalem at the sheep gate a pool, called Bethesda in Hebrew, which has five porches. And in these *porches* were lying a great multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame *and* withered. They were waiting for the stirring of the water. For from time to time, an angel descended into the pool and agitated the water; and the first one to enter after the agitation of the water was made well from whatever disease he had” (vs 1-4).

Why would God do this? Let’s look at it from several points of view: these people were coming close to the temple of God; not right at the temple of God. In the main, most of the people were following the *traditions of the Jews* and not following the commandments of God. The very fact that there were a multitude of sick people—blind, lame and withered—shows that a lot of people were living in sin! Sickness is the result of sin!

Either sin that the individual has committed or sin because someone else through germs passed it on to you, and you became contagious and got the sickness.

If you’re blind you could have been born blind, or you could become blind. If you’re lame, you may have a hip out of joint, or back out of joint. Or withered, like the withered arm and so forth.

What God was doing was showing that He would still be compassionate, even to the wicked and ungodly, if they would but come to the pool and wait.

I’m sure that there were a lot of people who

pushed and shoved and so forth, and you say that's not God's way. Well, were these people Godly? or not? *No, they weren't Godly!* God was being merciful to the first one that went there as a means to show them that *if they would change their ways and repent to God that they could look to Him for healing!*

As you read the New Testament, you will have to understand that God is not a communist. What do I mean by that? *God does not deal with each one equally!* True salvation to the repentant ones, and those who overcome and endure to the end, will equally receive salvation. But they will unequally receive rewards, which is based upon their Godly works, their zeal and their love toward God.

Here we have a very similar principle: if you get down there, or someone can put you in there first, you'll be healed. You might not like the fact that God did it this way, so living in a land where we believe in equality and political equality... Look around, do we really have it? *No! No such thing!*

Some people might say, 'If He's a God of love, God wouldn't do this.' Well, He did it this way, and here was a man:

Verse 5: "Now, a certain man was there who had been *suffering with* an infirmity for thirty-eight years.... [he was persistent] ...Jesus saw him lying *there*, and, knowing that he had been there a long time, said to him, 'Do you desire to be made whole?' And the infirm *man* answered Him, 'Sir, I do not have anyone to put me in the pool after the water has been agitated. But while I am going, another *one* steps down before me'" (vs 5-7).

What can I say except that it is the Word of God and it is there? Maybe God set aside that man who had the infirmity for 38 years to be healed by Jesus! You might say, 'Would God do that?' *Yes, He could, because God can do anything He desires!*

Verse 8: "Jesus said to him, 'Arise, take up your bedroll and walk.' And immediately the man was made whole; and he took up his bedroll and walked. Now, that day was a Sabbath" (vs 8-9).

I don't know why anyone would want to extract that from the Scriptures and say it shouldn't be there, except that whomever would say so doesn't not respect the Word of God and has not proved the veracity of the Word of God, and has not proved the Greek text from which it comes, all of which have been done before the translation of the Bible.

John 9 will help answer the question: Would God do something like this just for the sake of the person being healed by Jesus during His ministry? *Yes!* This is one of my very favorite chapters.

{Note sermon series, CD and transcript book: *Gospel of John*}

John 9:1: "Now, *as Jesus was* passing by, He saw a man who was blind from birth." Why does God do this?

1. because of sin
2. in this particular case so he would be healed by Jesus
3. God allows these things because He wants to see if the rest of us are going to have love and compassion toward who are in such a condition

Here's dumbest question of all, v 2: "And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?'" **How can a developing infant in the womb sin? Impossible!**

Verse 3: "Jesus answered, 'Neither did this man sin, nor his parents; rather, *this blindness came* so that the works of God might be manifested in him. I must work the works of Him Who sent Me while it is still day. When *the* night comes, no one is able to work. As long as I am in the world, I am *the* Light of the world'" (vs 3-5).

Now, here's a very unusual thing that Jesus did. You wouldn't think that Jesus—the loving sweet Jesus that a lot of people like think of—would do this. 'How terrible! What an awful thing to do!'

Verse 6: "After saying these things, He spat on *the* ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to the eyes of the blind man."

(go to the next track)

Someone could read that and say, 'What an awful thing for Jesus to do. Spit on the ground, make some clay and put it on the man's eyes.' That's unsanitary! And instead of saying 'be healed' He gave the blind man a very difficult task.

Verse 7: "And He said to him, 'Go *and* wash in the pool of Siloam' (which is, by interpretation, "Sent")...."

That was a very arduous, very difficult path from the temple to go down to the Pool of Siloam was! You could also see some of the 'do-gooders' in society saying, 'What an evil thing for Jesus to do. Make that man walk that difficult way. Why didn't Jesus have enough compassion to take him by the hand and lead him down there?'

Well, Jesus wanted to see what kind of faith he had. Remember, he was made blind for the very purpose of this healing! So, what we need to do is

learn how God operates and understand that He does things like this.

“...Then he went and washed, and came *from there* seeing” (v 7). It’s just like following God’s Laws. It’s a hard and arduous task, especially if you don’t understand the Word of God. *You’re blind!*

Then the rest of the story is really quite humorous and shows the stupidity of the Pharisees and the ways of Judaism.

Yes, the verses John 5:3-4 are there and, yes, God does things differently than from what we expect! Yes, those verses are in the original, quite to the contrary of some commentators.

There are some good commentaries. There are some that are not so good. There are some that are bad! There are some commentaries that have good commentaries and not so good commentaries within the same book. Bullinger has about 90% are really good commentaries. About 10% of them you say, ‘Hey, wait a minute!’ The reason is that you must first be able to know the Word of God so you can judge the commentaries, whether they’re right or not.

My recommendation is to keep asking questions like this, kind of set them aside and anything you don’t understand just make note of it and keep reading and studying. Then when you come to understand you can go back and read it and you’ll understand why.

Luke 16—the Parable of the Unjust Steward:

Q: Why would God—or the Lord—through the parable commend the unrighteous steward?

What about that? Let’s read it and understand something.

Luke 16:1: “And He also said to His disciples, ‘There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and he was accused of wasting his *master’s* goods.’”

In the society there in the Holy Land at that time you had the ruling class and the super-rich. You were not allowed into that unless you were invited. Does it sound a little bit like it is today? *Yes!* Then you had the stewards or administrators who worked for the rich people.

Today we have something very similar to it as we see a collapse of the economy. We have the very rich and they have brokers who ripped them off. When there’s a downturn in the economy, you’re going to see this even more.

Another thing you need to understand is that when a steward or administrator was fired, he couldn’t get another job. That reputation would follow him wherever he went. Granted, they didn’t have telephones, but they had a lot of walking people with flapping mouths and all the information would get around. Like it says in Proverbs, ‘a bird would come and tell you.’

Verse 2: “And after calling him, he said to him, ‘What *is* this I hear concerning you? Render an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.’” *In other words, bring the books and let’s see how much you lost!*

Verse 3: “Now the steward said within himself, ‘What shall I do, for my lord is taking away the stewardship from me? I am not able to dig; I am ashamed to beg.’”

Look at the brokers in New York who lost their jobs and no longer getting any bonuses. Are they going to join the sewer crew in New York City and go 50-100 feet below the surface of the streets and work in the sewers, the subways and all that sort of thing? *No!* Same way here!

Verse 4: “I know what I will do...” *You have a plan of rescue*, which today you would say, ‘minimize your losses.’ Instead of losing 100% of everything, bring back something.

Just like there are many people who watched their 401Ks and IRAs go down in value week after week and did nothing. They didn’t study enough to understand that this is a financial collapse. They should have gotten out of it.

I know of one person who said, ‘In two months I lost \$50,000 out of my 401K.’ My answer to them was, ‘Why did you wait so long to lose \$50,000?’ Same way here! He did this to minimize his loss to his lord so that he would have something to give him, rather than nothing. He was not going out and collecting these things from the debtors.

Verse 4: “I know what I will do, that, when I have been removed *from* the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.” *He knew that he was going to be fired, so he said, ‘I better pad the way so I can get another job, and also save my master some dollars or goods!’*

Verse 5: “And after calling each one of his lord’s debtors to *him*, he said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my lord?’ And he said, ‘A hundred baths of oil.’ And he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down immediately *and* write fifty’” (vs 5-6).

So, instead of losing 100%, he could return to his master 50%. Would you say that 50% is better

than nothing? *Yes! That's what he's doing here!*

Verse 7: "Then to another he said, 'And how much do you owe?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill and write eighty.'"

Here is the key: People can't understand what was going on, because why would he do this when there was a hundred baths of oil and there were a hundred measures of wheat, and he would take a discount?

Another thing, too, you need to know the market. You need to know when to sell and minimize your loses. That's what he did. And because it was a prudent thing to do, not the best because he didn't diligently do his job to make sure that he got paid 100%, but at least he rescued a good amount of it for his lord.

Verse 8: "And the lord praised the unrighteous steward, because he had acted prudently. For the children of this world are more prudent in their own generation than the children of light."

That is true! Many people who are in the Church today have a very difficult time managing their finances. So, you need to get on top of it and take care of it the way you need to.

Verse 9: "And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of **the mammon of unrighteousness...**" *the goods and services and money.*

You need to have some friends in those areas so that when things start going difficult for you, you may have a fallback position where you can go to them and negotiate something, where you may be able to get some help.

"...so that, when you fail, they may receive you into the age-lasting dwellings" (v 9). *In other words, in this age*, this is something you can do through the age from the time of Christ until He returns. Not eternal; this is age-lasting.

Then Jesus gives a lesson, because the unjust steward was partially faithful to his lord. Actually, at the beginning he was completely unfaithful. Then with his action he became partially faithful and redeemed part of the loss.

So, in today's world, it is *minimize the loss!* Would you rather lose \$200 totally, or recuperate and get \$120? What would you desire? Zero? *or* \$120?

There was a time when we owned a mobile home in a mobile home park. Stephen lived in it for

a while and later Jonathan lived in it. As the housing crisis was getting worse and worse there were people who were trying to sell houses, which they couldn't sell. There were people trying to sell mobile homes, which they couldn't sell. As a matter of fact, there was a mobile home very similar that I had that had been on the market for 250 days. Remember, you have to pay the rent all during that time. So, that is approximately eight months.

So, you figure the rent at about \$750/month in that particular park, over eight months you're looking at \$5600 to \$6000 that you lose and you still have sold the mobile. So, when it came time to sell it, I happened to know a real estate man who knew some people who wanted to buy. I said that I would sell the mobile—which was really worth about \$30,000—and also get rid of the rent that we had to pay on it by selling it for \$12,000.

If figured that if that other mobile sat there for 252 days, and probably sit there for another 90 days plus—and still have to reduce the price to get rid of it—the best thing to do is do the example of the 'unrighteous steward' and reduce the price and get something back and cut my losses.

He had someone who bought it and I said, 'If you they give \$2,000 down I will carry the balance and you pay me a \$1,000/month for ten months at no interest. They bought it.

What is happening? I received \$10,000 over the course of ten months and the \$2,000 down, which paid for the cost of the transaction and taxes. I have \$10,000 that I'm recovering, plus I have for ten months \$800/m which \$8,000 that I'm not expending.

They're happy because they got something for a lower price. I am happy because I got rid of the mobile and the burden of the rent, which I would have to pay.

I had one caveat that I had them do is that at the first of every month when they made their half payment to me, that I had them put in there the receipt that they paid the rent at the beginning of the month. This way I would know whether the rent is current, because if it is not current, and I hold the note, and they up and move out on me, I'm held responsible for the rent. So, I did this as a safeguard so I would know what was going on.

This is what you need to do in financial crises. You're not going to get the top dollar. Find out what you can get and get out. This is what happened here and Jesus goes on to give a lesson:

Verse 10: "The one who *is* faithful in *the things that are* least is also faithful in much..." *This*

is in all things, good times and bad times! In good times you handle it one way, and in bad times you have to handle it another way.

“...and the one who *is* unrighteous in *the things that are* least is also unrighteous in much.” (v 10). We can look at this many different ways.

- How is your spiritual life with God?

Is it righteous?

or

- Is it lacking?
- How have you been doing with tithes and offerings?
- Have you been righteous in it?
- Have you been faithful in it even in bad times?

or

- Do you only give in good times?

I'll tell you another thing that will happen: If you don't consistently honor God with your substance in good times and in bad times—and in the bad times you stop—then when your good times come, I guarantee that you will be so much in debt you will again have nothing to give to God. *I've seen that happen again and again!*

That's just the way it goes. It isn't that God is asking you to give something that you don't have, but of what you do have you give Him some of it—what you can afford—even in the difficult times.

Verse 11: “Therefore, if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true *riches*?”

The thing is this: It's not the money or the unrighteous mammon, ***but the honesty and truthfulness in your heart, mind, being and faithfulness!*** That's what it is!

It's not the thing out here that is so important, but the thing out here ***reflects what is in your mind and heart!*** {note sermon series: *Tithing*}. See if you can get your life adjusted, even on a discounted basis, and get right with God as this parable shows.

Verse 12: “And **if** you have not been faithful in that which *is* another's, who will give to you your own?”

If you haven't been faithful toward God with all your heart, mind, soul and being in loving Him, why is He going to give you eternal life? If we love God and obey Him, and how we conduct our lives according to His commandments, and how we handle our finances are all a part of a whole picture. Too many people are turned aside because of money

one way or the other.

- If they have lots of money they get corrupt!
- If they have none they complain because they have nothing!

When they get something, then they don't behave the way that they ought to. So, here's the key; this is of the heart:

Verse 13: “No servant is able to serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and he will love the other; or he will hold to *the* one and will despise the other. **You cannot serve God and mammon.**”

All of those ministers who have great merchandising things, you need to think on that. Let's see what Jesus said to the religious leaders of His time. I've never, never seen it fail. Whenever there is a church that doesn't believe in tithing, what do they have to do? *They have to replace the laws and commandments of God with their own devices!* ‘We'll mail you pledge cards. When you get this pledge card, you should make it approximately 10%.’ *Stealing God's way!*

The Mormons make you come in for a reconciliation—along with your income taxes—with the bishop to make sure that you have paid your due tenth!

God wants you to be faithful and honest in your mind and in your heart! To be wise in how you handle things in your conduct and in your finances!

Verse 14: “Now the Pharisees, who were also covetous, heard all these things; and they ridiculed Him. And He said to them, ‘You are those who justify themselves before men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination before God’” (vs 14-15).

You can apply that to all religionists. And to Wall Street. Didn't that turn out be an abomination before God? Will we not see all of the absolutely insane bailouts to the tune of trillions of dollars become an abomination before God? *Yes, indeed!*

That's the meaning of the Parable of the Steward of the unrighteous mammon. The way that you make friends for yourself in the world from unrighteous mammon:

1. you're honest in your transactions
2. you pay your bills on time
3. when there are economic difficulties, you still have to execute wisdom to not lose everything

That's why the discounting. That way if things get bad and you have to go to the bank and borrow money, then the banker will know that you will pay it back. Not like in the past and they loan you lots of money and if you don't pay it back 'we'll just go to the government and have them take care of it for you.'

The truth of it is that in this world you can't get along without the unrighteous mammon.

James 2:

Q: I do not have the words to express my pleasure in reading your new English translation of the Bible. However, there is one verse in your translation, **James 2:18**, that does not quite track the meaning I get from the *King James Version*, which has to do with faith and works.

King James: "...shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."

I'll tell you why I translated it that way, and why that is the correct translation, because this properly reflects the Greek. We'll read the context and we will see what James is saying in v 18:

James 2:14 (FV): "My brethren, what good *does* it do, if anyone says *that he* has faith, and does not have works? Is faith able to save him?... [being alone] ...Now then, if there be a brother or sister who is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; be warmed and be filled,' and does not give to them the things necessary for the body, what good is it? In the same way also, faith, if it does not have works, is dead, by itself. But someone is going to say..." (vs 14-18).

This is what we're confronted with between liberal Protestantism and what we teach concerning the commandments of God. Here's the question and the way I translated it:

"... 'You have faith, and I have works.' *My answer is: **You prove your faith to me through your works, and I will prove my faith to you through my works***" (v 18).

That's exactly what the Greek says. So, what is the meaning? *and* What is the lesson here?

- **IF** you have faith, *you're going to have works*
- **IF** you say that you have faith, *whatever you do is proven by your works*
- **IF** you say, 'I have faith and I keep Sunday,' that's *your works contrary to the works of God*

- **IF** you say, 'I believe in grace and I don't have to keep the Law,' *those are your works*

The key is that everyone has works one way or the other with or without faith. Everybody has works, which can be expressed this way: ***the works are the actions as a result of what you believe, and what you believe is your faith!***

That's why James said, "**You prove your faith to me through your works...**"

- What works do you have?
- Do you keep the commandments of God?
No, you break the commandments of God!

No one is ever without works. That's why it's this way in the Greek. Everybody has works of some kind.

What if you're so lazy that you never get out of your house. Like this man who got so wrapped up in eating and consuming food that all he could do is lie in bed and soon he weighed a thousand pounds. What was his works? *It certainly wasn't getting up and getting out and exercise in the gym! His works was he laid in bed and ate and ate, and his works reflected his faith, **which was nothing!***

Likewise, this is really James taunting the one who says, 'I have faith.' But James is actually saying, 'No, you also have works. If you want to prove your faith to me, show me your works "**... and I will prove my faith to you through my works.**"

'Without' in the *King James* is not a literal actual translation and does not reflect what James is really trying to show and teach.

Everybody has works. You either have *your own, or you have God's*, one of the two. Even your inactions, are works. Just like if ***you decide not to decide something, that is your decision.*** So, you still have a decision one way or the other.

Likewise with faith; ***if you truly have faith, you're going to have works!*** Then James gives an example to show the works of the demons.

Verse 19: "Do you believe that God is one? You do well *to believe this.* Even the demons believe and tremble *in fear.*"

Why? *Because they have their evil works and won't obey God, have no faith to do so, and they tremble because they know God's judgment is coming!*

Verse 20: "But are you willing to understand, O foolish man, that faith without works

is dead?" *It's really impossible to have no works!*
But if you do not have the works of God, it's dead!

You can look at Catholicism and Protestantism... I've watched Joel Osteen, a wonderful, nice, heart-rending, lovely little story on how to get along with people in the midst of a collapsing economy and society. I thought, those are his works based upon his faith.

But where it's referring to *without works* that's referring to the works that are to be motivated by God, *the good works!*

Verse 21: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac, his own son, upon the altar? Do you not see that faith was working together with his works, and by works *his* faith was perfected?" (vs 21-22)—*because they go hand in glove!*

If you have a glove on your hand and your hand represents the faith, the glove represents your works. What kind of glove do you have on your hand? *That's what it becomes!*

Verse 25: "Now, in the same manner also, was not Rahab the harlot justified by works when, after receiving the messengers, she sent *them* out a different way?" *They came in asked her, 'Where did they go!'* She said, 'Try over there, maybe they went that way.'

It wasn't an outright lie; it was a diversion, because it would have been worse to betray them, so she said to try the other way, maybe they went out that gate.

Verse 26: "For as the body without *the* Spirit is dead, in the same way also, faith without works is dead." *The Spirit comes from God!*

The Spirit gives life, and if you have life you're going to have living works. If you are dead, the works that you have are nothing, and that's what *your works* are, ***nothing!*** Now let's see faith in action by works and obedience together: you have to have ***faith, obedience and works!***

What James wrote was a real play on words. He was saying, 'You say you have faith. Okay, come and prove your faith to me by your works. What works do you really have?' The unanswered question is: Are they yours? *or* God's? It also shows that *living faith with action* and *dead faith with no works*.

So, if you say, 'Prove your faith to me by your works,' and you have no works, your faith is in vain. Heb. 11 is very interesting; it's called *the faith chapter*. I really cannot comprehend how the Protestants can say that they believe in faith, but

they don't believe in obedience. Yet, they read the *faith chapter* and say this is the faith chapter. When you read it, ***faith and belief is followed by action!***

Hebrews 11:1: "Now, faith is *the* substance of *things* hoped for, *and the* conviction of things not seen." *Substance is the correct word in the Greek*. It actually comes from God's Spirit to give us the faith we need, so that we can hope for eternal life, and the conviction that we are going to get it, though we don't see it. You can apply this to many other things.

Verse 2: "For by this *kind of faith* the elders obtained a good report. By faith we understand that the worlds were created by *the* Word of God, so that the things that are seen were made from *things* that are invisible" (vs 2-3).

Even with all of our scientific knowledge that we have today in delving clear down into the smallest portion of matter, they still don't know what's behind the atoms, electrons, protons and what is the smallest particle of matter, that you cannot see.

But we have faith that we know that God did it and that God sustains us, *and we believe it!*

Verse 4: "By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain..." What did he do? *He obeyed God!* He gave the sacrifice according to the instructions of God. Cain did not do that.

"...by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it, though he died, *he* is yet speaking" (v 4)—*because we can go back to Gen. 4 and still learn a lesson from it!*

Verse 5: "By faith Enoch was transported so that he would not look upon death, and was not found because God had transported him; for before his departure it was testified of him that he pleased God."

Then Paul tells us how to please God, v 6: "Now, **without faith it is impossible to please God...**" *Or with the wrong kind of faith as Cain had, the wrong kind of belief!*

"...For it is mandatory *for* the one who comes to God to believe that He exists, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (v 5). *When you seek God*, what are you going to do? *Obey God!*

Verse 7: "By faith Noah, after being Divinely instructed by God about the things *he could* not yet see... [God was going to flood the world] ...was moved with fear *and* prepared an ark for *the* salvation of his house; through which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." *You had to have faith to build the*

ark!

There is a man in the Netherlands who has built a model the same size as the ark. I suppose he has tourists going to there to look at it. He actually has it one of the harbors so people can go in and look at it. It's quite interesting.

If Noah did not believe God he would not have Godly faith to act upon the instructions that God gave him. This is where it is with a lot of people. Everyone has their own measure of faith:

- whether it is to God
- whether it is to another man
- whether it is to self and your own way of looking at things

If Noah had said, 'I don't know how God is going to do this, and besides, making an ark that big and that tall and it's just me and my three sons, it's going to take us forever to get this thing done. By the way, it didn't take 120 years. It was 120 years that God limited the lifespan of man at that particular time, and gradually came down that way after the Flood. Because in the 500th year, God appeared to Noah, and in the 600th year the Flood came. So, that can't be 120 years in building the ark. So, he did it.

Verse 8: "By faith Abraham, being called of God to go out into the place, which he would later receive for an inheritance, obeyed and went, not knowing where he was going."

God said to 'leave your father's house and your father's country and go into a land that I will show you.' Abraham said, 'Yes, Lord,' and went.

In every case, *faith is followed by action!* Lack of faith is followed by lack of action or self-actions, self justification, laziness or whatever it may be.

If you truly have faith you will believe God and obey Him! So, when we come back to James and answer the question, what James is literally doing is taunting the one who says, 'I have faith and I don't need works.'

What James was saying is that 'you have *your own* kind of faith and you have *your own* kind of works. Let's stack that up with ***God's kind of faith and God's kind of works!***'

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* (except where noted)

Scriptural References:

- 1) Ezra 6:14-16
- 2) John 10:22
- 3) Ezra 6:15-22
- 4) Ezra 7:6, 8-10
- 5) Nehemiah 8:1-10, 14
- 6) Nehemiah 9:1
- 7) Nehemiah 13:10-17, 16-22, 25
- 8) John 5:1-9
- 9) John 9:1-7
- 10) Luke 16:1-15
- 11) James 2:14-22, 25-26
- 12) Hebrews 11:1-8

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Genesis 15
- Revelation 22
- Genesis 4

Also referenced:

Sermon: *Should Christians Observe Hanukkah*

Books:

- *The Christian Passover* by Fred R. Coulter
- *The Day That Jesus the Christ Died* by Fred R. Coulter

Sermon Series:

- *Gospel of John*
- *Tithing*

FRC:bo

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