

A Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets – The Sovereignty of God

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Well, brethren, I'd like to welcome all of you to the Feast of Trumpets. I hope everyone is having, not only an enjoyable but also with our fellowship with one another, a very profitable time to recharge our batteries, to come before God and renew in our minds the plan He has in store for us. I'd like to begin by reading four prophecies relating to the fulfillment of this day. There will be two Old Testament prophecies and two New Testament prophecies. I'm going to read them without much commentary. I do want to accentuate and maybe have a few comments about our involvement in them, but these are prophecies that you're very familiar with. I just want to try to refresh our minds. Look over in Isaiah, chapter 9. This is one that you're very familiar with.

Isaiah 9:6. *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

7) Of the increase of [his] government and peace [there will be] no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to order it, and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward even, forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. (NKJV)

That's pointing to a time when Christ will return and literally take over that throne that David sat on, and of course, we understand in the future that that's pictured by the events of this day. Look over in Zechariah 14 for the next one.

Zechariah 14:1. *Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst.*

2) For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

3) Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle.

4) And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, [making] a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south.

5) Then you shall flee [through] My mountain valley, ... (NKJV)

It reminds me a little of Moses and crossing the Red Sea, because that remnant that was left, when this mountain splits, they're going to flee through that valley.

5b) ... For the mountain valley shall reach to Azal.

Azal (there's not a place named that) they think is a gate in the city. So in other words, it will take them outside whatever the danger or whatever that occupational area. That's

the guess.

5c) Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the Lord my God will come, [and] (I want to highlight) all the saints with You.

6) It shall come to pass in that day [that] there will be no light; the lights will diminish.

7) It shall be one day which is known to the Lord – neither day or night. But at evening time it shall happen [that] it will be light.

8) And in that day it shall be [that] living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; in both summer and winter it shall occur.

9) And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be – “The Lord is one,” and His name one. (NKJV)

Revelation 11:15. Then the seventh angel sounded and there were loud voices in heaven saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become [the kingdoms] of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign forever and ever.

16) And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshipped God,

17) saying: “We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned.

18) The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth.”

19) Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake and great hail. (NKJV)

Then down to Revelation 19 and we'll start in verse 5.

Revelation 19:5. Then a voice came from the throne, saying, “Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!”

6) And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thundering, saying, “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!”

7) “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.”

8) And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

9) Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed [are] those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”

Now skip down to verse 11. Here is the next event.

11) *Now I saw heaven opened, (and we just read in Revelation 11 where the temple of God was opened) and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him [was] called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.*
12) *His eyes [were] like a flame of fire, and on His head [were] many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.*
13) *He [was] clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.*
14) *And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.*

brethren, these are not angels; this is Christ's bride that is returning with Him. That linen that is clean and bright, we just read before at the marriage supper, that's what they would be arrayed in.

15) *Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*
16) *And He has on [His] robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

Clearly the prophecies we read are about future fulfillment and they're related to the return of Jesus Christ with His bride to put down all of man's governments and to establish a government that will never end.

Let's look at the giving of this day. Turn to Leviticus 23. As a custom, I feel compelled to read the command of why we are here. I hope we never just kind of take it by rote, but I think it helps us to see that God literally breathed that command for us to be here.

Leviticus 23:1. *And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,*
2) *"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim [to be] holy convocations, these are My feasts.'*
3) *'Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day [is] a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work [on it]; it [is] the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.'*

Skip down to verse 23,

23) *Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,*
24) *"Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'In the seventh month, on the first [day] of the month (and that is today; this is the only holy day that we keep that is a new moon), you shall have a Sabbath [rest], a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.*
25) *'You shall do no customary work [on it]; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord.'"*

You know what's interesting, and it's easy to read right over it, it says a memorial_of

blowing of trumpets. The definition of “memorial” is something such as a monument or holiday intended to celebrate or honor the memory of a person or event. In other words, it’s something that has already happened. It’s something we’re looking back at. It’s an adjective. It says, serving as a remembrance of a person or event, a commemorative of or relating to or being in memory. Consider that a memorial implies thinking back and pondering events that have happened in the past and gathering instruction and encouragement from the lessons from them. You know, here in America we have a holiday called Memorial Day and it is observed I think on the last Monday of May. It was instituted for Americans to think back and consider the ultimate sacrifices that were made in the past by the soldiers of this nation in order to preserve the freedoms and the rights that we have. But a memorial day is clearly not to think forward about the next war or whatever, it’s to think back about what has happened in the past.

Let me just contrast that and give you an example of looking back versus looking forward. Turn to Hebrews, chapter 10. You see, there are two very clear words of looking back or looking forward. I’ll just read this to make the point.

Hebrews 10:1. *For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, [and] not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.*

So what Paul is saying is that the sacrificial system in the Old Covenant pointed forward to a future event. It was a shadow of things to come and, as you know, a shadow casts an image of the real thing. So looking forward is a shadow. The shadow of the sacrifices here was pointing to it, but the real thing, of course, was the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made when He was killed for our sins.

I think we all know that the holy days including the Sabbath are both a memorial and a shadow; in other words, they look to events in the past as well as to events in the future. God gave us three distinct holy day seasons, the spring, the summer and the fall. Don’t turn there, Exodus 12:14, God instructs the Israelites to use the events of the spring holy days as a memorial and you can look that up. In other words, He wanted them to think about what happened. Many of the accounts written in the Old Testament in the Psalms remind people of what God did for them when He took them out of Egypt and brought them to Him.

The Feast of Weeks, the second holy day season, is a memorial of the first meeting when God brought them out of Egypt and brought them to Himself and entered into that covenant. It’s a memorial. It looks back to that. It’s a memorial of the beginning of the New Testament Church which occurred on that day, and God gave to His Church His Holy Spirit in a very visible and public way and they, at that moment, were begotten.

We also know there are future events that these holy days represent, but they represent historic events as well. By looking back and looking forward, we can gain encouragement from them.

But think about the fall holy days. They seem, in the way we look at them, to picture only future events, things that are going to happen in the future: the return of Christ, the

binding of Satan, the Feast of Tabernacles – the millennium, the Last Great Day. They seem to be things that are going to happen and what we're doing now is a shadow of that, foreshadowing, looking forward to that. If I could put it another way, perhaps we see the spring and summer holy days as processes that we should be actively working in to prepare for the future. In the spring, we're examining ourselves and asking for and receiving forgiveness by that sacrifice, by that Passover, and recommitting in our minds and before God that covenant we entered into, putting sin out of our lives, trying to live lives pleasing to God and doing our part to prepare for our future role as a firstfruit with the summer holy days. These are things we know we should actively be doing in our lives.

But the fall holy days seem to be different. They are future events, events instead of having a present action or associated on our part, they might seem that they are just events we're waiting on. We're just looking forward to them. We're looking forward to the return of Christ; we're looking forward to Satan being put away, but there's no action on our part. It's just looking forward to it. You know, events perhaps we can even be passive about because those fulfillments are really, right now, out of our control, and they are. They are, we reason to ourselves, things in the future. Don't get me wrong, brethren, they're very, very important events in the future, but there's nothing past or present about them ... or is there?

Why would God inspire the words, "memorial of blowing of trumpets," indicating that we should think back and consider when we're here and we look forward to future events?

I know all of us have kept the Feast of Trumpets many times. There are different trumpets: a warning, a call to war, a call to assemble. In other words, they represent very important life changing events. What I found interesting, and if you have the old booklet, God's Holy Days or Man's Pagan Holidays – Which? chapter three is about the Feast of Tabernacles. The one I had, I believe it was first published in 1957 and I think I had a '72 or '73 printing of it. It had been printed a couple of times. On there, they read the scripture and they say, "a memorial" and then in parenthesis they say "not a shadow." While they said that, the rest of the chapter is dedicated to what is going to happen in the future. I found that interesting because, again, very literally a memorial is about things in the past. Again, I just want to say I don't want to diminish from the prophetic events, because I think those give us the vision and the hope and the understanding of what's in it and we will see that proven.

What I want to focus on today, to add to the picture, is look back and help fill in some of the picture of those future fulfillments. You see, brethren, the entire world, including God's people, are going to be facing some of the most severe trials that have ever been in the history of mankind. Christ, we know, described it as a time unparalleled in the past or in the future. God's Church in the past twenty-five years has been through some of the most tumultuous times that we know since the early days of the Church, events that are increasing in intensity, increasing in frequency and brethren, sadly many have just quit. Many have said, "I can't take it. This can't be God's Church with all these problems. Why would God do all of this?" They've given up on God because of their mistaken thinking that God just wouldn't allow this to happen to us. All anyone needs to do is look at the prayer requests or the announcements, the ones today and

you know that God's Church is not immune to the trials the world faces, like relationships, jobs, health and aging. How could God love us on one hand and allow us to experience these things? brethren, you know what? It's going to get worse before it gets better.

Today brethren, let's use this time as a memorial, a time to reflect on God. Let's put God in the center of this holy day and consider aspects of Him, God's character, His plan, our current focus, our current actions and how those should affect our current spiritual development, to help us better prepare for our role in the future, but also brethren, to prepare for what's immediately ahead of us. In other words, let's move forward from here by looking back.

If you want a title for today's sermon and it's kind of long, it's

A Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets – The Sovereignty of God

I think as we go through this, that will become clearer. When the future fulfillment of this day comes (the entire world), there's not going to be any doubt of the absolute sovereignty of God. He will be the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, He will have all the power and all the authority, and it's going to come at a time that all the inhabitants of the earth are going to know God is supreme. God's sovereignty is one of the fulfillments of this day.

What about looking back as a memorial? What can we see in the past? Turn to the book of Job. I want to focus on this before we move forward. Again, this is a scripture we are very familiar with. I just want to recall it to mind before we move forward. Of course, this is when Job had his epiphany, when he saw God.

Job 42:1. *Then Job answered the Lord and said:*

2) *"I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of [Yours] can be withheld from You.*

3) *[You asked], 'Who [is] this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand. Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.*

4) *Listen, please, and let me speak; ... (NKJV)*

You know this was a humble Job who before said, "I want God to give me some answers." Now he says, "Please listen."

4b) *... [You said] 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.'*

5) *"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You."*

Notice this, because he saw God, he also saw himself and said,

6) *Therefore I abhor [myself], and repent in dust and ashes." (NKJV)*

Notice this, because he saw God, he also saw himself and said, "I abhor myself and

repent in dust and ashes.” You see brethren, I don’t care how good we are, how great we are, how much we know or what we can do, the only way we can feel good about that is to compare ourselves against someone else. Job, when he finally said, “Now I’m looking at You, I see You, I am very small and I’m very sorry.” Job went through tests and trials, things that are almost unimaginable to us, but do you know what? Those trials brought Job to the point that he saw God.

Do you even wonder sometimes why we have trials? Is God lashing out at us and punishing us or is He focused on our relationship with Him? You see, unless we have a proper relationship with God and see Him as He is, we can’t have proper relationships with one another. Those relationships will be clouded and we will see that later.

Remember, Job before that was a very converted person and very sincere. Job loved God. Job was committed to God and to His truth and he wanted to have a relationship with God, but by his own admission, he failed to see the greatness of God.

You know, our forefathers when God literally drew them out of Egypt, still failed to see God’s Sovereignty. Remember, God destroyed a nation, brought it to its knees.

Everything they looked at for their livelihood, everything they had for their social was just leveled and destroyed, all those gods that they looked to. Go over to Psalms 78 and I’ll start in verse 38.

Psalms 78:38. But He, [being] full of compassion, forgave [their] iniquity, and did not destroy [them]. Yes, many a time He turned His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath;

39) For He remembered that they [were] but flesh, a breath that passes away and does not come again.

40) How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert!

41) Yes, again and again they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.

42) They did not remember His power: The day when He redeemed them from the enemy. (NKJV)

You know, that word translated “limiting” is an interesting word. This is the only place in the Bible that this word limited is used. It’s Strong’s 8428, *tavah*. It means to wound or trouble or to cause pain. It’s from a primitive word which means scraping to pieces, and you ask “what does that mean?” If you take an object, anything, and you start to scrape it, it becomes smaller. In other words, it diminishes whatever you have that you’re scraping to pieces. You’re taking it from there and you’re making it smaller and you’re dividing it up. The Geneva Bible Notes said of this, “They turned back and tempted God.” It says, “As they all do who measure the power of God by their capacity.” In other words, we try to see God and His power with our capacity.

You know brethren, as soon as we insert ourselves into what God is doing, we diminish God and His power. We take a being that is unlimited in all aspects, whether it be existence, power, love, mercy and we put a boundary around it. We try to measure or quantify God who is unlimited by our words or our concepts which are very limited, and when we do, we have scraped away and diminished God. We’re limited in every area of our existence. Our lives are limited, our patience, our perfection, our mercy, our love

are all very limited.

There was a time in the Church when we, very innocently, and I'll say very sincerely, thought that somehow we were in control of God. I don't think anybody would have said, "We're in control of God." We didn't use those words, but we used to talk about God's work and we'd talk about what we had accomplished in the Church. We called it God's work and we limited God's work to what we were focused on, what we were doing and brethren, that diminished God. We even said that God worked exclusively through His Church. Again innocently and sincerely. Don't get me wrong. It was not evil on our part. We were like children. We also said that God is waiting on us to complete something so He can move on. Again it was very sincere and immature and very mistaken.

Many of you who are older remember the Art Linkletter Show. I remember this cute, precocious little girl and Art asked her if she knew how to make a cake. She said, "Yes," she knew how to make a cake. He said, "Could you describe it?" She said, "You take a bowl and eggs and then you take flour and throw it all over you and when your husband comes in the door, you go, "Oh, I worked all day baking this cake for you and here it is." That was, in her mind, how to make a cake and I think sometimes our work that we wanted to attribute to this great sovereign God, we described these very small and very limited events.

Brethren, I don't want to say that God didn't appreciate it and I hope what we do pleases God. But to somehow think that God is here and what's going on in this whole world is focused right; brethren, let's don't be so naïve as that. Never forget, brethren, there's not a person, principality or a power that can thwart what God is doing and never forget, we need God to do for us. God does not need us to do for Him.

Go over to John 5. I know those are very strong pills to swallow, that God doesn't need us. God wants us, God loves us and He desires to have us in His family. brethren, those are choices that we have to make and we can grieve God. Notice, if you have a red-letter edition, this was Jesus Christ, this was the Word saying this.

John 5:30. *"I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me."* (NKJV)

Go forward to John 15, because He passed that concept on to His disciples and to us.

John 15:5. *"I am the vine, you [are] the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."*

brethren, we didn't find God; we didn't come to Him. God called us and extended an invitation for us to be a part of what He is doing and we must never forget that and we must never doubt that. If we do, we will stumble and we'll get lost.

Turn over to 2 Peter 3. I want to just go through this concept of remembering.

2 Peter 3:1. *Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (We know he was referring to what we now call first and second Peter) in [both of] which I stir up your pure ...*

You could insert the word “converted.” He’s talking to those begotten sons of God, those that had His Spirit, those that were becoming converted.

1b) ... I stir up your pure minds (How was he to do this?) by way of reminder.

Peter was saying, “I’m not going to tell you anything new. I want to remind you of what you already know; I want you to call it back into your mind.” Because perhaps they had lost their focus, and brethren, when we’re in the middle of trials, it’s easy to become distracted. God knows that. Here Peter was trying to say, “Look, these are things that you know. I want to stir it up because perhaps they have lost their focus.”

2 Peter 3:2. *That you may be mindful ...*

The New American Standard says remember; the Geneva states to call to remembrance; the NIV and New American Bible state, to recall.

2b) ... of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment ...

That word is Strong’s 1785 and it really means an authoritative prescription. In other words, because this is from the apostles, “I want you to remember what the prophets said and what we said.”

2 continued) ... of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, (NKJV)

You know, sometimes when we speak and I know I’ve said this, “Well, this is my opinion.” Even Paul did that. I think I’m fairly safe. Remember in 1 Corinthians 7:6, where he was talking about marriage; in 2 Corinthians 8:8 he was talking about proving their love. He said, “Look, this is not God’s commandment, this is what I’m telling you. I believe I’m converted and I’m telling you, but it’s my opinion.” Here Peter is saying, “Look, this is not an opinion.” He wanted to convey to them the seriousness of him writing with the authority as a direct representative of Christ, as one that had walked and talked with Him and had been personally commissioned and sent forth by Him.

Here he wants them to think back, to recall to mind, and the reason he wanted them to do that was because it could have a very profound effect on them in the future. Now keep in mind as we read this that they fully expected Christ to return in their lifetime.

You know, from the time that Christ went back to heaven, they expected Him to come back, and there were scoffers at that time that were just having a hay day with the Church and many fell for it. He was coming to try to have them recall.

You know the past forty years we have set dates, looked for fulfillments; it came and went, and in every case there were scoffers. But the question is, brethren, did this

change any of God's plan? Did this diminish what God is doing?

2 Peter 3:3. *Knowing this first that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts*

4) *and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?"*

In other words, I'm sure they set dates. I will guarantee there were people that had their papyrus and their calendars and they had figured it out, and it came and went, and every one of those was just like a chip and they chipped it and chipped it. It was having an effect on the Church. It's interesting, the first recorded lie that was foisted off was that God was a liar and didn't mean what He said. You know what? Adam fell for it, Eve fell for it. Man has been falling for it for six thousand years and even those today in God's Church, we still fall victim to it.

Now let's stop here and look literally at this statement. Those in God's Church that have been around since the 60s know how many times. We were talking about it before services and I went through the dates and somebody said, "Well no, don't forget there was this date and that date. How many times have we set dates, only to watch them come and go? We, to this day, know of the self-proclaimed prophets that have predicted when the end will come. Some have written books! Some have even convinced people to sell out and go somewhere, only to be sent back home after having sold out or they're stuck out in the middle of nowhere, trying to recover. "You got to be with me so you'll be safe." They sold out and they fled. You see, brethren, the basic problem here is we look for and we depend on men. We use that, and when those expectations are not met that men made, we can give up on God. You know, Jesus warned about this very specifically when He walked the earth.

Set a marker; we will come back to 2 Peter. Go over to Matthew 24.

Matthew 24:44. *"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect."*

What Christ is trying to tell them is, "Look, I'll worry about the when; you worry about being ready. You worry about being prepared and I'll take care of that." I'm not saying you, we all do this. We're just curious people. We sometimes want to try to figure out the when and completely maybe lose or ignore the other part of it.

45) *"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?"*

46) *"Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing."*

47) *"Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods."*

48) *"But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,'"*
(NKJV)

Remember, for us to think God delayed His coming, we had to have an expectation that we knew when He was coming.

49) *“and begins to beat [his] fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards,”*

In other words, because the master didn't meet the servants' expectations, they gave up and went back to their old lifestyle. God lied; He was supposed to come back and He didn't. We won't turn there, but look how well that went for King Saul with Samuel, when Samuel didn't meet his expectations. He lost his kingdom.

50) *“The master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for [him] and at an hour that he is not aware of,*

51) *“And will cut him in two and appoint [him] his portion with the hypocrites. (Christ told the hypocrites what their future was.) There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (NKJV)*

You know, brethren, there is a foundational truth that we can and we must stake our eternal lives on. Look over in Titus, chapter 1. If there was any truth that you can hang onto about God's character; you see I've said several times, we want to say “God is” and then describe God. The only time we're on safe ground is when we're reading out of the Bible, because that's God's word and God is describing Himself. But then if I start saying, “Well what that means is ...,” then I've scraped away some of what God is. Notice this and, again, we can take this to the bank.

Titus 1:2. *In hope of eternal life which God, (here's what I want to point out) who cannot lie, promised before time began,*

If we haven't developed the closeness in our relationship with God and Jesus Christ, that He means what He says and we can never be shaken from that, even to death; if we do not have that, then we are very vulnerable to letting go of what was promised.

Let's go back to 2 Peter 3. I'm going to reread verse 3.

2 Peter 3:3. *Knowing this first: that scoffers will (If you mark your Bible, underline will) come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,*

It doesn't say they might, it doesn't say they could, it doesn't say they could possibly. It says they will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts. In other words, proud and puffed up with their knowledge. “I've figured it out!”

4) *and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming?...”*

You know, there's more to this than just the danger of, “He delayed His coming.” That's only part of the danger. Let's continue because it doesn't end there.

4b) *... For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as [they were] from the beginning of creation.”*

I think in the past, and I don't even remember the word, we put some term on it. We

always liked to name things and it was something like “universalism” meaning things were kind of constant. But here when we look over the last couple of years, we look at tornadoes, hurricanes, earth quakes and you take whatever the disaster is, and for someone to say, “You know what? It’s just better reporting. It’s always been like this, before facebook, we didn’t know about all these things. We’re just better tuned in.” brethren, that’s something we can fall into, thinking, “It’s all okay.” If someone came and says, “Where’s the promise of His coming? Since the fathers fell asleep, things continue ...” I don’t know that many in God’s Church would fall for those words as words, but let me tell you, we are very vulnerable. Hold your finger there and let’s go to Jude 1. I believe when Jude was inspired to write this, he was quoting Peter because some of this is a direct quote: “walking according to their own lusts.” There is a purpose for that that Jude brings out.

Jude 1:16. *These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts (direct quote from 2 Peter 3); and they mouth great swelling [words], flattering people to gain advantage. (NKJV)*

17) But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ:

18) How they told you (again, this is right out of 2 Peter) that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. (NKJV)

He is talking about that warning. Notice...

19) These are sensual persons, who cause divisions ...

“Follow me; I’ve got the answers; I know; I’ve figured it out; follow me; join in with me. Instead of saying, “Look to God, look to Christ, look at your relationship, work on that, God will take care of the rest of it.” They say, “Come with us. We’re where God is working, we are the work, we are doing _____.”

Notice he says,

19b) ... not having the Spirit.

20) But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,

21) keep yourselves in the love of God (In other words, stay pointed at Him), looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ (working on that relationship, comparing ourselves to Christ and see how much we need that mercy and how short we fall) unto eternal life.

Go back to 2 Peter now.

2 Peter 3:5. *For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water,*

6) by which the world [that] then existed perished, being flooded with water.

7) But the heavens and the earth [which] are now preserved by the same word,

are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

8) But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

9) The Lord is not slack concerning [His] promise, ...

He's talking about here the fulfillment of His return.

9b) ... as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Now let's bring it to today.

10) But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

In other words, that whole part, everything that's in the future, He says, "Look at the very end when it just doesn't exist anymore, when there is no more."

11) Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved,...

In other words, looking at the big picture, looking at what God is doing, not what we are doing.

11b) ... what manner [of persons] ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness.

12) looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

13) Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

14) Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things (things in the future), be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;

In other words, because of what we know is going to happen, and He is not delaying His coming, we need to be working on our relationship, and brethren, to have that relationship, we need to properly put God and Jesus Christ in the center of everything and us take a step out. If we want to compare, we will never win; we'll also know we have room to grow. We will always know that we need mercy and forgiveness and patience and God's Spirit. brethren, God requires us to meet His expectations, not the other way around. Is this harsh or is this because of His love and His mercy and His patience with us?

15) and consider [that] the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation –

17) You therefore, beloved, since you know [this] beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;

We just read about who the wicked are.

18) but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him [be] the glory both now and forever. Amen.

brethren, God is sovereign and what He is doing and how He intends to do it, He will carry that out. Our job is to not try to figure out how to bake the cake, because our childish approach is so limited. Our job is to work on that relationship and let God take care of the rest, in His time, in His way which, by the way, is perfect.

There's an event that happened on this day that absolutely proves the sovereignty of God; God's ability to carry out what He sets His mind to do. I want to go through this event and I hope by going through this, it will allow us to see the greatness of God. I hope this will let us see God larger and us much more humbled when we go through this. Let's read about the event first and then let's get the back story on this event. Turn to Nehemiah, chapter 8; and while you're turning, let me give you just a brief summary. I'm going to apologize ahead of time. I'm going to throw out a bunch of dates B.C. and, of course, since B.C. is backwards, they're almost impossible to hold in your head without putting them down, but I'm going to just do it.

Concerning the events that we're turning to, about two hundred years before that, the ten northern tribes went into captivity by the Assyrians and the Assyrians came into power about 900 B.C. and in 607 B.C. Assyria fell to the Babylonians who very promptly went down and pillaged and burned and destroyed Jerusalem. I say promptly; as soon as Babylon took over. It wasn't like, "Hey, let's get drunk and have a party." It was, "There's a lot of gold and stuff down there. Let's go get them. We need all those resources." They just almost immediately went to Jerusalem and sacked Jerusalem in 607 and destroyed it and took Judah captive. Seventy years later, Babylon fell to the Medo Persian Empire, and the Jews went back to Jerusalem to rebuild Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. That was in 536 B.C. There were 49,897 Jews that returned from Babylon. Immediately they rebuilt the alter and offered the sacrifice, and this was before the temple was rebuilt and before the foundation. They got there and they immediately rebuilt the alter and read God's law.

Nehemiah 8:1. *Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that [was] in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel.*

2) So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who [could] hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month.

This was on the Feast of Trumpets. This was on this day. It's also interesting that this was the first holy day that the exiles, brought back to Jerusalem, kept in Jerusalem and kept to God. It was restored, or at least the restoration, but at least the sacrifices and the turning back to God started on this day. It took twenty years for the walls to be rebuilt, and that's another story in itself because of all of the resistance to it by the enemies which, I think, seems to go on even to this day, wanting to thwart whatever they're doing. Over the next twenty years, the walls were rebuilt, the temple was rebuilt, restored and rededicated. Of course, it's interesting that we're looking forward to the

fulfillment of this day when the foundations of New Jerusalem will be started.

3) Then he read from it in the open square that [was] in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people [were attentive] to the Book of the Law.

Turn over to Ezra 3 and let's get a little more on this same account.

Ezra 3:6. *From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the Lord, although the foundation of the temple of the Lord had not been laid.*

So they rebuilt the alter, they started offering those sacrifices and the temple foundation still had not been laid.

7) They also gave money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre to bring cedar logs from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to the permission which they had from Cyrus king of Persia.

It's interesting, this word, if you've got a King James Version; it says "grant." Again, this is the only time this word, "permission" (Strong's 7558) is used, "rishyown." To me, "permission" doesn't describe what it was. If somebody gives you permission; you know, "Mom, can I go to John's house?" "Sure, go ahead." In other words, permission implies that they went and petitioned King Cyrus, "Oh, can we go do this?" "Let me think about it; let me get back to you." "Okay, you can go." That's not what happened. The right word would be a grant. If you think about what a grant is, a grant is, "Look, I want you to go do this. Here's the job I want you to do. Here are the resources that you need. Now, go do it." That's really what Cyrus did as we take a look at what I'm going to call the back story, because it will show us that God can and will accomplish His plan when He wants to, how He wants to and with whom He wants to. brethren, this story, in my mind, is so astounding, so miraculous that a lot of Bible scholars say, "Ah, this was forged later. This couldn't have happened. They just made this up and went back and put it in after it all happened." Let me just say, don't you believe that lie for a second.

Turn over to Isaiah 46. Again I know this is a little difficult, But Isaiah was born about 760 B.C. He was the son of Amoz, according to Isaiah 1:1, and some historians and Jewish traditions state that Amoz was the brother of King Amaziah which would make him a first cousin of Uzziah. Freda and I were talking last night and she said, "I get these kings all confused." And I said, "Yes, because there are the Israelite kings and the Jewish kings and the kings of Judah and they have the same names. You know, you really need a dance card, so I know this is a little confusing but apparently Isaiah was the first cousin of Uzziah.

The first event that dates Isaiah is in Isaiah 6:1, where it wrote that King Uzzuah died and we know that was around 724 B.C. and Isaiah would have been around 18 years old at that time. He died around 695 B.C., which would have made him about 65. I

would have thought at one time that was old, but now I think that's kind of young.

Northern Israel went into captivity by the Assyrians around 734 B.C. and by 721, about 12 or 13 years later, they had just sort of dropped off the radar. According to history at that point, they were just gone. Of course, we have tracked them, but during this time, Judah hadn't gone into captivity and would not go into captivity for another 128 years in 606 B.C. So the prophecies we are going to read were written about 100 years before they were fulfilled. Let's read this prophecy that was written.

Isaiah 46:3. Listen to Me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been upheld [by Me] from birth, who have been carried from the womb:

4) *Even to [your] old age, I [am] He, and [even] to gray hairs I will carry [you]! I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver [you].*

5) *To whom will you liken Me, and make [Me] equal and compare Me, that we should be alike? (NKJV)*

As I mentioned, God can't be compared to anything or anyone because anyone or anything is smaller or less than God. It diminishes God. God now indicts, He says, "Look, you can't compare Me to anything; I'm incomparable."

6) *They lavish gold out of the bag (this is the sin that God is indicting them for) and weigh silver on the scales; they hire a goldsmith, and he makes it a god; they prostrate themselves, yes, they worship.*

7) *They bear it on the shoulder, they carry it and set it in its place, and it stands; from its place it shall not move. Though [one] cries unto it, yet it cannot answer nor save him out of his trouble. (NKJV)*

After this, God gave the sharp indictment on how they had made and worshipped other gods. He directs them to think back.

8) *Remember this, and show yourselves men; recall to mind, O you transgressors.*

9) *Remember the former things of old, (Here in these two verses, He says three times, "Think about it; think back, remember, reflect on.") for I [am] God, and [there is] no other; [I am] God, and [there is] none like Me, (NKJV)*

God wanted them to look back and consider that there's none greater, none able to deliver them but Him and no one can stop Him.

10) *Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times [things] that are not [yet] done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,'*

God said, "I'm going to tell you things that haven't even occurred to prove to you that I am sovereign; to prove to you that I can make them happen and I know they're going to happen."

11) *Calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from*

a far country. Indeed I have spoken [it]; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed [it]; I will also do it. (NKJV)

God here says He is going to bring a man from the east to fulfill His purpose.

*12) "Listen to Me, you stubborn hearted, Who [are] far from righteousness:
13) I bring My righteousness near, it shall not be far off; My salvation shall not linger. And I will place salvation in Zion, for Israel My glory." (NKJV)*

Who is this bird of prey? At the time the Assyrian Empire was still ruling and would rule for another hundred years, the Babylonian Empire would overthrow the Assyrian Empire in 607 B.C. and rule for another 70 years. A year later, Jerusalem would be overthrown and the temple destroyed and it would be taken into captivity and remain there for seventy years, from 606 to 536 B.C. It's interesting that God not only reveals the bird of prey from the east by name, He even indicated how He was going to defeat the Babylonians, and in doing that, ending the Babylonian Empire and starting the Medo Persian.

Isaiah 45:1. *"Thus says the Lord to His anointed, To Cyrus, ... (NKJV)*

By the way, if you look at the seal of Cyrus, it was an eagle; and the standard that the armies carried was a bird of prey. It was an eagle!

1b) ... whose right hand I have held – To subdue nations before Him and loose the armor of kings, ...

In other words, there aren't going to be kings anymore. You're going to take off their armor to ...

1c) ... to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut:

That's another prophecy. You see, according to the book, Herodotus, The Persian Wars, Babylon was a square city, 15 miles by 15 miles. It was sixty miles around. The Euphrates River ran right through Babylon. At the entrance and the exit to the Euphrates, there were these doors that were lowered according to the level of the water to keep the enemy from bringing the boats through. If you look at Babylon, I think the walls were about 200 feet high and there was room for a four-harness horsemen chariot to go around these walls. You couldn't just get into it. It was a fortress. There were actually two walls, the outer wall and the inner wall and, of course, all the gates were shut.

It was fairly flat; what Cyrus did was go in and they dug a little bar ditch and diverted the Euphrates River into the marsh. As a result, the river dropped about two or three feet and they marched into the city right on the riverbed. It was about to their ankles. They marched right under the double doors because they had been set down. They went in and around and opened up some of the big gates and marched in and took the city.

God predicted how it was going to happen over one hundred years before it took place.

2) *'I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron.*

3) *'I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the Lord, who call [you] by your name, [Am] the God of Israel.'*

Is God somehow limited to only working through individuals who have His Spirit, or can God, who is sovereign, do anything He wants to accomplish His purpose? We're not going to go there for time's sake, but God showed His sovereignty to Nebuchadnezzar in the Babylonian Empire as well. Did God use Cyrus because He was working with him, so that Cyrus would know that God was sovereign? Was God trying to get Cyrus to be converted, or was Cyrus just an instrument that God used to perform His will?

4) *For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me.*

5) *I [am] the Lord and [there is] no other; [There is] no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me,*

6) *that they ("they" is not Cyrus; verse 4 clearly states who they are; it's Jacob) may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that [there is] none besides Me. I [am] the Lord, and [there is] no other;*

7) *I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the Lord, do all these [things].*

Brethren, God is not constrained by anything to fulfill His purpose. Let's back up to the previous chapter. Notice He wants Israel to remember their captivity and what He has done because He's not forgotten them, even though they were in captivity. Back up to Isaiah 44:21.

Isaiah 44:21. *"Remember these, O Jacob, and Israel, for you [are] My servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me!"*

What comforting words! They were in captivity; they were in misery and God says, "I'm not going to forget you! You are mine; you belong to Me."

22) *"I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed [you]."*

23) *Sing, O heavens, for the Lord has done [it]! Shout,*

In your own study, look up the correlation connection between shout and trumpet. If you go to Leviticus where we read about the blowing of the trumpets, that word is Strong's 8643, *truwah*, and it would tell you it's from the root 7321, which means an acclamation; *ruwa* is the root. It's an acclamation of joy. It's a shout.

23) *Sing, O heavens, for the Lord has done it! Shout, you lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest and every tree in it! For*

the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel.

24) Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, and He who formed you from the womb: "I [am] the Lord, who makes all [things], Who stretches out the heavens all alone, Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself;

25) Who frustrates the signs of the babblers, and drives diviners mad; Who turns wise men backward, and makes their knowledge foolishness;

26) Who confirms the word of His servant, and performs the counsel of His messengers; Who says to Jerusalem, 'You shall be inhabited.' To the cities of Judah, 'You shall be built,' and I will raise up her waste places;

27) Who says to the deep, 'Be dry! And I will dry up your rivers';

28) Who says of Cyrus, 'He [is] My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," and to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid."

Here was Cyrus and God said Jerusalem is going to be rebuilt and the foundation is going to be laid, and by the way, he's going to give you the money to do it. He is commissioning that. When Cyrus overthrew Babylon and became the king of the Persian Empire, as God said, I want you to notice something about the historical background and the beginning of Babylon. Look in 2 Chronicles 36. Remember, what we're reading here is not prophetic. The writers are saying what's happened here. I think this is interesting and then I'm going to try to tie some of this.

2 Chronicles 36:18. *And all the articles from the house of God, great and small, the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king and of his leaders, all [these] he took to Babylon.*

19) Then they burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious possessions.

20) And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia,

21) to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept the Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years. (NKJV)

Now, notice this ...

22) Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also [put it] in writing, saying, (NKJV)

Before I read that, you would think a leader, after overturning a world ruling power, their priority would be to secure the borders, establish order in that defeated country, send occupying forces. Look at the U.S. or any of them in World War II, there was a couple year period when they were occupying and setting up trade and restoring order to that country; and again, that could take a couple of years. Notice, it was in the first year of Cyrus' reign that he sent the captives back to rebuild Jerusalem. It wasn't like, "Okay, we have to do this, this and this, let's have parties and I'll go straighten out my sock

drawer and Oh, yes let's go back and rebuild Jerusalem." This was a man on a mission. The first year of his reign, what does he do? "Let's get this done!" Was that because of Cyrus or was that because the sovereign God had decided that?

You know what's interesting, and I don't know if we've ever considered this; when we look at the golden beast and the Assyrians and then they fell to Babylon and Babylon fell. Think about it in the light and remember, all of the history is about God's people, Israel and Judah. The length of Babylon and its reign was seventy years because it was the first thing he did was go down and took them off into captivity. It was already limited to seventy years because at the end of seventy years, God wanted him out of the way so Cyrus could come on to send the Jews back. Have you ever considered that all of those world powers and the length of time that they served, was because the great God had a plan and that plan was directly related to His people. It wasn't like sometime during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar; the first thing they did was go down and sack Jerusalem, the first year. With Cyrus, it wasn't sometime, it was the first year. It was like that was the order of business, because God said it's going to be seventy years and after seventy years, they just marched into this fortress. I don't want to say they took it without a shot being fired, but it wasn't like they stood out there and had to beat their way in. They marched in. The rise and fall of these world powers which are almost astounding, but it wasn't them. That's what God said to Nebuchadnezzar and that's what He said to Cyrus. It was because God was fulfilling a purpose ... why? Because God is sovereign and He can do anything He wants to. I believe also that what God does though is not for His pleasure. It's because God is very intent on bringing many sons into His family and what they went through and what we go through in our trials and tribulations are not to destroy us or hurt us. They are to help bring us into that proper relationship with God just as God did with Job.

22) Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also [put it] in writing, saying,

23) Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who [is] among you of all His people? May the Lord his God [be] with him, and let him go up! (NKJV)

God not only declared who would do it by name, He declared how it would be done and He declared how long Judah's captivity would last. Go over to Jeremiah 25, verse 9.

Jeremiah 25:9. *'Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,' says the Lord, 'and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, ...*

It's interesting He calls Nebuchadnezzar his servant. He calls Cyrus His servant. He calls Satan His servant and none of them are converted. God uses them to bring about His will. Servant doesn't always mean conversion; it means God is using them and they are fulfilling God's purpose.

9b) '... and will bring them against this land, against its inhabitants, and against

these nations all around, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, a hissing and perpetual desolations.

10) 'Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp.

11) 'And this whole land shall be a desolation [and] an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

12) 'Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, [that] I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,' says the Lord; 'and I will make it a perpetual desolation.'” (NKJV)

What's interesting is that God used Jeremiah to warn Judah what was to befall them.

All you have to do is read the book of Lamentations and know that the destruction of Jerusalem to Jeremiah was gut wrenching. Jeremiah wrote that book and the horrors he witnessed and the emotions he felt were just almost more than Jeremiah could bear.

Yet Jeremiah understood that, at that time, Judah's problem was spiritual. It was a relationship problem with God. He told the king, if you read the book of Jeremiah, he told them, "Look, don't fight it. This is because of your sins; let them take you into captivity. There will be less casualties." He said, "Don't flee to Egypt" and there were some that did, to the point that the people accused Jeremiah of being a traitor and that he was unpatriotic and yet Jeremiah loved the people and the nation and he knew they needed to turn back to God.

What is the lesson for us today? We live in countries that we love. We look around and see what's going on in our society, our business, our government and we want to do something. We want to fix the problem. We want to get involved. That's because we are humans. Take your pick ... throw the bums out! It's a conspiracy! They're out to get us! We need to expose them. We need to overthrow them. You know, brethren, what's going on in this country and every other country? We have rejected God. We have thrown Him out of everything. We've rejected Him. We've rejected God's laws.

We've rejected His government and let me assure you, the problems we are experiencing are not whether the Democrats or the Republicans or the Wig Party is in office. We have a spiritual problem in this nation and until that spiritual problem is fixed, there is nothing we are going to do to fix it. There is nothing we should do to fix it. Our job is to realize what God is doing and this is not to destroy a nation. It's not to destroy people. It's to eventually bring them back to God. It's not going to be solved by us or any man because the problems are spiritual.

What God is going to bring is so horrible, no one wants to go through it. Neither do I, but do we think by somehow us speaking out and condemning and exposing or campaigning or whatever that we're going to fix the problem when it's a spiritual problem between the nation and God? If somebody thinks that, they just simply don't grasp the problem. I want to be clear now, so let me just say it. We do need to protect ourselves from what's coming. We do. But let me also be real clear. That protection is not by putting our trust in men and governments. Again, we've got to understand the problem to know how to protect ourselves. How do we do it? Look in Ephesians, chapter 6, because we are to protect ourselves. We are warned that we had better

protect ourselves or we are not going to make it.

Ephesians 6:11. *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

12) *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, ... (NKJV)*

Let me put it in my words. Our fight isn't with political parties; it's not with leaders or governments,

12b) *... but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual [hosts] of wickedness in the heavenly [places].*

You see, our spiritual fight goes on inside. It goes on in our carnal minds and, brethren, don't forget there is a real war being waged. That is where we can and should fight to the very last fiber of our being.

13) *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand (when?) in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

14) *Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,*

15) *and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*

16) *above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all (there's another underline, not some, not most, not many) the fiery darts of the wicked one.*

17) *And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;*

18) *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints – (NKJV)*

As we reflect on the meaning of this day, let's put God and His sovereignty right in the middle of it. If we understand the great God that we serve, we will know that nothing is too difficult for Him to accomplish His will and His plan. As a memorial looking back at what happened and culminated on this day, God can use anybody in any way to accomplish what He wants. I think if we understand that, God should be magnified and glorified in our eyes and we should be humbled. Please turn to Hebrews, chapter 13.

Hebrews 13:5. *[Let your] conduct be without covetousness (be pure); [be] content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

brethren, the sovereign God, who can do anything, who cannot lie, has made a promise. He said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

6) *So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (NKJV)*

It doesn't say nothing is going to happen to me. He's going to take care of me.

brethren, if in our dying breath, we stand before someone like Stephen; you see, we can understand that God is with us. Just as Stephen looked up and said, "I see God and I see Jesus Christ." You see, everything is not decided on this side of that great gulf and God looks through all of it, and He promises. You know, the only absolutes we have in life relating to the future are the promises from God and He cannot lie, that He won't leave us. He won't forsake us. Turn to Romans 8 for a final scripture. You know, the road ahead is filled with trials to the greatest scale in human history and the comfort is that we are in the hands of the greatest power that exists; the greatest power that there is. With that in mind, let's put all of the fear behind us and know that what God is doing is to prepare mankind. Us first, but He is preparing all of mankind to be in His family and He's going to do that through the horrific times ahead.

Romans 8:28. *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to [His] purpose.*

31) What then shall we say to these things? If God (if the almighty sovereign God) [is] for us, who [can be] against us?

brethren, let's use the events that took place as a memorial on this day to know that God has started a work in us and He's going to finish it, if we allow Him to. We can take great comfort in that.