

# The Final Edition

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Once again it's good to be with you on the Sabbath, looking forward to the spring holy days and all that that entails. This time of year it's normal for us to consider self-examination; last week Rick's sermon dealt with the subject of deception and how easy it is for us to be deceived, and how we need to maintain our vigilance in that way. And so we will continue that process today.

The first edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica (also known as the Brittanica) was printed in Scotland in the years 1768 to 1771. Most of the accumulated knowledge of humankind was contained in its three volumes. When I was in Omaha in the late '80s, I acquired a set of the eleventh edition—nineteen books, nineteen volumes; the nineteenth volume was all indexed. Why would I do a thing like that? An encyclopedia printed in 1911?

It was touted as a landmark edition for scholarship and literary style, so I had this fine eleventh edition. I used it for a time but as often as I moved, it got to the place where it was a little bit too much and I don't know what happened to it; I disposed of it somewhere along the line. It's interesting about encyclopedias; they have to be updated, so by the 1980s, going back to 1911, why would you want an encyclopedia from 1911 when there had been several editions since then? Those kinds of things have to be updated pretty regularly.

It's interesting, though, in 1936, the editors of the Brittanica began a process of continuous revision, to examine what had been written, and to redo about ten percent of the articles every year, such that they revised the whole set every ten years. Now the current and last edition of the Brittanica is the fifteenth one, last printed in 2010, and of course it continues to be updated and revised regularly. They no longer print it now—it's just too expensive, given the Internet. You can subscribe to it inexpensively (\$17 per year) and you have the entire Brittanica available to you and all the information it contains, online. It's interesting, you can continue to receive updated information—it's a valuable source of information if you are inclined to use it.

So one asks the question, what does the Encyclopædia Britannica have to do with the Passover, with its personal emphasis on self-examination? Let's answer that question because there are some interesting parallels. Let's start in Philippians 1; at the risk of being redundant, let's be reminded about what's going on. In the process of self-examination, oftentimes we focus on the downside of human nature and all of our secret sins, and the terrible mistakes we've made. If you focus there continually it can get a little heavy and weigh a person down. It can be discouraging, if you're honest. A part of self-examination is to bring to mind again what God is actually doing with us and how

He is accomplishing that. Let's notice Philippians 1, and, beginning with verse 3, the tone Paul is using when writing to the church at Philippi.

**Philippians 1:3** *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,  
4) always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy ... (NKJV)*

It is a joyful thing for a minister—back in the day we used to have a constant stream of requests, new requests, from people seeking the truth, and it was always exciting when it seemed like it began to stick for them. They began to get the understanding of what was happening; they were excited about the truth and coming to new understanding. One can understand Paul's elation here and how he rejoiced over the individuals who had indeed begun the process of becoming a part of the family of God.

*5) for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,  
6) being confident of this very thing, that He [God] who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;  
7) just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. (NKJV)*

Self-examination, again, is not seasonal. It's not something we do only at the Passover, or if you do, you'll probably come to realize, I should have been about this throughout the course of the year—it would have been a lot easier. It is a lot easier, brethren, to make occasional, small adjustments than to be hammered with a huge adjustment that sneaks up on us because perhaps we weren't as diligent in self-examination as we should have been.

When you're involved in the work of God, doing the work of God, being the work of God—each of us as individuals are the work of God Almighty and of Jesus Christ—this is about doing a work and it involves growth, discipline, development, learning, maturation; it isn't something that happens in a moment and then it's done. God's work is about spiritual transformation and that of course takes some miraculous intervention on the one hand. On the other hand it takes a little work on our part as well if we expect to achieve what God has in mind.

Think about it for a moment. Does God have an end-product in mind when He considers you and me? He's constantly involved with us in our day-to-day lives and seeks to dwell among us, and not only among us but through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. What does He have in mind as the end result? What is He hoping to achieve through you and through me? These are the kinds of questions upon which we need to reflect from time to time because they help us in our self-examination—am I keeping pace? Am I doing what God expects of me? It's a continuous state of revision, with an end-product or final edition in mind. What is that final edition? We have our starting points and we have our end points. There does come a time when it's over: We've run the race, the old body wears out and the outward man perishes, and that's it until the resurrection.

God does have an end-product in mind and it's pretty explicit in scripture, what He has in mind, and what He hopes to achieve through each and every one of us, as individuals, and collectively, too, as the body of Christ. In scripture we have some examples of people formed and shaped by God, and the final edition, if you will—the final revision of those individuals and their character—is actually recorded in scripture and it's instructive.

Let's turn to Hebrews 11 for a moment, because here we have that great cloud of witnesses that is then referred to in the beginning of chapter 12. You have the stories of individuals. The book of Hebrews was written in the 60s A.D., so it's all about characters who are from the Old Testament period—the patriarchs and the kings and the prophets and so forth with whom we're familiar in scripture. You look through these individuals and they are a great cloud of witnesses. They've run the race and they have done what God expected them to do, and the complete and revised edition is now in place.

So there are things to be learned. Of each of these individuals who are mentioned here, you can go back into the Old Testament and actually read their stories. Go back in time and see how they lived their lives, and you'll find it can be encouraging because they weren't perfect. They made their mistakes. They had those occasions when they doubted God and whether He was actually going to fulfill His promises and the like. Yet according to Hebrews 11, they ran the race. They believed right down to the end, faithful to God, trusting that He would indeed fulfill His promises as anticipated.

Let's look at one specific story today, of Moses. Pick up the story in verse 23. Moses is interesting because here we have the final analysis, the final revision of Moses and here's what we find: He's spoken well of in the final edition.

**Hebrews 11:23** *By faith Moses, when he was born, [obviously it wasn't Moses's faith, it was his parent's faith] was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command. (NKJV)*

Pharaoh was alarmed by the growth in population and the fact the Israelites could some day become the enemy, so he was attempting to control the population, throwing the male children to the crocodiles. It was a rather challenging situation, to say the least.

24) *By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,*  
25) *choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin ... (NKJV)*

Obviously a day came when Moses had to make up his mind: Am I going to stay here and be a child of Egypt in the very royal family, in the court of Pharaoh, or am I going to suffer affliction with the people of God? Egypt evidently was an example of the passing pleasures of sin, and that's where he was—he was immersed in it. He had to make a choice like we all do. God brings us to that point where a decision has to be made.

*26) esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. (NKJV)*

He was coming to an understanding. It's interesting that the statement is made that he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches. Christ's coming was 1,400–1,500 years off, so how did Moses manage to do that? Maybe he had insight into things we are not aware of. Nevertheless this is the way it was described.

*27) By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.*

*28) By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them. (NKJV)*

It's a description of a life lived by faith, of making difficult choices, putting pleasure and convenience, etc., aside in order to pursue the truth of God. So we can be inspired by his example. I'm going to come back here later, so I'm going to put my marker here in Hebrews 11. Let's go to Acts, chapter 7. There's an interesting insight into the character of Moses in Stephen's comments. He's addressing the religious establishment and his comments are going to get him stoned. In Acts 7:20, let's notice what Stephen says about Moses; it's instructive.

**Acts 7:20** *At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; (NKJV)*

It's interesting, isn't it? God has heard the complaints and the moans and groans of the suffering children of Israel and so He begins the process of delivering them from Egypt, delivering them from bondage. How does He do that? He has this slave child, Moses, born into slavery, and He has an end-product in mind. Moses of course is an infant, he doesn't know; I'm not sure how much Moses's parents understood exactly what God was doing through their child. But Moses was going to spend forty years in Egypt, then forty years herding sheep in Midian for someone who would become his father-in-law, before he was to go back and be the instrument through which God would extract Israel from slavery in Egypt. So continuing on then, God begins with this baby. Israel is eighty years away from being delivered.

*20 continued) ... and he was brought up in his father's house for three months.*

*21) But when he was set out [that is, put into the river, in a little basket], Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son. (NKJV)*

Again, this is the testimony of Stephen.

*22) [Notice] And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds. (NKJV)*

Moses was thoroughly Egyptian. He thought like an Egyptian, he spoke like an Egyptian, no doubt his theology was Egyptian—he was a man of the world, thoroughly and completely learned in all of the wisdom of the Egyptians. God is going to call him

out of that and ask him to leave the wisdom of the Egyptians and begin to embrace the wisdom of God. And that's essentially what we have to do. We come to that moment when we realize we're pursuing the way of this world and it really is a dead-end street. We have to begin the process of coming out of that influence and begin to embrace the influence that comes from God. It's a real blessing to be able to do that, and not always an easy task.

*23) "Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. (NKJV)*

Just how did it get into his heart? How did Moses know that he was a Hebrew? Evidently he did know, somewhere along the line; it came to his attention and he was going to go down and visit his folk, his kinfolk, the Hebrews.

*24) And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian.*

*25) For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand. (NKJV)*

It's interesting, by this time, Moses is forty years old, thoroughly an Egyptian but something has been taking place because now he is of the opinion, according to Stephen's account, that God is going to use him to deliver the Israelites from Egypt. He was a little concerned, he assumed that they would understand this, but of course they didn't.

Let's go back to Exodus 2 where this actually happened. In the case of Moses, it's interesting because Moses actually writes the account of what he went through in Egypt—it's autobiographical. He's forty years old, he's beginning to come to a comprehension that something is amiss. God is stirring him up to a greater calling, and evidently by this time he's beginning to realize he's not going to be in Egypt forever. Let's notice how Moses himself gives account of what took place there, in contrast to the quite positive and uplifting assessment recorded in Hebrews 11. Pick up the story in Exodus 2, verse 11.

**Exodus 2:11** *Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. (NKJV)*

Again, at some point in time he came to understand that he was a Hebrew. How he came to that we aren't told.

*12) So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one ...*

Can you imagine that—what was he doing? He looked this way, he looked that way, what's he doing? He's about to take action and he doesn't want anybody to witness it. Is anybody going to see what I'm doing? Maybe I'd better rethink what I'm doing. So he

looks both ways and that's something you would expect a child to do, to see if Mom or Dad are looking before one gets involved in some forbidden activity.

12 continued) ... *he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.* (NKJV)

It's interesting, a couple of things come to mind as I'm meditating on this little incident. I suspect that by this time, age forty, thoroughly trained in the way and the wisdom of the Egyptians, Moses had a sense of entitlement: I can do whatever I want to do, somebody gets out of line, I'll just kill him and bury him in the sand someplace. Maybe he had a little problem with anger management—a short fuse, so to speak. Maybe they didn't push Moses too hard because he would lash out; that's what happened in this incident. So he killed the Egyptian thinking he was doing a favor to one of his fellow Hebrews—one of his kin, if you will.

13) *And when he went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were fighting, and he said to the one who did the wrong, "Why are you striking your companion?"*

14) *Then he said, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?"* (NKJV)

Who was it that would have reported the event? It was the survivor, it was the one he interceded for; there was no one else around. Moses intervened, killed an Egyptian to spare the punishment he was meting out to a Hebrew and that Hebrew spreads the word, and now what do we have? Are you going to do to me what you did to the Egyptian? Moses is guilty of murder, pure and simple. Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?

14 continued) ... *So Moses feared and said, "Surely this thing is known!"*

15) *When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well.* (NKJV)

This is the account, from Moses's own hand. He wrote the account. It's a little bit different, it's slanted a little differently than what we read in Hebrews: Rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, he took on the reproach of Christ and went off with the people—what? That's not the way Moses reported it. Let's go back to Hebrews 11 and just remind ourselves of the final assessment about Moses and his character—this is important. Once again, speaking of Moses and the situation that he faced, verse 24.

**Hebrews 11:24** *By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,*

25) *choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,*

26) *esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.* (NKJV)

*27) By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. (NKJV)*

Now that's not the way Moses reported it. He feared Pharaoh, he feared for his life and he fled, thinking, if I get caught, who knows what Pharaoh will do to me. Which account is right? Which one are you going to believe? What do we say? In actual fact, they are both correct. The one in Exodus is the initial assessment. Moses is a murderer, sorry. He has a short fuse, he has anger management issues, he has a sense of entitlement because of his position in the hierarchy of Egypt. When we come to Hebrews 11 and the final assessment is given, it's a different story. It's actually rewritten.

In actual fact, what we have in Hebrews 11 is a sanitized version. Think about it—are we going to criticize a scripture for the way it's reported? I think that's always ill-advised; you want to be careful how you criticize the scripture or interpret what God is doing, for that matter. What are we seeing here? We are indeed seeing a sanitized version. What we're seeing is the result of Moses putting aside the wisdom of Egypt and beginning to embrace the wisdom of God, and in so doing, he takes on a whole different character. We can do the same; we can learn from the lessons that are portrayed in Hebrews 11. Do we esteem the reproach of Christ as greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, or wherever we call home? Thus when you begin to pursue the truth, you begin to accept correction (the reproach of Christ) in a way that maybe you didn't expect to when you started the process.

*25) choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin ... (NKJV)*

What we have here then, in a sense is, you have the original assessment, the original edition, if you will, of the encyclopedia of Moses on the one hand, and you have the revised or final edition—final word—on the character of Moses who was the servant of God and was indeed used by God to extract the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. How does this apply to us personally? How should we apply it personally?

There is an initial status that we have when we are called. How did God view you the day He decided to get interested in your life? What did He see as an end-product? What's the current status? How does God view you and me now? Are we progressing in the way God would have us do? Are we on our way to achieving the work of God that He's doing in us? What's the final edition going to look like? Are we making sufficient progress so that we can be assured that when all is said and done, we will have accomplished what God has in store for us?

You look at the two accounts and obviously the one account is the initial assessment. Moses had a long way to go. He spent forty years in Midian, herding sheep for his father-in-law. Think about that. His first forty years, the foundational, educational years, he was steeped in the wisdom of Egypt. For forty years, God allowed him to herd sheep. One year herding sheep, out there in Midian, for every year he was in Egypt. Not so much going on out there in Midian. There weren't any wars to fight, there

weren't any political battles to win, there weren't any great lavish banquets to attend and all the things of the Egyptians he no doubt attended to as an Egyptian. Now he's got forty years to cool his heels and think about it, out there herding sheep, thinking about life and what God has in store for him. Who knows all the things that God might have dealt him there in those years. After forty years, maybe we can characterize Moses's situation as having at least been neutralized. He's now thinking more in line with the wisdom of God rather than the wisdom of Egypt. Now it's possible for God to begin to use him for His purpose.

Same thing for us. We start off, and there's an initial assessment. Think back to the day that God began to disrupt your comfortable life—maybe it wasn't so comfortable for some of us (even those of us in the United States). My life was quite comfortable. I had everything all planned out. I was going to go back to the family farm, but I wasn't going to do that until after I finished college, playing ball—I had to play ball at college, that was fun. Fun—fun and games. Yeah, I'll keep the Sabbath later—in a couple more years I can do that—but right now I have other things I have to attend to. There is the initial assessment. What is it about God that He's able to see through it? That there is potential in this individual?

I don't care how dark and miserable your life might have been at the time; when God looked at you, He said, I can do something with this individual. Really? If God makes that kind of assessment, why should we then doubt God's ability to work with us and develop us? We have our down moments, and it can be pretty dark sometimes. Things go contrary to what we had hoped for. We get this idea in mind that once we become a part of God's work and we're converted, and do God's will, everything will be smooth sailing the rest of the way. Well, it turned out not to be quite that way. We have our troubles and our trials right along. But God was able to look at each and every one of us and see some potential there.

Let's consider. God is committed to doing a work with each one of us. He has the solution in mind. He knows what He wants you to be in the time that He has with you. God knows how long that is and in the meantime we do our best to cooperate. Let's go to Colossians 1 and take a look at some of the descriptions here. God has promised some very wonderful things to those who submit to Him and go His way. But along with the promises there are certain obligations that we have to recognize, that we have to pursue and be willing to subject ourselves to.

**Colossians 1:19** *For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell,*  
20) *and by Him [speaking of Jesus] to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him [we're going to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and His sacrifice], whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. (NKJV)*

How is it that peace can be made through another's sacrifice? By the shedding of His blood—that's the way it works. That's what has happened for our benefit.



21) *And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled ... (NKJV)*

There's the initial assessment. You who once were alienated from God—didn't know God, didn't know who He was or what He was up to (you might have had various ideas depending upon your background and education, where you might have been raised and what influences were on you) but all in all, alienated from the wisdom of God, enemies of the truth, yet now He has reconciled,

22) *in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight ...*

Now that's God's vision of the end result for you and me, right there. Let's read it again.

22) *in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight ...*

The next time you find yourself criticizing a fellow Christian, or anybody for that matter, think about this. The one that you're criticizing, what's God's view of that person? Does God see that person as having been reconciled? Having been converted from an alien and an enemy to an actual child of God? We want to be careful how we criticize other people. His idea is to present you holy and blameless. The person who is across the room in the church, who maybe has irritated you and you're upset, God sees that individual as holy and blameless and above reproach also, so why am I criticizing? I've got no reason to criticize. As Paul put it in Romans 14, who are you to criticize another man's servant?

We are all servants of God. That's the soft term. We're all *doulos*—slaves of God, purchased. Let's not think too highly of ourselves—I'm a slave but I can criticize the other slaves. No, that's not really an option because God sees the one you're criticizing in the same light. You would like to be viewed this way, wouldn't you?—holy, blameless, above reproach—that's saying a lot. Now verse 23, but notice, that's what God promises—that's the end view as God sees it, for you, for me, for all those whom He is calling, and eventually all of mankind will be given the opportunity.

23) *if [yes, there's the if] indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister. (NKJV)*

As we approach the Passover, we'll be renewing the covenant that we made with God, and getting a deeper, clearer vision, being reminded of the things to which God has called us.

24) *I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,*

*25) of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God ... (NKJV)*

It should be encouraging to us to think that when God sees us and the end result that He has in mind for us, what does He see? Again, just for emphasis: holy, blameless, and above reproach. It's good to be reminded of that but it's also good to be reminded that we have to continue in faith, we have to be grounded, steadfast, not moved. There will be those dark moments; circumstances change, but God doesn't change. He is in the process of molding, shaping, forming us—the potter and the clay. In shaping us, if He sees something He doesn't like, what will He do? He'll work us over and rearrange circumstances a little bit to get our attention.

On a personal level, last Thursday, I completed a cardiac rehabilitation program—twelve weeks. So now I'm all rehabbed and ready to go. Hitting on all four cylinders again, and all this time I thought I was an eight-cylinder model. This is just getting old, a little dose of reality. It's interesting to be in a cardiac rehabilitation program. It was the last place on earth I expected to be in any given time. I wake up one morning, I'm in cardiac rehab. It's a twelve-week program and it's not twelve weeks and done. It's not like everything is fine, and you can go back to doing whatever it was you were doing before—things that may have got you in trouble. It's not about putting in a certain amount of time and then it's done, and now you can go back to your old way of doing things. No, they are now training you in a new lifestyle, that's what it amounts to.

It's interesting, along with the exercise program, which is about rebuilding cardiac capacity—strengthening the heart muscle—they do the same things over and over every session. They put you through various stretching exercises, the same ones every time, before and after. Then you go through the cardiac exercises and they have machines—treadmills and various other things—and you go to work pedaling and pushing and shoving and running, to improve your capacity and return you to reasonable health again, so that you can carry on life with some measure of quality. They start out kind of slow and easy, then over time they increase the pressure and the resistance on the machine; you stay on it longer, you work a little harder and they are monitoring the whole time. They take your blood pressure before and after, and once during the cardiovascular training. They also monitor your heartbeat and your oxygen use and all that sort of thing—it's constant, so they can evaluate how you're doing. Can we increase it, should we increase it, are you making progress, what's going on here? It's the same thing over and over again.

Again, it's not about twelve weeks and done because they anticipate that what will happen is you will take the things you are learning, and you'll go home and continue them, and thus maintain your health for as long as you can. You get to the place where the body is used up, it's the end. Until that happens, you need to be active. They also offer various educational programs along the way. They have an exercise where they give you this sheet of paper, you go home, and you record everything you ate and drank for three days—everything. Then you're going to have a one-on-one with the dietician. (Oh, mercy!) Then the dietician is going to take a look at what you've done for three

days, what you've eaten and drunk, and she's going to gently point out to you your bad habits. She'll say, you'd better rethink that, you're eating an awful lot of red meat or you'd better be careful about those salty snacks. The idea is not to satisfy the dietician for twelve weeks, the idea is to understand that there are certain things, certain ways of doing things, that are healthy, and certain things that are unhealthy, and you need to get rid of them.

So conversion—being called into the work of God—is not a one and done deal. Ok, you're in the foxhole, whether it's an actual wartime situation or you're in some entanglement on this earth, you know the story—if You will just deliver me this one time, I'll be a good person and do whatever You want the rest of my days. So He gets you out of that situation and then what? He reminds you, we made a deal, remember?

We are involved in spiritual rehabilitation, do we understand that? We've been steeped in the wisdom of Egypt as Moses was, and as we learned last week in the sermon, the devil is insistent on deceiving us and dragging us back into the old way of doing things, in various ways. He's able and capable of doing that sort of thing. We're in the business of spiritual rehabilitation; you come to repentance and conversion, you get reoriented, but that's not the end of it. Now we have to carry on. God has a final view in mind of what He wants to achieve with us. Let's turn to Hebrews 8 and there's a quotation right out of the book of Jeremiah giving us the essence of the New Covenant. It's insightful as well and useful for the current situation.

**Hebrews 8:7** *For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.*

8) *Because finding fault with them [the fault was with the people and it's the people who are the weak link], He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—*

There is coming a day when God is going to reunite the children of Israel and the children of Judah into one nation.

9) *not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD.*

10) *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (NKJV)*

We've entered into that New Covenant already. The unification of Israel is still ahead. How is the process going? How is the process of continual revision taking place? How much progress has God made? How are you cooperating with Him in writing His laws in your mind and on your heart? How is that work going? Are we willing participants or do we moan and bark and complain every step of the way?

11) *None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.*  
(NKJV)

This is probably the greatest deficiency for humankind, period. Not knowing the true God. Moses didn't know the true God when he was steeped in the wisdom of Egypt. But the true God was going to reveal Himself to Moses and use Moses for His purpose. Notice verse 12, here's a promise from God.

12) *For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness ...*

He's talking about Israel. You read the history of Israel and it's not particularly pretty. They balked at every turn. But God is merciful to their unrighteousness.

12 continued) *... and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."*  
(NKJV)

Consider the process of self-examination. God doesn't remember your sins and lawless deeds and unrighteousness. Let's be careful in our self-examination about how much of that old dirt we drag up. If indeed there is a need to make some adjustments in that regard, then do it, by all means, but let's try to avoid making that the center of our examination. That's depressing. God doesn't remember our sins or our lawless deeds. If He doesn't remember them, then why should we?

You can be thankful to God that He doesn't remember them. I have this recurring dream every now and again, it can happen any time of day or night when all of a sudden, it's not like I'm in a trance or something, but suddenly my mind is focused on this parade of ill-begotten events in my life. All the bad things I've ever done, things that would embarrass me to tears were they exposed in public, and it's just shattering. It's not God doing that, if you are faced with similar recollections. God doesn't remember our sins and our lawless deeds, thanks to the New Covenant. He has made the first obsolete. What is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

In a week and a half or so we'll be keeping the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, and it is about being reconciled to God. It is about the great benefit that we received in knowing an offering has been made for us, for our benefit. The Creator God sent His only begotten Son to pay the price for our misdeeds. We can be thankful for that. We need to be humbled by the thought that God would actually do that.

Once again, in the process of self-examination, I think it's important to recognize that self-examination should not be a seasonal thing, it should be something we are doing on a regular basis, making sure that our relationship to God is appropriate, and that we're doing our part to be steadfast and to remain in the proper relationship with God and Jesus Christ. Consider your final edition, if you will. What's the last thing that's going to be said about you and about me? God has a vision of how He wants things to

be—how they can be. I think we need to rejoice in that. It's part of His purpose to bring many children to glory and that would include us.

Let's turn to Jude, a little letter just before the book of Revelation. It's a rather sobering discussion. I want to focus on the closing verses of the book of Jude to remind us of what God has promised and how He views our situation and our end result. When we're down in the dumps and we're discouraged, things like the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread remind us that God is there to help us. He isn't there to condemn us. He's there to pave the way, make it possible. If God is for us, who can be against us? It doesn't matter who the enemy is, how powerful the enemy seems to be. If God is working with you and through you, you don't have to worry about those things.

**Jude 1:20** *But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,*

*21) keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. (NKJV)*

Mercy has been extended to us. God paid the ultimate price in sending His Son to be the ransom, to buy us back, if you will. To allow us to be brought out of the grips of the bondage of this world and into the freedom that is God's world.

*22) And on some have compassion, making a distinction;*

*23) but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh. (NKJV)*

There are occasions when we have to be pulled out of the fire and sometimes it's circumstances, sometimes it's our own misjudgment. We allowed ourselves to stray a little too far and into the ditch. It's very easy to do. It seems like errors come in extremes, the way C.S. Lewis described it. It's needful for us to steer a course between the two. On the one hand you're too liberal, on the other hand you're too conservative or too judgmental. You have to steer a straight course down the middle. Notice the benediction in the closing of Jude's comments.

*24) Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy ... (NKJV)*

A day is going to come when God is going to, with exceeding joy, bring us into His presence, fully and completely. God is willing and able to keep us from stumbling and to present us faultless. That's going to be the final conclusion. When the final conclusion comes, when God is making the final assessment of us, He isn't going to be looking at all the sins and errors. If we've made our effort, we've done our part, God is going to joyfully accept us into His presence. He will present us faultless. Really? That's going to be the final conclusion? That's the way God is going to see us? As faultless? That's what He says. Can you rejoice in that? Is that sufficient to outweigh the press of circumstances around you that wants to discourage you and weigh you down? What's the use?—too hard! Come on, think of it the way God thinks of it. He will think of us

and probably now does—He doesn't remember our sins. He doesn't look at us from that perspective.

*25) To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen. (NKJV)*

Our being brought to that place where we are described as faultless is a part of the glory, majesty, dominion, and power of God. It's a sobering time when we consider that our Brother had to die in order for us to be reconciled. That of course is sobering and we do need to take it seriously.

We need to approach this Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread with humility, but in our self-examination, let's do our level best not to look at it so much from the point of view of all of the sins and the errors that we've made but rather look at it from the perspective of God who sees us one day as faultless, without blemish, a part of His royal family. That's what it's about. Let's rejoice in that knowledge and continue the journey, as difficult as it may be at times. We can call on God for the help and He is faithful to provide it. So let's rejoice in our understanding and our knowledge and carry on with the journey.