

Revealed unto Babes

Terry Swagerty

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This is a statement out of Matthew 11, so this is where we will start, Matthew 11. I'll cover verse 20 through to the end of the chapter, verse 30. But there are numerous things I want to touch on as well, as we go through this section.

Matthew 11:20 *Then He [Jesus] began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: (NKJV)*

This is an interesting statement. It says that most of His mighty works were done in these particular cities—Jesus will point out just exactly which ones He is referring to in the next couple of verses. But, as He says, He does mighty works in them, but there is no response. This is kind of curious isn't it? The fact that Jesus Himself would appear, perform what is described in Matthew as mighty works, and get no response. You just wonder, what's the deal? If mighty works won't convince you, what will? From time to time you hear people say—if you would just show me a sign, if you would do some kind of a miracle, some kind of mighty work, then I would believe.

Well evidently, for the most part, mighty works do not serve the purpose of eliciting a response. If it's not a matter of attitude, no matter how many mighty works you perform, it probably isn't going to do the task. He makes reference to the fact that most of His mighty works were done in these places.

John 20:30 contains a statement relative to the things that Jesus did and the abundance of them.

John 20:30 *And truly Jesus did many other signs [it's kind of a review statement, if you will, that John adds here] in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31)-but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in His name. (NKJV)*

There are many other things which are not written in the book. There is probably much more to be discovered about Jesus Christ---who He is, what He did---than we actually already know. But back in Matthew 11:21 we find these little villages—cities they are referred to in verse 20 and actually named.

Matthew 11:21 *Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. (NKJV)*

Why is it that in some places, Jesus indicates in this verse that Tyre and Sidon would probably have repented if they had seen what these cities saw?

They just don't seem to get it. They have the privilege of having Jesus in their very midst, working mighty works, as they are described here, and right in their presence. Yet, there is no response, no repentance. You wonder what's the deal?

22) But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.

23) And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

24) But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.” (NKJV)

What is it about the attitude, the presence of mind, the overall view, which allows people to see mighty works done in their midst by Jesus and yet have no response? Jesus was there, He came, they had the privilege and the opportunity of having Him there with them and the response is indifference. The mighty works do not lead to repentance, do not lead to anything. They just did nothing. It is a puzzling situation. You would think there would have been some kind of response. Continuing in verse 25.

25) At that time Jesus answered and said, [it's kind of a prayer here, He addresses His Father] I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. (NKJV)

Wisdom and prudence are not the critical factor here, it is a matter of attitude.

Wise and prudent—the words are not all that difficult. Strong's concordance says the word “wise” means clear, practical skill—that is to say acumen. Here are the wise, they understand.

“Prudent” here, means mentally put together, intelligent. So, a person who is mentally put together, and intelligent can examine the situation that exists and come to conclusions, put things together and respond. They are mentally put together. However, this means in a negative sense. It also means conceited. Conceit is what? It's intellectual pride. It is not talking about intellectual competence here, it is talking about vanity, pride, self-admiration, arrogance and conceit. Those are the kinds of things that get in the way of revealed knowledge.

25) ... I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. (NKJV)

There is a quote in Deuteronomy 29:29

Deuteronomy 29:29 *The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. (NKJV)*

There are secret things that are not available to us, and there are things that are revealed and are available to us. What do we do with those things that are revealed? God is capable, at His discretion, of revealing additional information. We will call it truth, or more accurately, simply an expanding of our understanding. Truth is truth—it's there. God is capable of revealing and does reveal certain things to us. But what is the disposition of the wise and prudent? Well they can think we're wise, we're prudent, we don't have to be taught.

But in the presence of the mighty works of Jesus Himself, and the preaching He must have done in these northern Galilean communities, nothing happened. There was no repentance, just no response whatsoever. It is a troubling situation. Now I think you are getting the point of this. We need to have the attitude of a babe, which is having an attitude of one who looks to God totally for guidance, for understanding. That person does not depend on their own prudence and understanding and own ability to judge what is the truth.

Matthew 11:26 *Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. (NKJV)*

It seemed good to the Father to prevent these wise and prudent individuals, who are confident in their own ability to search out information, from having access to His secret things. That information is just not available to those individuals. It is available to people of a contrite spirit, who tremble at the word of God. God put that in place so there should be no glorying of anyone but Him. There is nobody who is going to glory in their own understanding. Revealing it to babes, concealing it from the worldly wise accomplishes God's purpose.

1 Corinthians 1 contains a couple of points which would be good to review before continuing. They are important points we need to remember. They show principles about having the right attitude to accepting the truth of God as He continues to reveal it. This is extremely important. Paul had to set the Corinthians straight. Corinth was a major Greek city and I suppose they felt they had considerable expertise. Paul pointed this out to those in the congregation.

1 Corinthians 1:26 *For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. (NKJV)*

Most of the time, the wise, the mighty and the noble of this world are simply not predisposed to putting themselves in a place where they are subservient to God, a place where they can receive the secret things of God. Occasionally one is called.

27) *But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;* (NKJV)

This goes contrary to human logic, because it is the mighty that trample the weak. The big fish eat the little fish, if you will.

28) *and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are ...* (NKJV)

So, when we are pursuing God's way, it turns human logic and the normal approach to life and situations upside down. For God to do this seems totally illogical to the ordinary human being—why would He do this?

29) *that no flesh should glory in His presence.* (NKJV)

The answer is that no flesh, no individual is capable of digging the truth out on their own. We are going to see more of this soon.

30) *But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—*
31) *that, as it is written, He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.”* (NKJV)

If we are capable of stirring up the truth ourselves then we could say, I can take credit for this, that and the other thing. No, we can't really take credit for much of anything. We have to continually acknowledge that God is in charge and He leads the way.

We pick up the story in Matthew 11:27.

Matthew 11:27 *All things have been delivered to Me by My Father ...* (NKJV)

The point is, Jesus Christ has the preeminence. If you'll indulge me one more time, I want to go to Colossians 1 where this is emphasized. It is important that we get things straight or we would never come up with the truth, as difficult as it is anyway. In Colossians 1, Paul focuses on the preeminence of Jesus Christ—verse 13.

Colossians 1:13 *He has delivered [the Father has delivered] us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,*
14) *in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.* (NKJV)

Without this redemption, the rest of it doesn't matter. This is the foundation of the whole work. If we are not properly redeemed, if you will—forgiven—then it doesn't matter what happens after that. This is step one.

The subject of the forgiveness of sin is an interesting one. Usually the statement is made that Jesus died for the sins of the world. Actually, it says, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Jesus didn't die for the sins of the world. Jesus died for my sins and He died for your sins. We can't hide in the crowd and hope we won't be noticed because we are in the crowd. Yes, we can acknowledge that Jesus died for all of our sins. Part of the attitude of being a babe is recognizing the need for forgiveness. The fact that, maybe or perhaps, we didn't get the best start in life and we found ourselves orbiting around influences that were contrary to God and all that had to change. We had to recognize the need for that change and now we have been forgiven.

Think back to the time when you were baptized. The time leading up to your conversion, your repentance and your baptism, you were pretty—shall we say—sheepish; that is to say, contrite. You didn't have much in the way of clever comeback for your circumstances and you were properly humble. That is what God needs. He cannot reveal His truth—the secret things—to people who are stuck on themselves and their own ideas and what they feel is important. The forgiveness of sin begins this way. In the beginning, if you weren't humble and if you didn't have a proper relationship with God and didn't recognize your need for a sacrifice, you might have gotten wet but you might not have been properly baptized.

We will assume that you did recognize your need and you were properly baptized.

16) For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

17) And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

18) And He is the head of the body, the church [the ecclesia, the called-out ones], who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. (NKJV)

It's important to understand this—the process by which Jesus became the firstborn from the dead is the same process that we will follow. Jesus Christ of course, was the Word, became flesh and dwelt among us—He lived, died, was resurrected to glory and ascended back to His Father in heaven. This is the same process that those who will become a part of the family of God will follow. We live this life in harmony with God. The day comes when we expire and it is likely that most people who are part of the firstfruits will be resurrected from the dead, resurrected to glory and to eternal life. That is the pattern that we will all follow and it requires the appropriate orientation, the appropriate mental outlook if you will. In all things He may have the preeminence—that's what we are dealing with. Christ said that all things have been delivered to Him by His Father. Therefore, He is essential in this process. Continuing in verse 27 we find another curious statement.

Matthew 11:27 *and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son ... (NKJV)*

If that is true, and I would assume that it is—as it is the words of Jesus Christ—if you are in a proper relationship with the one true God and Jesus Christ His firstborn Son, that little bit of information has been revealed to you. That is not something you can stir up on your own. You can look around the landscape of religion in the world today and there are literally a multitude of alternatives, counterfeits and frauds quite frankly—all parading the notion that to be saved in Jesus, or words to that affect is all that is needed. The truth is, this is not something you can stir up on your own. It is something that has to be revealed. If you are in a right relationship with the one true God, then that has been revealed to you. That is not something we can scare up on our own. That's interesting isn't it? He goes on to say:

27 continued) ... and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. (NKJV)

Jesus Christ has a direct responsibility in revealing Him—the true God, the Father—to others. He is directly involved in that process as well. I think we are all familiar with the fact that God is the one who calls. We will review this again, but first let us notice once again.

Matthew 11:27 *All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. (NKJV)*

It is of such great importance to know the one true God and Jesus Christ. Later, John will record this in chapter 17 in His prayer to His Father before He was resurrected. He makes the statement

This is eternal life, that they know You, the one true God and Jesus Christ whom you sent.

What we see spoken about in verse 27, is that knowing the Father and knowing the Son is the essence of eternal life. It is information, it is a principle concept that has to be revealed. It is of extreme importance and is the foundational principle, knowing the true God, knowing His firstborn Son and our relationship to Them. Jesus reveals the Father to others as He chooses, He has that capability.

As it turns out, both the Father and the Son are involved in this. This will not be new either, but turn to John 6. This is worthy of review and examination, because first of all the Father draws people. Obviously, Jesus Christ is involved in the process of who understands and who doesn't and it is a matter of discerning who has the childlike attitude. You think back on your calling and some of the experiences you might have had prior to baptism. It might have been deliberate on God's part to bring you to the place where you have a childlike attitude. Clearly that would have been His effort. Who knows, some of the things we may have thought God wasn't fair in and was beating up on us were needed just a little bit. We may have needed our priorities rearranged. Then, when we got our vision straight, we could see what God was trying to achieve in us.

John 6:41 *The Jews then murmured at him ... (NKJV)*

Here we see Jesus Christ, telling us the truth about the whole process of what God is doing. He is focusing on the fact that He is the Bread of life, as opposed to Moses who was there when they delivered the Manna. The Manna sustained them in the wilderness for forty years. Jesus is saying that this goes beyond that bread, this is heavenly bread. But they complained, they took exception to the fact that He said, "I am the Bread which came down from heaven".

I suppose they thought it was the Manna that came down from heaven and it was Moses that was involved. Jesus is saying, we are going to take it beyond that.

42) And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph ... (NKJV)

If you don't agree with the message, then what do you do? You start to find fault with the messenger. Isn't he the son of Joseph? Who is he, standing up there claiming to be the bread from heaven? How does that work?

I suppose, if you think back and put yourself in that position with the Jews at that time you could well have had the same thought. Let us impose our twenty-first century experience on the situation and imagine that you were a classmate of Jesus.

You went to school together and you played ball together and maybe you went fishing in the Sea of Galilee with Him, so you know who Jesus was. You're familiar with Him, you are familiar with His brothers and sisters and His family. Then one day He shows up and says, "I'm the Bread from heaven, I'm the Son of God".

How do you respond to that? There's one of two ways to respond to this, here is one, verse 42.

42 continued) ... whose father and mother we know? (NKJV)

How is it then that He says, "I have come down from heaven?". How can He say that? He was born just like the rest of us. Of course, they were missing part of the story, weren't they?

43) Jesus therefore answered and said to them, Do not murmur among yourselves.

44) No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

45) It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught by God. Therefore, everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. (NKJV)

Have you heard and learned from the Father? If the response is positive, it will lead you to Jesus Christ. In verse 60, he continues the theme. These are the Jews—they were among the Jews and there were those who you couldn't be convinced of anything. They

were stuck in their way and in their understanding and they were not going to change. How about among His own disciples?

60) *Therefore, many of His disciples, when they heard this, [here He gets into the proposition of, you must eat My flesh and drink My blood and that was a bit offensive evidently] said, This is a hard saying; who can understand it?"*

61) *When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, Does this offend you? (NKJV)*

Again, here is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, having been sent to do the Father's will. and explain about it and how it works.

But what goes on here? We don't understand—okay, it is a hard saying so what do we do? What is the proper response in the face of a hard saying? Something that is a little more difficult to comprehend. What is the proper response?

62) *What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?*

63) *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. (NKJV)*

These are the things that have to be revealed, that is revealed to those with a childlike mind and attitude, looking to God for the guidance. They are spirit and they are life.

64) *But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him.*

65) *And He said, Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father." (NKJV)*

Put yourself in that position. People do have difficulty understanding certain things, so what is the proper response? What do we do? Do we dig in our heels and bring to mind what we have always understood? Therefore that is what we will always believe? Or is there some room for expanding our understanding. I hope so, because there are things that have to be revealed to us, that are secret to God, and He will reveal them to us as He discerns and makes it possible.

Now what happened next? Verse 66.

66) *From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. (NKJV)*

How would I have responded if I had been there when Jesus walked the earth and was actually speaking and teaching—how would I have responded? Would I have responded positively or would I have said, "I don't know. That sounds kind of crazy. I think I will go back to whatever I was doing before". They didn't all leave of course. But many did, because, in verse 65 Jesus told them, "I have said to you that no one can

come to Me unless it has been granted to Him by My Father”. Yet if the Father is teaching, as we saw earlier, it will draw and lead you to Jesus Christ.

In chapter 14, this is later now, He is about to be arrested and crucified and He makes a similar statement. Verse 5.

John 14:5 *Thomas said to Him, Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?”*

6) *Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

7) *If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.” (NKJV)*

No one comes to the Son except the Father draws him. No one comes to the Father except through Jesus Christ—that’s the way it works. It comes to those who are of the right mental, spiritual disposition if you will.

Go back to Matthew 11 briefly and we will finish the chapter. Verse 25.

Matthew 11:25 *At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. (NKJV)*

Man’s wisdom, man’s prudence, man’s perception, are not capable of coming to the right conclusion relative to spiritual things. Things relative to the plan and purpose that God is working out here. Jesus thanked him, because again, no one is going to glory before God, nobody is going to go before God and present all of his good works. Some people believe that if you do the right things often enough, that will be enough and God will accept you. They think God owes them. They think they can write down all the things they have done—make a nice, neat list, and then go before God and say, “See here is what I’ve done, you owe me”. Nobody goes to God and says you owe me—nobody. We go before God and say, “Here I am, give me a hand, without You it is hopeless, I’m hopeless’.

26) *Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. (NKJV)*

That is the way it works, the work of God moves forward, the knowledge and understanding of God goes to those who are of the right spiritual disposition, described here as babes.

27) *All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. (NKJV)*

Once again, that basic foundational principle is revealed. It’s not something—look what I discovered—no, look what you were led to is probably the better response.

28) *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*
(NKJV)

This verse is probably one of the most often quoted in all of the New Testament, because we all want to be relieved of our heavy burden and the labor we find ourselves in. Sometimes life can really deal us a tough hand.

29) *Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me ...* (NKJV)

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me. Here the Yoke is a teaching tool. In Jesus' day of course, oxen were yoked together and there was a purpose in that yoke. It was to concentrate the power of a team of oxen so they could do the work that was required of them, whether it was pulling the cart loaded with whatever, or pulling the plow. You put the two oxen together, working in harmony and they accomplished a great deal. When it came to training a new ox to the yoke, you would hook a rookie up to a veteran. Then the rookie had no choice, he had the same step as the veteran. This is what we do. We are yoked to Jesus Christ to learn something, to be kept on the straight and narrow.

You cannot just wander off on any old way you want to, or suit your own current predisposition—not at all. We have to be in a yoke, be taught, be led, be directed. But the wise and prudent do not think they need to be in the yoke. I can do it for myself -- it's the three-year old's attitude. They try to tie their own shoes or whatever, and they are not having much success. Then mother comes along to help—I want to do it myself. I don't want mother messing. Eventually perhaps they will indeed yield to mother's instruction, when they recognize that it is a fruitless effort that leads only to knots and tangles. You know when you get a knot in your shoe—you've been there when you were a youngster, you've seen your kids do it—and the way to get that knot out is to pull harder and then what? Then we know what happens. We must do it God's way or not at all.

29 continued) *... for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

30) *For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*" (NKJV)

There is a yoke and there is a burden. When we are yoked to Jesus Christ and to the purpose of God, then we can stay on the straight and narrow and we can handle the burden. Whatever it happens to be, we can in faith, trust God. Whatever burden He puts upon us is to teach us the lessons that we need to know and that need to be revealed. We need to be alert to what God might reveal to us, what God might be trying to demonstrate to us.

Where do we go to find the truth of God, to find that information that's crucial to us? Of course, we go to the scriptures. You are all familiar with the basic statements, but I will just share them quickly with you. We are familiar with Jesus' words in Matthew 4:4,

where He said, “Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds through the mouth of God”. Where are these words that proceed from the mouth of God? They are in the Bible. They are in the scriptures.

You are familiar with John 10:35. The way it is translated in the English it comes across as a parenthetical statement, where Jesus says *scripture cannot be broken*.

What is scripture? It is the word of God. In Jesus’ day that would have been the Old Testament at the time He actually made that statement. Later in John 8:32 He said *you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free*.

Really? Where is the truth found? It is in scripture. Later in His prayer before He was arrested He made the statement that, *Thy word is truth*.

Paul later would write to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:16 that, *all scripture is God breathed*.

Think about it. Can we then trust the scriptures?

We have the word of God and yet, when you look at the landscape of general orthodox Christianity around us, the interpretation and what is useful and what isn’t, is just off the map. It is every extreme possible. Some people think you don’t have to do anything, just accept the Lord and that’s it, you’re done and saved. Others feel you have to obey everything at every moment or you’re condemned to hell or some such thing. What you find, and this has always been true, when you sit down to apply yourself to reading the scripture you realize that within the Bible itself, there are certain obstacles. There are hurdles. This is because what we have is a Christian translation of Hebrew scripture and we find, without too much effort, that there are denominational and doctrinal biases that you have to face.

I would like to share my experience—this is how I came to it and began to understand. When you begin to comprehend the whole process of conversion and coming into harmony with God, you begin to put two and two together. Everybody has their own story about what might have impacted you early on. My story began at my father’s funeral when I was thirteen years old.

You can imagine, it’s a funeral and I’m the oldest of four children. Here we are in a little Methodist church in our little home town and my mother is dressed in black. She has a little hat with a veil, which was typical of the day. There I am, me, my brother and our two sisters. They were too young to even be there, they were two and a half and eleven months, so really, they weren’t even there. I’m sitting there and the minister is going on about how my father has gone to heaven and isn’t it wonderful, he’s in the presence of the Lord. I don’t know all the terminology he might have used. He might have made some reference to being called home and that sort of stuff. I’m sitting there and my little thirteen-year-old mind was processing this and I’m saying, “time out! This God you’re talking about, He’s blind? He can’t see that there’s a widow and four fatherless children here. You’re telling me that it is preferable for him to be in heaven, in the bosom of

Abraham or whatever he said and we're here to fend for ourselves?" In my little thirteen-year-old mind I said, "I do not believe in your blind God".

It's not that I had given up on the notion of God, it was just that the God he was preaching, just wasn't right. That was it for a while. It went on for another six years or so before I had become a young adult and by this time I was nineteen years old. I was now old enough to be drafted and to be sent to a foreign land. I would be able to make widows and orphans and die for my country, yet I was not yet old enough, at that point in history, to vote whether or not I thought that was a good idea. You had to be twenty-one to vote. But at eighteen, you could die for your country. Make sense out of that one.

Nevertheless, I'm coming to the place where God says, alright now I can begin to work with him again. We introduced the concept that there is a God but the way God is normally portrayed, may not be accurate. That was in my little thirteen-year-old brain and that had a big influence on me.

Then the concept now of Protestant salvation history came along. I want to share something with you at this point. In 2007, I came across a book review in the New Yorker magazine. James Wood was the reviewer I think, and the book was The Book of Psalms; A Translation and Commentary by Robert Alter. He introduced to me the concept of salvation history, something I had not had any realization of before. In his translation of the Psalms he has some interesting things I want to share with you, relative to the whole concept of how God has presented it and what we have to deal with. He talks about the concreteness of language within the Hebrew, and that he is trying to reestablish the translation of scripture, based on the very concrete nature of the Hebrew language and he says,

What is at stake in this preference is not just a matter of phonetics or esthetics, but a world view that informs these poems. We are all accustomed to think of Psalms justifiably as a religious book. But its religious character is not the same as that of the Christian and Jewish traditions that variously evolved over the centuries after the Bible. There is a Christian-Jewish more modern overlay on the scripture as it was presented to us—the word of God.

He goes on:

... the Psalmists are constantly concerned with the relationship between man and God, or Israel and God, which is more than sufficient to qualify their poetry as religious. But this relationship is often imagined in social, political and even physical terms rather than in the framework of what Protestant theology calls salvation history.

What do we mean by salvation history? In another comment here he points out:

The two most notable instances of resistance to inappropriately theological language in this translation are the pointed absence of soul and salvation. The avoidance of these terms, which many English readers may automatically associate with Psalms, is not the result of contrariness on my part, but nephesh, the word that is translated soul in the scripture. Nephesh has a core meaning of life, death. That the vulgate—that would be the translation from Hebrew into Latin—generally rendered it as “anima” and that in turn predisposed the King James translators to represent it as soul. Soul, he points out, strongly suggests a body-soul split with implications for an afterlife. That is alien to the Hebrew Bible and to Psalms in particular; soul—salvation. As such, soul is a word that has to be avoided if we are not to get a misleading idea of what the Psalmists are saying. Nephesh often occurs in Psalms as an anatomical term for the part of the body between the head and the shoulders—the neck. For an example, Psalm 69: Save me oh God, for the waters are come in unto my soul.

That’s the King James version; waters have come into my soul. *This image of internal seepage is picturesque if mystifying. What the Hebrew really says in a vivid depiction of threatened drowning is for the waters have come up to my neck.* Not my soul, as it says.

Salvation is a heavily fraught theological term, pulling in its tow all sorts of associations of Ecclesiastical redemption or radical spiritual transformation and sublime elevation of the individual sinner. But in Psalms this noun and its cognate verb, “oshea”, are strictly directed to the here and now. “Oshea” means to get somebody out of a tight fit, to rescue him.

Now, back to my own personal experience.

Salvational history, as I understood it as a young Sunday school attendee, gave the basic questions about what is man? These are some of the most basic questions we encounter. Does man have an immortal soul? What is the reward of the saved? What is the truth about heaven and earth? We were taught man is an immortal soul in a body of flesh. Way back when, in the garden of Eden, man fell from grace. Woman and then man took of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, defying God’s direction and they fell from grace. They were put out of the garden. Consequently, the soul which is housed in the body of flesh, has to be saved—it’s immortal. At some point in time, the human body expires, it dies—is subject to death. What do we do then with this immortal soul? Well, if it’s saved, no problem, it will go to heaven and of course salvation. The story is, you accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as your personal savior, all is well and you are saved and you can go to heaven when you die.

What happens when you’re not saved? What do we do with an immortal soul that was in a body that was not saved? You go to hell and you burn forever. Really? Is that what it all means? I can remember processing these things as a child, like I said, as I looked at the process and I’m sitting there as a thirteen-year-old at my father’s funeral, listening to this—and I didn’t see it as salvation history at the time—but that is the way it

was understood. Somehow or another that was supposed to be okay. I would later learn of course, there is indeed a God different to the one that minister was describing. He is not blind to our needs and to our suffering and to the issues that we are dealing with—not at all. There is a reason things are the way they are. Naturally we have to do what we can to get ourselves in harmony with the one true God.

So, we begin to sort through these things and process truth from error. We begin to realize—our experience in the last several years has indicated to us that when we are not properly aligned, even the most basic of information is a shadow. Even the most basic information such as the record of God and Christ in scripture.

It is not available immediately, but then we begin to sort it out, taking a closer look because we have had our own predispositions. We can point the finger at the Protestants and their salvational history, but we have had our own issues which have had to be corrected and I suppose that is the big point here.

Let's turn to 1 Corinthians 8 because You would think that if we had the right knowledge things would be alright. But God has not revealed things to the wise and prudent, He's revealed them to babes. The whole point of my effort here today is, where we are, we can thank God for it because He has revealed it to us. 1 Corinthians 8:1.

1 Corinthians 8:1 *Now concerning things offered to idols: [that's the issue] We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. (NKJV)*

Surely the knowledge of God doesn't puff up. It depends on your disposition. It depends, does it not, on whether or not your attitude is one of obeying, accepting the guidance of your parent or whether or not you think you are in such a position that you know better. Have we ever, in the church of God as we understand it, been in the situation where we felt we had the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth? I think actually, we would have to admit we have been there. Hopefully we don't remain there. Hopefully we move ahead and follow God's guidance. In this case, you have things offered to idols and now Paul says, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.

2) And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.

3) But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.

4) Therefore, concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one. (NKJV)

It's interesting how, in times past, we have overlooked that particular statement—there's no other God but one—and have recently come to better understand what that means.

5) For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords),

6) *yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.*

7) *However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. (NKJV)*

So here again is the presence of knowledge. The more mature response is, there is only one God. Whatever else goes on out there in the name of religion and gods who are created here, there and the other place, that is not an issue. But if indeed you have someone who is not mature yet, doesn't comprehend that, here we are eating meat that has been offered to idols and which was primarily what was available in Corinth in the marketplace, then their conscience is defiled. So, knowledge puffs up. We have to be careful about how we use the knowledge that God has granted to us. Again, the purpose here is to remind us that our disposition, our alignment with God has to be appropriate. If it is not, then we will find ourselves in the same position as these villages that Jesus was upbraiding in the region of Galilee, because they had had Jesus there, they had the proper teaching and they had even seen mighty works. I don't know if we have been a witness to mighty works, in the sense of public miracles, feeding 5000, raising the dead—can't say that I've encountered much of that sort of thing. Healing dozens and whole crowds of people—those are just the things that are recorded.

But why bother with this? We are capable of defending and assuming the same attitude of these individuals here. We have available the truth of God and it needs to be accepted with the proper attitude. Otherwise it serves a wrong purpose rather than a proper purpose. Back to Matthew 11 again.

Matthew 11:25 *I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. (NKJV)*

Finally, then, a note of caution to think about. Present history, recent history, notes that the church of God, as we understand it, has been subject to the same problems that we have noted elsewhere in Scripture. There is denominational bias if we're not careful. Our brand had the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Somebody else's brand didn't match up. Knowledge, even of the truth can puff us up, cause pride, intellectual vanity. Therefore, if we expect the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, then we must control our wisdom and prudence and remain eager to receive God's revelation as babes.