

They Wanted a King

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July 10, 2010

On the way to exercise when I drive—it's a short distance away—there's a protestant church that has one of the reader boards out front. And over the last, oh, year or two they've had the following on their reader board. One said:

God is like State Farm. You're in good hands.

Then a few weeks later another one popped up. It said:

God is like Coca Cola. He is the real thing.

And then another one said:

God is like Hallmark Cards. He cared enough to send the very best.

And then the last one, it says:

God is like Tide. He gets out the stains that others leave behind.

And I'll have to tell you, every time I drive by the place I get angry! You know it's a cute saying. Yes, it's funny and all of that. I get angry because God isn't like a corporate slogan. God isn't like—you know you can't reduce God down to be the equivalent of some worldly corporation's slogan. And that's exactly what they're doing. And I get so mad because it is blasphemy! It is rank blasphemy to do that. And yet, people don't realize that!

And just to understand the word *blasphemy*: In Webster's 1828 Dictionary, which gets us kind of back, not quite half-way back, to the King James Version, it says blasphemy is "an indignity offered to God in words or writing; reproachful, contemptuous, or irreverent words uttered against Jehovah."

And that's exactly what those words are. And, of course, we, in the Church, we would never do that. We wouldn't say that and we understand that we would not lower God to the level of a human corporation or a human slogan. But the fact is that we, as God's people, can commit blasphemy and not be aware of it. We can commit blasphemy in different ways than this obvious example that I just gave you.

Let's go to Exodus chapter 20 and read the first three verses and look at the very First Commandment because God is very specific and we have to be very, very careful about His Word. Exodus 20 verse 1, it tells us:

Exodus 20:1. *And God spake all these words, saying, (KJV)*

And notice what He says. He says:

Exodus 20:2. *I am the LORD [your] God, (KJV)*

That is true today just as it was true back then.

Exodus 20:2b. *which [has] brought [you] out of the land of Egypt, [and] out of the house of bondage. (KJV)*

Verse 3:

Exodus 20:3. *[You shall] have no other gods before me. (KJV)*

That is the first basic, fundamental Commandment. We cannot put anybody, gods or otherwise, in front of God Almighty.

And yet, despite this Commandment, this fundamental commandment, those that God has dealt with down through the ages—Old Testament, New Testament—have always committed the blasphemy of putting a man in the place of God! And we are going to look into that today. They have continually—ancient Israel, New Testament Church, Church today—has continued to commit blasphemy by putting a man in the place of God.

If you want a title on the sermon, it's called: *They Wanted a King*. And I think you know where we're going to go in the Old Testament.

But what we want to do first is look at an example of ancient Israel and what happened. And then, we want to look in the New Testament at what happened. And then, we want to transfer it to the present day and look at that. And hopefully we can learn some lessons about how we might prevent ourselves from committing blasphemy.

Now Point Number One:

Almighty God promised Israel He would be their God.

He was their God and would be their God. He made that promise to them. Let's go to Leviticus chapter 26 and we're going to read verses 1 through the beginning of verse 4 and then jump to verse 12. Leviticus 26 beginning in verse 1, notice what God says.

Leviticus 26:1. *[You] shall make no idols [or] graven image, neither [shall you] rear up a standing image, neither shall [you] set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: (KJV)*

Why? He says:

Leviticus 26:1b. *for I am the LORD your God. (KJV)*

Just what we read!

Verse 2:

Leviticus 26:2. *[You] shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: (KJV)*

Especially on the Sabbath Day! Why?

Leviticus 26:1b. *I am the [Eternal]. (KJV)*

Verse 3:

Leviticus 26:3. *If [you] walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, [to] do them;
4) Then I will (KJV)*

Beginning of verse 4 and then, God goes down to list all of the blessings that if we put Him first and don't put anybody in front of Him.

But notice verse 12. He gives all these: If you will do this... and He says:

Leviticus 26:12. *And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and [you] shall be my people. KJV)*

God says, "I am your God. There are no other gods. You can't put anybody as a god in place of Me."

And we will see that Israel did not do that and had a history of doing that. And with Christ, the God of the Old Testament, as their Ruler, they needed nothing else. They really needed nothing else if they would have followed God.

So the First Point is:

Almighty God promised to be Israel's God.

That leads us to the Second Point:

Israel never needed a man between them and God.

It was sufficient that God was their God. They didn't need a man to come in between at all.

Let's go now to Deuteronomy chapter 11 and we're going to read verses 11 through 25. Deuteronomy 11 beginning in verse 11. Understand that Deuteronomy is written by Moses right before he died, right before Israel went into the Promised Land. And it's a history looking back of all that has happened. And he was warning them not to repeat the same mistakes they had made before. Deuteronomy 11 verse 11:

Deuteronomy 11:11. *But the land, [where you] go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and [drinks] water of the rain of heaven: (KJV)*

He's describing what a blessing it is!

Verse 12:

Deuteronomy 11:12. *A land which the [Eternal your] God [cares] for: the eyes of the [Eternal your] God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year. (KJV)*

He said, "I'm looking after you. I'm looking after your fields and your crops and your animals and your lives."

Verse 13:

Deuteronomy 11:13. *And it shall come to pass, if [you listen] diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your [life], (KJV)*

Put Him first! Nobody in between!

Verse 14, He says, "If you do that":

Deuteronomy 11: 14. *I will give you the rain of your land in due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that [you may] gather in thy corn, and [your] wine, and [your] oil. (KJV)*

He says, "You don't need anything. I'm looking after you. I'm going to take care of you," agriculturally in verse 14.

Verse 15:

Deuteronomy 11:15. *And I will send grass in [your] fields for [your] cattle, that [you may] eat and be full.*

16) Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and [you] turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; (KJV)

Verse 17:

Deuteronomy 11:17. *And then the [Eternal's] wrath [will] be kindled against you, (KJV)*

"If you worship another God, if you put somebody between Me and you," He says. And He says, "If you do that, I'm going to be angry with you."

Deuteronomy 11:17b. *and he shut up the [heavens], [there'll] be no rain, and the land [was not going to] yield [its] fruit; and lest [you] perish quickly from off the good [earth] which the LORD [gave] you. (KJV)*

Verse 18:

Deuteronomy 11:18. *Therefore [you] shall lay up my words in your heart and in your life, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.*

19) And [you] shall teach them your children [passing it down from generation to generation, decade to decade], speaking of them when [you sit] in [your] house, and when [you walk] by the way, when [you lie] down, and when [you rise] up. (KJV)

Your minds should be on God and your conversations should be about God. And your children should hear it and be instructed so that they follow in the same way.

Verse 20:

Deuteronomy 11:20. *And [you shall] write them upon the door posts of [your] house, and upon [your] gates: (KJV)*

Why?

Deuteronomy 11:21. *That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children [also be multiplied], in the land which the LORD [swore] unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth. (KJV)*

Now verse 22, notice the promise!

Deuteronomy 11:22. *For if [you] shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave [or hold on to] him;*

23) Then will the LORD drive out all these nations from before you, (KJV)

"You don't need a military! You don't need a police force. You don't need a king with chariots," He says. "I'll take care of that."

Deuteronomy 11:23b. *and [you] shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves. (KJV)*

"It doesn't make any difference who comes up against you. I will take care of you, because I'm your God."

Verse 24:

Deuteronomy 11:24. *Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be.
25) There shall no man be able to stand before you: (KJV)*

That's as promise! And what God is saying is, "You don't need anybody but Me. I will take care of you. You need nothing if you just put me first." He says:

Deuteronomy 11:25b. *for the LORD your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that [you] shall tread upon, as he [has] said unto you. (KJV)*

God promised to be their Provider of all that they needed—air, water, food, clothing, shelter. He promised to be their Protector against all enemies, against pestilences, diseases, armies. It didn't make any difference. What He was saying is, "You don't need anybody else, but Me. And I will take care of you."

So the Second Point, we want to establish in the Old Testament:

Israel never needed anybody but God.

Now we get to the problem. Point Number Three:

There is something about human nature that wants to look to a man and not to God.

There is just something there. Men want to look to men. They don't want to look to God. Old Testament, New Testament, today, it makes no difference. We're building a case now in the Old Testament.

Notice when after Israel came through the Red Sea, saw all the miracles. God was speaking. God was in Mount Sinai—on top of Mount Sinai with the lightning and the thunder and all that was going on. Notice what their reaction was. Let's go to Deuteronomy chapter 5. Again Moses is speaking and he's reminding them. We're going to read verses 22 through 29. And he's recalling the time when Israel was camping at the base of Mount Sinai. Deuteronomy 5 verse 22, but notice their reaction.

Deuteronomy 5:22. *These words the [Eternal spoke] unto all your assembly in the mount out of the [middle] of the fire, [out] of the cloud, [out] of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. (KJV)*

They heard the words of God with might and power and majesty. Then he goes on to say:

Deuteronomy 5:22b. *And he wrote them [these words] in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me. (KJV)*

Verse 23:

Deuteronomy 5:23. *And it came to pass, when [you] heard the voice [referring to God's voice] out of the midst of the darkness, (for the mountain did burn with fire,) (KJV)*

Can you imagine the sight? The mountain looked like the burning bush. It was on fire but not burning up. And the clouds and the darkness and the lightning and the thunder and then you hear this voice instructing them! And so he said in verse 23, "When you heard all that":

Deuteronomy 5:23b. *that [you] came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and [even all] your elders; (KJV)*

All the leaders came. And notice what they did!

Deuteronomy 5:24. *And [you] said, Behold, the LORD our God [has showed] us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the [middle] of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he [meaning man] [lives]. (KJV)*

"In other words, you can hear God's voice and still be alive. We've seen that today!" But notice what they said!

Deuteronomy 5:25. *Now therefore why should we die? (KJV)*

Now they just said they just lived. So this isn't the real reason, you see. They're not afraid of dying because they just lived through it.

Deuteronomy 5:25. *Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the [Eternal] our God any more, then we shall die.*

26) For who is there of all flesh, that [has] heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? (KJV)

Well, we have! Meaning: them! We just lived. So this is their plan. This is what they wanted to do in verse 27.

Deuteronomy 5:27. *Go [you—referring to Moses] near, and hear all that the [Eternal] our God shall say: and speak [you] unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto [you]; and we will hear it, and do it. (KJV)*

"We want you to go talk to God because we don't want to hear God. We want you to go talk to God and then you tell us what God says." So, they wanted to insert a man between them and God because they really didn't want to hear God. They didn't want to really face God. And that, again, is part of human nature.

Verse 28:

Deuteronomy 5:28. *And the LORD heard the voice of your words, when [you] spake unto me; and the LORD said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto [you]: (KJV)*

Notice what God says.

Deuteronomy 5:28b. they have well said all that they have spoken. (KJV)

"They don't want to talk to Me. They don't want to hear My voice. They would rather hear a man."

Verse 29:

Deuteronomy 5:29. *O that there [was] such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever! (KJV)*

Now if this doesn't say it all, I don't know what does! Because they had an opportunity to have a direct relationship with God, to hear His voice, to hear His Commandments, to know He was nearby with all His power and all His majesty and they rejected it. They would rather follow a man than follow God. Israel didn't want to see God. They didn't want to hear God. They didn't want God too close to them. They wanted God to keep His distance. And they wanted to put a man between them and God.

Now think about this: Despite God's promises to take care of them—we just read one section of Scripture; there are multiple sections of Scripture that talk about that—despite God's promise to take care of them, Israel rejected God when they wanted a king. They decided they wanted a man. They wanted a king. And God said, "All you need is Me." But they wouldn't listen.

Let's go to 1 Samuel chapter 8. And we'll read the first twenty verses just to get the account straight and to get the context. Now this is toward the end of Samuel's life. And, yes, there were some problems. Nothing was perfect. And Samuel had a problem with his boys. 1 Samuel 8 verse 1:

1 Samuel 8:1. *And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.*

2) Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beersheba. (KJV)

Samuel operated out of Ramah and Beersheba was quite a bit to the south.

1 Samuel 8:3. *And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after [money], and took bribes, and perverted judgment. (KJV)*

Not setting a good example!

1 Samuel 8:4. *Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, (KJV)*

Now Ramah is about five miles north of Jerusalem and about fifty miles north of Beersheba where his boys were.

Verse 5, and the elders of Israel came together, came unto him in verse 5:

1 Samuel 8:5. *And said, Behold, [you are] old, and [your] sons [don't] walk in [your] ways: now make us a king (KJV)*

"We want a king. We don't want God to speak us even through somebody like Samuel. We want a king to rule over us."

1 Samuel 8:5b. *to judge us like all the [other] nations. (KJV)*

"We want to be like the world! We don't want to be the way God wants us to be! We don't want to be differentiated from the rest of the world the way God wants us to. We want to be like the rest of the world!"

1 Samuel 8:6. *But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the [Eternal].*

7) And the [Eternal] said unto Samuel [just like he did with Moses that we just read!], [Listen] unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto [you]: for they have not rejected [you], they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. (KJV)

What is it about human nature that doesn't want God to reign over them? They want a man to reign over them. If you ask the average Israelite of the day, they probably didn't feel like they had rejected God in any way. They just wanted a king. They were blind. They didn't see that by asking for a king or putting a man over them, between them and God, they were actually rejecting God. And they were.

Verse 8:

1 Samuel 8:8. *According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, [He says,] and served other gods, so do they also unto [you]. (KJV)*

They have had a history since Day One of idolatry, going after false gods, worshipping idols, wanting kings, and so on. He said, "It's been nonstop."

Verse 9:

1 Samuel 8:9. *Now therefore [listen] unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. (KJV)*

"I want you to tell them how bad it's going to get when you put a man between yourself and God."

Verse 10:

1 Samuel 8:10. *Samuel told all the words of the [Eternal] unto the people that asked of him a king.*

11) And he said, This [is going to] be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: [He's going to] take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, to be his horsemen; and some [are going to] run before his chariots.

12) [He's going to] appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground [or cultivate his ground], and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. (KJV)

And, as God has said, "None of that had to happen. You don't need instruments of war and chariots if God is your God and you look to God."

Verse 13:

1 Samuel 8:13. *And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, (KJV)*

That's the King James. The New King James says, *perfumers.*

1 Samuel 8:13b. *and to be cooks, and to be bakers.*

14) And [he's going to] take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive yards, even the best of them, and [he's going to] give them to his servants. (KJV)

"As rewards, as perks, and it's going to come out of your hide."

Verse 15:

1 Samuel 8:15. *And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.*

16) *And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and [the best of] your young men, and your [donkeys], and [he's going to] put them to [do] his work. [Not your work.]*

17) *He will take the tenth of your sheep: and [you're going to] be his servants.*

18) *And [you] shall cry out in that day because of your king which [you] have chosen; and [God is not going to] hear you [when you do]. (KJV)*

Samuel's saying, "I'm warning you. I'm telling you in advance this is the way it's going to be. And God is not going to listen when you start whining and crying about the king that you have picked for yourself."

"Nevertheless," verse 19:

1 Samuel 8:19. *Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, [No], but we will have a king over us;*

20) *That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. (KJV)*

"We can see a king. He's a human. We want to see him lead us to war. We want to see him parade in and out of his palace with his robes on. We want to see that. This God, we can't see!" And so human nature wants to trust in something you can see and feel. And they wanted to look to a man and not to God Almighty, even despite all of the miracles, even to despite hearing the voice of God.

Now let's go to 1 Samuel chapter 12. Notice what God says. They didn't need a king. God is going to tell them that they already had a King. 1 Samuel 12, we're going to read verses 6 through 12.

1 Samuel 12:6. *And Samuel said unto the people, It is the [Eternal] that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. (KJV)*

He's making the case: God was looking after you. God heard you. God took action.

1 Samuel 12:7. *Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the [Eternal] of all the righteous acts of the [Eternal], which he did to you and to your fathers.*

8) *When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the [Eternal], then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place.*

9) *And when they [forgot] the LORD their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them.*

10) And they cried unto the [Eternal] [meaning your forefathers], We have sinned, because we have forsaken the [Eternal], [we] have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now [please] deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve [You, referring to God]. (KJV)

They want to come back now.

Verse 11:

***1 Samuel 12:11.** And the [Eternal] sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and [you] dwelled [safely]. (KJV)*

What he's saying to them really is, "You're not happy with that. You don't want that. You don't want God to take care of you."

Verse 12:

***1 Samuel 2:12.** And when [you] saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, [rather than look to God, they said] [you] said unto me, [No]; but a king shall reign over us: (KJV)*

But notice this last phrase.

***1 Samuel 2:12b.** when the LORD your God was your king. (KJV)*

And they rejected God as their King. They rejected the most powerful force, Almighty God, perfect in wisdom and judgment and love and kindness and gentleness with power that is unimaginable. This God says, "I'm going to protect you and take care of you." And they said, "No. No, we want a man with armies and chariots and all that. That's what we want. We're rejecting You and we're putting a man in Your place." And that is the summation of man's desire in that area.

Now let's look and see what they got. Let's look and see the manner of the king they got. Now let's go to 1 Samuel chapter 22 and we're going to read verses 6 through 19. Saul is king. And God has rejected Saul because Saul refused to be obedient to God. God has anointed David to be the next king. David is on the run. Now we break into this context. 1 Samuel 22 verse 6:

***1 Samuel 22:6.** When Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men that were with him, (now Saul abode in Gibeah under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants were [there] standing about him [his entourage];)
7) Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him (KJV)*

Now he's whining and he's complaining. And we know Saul is a Benjamite.

1 Samuel 22:7b. *Hear now, [you] Benjamites; will the son of Jesse [referring to David] give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds; (KJV)*

This is just what Samuel said he was going to do. And he said, "I've done this. And I've given you all these perks and this land and homes and all of that." He said, "Would David do that?"

Verse 8:

1 Samuel 22:8. *That all of you have conspired against me, and there is none that [showed] me that my son [referring to Jonathan] [has] made a league with the son of Jesse [David], and there is none of you that is sorry for me, or [showed] unto me that my son [has] stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day? (KJV)*

He is whining and complaining.

Verse 9:

1 Samuel 22:9. *Then answered Doeg the Edomite, (KJV)*

Now just stop here and think. Why would an Edomite be in his inner circle? Why was somebody that's not an Israelite be one of his chief advisors? Why would that be? Well, obviously, he's gone completely astray. He's completely lost his mind. He's not following God. He has an evil spirit. And here Satan has inserted this non-Israelite, this pagan, in his inner circle.

And so Doeg speaks up and says:

1 Samuel 22:9b: *[Doeg] which was set over the servants of Saul [Well, that's a high position.], and [he] says, (KJV)*

Now notice what Doeg says:

1 Samuel 22:9 continued: *I saw the son of Jesse [David] coming to Nob [the town of Nob], to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub.
10) And he inquired of the LORD for him, and gave him [food], and gave him the sword of Goliath (KJV)*

He's saying Ahimelech did all of this. Now he's sucking up. He's a spy. He's trying to curry favor with Saul.

1 Samuel 22:11. *Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests that were in Nob: (KJV)*

Nob was a priestly city. And all of the priests—Ahimelech is the chief priest—now came into Saul's presence.

Verse 12:

1 Samuel 22:12. *And Saul said, Hear now, [you] son of Ahitub. And [Ahimelech] answered, Here I am, my lord [very humble, respectful].
13) And Saul said unto him, Why have [you] conspired against me, [you] and the son of Jesse, in that [you have] given him bread, and a sword, and [have] inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as at this day? (KJV)*

He's accusing Ahimelech of a conspiracy against him. And all this is on the word of a pagan. One witness of this Edomite!

Verse 14:

1 Samuel 22:14. *Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said, [This was a common phrase.] And who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son in law, and [he goes] at thy bidding, and is honorable in [your] house? (KJV)*

He says, "Where is this that David's conspiring against you?"

Verse 15:

1 Samuel 22:15. *Did I then begin to inquire of God for him? [He said,] be it far from me: let not the king impute any thing unto his servant, nor to all the house of my father: for [your] servant knew nothing of all this, less or more. (KJV)*

He said, "There's no truth to this! And all of the other priests that are in Nob know nothing of this."

Now notice the king's reaction. This wonderful king that they wanted to be before them!

1 Samuel 22:16. *And the king said, [You shall] surely die, Ahimelech, [you], and all [your] father's house.
17) And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the [Eternal]; because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not show it to me. (KJV)*

Now you put yourself in a situation of one of the servants. You're an Israelite. And this is a priestly city. And the high priest is there with all of his other priests and the king asks you to kill them. What would you do? Well, they did the right thing.

1 Samuel 22:17b. *But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the [Eternal]. (KJV)*

They feared God. They feared God's wrath would come upon them if they did that.

Verse 18, guess what the king did? Guess who he turned to!

1 Samuel 22:18. *And the king said to Doeg, Turn [you], and fall upon the priests. (KJV)*

Notice what this creep did!

1 Samuel 22:18b. *And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day [eighty-five] persons that did wear a linen ephod. (KJV)*

And if that wasn't enough, in verse 19:

1 Samuel 22:19. *And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and [infants], and oxen, and [donkeys], and sheep, with the edge of the sword. (KJV)*

Now think about that! All of that priestly family was wiped out with their children, with the women. And Saul killed the priests of the very God that had placed him into the position of being king over Israel. He slew the priests of the very God that placed him as king over Israel. That is the kind of king they got. Just what Samuel said! "You're going to regret the day that you elect a king, you chose a king, or want a king.

So the conclusion of the matter in Point Number Three is that Israel wanted to follow a man. They wanted to follow a king rather than God. They reaped what they sowed. We know in Galatians chapter 6, we're told man reaps what he sows. If he sows to his flesh, he's going to reap to his flesh destruction and corruption, but if he sows to the spirit, he's going to reap life everlasting. They reaped what they sowed.

So let's understand there is something about human nature that wants to put a man in place of God.

Now Point Number Four, let's jump to the New Testament. The same is true today in the New Testament times. The same is true. You would think that the New Testament Church would have learned from all of these examples. But the New Testament Church has not. As with Israel, people want a man to speak to them and not God to speak to them. They want to look to a man and not to look to God.

Let's go to 2 Timothy chapter 3, very famous Scripture. We read this a lot. "In the last days, perilous times shall come." It refers to us today. 2 Timothy 3 verse 1 says what I just said. And then at the beginning of verse 2, 2 Timothy 3 verse 2, it says, "For men

shall," and then it describes how men shall be in the end days. But notice verse 5. 2 Timothy 3 verse 5:

2 Timothy 3:5: *[Men will have] a form of godliness, but [deny] the power thereof: (KJV)*

They will deny God. Just like ancient Israel denied God by saying, "We want a man. We want a king." And at the end of the age, men are going to deny God by denying the power of God. And he says:

2 Timothy 3:5b. *from such [you better] turn away. (KJV)*

They want to deny the power of God just like ancient Israel did. God said, "I'm going to protect you from all your enemies." They didn't believe it. They denied that. "I'm going to give you rain in due season. I'm going to bless your crops. I'm going to bless your flocks." They didn't believe that. Same thing is true today, but in a different area. People deny the power of God just like Israel did. They deny the power of God to provide and to protect for His people.

I know people right now. I know of a family that's moving out in the middle of nowhere and equipping themselves with an arsenal of weapons because they think that's going to protect them. And that the Place of Safety is in your own house! Now where is God in that picture? I mean these are real people. I know them. Denying the power of God, denying the power of God to save His people from those who would destroy them! And there are people down the road are going to want to destroy us. Satan does already obviously. And we are going to have to rely on the power of God and not on human inventions—weapons and such.

And there are people that deny the power of God to take them to the Place of Safety. They believe a man will take them to the Place of Safety or a corporation will take them to the Place of Safety rather than the power of God Almighty.

Here's how we commit blasphemy against God today like I read in the beginning of those signboards. We commit blasphemy by putting a church corporation before God. And there are many today—I am sad to say—that do just that! Their loyalty is to a human corporation, a church corporation, before God Almighty. They will support the corporation before they support God.

We can commit blasphemy by putting a church administration before God. Meaning: a ruling council or a one-man guy or whatever it might be and what they do and what they say before God Almighty.

We can commit blasphemy by putting a church leader in front of God. Looking to a man, not looking to God. "This man's going to take us to the Place of Safety. This man's going to lead us. I'm going to believe what this guy says." Rather than look into the Bible and see what the Bible says.

We commit blasphemy by putting what one of these leaders says in front of what God says in His Word. And I've heard leaders absolutely contradict the Bible, and yet people believe them! And they don't go into their Bible to check it out as the Bereans did. We commit blasphemy by accepting these leaders' words, their teachings without ever checking them out in God's Word. And, as I said, the Bereans did that.

We commit blasphemy by following a man who promotes the notion that as long as you're with him, you're going to the Place of Safety. Or as long as you're with him, you will be in the Kingdom of God. That is blasphemy. Only God decides who goes to the Place of Safety. Only God decides who's being in the Kingdom. But I heard one man say that "We are the only ones going to the Place of Safety. And you better be loyal to me because the ministry decides who is going to the Place of Safety." Heard that! Not directly, but through a tape. And so that is rank blasphemy just like those reader boards in front of that protestant church. Only this is far deeper!

So what people do in committing this blasphemy is turn their mind and their will over to another human being. What this person says is more important than what God says. What this person teaches is more important than what God teaches. And this person is going to save us. Not God. That is blasphemy.

And I think all of us have seen it and heard it with our own eyes, with our own ears in the last several years. And that is blasphemy. It is happening in the New Testament today as it happened in the Old Testament with ancient Israel.

Now what we want to do under this Point Number Four—putting a man in front of God—we want to look at two Scriptures that some people use to justify putting a man in front of God.

The first one primarily is used by the Catholic Church, but let's look at it. This is John chapter 20 and we're going to read verses 19 and then 21 through 23. These Scriptures are used to justify one-man rule. These Scriptures are used to justify a priesthood that comes between men and God. Let's see what it says. John 20 verse 19:

John 20:19. *Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews [This is after Christ was crucified and resurrected.], came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. (KJV)*

Verse 21:

John 20:21. *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father [has] sent me, even so send I you.
22) And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and [said] unto them, Receive [you] the Holy [spirit]: (KJV)*

Looking forward to Pentecost when that actually would happen.

Verse 23, this is the key verse.

John 20:23. *Whose soever sins [you] remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins [you] retain, they are retained [unto them]. (KJV)*

Now the Catholics use this to justify the confessional. And the Catholics use this to justify a priest's ability to forgive sins. Because you confess, the priest then gives you some penance—a few laps around the beads or go do this or go do that—and then your sins are forgiven. The priest really actually says those words. The Catholics use this to justify putting a priest between a human being and God Almighty.

"Whatsoever sins you remit, they are remitted, and whatsoever sins you retain, they are retained." Now what is meant by this verse? What is really meant by this? Let me just read—this is no secret by the way—let me read from Jamieson, Fawcett, and Brown Volume 3 Page 480. I'm quoting now.

In any literal and authoritative sense this power [meaning to forgive sins or remit sins, this power] was never exercised by one of the apostles, and plainly was never understood by them as possessed by them or conveyed to them.

Because you see no example in the New Testament of that happening! You don't read of Paul standing up and forgiving people's sins or Peter or anybody else.

Going on JFB:

The power to intrude upon the relation between men and God cannot have been given by Christ to His ministers in any but a ministerial sense—as the authorized interpreters of His word—while in the actings of His ministers, the real nature of the power committed to them is seen in the exercise of church discipline.

And so let's understand. This verse is talking about making godly decisions using the wisdom of the holy spirit—remember, He breathed on them and said, "Receive the holy spirit"—using the wisdom of God's spirit making decisions based on God's existing Law. And all He is saying is that there are going to be decisions that you must make. It could be interpersonal decisions. It could many other kinds of decision today. Do we have the Church this place or that place? Decisions have to be made. And what Christ is saying to them is "Given the power of the holy spirit, you will make decisions" but we have to understand it's based on God's existing eternal Law. Not the power to change the Law, but to discern God's Law and make decisions based upon that. This verse in no way authorizes the placement of a man between God and the individual church member. It's just not there.

And so let's understand what this really is talking about. It's talking about the leaders of the church being able to administer decisions based on the motivation of God's holy spirit and also based on His existing Law. Not to change God's Law.

Now let's go to Matthew chapter 16 and see a second verse in a similar vein. They're related. Matthew 16, we're going to read verses 18 and 19. This is the one where He's talking to Peter. Christ says:

Matthew 16:18. *And I say also unto [you], That [you are] Peter, (KJV)*

Now the Greek word, we know, is *petros* which means a small rock or a small stone, something you can hold in your hand.

Matthew 16:18b. *and upon this rock (KJV)*

This *rock*, now that is a different Greek word. It is *petra*. It means a large stone or rock, referring to Himself.

And when He was standing in that place making the statement, there was a gigantic solid rock behind Him. It was probably the length of four or five football fields and eighty or ninety feet high—this solid giant rock right behind Him! And so, He was making a point. He says, "Peter, you're just a little pebble. You're a stone. But upon this rock, Me," and obviously the inference is this gigantic thing right behind Him—I've got a picture of that rock—and He says"

Matthew 16:18b. *I will build my church; (KJV)*

"Not a man's church, but My church."

Matthew 16:18 continued. *and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (KJV)*

Now notice verse 19. This is the one in question.

Matthew 16:19. *And I will give unto [you—Peter] the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever [you shall] bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever [you shall] loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (KJV)*

Now the Catholics use this to justify placing a man between the people and God—a priest. They justify a one-man rule placing the Pope as God's representative on earth, the Vicar of Christ. He is "Christ on earth", so to speak, Christ's representative on earth. They use this Scripture to justify that. And frankly, they use the Scripture to change the Sabbath to Sunday. Saying, "We can bind and loose. We can change this commandment and that's what we are doing."

Now the Worldwide Church of God also taught—I was taught. I've heard it many times as a minister, as a deacon, and as a church member that the *keys* He referred to here in verse 19 were church government. There's many, many—I've got it in my margin, church government. And again, the Worldwide Church of God used that to promote a one-man rule, saying Peter was the man. He was given the keys of church government. That mantle was passed down and down and down and then, of course, resided on Mr. Armstrong.

Now what is Christ referring to? Let's really analyze this. And we have to put out of our mind what we've maybe been taught in the past or what our gut feels. What is it really referring to?

What are *keys* used for? Let's ask that question. Well, keys are used to open doors. Keys are used to unlock locks. Keys are used to gain entry into something. That's obvious. Well, what doors might these keys open? What locks might they unlock? Or what entry—where would it allow you to go by having these keys? Because remember in verse 19, it says, "the keys of the kingdom of God." Not about government. Not about anything else but a key to get into the kingdom of God.

What doors did Peter open? What locks did Peter unlock? It's very clear. It is so simple. Peter opened two doors or unlocked two locks, if you want call it that.

The first is that he opened the door of the gospel to those of the Jews. In Acts chapter 2, remember? He stood up and told them this wonderful sermon that we have in Acts chapter 2 that the Jews were responsible for those people there, responsible for the death of Jesus Christ because of their sin. "And you have crucified Him. He had to die because of your sins to pay for the penalty for your sins." And remember what they said? "Well, men and brethren, what shall we do?" And then in verse 38, he said, "Repent, and be baptized for the remission of your sins and you shall receive the holy spirit." And that happened on that day and a door was opened, a lock was unlocked, a door was open for the gospel to come to the Jews. Whereas those God was calling could be baptized, could repent of their sins and receive God's spirit. That was a door opened to the Kingdom of God.

Nothing about government! This isn't talking about government at all. It's talking about access to the Kingdom of God. So that's the first door or lock Peter unlocked.

What was the second one? The second door Peter opened was taking the gospel to the Gentiles in Acts chapter 10. Remember the situation with Cornelius? And Peter was on the top of a house and he went into a trance, vision, saw this sheet coming down, lowered down and it had all kinds of unclean beasts and animals. And words came to him, "Go and eat." And he said, "No, no. I can't do that." It happened three times and he just rebelled at it. And then Cornelius' servants were walking up toward the front door and you know what happened after that! And Peter understood that now the gospel was opened to those who were previously "unclean"—to the Gentiles.

Let me read again from JFB—Jamieson Fawcett, and Brown, Volume 3 page 89.

... with these "keys," on the day of Pentecost, he first "opened the door of faith" to the Jews, and then, in the person of Cornelius, he was honored to do the same to the Gentiles.... One thing is clear, that not in all the New Testament is there the vestige of any authority either claimed or exercised by Peter, or conceded to him, above the rest of the apostles—

In other words, he is not given any more authority than the rest of the apostles. And in fact, you remember when Paul called him down and criticized Peter publicly. Can you imagine that happening to the Pope? Can you imagine it, frankly, happening to Mr. Armstrong? Wouldn't fly! But it did happen to Peter and Peter took it because why? Because he wasn't above all the other apostles; they were all the same.

Going on, let me pick it up.

... [there's no] vestige of any authority either claimed or exercised by Peter, or conceded to him, above the rest of the apostles—a thing conclusive against the Romish claims in behalf of [Peter].

Meaning: he was the one, one-man rule. He was the first Pope.

Well, it also talked, remember, the Scripture talked about binding and loosing. "Whatever you bind, it's going to be bound in heaven; whatever you loose, it's going to be loosed in heaven." It's just exactly what we read earlier. It's about ministerial authority to make administrative decisions based on God's unchanging, eternal and existing Law!

Decisions have to be made. And we say, "God, we want you to show us where to put Your name for Feast. We want You to do it, but just reveal it to us." So a decision has to be made. Is it this place, this place, or this place? A decision is made and God gives the authority for human beings to do that very thing. And He says, "When you decide based on My spirit, I will bind that decision. I will place My name in Kellogg, Idaho. Or I will place My name," wherever God's people meet.

And Acts 15 is a good example. The church, the apostles all came together to discuss something. God guided it. They reached a consensus. And there was no dictator saying, "This is the way it's going to be."

So let's understand that these two Scriptures have nothing to do with placing a man between a Christian and God Almighty—have nothing to do with that! Let's please understand that.

Rather than put a man or an organization before God, what should we, as God's people, be doing? Let's go to John 12 and verse 26. It is very simple, very, very simple! Christ says in John 12 verse 26, He says:

John 12:26. *If any man [is going to] serve me [If any man wants to serve Me or woman wants to serve Me, what does Christ say?], let him [or her] follow me;* (KJV)

Not a man!

John 12:16b. *let [them] follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor.* (KJV)

As long as we put God first and serve God first! So let's understand that.

Now let's go to the Fifth Point. How do we avoid this kind of blasphemy? How do we do that? We'll just cover two areas, A and B. The first is that:

A. We must look to God and His Word and not to men.

We can't say that strongly enough! You have to put God first, His Word first. And you can't allow a man to come in between that. It just can't happen!

Now let's look at the New Testament example. Put yourself in the position of one of the first disciples and then apostles. You grew up in the nation of Judah and you looked totally to the temple and you looked to the priests. If you could be anywhere to worship God, you'd want to be on those bricks in front in of the temple. And if you would want anybody to teach you, it would be one of the priests at the temple or a rabbi, maybe outside. But hopefully there's where you would want to be—at the temple.

Now the apostles grew up knowing this. I mean it was ingrained in them, ingrained in their parents and their grandparents and their great grandparents. And then all of a sudden, Christ comes and He changes everything. But in their gut they still have this loyalty to the temple and to the priesthood. So let's understand that when we read what the apostles did because what we're going to read now is all the more impressive when you consider their background and what they grew up in.

Let's go to Acts chapter 5. The New Testament Church has started. The Day of Pentecost has come and thousands were baptized. Jerusalem is all abuzz with, as they see it, this new heresy or this new movement. And we're coming to Acts chapter 5. We're going to start in verse 14. Let's read this account but from the basis of understanding where the apostles came from and what their training and their traditions were.

Acts 5:14. *And believers were the more added to the [Eternal], multitudes both of men and women.)*

15) Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

16) There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and [those] which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one. (KJV)

Can you imagine the uproar that this caused?

Verse 17:

Acts 5:17. *Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and [they] were filled with indignation, (KJV)*

Can you imagine why? Their authority was being threatened. They weren't being looked to now.

Verse 18:

Acts 5:18. *And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.
19) But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, (KJV)*

Verse 20, notice what the angel said.

Acts 5:20. *Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. (KJV)*

Now think about it! They're being asked to go into the temple and speak. I'll draw an analogy. It would be like back in the Worldwide days God saying, "I want you to go into that auditorium and I want you to speak. I mean that's the kind of mental leap you would have to make. And I'm not saying we shouldn't have done that and didn't do that back then. I don't mean that. But I'm just trying to put in our minds the kind of leap you would have because they grew up thinking "The priests speak there. Not us. That's where God is. That's where God lives," in their mind. And so they were asked now to go into the temple and speak of Christ.

Verse 21:

Acts 5:21. *And when they heard that [they didn't bat an eye], they [went right] into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, (KJV)*

It's not referring to the temple. The high priest didn't come to the temple.

Acts 5:21b. *[he came] and [those] that were with him, and [he] called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. (KJV)*

They still thought they were in the prison not knowing that at that very moment they were in the temple preaching.

Verse 22:

Acts 5:22. *But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told,
23) Saying, The prison found shut with all safety, (KJV)*

I mean there weren't any doors broken, nothing.

Acts 5:23b. *and the keepers standing without before the doors: (KJV)*

They hadn't seen a thing!

Acts 5:23 continued. *but when we had opened, we [didn't find anybody inside].
24) Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them [what the outcome would be]. (KJV)*

They were confused. "What on earth is going on?"

Verse 25:

Acts 5:25. *Then came one and [said], saying, Behold, the men whom [you] put in prison are standing in the temple, teaching the people.
26) Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without [meaning outside the temple] violence: for they feared [if they had used a strong arm or muscled them] they should have been stoned. (KJV)*

Meaning: the guards, the captain.

Acts 5:27. *And when they brought [the apostles], they set them before the council: and the high priest asked,
28) Saying, Did not we straitly command you that [you] should not teach in this name? and, behold, [you've] filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend [on bringing] this man's blood upon us. (KJV)*

They were only worried about themselves. They could care less about the truth—just about themselves.

Now notice verse 29. This is the key:

Acts 5:29. *Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. (KJV)*

Now we cannot forget that! And they are saying this to these priests that they looked up to all their lives. The high priest particularly standing right in front of them is saying, "Don't do this. I'm going to kill you if you do!" And they said to their face, "We need to obey God rather than a man," looking right at the high priest. Now that takes some gumption powered by God's holy spirit.

Verse 30:

Acts 5:30. *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom [you] slew and [hung] on a tree. (KJV)*

Now they're putting their lives on the line right here because these apostles know that they killed Jesus, what would they do to them? But they weren't afraid or if they were afraid, it was deeply buried and they were motivated more by God's spirit.

Verse 31:

Acts 5:31. *Him [has] God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.
32) And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy [spirit], whom God hath given to [those who] obey him. (KJV)*

They knew full well that if they wanted God's spirit and wanted to continue to have God's spirit, they had to obey.

Verse 33:

Acts 5:33. *When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.
34) Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, (KJV)*

Now this is the same Gamaliel that Paul studied under. Paul was at the feet of Gamaliel. This is the same man.

Acts 5:34b. *a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; (KJV)*

He says, "Get them out of here. Put them at the other end of the room. We need to talk."

Verse 35:

Acts 5:35. *And said unto them, [You] men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what [you] intend to do as touching these men.
36) For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: [and he was*

killed]; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and [it was] brought to [nothing]. (KJV)

That movement came to nothing.

Verse 37:

Acts 5:37. *After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: [and] he also [died]; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.*

38) [He says,] now I say unto you, Refrain from these men [Don't go after them.], let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, [it's going to] come to [nothing]:

39) But if it [is] of God, [you] cannot overthrow it; lest [you] be found to fight against God. (KJV)

Great wisdom there!

Verse 40:

Acts 5:40. *And [so] they [all] agreed: and when they had called the apostles, (KJV)*

Guess what they did? They just beat them. They beat them up. We don't know what they did to them but they bloodied them I'm sure.

Acts 5:40b. *[and then], they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. (KJV)*

Now are the apostles—now they have been beaten—now they know their lives are on the line. Now that they've been beaten and if they violate what they say, what do you think the next punishment might be? Death? More severe beatings, scourging, crucifixion?

Verse 41, guess what they did!

Acts 5:41. *And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. [And notice!]*

42) And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. (KJV)

Obedying God not a man no matter what was said. But understand they had looked to these men all their lives until they were converted. Christ said in John 17 verse 17, "Your word is truth." That's what we must obey. God blessed them because they followed him and not a man. And daily we need to do the same thing! We've got to follow God. We have to follow Jesus Christ. That's the first point, A.

B. We need to follow a man's example only as that man, or frankly woman, follows God.

That is the only time we look to a human being is when that human being is following God and you can see the spirit, God's holy spirit, through that human being, living in that human being. And then if that person walks in the path of Jesus Christ where you can see Christ living in that person, man or woman makes no difference, then you follow that example.

Look at 1 Corinthians 11 verse 1, a very simple Scripture. Paul understood this. He didn't say unconditional. He says, "You don't unconditionally obey me. You don't unconditionally follow me." 1 Corinthians 11 verse 1, I'll read it out of the NIV. Paul says:

1 Corinthians 11:1. *Follow my example, as [or to the extent that] I follow the example of Christ. (NIV)*

Very simple! "Follow my example as I follow Jesus Christ."

A friend of mind came to me yesterday and they had heard a tape from another organization. And this individual says, "If you ever question, you are out!" And this was said and broadcast all over the world. "If you ever question, you are out!" Now what if that question has something to do with God's Word? And what if that question in questioning something that violates God's Word, something that's going on? They say, "You're out!" Talk about a cult.

Look at 2 Thessalonians 3 and verse 7. We're talking about following a man only as that person follows God and Christ. Paul is saying to the Church at Thessalonica, 2 Thessalonians 3 and verse 7, he says:

II Thessalonians 3:7. *For yourselves know how [you] ought to follow us: (KJV)*

Now why should they follow Paul?

II Thessalonians 3:7b. *for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; (KJV)*

In other words, we were following Jesus Christ. "We weren't disorderly against the Commandments of God and Christ. Or we were following in an orderly way, the Commandments and the example of Jesus Christ."

Notice Hebrews 13, last Scripture under this—following a person's example only as they follow God and Christ. We'll read verses 5 through 7 of Hebrews 13. Notice this! It says:

Hebrews 13:5. *Let your [conduct] be without covetousness; (KJV)*

Now that follows Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 3:5b. *and be content with such things as [you] have: for he [has] said, I will ever leave [you], nor forsake [you]. (KJV)*

Referring to Jesus Christ. So in this verse, the writer is saying, "Look, this is what Christ said. This is what we're going to do."

Verse 6:

Hebrews 13:6. *So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. (KJV)*

Verse 7:

Hebrews 13:7. *Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: (KJV)*

Well, if they don't speak unto you the word of God, then they shouldn't have the rule over you is the implication! But notice, it says:

Hebrews 13:7b. *whose faith follow [Follow their faith!], considering the end of their [conduct]. (KJV)*

Now the Greek word for *faith* here is Strong's 4102. It's the Greek word *pistis*. And Zodhiates' says in his Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament, says: "It is a firm confiding or trusting belief in Jesus Christ and His gospel." In other words, what He taught.

You follow that, "whose faith follow." Follow Jesus Christ, but you can follow those who have the rule over you as long as they follow Jesus Christ.

And I'll have to tell you, over the years, I have followed the examples of many men and many women. I've followed the examples of ministers who were living a righteous life, who you could see Christ living in them. They had love and kindness—all the fruits of God's holy spirit—generosity, compassion, faith. They knew their Bible. And I've followed brothers and sisters. I've seen the example of many women that I've looked at them and saw their example under adversity, trying circumstances, how they raised their children, how they took care of their mate when the mate was sick or dying. And you look at their faith and their perseverance and their dedication and their compassion and their love. And you say, "Jesus Christ is living in that woman. Jesus Christ is living in that man. I'm going to follow that example." It doesn't have to necessarily just be a minister. But we follow people when we see Christ living in them and only then!

And so let's understand that we need to follow God. We need to follow godly examples. And we need to avoid the blasphemy of putting a man in front of God or Jesus Christ or between us and God and Jesus Christ.

Now we have seen—let's wrap it up. We have seen that ancient Israel did not want God to be over them. They wanted a man. They wanted Moses to speak to them. They wanted a king. They did not want God in direct contact with them. And there's a powerful lesson there!

We should want to be in direct contact with God. Prayer and study, meditation, fasting, we want to have God speak to us directly through His holy spirit. Not funneled through anything else. Not filtered by anything else. But God speaking directly to us, through His Word and through God's spirit as God leads us and guides us by putting thoughts and emotions in our mind—and also, obviously, to rebuke similar attempts by Satan to take over our mind. Ancient Israel didn't want that. They didn't want God directly talking to them.

And we've seen that we can actually in these days—unlike what we read on the reader board—that in these days, we can blaspheme against God by putting men or organizations of men or words of men in front of what God says. And we cannot allow that to happen!

But rather than doing that, what we need to do is we need to look to God. God is our King. God is our Protector. God is our Provider. As He said to ancient Israel, "You don't need anybody else! I will do it all for you if you will just allow Me to do that!" And so we have to allow God to take us to a Place of Safety. We have to allow God to heal us. We have to allow God to provide for us and look after us and to light the path that we walk down.

We need to follow Scripture. We need to follow the lead of God's holy spirit. And we should follow the examples of men and women as long as they follow God and Jesus Christ and you can see Christ working in that man or that woman.

So let's avoid, please, let's avoid the human desire to worship a man, the human desire to put a man between us and the Father and us and Jesus Christ. And let's look to God the Father and Jesus Christ for our guidance, for our leadership, for our protection, and for our preservation.