

(Church Life) an Overview of the Kingdom

by Mose Stoltzfus

Mose Stoltzfus emphasizes the vital role of the church in the believer's life and the enduring nature of the kingdom of God.

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Scripture: Matthew 3:12, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 13:47-50, Matthew 16:17-19, Acts 5:29, Ephesians 5:30

Topics: "Kingdom Of God", "Church Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the prophecy of the image in the book of Daniel. The image represents four major world kingdoms, with the fifth being the kingdom of God. These kingdoms had world dominion and power, but eventually crumbled and were replaced. Throughout history, God brought revival and cleansing, with Christ being lifted up and honored. The speaker emphasizes the importance of the church in the life of believers and the value it holds in God's plan.

Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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God's grace and blessing be upon all of you. This morning, we so appreciate the opportunity once again, even though our flesh does recoil and shrink from it, to stand before you on this great subject that God has given us to speak about this week, the value of the church in the life of the believer. I would say it is the second most important one, the first one you just heard about, and this one is very, very close to it.

I thank God that we have the opportunity this week just to focus on this in a very practical way, first theological way and laying a foundation for the church and then very practically down to where we live. I also would welcome any personal subjects, if you can just come up to me and encourage me perhaps to

elaborate on a given subject, I will try to do that as time will allow. Shall we bow our heads for a prayer? Our loving Father, dear God, we come to you.

Thank you so much for the church of Jesus Christ that has been given that great, unique organism that has been birthed by blood upon this earth. Lord, and for 2,000 years, we have been able to experience it through believers by the hundreds of thousands and perhaps millions. Lord, and the ability to have that experience, to know what it is to have on earth your body and also you living in it and walking in the midst of it as John the Revelator gives it to us.

And we pray for that throughout this leadership seminar, that you truly would walk in the midst of it again and correct us, Lord, adjust our theologies and our thinking. We desire to adhere to the precious Word of God and the inspiration of the Spirit of God interpreting the Word of God to us that we don't go wrong in these last days that we are here upon the earth. There are tremendous pressures upon the church today and we feel them and we know them and see them.

But Father, through it all, bring us through, we pray, that we may not depart from that great opportunity we have to be a member of your body, of your blood and your bones. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us read from Matthew chapter 16. Matthew chapter 16, starting in verse 17. When Jesus came into the coast of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? And they said unto him, Some say that thou art John the Baptist.

Some, Elias, and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Simon, always a bit impulsive it seems in his pre-conversion life or his pre-comforting, when he had the power of the Holy Spirit, comfort came upon him in life. He said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Now I am going to assume, and I believe my assumption is correct, that perhaps we have a little bit of it in the Old Testament likewise. I think we do, especially in prophecy, which I will look at a little bit. But as we look at the New Testament, we would believe that the word church is synonymous with the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of Christ.

And so I am going to look at the kingdom, or I am going to look at the church in the same vein of thought. Because when Jesus came and He brought the kingdom and He introduced the kingdom to the people, and even John the Baptist began to prophesy the kingdom, we have a major shift, what we call a paradigm shift, that is taking place in the Bible, in the New Testament. In order for us to ever come out with an understanding and a clarity of what the church is, we are going to have to be able to comprehend that shift.

Else we get mixed up in what we will call or refer to as the flat Bible concept, which gets all mixed up in the two covenants and is not able to rightly divide the word of truth concerning this church of Jesus Christ. That entity, that unique, that organism, I will call it not an organization, but an organism of Christ Himself

brought down upon earth. And we as His children are allowed to experience it, to be a part of it, and to see it function now for virtually 2,000 years.

I want to look at some of these scriptures here. Specifically, we notice here that, like I said, Peter might have been a bit impulsive as he was to give a quick answer. But this time we recognize that the Lord Jesus said that He did not speak of His flesh.

He did not speak of Himself. But here He actually spoke as it was given Him, not by flesh and blood, but My Father which is in heaven actually revealed and inspired Peter at that very moment to make that supreme confession. And we build on that today, that that confession and the words that He spoke there mean a lot.

And we just want to look at that. First of all, we notice there when He says, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And then He also says in verse 18, Thou, that Thou art Peter, behold, and I say unto thee, that Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

In verse 18, And I say unto thee, Thou art Peter. The word Peter in Greek means a rock. It was given to Simon by Christ when He called him to be a disciple.

Now, he was called also Cephas, which also I understand in the Greek would mean a rock or a stone likewise. But for some unique reason here, I believe Peter, the Lord Jesus changed His name to Peter. And perhaps we can understand a bit why that is here.

The meaning of the phrase may be thus expressed, Thou, in saying that I am the Son of God, have called me by a name expressive of my true character. The Lord Jesus is saying when He said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, Peter, you have expressed my true character. And then He turned around and perhaps expressed Peter's character likewise there a bit.

But He says there, upon this rock. Now, this passage we recognize has been highly controversial throughout the church age. And we ask the question, what is meant by Thou and upon this rock I will build my church? Some have supposed that the word rock refers to Peter's confession.

And I personally would lean that way the heaviest. I do believe that when Peter made that, when Jesus said after Peter's confession that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, and Jesus said that upon this rock I will build my church, that I believe He was referring primarily upon the confession that Peter made. Now, unfortunately, we have, like I said, much confusion on the subject.

The Catholic church having been the worst perhaps to bring us that confusion in determining that the rock meant Peter because His name means a rock and that Christ was referring to Peter. And that the church is built upon Peter and He was supposed to be some superhuman being that the church was built on and He is the true man that the church was built on and He becomes the supreme leader of the church of Jesus Christ. And for that reason they have a statue of Him in Rome and millions of people, they say, have kissed His toes on the concrete structure there, the idol or whatever that they have built up to Him to the point where the toes are missing today because they have actually kissed away the stone or the concrete or whatever it was made out of and it is missing today due to a misconception along with many others that the Catholic church has brought.

But I do want to give Peter this. When we have Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church, we must give credence to the fact that Peter was a door opener and Peter was the man who when the Holy Ghost came in Acts chapter 2 and He came down out of the upper room, that He is the man who stood forth, lifted up His hand and for the first time in all human history preached the gospel in living reality to the people right there. Likewise, back in chapter 10, He also was the door opener to the Gentile world when under much opposition actually from the Jerusalem church He took the gospel of the kingdom to Cornelius' house and baptized Him, accepted Him as a Gentile into what was before that an all-Jewish church and He boldly was used of God to open that door.

Now, He was not a superhuman individual and He was not a man of perfection and He was not immaculate or infallible like the Catholic church would like to say. He made some mistakes in life and had to be corrected by His brethren or by brother Paul especially there in the account in Galatians and so that part is definitely not true. But to say that the confession is the only thing that God had in mind, I'm not sure that I can say that because of how God used Him in opening those doors.

I believe He was highly honored in making known the gospel to the Jews and Gentiles because of having been the first to preach the gospel there to both of them. In essence, I believe we can say, one writer would give it here, I will make you the honored instrument of making known my gospel first to the Jews and Gentiles and will make you a firm and distinguished preacher in building my church. But like I said, primarily I would believe that the membership of the church is based upon the heart confession that Thou art the cross, the Son of the living God and that confession and some would actually believe that Jesus may have in His hand said, that's right Peter and pointed to Himself and said upon this rock I will build my church.

I don't know if that happened or not but I would say yes, that's also a possibility. So let us leave the controversy there where it has been so to speak and yet in our own minds clearly honor Peter for what he did do but personally adhere and ascribe to the great, great confession of who the Lord Jesus Christ is because that is going to be very pertinent as to how we will come out in this matter of church and church life and church building is to how we look at that confession and how we honor and respect that and believe that with all our heart. The word church also in the Greek would mean ecclesia is the Greek word I believe which means called out ones and so we also want to give some encouragement there in the understanding of when he says we will build my church it refers to the custom of building in Judea on a rock or another very firm foundation.

The word church means literally those called out or often means an assembly or congregation. It is applied to Christians as being called out from the world or like Israel was called out of Egypt, passed through the Red Sea, all drank of that spiritual rock that followed them and that rock was Christ. So we as the congregations of the saints who have made that confession upon knees most of us in our conversion and acknowledge Jesus for who he was are made members of the body of Christ likewise and so the word church also means the whole body of believers universally that have been called out of the world into Christ Jesus our Lord.

In common language it means the church visible. All who profess religion or invisible all and I like this who are real Christians. Now we want to speak a little bit about the gates of hell.

That is another point of confusion through the years and some of the songwriters and various commentators have looked at iron gates there. I do not believe that iron gates of a city are meant by the

gates of hell not prevailing against it. I don't think we're looking at somebody putting up some kind of a barrier that will try to stop the church from its progression.

Yes it does reach us in that sense and when we look at the indestructible church through the years that the devil has attacked it and tried to bring into oblivion and bring to ruin and never being able to succeed we do recognize that there is some allegorical value there to look at it that way that the gates of hell shall not prevail. But when we look at the gates of hell not prevailing we actually look at gates that would come against the church not just hold still that wouldn't let the church come in. But consider this and that is the concept of Lot sitting in the gate in Sodom.

It has nothing to do with the iron gates of the city of Sodom but means rather as I understand that well here I have this that ancient cities were surrounded by walls. In the gates by which they are entered there were principal places for holding courts, transacting business and deliberating on public matters. The word gates therefore is used for councils, designs, machinations, evil purposes and hell means here the place of departed spirits particularly thinking of evil spirits and the meaning of the passage is that all plots, stratagems, machinations of the enemy of the church should not be able to overcome it, a promise that has been remarkably fulfilled and there is where we believe that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The reason in 2008 here of the month February that we can still have them and still enjoy them and still appreciate them and still see them actually progressing in some areas although I do believe that the progression of the true church is actually going one step forward and two steps backward because the apostasy today is worse than the advances of the church. I understand in reality we are losing ground. In our circles we have seen a lot of progression or see a lot of expansion perhaps over the years and are very grateful to God for that but when we look at it worldwide and you look at what has happened to the evangelical church throughout these last 50 years we must recognize the fact that we are on a slippery slope going backwards and not individually we hope, not corporately as we look at a group like this but nevertheless as we look at the evangelical on a wide scale.

All right, the value of the church in the life of the believer. Now I am going to give in today's message a bit of an overview of the kingdom of God and when we look at the value of the church I would less like to say at the beginning here church has been a wonderful experience for me. I cannot feel for you if you have been sitting for a number of years without any relationship to a local body and of course I am going to reflect that throughout my messages this week.

I of course am very convinced that it is the heart of God for a local church. I do understand that some of you have been in very, very unfortunate situations in that you are located in places of the earth where you have virtually in your community not being able to find a group and I want to speak kindly to you because your journey and your search has been long. Nevertheless, I would like to up the importance again of seeking a church fellowship where you can experience a body experience because I do believe that there are literally dozens and dozens of scriptures that we have no idea what to do with in the Bible if we do not have a local church experience.

And so I would like to say do all that you can within your situation through much prayer and much importance to find a local body. I for myself have always felt like I would have never answered an ad in any paper or by any company to be relocated by a company in business. Always it had to be a move for the sake of a church and then I would look for a job otherwise.

And I have done that a few times in life, in my early Christian life and do highly value the blessing of God upon that decision. The work takes care of itself. I feel if we put first things first and as the Bible would teach us, seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added.

Don't seek your profession, don't seek your job, don't seek those things. I realize you all have to live and there are sometimes some stressing difficulties in it all. I acknowledge that but seek first the kingdom of God and I believe God will give you a job if you're a willing honest worker.

Like we always say when we talk about unemployment, it seems to be a job for anyone virtually who's really willing to work today. And I see that. It could get worse I realize but as I know some countries have an unemployment rate of 30%, we know nothing like that in this country and therefore we have to be careful a bit of what we say about unemployment and jobs being available.

My church, I will build my church the Lord Jesus said. May I also before I forget it emphasize the fact that it is his church and it is never right for any man to take that upon himself and to call it his church or to act like it is his church in a full sense of the word. I do believe it is right as we have the letters to the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 2 and 3 written to the angel of the church of Asia that I believe that that is referring to the local leader.

I believe that is probably the best interpretation of the angel there. But at the same time Jesus said I will build my church and we must realize in fear and trembling as leaders that are sitting here with me that it is God's church not ours and that we must not hinder him from building his church but only help him and respond along. Somewhere in my early Christian life or maybe by now it is more in the middle of my Christian life somebody coined the phrase cooperating with God and I have liked that myself that in church building we try all that we can to cooperate with God.

All right, let us turn to Matthew chapter 16 here and also look at verse 24 through 28. Then said Jesus unto his disciples if any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me and whosoever will save his life shall lose it and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. And what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

I want to single out that verse and then I first want to read the last one. Verily I say unto you there will be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. I believe that has reference to the church or reference to the kingdom of God.

May I first explain the last verse that there will be somebody who will still be here. The church of Jesus Christ will still be extant. It will still be living.

It will still be moving. It will still be preaching the Word of God when the Lord Jesus comes back again. And that is a great consolation.

Like we said, the gates of hell shall not prevail against us. The devil will not win the battle. And we rejoice in the fact that even though we see a lot of people falling away, we are able to stand faithful before God at His coming.

And that should give a lot of courage, I believe, for us to continue. But notice in verse 27 that the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels and then He shall reward every man according

to his works. Now how many of you, including myself, have been influenced by what we call a hybrid? There have been many hybrids in this world and this one here just simply shows again how much that we have been influenced by the faith alone hybrid.

You know, that salvation or a whole, we look almost at many times at the whole Christian life and that has come about by a Lutheran hybrid. About 500 years ago, that has taught us that it's by faith alone when the Bible says that it is also allowed to be expressed that works, which proves the faith is being right. And so I just want to bring that balance.

You know, we have had these waves of hybrids that have come across us throughout church history here and have made major, major changes, I would say, or purgings, as John the Baptist would call it. And I think I will just let that and pick it back up when we turn to the Scripture in Matthew chapter 3. But I just want you to know that as long as the true church has functioned and is still functioning today and will be here when the Lord Jesus comes, but there have been many, many hybrids. And I recommend Leonard Verdine's book if you care for some heavy reading on the anatomy of a hybrid.

And you will understand as he goes through and explains that in great, deep theological detail of what a hybrid is and how it is brought about. The Anatomy of a Hybrid by Leonard Verdine. A very, very good book.

Leonard is not alive anymore, has written three books on the subject, but that one I consider to be one of his better ones. Let us turn now to the prophecy of the kingdom of God. And I know that there are many that I could refer to here, but I would like to go to Daniel chapter 2, a very favorite of mine.

A few of you have heard me preach a bit on this subject before, but I love this and it is one of those that puts fire in my bones and causes me to rejoice greatly when I read this great prophecy by Daniel. Daniel the prophet was a man who prophesied basically of the kingdom of God that was to come. And he made very profound statements concerning the New Testament era or the New Covenant era that was to come.

And this one likewise he did. Now, if I would go to, I am not sure where to start, except that I want to tell you the story of what happened a little bit to give you the setting. Here is where Nebuchadnezzar had a dream.

And of course he called the magicians and the astrologers and the soothsayers together to try to get them to interpret the dream. And then of course threaten the people that if they are not going to interpret his dream, he is going to have them all killed. And of course they felt that it was an unreasonable claim and they began to despair and they did not have an answer.

And they were fussing around there about ready to lose their head. And Daniel went into the king and asked for time. And the king said, I will give you some time.

And during that night, on the night visions, the Lord revealed to him Nebuchadnezzar's dream. And then he came out and stood before the king and laid the whole thing out as an accurate plan of God for the ages. And that is what it was.

But he had to say to him, Nebuchadnezzar, thou art that head of gold. It started with him. And I will start reading in verse 27.

Daniel answered in the presence of the king and said, The secret which the king has demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers show unto the king. But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets and maketh known to the king, Nebuchadnezzar, what shall be in the latter days. Look at that.

Then thy dream and the visions of thy head upon thy bed are these. As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, which should come to pass hereafter. And he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass.

But as for me, this secret is not revealed unto me for any wisdom that I have more than any living. But for their sakes, that shall make known the interpretation of the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart. Verse 31.

Thou, O king, sawst and beheld a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee, and the form thereof was terrible. His image, the image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron and his feet part of iron and part of clay.

Thou sawst that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and break them to pieces. Now he's speaking here, if I can just stop here a little bit and explain the fact that he's speaking about the actual world history will only have four major world rulers. Or you might say the fifth when you look at the feet or the toes of the image here.

Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold. And then we have the breast being of silver, which was the Median Persian Empire. And then we have under Cyrus and Darius and those fellows who took over Babylonia after Nebuchadnezzar was finished.

And then we have the kingdom being given to the Grecian Empire, which is the loins of brass. And that is the Grecian Empire under Alexander the Great. And then finally we have the legs, which were of iron.

And we have that in reference to the Roman Empire. And that was really the last world great ruler, the last great world ruler. And then of course we have the feet, which seems to be in the book of Revelation, perhaps the revival of the Roman Empire as some would say.

But we have these four kingdoms. And then he says in verse 34, Thou sawest till a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet, that were the iron, the clay, and break them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold broken to pieces together and became like the chaff of a summer threshing floor.

And the wind carried them away until there was no place that was found for them. And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. You get the picture? You have four world kingdoms described in an image.

It's just a beautiful thing. Oh, one was like this and another one was like that. And they had world dominion and world power.

And they basically did what they wanted to. Nebuchadnezzar was so proud that the Lord even had to smite him for seven years and go out and live like an animal in order to be humbled. And then gave him the kingdom back and gave him another chance.

And he was a heathen king. And the Lord did that because he was so puffed up. But you have these kingdoms coming down through.

And all at once we have this stone cut out of a mountain without hands that smote the image down in the Roman Empire. And the whole thing crumbled and fell. And the stone that was cut out of the mountain filled the whole earth.

Now let's turn the page. At least that's the way it is in my Bible. Verse 43 of chapter 2, And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with myriad clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men, but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. And the kingdom shall not be left to another people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that a stone was cut out of a mountain without hands and that it break in pieces the iron and brass and clay and silver and gold, the great king has made known to the king what shall come to pass thereafter, and the dream is certain and the interpretation is of sure.

Now there we have to be a little careful. We could say very easily, and I hope that most of you will understand when I say this, that that stone cut out of the mountain was Christ and His church. Not only the king cut out of the mountain without hands, but the kingdom with the king smote the image at His feet, the whole thing fell to pieces, and the stone cut out of the mountain without hands filled the whole earth, ruled over all the kingdoms, destroyed all the other kingdoms and stood forever.

And that's the great, great consolation of the church today and the kingdom of God, a king with a kingdom. However, a lot of damage has been done with the wrong interpretation of that Scripture because they have not been able to appropriate when and how that should happen. Because at the end there, when it says that the stone that was cut out of the mountain without hands, that it break in pieces the iron and the brass and the clay and the silver and the gold, they got an idea that the king and the kingdom takes up human force and overthrows all those kingdoms in a physical way with wars, and that has made terrible calamity because they have not understood the time and the timing and the days in which these things should be fulfilled.

Now let us swing back to Revelation chapter 19 and I'll have to finish the prophecy a little bit in order to explain that. Here we have chapter 19 of Revelation. We have the marriage supper of the Lamb taking place, but then we have the Lord described in verse 11, As I saw heaven open, and behold, a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he does judge and make war.

His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns, and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and his name was called the Word of God. Now look at verse 14, And the armies that were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, and they were the church redeemed.

And so we have the king and his kingdom coming down upon the earth after having experienced the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven, I believe, in proper chronological order, but then coming down, and then he says in verse 15, And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, and with it he shall smite the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron. He credits the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, and it goes down describing that. But that, I believe, is the fulfillment of Daniel chapter 2. And where

the hybrids have gone wrong so badly, and have brought such awful confusion upon the Christian church today, is that they have assumed that that is supposed to take place in our time with our physical swords and our own machine guns or whatever.

And we have to bring this about like the Crusaders did in Jerusalem when they tried to overthrow the Muslim possession of Jerusalem. And if you want to read a description of that, Brother David Bristow has a tremendous description of that battle in his introduction on the book that turned the world upside down. But he describes that battle, and it is claimed at least by the writers of history there that blood would have flowed to the horse's bridle in that awful slaughter.

While the church, so to speak, physically thought that it was their job to do it. And that was a terrible mistake, I believe. And so I believe it has its fulfillment that the church is going to reign.

I don't know how much time I'm going to have on Friday to talk about the triumphant church, but I do want to close the session with that. But as we look at it right now, we have to recognize, I do want to say this much, that things have to get a little worse before they get better. They're going to get worse, and I believe the church is going to be tested and purged and purified and tried.

With a great trial that shall try all them that dwell on the earth that's spoken of there. But at the same time, the church will win. The church will win.

And what an exciting thing it is to know that even if it costs me my head, I will resurrect again and reign with Christ triumphantly. And that I'll be there and riding a white horse, the Bible says, and following the Lord Jesus Christ and will help conquer the rest of the opposition, and we shall reign forever. That is a joy in the midst of picking up a newspaper today.

Everything is dark and bloody and violence overtakes the earth until it makes us sick at the description of the news commentators giving to it. And yet at the same time, the church will reign. The church will reign.

Well, it's been interesting to me how that stone has showed up in numerous times in history. I have tried to mark that mentally in my Bible reading different times, but I just love a few illustrations I'd like to give quickly here, is that when the three Hebrew children were thrown in the fire furnace there by Nebuchadnezzar, and they threw those three men in, and there Nebuchadnezzar would look into the door, and the heat of the furnace was seven times hotter than it was before. And behold, he looked into the door and he saw the force man in there.

He saw the stone that was cut out of Nebuchadnezzar's hands that showed up at that very moment. And the men were in there. Their bondage had burnt off their hands.

They were in there with their hats and with their socks on, on their feet yet, and they didn't have the smell of smoke on them. That's just a beautiful picture there of how that stone showed up at numerous times. He says, and it looks like the Son of Man.

I think he probably meant an angel because of the way it appeared, you know, but I like to think perhaps it was Jesus Christ that would have showed up likewise, because he said, one looks like the sons of God, or the Son of God in there. All right. The great prophecy of the Kingdom of God.

Now, let us turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 10, and we do recognize broader than this that I just want to give it, the church in the wilderness also was a prophecy, was a type. It was not the church, and I do not

believe that we should unite Israel and the church as one and the same, because there is too much confusion with the covenants when we do that. In my own experience or my own thinking there.

But in chapter 10, he does say in the first four verses there, moreover brethren, you should not be ignorant that all our fathers were under the cloud and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and did all eat of that same spiritual meat, and did all drink of that same spiritual drink, and they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ. And so we have Israel coming out of Goshen, coming out of Egypt, passing through the Red Sea down underneath there with a cloud of mist above them, and that was considered a baptizing. The whole group went through there, and they all did eat of that spiritual meat, perhaps referring to manna, which was spiritual because it came down from heaven in that way, and it was not like the literal food of the land, and therefore I believe it's referring to manna.

And then when Moses struck the rock and the water came forth and they all drank of the rock, that was a type of Christ that they were all partaking of. Yet the warning is given that many of them, God was not well pleased, and they lost their lives in a wilderness because they would not continue in that following Christ and following and being obedient to the commandments given unto them. Now we go back to Matthew.

First of all, I think maybe Matthew chapter 11, verse 11. Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist. Notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets in the law prophesied unto John. Now this is a very interesting verse in light of what we're looking at in the dividing of the covenants and recognizing that John the Baptist is noted here and honored to be the greatest of all prophets that ever lived.

But he is the last of the prophets. And the amazing thing is that he that is least in the kingdom of God is still greater than he. And the way that is possible is the fact that though John was a marvelous man of God and he was a prophet and he prophesied of the new kingdom and some of the changes that should happen, yet he belonged to the old covenant.

And when he died, that was the end of prophets and you will not have such as the Old Testament prophets ever again. We now have, this is my beloved son, hear ye him, the Lord Jesus Christ. And that brought about a change in the covenant and that is where the hybrids have messed up so much is that they have not been able to divide the covenants in that clear scriptural teaching there.

And therefore have brought old covenant things and mixed them with new covenant things and therefore they have had the liberty to do a lot of things that Jesus in the new covenant and in the kingdom of God had forbidden. Let us turn back to John's prophecy and I'll just show you a little bit of the thinking there that I have in that I feel is clear with to share with you in Matthew chapter 3. We have the scribes and the Pharisees coming out to John in the wilderness also to be baptized and he in verse 7 says of chapter 3 of Matthew, And when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruit and meat for repentance. And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham our father.

For I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children of Abraham. And now also the axe is laid to the root of the tree. Therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and

cast into the fire.

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. But he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire, whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor and gather his weed into the garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

That was a prophecy made of John the Baptist concerning the new covenant and the changes that would take place in the covenant. Now I'm not sure if I have the right scripture in Matthew chapter 21. No, that's not the one I wanted.

But maybe it will come to me here later on. I forgot to give that reference there. I probably missed writing it down there.

But here's the gist of this prophecy. There's supposed to be, like I said, a paradigm shift in the covenants here and the way God relates to His people. And here all at once He brings this powerful prophecy upon the people and He says, now, before this you've always said you were Israel and you were part of Israel and you're Abraham's children and all that.

Don't say that anymore. Now it's going to be a shift. God will not work with Israel as a nation in that way anymore, as His church or His people or His called out ones, like He called them out of Egypt and blessed them there and took them into the land of Canaan.

But He says now in verse 10, and every tree. It comes down to individual conversion or individual accountability before God. And there's where the major shift is.

You will not bring in groups of people en masse or in a large group of people. And that's where, again, the hybrids have made great mistakes. But He says there, every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.

And then He says later on in verse 12 there, whose famine is in His hand and He will thoroughly purge His floor. Now I believe that God, it's hard for me to say, I don't know how to say it, how God allows things to happen or designs them to happen or whatever. But I personally believe that God wants the hybrids to come down through and actually when things start going wrong, He allows a hybrid to come many times to purge the floor.

Now that may be a hard saying, but I remember, if you might remember, you might say, well God is so merciful to make it so confusing to the people. But that's what He did when the masses followed Him while He was alive on earth. You know what He did? He threw at them the fact, eat my flesh and drink my blood and the people vomited, so to speak.

And He purged the floor of those that only wanted the loaves and the fishes and only wanted the physical benefits of healing and all those things and were not interested in following Christ completely and entirely. And He gave them hard sayings to purge the floor. And it is of my opinion that that is the same way He has done for the last 2,000 years.

If you read early church history, you will find great prosperity and great expansion in evangelism and church planning in the first hundred years. Pretty much so. And then we have false doctrine coming in.

We have infant baptism, Gnosticism, we have this and that. And already hybrids showed up. Gnosticism was a hybrid.

It showed up to purge, to test them. And of course, numerous Christians were led away by the hybrid of Gnosticism. And then around 250 Roman persecutions ceased.

And for about 40 years there, they had peace until the wicked king Diocletian stepped up to the plate and became the Roman ruler. And he brought horrible persecution again upon the church. And many of them compromised because they had already apostatized to that degree that they then compromised and capitulated, gave up the faith, denied the Lord and all those things because they weren't willing to suffer the consequences.

But the real one that is alarming to me is when Constantine came to the surface. And a hybrid was brought upon the face of the earth, in the face of the church, to a people who weren't willing anymore to suffer. And he endorsed Christianity and actually shut down the heathen sacrifices and claimed to win battles by the sight that he had seen in the heavens and all the different things that Constantine did.

He did some good. That's the only way he could bait the Christians and draw them in. He started Sundays that everybody should stop work and have a day of worship and there were a lot of good things he did.

But he produced the worst hybrid ever to face humanity as we know it looking back in history. And he plunged the church into the dark ages and produced the worst hybrid we have ever seen that actually has lived over a thousand years, endured the Catholic Church. Where he has united church and state and produced that hybrid.

But why did the hybrid come? Was it not because of the laxity of the church? Was it not because of apostasy? Was it not because of doctrinal divergence like infant baptism and going to war? You know for the first 200 years we have no record of any man leaving the church taking government office or leading an army or becoming a general or any of those kind of things. There was true separation of church and state. But toward the end when it come up toward the year 300 we have that thing starting to compromise.

And then the Lord just simply allowed a rank hybrid to come down upon the earth and allow all men to choose and the great division took place. And the persecuted church again rose up and the persecutors in the 250 to 300 AD became the persecutors. Or at least Constantine gave liberation of Christianity except for heretics.

Except for heretics. And the things he proposed to do with heretics was an amazing thing. And he tried to manipulate himself to become head of the church.

And actually he became the, how do you say that, Pontifex Maximus, something of that nature. And that is what the Pope calls himself I think to this day. And we have the mudding of the waters in every way.

But just to show you who Constantine was and the awful hybrid that he brought about. He himself was not even a baptized Christian through all those years. Not till the end of his life was he baptized.

He killed his second wife. He killed his son. He was paranoid that somebody would overthrow him.

And he just acted like the heathen kings in many ways. He killed his nephews. And made war with, what was his brother, Licentius, who was his brother.

And Lactaneous is his name, I think. Made war with him and he was killed in battle. And then he became the supreme ruler and he had the lust for power.

And he was just like a heathen king in so many ways. But he had brought the church in there and united it together. And that produced a hybrid that I said before produced the dark ages.

And the church went underground into suffering again. And if you trace it down through the years, that's the way it was. When things started getting apostate, when people departed from the kingdom of God, the king and his kingdom, separate, called out, ecclesia, dedicated, consecrated unto him.

Then a hybrid came along. And the people got confused. And many followed the hybrid.

But it was because they had not built upon the rock. They had built upon the sand. And you know what that little story that we sing to the children on the wise man building his house upon the rock and the foolish man building his house upon the sand is all about? Them that wouldn't obey the word of God.

Building your house upon the sand today is not an atheist. It's Christian professing people who build upon the sand in that they profess Godliness. That little thing was given.

That little story, that parable was given right after. Many shall say, Lord, Lord, but will not obey the Lord. Will not follow Him.

And therefore, that ended that way. Now, just follow me through, down through in our day. Or in the last 500 years, just look at it again.

Over and over again, God brought revival. God brought cleansing. God brought a washing of the water of the Word.

Christ again became central, as Brother Denny said this morning. And that Christ was again lifted up and honored and men obeyed Him and said, we must obey God rather than men. And suffered incredible tortures and persecution through the ages.

The king and his kingdom. And if you go through the kingdom of God is like unto, the kingdom of God is like unto. You see that already prophesied that that's the way it's going to be.

What do you make out of the one where the kingdom of God is like a man who threw a huge net into the sea and got it of all kinds, both good and bad. And he drew him to shore and he separated him out. Separated him out.

What does it mean when there were three measures of leaven given until the whole was leavened? Or it became, the mustard seed became a great tree and the birds of the air came and came and flooded in and flocked in there and sat on that tree. But invariably the message of the king and the kingdom is that there has to be a division made. There has to be a purging over and over again throughout history.

And I consider that the same as I look through history. I see the Constantine and purge as the greatest one perhaps. And like I said, we have the consequent dark ages given.

Then we have the Lutheran hybrid of faith alone. Then we have an ending up again, the persecuted became, he was hunted. He was, you know, they wanted to fight against him and get his life.

And he ended up persecuting other Christians who were following the kingdom of God and took their life away just like the Catholics had done. We have the Swinglian hybrid. We have Calvin hybrid which was actually a branch off of the Augustinian hybrid that came back in Constantine's time.

We have the church leader Augustine who was again a hybrid, a man who would not follow the king in his kingdom. And so you have one after another. But look at our day.

Look at what we're facing. We're facing in these last days, we have great apostasy and great departure from the church of Jesus Christ. The church is falling apart, and the church is corrupting, and the church is liberalizing, and the church is going into the world.

And what do we have but the massive charismatic hybrid coming upon the earth. And everybody gets confused. And they start speaking in tongues before they're ever born again.

And all kinds of crazy things start happening, slaying in the spirit, barking like dogs and all these things. And the Word of Faith people who believe that prosperity directly, prosperity belongs to the Christian, directly against the king and in his kingdom. And what he said in the Sermon on the Mount.

And God threw that hybrid out there. And what is it doing? But it's purging the body of Christ. He will thoroughly purge his floor, gather the weed into my barn, burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

That's what's happening in our day. Now we have the Alpha Chorus, and we have the emerging church, and we have just, I mean, I look back over my 40-some years as a Christian, and they're almost back-to-back, hybrids. Because we have a professed 62% of the population of the United States professing to be Christian.

And the only thing God can do is thoroughly purge his floor. And he throws these hybrids, or he allows them, however you want to say it, out to come upon the face of the earth. And men must make a choice.

Follow the king and his kingdom, and obey him, and build a house upon the rock, and follow Jesus, and believe his word, and submit themselves unto him. Or else follow some hybrid, easy-believerism, emotionalism, and allow some other ism, some other experientialism to come into their life, and give them a good feeling, clap their hands and jump up and down, go home and be empty. But the remnant church, and I don't mean that us.

I'm talking about the remnant church worldwide. Romanians, Africans, South Americans, wherever they are at, Russia. The remnant church is being birthed out of that.

And we meet them here and there. And we thank God there's some of them here. And we are very, very grateful for that and strive to be a part of that.

Humbly we can say we want to be a part of that wherever it is worldwide. But there it is. And God knows what he's doing.

And these hybrids are not just the devil. They are, of course, instigated by him. But I believe God allows these things to happen to test us and to prove us as to whether we're going to be the king, submit to the king and his kingdom, and the church of Jesus Christ.

And we become a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people again that will show forth the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. May God help us this week to get an

incredible vision of that church of Jesus Christ again in that kingdom and bow our hearts and bow our knees before God and let God build it again. That's going to be small.

He has said that most of the people aren't going to come around. They're not going to see it. They're not going to pay the price.

But it's going to be there because some of you are going to be standing here when the Lord's going to come, the Bible says, some of the true church. And so we have that hope among us. May God bless you.

Shall we bow our heads for prayer? Father in heaven, I just want to thank you again for the word of God. And I pray, dear God, that we may be able to understand and to submit ourselves completely unto thee and unto thy word through the Holy Spirit showing us the true and right interpretation of the word of God. We love the church, Lord.

We thank you for it. And thank you we have been able to find it here and there and become a little part of it. And pray, dear God, that you would raise up many, many of this remnant worldwide movement that is taking place amidst all the hybrids that are out there.

We pray, God, help us this day to attain unto that. We pray in Jesus' name, amen. Turn the time over to Brother Mark for some announcements here.

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