

Today we're continuing in the series *God's Glory and Greatness*, and this is *Part 4*.

At the end of *Part 3*, we covered how Jeremiah had written about the Babylonians conquering the Egyptians and pharaoh Necho's army at Carchemish at 605 BC. This was also the year that Nebuchadnezzar's father, Nabopolassar, had died. Again, this was also noted as being the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign in Judah.

Now, some of these things get a little complicated at times. That's why some have this ability to have this little chart out there. I did find one date in it that was wrong, but I'll correct that later on.

Basically, what we're doing is we go through this series, or as we're going through it, we're going to continue in a lot the history of a lot of these things. I'm finding it incredibly inspiring in the sense of seeing how so much of the Old Testament fits together in a better way. Because generally, we turn to a book, go to various scriptures, and have different stories that we focus upon, but to know in our minds what really happened back then and all of it that was connected, it really hasn't been focused on, as a whole. In times past we haven't done a whole lot of that.

This here is really incredible, to see how they fit in, to see different prophets, when God worked with them. Because that's what this focus is about anyway. It's about God's glory and greatness and to know that He's had a plan for so, so long, and then He starts working at that, tweaking various things within that plan, working with nations, working with leaders in nations. Above everything else is the fact that He's working with individuals, preparing them as 144,000, the firstfruits.

That is the most exciting part, to realize how different ones were molded and fashioned, what they experienced knowing that whatever God was molding them for within that government of His that it's unique to them. They had to go through various things to have the mind developed in a way that's going to best suit where they're going to serve. That's where they'll be the most excited, the most fulfilled in life. That's an incredible thing, to be in God's hands in that regard.

So, when we're called and we have that opportunity to be molded and fashioned, it means a lot more than what we can even begin to grasp. We can be in the Church a long time and not fully come to grasp and understand it. But as God blesses us to see some of those things that becomes exciting too, to realize this is awesome, to be a part of something so great, so mighty.

We can't see it except that God helps us to see it and to understand it more clearly. He gives us more and more. He shares that with us. That's His way. Again, these things are incredible.

Matter of fact, I've had to cut off this series, I think it's after *Part 6*, and we're going to go into another one. But they're joined together. I just didn't want to go on seven, eight, nine, ten, keep going. So, we have a different title it's going to have, and a little bit different focus, but it's still going to carry on with this theme

in the sense of understanding how God has worked with nations and people and brought everything to pass. We'll see it as we go along.

But there are so many people involved in some cases here in the Bible, so many different time periods involved it can sound a little confusing. So, some of these might be a little shorter by design in some cases because there's a lot to drink in and keep up on if you're trying to. If that's a particular interest you might have it's hard to do all this.

But as we've been going through some of this I have been dumbfounded by something, and not dumbfounded, and that is by how theologians, scholars, I don't care what it is, historians of different types, they have messed so much up. History has been written and rewritten so many times in some cases that it's really difficult to piece it all together. The biggest glaring problem of all is they don't just take God's word for what it says as being the truth.

There are those who fight against that, who won't even acknowledge. You read some things and they don't even acknowledge anything about some of the names that were given to various ones and why. Some tried to address it. The farther we get along in some of this the more confusing it becomes for scholars in one regard or anyone that tries to go in there, but because of what they have done, they really messed things up. It's just like anything to do with the truth, mankind has so messed everything up. Without God's spirit, we wouldn't be able to understand or know what really is true.

But the overriding thing of everything is God says what He means, He means what He says, and to take that as being the truth, it's amazing how things are then put together when you think that way.

So, continuing on here we're going to be moving ahead to 598 BC. It was stated how Jehoiakim only continued to pay tribute to Nebuchadnezzar for three years. Now, he'd paid three years to the Egyptian pharaoh, Necho, then after he was defeated he obviously here, sort of wisely, (but stupid if he didn't do it) started paying to Nebuchadnezzar, tribute. But he only did it for three years.

So, rephrasing that, it wasn't really smart. So, kings go back to their region, and back in those days, it wasn't like we have travel today where you can do it quite quickly. Things took time, and especially if you're moving an army. And so, sometimes people didn't take the threat as being as real as they should have – which is a good lesson for us, to realize there is threat around us all the time in God's Church. Truly is.

This time of year, I can't help but notice people are already being bombarded. It happens before Passover and Unleavened Bread, happens before the fall Holy Days, and it just goes with the territory because there is a spirit world out there that hates God, that hates God's way of life, that has always tried to thwart in any way they can God's people, those with whom God is working. We learn to deal with that, we learn to address some of those things and go through whatever things that come our way. Because some things are allowed.

God allows certain things because we can learn from it and there's profit in that then. If we are to be molded in something that we can learn in that fashion, grow from perhaps to help others, whatever it might be in the future, so be it.

So again, it was stated here about Jehoiakim, he paid tribute to Nebuchadnezzar for three years when he then rebelled against him in 602; because it started in 605, when he started paying tribute. Then finally, we're four years after that. So, just because he quit paying tribute doesn't mean that he's going to be dealt with right away.

And what's going to happen to someone if they don't feel like there is any repercussion? They just get worse. He got worse as a king, as a ruler, which happened over and over again with the kings at different times. This is a good example of that. That happens in people's lives too in the Church. Just because God doesn't deal with something speedily, just because He allows for certain individuals to get by with certain things or allows you to continue on with certain things for a time there is going to come a time when He's going to say, "No longer."

There is a time when God gives grace and mercy. That's going to come out a whole lot more later on in that other series, but there is that time when God gives grace and mercy and help and favor and allows for us to make choices. Because you have to have that time. God allows us to have time to make various kinds of choices, to see what we'll do, to try us, to test us to see what's really in us, to see what we really want, to come to know what we really want. Because sometimes we really don't even know fully. He lets us go through a lot of things, and that's that process then that determines what we're going to become, our choices.

So, let's turn over to 2 Chronicles 36 and continue on with the story here. Again, this is about Jehoiakim who was placed in rule there in Judah, in Jerusalem by pharaoh Necho. He was conquered, Nebuchadnezzar kept him there then. And so, we are going through this period of time coming up finally to 598, four years after his rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar.

It says, **2 Chronicles 36:5—Jehoiakim was five and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned, it says, eleven years.** So again here, this process of his reign began in 609 and now we're down to 598. So, it says, **he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And he did evil in the sight of the Eternal his God.** What an incredible thing, over and over again, some of these kings and things they did. So again, he didn't strive to live God's way at all. That's a story of so many kings.

**Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, went up against him to bind him in chains and carry him to Babylon.**

So, he had had enough. This was his determination; he's going to go up and lay siege to Jerusalem and take the king and put someone else in there who will at least pay the tribute. That's what happens when you conquer a certain area without taking everyone to captivity or whatever.

So, his purpose was **to go up there and to bind him, to carry him into Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessel of the house of the Eternal to Babylon and put them in his temple.** Now, the first time it talks about those that actually, the things that were taken out from the areas of the temple that

Nebuchadnezzar took back the first time, and it talks about some of those things being put in the temple of his God. This here doesn't state this this way. That word "temple" can be used for "palace." It can be used for various things, but primarily it's going to be one of the two. It's going to be a great palace or it's going to be the temple.

Anyway, mentioning that because there seems to be a distinction being made here in the story flow of some of this, that he kept some this time for himself to enjoy, not for his god but for himself. So, they put them in his temple at Babylon. Doesn't say for his god.

**Verse 8—Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim...** Now, there is something unique that's taken place in here that hasn't been totally gone into, and there's a lot of discrepancy in things that are written about this, but his intent was to go there to take him, but when it came down to it they didn't take him, but he lost his life.

So, there are all kinds of stories out there about him and what took place to him, how he died, how he was killed there, and so forth. He wasn't taken into captivity, he was killed. So, he lost his life there.

**Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim and his abominations which he did, and that which was found in him, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. Then Jehoiachin...** Sometimes this gets so tough. Jehoiakim and now his son Jehoiachin. I'm not even going to tell you about some of the kings we get into later on that in Persia and so forth, there is so much confusion in some of that it's insane.

But anyway, **then Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead. Jehoiachin was eight when he began to reign.** No, he wasn't. So, sometimes mistakes are made. Who made them, we don't know. I don't know. But there's a lot of debate over this and what this is all about. It's not saying he was eight years old. Another place makes it very clear how old he was when this took place. But when you have something translated for so long and you get to a certain point where someone makes an error, there are errors that are made.

This is an amazing thing. I think of the one time pointing out that no place in the Bible does it mention Easter. And so, this one person wrote back and says, "Yes, there is! It's in the King James Version." Well, they didn't read everything very closely, because usually it's always been explained.

But anyway, this is a part of the problem, is that people think it's a holy book, that everything in it is holy. That's why I've mentioned in times past there is a time period that I lived through—I don't think it's that way in today's world in traditional Christianity—but to write in a Bible was thought to be bad because it's God's holy word. You realize, no, it's a book and a lot of copies have been made and a lot of mistakes have been made through time, especially in translating from Greek and the things the Catholic Church did to it in 325 and afterward, I should say, even afterward when they started messing around with the Latin and so forth and translating there.

All the different things that have taken place, if people don't know God's plan and purpose, if they don't know the truth there are things they can't translate properly because it's not a thing you can do word by word from one language to another because one thing means something in one language, and okay, you can translate the same word... No, you can't do it that way. To translate something truthfully, clearly, you

have to know what's being said, the intent of it. You might have to use totally different words in another language to say the same thing in the language you're translating from. So, you have to use three or four words to describe one word sometimes. It's the way it works. That hasn't worked well through time.

So, for whatever reason, don't know, this was translated as eight. They put "years old," "he was eight years old." It's not even about him. It's not about Jehoiachin. He was eighteen at the time, which we'll read in a moment.

So again, this is a translation that scholars try to explain and excuse how this might have taken place and so forth, and why there was an error. The reality is, it's just an error. And instead, the context is talking about Jehoiakim and it's following a clear line here of something as far as a timeline. That's what we're going to take a look at here in these verses here going on in verse 8.

**2 Chronicles 36:8—Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and his abominations which he did, so, it's very much about him and what was taking place in his reign, how long he reigned and so forth, and that which is found in him, behold they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. Then Jehoiachin, his son, Jehoiakim's son reigned in his stead.**

**Jehoiachin**, and it should be **in the eighth year while he reigned**. He didn't reign very long. It wasn't something you could go into like they did oftentimes when they talked about, "In the eighth year of Jehoiakim or the fifth years of Jehoiakim," because he only reigned for three months. So, it didn't even bother going into the years in that respect, and so, that wouldn't have made sense to someone unless they know.

You think sometimes, do they even read the Bible? Did the people translating even know the stories? Did they even bother reading in other places? Now, today we're able to do that because just plug it in and it comes right up on your computer. You can plug in a name and all the places it's used; they all pop up. So, you can easily compare things in Kings and some of the prophets and chronicles and it's easier to find things that way.

But for some of them back then it wasn't so easy. You had a responsibility to do a lot of reading in order to know the story of someone's life because it's scattered throughout the Bible. As we go along here you're going to find there are things scattered all over the place. Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, all these prophets throughout this period of time we're talking about, when they came and when they were preaching and so forth, the things that they did, how God worked with them. It's pretty tough unless you have a computer like today.

So, it says, **while he reigned, reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem**. So, what is this "eighth year?" It's the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar. All of it was measured – Jehoiakim's reign, later on, all the things were measured by the one conquering the region, in this case here, Nebuchadnezzar, and what was his influence in the region. And if you look at it, the timing, that's exactly what it was. It was his eighth year of his reign, from 605 and coming on down to 597 when these things were taking place at this point here because it's right at the change of the year, which another scripture brings out here in a moment.

**...while he reigned, reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem. He did evil in the sight of the Eternal. So at the turn of the year...** So again, little phrases like that, and I wondered about that. What is? What do you mean, "At the turn?" Why is this important? It becomes important because here we are right **at the change of 598-597 King Nebuchadnezzar sent for him to be brought to Babylon, with the desirable vessels of the house of the Eternal.**

Now, this is an amazing thing. So often when you read some of the things written by theologians or scholars and different ones out there, they look at basically two captivities, two periods of captivity, and there were several. There were several of them and how, why they ignore all those, I don't know. But this is talking about another one. What's amazing is each time they kept taking more and more. It got bigger and bigger. More people, more from the temple, more from there and carrying it into Babylon.

And you think, the point being is there was a lot to carry. There was a lot of gold, a lot of silver, and a lot of valuable things that were in the temple. We don't tend to think that way but when Solomon had the temple built and you read some of those things back there, it was huge, and it was packed with wealth and riches to honor the Great God of the universe. God gave instruction on how it was to be built, how everything was to be done. Incredible! To His glory and His honor, to work with the people on a physical plane because they needed something like that. They needed something like that.

Those different peoples who had different gods and so forth, they made these huge temples. The carnal, human mind is impressed with that kind of thing. So, if it'd been a little thing out here, a little building and not much in it, it wouldn't have gone a long way to impressing Judah. Whereas Judah in a carnal way could take pride in something like this. God had to work with human beings. Unless they are called, unless they are moved by His holy spirit, they're just working on a physical plane. I hope that makes sense because that's the way it was.

He was working with people on a carnal, physical plane so often as far as nations, as far as Israel was concerned, and then as far as Judah was concerned for as long as they were there. They had to have these various things. Just like the rituals and the offerings that were given, meticulous and huge quantities of things that were done. This was known by the other nations around then, how incredibly great some of this system was in Jerusalem. They knew about it. God did things on a grand scale for a reason.

**So, at the turn of the year (597) King Nebuchadnezzar sent for him to be brought to Babylon with the desirable vessels of the house of the Eternal, and made Zedekiah, his brother, king over Judah and Jerusalem.**

So, now we're going to jump over to 2 Kings because again, these things are scattered all over the place, little piece here a little piece there.

**2 Kings 24:5—So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead. Then the king of Egypt did not come up out of his land, for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt.** So, it's showing here how powerful Nebuchadnezzar was. All the way from the Euphrates all the way down through the areas of Judea and

where Israel used to be, and Samaria, all the way down through Judea, all the way down, as it shows here, basically to the Nile area.

And so, it's talking about some of this, and it says the pharaoh didn't come up again. Now, he made a pact later on here with someone, but he didn't come up there because he didn't commit his armies to the power of what he knew Nebuchadnezzar had.

**Verse 8—Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months.** Short and simple. Not eight years old but it was in the eighth year. And so, it doesn't take a lot of brains to figure out, well, what eighth year? Well, it wasn't about the eighth year of his reign.

**And his mother's name was Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. He did evil in the sight of the Eternal, according to all that his father had done.** So again, one after another after another. So again, toward the end, especially after we have the various kings there that have rebelled over and over again, and what took place, it seems like they just got worse and worse and worse.

But they still had the Sabbath and the Holy Days. It's one thing they were noted for that they never abandoned. Even in the midst of all the stuff they did with foreign gods and so forth, they still adhered oftentimes then to this process here. Even though some tried to push away from it, they as a whole stuck to those things. They just polluted them.

**Verse 10—At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon went up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged.** Now, he didn't go all the way up, but his troops did. It's making a distinction here, he stayed farther back, and it comes out in the story as well. But that's why it states it this way, "the servants went up," "the army went up."

**So Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, went up against the city, and his servants did besiege it.** So, here we go again. **Then Jehoiachin, the king of Judah, went out to the king of Babylon.** This is about a surrender. So, he's come to a point now where the city is going to be overrun, the massive army that's there, so he surrenders rather than seeing the whole city destroyed.

**He and his mother and his servants and his princes and his officers.** And obviously, this would have been something communicated back and forth, that they would accept his surrender, that they would allow them to live. So, they did this. **...and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign.** So, that's in 597. So, he didn't last very long, obviously, and now we're definitely in that year of 597.

**And he carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the Eternal and the treasures of the king's house.** So again, more and more treasure each time. It says here, "all the treasures of the house of the Eternal." If that's a specific kind of treasure, I don't know, but they keep doing this over and over again.

**...and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon, king of Israel, had made in the temple of the Eternal, as the Eternal had said.** So, some of these things were massive. So, how do you transport something so huge? Well, you have to just tear it off and cut it up, and that's what they did to some of these things and what was made.

**So he carried away all of Jerusalem and all the princes and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, even all the craftsmen and smiths. None remained except the poorest sort of people of the land.** So, this time here they did a huge clean-up job. But again, there had been other periods of siege and other treasure taken out, so what was left they carried on into Babylon.

I think of things like this. As we get deeper into some of these stories, especially later on in the other series, there are so many things that relate, that we can relate to in the Church. Our history. It just didn't go over such a long period of time. What they went through, they went through a long period of time for all these things to happen, to be taken captive, to be in captivity, finally to begin to come back at different times. It's an incredible story. Some of it really gets close to home and what it has to say. But I don't want to get ahead of the picture.

So, again here, these things here that were taking place, there are things we can relate to. I think of different periods of time, of what happened to the Church to finally come into the time of Laodicea and the things that happened to us, the things we experienced on a spiritual plane. They experienced this on a physical plane.

But I think of more and more that was taken from us. Finally, went through Laodicea, and especially the last six, seven years of it, and all the things that were being taken from God's people, the treasures. Because our treasure is God's word and God's way of life and God's truth. Things that had been given to us through sacrifice for a long period of time through God's apostle Herbert Armstrong. There were those who were trying to tear it down, who were trying to destroy it. These happened at different intervals. I'm not going to go through them all but at different times leading up to even especially the last three years before the Apostasy until finally a final collapse of everything.

So again, this process of the Babylonians coming up against Judah and Jerusalem to take captives, treasures from the house, or the king's house, and treasures from the temple. Because both places had tremendous treasure in them, and even the temple then, obviously. It happened at several different times, and this time in 597 was the greatest of all to this point.

So, now we're going to review what was covered in a sermon back in 2019 that was about Hezekiah, and it was in his reign nearly a hundred years earlier than this because all this has been prophesied to take place, and of what we've been reading through, what we've been going through in this story flow here. So, it was back in the time of Hezekiah, again, nearly a hundred years earlier that this captivity of Judah was described in the manner of what would take place, prophesied by Isaiah the prophet.

So, from *Part 4* of that series, I'm just going to read what was covered in that part. "Toward the end of Part 3 we had looked at the verses that were a very condensed version of the fact that Hezekiah's heart became lifted up, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem." That's really a horrible story of what took place toward the end of his life, and after all that he had witnessed and all that he had seen.

Going on, "And it was stated after reading about this that it does not fully explain when Hezekiah and the people humbled themselves after this. But as the story is pieced together it becomes clear that it had to be

after visitors had come down from Babylon.” Remember the story? “So, to this point in time what happened after the encounter with confronting death?” So, he was at the point, he came to a point where he was confronting death on his part. “And first of all, Hezekiah was healed of his illness and God had given him the sign of the sundial going backward by 10 degrees.”

Now, what an incredible thing. The sun doesn’t go backward. It doesn’t happen. How? What did God do? What did God do with the earth, the sun? The earth, something had to happen with the rotation. I don’t know. But what an incredible thing Almighty God of the universe, doing something like this for him, a request that was made, “Just let me see that and then I’ll know.”

Then Sennacherib, another thing that took place: “Sennacherib was defeated by God when an angel of the Eternal,” because he’d come down against them, “when an angel of the Eternal went out in the camp of the Assyrians and killed 185,000 of Sennacherib’s army.” Hezekiah knew this.

So, you think about some big things to witness in your life – the sundial going backward 10 degrees, 185,000 people being destroyed as in whatever way that God sent out angelic beings, if it were in that manner, which it sounds like it was, that destroyed that many people.

That’s why I think about what’s going to happen when Christ returns, and the 144,000, because those who are destroying the earth, God says, they’re going to destroy. That’s an incredible thing because that’s not going to be small in number. The earth has to be brought to that point where all these people who have a mindset just to kill, to take a life, to keep fighting, to win, to win out over the others, to do anything it takes to accomplish that, God says He’s going to destroy them. Well, He’s going to destroy it through Christ and the 144,000 who will have the power to do something like that. We don’t understand all that, but we will in time.

So, here are two incredible things that Hezekiah witnessed. You think about people, you think about the Israelites coming through the sea and leaving Egypt and you think that would be enough for a nation of people to be sobered to the core of their being, to know how they escaped death from someone who was out to destroy them. They knew what happened to pharaoh’s army.

And yet just a few days later? You talk about human nature, what we’re like, it really is nasty. Human nature is just downright nasty, selfish, and inward. It’s almost hard to comprehend what our nature is like, how deceitful we can be as human beings, how resistant to God and God’s way of life we can be as human beings, regardless of what we might witness.

We in God’s Church, one of the great lessons of time, will be what we have witnessed in the end-time through Philadelphia, through Laodicea, through the remnant, and to see what most have done. Because they all had access to God’s spirit who have turned against God. It’s almost unbelievable and mind-boggling that such a thing could happen on such a massive scale, and yet it happened over and over again to people who did as we’re doing today, went to Sabbath services, for most of their lives in some cases, Holy Days. Holy Days, tithed, had fellowship with others that was good, until something started to change at some point in their lives.

These things are being repeated. They've been repeated through time on a physical plane and even in the Church on a spiritual one.

So, it was after this that Hezekiah's heart became lifted up." That's hard to comprehend how such a thing can happen in our minds. To witness things that God has done and things that God has given, and yet we still as human beings have this proclivity of pride and being lifted up. That's what happened to him. He became lifted up with his greatness, with what he thought was his greatness. But it was the greatness of Almighty God! He was able to do and have what he had because of God! God did these things for him, healed him, gave him extra time of life, and the sundial went back 10 degrees.

Back in that time, to have a force of this size, 180,000 out there, and just slaughtered? I think of those wars and what they had to be like. Spears, swords, different things they used to kill each other. Gory, hideous, sick. Incredible! All these things he witnessed in a very powerful way to keep him as king.

So again, "It was after this that his heart became lifted up. And these events of him experiencing the healing that God gave to him, and the sundial turning back, and Sennacherib's army being destroyed had a strong impact on him, but it wasn't good because he took it to himself."

I think of Philadelphia and what God said would happen during Laodicea, "rich and increased with goods." It's the exact same thing on a spiritual plane having to do with the mind, of what can happen in the mind. To see this era that God had so blessed, so many truths being restored and given, and more things in there that were never given to the apostles, things that were never given to Paul, things that were never given to John.

John wrote the book of Revelation, but he didn't know what it was about! He had no idea! All the disciples before him, or the apostles before him, they didn't even know about any of that stuff because John wrote it much later. You think, what an incredible thing the different periods of time, the different eras, which they wouldn't have known what that was about unless God had shown them. But it wasn't His purpose to do that. Then all the different things that would happen in the end-time.

To have all that ability to see and understand the news that's happening in the world, what's happening in Europe, to get a glimpse of some of those things that God had given to Herbert Armstrong, and then to start feeling better about ourselves? About how big we were getting as a Church? Of what service we might be doing in the Church? Deacons and deaconesses and different jobs that people had and it going to people's heads? Y.O.U., the different ones who were working in the different groups, and so forth?

After a while, people begin to feel importance just like Hezekiah did. He's important, he was given more time to be important, more time to live, to be important. What's really important? It isn't us. Only to the degree that it's a part of what God is doing. Only to that degree.

And if we're called and we're in God's hands and we're His children, that's important. It's the most important thing on earth. Because this is our time, and this is God's Church and God's people. The most important thing on earth. But you can't get lifted up by it, you can't let it go to your head and begin to think that you're important, I'm important.

So, Hezekiah lost sight of God. That's what it amounts to. Sometimes in this process, people can begin to lose sight of God. That's the mistake the vast majority of people who have been called into God's Church have made over and over and over again, especially in the end-time, because this has been one of the major times of adding to the 144,000 – through the period of Philadelphia in through Laodicea and all those who died during those periods, who died faithfully, in the faith, the thousands and thousands.

Then the last part. Not as many to be filled when you get toward the end because God has done the work over 6,000 years and planned meticulously so. Primarily His focus, the 144,000. It's His government. Because that is going to determine the next 1,100 years and how that functions.

So, many have followed the way of Hezekiah and never repented. Because in God's Church it's even more serious because of God's spirit that dwells within us.

Then we went on to or read 2 Chronicles 32:31. This was the process that took place. **2 Chronicles 32:31— However, regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, whom they sent to him to inquire about the wonder that was done in the land.** So again, the story is that this Babylonian king had heard about him and of some of the things that had taken place, and that he was ill, and then sent down ambassadors to see how everything was going. At least that's what they had to say.

It says here, **whom they sent to him to inquire about the wonder that was done in the land. God withdrew from him.** Meaning God had determined to let Hezekiah now act upon his own without His help, influence in his life. This was a part of his heart anyway, so God allowed it to come to fruition.

Just like He did with Laodicea. He allowed us to do what human beings do under those circumstances. It wouldn't have mattered what time period it was. Under the same conditions that happened after God's apostle died and others were there doing what they were doing, Laodicea was going to be the result.

It's just automatic because of carnal human nature and the drifting away from God, becoming sleepy and sluggish, becoming lukewarm. Lukewarm, God does not accept, and yet the entire Church became lukewarm. We all did. We were all guilty of it because of our human nature, and God allowed it. He withdrew and withdrew help and allowed us to go a particular course, and in some cases, to try, to test individuals as well, to see how they would respond to certain things because there are different parts of the building.

Now, God worked in the first 4,000 years with so many, and the molding and fashioning and sometimes from the very womb, as we've read about. But then when we get down to another part of the building where more are going to be added to it and there is that flexibility now more so to bring people through various things and to choose. "Many are called, few have been chosen." So much of that is in our part then, how we respond to the calling of God.

So again, to see some of these things, how God has worked in the constructing of His Family, it's an awesome thing.

God withdrew in order to test, as it's talking about here, or **to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart**, to bring it to the surface, to reveal. Now, there's more to this type of thing because God knows us very well. There was a proclivity, a way, a mind that Hezekiah had but it's to reveal. That's what this is about, it's to reveal what was in his heart, to reveal where he really was, to give him opportunity to see himself.

So, God lets us go through things. He knows where we are, and He allows grace and mercy and time. But so much of it depends upon us and what we want and how much we're willing to fight for it and whether God is first or to what degree God is in our life in importance. God allows those things.

It's like the gold being fired up, the silver, if you will, being fired up and dross in silver that comes to the surface, or it can be seen then sometimes. I think of gold when you watch people make a gold nugget of some sort. They pour the gold into a container and on the outside there is still dross, parts that aren't gold that will be on the outside of that. They just break it off and the rest of it, nice gold, after they've heated it up. Silver, there's a process there of being able to take off the dross, of things that aren't a part of silver.

That's what trials are about. It's not that God doesn't know us. God knows where we are, but He knows what we have to have in order to become purified. But that's something that's largely left to us, in large part. God knows where we are and so He allows these things. God offers us in the Church repentance, the ability to repent of things when we see them.

That's why trials can be very good to bring things to the surface so that we can see them. God knows what's in our heart and what's in our mind, but He helps these things come to the surface so that we can see them as well. Then sometimes in that process, it is up to the individual in the sense of God pulling back, "Where are you? What do you want?"

So, there's a combination of these things working in our lives.

So, the question was asked after that, "So, what happened to Hezekiah after this?" "This begins to show" a little bit later said, "This begins to show in the verses preceding this last verse we just read in 2 Chronicles 32, backing up to 2 Chronicles 32:27, after all these events had happened to Hezekiah, sickness near death, the sundial going backward, Sennacherib's army being defeated and Sennacherib himself being murdered..."

These things take place, and what do we see? What are the things we have witnessed? I think of being blessed to have lived during the time of Philadelphia because I have witnessed things through a period of time that God worked with at the end of an age, through an apostle, to do some incredible things. To think of how Ambassador Colleges were raised up, to think about the incredible power of *The Plain Truth* magazine, the telecast and the broadcasts that went out as it did, and to give the means and the ability for those things to be done. And on and on it goes. But in the midst of all that the most important things were the truths that God gave to him to give. Those things are our strength. Those things are our life.

And if we learn from them, just like number 4 altogether, number 1 attributed to him, government. And yet so few ever grasped it, government. They would never have spoken ill toward him; they would never

have done some of the things they did. Some of the students that went to Ambassador wouldn't have taken away, "Well, he's a great teacher." No, they would have taken with them, "He's God's apostle and God gave him truth to give to us. And I wouldn't know diddly-squat if it weren't for what God gave through him." Simple! But it wasn't simple because of the choices that people made.

And so, I think, how blessed are – and this is something we have to see in our lives – how blessed are you? The things you've been able to see. There are things you don't grasp; you can't grasp their fullness yet. As you grow, as time goes on God will help you to see them more and more. That's an exciting part of life. But it means staying close to God. It means a desire you have crying out to God for His spirit to guide and direct you, to mold and fashion you, to help you see the things you need to see so that you can grow more and be more at one with Him.

To me, there is no more beautiful thing in life than to be at one with God. Think of the word "atonement." At-one-ment. I know we break it up that way but that's the goal, to become at one with God. We are to humble ourselves through fasting to be at one with God. That has to be our whole life, not just on the Day of Atonement. It has to be our entire life, that we want to be of the same mind of God. We want the word of God to be in our mind, that we're in agreement with it, that we don't just do it because God says it (which is how we begin the process because God says it we do it).

But then we learn why God says to do it that way. As we yield ourselves to obey God's way of life He blesses us to grasp and comprehend why He's given these things to us, what it means, and what is the spirit of it, as Christ came along and began to reveal the spirit of the law after 4,000 years. People didn't understand what it was all about.

I think of the simple thing of circumcision, which was given later on, the explanation for it. Circumcision of the flesh. What does that mean? Well, it's the spiritual part that has meaning. The other thing is just a total physical thing that can identify someone as being different because of what they're doing. I could make a sermon out that I guess, too. But it's about what's inside of us. We want this thing...we point to the heart, but it's in the mind.

I'm sorry, but I have to pause here a moment because there was a minister of God's... used to be of God's Church, who came along and began to teach this. He began to teach (or close to it), that our heart has thinking in it. Because of scriptures, that there is some kind of process where there is some thinking that takes place. That's why it's about the heart. Think, hmmm. Whew! You think, how nuts can you become?

I honestly can't remember now if he was a regional pastor. I'm going to have to have a talk with my wife later on because it slips my mind. But there were a couple of individuals out there that started to go into some of this. You think it's like today in government. Sometimes you think, what's happened to your mind? That's about as nutty, as whacky, as crazy a thing you could do in God's Church, to begin thinking something like that, that somehow, it's not in the mind, some of it slipped down into the heart. Anyway, I'm sorry. Then if you get a heart transplant, today we have the technology, "What did you say? What are you thinking?" Anyway, I'm sorry, whacky, whacky, whacky. I don't even have any idea why I even got into that part.

Oh, his heart became lifted up. Maybe that was it. Let me go back and make sure. We're talking a lot about his heart, Hezekiah's heart, what happened. So, we saw all these things. Oh, the truth.

Anyway, for us, I think of the truths we have that God has given to us, and how blessed we are that we see what we do. We marvel at what Hezekiah saw. A sundial? It doesn't happen. It's never happened before except for that one time that we know of. It's not recorded. What would be the point? Anyway, so Hezekiah, he had his wish. Do you want it to go forward, to go backward, what do you want? Going forward might seem easier, but going backward, that's a biggie. Yeah, it's a biggie.

We have that. We do it artificially. We call it daylight savings. But nothing really moved on the sundial.

Anyway, I got to keep track here where I'm going. So, we marvel at things like that, and 180 some thousand people being destroyed, an army coming up against you? What do you have to worry about?

And then us. We don't tend to measure the things we have been shown and given like what was given to Herbert Armstrong as I was mentioning, like some of the truths that were there that were given, some things that others never even understood early on in the Church because they weren't even given. Like, I mentioned, John and what he wrote. Yet they were given to Herbert Armstrong at the end of an age.

Then to go through the various things that we did for a period of time and then what God has continued to give to a remnant people? Incredible! To understand why we went through an Apostasy, that we even had one? You know if we're not careful we'll think, "Well, that's not hard to understand." Yeah, it is. You can't understand it unless God gives it to you.

Because there are thousands and tens of thousands of people out there who used to go to Sabbath services, Holy Days, and tithed, who won't believe that. They won't believe it until God helps them to see it for what it is. But at this point in time, they won't, and those who are given an opportunity to see it, the vast majority of them turned against it. To think that a man rose up who wasn't an apostle, who became the man of sin, son of perdition, who believes it out there? Well, one did for a while, then he changed it when he died.

How rich are you? How much has God given you? What have you seen? And see, we don't tend to raise those up as being as great as what Hezekiah saw. No, they're greater, far, far, greater. Things that God has given about Himself, about His plan and purpose.

I think of a being that's going to be destroyed. What kind of peace can that give to you? What kind of peace will that give to the world forever? Things of that nature that are so incredible, truths that God has given to us. That's far, far greater than a sundial going back ten degrees. That's far, far greater than destroying 180,000 people. Those are small things! They're physical things.

Spiritual things are far, far greater. They're about the mind and the being of God Almighty, the Great God of the universe, and if we're able to share in that mind and that thinking how blessed are we? Is it greater than anything that can be done physically? I hope we can see that. To be in awe of God, the greatness of

God, the glory of God. That's a part of why we're going through some of these things, to reflect on their history that was very physical and then hopefully see it spiritually for what we need to see.

Then going on in the story flow out of that same sermon, 2 Kings 20:12-13 is read. **2 Kings 20:12—At that time Merodach-Baladan, or as he's called in Isaiah, Merodach, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick. And Hezekiah was attentive to them and showed them all the house of his treasures...** Not a bright thing. Not a bright thing to open the door and give way to a king of another nation the ability to see the incredible wealth that you have.

**—the silver and gold, the spices and precious ointment, and all the valuable vessels or things that were there—all that was found among his treasures. There was nothing in his house or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them.** Now, you have to understand the mindset of Hezekiah in some of this now. He was filled with pride, "Look how great I am!" He looked at the things that God had given, and he said, "Look how great I am."

We're so stupid sometimes as human beings, even in God's Church, when we begin to have this thinking and these thoughts of how important I might be or am or whatever. You want to run from that and fight against that with all of your being because it's a natural human proclivity that I've seen a majority of God's people succumb to since I've been in God's Church. A majority! It should turn our stomachs when we see such a thing.

**Verse 14—Then Isaiah the prophet went to the king, Hezekiah, and said to him, What did these men say?** Why do you think Isaiah went to him? God inspired him by His spirit to go in and talk to him, and I'm sure that Isaiah already knew. **And from where do they come to you? So Hezekiah said, They came from a far country, from Babylon.** They didn't just come from a country; they came from a far country. "Don't have to worry about them," basically. "Isaiah is asking me a question here."

**So he said, What have they seen of your house?** Why ask the question? He knew. God had already given it to him. **Then Hezekiah answered, They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasures that I haven't shown them.**

**Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Eternal...** He'd already been given it by God. Now, sometimes when we've read stories like this we tend to think back at times when God manifested Himself in different ways to Abraham, spoke to him, or a voice coming out of a burning bush, as Moses experienced. But most of the prophets, it was right up here in the mind.

**Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Eternal, Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, will be carried away to Babylon.** Now, not a difficult thing. God's going to maneuver, work with things between nations to bring this about. We've already read so much of this, what God did in bringing along Babylon. The Assyrians had to be removed first of all, the ones who conquered Israel had to be lowered in power and strength as a people. Egypt was messing around in the area coming all the way up to the river Euphrates, right next to the

Assyrians. They had to be taken care of. God took care of that, made sure they were defeated in Carchemish. Incredible!

God working with, molding and fashioning, putting certain leaders in power. God put them there to do the job that needed to be done at a specific time because of what God was molding and fashioning, what He was doing. Much of it is there for us if we can grasp it. Things have been written – there are patterns of things, there are lessons of things that happened on a physical plane for the express purpose that things can be taught from it on a spiritual plane over and over and over again. That's why I marvel when you go through the Bible how much is about the end-time. Candidly, even how much is about what God is doing right now at the very end.

**...will be carried away to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says the Eternal. Even they shall take away even some of your lineage who have descended from you; shall become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.** Some of those taken captive and served there, this is what happened to them.

So, the exact same account is recorded then in Isaiah 39. So again, this prophecy given nearly a hundred years earlier concerning the captivity of Judah, and the carrying off of the treasures of the king's house and the temple, again, were given through Isaiah, God molding and fashioning, already planned and purposed. It was already purposed, Hezekiah, what would happen, how it would happen, the ones who came down to visit him – all by design of the Great God.

There's a balance in this that we have to understand. God doesn't make individuals do various things, but He works with people to accomplish various things. He knows us inside out. There is nothing greater than God's purpose, and if we're a part of all that, if He allows some, which He's allowed the vast majority of human beings to go their own way and not even know Him, not even hear of Him, but with some He worked with through time on a physical plane.

Some out of that He worked on a spiritual plane because that's the most important of all. It's about His Family, Elohim. Eventually the others are going to have incredible opportunity as well in a different time.

We have choices and it comes down to whether or not we choose and want what God has to offer, that we recognize that's the greatest thing of all. Nothing else can be compared to that! Why would we want anything different? Yet over and over again it's happened through time. It happened throughout the Church, that the majority wants something different because they don't see, they don't have the vision.

Somewhere along the line it begins to be lost. That has to come from God. That's why we have to pray every day for God's spirit. You want God's spirit every day in your life. You don't want Him to ever leave you. You want to be molded and fashioned by Him. You want to be able to be forgiven of sin so that He will dwell in you, so that Christ will dwell in you, so you can dwell in them.

Returning to the story flow now of the captivity. 2 Kings 24, the last four verses. **2 Kings 24:11—So Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, went up against the city, and his servants did besiege it. Then Jehoiachin, the king of Judah, went out to the king of Babylon, again, to surrender, he and his mother,**

his servants, his princes, and his officers. And the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. So it becomes very clear right here, doesn't it. ...in 597.

**And he carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the Eternal and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon the king of Israel had made in the temple of the Eternal, as the Eternal had said. So he carried away all Jerusalem; and all the princes and all the mighty men of valor, of ten thousand captives, even all the craftsmen and smiths. None remained except the poorest sort of the people of the land.**

So again, what an incredible thing here that God allowed and brought to pass on a physical plane.

Now continuing in **2 Kings 24:15**—**Then he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty men of the land he carried into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. Even all the men of might, of seven thousand, incredible the numbers, wave after wave, and craftsmen and smiths, a thousand, all strong and apt for war.** So again, when they conquered someone they had different places to place them in service. Some for war.

**...even these the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon. Now, the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, his father's brother, king in his stead.** So, this is Jehoiakim's son as Jehoiachin was son. In other words, they were brothers, Mattaniah and Jehoiakim were brothers. **...and changed his name, Mattaniah, to Zedekiah.**

So again, all this happened in 597 BC. One of the captives taken into Babylon was one whom God would use in a very unique way concerning His prophecies, and that's Ezekiel. Incredible, the different timing here and how God brought various ones on the scene and what they went through. Ezekiel was about twenty-five, he and his wife, when they were taken captive into Babylon at this time.

Now, what's incredible about him, he's taken into Babylon of the Jews, of Judah, taken into Babylon as captive, and then he makes prophecies about the captivity of Israel. That's why he's been looked down on by a lot through time, because it's like, "This is nuts. They were taken captive long before this and he's writing prophecies about something that already happened long ago." So, he's been discredited by many, even the theologians. Why they call them that, I don't know.

So again, his prophecies primarily addressed Israel. But what's really unique about his prophecies is that although it talks about Israel there's a lot in there about the Israel of God at the end-time. Us. God gave a lot out of the book of Ezekiel to understand what happened at the Apostasy because that's what's written there. So people look at it and they think it's about a physical nation. First and foremost, it's about a spiritual one. So, it confused many about what he wrote because the Assyrians had already conquered Israel 130 years before that, or over that, nearly that.

So, let's go over to Ezekiel 1. Interesting to read a part of what he wrote at one point here. **Ezekiel 1:1**—**Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river Chebar...** I think about that, that song *By the waters of Babylon, there we wept and there sat down; hung our harps on the willow tree, Zion yet we remember thee.* Incredible!

**...captives by the river Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. On the fifth day of the month, which is in the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity, so now we're down to 593-592, the word of the Eternal came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Eternal was upon him there.**

Then it goes on down in **verse 28** here—**Like the appearance of a rainbow and a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Eternal. So when I saw it I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of one speaking.**

So again, we saw Hezekiah, what Hezekiah saw. Now here is Ezekiel seeing something incredible that God is showing him, and seeing in a very unique way the glory and the power and the might of Almighty God.

**Ezekiel 2:1—Then He said to me, Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you. Then the spirit entered me when He spoke to me.** What an incredible thing to write, of things that were given him to record. **...and set me on my feet. I heard Him who spoke to me. So He said to me, Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel.** Well, it's about his message because he never went anywhere from there. So, it's about the message and what God is sending out through him to be given.

**...to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me.** Nothing could be more clear on a spiritual plane of what God would bring to pass at the end-time than this. Because the greatest thing is not a physical rebellion that had already taken place and Israel taken captive and ten nations lost their identity of who they were, but it's to another Israel that God is speaking of in the end-time. It's about the Church of God, the Israel of God and with whom God is working.

He says, "I am sending you to a rebellious nation." What happened during Laodicea was a rebellious people, a rebellious time. Truly was. To let down, to become lukewarm is rebellion. It is not of God. It can't be accepted by God. You can't accept that in your life, to be lukewarm, to be halfway somewhere sitting on a fencepost or whatever it might be. That's happened with so many in the Church and was sometimes so incredibly frustrating after the Apostasy, people sitting on the fencepost. People willing and wanting to make bridges to one another, share ideas. Sick, sick time. Horrifying time for God's Church.

"A rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me." And it happened. To have a rebellion of the magnitude of something that was so unthinkable in God's Church? To think that you could have wave after wave of people to do what they would do, that in one day, one telephone conversation, a minister, ministers actually (this happened to several), would call out to Pasadena, and talk to an individual or individuals, but primarily one, the son. He would get them on the phone and talk with them for two, three, four hours.

By the time they hung up the phone that minister who made the call, who could not grasp the difference between day and night, had chosen night, had chosen to go back to what he was called out of, or they were called out of. To go back to Sunday worship, to go back to Christmas – well, first of all, to go back to Easter. How do you describe that in life? The third of the Church did that, and a huge number of the ministry in greater proportions did that.

So, you think of the glory of God Almighty, the power of God Almighty, the greatness of God Almighty, knowing what would happen to His Church through time of individuals who had his holy spirit living and dwelling within them, who would have the Messiah who was their Passover and their High Priest in their life, that truth and that magnitude of truth that was given to so many, thousands and tens of thousands, and what would happen after an apostle was dead, and various others then fighting, vying for power.

Because that's what happened. That is one of the greatest lessons of all to learn, how evil haughtiness and pride is, and being lifted up with riches in your own mind of how great you are. Because it happened first to the ministry, and in that manner happened to the rest of the Church. That's how it works. How we're raised up is how we can also go down. It happened in area after area after area.

When this is said, boy, it says a lot. **I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that's rebelled against Me. Both they and their fathers have trespassed against Me to this very day.** So, it's just a proclivity in other words, that's been ongoing. The greatest of the lessons will be at the end when this will happen in a greater way because it's spiritual in every respect, of what will take place.

**For they are impudent and stubborn children. I am sending you to them.** What else can you say? Impudent, rebellious, stubborn. That's our nature. It's human beings. If God's not in our life that's what we succumb to, that nature. It's powerful. It's more powerful than what we are by ourselves. It's God Almighty that gives us strength. It's God Almighty that day by day continues to give us strength and gives us the ability to see what we see. If we don't have that we don't have it anymore.

Again, **For they are impudent and stubborn children. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, Thus says the LORD Eternal. As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse—for they are a rebellious house—yet they will know that a prophet has been among them.**

So again, starts out being about Ezekiel and going on in what it has to say there. But I think of everything we've gone through in the Church, brethren, and these things that happen on a very physical plane you have to marvel, I have to marvel because of what God gave, something so long ago, yes, prophesied by Isaiah, that would happen to Judah, taken captive into Babylon.

I think of the Church taken captive back into Babylon. Disgusting what took place. And yet that was a part of the story because God has allowed physical things throughout time to take place to plan within those stories spiritual lessons. Things for our minds to learn from with the help of God's spirit, to become more at one with God, to understand how He's worked, why He's worked the way He has, and what it is we're to learn. It's incredible.

So, I think we'll stop there today. There is more to the story here on this part, obviously, but I think this is a good place to end today. We'll continue on from there next Sabbath.