

This is *Part 5* of the series *God's Glory and Greatness*.

In *Part 4* we had covered how Jehoiachin served as king for only three months and ten days and then was taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, and then Zedekiah was made king in his stead. So, it was at this point of the captivity that another incredible count began to come to pass.

I find these awesomely interesting when you find the different times when various prophets, if you will, different ones who were taken into captivity, when they were taken. We've already talked about some of those already. Jeremiah, who actually stayed in the area of Jerusalem throughout the periods of captivity until another period of time when he went farther down toward Egypt.

But we already talked about how Daniel was taken captive and some of the different prophets coming along here. Now we're at a point in time where Ezekiel is on the scene in this particular captivity in 597 BC. So, he was taken captive and we ended *Part 4* and we'd just begun to look at some of what was written in the beginning of the book of Ezekiel.

Now, what's amazing is here he's being taken into captivity, and there are scholars who have argued in times past that he couldn't have been a prophet because he's preaching to, talking to Israel. Israel was already taken captive. He's talking about the captivity of Israel. There are people who have rejected him in that respect, as being a prophet, because of that. It created a lot of doubt with different ones because of things he had to say. It's like, why to Israel when they were taken captive a long, long time in advance of Judah's captivity? And yet they didn't understand this is for the end-time.

So, when you put that in perspective and you begin to see certain things that God began to reveal after we went through the Apostasy it becomes even more profound. Because it isn't as much really about the physical captivity of Israel because it's not a matter of them being taken captive and taken somewhere because it's not going to happen that way.

There used to be a time in the Church where there were those who felt that that great Assyrian power over in Europe is going to conquer this country and take people into captivity. That's what was being taught, that's what was believed in the present truth. Then to understand as time has gone along that God has revealed various things and helped us to better understand that it's not, in this case here, not even as much about the physical captivity because it's not a captivity, it's a conquering that's going to take place in the sense of totally bringing this country to an end as far as a government is concerned and as far as a nation is concerned. But all governments are going to fall into that as we go through that period of time that's going to happen rather rapidly.

But the primary thrust of all this concerning Ezekiel is the Israel of God, the Church. That's why as we come to understand various things that are said about the end-time and God's focus in large part in prophecy upon the Church, it becomes even more profound because it helps us to understand how important the Church is to God. Because it's about the molding and fashioning of 144,000 first of all, it has been, for the past 6,000 years, but now we're at the pinnacle of that. We're at the point where that's almost complete. Even certain things will not take place (we understand now) until the complete sealing has taken place. So, until that takes place we understand the events of the Trumpets can't even begin.

God has revealed a little more through time. It started with Herbert Armstrong revealing so much about Europe and what was going to happen toward the end and that Assyria was going to rise again and do some of the things they've done in times past there in Europe.

But again, this story here becomes quite incredible and we're going to go into some of these things because this is where God began to reveal a whole lot more to us about the fact that Ezekiel was speaking to the Church.

That should help everyone to understand your calling is awesome. It's profound. To understand how important that is to God Almighty. When you begin to grasp those things, and especially this focus in time, how important that is to God, because it's the completion of 6,000 years of work, work that He and His Son in the past 2,000 years have been doing. That primary focus has been about, in the last 2,000 years especially, because more have been called and worked with during that period of time than in the first 4,000 years, it's about the Church. It's about God's Family. It's about the molding and fashioning of God's Family.

When you understand you've been called to that and you see God's great concern and the things He has to say about it, it puts things in a better perspective in helping us to understand our lives are not just casual, ordinary lives, like so many live in this world. Not at all. We have opportunities that we can't even begin to grasp.

If people were really able to have grasped those things during Philadelphia and Laodicea we wouldn't have had an apostasy. If they really grasped what was before them, in that respect, they would have been far more filled with zeal, on fire for this way of life, to fight. But it wasn't meant to be that way. God allows human beings to make choices, to do things according to the time they live in to bring things to the surface of how much we need God all the time.

Haughtiness and pride can never get in the way. That's what happened during Laodicea. You could never let down to a point where you become lukewarm. You've got to be stirred up, on fire.

I've seen these trends in the Church, even within PKG, that there are times that people just let time pass by. We have to keep a constant prod on ourselves. That's what it means when it talks about watching and being watchful and alert and on guard. Ezekiel has a lot to say about that, too, of being watchful, of

being on guard. It's about us and what we need to do, and to ask God for help to be stirred up and on fire for this way of life.

Because I see it too often. I see it today in the Church as well. You've got to stir up God's spirit in your life. You've got to ask God for help to stir you up, to be excited about where we are in time, to be excited about what He's giving to you and what He's given to you in times past here to bring you to this point. This is the most important thing of life right now, truly is, your lives, your being molded and fashioned by God.

Sometimes it's like we don't seem that we get that point, of how important we are as a part of God's plan, and if we don't fight for it and don't want it enough God will give it to someone else. That's what's been happening. That's a frustrating thing.

So anyway, let's pick it up again here in Ezekiel 2 and then continue on, pick up what we had read toward the end. **Ezekiel 2:3—So, He said to me, Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel.** Ezekiel was never sent anywhere. His message was. He was never sent up into the lost tribes of Israel. They wouldn't have understood anyway because they lost their identity, they didn't know who they were. So, all those things are a part of time and history of the migrations of where the Assyrians had taken Israel into Europe, and so forth. They don't know who they are today.

This nation doesn't know who it is, that it's a part, in that respect, of the blessings God gave to Israel. This country, a very wealthy country, Manasseh, no concept. Well, how blessed are we to see and understand those things? We're blessed to be here; we're blessed to live here. It is awesome because it's from God.

The greatest wealth of a nation the world has ever known. The greatest power of a nation the world has ever known. We're the recipients of it. There is no one that did this themselves, and yet people take credit for a lot through time. It's God Almighty that just gave it on a silver platter to fulfill His purpose and His will (in the short story, short version).

I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me. There is no greater rebellion of human beings ever, ever, ever than the one the Church experienced in the Apostasy. There has never been a greater rebellion against God and Joshua the Christ than the Apostasy. We need to understand that with all of our being!

The greatest rebellion of all time, in that respect and what took place, that started it all, was Lucifer. That was in the angelic realm. But as far as mankind, the Apostasy was the greatest rebellion against God.

It wasn't the physical rebellions of Israel. It wasn't the physical rebellions of the nations of Judah. They didn't have God's spirit. They were physical, carnal human beings. And yes, they rebelled, and yes, we can look at those things and understand that there was rebellion there, but they didn't have an ability

that the Church of God had in Philadelphia that went into Laodicea and led up to the Apostasy, because that's turning against God and Christ.

I'll get into that as we go along. It's really profound to see and understand what's being said here. It's not at all about a physical Israel. It's about the end-time. It's about the Church of God.

I am sending you...to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me. Both they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day. So, yes, that has been the history of mankind. Yes, that's the way mankind is. And yes, different ones with whom God has worked at times in physical nations, yes. But coming up to the end the worst of all times.

For they are impudent and stubborn children. That's our nature. It's hard for us as human beings to come to grasp that to the depth it is and to understand this is always a battle, to fight against this, ourselves, our own carnal, selfish nature. Because we have a mind that resists God. It just does. That's the battle.

That's our primary battle, first and foremost. It isn't Satan and the demonic world. It's us! We are the greatest battle because we have the choices to make as to how we're going to respond to various things once God has called us and given us of His holy spirit. Because He gives us the help we need to see those things and then to battle them. Awesome! We just have to yield to the process.

I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, Thus says the LORD Eternal... I think after the Apostasy and going, being invited to different places. Just to be candid about it. I think of the Minneapolis area one time. We were invited up there to meet with a group of people that was a combination of several different groups by this time right after the Apostasy who were trying to build bridges with one another.

So, they're trying to make something work to have what they had in the past and there's a frustration in all that. These different groups were willing to talk to each other and to try to feel their way through some of this. And so, different ones, they were inviting different ones up and so I got invited in the midst of that. Also, down in Phoenix. I think some came in from Tucson. But anyway, we were in the Phoenix area as well, the same kind of invitation.

So, at that particular time in the very beginning, the most important thing that God was giving to me, to the Church, to address was Passover, that it all happened on the 14th. Nothing happened in the 15th. Because there were so many ministers out there already who were pushing this concept, this idea of going on into the 15th.

You go and speak to a group like this and tell them this isn't what you want to hear: "You can't build bridges with each other. You can't bring along different ideas. You've got to yield to what is true and what is right, and you've got to start with what God gave to us – Passover. Because if you can't deal with that one there you're not going to make any changes or growth in your life."

Never got invited back because they didn't want to hear it. That isn't what they wanted to hear. They wanted to hear how you can build bridges with each other, that someone can bring along some ideas about Pentecost that aren't right, and they can talk about it, and then kind of go their separate ways, and really not accomplish anything because they're all going to believe what they believed when they first came to the meeting anyway! Same thing with Passover.

Nobody's minds are getting changed by all this. You have to have the conviction of God's spirit, that you see the truth and you're going to hold on to the truth, and if you don't do that you're relying on yourself as a human being. That's what people were doing.

Anyway, when I read this I see something that's totally about us, totally about what we've gone through.

As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse—for they are a rebellious house... So, I think after the Apostasy. I think about one-third of the people who had an opportunity to be shaken to the core of their being and didn't really turn to God in the way that they should have, could have, that God was offering at that time.

But in the midst of that He was calling out a group of people. Because that's what it takes, God had to call people out because you can't do it on your own. It's only because of God's mercy that those of us who came through it all were able to come through it in the first place. That's what people have to acknowledge. But people were given an opportunity.

So, He said, . . . **they are a rebellious house—yet they will know that a prophet has been among them.** Well, just calling it what it says, what it is. Because one day they're going to come to find out, yes, Passover was really important. Should have listened. "Yes, should have listened." We had an apostasy. "Yes, I should have listened." There was a man of sin, there was a son of perdition. "Yes, I should have listened." This is what God said would come to pass at the end.

I think of truth #32.

32 (11) Ezekiel 5 has been fulfilled (spiritually) through the scattering of the Church of God since the Apostasy.

Awesome thing that God revealed at that time. Didn't reveal it before that because it hadn't happened and there wasn't a need for knowing some of those kinds of things that would come to pass—God wasn't going to give that—until later on. So, I'm going to read what it says:

After the Abomination of Desolation, approximately one-third of the Church remained in Worldwide (or accepted the same kind of beliefs of other false churches of traditional Christianity), one-third gave up completely...

Now, these are staggering things because as God was showing the numbers, basically, of different groups and how many there were out there in them this is what helped to bring this to light. God then showed, "Here it is. That's what I said."

...and one-third went into the various organizations that formed afterward. The last third was to endure further trials, mirroring what God said about Laodicea. Within all this spiritual destruction, God prophesied that a tithe (ten percent) of a third would survive captivity within the end-time destruction and be offered to become a part of His remnant Church that would continue to the very end. This small remnant Church is spoken of in many other prophecies of the Bible.

So, that's why for a time when God revealed the truth of this, that there would be a remnant offered all this, I didn't know or see the offering part. I had been looking for a long time for the group to grow because of what it says in Ezekiel. But then God revealed later on because we experienced it.

So often God reveals things because of what you experience. Then He lets you see it and you can say, "Ah, yes, now I understand." That was one of them, that for a period of time people were coming and then going, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds into PKG. It's mind-boggling how many people came and went.

But all those individuals that came had an opportunity. So, just because God offers something, a remnant, a ten percent of a third, doesn't mean they're all going to choose it. That's what we came down to. It's a choice. So, those especially were actually given an opportunity.

I think of some of the areas. I can't help but when we go into different areas, I think about different ones that we used to know, and then Laura may mention some others and some of them that I've totally forgotten about because there were so many. I mean any area here in the United States you can go into, people came, and they went. Incredible numbers in that regard.

Well, I didn't finish this part here, "This small remnant Church is spoken of in many other prophecies of the Bible." So, God helped us to see and understand that because His primary focus is the end-time. So, He reveals what's going to happen. Because these are some of the most important times in 6,000 years. They really are.

I hope we understand why. Because some of the greatest lessons are to be learned from this period of time. Philadelphia, Laodicea, the Apostasy, and the remnant. There are awesome lessons to be learned.

It's like a maturing process. You start out with God revealing not a whole lot in the first 4,000 years, candidly, and then building upon that, and then building upon that and revealing more and more. Then we get to this point in time and God just begins to reveal a whole lot more toward the end. He's going to reveal a whole lot more beyond this, obviously, and it just becomes more and more exciting the farther you go into time. Those periods of time become more exciting because God has chosen those periods to give more. Anyway, we'll come back to that later.

Ezekiel 5:1—Then you, son of man, take a sharp sword, take it as a barber’s razor, and pass it over your head and your beard; then take scales to weigh and divide the hair. You shall burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city.

Now, we can read through that, and well, what do you mean, what city? Well, if you understand things that are being spoken of here and you can mention Jerusalem, whatever you want to, but it’s about the Church. It’s referred to as Jerusalem, Mount Zion. But God refers to the Church in different areas of prophecy in regard to a (if you will) a city.

“Burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city.” Something like this meant a lot to, if you will, Ezekiel, in his writing, because he had experienced some of the things before this because there were different periods of captivity that had taken place already just with Jerusalem and Judah, and Judah being part of Israel (one of the tribes). So, there was incredible destruction that had taken place and he was at a point in time where he was seeing far more than others who had gone before him. Because each time it got worse and worse, more things were taking place each time that Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, came up against the city.

So, it says, **Burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city. And when the days of the siege are finished** (fulfilled); **then you shall take one-third and strike around it with the sword.** Now, we shouldn’t miss out on what those things mean.

The sword. The first one was just a matter of fire. This one now is talking about a sword. I think about it’s the word of God. You talk about the sword, what God gives to us, and how did that start affecting different ones?

They were defeated in what they thought they believed. So again, another third here it’s talking about. I think of the different ones that went back to traditional Christianity, some who stayed in that group and then they changed the name to whatever it was, Grace something or other, and just as protestant as you can be.

But another third just flat gave up because they couldn’t see anything concerning the word of God anymore. Because it was like, “If this happened to God’s Church and we have believed these things for so long, and we know things about Christmas and Easter, and if this happened to God’s Church and this isn’t God’s Church then there is nothing. What else is out there?” People just lost hope, faith in anything. It’s like, God? That’s kind of hard to imagine but some just gave up totally. They were totally defeated.

Verse 3 ...and one-third of you shall scatter in the wind. That’s why I think of the Church and what happened and it’s what it’s like as far as the world is concerned because it was the Worldwide Church of God and we’re all scattered all over the place, that last third, different areas, small groups here and there, people trying to survive something and wanting to hold on to something of their past but not able to do so, building bridges to try to hold on to something of their past.

But notice what it says: **And I will draw out a sword after them.** So, the last third doesn't have it made by any measure, and that sword, again, is the word of God. It's a proof that people wouldn't accept it. They don't want to hear it. They don't want to know. They don't want to hear from God. It's the sword that's brought out against them and they won't receive it.

Going on in **verse 3—You shall also take a small number of them and bind them in your skirt.** Again, I've talked about these things in times past. The term there, "bind them in your skirt" is an expression that's used for protection. Anyway, this goes on here, "You shall take a number of them and bind them in your skirt." God gave protection to various ones to be able to see something, to know something.

Anyway, let's go on... **Then take of them and again throw them into the midst of the fire.** So, there is this group that's going to have a protection and yet God's still going to put them through trial. That's what it's about. Why? To bring out whatever is inside of us, to make it clear of what we are, who we are. To make it clear where we stand. We have choices to make.

...and burn them in the fire. From there a fire will go out into all the house of Israel. So, what does that mean? It's about the Church, the remnant Church. That's the Israel. The rest have separated themselves from it. They're no longer a part of it. If they remain asleep they're asleep and that's not a part anymore of spiritual Israel.

When you're cut off from God's spirit, when you're vomited out of God's mouth you're cut off. That's what that's about, no longer a part of something that's on a spiritual plane, spiritual Israel. These here then that were going to come along don't have it made.

Look at what we've gone through. I think of all the battles we've gone through. Every place we've been we've had battles after battles after battles after battles, people who would turn against you and stab you in the back, over and over and over again. It hurts to get stabbed in the back. Friends, people who walked to God's house side by side do hideous things, say horrible, hideous things about you when it comes to that point. Those things are hard to take. But you know what? We grow from that with God's spirit, we truly do.

Those who recognize what they have, have the opportunity to become a closer-knit Body. But you have to see that and understand that. That's why we've had sermons in recent times, after Covid especially, about fellowship, the importance of one another, and being with one another. Because a lot of the Church, candidly, is letting down in some of those areas, did let down in some of those areas through Covid, and it's a natural inclination.

Then to get back on track again, to meet together, to want to be together, I've had to prod some in order to do it. I shouldn't have to do that. It should be something we want inside of us that we treasure God's people, that we want to be together with God's people.

So, the fire is not over with. It's still ongoing. It's going to continue until we're there or until the 144,000 are fully sealed, in other words.

So, these things in Ezekiel, and hopefully we all see it, hopefully, we all grasp it. Because you can't see it without God's help, and with God's help, it's as clear as day. Truly is.

Take of them and throw them into the midst of the fire. So even we, the remnant, we have been in fire ever since we started, except for that first 3½ years. I'll have to say that the first 3½ years this is a protection that God gave.

I think of Revelation. Do you remember the scripture there that it talks about protection, that He gave 3½ years of protection, basically, to the Church? Satan wasn't going to have an ability to come after people. That's what that's about in Revelation 12.

So, when you go through and read that in Revelation 12 it's talking about a process there of coming up to the Apostasy and then after the Apostasy and had 3½ years to become settled and strong once again. Then thrown into the fire. That's exactly what happened. 3½ years of being protected, not being cast into a fire again, God re-establishing things within the Church making them even stronger than before, things about Passover and Pentecost that we didn't even have before, and God made it stronger and began to reveal other things about the Apostasy.

We understood what we went through and why, being vomited out of God's mouth, admitted we're a Laodicean. All these things that we had to do God blessed us in the first 3½ years, exactly 3½ years, and then we had our start, and it didn't take long, and we started having problems within. Why? Thrown back in the fire. It was going to happen again and again and again until this is all over with. That's an awesome thing to understand. We've lived it.

I'm going through right now preparing meetings for November for some that are coming into Dallas, and I'm going through right now and looking at the ministry, the numbers of people who have been in time past had an opportunity to be within the ministry to learn various things, to have molded and fashioned that wouldn't be molded and fashioned in any other way. Others who saw various ones being ordained and so forth, had to learn lessons as well and things about themselves that they wouldn't have been able to see any other way.

God gave that then to the Church to help mold and fashion the Body of Christ, the Church of God. And so, we learn through this entire process.

Then I look at the vast numbers who have been disfellowshipped just within the ministry. Not just with the rest of the Church, because they're have been tons of people out there. But even those who had that opportunity, of people, and I'll give that later on after I give the November meeting. I'll give it to the Church because I think the Church needs to be reminded of some of those things of our past.

When I look at those things each time I look at various names, I saw fire. I saw different times that there was incredible rebellion once again in God's Church, people turning against what they had been given, and how in the mind of an individual who's lived and then gone through an apostasy can go back into some other group, when they were convicted of we had an apostasy, and then go someplace else where they say, no, we didn't have an apostasy.

Even in a carnal way with that kind of knowledge it just seems a little mind-boggling. But it happened. I witnessed a lot of fire in God's Church. And candidly, it's good, but it's hard because fire refines us. Because it's just like the gold, or the silver, things are brought to the surface that otherwise oftentimes are not even seen. You don't even know it until it's actually there.

I think of different names. They're flashing their faces before my face right now. I think of Cincinnati and some different faces right there of individuals that you didn't know until the day it happened, until the day it finally came out, their deceit, their lying, their hypocrisy. The evil. How they tried to reach out to different ones to bring them along and hurt them and bring them down to go in the same direction they did.

Again, this is kind of a difficult thing sometimes to say that fire is good. You know why? Because we need it. We have to go through fire to be refined. You have to go through various things in your life in order to have things come to the surface that you otherwise couldn't see in yourself.

Now, that's a blessing. It's hard but it's a blessing. The more we see of carnal human nature in ourselves the more we can fight against it, the more we can loathe and hate it and turn to, and be turned to, transformed to what God is offering us. The more that happens in our life the more that can take place.

So, it's not a pleasant thing to go through, but what a blessing. I hope we see that. It's a blessing. Every one of those fires for my life has been a blessing. It's been painful though, but it's been a blessing. Another great blessing through it all is what I count as some of the greatest of blessings. That if individuals have hidden within their hearts, within their minds, a rebelliousness, a lying spirit, because these things didn't happen overnight. Those things go on for years and years and years sometimes.

And to me it's one of the greatest blessings of all if that doesn't repent, doesn't change, get rid of it. Just get rid of it. That's a blessing to the Body because it's important that the Body is stronger, that the Body is more unified, and where there is that which pulls at it and fights against it that's a horrible, ugly, evil thing to watch.

But you know what? Even in the midst of that God allows some of those things to exist for a time. Why? Because we can learn from it. "That isn't right." "That isn't what should be done." "There's a problem there." It doesn't mean every problem has to be dealt with immediately. Sometimes God gives grace and time and gives people an opportunity to change. But if they won't, then in time it's better that it's gone.

So again, **Then take of them and again throw them in the midst of the fire**, not just once, but over and over and over and over again, **and burn them in the fire**. We're to experience fire. That's what He's saying here. Not just some going to be thrown in the fire, we're all. We've been thrown in the fire.

...and burn them in the fire. From there a fire will go out into all the house of Israel. No one escapes the fire because we need it for growth, and we need it for cleaning up things.

Chapter 6:8, just touching on a few verses here that are some of the most important out of the midst of all this. **Ezekiel 6:8—Yet will I leave a remnant, that you may have some who will escape the sword among the nations.** So again here, that choice when it's given is in our hands because we either learn from the sword as far as the word of God and we are in agreement and unity with it, but if we're not, it will destroy us. It will bring us to destruction.

That's what this is all about; it's about a process of either receiving what God offers and gives or fighting against it. We've had far more who've fought against it.

...who will escape the sword among the nations when you are scattered through the countries. That's the literal part. We're scattered through the countries because it's a part of a remnant of all of Worldwide that was around the world. So, a little here, a little there, small, small, small, just a little remnant.

Now returning to the story flow then of the captivity in reviewing the last few verses where we left off in *Part 4* again.

2 Kings 24:15—Then he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon. And the king's mother... We talked about last week that they went out, they surrendered because they came up against them again. And so, here is this surrender. And took captive the king's mother, the king's wives, his officers, and the mighty of the land he carried into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. Even all the men of might, of seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths, a thousand, all strong and apt for war; even these the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon. So, all this around 597 BC.

Now, the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, his father's brother, in other words, Jehoiakim's brother, **king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah.** So Jehoiakim and Zedekiah were the sons of Josiah, to make a long story short.

Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years. ... Then he did that which was evil in the sight of the Eternal, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. This is a marvel when you read through some of this, and you think of Josiah who was such an incredible king. He had these sons and grandchildren and their attitude toward God stunk. It was a stench. They didn't have the same kind of mind, the same kind of heart whatsoever as Josiah did. Again, they succumbed to these things, to human nature.

You think of all the times that you would do that is at a time when you have a nation coming up time after time after time to conquer, to destroy, to take things away, to take people away, to take wealth away, and they just keep doing this. It reminds me kind of the insanity that's going on today in government, doing things that are just going to destroy you if you keep doing it. It makes no sense.

Then he did that which was evil in the sight of the Eternal, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.

Then **verse 20** states, **Then Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.** You'd think after seeing some of these things after a while you would make better decisions. But selfishness and an evil mind that wants other things; it's amazing how far it'll go.

The story is rather long about the reign of Zedekiah, and that's because of Jeremiah and his dealings with Zedekiah. So, Jeremiah wrote a lot – which isn't all about Zedekiah, but again, there are many things in there that are prophetic. But again here, he wrote quite a bit about Zedekiah. He was given a lot to say about him because of his interactions with Zedekiah. Zedekiah treated him quite badly when it's all said and done.

Anyway, let's pick up the story here in 2 Chronicles 36. Some of these people were really rotten to the core and didn't want God in the picture, didn't want to hear about God, when they'd say something that was bad or whatever. In other words, it wasn't going to be good because you're not obeying, they don't like the message and they took it out on the different ones. Like, well, Jeremiah, he was the one that got the vast majority of this.

2 Chronicles 36:11—Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for eleven years in Jerusalem. Isn't that amazing? It doesn't take that long. **Now, he did evil in the sight of the Eternal his God and would not humble himself before Jeremiah.** Man, that says so much. Because even within the Church that's one of the major things we have to get a hold of in our life, and that's humility. That's why we're to fast at different times. But we have to know we need to fast in order to get rid of pride, in order to fight the battle against pride. Because by nature we're very prideful. To be able to embrace humility we need God's help. You can't do it by yourself.

Again here, lesson after lesson in scripture. Here is an individual who wouldn't yield himself to things that Jeremiah had to say. He didn't recognize God's government. He didn't recognize or accept God. He wanted to hear something different. He wanted something else.

...he wouldn't humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet. We can marvel at this and say, well, carnal Zedekiah, can kind of understand that. But within the Church? See, I've experienced this over and over and over again within the Church and within the ministry of the Church through time as well, okay? Rebellion after rebellion after rebellion, people not doing what they're told. To go out and do something, not doing it the way I asked it to be done.

Not the way I've asked to be done in the things that are on the EMC, which ministers know what that's about. It's going there and seeing what's been given in the past in the sense of whatever is the latest or the last things that were said as far as the ministry and how we're to conduct ourselves. And so, yeah, over and over and over again people wanting to do something a different way.

Because sometimes it's like, "Well, that's kind of hard. You're being kind of hard." "Well, they've repented." "They've repented and they feel bad about what they did." Yes, and sometimes we can move on from that and that can be gone. Sometimes God says, "No." Sometimes God says, "There needs to be something else take place here to drive it home." Perhaps a disfellowshipment. Perhaps a suspension, to be suspended for a time.

Sometimes I've found that some ministers don't like to follow through with that or be a part of that. That's too bad. That's your job if that's been given to you. I do what I believe is given to me. Do I enjoy doing those things? No. But the Church needs to understand, and individuals who do certain things need to understand there are certain things you may be forgiven of, but you have a penalty you're going to pay in your life as well for some of the things that you choose to have done. That's the way we learn.

It isn't easy but in the midst of all that is forgiveness all along the way if we change, if we want to change, and it's forgotten. That's what God does. But if we're holding on to certain things and we're not really learning the lesson then sometimes a suspension can be a thing that helps to save an individual. I've seen that happen.

Sometimes people don't understand. What you're saying is that "God is hard. God isn't loving and caring." "God doesn't understand," and "You're too hard." It's like saying God is too hard. No, there are things we go through in life, and whatever is the best way to learn something so be it. God loves us. And if it takes certain things to shake us to see, so be it, embrace it, thank God for it. Because God is very merciful, incredibly patient, and always loving. Sometimes it's us who can't see. Sometimes it's us who don't grasp the importance of why God does things in the way that He does.

Verse 12—Now, he did evil in the sight of the Eternal his God and would not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the Eternal. Calls it what it is. I've gotten to a point where I don't apologize for it. Not lifted up in self-importance because of it. But I believe certain things that God gives, and I have to do them because that's my conviction toward God and I'm going to do it. I don't care who it is. I don't care what has to be done. If it's right and it's good before God I'm going to do it.

Sometimes we go through something like this and it's like we miss the point. Look at what it says about Jeremiah, speaking to Zedekiah, **He would not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, from the mouth of the Eternal – speaking from the mouth of the Eternal.** That's something the Church has had a hard time seeing through Philadelphia. Didn't see it at all, hardly, it wasn't there in Laodicea.

But I think of how people reacted and responded so often to Herbert Armstrong and not understanding this is how God's working, this is how God works to us. And if we find fault with and begin to pick at and chew at the one whom God has given us to give truth to us? It either comes from God or it doesn't. If it doesn't come from God then go on your merry way, do something else. But that didn't happen in the Philadelphian era.

So, we're still learning some of those lessons to this day. We have to go through those things and realize there's a way that God works. It's just a reality.

Verse 13—Then he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, even though he had taken oath before God, in other words, concerning loyalty to the king. **He stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the Eternal God of Israel.** He wasn't going to do it, period. He wasn't going to listen to Jeremiah. Instead, he would choose to fight against Jeremiah.

Verse 14—Even all the chief of the priests and the people transgressed very much all the abominations of the heathen and polluted the house of the Eternal which He had sanctified, speaking that God had sanctified in Jerusalem. **Even the Eternal God of their fathers sent to them,** in other words, His word, **sent to them by His messengers, rising early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place.**

So, that was the way God deals even with the physical nation, speaking of them, how He dealt with them. His desire was to have compassion. His desire was to love, to care for, to give favor to. But if the response isn't there then there has to be judgment, and judgment isn't fun. It's hard to execute judgment.

Things like this, it should help us to grasp things about God, that He's patient, that He's merciful, that He's compassionate. He was toward them, how much more toward us, His Church. He wasn't working with them on a spiritual plane. He is us. Incredible.

Verse 16—But they mocked the messengers of God and despised His words, and, it says, **"misused" His prophets.** That's not the right word at all. It has to do with a kind of mocking with jesting. It's tongue in cheek type of thing but in saying something that is caustic but not necessarily an individual always being able to say, "Well, that was wrong. It just wasn't smart." There's a meaning behind things that are sometimes said that are evil and nasty and meant to cut. That's what this is talking about.

So, it has to do with the kind of mocking with jesting in the sense of, again, of jesting, but making fun of or light of things stated, making various fun of various things that maybe are stated, especially, just candidly, in sermons perhaps. Because this has happened in times past. Amazing. Or criticizing in a lighthearted manner things that are being spoken.

Thankfully those things are far more rare today. But I don't have to go back very far, and it hasn't been that rare.

...until the anger of the Eternal arose against His people, until there was no remedy. So, the whole thrust here is God is merciful and patient, gives time. That word “remedy” is the word for “healing.” Until it comes to a point in time now they can’t be healed, they’re not responding. That’s their choice. They’ve made wrong choices and because of that, basically, a judgment has to be made that this is not for them, this is not their time and something else has to be done.

Verse 17—Therefore, He brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, elders, or those who stooped for age. He, speaking of God, **gave them all into his hand.** So, even on a physical plane, there are times that God said there can be no healing, there is no answer for this now, better that the king come in and remove this, get rid of this, destroy it in this time, this period of time, take certain ones captive because others are going to learn from this process. That’s exactly what He did.

Then there are people who sometimes feel, “Well, that’s pretty hard. God’s pretty hard.” No, He isn’t. We are. Human beings are.

Verse 18—And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Eternal, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all this he took to Babylon.

Now, another thing about some of these lessons we can learn from spiritually is what happens to people if they continue to go too far with things. That’s what happens to them spiritually, going into Babylon, babel, confusion. Their minds become more confused. They’re more unsound because of what they do. Incredible.

We’re going through these things because they teach us lessons, they teach us things about God, about God’s mercy, and God’s patience. Because God was exceedingly patient through all of this. Even in the captivities, they didn’t happen all at once. He gave them a different chance at different times, different kings, but they all did the same thing. We have to learn from that.

2 Chronicles 36:19—They even burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem, and burned all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all it’s precious possessions. So, each time, and this was the most destructive of all, a final clean sweep of just destroying the entirety of the city, if you will, including, as it says here, burning down the house of God, other structures, and so forth.

Then those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia, thus fulfilling the word of the Eternal by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land could accept, it says, “had enjoyed” but again some of these translations are not too swift; **until the land** (it’s about accepting) **could accept her Sabbaths.** Because, in other words, they were not fit to be received by God for how far they had gone away from Him in the things they had done. It’s better to be taken into Babylon and now let this place rest and give it time until something better can be given again, so that the Sabbaths can be accepted, in that regard.

For as long as she lay desolate she kept, not “Sabbath,” but **rest to fulfill seventy years.** Now, I’ve chosen not to go into all the seventy years because it is a mess because of chronology, because of discrepancies between different things that people say about time periods and stuff. But it’s been very evident as I’ve been going through this there is not just one period of seventy years in the midst of this, there are different ones of things that happened in the area of Judea, Judah, and the timing for when they actually went back. That was a rest right at seventy years.

But each time as well there is a period there that rests into seventy years or goes into seventy years. Again, it gets too murky to go into, it’s not what it’s all about here. So, when you don’t have all those answers to everything that you can make really clear to everyone to enjoy it, to be able to say dogmatically this is the way it is, you know what you do? I believe God. Whatever the seventy years is, if it’s just one, so be it, but I believe that there are three periods that fit into these prophecies because there’s not just one prophecy.

The reality is then it’s a matter of what we believe. I believe what God says is true and then work with that. That’s why even in this series some of the things that are there that different ones get in argument about and so forth out there, it’s because they don’t accept specific things that are stated here in scripture. Well, you should.

I hope that makes sense, what I’ve just told you.

2 Kings 25:1, because there is more added in this book here. So, sometimes you have to jump around a little bit because some is in 2 Chronicles, some is in 2 Kings here about the same things, but sometimes it adds something different to it.

2 Kings 25:1—So, it came to pass in the ninth year of his (Zedekiah’s) reign (that’s 588 BC), in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his host against Jerusalem and encamped against it; and they built a siege wall against it round about. So, this took a little while, a year and a half plus to do all this, finally, to bring an end to it all and destroy it.

Just in the midst of all this it’s also recorded in history and so forth, and sometimes they find various tablets and things that are recorded as well, but evidently Zedekiah had made an alliance with Egypt and this is the reason that finally that Nebuchadnezzar came in to totally destroy everything, to have it fully destroyed. Because they’d gone back and forth, the different kings here, as to what their alliances were. Even though the pharaoh wasn’t coming up into that area anymore, to make that alliance would have been a threat or the beginning of something and so he just ended it all as far as Nebuchadnezzar’s concerned.

So, it goes on to say here, **Then on the ninth day of the fourth month, the famine prevailed in the city and there was no bread for the people of the land. So, the city was broken up and all the men of war**

fled by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which is by the king's garden. Now, the Chaldeans were against the city round about it, and they went the way toward the plains.

So, it's telling here that basically, they went out a certain area toward the plain there to escape and it didn't go so well. **Verse 5—So, the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho, and all his army became scattered before him.** So again, it was mass chaos. Here they're trying to flee the city because they know it's over with, there is nothing to eat, famine has taken place, they've had the siege for a year and a half, run out, no way to bring things in and out of the city, so they're down to their last and they finally make a break.

2 Kings 25:6—So they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon, to Riblah, and they gave judgment upon him. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and then put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him with bronze fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

Then in the fifth month, in the seventh day of the month (which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon) (so we're talking about 586 BC), came Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto to Jerusalem.

It brings up here what we just read in 2 Chronicles. **He burned the house of the Eternal and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem. And every great house he burned with fire. Then all the army of the Chaldeans that were with the captain of the guard broke down the walls of Jerusalem all around. Now, the rest of the people left in the city and the defectors who departed to the king of Babylon with the remnant of the multitude. Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, carried them away.**

So, what a horrifying thing to go through, the things we go through in life sometimes. I think of people in the Church and things they go through when they've turned away from God, when they've turned away from the truth, when they've turned away from the Church, and their lives. You think, you don't know what you do to your lives. Zedekiah, if he hadn't done some of the shenanigans he had, if he'd listened more to Jeremiah, hadn't treated Jeremiah the way he did, things would have been so much better for him. But that wasn't his choice. He couldn't see to the end.

When somebody wants something so badly that's different, it's in them. You can't change that. If someone is determined to go a certain course and they won't change and they won't repent and God gives time and space, and sometimes many years, and something doesn't change, then He comes to a point it's like, "Okay, I gave you this, showered you with love..." Because in the Church to receive grace and mercy and patience and the love of God, to be able to continue on in a fellowship is an awesome blessing. Sometimes it's not used well, and that's upon us then, isn't it.

So, you think here, he saw his sons killed in front of him, his own eyes were taken out. What a horrible thing!

But anyway, **verse 12—But the captain of the guard left of the poor of the land to be vinedressers and farmers. Then the pillars of bronze that were in the house of the Eternal, and the bases, and the bronze Sea that was in the house of the Eternal...** So, when you read some of these things that were built and constructed by Solomon, and they were massive, and so it's talking here now they're taking the last of it. Some of these were gigantic and so what they had to do here, in that respect, was cut it down. They're going to take everything, the rest of what's there, these bronze items and so forth.

It says here, **and the bronze Sea that was in the house of the Eternal did the Chaldeans break in pieces.** Just to have the metals, to take it back, **and carried their bronze to Babylon. They also took away the pots, the shovels, the trimmers, the spoons, and all the instruments of bronze which they,** speaking of the priests, **ministered,** and used in the ministry of the temple and so forth. **Even the firepans and the basins, the things of gold and the silver that the captain of the guard took away.**

So, these are physical things. But I think of different ones through time in the Church, doesn't matter where, whenever anybody has left God's Church, and you think, what did they take with them? Eventually, it's all destroyed. Eventually, it all goes by the wayside. It has no value anymore in worshipping in service to God. Because it's about the truth. When people treat the truth that way and treat what God's given them that way they're off on their own, they do horrible things. It's amazing what people can do.

We've gone through this about Nebuchadnezzar. He was that head of gold in the statue of his dream that Daniel had revealed the meaning. So, he had the beginning of that reign and the longest of the reign. That part of the statue about Babylon wasn't going to last very long. It didn't last for a very long period of time. Nebuchadnezzar reigned for 43 years. He reigned up until 562 BC. So, from 605 to 562.

Then following Nebuchadnezzar there were several different kings that were short-lived as far as the successiveness of kings. They didn't last very long. Then we come up to the last king. So, we're moving right ahead here to the end of the Babylonian kingdom (it was the first part of the statue). Each period became longer, especially toward the last. You see the last part, how long that lasted. So, this was rather abrupt, didn't last long as far as time is concerned when you talk about the head of gold.

Anyway, we come down to the last king who reigned, and his name was Nabonidus. Nabonidus, his son Belshazzar is recognized as being a co-regent with him over the last ten years with his father. Now we're talking about a period of time if you're looking on the chart (and I may not have put all this in there, I'm not sure), but anyway, from 556 BC down to 539.

Anyway, before looking at the story of Belshazzar it'd be good to remind ourselves of a particular story that we'd covered in the series *Humility and Seeing Ourselves*. And again, even though we had it recently I think it'd be good to repeat this one more time here before we go into the story about Belshazzar because this is an incredible thing in itself.

To understand the Great God of the universe and how He molds and fashions various things, and He was going to have this next portion of the statue, the arms and the chest of silver; it's about to come on the scene. That's the Persian Empire. When you read what God has to say about it and what He'd given long before any of this was even revealed to Nebuchadnezzar in the statue, there were various things prophesied about that Persian Empire.

And to me, I find those immensely inspiring because, again, it glorifies God. God has a plan, He tells what He's going to do, and then He does it. We can look upon that, and the more we look at it, the more we should marvel at how incredibly powerful He is. That should give us strength then in the time we're living in because of what we are going to see and what we're going to go through.

Anyway, let's look at Daniel 4 one more time here. **Daniel 4:34—Then at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes to heaven.** You remember he had no mind. He was left like an animal. His fingernails grew into like having claws and the hair that was exposed on his body and the way it grew, well, he lived like an animal. He wouldn't humble himself before God and God's going to humble him.

Now, for the Church it's far better you humble yourself before God and desire to humble yourself before God. That's why we focused on things about fasting. To understand where we are in time and a final refining because we have some more fire to go through. It's not over with yet. To realize that each time that a refining takes place we become stronger, the Body does. It's far better to humble ourselves to receive what God gives to us.

I think about the Feast coming up and I know there are going to be some difficulties with a few. I don't know how many, but I know some are going to have some difficulties with some of what's going to be given. So, you should want to be prepared for the Feast of Tabernacles this year, that you be of a right spirit and mind.

I remember 2005 and I know of some who were very concerned about what was going to be given because a little bit here and a little bit there, and a little bit there had been given and it's like, what does all this mean and what's going to be stated? Because there was enough there to realize there are some big things coming.

Again, that's a healthy thing spiritually because you want to be prepared. So, what does that do? Well, if we respond to that we're going before God asking Him for help to receive what He's going to give to us because it's from Him.

Now, there are people during that period of time who weren't all in agreement with that and eventually that came out, about Christ, because some went right back to it in time. It took maybe in some cases several years before they finally went back. But never really convicted of it, not in the deepest sense.

It's good for us to have a mindset where we realize when certain things are coming our way that we want to humble ourselves before God. Because it requires humility to be able to receive things from God.

Here is this case of Nebuchadnezzar, and I think of this last part of it where it says, Nebuchadnezzar, he said, **I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes to heaven and my reasoning...** I love that word because it's about "the ability to know." Because he lost that. He had no ability to know anything. He was just like an animal.

He says, **my reasoning, my ability to know returned to me.** Can you imagine? All of a sudden God gives you – took away and then gives back to you an ability now and you see yourself the way you are? He had to look pretty bad. To come face to face with that and then for others to tell him what he had done and what he'd been like?

I lifted up my eyes to heaven and my reasoning, my ability to know returned to me, and I blessed, meaning "to kneel," **kneeling before the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever.**

I liken this to if we will always seek to humble ourselves and constantly go before God on a regular basis because we know we need His help and we're crying out to Him, we're asking Him for help never to become lifted up with pride but to fight against it and to seek to be of a humble spirit before Him.

Because the worst-case scenario is that what a horrible thing to be awakened to know in the Great White Throne, and you look back. That's why I love the scriptures that talk about there's going to be wailing and gnashing of teeth at that time. What does that mean? It's the way the mind thinks. It's going to be a sickening thing that an individual is going to feel inside about themselves, a wailing and a gnashing of teeth. It's like grinding your teeth and it's like, "How could you have been so stupid?!" Really, "How could we have been so stupid to fight against what God was giving to us?!" And so, there's going to be that incredible regret.

Because to me that would be like a horror story. I've mentioned that many a time. To have to live in this body, a body (it wouldn't be this body), and to know it's going to be for a hundred years? Because a lot of people are going to be very convicted at that moment in time. Can you imagine? You see things around you, and you see nothing like it used to be. It'd be like someone being resurrected today seeing cars out here, cities, skyscrapers, and highways. I mean, you think about some of that, and see things shoot through the sky, flying through the sky, and you learn what they are, that has to be an amazing thing.

But how much more in the Great White Throne? But to have that regret, "I could have done it then." This is like Nebuchadnezzar. He learned a lesson, but he gets to live on.

So, he says, **I said to the Most High and praised Him and honored Him who lives forever. For His dominion is an everlasting dominion.** What a horrible thing that it takes something like this to bring a

person to their knees to where they have a humble spirit and realize God Almighty is great, all powerful. **...and His kingdom is from generation to generation.** When you come to finally say “Everything is God’s. We’re here because of God; stupid not to listen to Him.”

All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, in other words, before God. **He does according to His will.** What an awesome thing to understand, God does according to His will, and if we’re given opportunity to be a part of it to embrace that and to realize that’s the best thing in life. Why would we want something different? Yet the vast majority have done something different.

All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing before God. We are puny. We’re small. Yet God has an incredible plan for every one of us if we yield ourselves to it.

...He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, What are You doing? Yet the vast majority of the Church has done exactly that through time over the past 2,000 years. “What are you doing?” It means you disagree, there’s something else you think should be done a different way.

But people can’t see that because they lose sight of the spiritual part of it and they see individuals, Paul, Peter, John, whomever it was they disagreed with. Some of them are listed in scripture. I think of the end-time here.

Verse 36—At the same time, my reasoning returned to me, and the glory of my kingdom, and my honor and splendor returned to me, my counselors and nobles returned to me. You know, what an incredible thing that God did, to be so incredibly merciful to him. After he lived through that period of time, seven times, whatever it was, whether it was years, months, we don’t know.

He says, **I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me.** Why? Because now he has a humble spirit and he acknowledged all this is of God Almighty, the Great God of the universe, and that we’re all small in front of Him. He saw himself for the first time as being small. Saw something greater, the great God. Beautiful.

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth. It’s where all truth comes from. It comes from God. He determines what’s true. **And His ways justice.** One of the hardest things for people to learn is to judge according to God’s will in our relationships with one another, in matters of the Church and so forth.

It’s one of the most difficult things, because we resist, and we try to do something different. We judge so often then by the way we see things and how we think about things. That has to be gotten rid of completely and entirely. It has to come from God. Only then can it be just and right.

...whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to bring down, to abase, subdue.

We're going to stop there today on that one there concerning Nebuchadnezzar and that attitude of mind, that spirit. Again, as a reminder of the importance of what we need to prepare for as we're preparing for the Feast.

Because all these sermons are leading up to the Feast and there are things that have been said throughout some of this series that also are leading up to that point in time. We need to be prepared and we need to be ready. We need to have a humble spirit and understand we are to glorify the Great God of this universe all the time in our life, to realize how great He is and what He's given us opportunity of.