

~ The biggest problem — the number one problem — in the church today is a total and complete ignorance of the Word of God. Randomly taking verses out of context without understanding what they really mean leads to all the factions and cliques that have developed in this modern day of technology. Everyone seems to think they are a Bible scholar when they cannot even locate the Book of Ezra or place his writings down properly in the historical period of the nation Israel. Well, this passage of Scripture in our Spiritual Safari covers one of the most egregiously and woefully misinterpreted sections of the Word of God by the church.

Up to this point in second Chronicles, we have been considering the reign of King Solomon. Most of these details recorded in Chronicles concerning Solomon are an examination of the preparation to construct the temple in Jerusalem. Our previous report considered Solomon's address to the nation and the prayerful sermon Solomon gave to the nation. This report begins with God's response to that prayer! I trust *you* have prayed for wisdom and that you have read this text in your own Bible before reading this report. If you have done both of those things, then this will be so much more meaningful to you....

¹ Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house.

~ This chapter examines God's acceptance of the temple. You will recall the same sequence of events happened to Moses when he constructed the tabernacle in the wilderness. When the fire consumes the sacrifice, it means judgment has fallen upon sin. As we have learned, all of the sacrifices pointed forward to the coming of Christ. God didn't accept this

building because it was beautiful – although it was beautiful. God didn't accept it because of the wealth that was spent constructing it – although the cost was staggering for that day. God didn't accept the temple because of the hard work they had put into it, either – although it did take much hard labor to build. No, God accepted this temple *ONLY* because these people were looking forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; and these burnt offerings and sacrifices were the *ONLY* basis on which God did accept the temple....

² And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD'S house.

³ And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.

~ So, the *"glory of the Lord"* means the Shekinah Glory; as Israel had the visible presence of the True and Living God leading them. When Moses made the tabernacle in the wilderness, there were eight fingerprints of identification; and one of those was that the Shekinah Glory filled the Holy of Holies. No people have ever had the visible presence of God at any time in history — except for the nation Israel. This glory was so great that the priests couldn't even enter the temple at that time.

I hope the expression *"the mercy of the Lord endureth forever"* will get into your vernacular. I trust you can say today that the Lord is good! This expression occurs countless times in the Psalms; and, the redeemed of the Lord should say so; because if you and I are not *"say so"* Christians, then nobody else is going to be, either. If you cannot honestly say the Lord is good, then you'll never make a single convert for the Lord Jesus Christ, either. If you ever want to influence someone to turn to Jesus, then His mercy and goodness are going to have to be genuinely evident in your life.

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Mankind isn't going to tell you of the goodness of God. Man wants to tell you how great *they* are — not God. They want to tell you what they are doing and how their brilliant ideas are making the world such a lovely place. That is particularly true in politics; although our politicians are totally and thoroughly corrupt. Well, men continue to believe that other men can solve all of life's problems; and they will erroneously believe that until Christ returns to establish His kingdom on this earth. The Lord *IS* good, my friends — we're not! Solomon acknowledged that realization of the mercy and goodness of God right here at the dedication of the temple....

⁴ Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD.

⁵ And King Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God.

~ There is always criticism by the skeptic saying this was an overly-extravagant offering and sacrifice — and it was; but the critic also says it would have been physically impossible to offer that many sacrifices on the altar. Then, they further say that this was all an unnecessary killing of animals. If this happened today, there would certainly be a protest movement by the society for the prevention of abuse of animals to stop it.

Well, to begin with, these offerings weren't all offered on one altar. I'm sure many altars had been erected throughout the nation for this special occasion. Not every Israelite would have been able to make the trip to Jerusalem. In that light, this was in no way a physical impossibility. Remember, when the children of Israel came out of Egypt in the Exodus, a lamb was slain for each and every home. That would have been a whole lot of lambs killed in that night. Again, this all speaks of and points to the Lord Jesus Christ as our sacrifice on the cross. Simon Peter called His Blood "*precious*" when he said, "*... we have been redeemed by the precious*

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Blood of Christ!” So, calling this an unnecessary expenditure is not a genuine or sincere argument.

Further, the animals were largely used afterward. Of course, the burnt offerings were wholly consumed; but the meat from the peace offerings and the trespass offerings and the sin offering were dispensed to individuals to eat. This was a time of great feasting – not fasting – at this tremendous celebration.

We need to, at least, be fair and sincere when considering the Bible. When we have a proper, correct and complete perspective of the Word of God all of these criticisms fall apart. I have noticed that the people who criticize any expenditure for the cause of the Lord don’t have any problem completely wasting money on themselves for their selfish desires. Most people don’t want to donate *ANYTHING* to the man who teaches the Bible properly, correctly and completely. They consider that a waste, by the way; but they’ll spend more in a weekend at the beach than they give to the church in a whole year. These people consider giving to the church a waste of money while they just burn it up without a second thought on the things of the world! Many criticize Solomon for what happened here, but they pay no attention to the fact that hundreds of millions of animals are killed in the packing houses of the world every single day. They ignore that because those animals satisfy their lust for big fat porterhouse steaks. However, because this sacrifice of Solomon’s was for the glory of God — they condemn it wholesale. I don’t know about you, but I am taking sides with Solomon in this connection; because it all pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ....

⁶ And the priests waited on their offices: the Levites also with instruments of musick of the LORD, which David the king had made to praise the LORD, because his mercy endureth for ever, when David praised by their ministry; and the priests sounded trumpets before them, and all Israel stood.

~ If there is one thing I wish to accomplish through this so-called safari ministry it would be to bring people to praise and worship the Lord and say He is good. I wish you dear readers all truly knew His mercy endureth forever. I cannot tell you how good the Lord has been to me in my own personal life – but it's *VERY* good, friends. Has He been good to you? If He has then *SAY SO!* Well, that's what Solomon is saying, and the people knew it to be true, also....

⁷ Moreover Solomon hallowed the middle of the court that was before the house of the LORD: for there he offered burnt offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the brasen altar which Solomon had made was not able to receive the burnt offerings, and the meat offerings, and the fat.

⁸ Also at the same time Solomon kept the feast seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt.

⁹ And in the eighth day they made a solemn assembly: for they kept the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days.

¹⁰ And on the three and twentieth day of the seventh month he sent the people away into their tents, glad and merry in heart for the goodness that the LORD had shewed unto David, and to Solomon, and to Israel his people.

¹¹ Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD, and the king's house: and all that came into Solomon's heart to make in the house of the LORD, and in his own house, he prosperously effected.

¹² And the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice.

13 If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people;

14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

~ Our Spiritual Safari is going to consider verse fourteen for the remainder of this report; because I know of no other verse in the entire Word of God that has been lifted out of context with absolutely no regard to its primary meaning more than this one. It is recklessly and irresponsibly claimed as a promise to us from God today. People seem to think that if we do certain things, then God will be obligated to do certain things for us; and the only way I ever see this verse interpreted is to force-fit into someone's local situation. This verse has also been misused to promote revival. In fact, I don't think I've ever seen an evangelistic movement that didn't quote this verse at some point.

The way this verse is abused today reminds me of the contests that used to run in the newspapers. A composite picture was given with the hair of some famous person and the eyes of another famous person; the chin and cheeks of yet another would be thrown in, and people were supposed to figure out who it was by putting them all together. Well, that just doesn't happen to be the way we are to handle the Word of God, friends. If we give this a careful and sincere consideration, I think we can easily discern its proper, correct and complete meaning. Verse fourteen must actually be wrestled away in violence in order to fit it into our present plan; even though it does seem to fit there. When we use it for our own purposes, we rob it of its vitality and strip it of its meaning altogether. I don't think any other verse is so easily diminished in value to nothing by a misapplication.

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Now, let's be very clear: I am a dispensationalist Bible teacher because that is the only system I have found that deals with the entire Bible consistently. Dispensation gives a literal and very real meaning to the Word of God. After considering all other methods and theologies of the various denominations, it is easy to see that *MOST* of the Bible is utterly ignored because they cannot reconcile part "A" with part "B!" Just about every organization in existence today treats the Bible like a corn crib; where they each reach in and take out enough to feed their chickens but ignore the rest. Amazingly, they have no problem not worrying about it. As a result, they never want to come back for more because, when they do, they find themselves with serious issues on their hands.

To be fair, a dispensationalist interpretation has its problems, but it solves more of the problems than any other interpretation – and I have heard a whole lot of them. For instance, the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters five, six and seven is the law for the Kingdom age; and it looks forward to that time. Even so, I believe it has a very real and applicable message for us today. Another example is the so-called Lord's Prayer; which is meaningless the way it used in churches today in an affluent society – but in the Great Tribulation will take on its intended meaning in a very powerful and important way.

Even being a dispensationalist, this safari is not "*hyper*" dispensationalist in our study methods. We don't exclude *ANY* of the Bible – we're going through the whole thing. If one area conflicts with another, it's going to show up. We'll necessarily have to work it out! The Sermon on the Mount shows the standards of God and how we come short of His holy standard. Personally, I find the so-called Lord's Prayer helpful — and I pray it often. However, there is an interpretation of Scripture which is one thing and an application of Scripture which is something else altogether different. All Scripture is written *FOR* us, but not all Scripture is written *TO* us! That distinction is imperative to understand, or you will never understand the Bible.

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Verse fourteen is one of those Scriptures that just doesn't happen to be written *TO* us. The only application to be made is that it is *FOR* us — and we'll get to that. The correct setting we are to consider it in is David's temple which Solomon had built. This is God's word to Israel through King Solomon, and it concerns that land specifically and in that day specifically. After Solomon prayed and dedicated the temple, God answered Solomon, and this is part of that answer. God is remembering their prayer by saying to Solomon, "*My people....called by My Name....*" God happens to be talking to Israel, friends. There is a whole lot of "*if's*" here, too: *IF* they shall humble themselves — *IF* they seek God's Face — *IF* they turn from their wickedness — *THEN* God will hear them. Who has turn from wickedness? God's chosen people! See, this was meaningful to Israel at the time in which we are studying. These are definite conditions; and the history of the nation demonstrates the accuracy and literalness of the specifics.

A proper interpretation takes into consideration that when we get to the New Testament, John the Baptist says, "*repent, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!*" The Lord Jesus Christ repeats that admonishment. The nation Israel is called upon to meet conditions — *THESE* conditions — and only when these conditions are met are the promises of God to be fulfilled. It was a legitimate offer by Jesus to a nation that had been scattered throughout the world. Presently, Israel cannot have peace because they *still* have not met God's conditions set forth in this prayer! That's a literal interpretation, friends.

The spiritual application of this message for me cannot be tossed aside, however, just because it's not directed at me. It contains a very definitely formulated prescription for this hour in which we live — it's for His people. Those people just happen to be the church! Christ gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity. The Lord Jesus Christ is purifying for Himself a peculiar people; and many of us are peculiar — but this means a people for Himself. God has a people today, and He is telling us to humble

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ourselves. Well, this flesh is very proud, that's a fact. We are instructed to walk with all lowliness, longsuffering and meekness, as Paul said. Longsuffering happens to be one of the fruits of the spirit, too, by the way. These people are told "if" they will pray; but we're told to pray *always* in prayer in supplication. These people are told "if" they will seek My Face; but we're told "if" we confess our sins, then He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Colossians 3: ¹ *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.* ² *Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth ~*

The message for me and you is to turn from our wicked ways; and God has a lot to say to believers about repentance. As many as God loves, He rebukes and chastens; be zealous therefore and repent. That's Revelation chapter three verse nineteen.

Hebrews 6: ⁶ *If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame ~*

Repentance is *ONLY* for the child of God, friends. It has nothing to do with the lost. God's part is that He promises to hear *IF* we receive His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. That's first John chapter three. John says He will forgive our sins, but I don't see anywhere John says God promises to heal our land. Only secularism emphasizes this verse in second Chronicles verse fourteen in connection with today. I challenge you to show me *ONE* verse in the New Testament where God promises us material blessings down here. You and I have received all spiritual blessings in the Heavenlies. See, we were aliens and enemies of God who have now been made sons of God redeemed by the Blood of Christ. Our sins are already forgiven, and Heaven is our home – not this place down here. We have been delivered from hell – so, this verse has

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a message *FOR* us — but let's be sure it is in no way *TO* us. We're going to have to interpret it in light of the New Testament — or we have it all wrong
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