

Psalms 14: Question #10 Fools are Going to Ask You

I. Review

We've been coming through the book of Psalms verse by verse and chapter by chapter. When we came to Psalms 14, I told you we were going to camp out here for a little bit. We have such an extensive ministry working with people here. We have our Discipleship I and II programs and our counseling ministry. Psalms 14 is a place where we can cover some things to really get our Bible down. We had an incredible camp, and our church is at its highest level with people wanting to do everything they can to be everything God wants them to be.

We also started the Patterns of Human Nature study that really teaches you the basic training tools for reaching people. We built that on Psalms 14 where the Bible says, *the fool hath said in his heart, [there is] no God*. I want to take that theme every week. Over my 50+ years in the ministry, I've been asked 30-40 questions that the fools, skeptics, agnostics, and atheists (all men and women who really reject the word of God) want to throw at you. You need to learn how to deal with that. Most of you are coming to the place in your life, no matter what level you're on spiritually, where you need to learn these things now. It's only going to get more intense as you grow spiritually and get the opportunity to work with people.

As your pastor, I'm not just interested in teaching you the Bible, though obviously that's important. I'm equally interested in you learning how to use your Bible. You find many Christians who know many things about the Bible, but they don't know why they believe what they believe and certainly don't know how to use the Bible. I used the illustration last week of 4 people singing 4-part harmony. Someone sings the lead and others sing other various parts, and it all makes a beautiful song with all the parts blending together. **For us as believers, we want to learn the 4-part harmony of using the Bible.**

The Bible has a historical application, doctrinal application, inspirational application, and the 4th part of the quartet would be the Holy Spirit of God. It's learning how, in any scenario you're dealing with, to blend it all together and use it. Most Christians are very one dimensional when it comes to the Bible. I don't want that for you. For those of you who want to be above the rest, you who want to learn to use your Bible (and many of you already do), I want to teach you how to do that but also make the ones who already know how to do that better.

➤ The Doctrine of the Rapture of the Church

Last week we looked at one of the great doctrines of the Bible that is beginning to be rejected today by God's own people—the rapture of the church. The unsaved world never cared much for it. The value of these questions that I'm giving you, although on the surface they may not look like much, will help you to thoroughly understand these things. So many pastors in the neo-evangelical world say there is no rapture, and I showed you where that all comes from. This great doctrine is found in your Bible as you study, and God's Holy Spirit reveals it to you. Their

lame argument is that there is no rapture because you don't find the word rapture in the Bible. Fools will tell you, because the word is not found in the Bible, to throw out the doctrine of it. I gave you words that people believe that are not found in the Bible—words like “demon” and “Bible.”

What we call our rapture is basically our going home; it's our understanding Christ's love for the church (the bride), and what our love for Him (the bridegroom) should be. It's what we, who love the Lord Jesus Christ, should look for. For centuries, God's people have looked for this day with anticipation—longing and looking for His return.

In II Timothy 4:8 the Bible tells us that, as Christians, there are five crowns that we can get at the judgment seat of Christ. One crown is simply based on loving His appearing; that is, looking for His coming back to take us home to be with Him.

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:8

➤ The Closer we get to the End, the Farther we get from the Truth

Over the years, I have observed something I find quite amazing concerning God's people. I find that the closer we get to the end, the farther we get from the truth. It should be just the opposite, but that's the mark of the Laodicean church. God's people, who should know things about the Bible—the rapture, the judgment seat of Christ, the millennium, have no clue about these key teachings in the word of God even though they've been saved for years. It simply comes down to the indifference of God's people when it comes to the things of God.

The reality of it is that there are two key areas that should be in our lives today: the word of God and our understanding of His coming for you and me (the day of Christ); yet, when you reject the first one (the word of God), it leads to the rejection of the second one.

Therefore, you've got a lot of saved people on their way to heaven who have gotten so far from the truth and replaced it with so many other things. **Once you get disarmed from the word of God, then you get deceived by the things that are out there, and you wind up being discouraged.** If that isn't the state of Christianity today—no victory, no steadfastness, no depth, no confidence, dysfunctional lives, dysfunctional families, and dysfunctional Christianity.

I've told you many times that God has built into the Bible His own systematic theology. Among that, God has given the church seven mysteries. They are seven fundamental key doctrines that the Bible is built around. The Bible also gives us seven things that the child of God is not to be ignorant of. The Bible is also built around those seven things, and they open up the great fundamental doctrines of the Bible. Many of God's people do not understand either one of them, yet both contain the rapture of the church.

God's people have replaced everything that God has for them, thinking that through higher education and gaining the degrees of learning, in a spiritual sense they can get to the place (by understanding the Greek and the Hebrew) that they have mastered the Bible to the point they

think they really understand it. Listen! **It's never about you mastering the Bible, it's about the Bible mastering you.** It's changing your life to the point where you look at a Book that God gave you that has everything built within it—its own dictionary, commentary, and its own systematic theology, for it to open itself up to you.

I laid out for you the two days the Bible is really built around:

1. The day of the Lord—for Israel: the second coming of Christ.
2. The day of Christ—our rapture; called the harvest in the Bible.

You're often taught that these two days are the same. It's those fundamental errors when it comes to the great doctrines of the Bible that lead Christianity into the mess that it's in today.

Key verses on this great doctrine that we call the rapture, based on our love for Him:

1. In I Corinthians 15—It's likened unto a harvest, and I showed you the three parts of a harvest (first fruits, main harvest, gleanings).
2. I Thessalonians 4—God's great comfort chapter for His people and our loved ones—our going home and our great reunion. Finally, the bridegroom gets His bride.

II. Song of Solomon—The Raptured Love Between the Bride and the Bridegroom

I told you how important the Song of Solomon is. Several years back, I took the Song of Solomon on New Year's Eve and for five hours walked you through and showed you the consistency of that book and how it fits into your life. **The book of Song of Solomon is the most intimate book in the Bible. When you break it all down, it shows you and me how Christ looks at us and what He feels for us.** I think many of God's people have no idea what a real working relationship with Christ is. For them, it's all built on aesthetics. It's built on what they've heard without understanding it themselves.

The book of Song of Solomon will break down for you and show you exactly how Christ sees you and what He feels for you. The bridegroom speaks about the bride, and then the bride speaks about the bridegroom, and in that, we find what our love for Him should be. I know many people love God, and this is not a criticism of them in any way; however, it's hard for me to understand how anybody can really have the right loving attitude and relationship with Christ without understanding this book. That's why I broke it down for you that night.

Chapter 1 has the bride and the bridegroom and shows our relationship; our raptured love for each other. We were talking about the rapture last week, and how it's discarded today; yet it is taught all through the Bible. **When you get to Song of Solomon chapter two, after reading chapter one, you see hidden within this great book what we call the rapture of the church—the great homecoming or the harvest of God.**

Song of Solomon 2:1-10.

1. **I [am]** the rose of Sharon, [and] the lily of the valleys.
2. As the lily among thorns, so [is] my love among the daughters.

I want you to see in verses 1-2 that it's the bridegroom speaking about the bride. You need to mark that if you haven't already. **Then in verse three, the bride picks up the narrative.**

3. As the **apple tree** among the trees of the wood, so [is] my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit [was] sweet to my taste.
4. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me [was] love.
5. Stay me with flagons, **comfort me with apples**: for I [am] sick of love (we call that lovesick).
6. His left hand [is] under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.
7. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake [my] love, till he please.
8. **The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.**
9. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, **he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.**
10. My beloved spake, and said unto me, **Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.**

➤ *I AM*

In verses 1-2, we see Christ and His love for us. As I said, this is the bridegroom speaking about the bride. There's no question this is the Lord Jesus Christ, although I've found some pastors who don't think it's Christ; however, the thing that gives it away is in found in verse one where it says **I am** the rose of Sharon. **The *I am* was the name by which God first revealed Himself to the nation of Israel in Exodus Chapter 3.**

In John 8:18, he says, **I am** one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. In John 18:6 he says, **As soon then as he had said unto them, I am [he], they went backward, and fell to the ground.** When they came to take Him in the garden of Gethsemane, He said *I am*, and they all fell down at the power of the word of God.

Seven times in the book of John He shows us who He is by using the phrase *I am*—**I am** the bread of life (John 6:35), **I am** the light of the world (John 8:12), **I am** the door (John 10:9), **I am** the good shepherd (John 10:11), **I am** the resurrection and the life (John 11:25), **I am** the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6), **I am** the true vine (John 15:1)...it's over and over again. (His eternalness and completeness in everything we need—additional material covered at Bible Study on 09/19/2024). **When he starts chapter two by saying *I am*, you don't have to wonder who he's talking about here. This is Christ.**

➤ Our Spiritual Relationship with Him Likened unto a Garden

I've told you before that the Garden of Eden, before the fall, was splendid. Everything was perfect. **Every time you find Christ talking about our relationship, it's always with flowers (lilies, roses), a garden, and this is why.... spiritually, in your relationship with Him, you and Him should still live in that Garden of Eden.** Everything is wonderful because of your relationship and fellowship with Him. That's why he says, *I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys*. Now as a Christian, there are going to be some valleys in your life. The thing that I want you to see is the fact that Christ will take you through those valleys. The garden of God spiritually, where we have our relationship with Him, knows no valleys. God will always take care of you and get you through. There are some tremendous principles in verses 1-2 that you need to get down.

Then the bride picks up the narrative in verse 3 and carries it though. We see in verse three that He's called the *apple tree*. You're going to find in Proverbs 25:11 that the word of God is likened unto apples. Your mama probably told you that an apple a day will keep the doctor away. Well, you get in the word of God every day and you're going to have some good spiritual health.

The word of God is likened unto apples, and here the picture is you and me in our fellowship with Him. He's the apple tree with the fruit of that being the word of God, and we are sitting under the shadow of that great apple tree in the cool of the day enjoying the fellowship that we have with Him. That's the picture. Hebrews 8 tell us that we live under the shadow of heavenly things.

There was a song that was very popular during World War II. All the soldiers were fighting in the Pacific. They had to leave their sweethearts, and while the guys were off fighting, some of the women found someone else. A "Dear John" letter was written to a GI letting them know it was over. It was very demoralizing to the troops as you can imagine. Someone came up with a song about it.

*Don't sit under the apple tree with anyone else but me,
Anyone else but me, anyone else but me, no, no, no
Don't sit under the apple tree with anyone else but me
Till I come marching home.*

The problem is that too many of God's people are sitting under the apple tree with somebody else!

➤ The Rapture Clearly Seen in Song of Solomon Chapter 2

In verse four, he talks about our salvation. In verse five, he talks about our fellowship. In verses 8-10, you begin to see what we call the rapture based on the love we should have in the earlier verses. **We see him coming for his bride. In verse 8, he comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.** *My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.* I wish I had time

to get into the windows, wall, and lattice and show you the fabric of the universe. *My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. Now there's what we call the rapture.* In the Song of Solomon, the book about God's love for you, He can't wait to be with you. Right now He can do it spiritually through the word of God, but He's coming for His bride. All these things are a picture of that relationship.

In verses 11-13, we see the time frame. *For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over [and] gone; The flowers appear on the earth; We say April showers bring May flowers. The time of the singing [of birds] is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;* I had a question years ago from a young kid who didn't know turtles could speak. Well, it's a turtledove that He's talking about here!

Here's the kicker. *The fig tree putteth forth her green figs* (that's the nation of Israel, Matthew 24 and the last generation, when you know the end is coming), *and the vines [with] the tender grape give a [good] smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.* The last prayer in the Bible, found in Revelation 22, fits right in with this. John is a type of the church. You see John's love for Christ superseded the other apostles, and he is a picture of what we should be; I don't have time this morning to show you that John is in chapter two. **The last prayer in Revelation is what the prayer on our lips should be every moment of our lives. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The rapture based on our love.**

III. Another Question asked by Fools

Question 10: Jesus wasn't born on December 25th, and the Bible never tells you the time of the year He was born.

This one is actually a statement; and remember, these questions can come from either the saved or the unsaved. This is what they're going to throw at you sooner or later, and I gave you several verses to go along with this.

Proverbs 16:1: The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord. We prepare our hearts then the answer comes from the Lord.

1 Peter 3:15: But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and [be] ready always to [give] an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

This particular question will have to do with the first coming of Christ. I want you to know your Bible. **Paul said about the church in Corinth in 2 Corinthians 11:2, For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: Then he explained how he was afraid that the devil was going to steal from the church the simplicity that is in Christ.** That should be the fear of every pastor. I don't want the world to swallow you up. God saved you for a purpose. He gave you the Holy Spirit of God inside you, He gave you the perfect word of God, He put you in this church...all for the purpose of you fulfilling what God saved you for, and I'm jealous over you for that purpose. I've seen too many people over the years get taken away from everything God had for them. I don't want that to happen to you. It's the pastor's job to not only teach you the Bible, but also how to use the Bible. I want you to know what and why you believe what you believe.

I know this question sounds miniscule compared to some things in the Bible, but let me broaden your horizons just a little bit. **Now with this question, part of what they say is true.** He wasn't born in December, and He certainly wasn't born on December 25th; however, they don't understand the truth, nor do they understand what we have here.

We're fast approaching Halloween, Thanksgiving, then Christmas...and December 25th has always been associated with the birth of Christ. I want to show you how this happened. You're going to learn some real Bible today, and you're going to know why and what to believe. Better yet: you're going to be able to take this, and with you understanding it thoroughly, be able to repackage it and deal with the circumstances or the people that you're dealing with in different scenarios. This is why I take the time to do what I do.

➤ The History Behind December 25th

In the pagan worship of the Old Testament, we have Baal worship. Baal worship was the source of all the pagan religions through history. It all goes back to Genesis 10:10, and Genesis 10 is the first gentile kingdom in the Bible. There you find Babel, and from Babel you get Babylon, and from Babylon you get Baal worship. "Babel" means confusion. **Baal was the sun god. His birth, according to pagan teachings, was on December 25th, and he's always connected and centered around the sun.** His birth is associated with what we call the winter solstice. The winter solstice is around December 21-23, and it is the shortest day of the year. In June, you have the summer solstice which is the longest day of the year.

Baal's birth was associated with the winter solstice, and in pagan history, this is called the nativity of the sun. Today, you hear the manger scene with Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus, and the animals referred to as a nativity scene. **The word nativity doesn't come from the Bible, it comes from Babylon with the nativity of the sun**—just so you know that. Somebody said one time, "Bob, how do you learn things like that?" I said, "It's a conspiracy. They hide this stuff in books!" You can find this material in any public library in any city.

Around 325 to 400 AD (this was #7 on the 10 changing points in history from Bible Study 09/05/2024), **Constantine, the great pagan Roman emperor brings an end, as far as history is concerned, to the paganism of Rome. He now changes it all to a New Testament paganism called the Roman Catholic Church.** What they do now is take all the pagan things and "Christianize" them. The statues of the gods now become statues of the apostles and saints. The pagan winter festival which took place on December 25th in time will become the birthday of Jesus. We see now the word "Christmas" show up as Roman Catholicism adds it to their pagan holidays. In fact, around 347 AD, Pope Julius gave the first "Christ" + "mass".

You can do a little deeper study on it by reading *Babylon Mystery Religion* by Ralph Woodrow. I don't know of any other book that I've read in my 50+ years that lays these pagan things out and documents them better than this book.

I also came across the Forbidden History Series on television, and I found an episode called *Forbidden History: The Secrets of the Vatican Archives*. Never in my life, with all the things I've seen and read, have I ever seen 60 minutes more formidable showing the origin of the Roman

Catholic Church, how it figures today, and what is going on. This wasn't done by a bunch of Bible Baptists who were bashing Catholics, this was done by men who know nothing about the Bible.

As time moves on, Christmas is established, and you'll see two other key parts of Christmas that get added. They are both part of Baal and paganism in the Old Testament.

➤ The Christmas Tree

This pine tree, which we also call an evergreen, will have its start back in ancient Babylon. The legend goes that an evergreen or pine tree sprang out of an old dead stump, and it was taken to symbolize that Nimrod, who you find in Genesis 10:9, was born again (he had died) as a pagan god and becomes connected to the sun god. **So, in Baal worship, the pine tree or evergreen is a sacred tree used in the worship of Baal.** Now I'm not up here to throw water on your Christmas or your Christmas tree, but I want you to understand these things. Let's turn over to Jeremiah 10. Follow along very carefully.

Jeremiah 10:1-5. Hear ye the word which the Lord speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: He's talking to Israel in an Old Testament context. Watch what he says.

2. Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen (there's Baal worship), and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven (they worshipped the sun, moon and stars); for the heathen are dismayed at them.

*3. For the customs of the people (these are heathen people: Baal worshippers) [are] vain: **for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe.***

*4. **They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.***

5. They [are] upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also [is it] in them to do good.

Now in Baal worship, what you did around December 25th was go out into the woods and cut down a pine (evergreen) tree. You brought it into your house, put it up, and fastened it with nails. Verse four tells you that you deck the halls with boughs of holly-- Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la. **These are exactly the customs we do today, but you see the origin of it goes back to Baal worship.**

I don't have time to get into it this morning, but that evergreen is a picture of the second heaven. It's a picture of the universe and then you put the little winged cherub on top which you think is an angel, but all it shows (Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14) is that he's (Satan) over the top of the whole universe.

So...you put a dead tree in the house, you go to sleep at night, and when you wake up in the morning, your parents have put colored balls all over the tree. **When you get up in the morning, the tree now has resurrected. Now you have a counterfeit tree of life.** This is

exactly what Baal worship does—it tries to counterfeit everything that the Bible will tell us. This is, of course, what Israel was told not to do.

➤ Santa Claus

He is an eternal man who lives forever, and on a special day, December 25th, gives gifts to the world. Now Santa Claus is a counterfeit Christ. He also comes from the Roman Catholic Church. In Germany, he's called Kris Kringle which means "Christ Child." In Europe, he's called Saint Nick. Saint Nicholas was the Roman Catholic patron saint of children. He's named after a 3rd century monk named Nicholas, and by the time of the Renaissance period, everybody knew about him.

If you go to Europe at Christmas time, you will find pictures of Santa Claus where he is dressed like the pope including the miter hat. That's because it came out of the Roman Catholic Church. Around 1770 when the Dutch came over to America, they brought the tradition here and called it "Sinterklaas" which becomes "Santa Claus." He's added into American folklore in the 1800's. In 1822, Clement Clarke Moore writes *The Night Before Christmas*. In 1881, Thomas Nast creates the best known image of Santa Claus which is still used today.

The idea behind it all has nothing to do with Christ, God, or the Bible; however, for the pagan world and for unsaved people today, Santa Claus is the counterfeit Christ.

1. He dresses in red—Christ's vesture is dipped in blood: Isaiah 63:1
2. He comes from the north—God is coming from the north: Psalms 75:6-7
3. He's a carpenter—So was Christ: Mark 6:3
4. He's omniscient—He knows when you're sleeping and when you're awake
5. Little children gravitate toward him—Just like they did in the gospels when Christ was here
6. He's got white hair and a white beard—That's Christ: Revelation 1:14
7. He makes a list, checking it twice, going to find out who's naughty and nice—That list will show up in Revelation 20:11-12 at the Great White Throne Judgment. Why does he check it twice? It's because you have two books in your Bible—the book of life for the nation of Israel and the Lamb's book of life for the church.
8. He's eternal, a bunch of elves help him, he can be all over the world in just one night, and he brings gifts—My Jesus in Matthew 7:11 says, *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?* You know what the good things are—the Holy Spirit of God.

The whole thing is a counterfeit based on paganism, but these are the things you need to know if you're going to talk to somebody.

➤ The Real Santa Claus from the North

Do you want to see the real man from the north? The guy with white hair and a white beard who comes with a vesture dipped in blood.

Zechariah 2:6. Ho, ho, [come forth], and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the Lord.

That's the second coming of Christ. Here's a man coming from the north saying ho, ho. This is the real one, and the other is a counterfeit.

➤ **When Christ was Really Born – The Feast of Tabernacles**

So, when was Christ really born? People say the date is not given of his birth. Well, yes, it is but you're a fool, so you'll never get it. **Christ was born the time of the year at the feast of tabernacles. In your Bible, that will be September 20-26. It's the original six days of creation in Genesis 1.** Up to Exodus 12, the Jews started their year according to the feast of tabernacles. According to Usher's Chronology, which we have talked about before as the correct chronology of the Bible, it runs the six days of creation based on the genealogies of the Bible back to 4004 BC—September 20-26.

Then in Exodus 12:1-2, there is a new start to the Jewish year. It changes to start with them coming out of Egypt: the Passover. (Note: this is change #4 of the 10 changing points in history that I gave you at Bible study on 09/05/2024).

So up to Exodus 12, they started their year based on what they knew to be the beginning of creation. It's kind of like being born again for you and me, *old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*; after that, they come out of Egypt under the blood just like you got out of the world under the blood (like a new creature in Christ Jesus), and now they count their beginning from when they came out of Egypt—the Passover. You just can't beat the Bible!

In the Old Testament, the feast of tabernacles will represent three key doctrines in your Bible that you have to get down at some point.

1. The original creation—Genesis 1:2-2:1 when He finishes the seventh day.
2. The first coming of Christ.
3. The second coming of Christ.

In the Bible these dates were all in September, although I say September/October now because the dates have shifted because of changes in the calendar. **In the Old Testament, when they celebrated the feast of tabernacles, they built little booths (lean-tos or little cabins), and they dwelled in them for the time they were celebrating the feast.** Basically, they made little tabernacles that they lived in. That's a picture of the first coming of Christ when He came down to Earth, and He tabernacled among men. That little lean-to or tabernacle is also a picture of the little stable where He was born when He came into this world. It's also a picture of the second coming of Christ.

➤ The Significance of the Order of the Old Testament Feasts

When you lay out the Old Testament feasts that are found in the book of Leviticus, there are eight of them that run the course of seven months.

- The first month of their year, they celebrated three feasts: Passover, the feast of unleavened bread, and the feast of first fruits.
- The second month, they celebrated one feast: the feast of weeks.
- The third month, they celebrated the feast of Pentecost.
- There were no feasts the fourth, fifth, and sixth months.
- In the seventh month, they celebrated the last three feasts: the feast of trumpets, the feast of the atonement, and the feast of tabernacles.

Those first three months with the Passover, unleavened bread, first fruits, feast of weeks...it's all a picture of Israel in the Old Testament. Notice it starts with Passover—that's when they came out (the beginning of the year now). So that's going to show you the Old Testament.

Remember that in the fourth, fifth, and sixth months there were no feasts. That's a picture of the church age.

The seventh month you have the last three feasts. The feast of trumpets—the rapture of the church, feast of the atonement—Jews making an atonement in the tribulation period, and feast of tabernacles—the second coming of Christ. It's all laid out by the order of the feasts.

If that wasn't enough, when you go over to Zechariah 14 when they get into the millennium after the second coming of Christ, the only feast they keep as a commemoration is the feast of tabernacles that commemorates the second coming of Christ.

➤ Willow Branches and Palm Trees

You'll find in the Old Testament, in the feast of tabernacles, when they made these little booths, they were made of willow branches and palm branches. Now, why is that? Everything in the Bible will mean something (but that doesn't mean we'll figure it all out!). I just told you that the feast of tabernacles is about the second coming of Christ to the nation of Israel. I showed you the eight feasts over the seven months that show you the Old Testament, Pentecost, the Church Age, the rapture of the church, Jews in the tribulation, and second coming of Christ. Why? This is the difference between knowing some things about the Bible and knowing your Bible. This is where I want you to get. I have spent 50+ years burying my life in that Book. If I can give it to you quicker than I got it, we can get more done for the Lord. That's what it's all about!

So, why the willow branches and the palm trees? **It's because the willows represent the trials and the weeping of Israel down through their history. The palm trees represent the millennial reign of Christ at the second coming of Christ.**

*Psalms 137:1-4. By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. **The context is Israel in the captivity of Babylon.***

*2. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. **There it is! We call them Weeping Willows!***

3. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us [required of us] mirth, [saying], Sing us [one] of the songs of Zion.

4. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

The children of Israel are in captivity, and they're down by the river Babylon. They've been separated from their families and many of them have been killed. They're weeping and crying, and they remember what they had with God; however, now God is done with them (temporarily). They take the harps they used to use to sing for the Lord, and they hang them on the willow trees. Their enemies (the world) come up to them and ask them to sing them one of the songs of Zion. Their response was how shall they sing the Lord's song in a strange land. This is why God's people don't sing the way they should. This is why God's people don't lift this roof...because it's hard to sing the Lord's song in a strange land. There's the suffering.

Now let's compare this to the palm tree.

*Psalms 92:12-15. The righteous shall flourish like the **palm tree**: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*

13. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord (context is the millennium) shall flourish in the courts of our God.

14. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;

*15. To shew that the Lord [is] upright: [he is] my rock, and [there is] no unrighteousness in him. **There's your millennium.***

I don't get dogmatic about this, but if someone asked me to pin down the day that Christ was born within the September 20-26 time period, I would say it's September 23. This is where the consistency of the Bible comes into play. In Genesis 1:14-19, which is a Wednesday according to Usher, on the fourth day, the sun shows up on this Earth—literally. And it's on September 23, so I would say 4,000 years later, feast of tabernacles—September 23, the Son of God showed up on this Earth.

IV. Putting it all Into a Context

So, the truth is that Christ wasn't born on December 25th; rather, most likely on September 23, but most certainly during the feast of tabernacles. Most Christian holy days are not biblical, and they all start with the Roman Catholic church. In time, as I showed you, they get "Christianized" into the church. You have the same issue with Easter. It's completely pagan and had nothing to do with the resurrection. Easter is about the goddess of fertility which is another whole study.

So, how do you put all this into a Christian context since we live in the world with these holidays? First, you learn the material which I'm trying to get you to do now. Second, you try to learn how to use the material. That's what we're going to do in our Patterns of Human Nature class.

You have some Christians who celebrate no holidays, some celebrate a few, and others celebrate them all. I have found the key to dealing with this and anything in the Bible is a balance. There have always been spiritual issues like this all through the church. In I Corinthians 8, back in the church at Corinth, there was an issue with meat offered to idols. At the marketplace, they were selling meat cheaper that had been used in the pagan sacrifices. Some Christians were lining up to get the deal, but the super spiritual Christians thought it was of the devil. Here's what Paul had to say. He said that these gods didn't mean anything. There is no power with them; they aren't alive or real. He says that if you can get the meat sacrificed to idols cheaper, get it. There's nothing spiritually wrong with that. He says in I Corinthians 8:7 that the people that believe there is something spiritually connected with it and don't buy the meat, are weak—but you have to help them.

When it comes to the holy days, you just need to be smarter than the problem. I will use them as opportunities to reach people. It's what I gave you last Thursday night at Bible study (09/12/2024) regarding **the letter of the law versus the spirit of the law—grace and truth.** I don't believe in any of these holidays, and I don't celebrate any of them.

I Corinthians 9:22. *To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all [men], that I might by all means save some.*

➤ Reaching People but Understanding There's a Line you can't Cross

As a Christian, you have to be insulated from the things of the world but never isolated from the world. We must take the gospel to them. The Biblical model for this is found in Acts 21. Paul, who is a New Testament Christian, goes back under Judaism in the Old Testament. He goes into the temple, shaves his head, and becomes one of them so that he may have the opportunity to tell them about Christ. At that time, temple worship is done. Judaism is done. It's now New Testament Christianity, and he is the apostle to the church; however, he shaves his head, puts on the robe, goes into the temple, eats with them, and does everything that they do even though it had nothing to do with the New Testament. He goes right up with them to the evening sacrifice, **and you don't want to miss this. You see, he could play the game, wear the clothes, speak the language, and he could do things in the temple, but he couldn't make the sacrifice because Christ already died on the cross as a sacrifice. That is a line he cannot cross.**

In other words, when you use these things to reach people, there is a line you can't cross. You'll never see a Christmas tree in this church at Christmas time, although I have one in my home. For us it's just a fun time, and nobody thinks that it's anything connected with Christ. **If you take the position of rejecting it all, how are you going to win anybody to Christ? You've got to become all things to all men, but you know where to draw the line. You have to understand where your liberty is, but you also have to understand how to use it.**

V. Summary

Halloween is coming up. If I can use it, I'm going to use it. We'll have 500 people coming through that parking lot that we can reach. I'll use Christmas and Easter, too. On Sundays, I recognize birthdays. There are only two birthdays in the Bible, and somebody got killed on both of them. I do it because it identifies with some time in your life that I can use to get into your world. I'm balanced, though. We have this birthday physically but then we celebrate spiritual birthdays. You've got to show them the difference. It's the same with our softball and volleyball ministries. None of those things are in the New Testament, but we reach people with them. It's getting into people's culture by being smarter than the problem.

I have one goal for you, and it's to take all that I've learned in 50+ years and make you the best you can be in these last days. Learning your Bible is not hard; it takes time and discipline. Just remember one thing about it. **The greatest symphony you've ever heard will break down into single notes. Everything about this great masterpiece called the Bible will break down into single principles that form patterns.** Where a guy like Beethoven could take notes and create a symphony, God's people ought to be able to take the principles out of this great masterful Book and change people's lives.