

## “IF” Statements of the Bible IV

Fred R. Coulter—September 11, 2010

Today is the ninth anniversary of 9/11. Most people still do not know or understand the source of the problem, nor do they understand that God is involved, nor do they understand where it comes from. It goes back thousands of years.

Let's come to Genesis 25:20 and read the beginning of it: "And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian. And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife because she *was* barren. And the LORD heard him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. And the sons struggled together within her.... [This shows that babies in the womb are counted as human beings.] ...And she said, 'If *it is* well, why *am* I this way?' And she went to inquire of the LORD" (vs 20-22).

"And the LORD said to her, 'Two nations are in your womb, and two kinds of people shall be separated from your belly..... [Isn't it interesting? Same father, same mother, but two different nations, two different dispositions.] ...And the one people shall be stronger than the other people, the older shall serve the younger.' And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, twins *were* in her womb! And the first came out red, like a hairy garment all over.... [I still cannot imagine that myself. 'Look, Dad, we've got a red rug. Oh, it's a boy!'] ...And they called his name Esau.... [which means red] ...And after that his brother came out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel. And his name was called Jacob. And Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them (vs 23-26).

Now come over here to Genesis 27, because it said that the older shall serve the younger. Now you know what happened here about how God allowed Rebekah and Jacob to connive against Isaac, supposedly. Jacob was to get the blessing. If he would have waited, it would have come. Esau was not to get the blessing, so there had to be means to change from the firstborn blessing, from the firstborn to the second born. So God used human beings and their own deceit to do it from the point of view that it would be looked upon as something that a man did, rather than what God did.

So nevertheless, Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau came in. It was just minutes later, Genesis 27:32: "...'I *am* your son, your firstborn, Esau.' Then Isaac trembled greatly, and said, Who then *was* the one who has hunted deer and brought *it* to me—and I have eaten it all before you came, and have blessed him? Yea, he shall be blessed!' .... [You can't change it. It's like the Word of God. You can't change it.] ...And when Esau heard the words of his

father, he cried with a great and exceedingly bitter cry, and said to his father, 'Bless me, even me also, O my father!'" (vs 32-34). Now, he didn't tell him that he already sold his birthright for a bowl of pottage, but he still demanded to have what he thought was his, when it was by prophecy it wasn't going to be his. So, you see how God works with human beings and human thoughts, and things like this. That's what creates interesting things in history.

Verse 35: "And he said, 'Your brother came with deceit, and has taken away your blessing.' And Esau said, 'Is he not rightly called Jacob?... [which means *supplanter*] ...For he has supplanted me these two times--he took away my birthright... [No, he sold it!] ...and behold, now he has taken away me blessing.' And he said, 'Have you not reserved a blessing for me?' And Isaac answered and said to Esau, 'Behold, I have made him your lord, and all his brethren I have given him for servants. And with grain and wine I have sustained him. And what shall I do now to you, my son?'" (vs 35-37).

"And Esau said to his father, 'Have you but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, my father.' And Esau lifted up his voice and wept. And Isaac his father answered and said to him, 'Behold, Your dwelling shall be far from the fatness of the earth and far from the dew of heaven from above. And you shall live by your sword and shall serve your brother. **But it shall come to pass that when you shall have the dominion, you shall break his yoke from off your neck.**' And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him. And Esau said in his heart, 'The days of mourning for my father are at hand--then I will kill my brother Jacob'" (vs 38-41).

That's the source of the problem we have today. I think we can look around and see that the yoke on Esau—remember he had twelve sons and he had a great nation. Plus you have Ishmael, who was from the generation before, was the half-brother of Isaac, and so you've got that mixed in to the whole equation. So, you've got all the Arabs with their twelve tribes. You have Edom with their twelve tribes, and they are blessed with the desert.

Now, there's a lot of oil underneath, so they ended up with a lot of riches. What is happening today? Is that yoke being broken? Does that hatred still exist still to this day? And how is it going to play out? That's just the start of it. But since it's 9/11, I thought I would give you the true source of the problem: Family feud and the rejection of God by the ones who were to be blessed of God. And He uses Esau and Ishmael as a hand of correction

against us. So that's where we are right now with it. I've got some startling statistics about Europe. And when you understand that, it looks like the yoke is just about ready to be broken.

This thing of false gods and professing the Lord and not really following after God the way that they should is just part of the human problem of Jacob and the children of Israel. So here is one of their cycles:

1-Samuel 7:4: "And the children of Israel put away the Baalim and the Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only. And Samuel said, 'Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you to the LORD.' And they were gathered to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, 'We have sinned against the LORD.' And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh" (vs 4-6). Then they went to battles against them, everything went well, they were there for years and years; Samuel got old. Remember, he came as a four-year-old to the temple to serve Eli the priest. So we're talking about many, many years of things that have taken place.

Now let's see what happens again. We also see another generational thing. The sons don't do as the fathers. There's always free choice involved. Come to 1-Samuel 8:1: "And it came to pass when Samuel was old, he made his sons judges over Israel. And the name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second was Abiah, judges in Beersheba. Yet his sons did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted judgment" (vs 1-3). Now think of this: they were judges and priests as well. And it's just exactly like Solomon said, that in the highest places of righteousness there is sin and in the highest places of judgment there is sin. So we have it right here. Now, here's a movement by the people to correct this. Notice what their solution was because this becomes important in God's dealing with the people later.

"And all the elders of Israel gathered themselves and came to Samuel to Ramah. And *they* said to him, 'Behold, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations'" (vs 4-5).

Think about this for a minute. What was the standard of Israel to be? *To be a model for all the nations* on:

- how to serve God
- how to have righteous law
- how to have a system of judges

But when they become corrupt, that when they look at their relatives and see all the blessings that they have, see all the wealth that they have, and see that

they are corrupt, they are dishonest, they are just like our society today. We are obsessed with sex, we are addicted to all kinds of things. And they look and see, 'Why don't we have that? These people don't deserve it.' Well, here we have something very similar. The elders come up and say, 'Look, Samuel, we've tried it your way. Now we want to be like the rest of the nations.' So now they are stepping down from their called purpose of *being a model of truth and righteousness and how to come to God*, to become like all the nations.

- What do we have today?
- What is it called? *United Nations!*
- Who started it? *The children of Israel!*
- Where is the main headquarters of the United Nations? *New York City!*

See the parallels? Amazing, isn't it?

Verse 6: "But the thing was evil in the eyes of Samuel when they said, 'Give us a king to judge us.' And Samuel prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel... [Now here's a good lesson. Be careful what you ask God. Even if it's right in your own eyes, it may not be right in the eyes of God. Even though God will not totally reject you, you may be asking for a heap of troubles.] ...'Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them'" (vs 6-7). That's the whole key—is it not? *Yes! God reigning over us!* What is it today? How are we to govern ourselves? And even in the Churches of God, have we not seen things that are not right? They set up a government that's like a kingship with princes and all this sort of thing. God doesn't desire that. How are we to be reigned over today?

Let's come to Colossians 3. This is what God wants for every individual and the whole purpose of government, regardless of whether it's civil or whether it's religious. This tells us how God wants us to be ruled. Not by a ministry, not by another man, but by God. The best government in the world is this: God to the people and those who are to be the leaders and teachers are to always point them to God, so that they as individuals can live their lives by their choices knowing right from wrong, good from evil, and to be able to choose the right. And does that not go clear back to Genesis 4:7 where we started with the "IF" clause sermons? *Yes, indeed!*

Colossians 3:15: "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts... [God is to rule you in your hearts, only now with the Holy Spirit.] ...to which you were called into one body, and be thankful... [And here's how you do it:] ...Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom..." (vs 15-16).

- Christ is our *wisdom!*

- Christ is our Truth!
- Christ is *how we are to live!*

The problem back here with the children of Israel, God gave them the judges. That's what Samuel was; he was priest, he was a judge. Now they didn't want the judges system. What did He say? ***'They reject Me that I should not reign over them.'***

Let's see a parable very similar to it. This again is the whole story of life, of people, of nations, of churches, of families, and the whole thing. Do you love God? Do you serve Him? Now here's a parable that Jesus had and it has to do with individual integrity and responsibility, you ruling yourself and letting God rule you.

Here we see the same thing. So as we go through this today we are going to ask the question: Who rules in your life? Because God has always said ***'IF, IF*** you're willing and obedient.' Matthew 21:33: "Here another parable: There was a certain man, a master of a house, who planted a vineyard, and put a fence around it, and dug a winepress in it... [didn't say grape juice press] ...and built a tower, and then leased it to husbandmen and left the country."

The thing is, some people have to have someone in authority around all the time. If you own a business, you have to have someone supervise the helpers, but the best help is what? Those who know what to do and do it right without having someone to just look down there; are they doing the job? It's like the county workers or city workers, wherever it is, you drive along and there are three guys doing shoveling and there are two supervisors standing there watching them and talking together, making sure they dig the hole.

Verse 34: "Now when the season of the fruits was drawing near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen to receive his fruits." What do you get from the vineyard? *You get grapes*, because you can't keep fresh grapes very long—can you? *Nope!* You get raisins and you get wine, because without refrigeration and pasteurization you can't have grape juice.

What should they have done? *They should have had it all ready to go—right? Because they had the agreement—correct?* 'Now when it comes time, I'm going to send and I'm going to collect what you owe me, because I leased it out to you for so much of the crop. You can sell the rest and that'll be your profit.' Well, we can take a principle here of tithing, principle of giving. Do you tithe only when someone says you must tithe? or Do you tithe because you know that God desires it and you want to love Him and obey Him? Same way with offerings; same way with anything that we do with the laws and

commandments of God. So here this parable has all of it there.

Verse 35: "But the husbandmen took his servants and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.... [Nice welcoming committee. Sounds a little bit like the Mafia infiltrated this organization and got a hold of it—right?] ...Again he sent other servants, more than the first *time*; and they did the same thing to them. Then at last he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will have respect for my son.' But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us murder him and gain possession of his inheritance.' Then they took him, *and cast him* out of the vineyard, and murdered *him*" (vs 35-39). Typical human story—right? *Jealousy, lust and greed*, wanting more than they should, taking from, not being honest, and so forth.

"Therefore, when the lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do to those husbandmen? They said to Him, 'Evil *men!* He will utterly destroy them, and he will lease his vineyard to other husbandmen, who will render to him the fruits in their seasons'" (vs 40-41). They weren't willing to obey God, have the peace of Christ rule in their hearts, do it because they loved God. *No!*

"Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the Scriptures...'" (v 42) Of course, they didn't. It's like all religions.

- Do not the Catholics profess to use the Bible? *Yes, but they don't!*
- Do not the Jews profess to use the Old Testament? *Yes, but they don't!*
- Do not the Protestants profess to use the Bible? *But they don't!*
- Do not the Mormons profess to use the Bible? *Only if it's properly translated, so they say.*

"...Have you never read in the Scriptures, "*The Stone that the builders rejected, this has become the head of the corner. This was from the Lord, and it is wonderful in our eyes*"? Because of this, I say to you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and it shall be given to a nation *that* produces the fruits of it'" (vs 42-43).

Boy! That's why we're in training now. The world doesn't know us. The world doesn't recognize us. Here we are studying the Word of God, wherever the people of God are—learning what? *How to have the character so that we can rule in the Kingdom of God!* We have to have the character of God operating in our lives at all times *when no one is supervising*. That's the whole lesson here.

And it says in another place, in one of the other parallel accounts with this, that He said, 'Bring

those My enemies before Me and slay them.’ The normal carnal mind called? The carnal mind is **enmity against God!**

God made a promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that He would always work through the children of Israel. Come back here to 1-Samuel 8:7 and let’s see what happened here, because God said, “...‘Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.’”

So then he tells them what kind of king they’re going to have—and did it not turn out this way? Now I want you to stop and think: Was there ever *one* king that was totally righteous his whole life before God? Now David was the closest, but he had two things: Bathsheba and the numbering Israel

Look at all the rest of them. Remember what we read with Hezekiah that *God left him to test him*.

Verse 8: “According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even until this day—*works* with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they do also to you.... [He’s saying, ‘Look, Samuel you feel bad? You feel rejected? Look what they’ve done to Me! I live forever and look what they’ve done to Me in every generation!’ So this is why, be careful what you ask for.] ...And now hearken to their voice. Only, you shall surely protest solemnly to them, and show them the kind of king who shall reign over them.’ And Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who asked a king of him” (vs 8-10).

“And he said, ‘This will be the manner of king who shall reign over you. He shall take your sons and appoint *them* for himself, for his chariots, and his horsemen. And they shall run before his chariots. And *he* will appoint commanders over thousands, and commanders over fifties, and some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and make his weapons of war and weapons for his chariots. And he will take your daughters *to be* perfumers and cooks and bakers. And he will take your fields and your vineyards and your olive-yards, *even* the best of *them*, and give *them* to his servants” (vs 11-14).

Now, if you want this kind of government, this is what you’re going to get. That’s what all the other nations do—right? *Yes!* What did Christ say concerning the church? ‘*You shall not do like the nations*’—right?—‘*who lord it over, who exercise authority over them*’—right? ***That cuts you off from God!*** Well, we have the same thing here. This didn’t even deter them.

“And he will take a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards, and give it to his officers and to

his servants” (v 15). And then he would take more and more and more, and by time Solomon got done the tax load was so heavy there was a revolt of the ten tribes. And his son, Rehoboam went to the elders and said, ‘What do you think I should do?’ *Lower the taxes and the people will be with you*. He came to the young bucks, the ones of his generation, and said, ‘What should we do?’ *Tell them your little finger is going to be heavier than your father’s thigh*. So there you go, again and again, human nature.

So this is what they wanted. So he warned them, v 19: “But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, ‘No, but we will have a king over us. And we shall be, also we, like all the nations, so that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.’ And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them in the ears of the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Hearken to their voice, and make them a king.’ And Samuel said to the men of Israel, ‘Every man go to his city’” (vs 19-22).

Saul was the first king. You can read all about that. Let’s come over here to 1-Samuel 12. Now, here’s kind of a farewell address and acceptance of God of what the people wanted. God was duty-bound because of His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to continue working with the children of Israel.

- If they would sin, He would correct them.
- If they would obey Him, He would bless them.

Now here they’ve come to the point of saying, ‘God, we don’t want you to rule over us,’ which is the easiest and best rule—don’t you think? *Yes!* ‘But we want a king to rule over us.’

1-Samuel 12:1: “And Samuel said to all Israel, ‘Behold, I have listened to your voice in all that you said to me, and have made a king over you. And now, behold, the king walks before you. And I am old and gray-headed... [He lived quite a while longer after this.] ...and, behold, my sons *are* with you. And I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold, here I *am*.... [This is his kind of standing up in front of them and saying, ‘I’m washing my hands in innocency. This is being done because of you, not because of me.’] ...Witness against me before the LORD and before His anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or from whose hand have I received a bribe to blind my eyes with it? And I will restore it to you.’ And they said, ‘You have not defrauded us nor oppressed us, neither have you taken from any man’s hand’” (vs 1-4). This was a legal thing that they were doing. They wanted to

legally have sanction from God a king. God said He would give it to them.

Verse 5: “And he said to them, ‘The LORD *is* witness against you, and His anointed *is* witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand.’ And they answered, ‘He is witness.’ And Samuel said to the people, ‘*It is* the LORD Who appointed Moses and Aaron, and Who brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. And now stand still, so that I may plead with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LORD which He did to you and to your fathers’” (vs 5-7). Then he rehearsed it.

Verse 13: “And now, behold the king whom you have chose, whom you have desired! And behold, the LORD has set a king over you!... [Now notice what God says here, v 14:] ...**IF**... [There it is. So it goes the same message that we had back here in 1-Sam. 7—right? *Yes!*] ...**IF** you will fear the LORD, and serve Him, and listen to His voice, and not rebel against the commandments of the LORD, then both you and also the king who reigns over you shall continue following the LORD your God.... [So there were the conditions. Still the commandments and laws and statutes and judgments of God were to be followed and obeyed.] (another condition): ...But **IF** you will not hearken to the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the command of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD shall be against you as *it was* against your fathers’” (vs 13-15). So then he gave them greater witness of it and so forth.

Verse 20: “And Samuel said to the people, ‘Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness. Yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart.’” And don’t go after any of these things. So that’s what happened. So he took all these words and laid them up before the Lord.

You will notice that when the people came to Samuel, they didn’t say, ‘We know that in the law it says that if we want a king that we can have a king.’ This must have been added by Samuel as part of the condition for other kings to read, because he took this and laid it up before the Lord. Now remember, the tabernacle at Shiloh wasn’t functioning. The Ark was at Kirjath Jearim, so Israel was in a restorative mode.

Here’s what he said. Here are the conditions, Deuteronomy 17:14: “When you come to the land which the LORD your God gives you, and shall possess it and shall live in it and shall say...” That’s exactly what they did—right? And let’s also understand this: The whole of the kingdom of Israel was not fully conquered and established until the days of David, and all that you ask—why? *All*

*because of the sins of the children of Israel!* Now let’s see what he has to say here with it.

(go to the next track)

Now let’s continue on in Deuteronomy 17 about the instructions for a king. These had to be the instructions that Samuel wrote, because Samuel didn’t want them to have a king. God didn’t want them to have a king. They didn’t come and ask him saying, ‘Well, Deuteronomy tells us that if we want a king that we can select him.’ So this had to be added at the time of Samuel.

Deuteronomy 17:14: “When you come to the land which the LORD your God gives you, and shall possess it and shall live in it and shall say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that *are* around me.’ You shall surely set a king over you, whom the LORD your God shall choose.... [God chose Saul. God chose David.] ...You shall set a king over you from among your brethren. You may not set a stranger over you who is not your brother’” (vs 14-15). You think about that today what we have. Did the people set a king? *Yes!* And the whole purpose of all what we’re going through here is the questions:

- Does God rule in your life?
- Do those who lead you do so according to the commandments of God?
- Does he point the people to God or to himself?

Now here’s some of the things he shouldn’t do: “Only he shall not multiply horses to himself... [which was one of the first things Solomon did] ...nor cause the people to return to Egypt... [go after other gods, foreign religions, etc] ...so as to multiply horses because the LORD has said to you, “You shall not return that way again.” Nor shall he multiply wives to himself... [which Solomon did] ...so that his heart does not turn away. Nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold to himself.... [here’s personal instruction for the king]: ...And it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book from that which is in the custody of the priests and the Levites’” (vs 15-18).

So he was to go to the priest, the priest was to give him a copy of the law and he was to sit down and copy it to know how to rule, to know the judgments and statutes and the ordinances, commandments, etc.

“And it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book from that which is in the custody of the priests and Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life... [Ever heard of the thing of prayer and Bible study? That’s an old thing. *Study every day*, that’s what the king

was to do. He was to *pray every day to God*, of course, so then he was to read this all the days of his life:] ...so that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them” (vs 18-19).

Before God, *everyone is subject to the same laws*, not like too many of kingships or even in churches, the equal and the more equal; the ones that have special privileges. That’s not what God wanted. There are certain responsibilities and there are some things that go with it, but it doesn’t give them the authority to rule over from an exalted point of view. We’ll see this even in the Church and Christ warned of that very severely concerning that.

Verse 20: “So that his heart may not be lifted up above his brethren...” Isn’t that interesting? Counted as brothers, not separate special royalty with special privileges, but those who had an obligation to lead the people, keep them pointing toward God. Keep the laws and commandments of God as the laws and commandments of the land. What I want you to see in going through this is the connection between what happened to Israel and their ups and downs with God and what is happening in America today and our ups and downs with God as a people.

“So that his heart may not be lifted up above his brethren, and that he does not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, to the end that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel.” So that was really quite a thing! That’s what God required. What we’re talking about here with **IF** clauses here, **IF** you do these things you’ll be blessed. **IF** you don’t, you will be cursed. And God has given the conditions.

Come here to Matthew 20:20 and let’s see a very specific thing that God said *do not do*. We can see that this is one of the problems that happens in churches and Churches of God. As we go through and read this, I want you to think of all the problems and troubles that happen in the Church because those who are to be ministers and to serve exalted themselves *and then they turned away from God first* and then the brethren turned away from God. And what happened? Just exactly like Hezekiah. *God left them to see what they would do!* So this whole thing of the **IF** clause is very important. Now let’s see how it’s carried out in Matthew 20. There’s no *if*, *ands* and *buts* about this. I always like the way this starts out, because here’s a little family politics.

Matthew 20:20: “Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Him with her sons... [There they were all three standing there.] ...worshiping Him and asking a certain thing from Him. And He said to her, ‘What do you desire?’ She said to Him, ‘Grant that these my two sons may sit one at Your

right hand and one at *Your* left *hand* in Your kingdom” (vs 20-21). They were called the sons of thunder, so they were pretty good preachers. She thought, ‘Boy, they’re worthy.’ You know, the right hand and the left hand. ‘Lord, You’d be blessed to have them there.’

“But Jesus answered *and* said, ‘You do not know what you are asking.... [the sons were right there] ...Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink... [what He was going to go through, be arrested and scourged and crucified] ...and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized *with*?’... [Just like Peter, ‘Lord, I’ll never deny you. Christ said, ‘Yes, you will, three times before the sun rises, before the cock crows.’] ...They said to Him, ‘We are able’” (v 22).

Part of the thing is not only the **IF** clause from God, but be careful what you ask for, because you may get it, maybe not all the way that you want. But look at it. They said, ‘We are able.’ So what did Christ say? Well, He took them up on it.

“And He said to them, ‘You shall indeed drink of My cup, and shall be baptized *with* the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit at My right hand and at My left *hand* is not Mine to give, but *shall be given to those* for whom it has been prepared by My Father.’.... [This started an uproar. It did! Why? *Because the other ten thought they were as worthy to do this themselves*; equal opportunity. ‘Well, if they do, we do.’] ...And after hearing *this*, the ten were indignant against the two brothers.” (vs 23-24). And they brought that up again even on the Passover night.

Notice what Jesus said and this becomes an important thing with the Church, because it’s an **IF** clause again, only in this way implied. **IF** the Lord rules in your heart. **IF** you are going to serve the brethren, here’s how you’re going to do it. **IF** you are going to serve Me and be My apostles, here’s how you are going to do it.

“But Jesus called them to Him and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the nations... [that’s what we’re talking about—kings, princes, mighty ones] ...exercise lordship over them...” (v 25). The Greek is very interesting here because the Greek is ‘kata’—which means *down*. ‘Kurios’ or ‘kurio’ is the verb for *to lord*. ‘Kurios’ is *lord*. So this is ‘kata kurion’—meaning *you shall not exercise lordship over them downward*. That’s why we have the series on *Why God Hates Hierarchy*. That doesn’t mean there isn’t authority in the Church. The authority is very limited in the Church because it is not a sovereign nation. It is the called-out ones of Christ in the Church, living in many, many nations and they do not have sovereign national authority. That is covered in the sermons that I’ve given, *What is the*

*Administration of Death?* You're not to "...exercise lordship over them and the great ones..." (v 25). Who are the great ones? *Rulers and great ones!*

Let's come to Acts 8, and we will see that the *great ones* are the religious leaders of the Gentiles. There is a perfect example of it in what is known as Simon Magus, typical example of the religious leader who holds the people in the grips of fear, through sorcery and superstition.

Acts 8:9: "But *there was* a certain man named Simon, who had from earlier times been practicing sorcery in the city and astounding the nation of Samaria, proclaiming himself to be some **great one**.... [Now do we have one man on earth that is called today a *great one*? *Yes, indeed!* He even takes a name that God says don't take—*father*. And he even adds to that another word called *holy*. And what does he practice? *Sorcery!*—same thing here.] ...To him they had all given heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, 'This man is the great power of God... [Not much different than from the 'vicar' of God—right? *Yes!*] ...Now they were giving heed to him because *he* had for a long time bewitched them with sorceries" (vs 9-11). So when we talk about great ones here, there are two distinct categories of rulership:

1. Those who are lords or kings ruling over them from the top down
2. "...the great ones exercise authority over them." (Matt. 20:25)

Now how is that given? Even in the Church of God it was said, 'If you do not obey the leader of this church, you are not obeying God!' *Exercise authority over them!* It's the same thing. *Authority* is 'exousio'—that's the verb and the Greek here is 'kata exousio.' ***Do not lord it over with authority and do not take the authority and keep the people bound in fear and superstition.*** God says, 'Don't do that.'

So what I want to do in this is also draw the parallel. What has happened to the Churches of God today? *They have violated this very thing that Jesus commanded.* Well, we'll look at the churches there that I eluded to back in Rev. 2 and 3 in just a bit. But notice what Jesus said: "However, it shall **not** be this way among you; but whoever would become great among you, let him be your servant.... [*Servant* here is 'doulos.'] ...And whoever would be first among you, let him be your slave" (vs 26-27).

Think about that! What has happened even in the churches of the world? *They've got to have all this rulership and hierarchy.* What has it done to the people? When they go against God, the people follow—right? So that's why He said not to do it. To emphasize how important this is—and we've covered this before, but let's cover it here—this gets

into the fulfilling of the thing of taking care of the Church.

Let's come to John 21. Let's see what Christ, who was God, told Peter to do for Him for the Church. The ministry needs to understand this: ***If you have that kind of government in the church, Christ is going to fight against you.***

John 21:15; this was quite a thing! This part really emphasizes something and it shows kind of the other side of the coin of Peter denying Christ three times, because He emphasizes this now three times. John 21:15: "Therefore, when they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonas... [What we need to do, everyone who is a teacher or a minister or a deacon, ask yourself this question, because Christ is asking it]: ...Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me more than these?'... [According to the other apostles who were there.] ...And he said to Him, 'Yes, Lord. You know that I love You.' He said to him, '**Feed My lambs.**'"

Now we've got a footnote at the bottom of the page explaining the difference in the Greek words, so I'm not going to go into detail in that here. But 'feed My lambs.' Now what is feeding? *Feeding is caring for and teaching and giving them the Word of God!* Which means everything that anyone who has a responsibility of teaching, just like with the king, just like with Samuel, just like with anyone who deals with God's people where they have to bring the teaching and the things from God. ***The people belong to God! They are the sheep! They are the lambs!***

One time I remember when the great exalted 'self-proclaimed apostle' got up and said one night to all the brethren that were there, because there was a great deal of trouble going on in the Church and everyone knew it was going on and the lies coming down out of the pulpit said, 'No, this is all gossip.' He got up there and he said, 'You're all a bunch of dumb sheep.' ***God does not expect the brethren to be dumb sheep!*** If they're dumb sheep it's because the shepherd has not been doing what he's supposed to do. So just because it says 'feed My lambs,' does not put them into an inferior condition or an inferior status. But they are to be fed with the Word of God. Like Paul said, 'Be instant in season, out of season. Preach the Word.'

Verse 16: "He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Yes, Lord. You know that I love You.' He said to him, '**Shepherd My sheep.**'" Shepherd is to help keep them going in the right direction—the way of the Lord, to walk in it.

That's why all of this, all of the **IF** clauses and everything that God has here. Notice how many times it revolves around our relationship with God

and our relationship with each other. *Always!* And here Christ has it very simply defined. *'Shepherd My sheep.'*

"He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?... [Now Peter was getting a little irritated and grieved and Peter was grieved because He said to him a third time, 'Do you love Me?'] ...And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, **'Feed My sheep'**" (v 17).

This is why that preaching and teaching becomes so important and writing as well. Everything needs to be geared to this.

- *preaching* the Word of God
- *teaching* the Word of God
- *feeding* the brethren
- *shepherding* the brethren
- *showing them the right way*

—so that Christ can rule in their hearts; so we don't have all of these vicissitudes and ups and downs and problems like the children of Israel of old and like so many churches have even today. I mean, right now there are great problems in some churches for this very thing.

Now come back a little further to 1-Peter 5. We'll see that Peter learned this lesson. It's important to understand. That's why when we have an ordination of an elder I always let them know that it is a demotion. *Now you are to serve upward, not lord over downward.*

1-Peter 5:1: "*The elders who are among you I exhort, even as a fellow elder, and an eye-witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that is about to be revealed: Feed the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight... [That's what it's to be—oversight—not over-lording.] ...not by compulsion... [You don't do what you do because you're forced to do it.] ...but willingly; not in fondness of dishonest gain... [Don't use the ministry as a merchandizing platform.] ...but with an eager attitude; not as exercising lordship... [Goes right back to Matt. 20—right? Yes, indeed!] ...not as exercising lordship over your possessions... [These are my people, they belong to me.] No! These are Christ's; He has called them, He died for them! God the Father has forgiven their sins. God the Father has given the Holy Spirit. They belong to Him. The thing that becomes within the Church then, is that all, all are to be taught and uplifted and to be fed.] ...but by being examples to the flock of God" (vs 1-3). That's what it's supposed to be. Not exercising the lordship.*

Revelation 2 and 3 contain the prophesy of the Churches and the main problems that would befall the Churches from the time that the Apostle

John died until our time. I want to focus in on just some of the things that are here. Because what we have is the whole curve of human problems and ministerial problems as well.

To the Church at Ephesus, they were faithful. I'm just going to summarize it because I want to get to a couple important places here. They tested all the ones who said they were apostles and found them to be liars and weren't. They endured, they worked, but notice what happens in any human endeavor, because this is the pull of human nature.

Revelation 2:4: "Nevertheless, I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love."

- Complacency!
- Becoming familiar with!
- Taking things for granted!

And it's down deep on the inside of us. I fight this every time I exercise. I've mentioned this before, but it happens almost every time I exercise. I get down to do some sit-ups and leg raises and things like this, and I say I'm going to do so many. And a little voice inside says, 'Well, maybe you can get by with less.' Transfer that over into: How many times have you said, 'I'm going to pray.' *But don't!* 'I'm going to study.' *But don't!* 'I'm going to not fall asleep in church.' *But do!* Or whatever! Whatever the endeavor.

Oh, and I have to bring this in—just came to mind. I forget which channel, but every once in awhile Dolores watches it and it's called *The Hoarders*, those who hoard. And you won't believe what people do to their houses. Some places it's stacked so high with junk that there's a little narrow trail down and their rottenness and filth and mice, dead cats, and even one woman walking down this little trail fell over into the trash and her body was so heavy and everything that even her husband and son couldn't pull her out of it. She laid in that for eleven hours before they finally had enough courage to call the fire department to come in and rescue her. Well, the firemen were shocked! There was junk stacked nearly to the ceiling in every single room! Hardly any place to walk. So when they got done, they turned them in to the health department. The health department said, 'You know, you've got to get rid of this.' They said, *Well, we've been intending to.* 'How did it get this way?' *Oh, we just thought everything was important and didn't want to throw it away.* Dolores has learned one secret and she tells this to me when she looks at my office, which is this: You have three categories of things to decide which to get rid of and which to keep:

1. Is it a friend? *Keep it!*
2. Is it an acquaintance? *Get rid of it!*
3. Is it an enemy? *Absolutely get rid of it!*

Let me just explain it this way in relationship to this verse. What is your spiritual relationship with God because Christ is supposed to rule in your heart? *The Holy Spirit is supposed to lead us*—right? Do we definitely pray on our knees every day? Do we definitely study every day? *Because this is God's Word to us!* And isn't it true, when you pray and when you study, you love God more—don't you? *Yes!* When you don't, you avoid God—right? 'Oh, well, I'll get to that. God, you'll understand.' He says, 'Yeah, I understand.' God is going to give us eternal life—are those not the tools?

So they lost their first love. Now they did have some things that God commended them for, but nevertheless, he said repent, v 5. "Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the first works; for if you do not, I will come to you quickly; and I will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent. But this you have: that you hate the works of the Nicolaitanes..." (v 5-6).

Now what happens when the Church then comes down to a point that it must be corrected? All right, here's the Church at Smyrna. They have tribulation, thrown in prison, they were faithful under those duressful circumstances. Isn't it interesting, when people are under duress, they have enthusiasm for God and His way—right? *Yes!* Then after that, then here's a church that's got one foot in the world, the Church at Pergamos. Remember what happened to Israel, what did they say? 'We want a king.' What happened here?

The Church at Pergamos, v 12. "And to the angel of the Church in Pergamos, write: These things says He Who has the sharp two-edged sword.... [Never forget, the sharp sword is in the hand of Christ, and the Word of the Lord is a sword for correction and for strength.] ...I know your works and where you dwell, where the throne of Satan is... [There was a big throne, huge great cathedral to Zeus. By the way, the king of Pergamos deeded the whole thing to the Roman Empire.] ...but you are holding fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.... [they're too far into the world] ...But I have a few things against you because you have there *those* who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrifices to idols and to commit fornication.... [bringing in doctrines of false Christianity and paganism] ...Moreover... [This is almost like saying, 'With this you've gone too far.'] ...you also have *those* who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate" (vs 12-15).

What is that? *Over lordship!* That's how all of these things tie together. If all the people of Israel

would have loved God and followed Him, they would have been self-corrected to the king. And the king if he would have read and studied the Word of God would have been self-corrected to himself and God's blessing would be upon them. But when they let these things happen, just like also in the Church, what happens? *God has to intervene and correct!* Also what happens? Just like with Hezekiah. *God leaves them for a time to test them!* And how many times have you heard those who have slacked off say, 'Well, I've got to get back with God'—right?

Now notice what they are to do, v 16: "Repent! For if you do not *repent*, I will come to you quickly, and will make war against them with the sword of My mouth." In other words, the words that God has said of the things we are not to do and we know that, Christ is going to execute against us—correct?

- Did we see that in the history of Israel? *Yes!*
- Do we see that in the history of the Church? *Yes!*
- Have we seen that in the history of contemporary churches of God? *Yes.*

So the **IF** clauses are very important, because there are a lot of Scriptures before and after every **IF**. This is:

- very important in our relationship with God
- very important with how the church is fed
- very important as to how the elders and those who are teaching are teaching the brethren and the people

Scriptural References:

- 1) Genesis 25:20-26
- 2) Genesis 27:32-41
- 3) 1-Samuel 7:4-6
- 4) 1-Samuel 8:1-7
- 5) Colossians 3:15-16
- 6) Matthew 21:33-43
- 7) 1-Samuel 8:7-15, 19-22
- 8) 1-Samuel 12:1-7, 13-15, 20
- 9) Deuteronomy 17:14-20
- 10) Matthew 20:20-25
- 11) Acts 8:9-11
- 12) Matthew 20:25-27
- 13) John 21: 15-17
- 14) 1-Peter 5:1-3
- 15) Revelation 2:4-6, 12-16

Scripture referenced, not quoted: Genesis 4:7

Also referenced:

- Sermon Series: *Why God Hates Hierarchy*
- Sermon: *What is the Administration of Death?*

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