NEEDED: REFORMATION

 Chapter 1

Background of Isaiah the Prophet

It was said that Isaiah’s ministry lasted for about sixty years and that he supposedly died under the terrible reign of Manasseh. Jewish tradition says that he was brutally martyred by being placed in a hollowed trunk of a tree and then “sawed in two.”

Reading through the book of Isaiah one is impressed with his vivid sense of the majesty of God. When we look into Isaiah chapter 40 we will see that he compares God to how we think in terms of greatness, and then he says that there is no comparison.

One of the main things that Isaiah is speaking against is the outward forms of religion with no inward reality. Reading through Isaiah one is impressed with qualities like “boldness, patriotism, tenderness, broad sympathy, stormy indignation at hypocrisy, with deep spirituality and a profound sense of the Divine majesty.” Isn’t this something missing today in our churches and meetings together? Are not these the things of character that should be more in our preaching today?

When Isaiah began his preaching career several things were happening in Israel. The ten tribes (Israel) were nearing destruction by Assyria whose capital was Nineveh.  They were desperate times.

Israel joined with Syria under the leadership of Damascus. Judah would not join so Israel and Syria invaded Judah to coerce Ahaz, the king of Judah, to join the confederacy. So we find Ahaz making a treaty with Assyria and marching forth to overthrow Syria and Israel. So Judah then became dependent on Assyria.

Later Hezekiah rebelled against the King of Assyria. Isaiah was always advocating that Judah’s dependence should be upon Jehovah and not some earthly monarch. However, the king of Assyria came to lay low Judah and since Egypt failed to respond to help, Judah had to buy off the King of Assyria with gold, etc. and so again became dependent upon Assyria.

Later when Assyria was coming to attack Judah and Jerusalem Hezekiah heeded Isaiah’s advice and trusted in the Lord to deliver them from this ‘present danger’ coming upon them in the form of Assyrian army. The result was that God sent His angel and a great disaster fell upon the army, and from which King Sennacherib never recovered.

Judah was freed from the threat of invasion and enjoyed a season of peace.

When we come to Isaiah 40 we see that there is turn in God’s approach to His people. They have repented and now are turning back to God and so we read in Isaiah 40:1-2: “‘Comfort, comfort my people,’ says your God.  ‘Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.’”

Later we have the words: “A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.’” Isaiah 40:3

The same words are repeated in Matthew 3:3 "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him,’” referring to John Baptist prior to the first coming of the Lord.

In reading through Isaiah 40 one sees what ‘reformation’ will do and what is needed today.

Chapter 2

Reformation: What it is

It is very important to realize the times that we are living in. With rapid communication we are seeing things taking place all over the world. These are tumultuous, but exciting times. It is a great time to be alive and to be a part of all that the Lord is doing.

God is moving in Latin America, Africa and Asia, but Western Europe is a different story. Secularism has set in and Christianity seems to be fading from the scene. Some of the same forces at work in Europe are pervading the United States as well. Because of the influence of the Western culture we find these same ideologies moving into other parts of the world and influencing the church in a negative way.

The need today is for what I call ‘reformation.’ Reformation is a divine moving of God in bringing His people back to the foundational truths that we once had, but have departed from.

For example, in his survey, Frank Barna brings out how few believers - even protestant pastors, operate from a Biblical worldview. It is quite scary when one thinks about it. Malachi mentions the role of priests: “For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, and from his mouth men should seek instruction — because he is the messenger of the LORD Almighty.” Malachi 2:7

Malachi goes on to say in 2:8: “But you have turned from the way and by your teaching have caused many to stumble.”  All one has to do is walk down the streets in our cities or the shopping malls, or turn on TV or the radio and what do we find? Often the name of the Lord is being vilified (run down, belittled, maligned). Satan seems to still have a stronghold over our societies, culture, etc. Jesus does not seem to be making much of an inroad today even in the midst of the mega churches, our radio programs and TV shows that present Biblical teaching.

What is wrong? Could it be that what we do is not in tune with what we profess. We profess to be Christians, but out of 65 common values there is no difference between us and the non-believers. We profess to be Christians but our divorce rate is right up there with the unbelievers.

Paul told Timothy: “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.” (1 Timothy 4:16) It is interesting that Paul puts life before doctrine. Is there a reason for this? I think so.  Doctrine is important, but before we can get into doctrine we must have the life to begin with. However, these two go together. I need to make sure that my life is in tune with the doctrine that I say I am following.

For example: I say that I believe in Jesus and I am saved, but does my life back this up? I say that I believe in prayer, but does my life back this up? I say that I am honoring God, but what do I do with my time and money?

Even Jesus when He came says that “He came to do and to teach.” (Acts 1:1) In other words, His life and His teaching went together. What He taught was in harmony with the way He lived.

Reformation is preparing the way for the Lord. It is John the Baptist crying in the wilderness: “A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’” Matthew 3:3

Chapter 3

Why We Need Reformation

In Chapter 2 we saw something about reformation – that of bringing us back to our foundation in our Christian faith. But the question might be asked: Why do we need reformation?

In this chapter I would like to answer this question by asking other questions.

The first set of questions is dealing with our personal lives, starting with: Is our life in tune with what we profess to believe? Let’s take our faith in what we profess to believe. George Barna made waves by citing statistics showing that only 9% of all born again adults and just 7% of Protestants possess a biblical worldview.

What is a Biblical worldview? It includes a belief in absolute moral truth as defined by Scripture, as well as the acceptance of six core biblical beliefs: \*The accuracy of biblical teaching

\*The sinless nature of Jesus

\*The literal existence of Satan

\*The omnipotence and omniscience of God

\*Salvation by grace alone

\*The personal responsibility to evangelize

Only 9% of all born-again adults and 7% of Protestants believe these six core beliefs, according to researcher Frank Barna.

"The low percentage of Christians who have a biblical worldview is a direct reflection of the fact that half of our primary religious teachers and leaders do not have a biblical worldview." (Barna quote)

In most of our homes in the West you will find a Bible or two and many will know some of its content, but very few know how to integrate its teaching into a coherent life style and being able to respond to the challenges and opportunities that come our way. Like Frank Barna said: "We're often more concerned with survival amidst chaos than with experiencing truth and significance." However, those that do operate from a Biblical worldview will have widely different views on morality and the choices they make daily.

Reformation will bring a Biblical worldview back into our daily lives.

The second set of questions that we need to ask ourselves is: Are our ministries in tune with the Word of God? Before we answer this question let me ask some other questions about “ministry:”

1. Our ministry - is it competition or completion? Do we find ourselves “competing” with other ministries rather than trying to see how we can “complete” them?
2. Our ministry - is it “focused” or “fragmented?” We know that the opposite of focus is fragmentation. Do we see our purpose in the light of God’s Word and are we focused on that?
3. Our ministry - is it a “relinquishing” or a “resisting” ministry? So often we (the professionals) hang onto the work and do not know how to relinquish to those that have been prepared for the task. We see this with Jesus when He ascended back to heaven and gave the task to His 12 disciples.
4. Our ministry - is it “reconciliation” or “alienation?” In 2 Corinthians 5:18 we see that we have been given the message of reconciliation, but when we see the disunity in the church we wonder what happened to the message of reconciliation.
5. Our ministry - is it the “letter of the law” or the “Spirit of life?” Is it rules and regulations or is it laying down Biblical principles to govern ourselves by?
6. Our ministry - is it a “movement of God” or is it a “monument of man?” Many movements and even denominations that start out as a movement of God become more of a monument of man after one or two generations

These are questions that I ask myself when I read the Word of God and then look at the ministries that are taking place today. Reformation will bring us back to a Biblical ministry. You can go to [www.menwithfaith.com](http://www.menwithfaith.com) and on the “teaching” page read more on this in my book: MINISTRY OF THE 21ST CENTURY where these questions are asked and answered.

We will take up the third question regarding our culture in our next chapter.

Chapter 4

Why We Need Reformation – Part 2

The third thing that we need to ask ourselves is in regards to our culture:

Is the church making an impact in our culture today? Who is in control in our culture? Is it God or is it Satan?

When we turn on TV what do we see: programs that honor God or Satan? When we listen to modern music what do we hear: music that honors God or Satan? When we consider art, music, films, etc. what are we confronted with: do we see something that honors God or Satan?

Chuck Colson was speaking to a group of pastors about engaging our culture today. He said that one of the pastors came up and asked a question: "But won't engaging the culture this way interfere with fulfilling the Great Commission? Isn't it our job to win people to Christ?"

Chuck’s response to this was: "Of course we're called to fulfill the Great Commission, but we are also called to fulfill the cultural commission. Christians are agents of God's saving grace in bringing others to Christ, but we are also agents of His common grace. We are to sustain and renew His creation, defend the created institutions of family and society, and critique false worldviews.”

I was reading a book on the Nazi conscience. I was wondering how a nation that had a Christian heritage turn in such a way that millions would be killed.

We all have a conscience, but the question is: What is the conscience set on? For example, I think of some of the different religions in the world such as Hinduism. They have what is known as Sati (wife burning). When the husband dies they throw the wife (alive) on the burning pyre so that she might be with him in the next life in reincarnation. Their conscience does not seem to bother them. My conscience would. What makes the difference?  It depends on what their conscience is set on. For me it is set on the Bible with a biblical worldview. This makes a difference. The Hindu has a Hindu worldview. It is a difference of belief.

So it would seem that what we believe is very important.  What is remarkable to me is that a nation that supposedly is a Christian nation (nominally) would have a Christian belief and still do what they did during the war? How was a nation's conscience cauterized to allow something like that to happen? Also, where was the church in the midst of it all?

Then I think of the USA with over fifty million babies that have been aborted. Where was the church? What happened to bring us to this point? Where is the church in the midst of it all?

While reading this book several things stood out for me. First, we see that it was a time of lax moral codes in the country. No morals, no truth. It was a time when the moral people (probably the church) felt that something needed to be done, but what and by whom? It seemed that there was a sense of impotence. It was at this time that the man Hitler rose up. At first he appeared as a man of morals giving voice to what many felt. He was a good speaker and a charismatic character. He was sharing what many people felt and through his charisma many fell for his propaganda.

Next we find that Hitler had a tremendous propaganda mill and through this he began to pour out the poison. In one sense what he was doing through his propaganda mill was to engage the major issues of the day and give an answer. What the German preachers should have been doing we find Hitler doing. We know the rest of the story with the Holocaust. Biblical preaching is engaging the major issues of the day and giving a biblical response.

Through the constant barrage of propaganda, people's thinking and belief began to change which in turn affected their conscience, setting the barriers for the conscience. Once that happened it was easy to lead them to other things as well. This is what we see today in our own culture.

Later when Hitler took more and more power, it was even more difficult for any opposition to what he was doing. He also used thugs to help bring about his message by fomenting fear in the hearts of anyone who did not agree with the propaganda. What do we encounter today when we speak out against a homosexual lifestyle?

So where was the church? Did they see? Did they understand the dynamics that were taking place? Perhaps some did and they did speak out to their own detriment. I think of Bonhoeffer who was eventually put into prison and later hanged.

Looking today at our culture in the West makes me want to cry out for reformation.

Chapter 5

Reformation in the Past

If we look at church history it would seem that there were two other times when there was reformation.

From the 1st century to about 300 AD the church spread throughout the Roman world.  There were many things against the early church: the Roman Empire, pagan gods, superstitions, etc. Yet within 60 years the Gospel of the church had been planted throughout the Roman Empire.

The second reformation took place in 1500 AD. Martin Luther discovered an old truth (new to him): justification by faith alone - that stepped out and into the pages of history. Most of what we have in our Western civilization can be traced back to this reformation.

In the first reformation the Gospel got into the hands of the people and transformed the Roman Empire.

In the second reformation the Word of God got into the hands of God’s people again. It is electrifying to see what happened. Two college professors did a study on whom and what made the biggest impact upon the United States. They went through thousands of documents, essays and speeches that had made the biggest impact upon our nation to see who was quoted the most. They discovered three men: John Locke, Mononisque and Blackburn. They discovered also that when these three men were quoted it was when they were quoting the Bible.

Studying our history, as well as what we have in Western Europe, the Word of God has made an impact in our culture. It is interesting to see that the new EU Constitution was recently rejected in France. In that constitution they had left out the Word of God and anything to do with Christianity.

Today we need a reformation that will bring the work of God back into the hands of God’s people. For too long it has been in the hands of the professionals: clergy, priests, paid pastors etc. Now it is time for the work of the Lord to be brought back into the hands of God’s people. We read in 1 Peter 2:9 “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

Just as Martin Luther discovered the truth of justification by faith and brought in the second reformation - so we also need to bring in another reformation of the truth; one where every believer is a priest and able to proclaim the “praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light.” 1 Peter 2:9

We need a new reformation that frees God’s people from church - or perhaps what I should say - out from the four walls of what we call “church.” The real work of God is not done within the four walls of a building, but in the market place. The four walls are to train us for the work ‘out there.’

This reformation will shift us from strategic planning to spiritual guidance, prayer, etc. So much of what we do today is done through worldly marketing ideas, planning, etc. instead of realizing that God’s work must be done God’s way and through prayer.

One last thing that I would like to share about reformation is how we need to see a shift to ‘apostolic’ leadership. This doesn’t mean that pastoral leadership is not necessary, because it is, but we will begin to see that a part of the Body of Christ has been in a locked down situation of not being recognized.

However, this is beginning to change and new wine skins are being developed that will engage the world in bringing hope to the millions who now have no hope. God is on the move.

Chapter 6

Supremacy of Reformation

When we think about God, who He is and what He has done, we must give some thought to the Supremacy of His redemption. In reading through Isaiah chapters 42-45 one sees the number of times the Lord shares who He is and how He is the only God.

One of the first things He brings out in Isaiah 42 is that He will bring justice to the nations. Several times this is mentioned. “I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.” Isaiah 42:1 “In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope." Isaiah 42:3-4

To me an aspect of this redemption is bringing justice to the nations. It is a two-fold act that will achieve this. First, we have the first coming of the Lord where the Gospel is preached and people are given a chance to respond. Secondly, we have His second coming whereby “the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.” 1 Corinthians 15:24

When I think of all of the unjust things that have been done and are being done - one cries out for justice, but there is no justice. However, one of the things that reformation brings around is an awareness of who God is and that He will not relax until justice is brought forth to the nations. He will not falter or be discouraged till He establishes justice on earth.

Another very important aspect of His Supremacy in redemption is that He is the only One. There is no one else like Him or above Him. Although our world is filled with many false hopes of redemption there is no one else that will accomplish it.

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you.” Isaiah 43:1 “I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no Savior.” (43:11) “No one can deliver out of my hand.” (43:13) "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.” (43:25) “I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you." Isaiah 44:22

It is obvious from these verses here in Isaiah that God only and God alone is our Redeemer. This is important because we do see from Isaiah 44 how a man will take a block of wood and use part of it to make a fire and keep warm, cook his food and then with what is left over he makes an idol to worship and say: "Save me; you are my god." Isaiah 44:17

In our Western culture we might be a little more refined than this man depicted in Isaiah 44, but we still do the same thing. How do we use and look at money, for example. We use some money to give us heat in the winter, to cook our food over our stoves and we store it up so that when a rainy day comes, or problems come, we can say to the money that we have put away: "Save me; you are my god."

Reformation brings us back to who God is and what He has done. We will begin to see afresh that Christ is the answer. We will again look to Him and no other. “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfector of our faith.” Hebrews 12:2

Recognizing the Supremacy of His redemption will also give us a sense of urgency that this message is the only hope in this world for salvation. It will not come through our major religions, or from our governments that we so often hope in, but through the Lord Jesus Christ alone and always. ONLY CHRIST SAVES!!!

Chapter 7

                      Supremacy of God in Reformation

The “supremacy of God in punishment” might sound like an odd title, but one thing that we forget about God, or at least like to put on the back burner, is that God is a God that will punish rebellion.

1 Corinthians 15 tells us that there will be a day when all authority, dominion and power that does not confess Jesus as Lord will be destroyed. Philippians 2 tells us that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord.  This is something that will and must happen for the good of mankind.

We all know from numerous passages in both the Old and New Testament that God will punish His people. “See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. This is what the LORD says — your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: ‘I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go.’” Isaiah 48:10, 17

We know from Hebrews 12:5, 6  that God will discipline us. “And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: ‘My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.’”

When the children of Israel were led out of bondage in Egypt they came to Mount Sinai where they received the TEN COMMANMENTS. God came down on the Mount before all of the people. We read that it was a terrifying experience. “You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: ‘If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned.’ The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, ‘I am trembling with fear.’” Hebrews 12:18-21

We see that standing before God was a tangible, terrifying experience. Why? Because their senses were involved. They could see, smell, touch, hear and even taste. Like Moses said: “The sight was so terrifying I am trembling with fear.”

However, in the New Testament this is not our experience. Our experience with God is not a tangible or terrifying experience. We come to Mount Zion and our senses are not involved. We come by His grace and we sense God’s forgiveness, love, etc. It is not the same experience that we find with God’s people at Mount Sinai.

We need to keep in mind that the God who met with Moses and the children of Israel at Mount Sinai is the same God that meets with us and saves us today. The God we read about in the Old Testament is the same God that we read about in the New Testament.

He will punish all wrong doing. He is a God of justice. Paul tells us in 2 Thessalonians 1:6 “God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you.” And in verse 8 Paul says: “He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” Verse 9 goes on to tell us: “They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.”

We might not like to talk about a God who brings punishment, but we need to understand that there is heaven and hell, and there is also eternity – which He has put in the heart of every human being.

Reformation brings us back into the reality of who God really is. In our day and age we have become very flippant about God. One of the things that Isaiah is bringing out to His people is that He is an awesome God. Several times God, through the prophet Isaiah, asks the question: “To whom will you compare me?”

We saw in an earlier chapter that there is nothing and no one that God can be compared to. He is above and beyond all. We need to come back to this truth and personal acknowledgement.

Chapter 8

Glory of the Lord

Isaiah 40:5 “And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

In the Book of Ezekiel chapters 10 and 11 we see the glory of the Lord departing from the temple. In the first chapters of Ezekiel we see the sin of the people of Israel. God is warning them, but they are refusing to listen. This is most usually the case with His people, not listening to His admonitions or warnings until it is too late.

Because they would not listen - we see in Ezekiel chapters 10 and 11 the glory of the Lord beginning to depart from the temple, or rather His mercy seat. The glory of the Lord was leaving the place of mercy and entering into the place of judgment. However it is important for us to see that when God moves from a place of mercy to judgment it will be very slow, but at a steady pace. But, when He moves from judgment to mercy it will always be instantaneous.

What is interesting is to see how He moves. In Ezekiel 10:18 we see the glory of the Lord over the threshold. There He waits to see what His people will do. Will they listen to the prophets, heed the warnings and repent or will He have to take another step towards judgment? They do not repent so He takes another step of leaving the temple and the place of mercy. According to verse 19 He is now over the East gate and again He waits. What will His people do?

They do not repent and so we read in Ezekiel 11:23 that the glory of the Lord is now over the Mountain, east of it on the Mount of Olives. The glory of the Lord has now departed from the temple. God has moved into the place of judgment. We see the judgment that fell on God’s people for almost the rest of the book of Ezekiel, which also models the history of the children of Israel up until today.

However, we find that repentance does come in and the glory of the Lord returns. We read about this in Ezekiel 43:4 “The glory of the LORD entered the temple through the gate facing east.” What is interesting is that there is no stopping over the Mountain, or the East Gate or the Threshold, but immediately the glory of the Lord is pervading the Temple over the mercy seat.

In the New Testament we see something that is parallel to this, in Luke 20:9-15 we have the parable of the tenants. Here we see the landlord who planted a vineyard and went on a journey. At harvest time he sent his servants to gather fruit, but were wrongfully treated and cast out, and some were killed. Almost in desperation we hear the owner say: “What shall I do?” and then he goes on to say: “I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.”  But the son is rejected, cast out and killed.

This ties in with Matthew 23:37-39 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate.  For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”  Here we see the heart of God. “How often I have longed to gather your children together,” and we see the heart of man as well, “but you were not willing.”

So we read in Matthew 24:1 that “Jesus left the temple.” The glory of the Lord of Israel had departed from the temple. After this Jesus never came back to the temple. Where did He go? He went to the East Mount - the Mount of Olives.

God is warning us as He has always warned His people throughout time, but are we listening? This is most usually the case with God’s people, not listening to His admonitions or warnings - until it is too late.

Chapter 9

JESUS: Who Is He?

Hebrews 12:2 “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.”

After 9/11 everyone was talking about God. I was thrilled to hear that God’s name was being invoked other than used in swearing. I would see different groups of people gathering together in public forums talking about God. I was thrilled that God was back in the public forum again. However, I soon noticed that on the same platform of people talking about God were Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, etc. I then began to wonder what God they were talking about.

Never once did I hear the name of Jesus. As a matter of fact, it seems that people hate the name of Jesus. If you talk about God people are somewhat civil until you mention the name of “Jesus” and then they seem to go ballistic. In thinking about reformation this brings us to a very important question: Who is Jesus?

When witnessing to Muslims one of the big hang-ups they have is what do we mean by calling Jesus the Son of God. For the Muslim it is blasphemous, because they think we are saying that God had an immoral affair with Mary and through it God’s Son was born that we call Jesus.

What does the Scripture say? I would like to mention several important things:

First, we know that John calls Jesus the Word of God. John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”  It takes a breath to speak a word. Some who work with our Muslim friends say that what they mean by calling Jesus the Son of God is that He is the Breath of God.

However, we are told in Hebrews 1:3 “The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.” This means that He is the expressed image of God. If we could take a photograph of God it would be Jesus. If we want to know what God is like then we can look at Jesus. If we want to know what God would do then we can look at what Jesus did. Like the writer of the book of Hebrews says: “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.”

Another aspect that we need to look at regarding Jesus is found in John’s gospel. When Jesus was being arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus asked the soldiers, "Who is it you want?" (John 18:4) They replied, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus replied: ‘I am.’ With that utterance they fell down backwards.

What happened? What were the dynamics involved here.  When the soldiers came to Jesus to arrest Him they were asking for Jesus, but when Jesus answered them He reverted back to His Old Testament name, "I AM." When He uttered those all-powerful words they fell down backwards.

When we look at this what we see coming out is that the Name of God is “I AM,” but He does business down here on earth as “Jesus.” Who is Jesus? He is God, the Creator, upholder of all things and by Him all things exist.

Is it not humbling to think that this God became a man, dwelt among us and tasted death for all men. Think about how the Author of life tasted death, the Ruler and Sustainer of all things come into this world as a little baby needing the complete care and nourishment of an earthly mother. This is our God - this is our Jesus. He deserves all of our worship as we ”fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.”

In Matthew 16 Jesus asked His disciples who people said that He was. They came back and said that he was one of the prophets. Basically, this is what we hear today, but then Jesus asked these 12 men (who had been with Him for almost 3 years) who they thought He was. Peter’s bold declaration was: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Matthew 16:16

Reformation brings us back to the realization of who Jesus really is.

Chapter 10

Who Is Man? - Part 1

Isaiah 40:6 “A voice says, ‘Cry out.’ And I said, ‘What shall I cry?’ ‘All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field.’”

When we think of reformation we need to come back to what the Bible says about man. Here in the West we live like in the days of Nimrod when they were building the Tower of Babel in the land of Shinar (modern day Iraq).

In the days of Nimrod man was supreme, he was god. Man was in rebellion against God. God had told mankind to multiply and fill the earth. (Genesis 9:1 and 7) Instead, we read that under the leadership of Nimrod men stayed together and were building “a tower that would reach into heaven.” Why? They wanted to make a name for themselves.

Man thinks that he has the answer to all of life’s questions. It is incredible that man can even think this way. When we look back at the 20th century and the wars that came through Nazism, Fascism and Communism where literally millions of people died; how can man still think he has the answers?

Yet, man in the West generally believes that he is god and master of his own soul; that he can manage without God, even if all of the evidence proves otherwise.

This type of thinking has pervaded the church as well. We do not voice it, but our actions speak louder than words; that we can manage God’s work without the Spirit of God. Remember that the best interpreter of a man’s thoughts is heard by his actions. One example of this today is the lack of prayer that we have in the average church.

A question was raised: Whatever happened to the prayer meeting? The answer has come back loud and clear through our actions that we can manage quite well by ourselves without any help from the Divine.

It is imperative that we see ourselves as God sees us and we come back to what God has intended for man. This to me is what reformation will do: reformation brings us back to God’s view of man.

Chapter 11

Who Is Man? Part 2

Genesis 1:26 “Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

There is no mention of man in the Bible until the sixth day of creation and then God said:  "Let us make man in our image." There is also no doubt that man is different from all of the other creatures that God had made previously.

One might ask the question: Is there any difference between image and likeness? Some Bible students say that “image” refers to constitution which includes the gift of personality, mental and moral capacity, free will, whereas “likeness” refers to the moral and spiritual resemblance to God.

Man has faculties that no other creature has that God made. Man is able to see God, in His work.

Romans 1:19-20: “Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”

Man is able to see the wisdom of God. We read in Psalm 104:24: “How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.”

Man can also marvel at His power. Psalms 150:2: “Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.”

Man, above all of the other creatures that God created, can appreciate the goodness of God.

Psalms 33:8 “Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere him.”

Man’s ability to think, acquire knowledge, making deductions from knowledge gained that lead to practical results - shows that man is different.

Probably one of the greatest things that the Lord has given man is the ability to speak and express his thoughts with the gift of speech. Someone said: “Animals may have instinct, but man has intellect to guide him in important decisions.”

In considering man we need to understand that he was fashioned by God with deliberation, bore the stamp of the Divine and was made partaker of many divine qualities. There is no doubt that man is the crowning work of God’s creation.

It is important for us to see this with man, and even the drunken man lying on the street gutter; he still has the image of God on him.

Chapter 12

Who Is Man? Part 3

Genesis 2:17 “…but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

In our study of man it is important to understand what is commonly known as the “fall of man.” Scripture testifies to this in many places. For example: Romans 5:12-19 says, “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned."

Through this sin man lost much of his original dignity. He was made to have dominion, to rule and reign. Still to a remarkable degree man still retains much of this dominion. However, sin has weakened his power to dominate nature. We see even today that with all that man has he still cannot control nature: earthquakes, hurricanes, etc. and we see the havoc they have brought upon man.

We read that the PERFECT MAN: JESUS CHRIST had full control over nature. We read from out of God’s Word that He will put everything, even death, under His feet, and Christ will reign supreme. We see His miracles, rebuking the storm and many other incidences of His power being displayed.

At the FALL of man we see that every part of man became tainted by sin. Although man is not all together bad, still we do have total depravity. Man’s way is not up, but down. His whole being is corrupted.

As someone said concerning ‘man:’ his spirit is darkened (Ephesians 4:17-18; I Corinthians  2:14); his soul is debased (Jeremiah 17:9;  Ephesians 4:19); his body is diseased and death-ridden (Romans 7:24); his will is weakened (Romans 7:15); his conscience is blunted (1 Timothy 4:2). Sin brought a schism into man's nature, the lower dominating the higher. Man, apart from grace, has "the mind set on the flesh" (Romans 8:7) and a heart that is deceitful (Genesis 6:5-12; Romans 1:17-24). He is spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1); under wrath and judgment (John 5:28,29; Psalm 130:3; Romans 2:5-12; Ephesians 2:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9; Revelation 20:15; 21:8); utterly lost (Luke 19:10); a guilty sinner before God (Psalm 14:2,3; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:9-23); a child of the devil, and under the control of Satan (Ephesians 2:2).”

Dr. R.A Torrey listed five steps in the *fall of man* given in Genesis 3:1-6. Adam was guilty of:

1. Listening to slanders against God.

2. Doubting God's Word and His love.

3. Looking at what God had forbidden.

4. Lusting for what God had prohibited (I John 2:16).

5. Disobeying God's commandment.

What “reformation” can do is to restore man. Yet, as we will see later - He does more than just restore. He takes us even beyond where man was before he fell.

Chapter 13

Who Is Man? Part 4

When we think of man we cannot forget what evolution has done. However, evolution did not start with Darwin, but with philosophers known as “Pre-Socratics,” around sixth to mid-fifth century B.C. These were philosophers bouncing ideas back and forth before the coming of Socrates. They were not interested in ‘who’ created the earth, but ‘what’ the universe was created of. They thought that all of life was just “matter” (stuff). For them, even if ‘the gods’ did exist they too came out of the same cosmos soup.

This type of thinking has been with us ever since and today it shows up in our class rooms as evolution. In this type of thinking, here in the West especially, doesn’t always mean that they are against God, but that He does not really matter. He is insignificant. Therefore, the evolution of man has taken the place of God and man can manage on his own.

Yet, when we read the Bible we find that it is completely different than what we are learning in the class rooms of our universities. Who is right? What is truth? Some will say that evolution does not oppose the Bible account of the origin of man.  However, they are wrong and here are a few questions by Herbert Lockyer that they can give us an answer to:

1. At what point in the ascending scale do moral questions emerge, or where does irresponsible animal passion pass into moral obligation?

2. At what point does a spiritual nature, carrying the gift of immortality, appear?

3. At what particular stage in the development of a semi-animal, semi-savage creature, can we apply the words: “Made in the image of God?”

4. How does the theory affect the Person of Jesus Christ, and how far back along the process of development does His redemptive work take effect?

I am reminded of the philosophers of the Apostle Paul’s day. Paul, in particular said, “Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?” (1 Corinthians 1:20-21) What Paul is doing is putting out a challenge and saying to these people that if you have the answers to life’s questions then step forward and let us hear! But they have nothing to say. Truth brings us back to who man is and why he is here, and reformation starts when people accept the Word of God: Truth. What we have today is man’s prideful opinions based on his opposition to the truth, which reveals his hatred for God and His Word. His Word is truth.

Why is all of this important? It is important because we need to see that we are the creatures and God is the Creator.

The philosophy I was writing about that somehow we can do the work of God in the flesh, without the Holy Spirit, has penetrated the churches here in the West and is causing untold damage.

In Galatians 3:3 Paul said: “Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?”

How much of what we do with our church programs, missions, evangelism, etc. is truly a direct result of ‘waiting on the Lord’ for His direction and timing? Are we fulfilling our own plans that seem or feel good to us? God’s work, when it is done in the flesh, is nothing more than ‘dead works,’ according to God (James 2:26) that “the body without the Spirit is dead.”

Chapter 14

Who is Man? Part 5

If paradise has been lost it can be regained. Man can be regenerated. The image that we had can be renewed. This is one of the great truths in the Word of God. Instead of the devil’s image of pride, malice and envy - the righteousness and goodness of God’s image can be recovered.

Colossians 3:10 “…and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”

This image repair can be accomplished only by God. In Hebrews 1:3 it says: “…who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.” He is the only One that can restore His image in us. How did He do this? This is what the Cross of Jesus is all about. This is why reformation is so important. It brings us back to the cross and what it means. In Adam we die, but in Christ we are made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:22)

Truly God does all things well. In the future there will not only be the blessings of the resurrection, eternal life, immortality and all being manifested with Christ, but also a restoration of the dominion that we lost through sin.

When Christ returns He will exercise all the power over His creation that was lost through sin. (Hebrews 2:6-8) “But there is a place where someone has testified: "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet." Psalms 8:4-8

It is through His grace that those who are ‘in Christ’ will share in His glorious reign. When God raises us up in Christ we possess a dominion that Adam would never have known had he remained innocent all his days.

We will be given a new name. It is interesting to see that what Nimrod and the people of his days wanted was to make a name for themselves, but God gives us a new name through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Genesis 11 we learn that they wanted to make a name for themselves, but in Genesis 12, where Abram is chosen, we read “I will make your name great.”

Later in his life we read that God gave to Abram the name Abraham. Genesis 17:1 “When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.”

Most of the world, with the different religions, are like Nimrod leaving God out of the picture and trying to gain their own righteousness, but His righteousness is being offered to us by grace through the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Needless to say that reformation brings us back to this truth: IT IS ALL GRACE AND NOTHING OF WORKS.

Chapter 15

Who is Man? Part 6

 **Post-modernism and Culture
  Worldview and the Gospel**
1 Corinthians 15:4-8 "…that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born."

Another aspect of the Gospel that we need to consider is in the verses above.  Jesus Christ was buried; He rose from the grave and was seen by a number of witnesses, over five hundred witnesses at one time.This is good news!

God had told us that every matter should be established by the testimony of two or more witnesses. (Deuteronomy 19:15) However, how does this build a Biblical worldview? Francis Schaeffer talks about the “mannishness of man.”  He said: “This draws attention to the fact that humans are different from all other things in the world.  Several things bring this out:  1. Creativity; 2. People fear death; 3. We are able to choose and we are able to verbalize.  People are able to remember the past and make plans for the future.”

For a worldview to be a true worldview it must answer this question about man, what Schaeffer called the “mannishness of man.” With the Gospel being the core of a biblical worldview we see how this question is answered.
When I think of what Christ has done for me (for man) it makes me realize that I (or man) am different from all other creatures. I can think, verbalize, create, love, fear, feel and express emotion, etc. One of the things that Francis Schaeffer brings out is that man fears death.

There seems to be within the heart of man a sense for the eternal. Even in our post-modern culture we see this coming out with man trying to remain young and not looking old. Look at the medicines being propagated that will reduce aging and exercises that we do to remain healthy. Pseudo spiritual mantras are being voiced and all because of the sense of the eternal in the heart of man placed there by God.

Man knows that he is different, but why?  The Gospel tells us that man is unique, made in the image of God. Man has a longing for eternal life because God has placed eternity in his heart. Man fears death. But the Gospel gives us hope. Jesus rose from the dead. To collaborate this truth He was seen after the resurrection by over five hundred brethren at one time.

So what does the Gospel teach me?
1. God made the world and He is in control.
2. Man is made in the image of God. Man is different from other creatures.
3. Man has sinned and fallen out of fellowship with God his Maker.
4. Jesus died for my sin so I might be forgiven and brought back into fellowship with God.
5. Jesus rose from the dead and so will I.

Another question that comes is: Why do I know that this is true? The answer lies in the Word of God. 1 Corinthians 15 states that "according to the Scriptures" we know this is true.

These are the core beliefs in creating a biblical worldview.  How important it is to be grounded in these truths!

Chapter 16

The Word of God - Part 1

Psalms 119:105 “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

Isaiah 40:8 “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever."

When we pray for reformation we are praying for His people to come back to the Word of God. Our US Supreme Court has announced that it is unconstitutional for the TEN COMMANDMENTS to be hung in our court rooms. We can hang them in our State Houses, but not in the courts. How ridiculous this is when the Supreme Court itself has a statue of Moses the Law Giver as well as the Ten Commandments in different places throughout the highest court in the nation.

The Bible has been banned from our public schools and some are trying to get it banned from any public forum. What these so-called elites are wanting is a secular society - with no mention of God and morality. This is why in our postmodern world there is no such thing as truth. It has been banned as well. What is the result? Isaiah tells us in 59:14-15 “So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice.”

What this is telling us is that there is no honesty, no truth and no justice working in the areas of our public lives. How long can a society function like this? Not long. In our Western world we are going down a path where we will soon reach a place of no return. Reformation is urgent! Reformation will bring us back to the Word of God. We, His people, must begin to see His Holy Word for what it really is - the very Word of God for our lives.

A REPORT by the Bible literacy program suggests that young Americans know very little about the Bible. But what is a real stunner is that a fair number of Americans don't see why teenagers should know anything at all about the Bible.

A study was done by a major denomination trying to find out why so many pastors were leaving the pastorate. They came up with four things. First, they were treating the pastorate like just another profession and not as a calling. Secondly, immorality was a major reason why many were leaving the pastorate. Thirdly, a desire for material things and fourthly (this is the one that blew me away), is what they called biblical illiteracy. They did not know the Bible although many were seminary graduates and some even doctors of theology. They did not know the Word of God as they should. They had studied books about the Bible and they could give you all the arguments about higher criticism, etc., but they did not know it in a personal way; how it applies to them personally, as well as knowing it from beginning to end.

This is why in another survey done by Frank Barna, he concluded that almost one half of the protestant pastors did not operate from a biblical worldview. They were ignorant of the Word of God and consequently this was true of the congregations as well.

Reformation brings us back to the Word of God in a very personal way.

Chapter 17

Word of God – Part 2

Psalms119:11 “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

When John the Baptist, forerunner of the Lord, appeared on the scene he had some choice words to say to the religious leaders of his day.

Matthew 3:7-10 “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.”

One of the things that the religious leaders were doing was relying upon tradition. Tradition was taking over the Word of God. Later Jesus told them: Matthew 15:3  “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?”

Some years ago I was speaking in a church on the subject: WHAT IS REAL SPIRITUALITY? After the message a number of people came forward and I sensed that they had come into a real freedom. However, I learned later that the pastor was very upset with me, for what I did not know. I felt that I should go and see what the problem was, so I went the next day.

When I spoke to the pastor I first mentioned that if I was saying something that was not biblical that I needed to know so that I might correct it. What he did was he pushed the Bible aside and said: “Let us not get into that right now.” He said the real problem was that in my preaching I had gone against seventy years of tradition. Ah! That was the real problem: I had gone against tradition! This made me wonder how much of our work today is based on tradition and not the Word of God, and how this could be the major problem today in some of our churches.

When I think of our denominations today most of them were started by men and women of vision and some of the things that they did were right on for their time, culture, etc. However, today is a different situation and yet we carry on with many of these things not because we are obligated by the Word of God, but because of tradition. As a matter of fact our tradition has begun to take the place of Scripture.

Why do we do some of the things that we do? Are they biblical? Do they fit in the culture that we live in today? I was preaching in a church in Europe where the pastor had a real desire to go back to the Word and make sure that what they were doing as a church was really based on Scripture, and not tradition.

Later when he wrote to me he told me that there were many blessings and they were praising the Lord for all that He was doing. The only thing that was negative, he said, was that they were kicked out of the denomination they were in. Interesting! But perhaps that is not so negative after all.

Perhaps the biggest issue facing us in the Western world is the rejection of ultimate truth. People say today that we make our own truth. What is true for me might not be true for you. Or, those who have the places of power are telling us what truth is. (Like the U.S. Supreme Court telling us that the Ten Commandments are not 'constitutional' and cannot be hung up in our court rooms throughout the land.)

Reformation brings us back to the ultimate truth - the WORD OF GOD.

Chapter 18

Word of God – Part 3

Psalms 119:98-100 “Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.”

When we look back into Western history and we see the importance of the Word of God - we are astounded. However, in many of our schools and homes people are ignorant of the important role that the Word of God has played in our lives and societies.

The Bible Literacy Project states: “Scripture begins with God creating the world, but there is something these verses don't tell you: The Bible has itself created worlds. Wherever you stand on the spectrum from devout to atheist, you must acknowledge that the Bible has been a creative force without parallel in history.”

If one was to go to the apotheosis of the French Middle Ages - Sainte Chapelle - one will see that the walls are made almost entirely of stained glass. Writer Shalom Spiegel said: “It has been rightly called the most wonderful of pictured Bibles.”

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch said: “The King James Bible has influenced our literature more deeply than any other book - more deeply even than all the writings of Shakespeare - far more deeply.” The poet and painter William Blake calls the Old and New Testaments "The Great Codes of Art."

Abraham Lincoln, one of our great Presidents said in his inaugural address: "With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right.” The historian William Wolf said this about Lincoln’s address “with its fourteen references to God, four direct quotations from Genesis, Psalms, and Matthew, and other allusions to Scriptural teachings it reads like a supplement to the Bible.” Lincoln’s comment about the Bible: "The best gift God has given to man. But for it we could not know right from wrong." Isn’t this one of the problems that we have today? We do not know right from wrong. We are now calling good evil and evil good.

Ronald Reagan called America "a great shining city on a hill," three-and-a-half centuries after John Winthrop (sailing for Boston in 1630) anticipated a new community that would be "as a City upon a Hill" invoking the famous verse in Matthew, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid," (Matthew 5:14) which harks back in turn to the prophets (Isaiah 2:2-3, Micah 4:2) and the book of Proverbs 4:18. John Livingstone Lowe called the King James Bible "the noblest monument of English prose" (1936); George Saintsbury called it "probably the greatest prose work in any language" (1887). Nearly two millennia earlier, the great Pharisee rabbi Hillel described the ideal life: "loving peace and pursuing peace; loving humanity and bringing it close to the Torah."

A survey was done by two professors to see who had made the greatest impact upon our nation. They went through thousands of speeches, essays, etc. to find who was quoted the most. To their surprise they discovered that the Bible was the one that was quoted the most. What an impact the Bible made upon our nation in its early developing years.

Some of our founding fathers like Winthrop, Adams, Lincoln, and thousands of other ordinary citizens found a good destiny in the Bible and made it their own, but today the Bible is fast becoming a book that just sits on the book shelf and gathers dust.

Historian G.M. Trevelyan said: “We aren't discussing a merely ‘popular’ or ‘influential’ book. We are talking revolution. In 16th and 17th-century Britain, the English Bible was capable of affecting the first thoughts people had on waking, their last thoughts before sleeping, their dreams, and their nightmares. British homes were *decorated* biblically - with Bible quotations or pictures painted or papered on the walls or printed on cloth wall-hangings. British life grew and flourished on a biblical trellis. Centuries later, Quiller-Couch wrote of the Bible in Britain that the Bible is in everything we see, hear, feel, because it is in us, in our blood."

Reformation brings us back to the Word of God. My prayer is that God will give His people a hunger for the Word of God. Like Job said: “I have esteemed your word more than my necessary food.”

Chapter 19

The Word of God – Part 4

2 Timothy 2:16-17 “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

In every society we have what I call the ‘opinion makers.’ These are people who use words to make a living like the journalists, anchormen/women, lawyers, politicians, educators, etc. Often we find that they create the opinions that we all accept and live by.

Some years ago I was in Denmark and stopped at a little kiosk to buy a English magazine. When the owners saw that I spoke English they started to speak to me. They told me that they had lived in Canada for many years and had just recently moved back to Denmark having been gone for almost 25 years. They went on to tell me how they were scared with what they saw taking place on how people were being brainwashed. They were being told what to buy, where to buy it, what to wear, etc. In other words, what they were telling me was that their opinions were being formed for them.

I believe that we, as God’s people and especially those in leadership positions, should be the opinion makers. We should know the Word of God and make God’s opinion known in our society. Francis Schaeffer said: “The culture is to be constantly judged by the Bible, rather than the Bible being bent to conform to the surrounding culture. The early church did this in regard to the Roman-Greek culture of its day. The Reformation did this in its day in relation to the culture coming at the end of the Middle Ages. And we must never forget that all the great revivalists did this concerning the surrounding culture of their day. And the Christian church did this at every one of its great points of history.”

Isn’t this a problem that we have in the Western world today in that the Bible is looked down upon and is discredited and irrelevant to what we are faced with today? However, it doesn’t matter what the ungodly say about the Bible, but for those who profess a faith in Jesus Christ and believe that the Bible is the Word of God, we need to allow the Word of God to be the one guiding us in this world. This is what happened with the early church as well as the reformation during Luther’s day. Luther’s great statement should be the statement of each one of us who claims to be a Christian: “I stand on the Word of God.”

What is happening in our society is that all things are relative. The final value is what makes me, the individual, happy, feel good, etc. Nothing is fixed; there are no standards except what makes the individual happy.

I would like to bring home two things in this regard. First, in most of our states we have the no-fault divorce laws. They are based on the view that there is no right or wrong and consequently what gives them happiness at the moment is the only way to go. Today, divorce among God’s people is just as high as among the unsaved.

Secondly, we need to see the promiscuity that is taking place today in the light of the Word of God. In our generation people are asking why promiscuous sex is wrong. I can think of three reasons why.

First: Because God says it is wrong. For those of us who profess to follow Christ that should be enough right there. Second: We need to understand how the Lord made us in regards to our relationships with one another and to fulfill the way in which He made us for. Promiscuity tries to force something into a form which God never made us for and which cannot be fulfilled. Third: Promiscuous sex is wrong because it destroys the picture of what God means of marriage, the relationship between a man and woman.

We need reformation to see things set right in our society.

Chapter 20

The Word of God – Part 5

Psalms 119:98-100 “Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.”

We read that when the resurrected Jesus was in the midst of the 12 disciples that “he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.” Luke 24:45

We will not understand Scripture by intellect alone. It will take the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit to open Scripture. One man of God rightly said: "The Bible is burglar proof against all unsanctified learning. The Holy Spirit alone holds the key to it." In other words, if we are going to understand the Word of God then it is going to be the Holy Spirit teaching us. It was Augustine who said: "I would affirm that the sufficiency of our learning is to discover that our learning is insufficient."

Just as we need the Holy Spirit for the work, so we need Him to fit us for the work.  Jesus told His disciples to stay in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit. It could have been easy for the 12 disciples to think that because they had been with Jesus for three years (three years of Bible School) that they were prepared to go out.

This, I believe, is a mistake that we are making today; that somehow a biblical education fits us for the work of the ministry. I am not saying that this is not important, but if we do not have the Holy Spirit leading in this then we are doomed to failure.

Often what we call “sacred” learning is nothing more than ‘secular’ because so often there is the absence of the Spirit’s anointing and illuminating power as well as dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

What we have found out throughout the history of the church is that studies about God when there is not a humble dependence upon the Holy Spirit to illuminate – do not help but are actually harmful. We have too many preachers preaching about God; preachers who do not know the Lord in an intimate way. They know about Him, but they do not know Him in truth and Spirit.

In Psalms 103:7 "He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel." This is what I am referring to. There is a difference between knowing the ways of God and actually seeing His them, in His deeds. Moses knew the ways of God and through Moses God could act and show His ways/deeds to the children of Israel. I believe that this brings out the difference between a person who has been fitted by the Holy Spirit for the work, and those who have not.

It was professor Beck who said: "Gentlemen remember that without the illumination of the Spirit theology is not only a cold stone, it is deadly poison." The Psalmist said: "If the foundation is being destroyed what can the righteous do?" What is our foundation? The Scriptures! Who have been the ones tearing down the Scriptures? It has been our so-called theological professors.

One of the reasons for this is that they think that they can understand the Scriptures by microscopic exegesis and by philosophical analysis. However, we read in 1 Corinthians 2:11 “For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.” This seems to be a truth that today has been forgotten by many of our Bible Schools and Seminaries. We read about the two disciples on the Emmaus road that when they were walking with Jesus and Jesus opened the Scripture to them, their hearts burned within them.

Reformation will bring us back to a simple reliance upon the Holy Spirit to understand Scripture and to see Scripture become flesh in us.

Chapter 21

The Word of God – Part 6

2 Timothy 2:15 “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

Our attitude toward Scripture depends upon whether we really believe that Scripture is inspired. If not, then any system of truth it contains cannot be relied upon.  It is imperative to understand their claims to divine inspiration, infallibility and integrity. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

One of the great truths about the Word of God is its symmetry. The Bible contains 66 books, written by 39 human authors (although we know that the main author is the Holy Spirit moving upon these men as He so chose) and over a period of 1500 years. Separate any one of the 66 books and it makes no sense, but together they proclaim a unity of the whole will and plan of God.

We talk about the revealed Word of God. What does that mean? The dictionary definition of the word revelation is: "A revelation is that which is revealed by God to man.” The word itself means “flinging or drawing back the veil,” which would indicate the removing of a veil or obstacle that hinders complete vision.

The Bible is not primarily a record of man's thoughts about God, but a record of what God has done and revealed of Himself to man. Its basis is not, "Thus and thus man thinks," but rather, "Thus and thus saith Jehovah," or "Thus and thus hath Jehovah done."

We also talk about the inspired Word of God. It is important to grasp what we mean by this often used word. There is a difference between revelation and inspiration.

Revelation is the subject matter of the message, what God imparts to man, but inspiration is the power or method by which man communicates his God-given message to man. We may therefore regard inspiration as a special gift of the Holy Spirit, by which prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles and their companions in the New Testament transmitted the revelation of God as they received it. These two facts are combined by Peter: “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” 2 Peter 1:21

Here the word signifies "breath," thus showing that God is the Author of man's intelligence.  In 2 Timothy 3:16 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." The particular word used by Paul means "God-breathed," that is, God Himself, or, through His Holy Spirit - told the writers of the Bible just the very things to record.

The Bible not only contains God’s words, but is, from beginning to end, the Word of God. If anyone has reason to doubt the inspiration of the Bible, the certain yet simple test to apply is to yield oneself to its power; strive faithfully to follow its commands, acting as it suggests, and as a result, the conviction will irresistibly grow upon the mind seeking proof in this way - that its claim to be inspired of God is not to be questioned, but reverently received as just and undeniable.  After all, it is personal experience that counts, and our Lord said: "If any man will do…..he shall know." (John 7:17)

Another word that we often use is ‘illumination.’  Clarence Larkin observes that: "Spiritual illumination is different either from Bible inspiration or revelation. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer, by which he has his ‘spiritual understanding’ opened to understand the Scriptures. (John 16:12,15)

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.” I Corinthians 2:11

“The natural man cannot receive the teachings of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." I Corinthians 2:14

He goes on to say, "The work, then, of the Holy Spirit in these days is not to impart some new revelation to men, or to inspire them to write or speak as the prophets and apostles of old, but so to illuminate men's minds and open up their understanding of the Scriptures that their heart will burn within them as they compare Scripture with Scripture, in having revealed to them God's plan and purpose in the ages, as disclosed in His Holy Word."

Reformation brings us back to the realization that God’s Word is just that: GOD’S WORD, and it is reliable “for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17