



# Shaqah

*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”  
Colossians 2:8*

In our last segment, we started our more direct look at the history books of the Bible. However, we spent most of that segment discussing the contrast between those books following the Torah, which Christians call the history books, versus the collection of books the Jews see as coming next. In that, we clearly saw how different the Jews put the books together. One of the main points discussed about the way the Jews look at some of the next books is that they call many books Christians consider history, books of prophets. Books such as Joshua, Judges, and Samuel to the Jews fits into prophecy thinking, based on the fact they speak of men who led the nation. So, as we continue our look going down the way of looking at the divisions and talk about these history books, I want us to keep that point in mind. As I have said so many times in this study, the Bible was given to create a perspective from which to view the plan of God. The Torah gives us that perspective. Thus, as we go into books such as Joshua let's look at them not purely as history but in the way the Jews do, because they were the ones who live with the perspective God wants us to see things from as part of their daily lives.

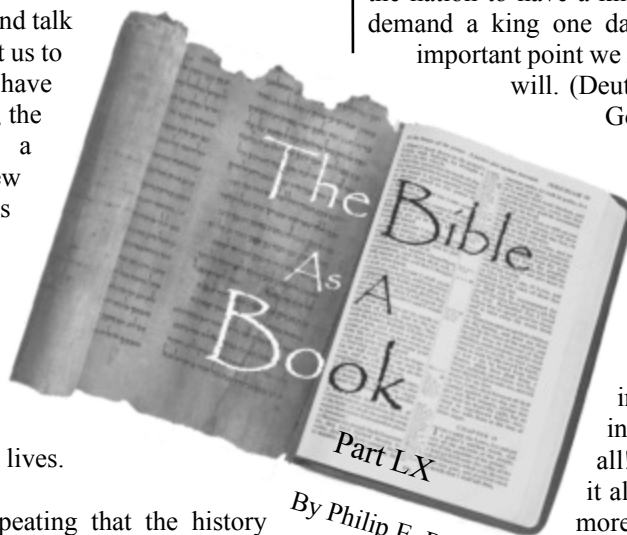
Of course, it bears repeating that the history books we are going to look at are the books from Joshua through Esther, and while some of these books such as the Kings, Ruth, and Esther are not even part of the second set of books as the Jews see it, which is called the Nevi'im, most of the first part of both the Jewish and Christian divisions are the same. So as we go into talking directly about our first book of history, which is Joshua, we just want to think of how much to the Jews this is history, yes, but in many ways it is no less prophecy than any of the books we see as prophecy. Joshua was a man ready to lead the nation in the same way Moses had led them. Joshua had been with Moses it would seem almost from the beginning of this journey from Egypt to the promised land. Of course, Joshua was younger than Moses by far, and that is why he is able to live on and take charge after Moses' death without just being another piece of Moses' generation stepping forward to take the lead.

Thus, from Moses to Joshua we have the true transition of not just leadership from one person to another, but the transition from one generation to the next.

All that being true, the point we have talked about before is also true, and that's the fact Joshua was taking over Moses' ministry as much as replacing him as the leader of the nation. Remember, at this point Israel did not have a king nor were they intended to. That is not just because they were not on the land as yet and in need of some more national structure of government. No, it was because it was not God's intention for the nation to have a king - ever! God knew the people would demand a king one day, but again and again it is such an important point we keep in mind it was not in God's perfect will. (Deut. 17:14-20, I Sam. 8:6-9) As much as

God would use the Davidic line to one day bring The Messiah through, in order to be The King of the Jews, this was done on the basis that God is always attempting to use where man's thoughts are to point us back to where they should be. If Israel had never disobeyed God and continued in the Law without a king as God set it up in the beginning, it would not have inhibited the coming of The Messiah at all! It would be my guess that in the end of it all, Jesus would have come as a man far more directly connected to the High Priest's line than He obviously did. The emphasis would have been that The True High Priest, The Eternal High Priest, had come, and not so much what we see in calling Jesus The Son of David.

However, there is another point in all this which God showed us by telling the nation, in spite of the fact He designed them to not have a king as other nations had/have, He knew they would one day insist. It is related to the fact that when that day came it would mean Jesus would be looked at as The Son of David. That point is the fact The Messiah was only necessary due to man's sin and man's inability to follow God without always questioning His ways, and/or wanting to morph them with the times and fads going on around them in the world. For example, just in our last segment we talked about how the



By Philip E. Busby



Christians and Jews separate the Hebrew Bible differently in spite of the fact we are dealing with the same books. Since this is the Hebrew Bible we are talking about, it should seriously beg the question, why? Why do we as Christians not simply have the Word of God in the same form as the people to whom it was given? The answer is in that same point about morphing and changing according to the times and world around us. The Christians and non-Christian Jews should really only have one issue between them, and that is the argument of whether Jesus was or was not The Messiah. That is certainly how the church started out. While it's true that can change other things such as the fact Christians (though not all, in truth, care, which is another big subject in and of itself), believe the Feast of Weeks has been fulfilled by the coming of The Holy Ghost, and Jews do not see it that way.

However, this would be a simple extra point along with the belief that Passover, Matzot, and Bikkurim have not yet been fulfilled as far as the Jewish religion is concerned, where as Christians believe they have been. Now, the more I talk about these kinds of points and it is read by especially first time or at least not long time readers of the kind of teaching I do in these writings, the more I am causing many Christians to lose track of what we're talking about. Many would say, "What, wait, I have no idea what you're talking about!" and there is the point right there that is at the core of it all. Christians have not even maintained the Jewish understanding of what it is to need to wait for The Messiah. Thus, while believing The Messiah is Jesus, we have not studied to show ourselves approved in understanding how that is possibly true! I find that totally odd and unacceptable, but it is the way the Christian religion has developed on the basis it has so totally strayed from the truth and prophecy the Bible shows us. The books of our version of the Hebrew Bible being arranged differently than those in the Jewish version is the least of our worries, because we don't seem to know much about any of them! Of course, I am being a bit facetious, but really, it is no wonder we might have a hard time seeing the Book of Joshua and others as prophecy books instead of just pure history books. Christians have been led so far afield from the core values and truths of God's Word, most who consider themselves Christians are not living in more than a Mother Goose nursery rhymes about moral teachings kind of life, when the Bible shows us something so much more than just the attempt to be "good people" according to man's standards!

Christians simply do not have the same breakdown of the books of the Hebrew Bible as the Jews (who are the Hebrews) because what we know today as the Christian religion in no way is a direct descendant of the original church! Does this mean it's wrong to call one's self a Christian? Absolutely not! The believers in Jesus were called Christians long before what we call the religion of Christianity existed and hijacked the term. (Acts 11:25-26) Does it mean we should avoid churches that call themselves Christian? Well there is a much deeper and complex argument. We have what we have and we live what we live in this world and life. The simplest way to put it is if you can find a group of believers to fellowship with and ministers who teach the Word of God, it can be something of value. However, it cannot be your walk with God. It can only be something of value to your walk. That said, if as you grow and learn some of the points I am trying to make in studies such as

these, you may find yourself at odds with what goes on in most churches. When that happens in the church or group you are in, it's time to leave, especially if there is no openness to hear any of the things you have learned and now know about how to walk with God. It is always about a process of individual growth, and if you can grow then stay, but if it is holding you back then leave, even if that means you can't find another group to be with. You will not be truly alone, and you by far will not be the first to feel you are all that is left of true believers. (I Kin. 19:10-18)

Does that mean the people in the church you left are all on their way to hell? Of course not. For a church that likes to emphasize how we should not judge, there is surely a lot of that thought pattern in the minds of those who are part of it. Your need to leave a group on the basis you can no longer continue to be a part and grow in the path God is showing you is to say nothing of anyone in the group who stays. Each must work out their own salvation in fear and trembling or be lost forever. (Phili. 2:12) I would hope as you strive or strove to grow while in the group, you did not feel you were on your way to hell, so there is no reason to judge others or for them to judge you if they stay and you leave. If they are interested in what you have learned then let them ask, and you need to be willing to help. If all they want to do is try and show you how they are right and you are the one in the wrong, using the same old arguments that made you feel you could no longer grow while in the group, then agree to disagree and walk away as best you can. If they want to continue to judge you, they certainly fall in the category Jesus was mostly trying to get at in telling us not to judge. (Mat. 7:1-2) Thus, pray for them every day.

The point still stands, Christianity as it is organized today does not represent what the apostles began in those decades following Jesus' ascension. It represents a religion that was formed during a specific time period to fit the needs of those whom it was attempting to be sold to and/or forced upon. This is simply a sad truth all true believers both Jew and non-Jew must live with as we attempt to live for God as individuals. We simply may not get the support of a group as we attempt to walk with God and grow, because far more often than not groups are swayed with the times. Israel was swayed with the time period they lived in, and it drove them crazy that they did not have a king. As talked about last time, another book Jews call prophecy which Christians simply see as history is Judges. The judges had to rise because Israel was not living as God wanted them to live. That is a key point not to forget. Due to their disobedience or simple lack of obedience, however you want to see it, the nation was not experiencing the protection of God in the way God wanted to grant it to them. They were also not experiencing the curses God said He would bring upon them for disobedience, but they were simply getting a taste of what it was like not to have God's hand on them. Sadly, they did not see it that way as much as they should have. Thus, the judges, if looked at as simple history, appear to be a lead up to the inevitable result of the nation "needing" a king. When, in fact, the judges were God's warning to the people they needed to return to His ways and experience, once again, His direct hand of protection.

In that light we see how much the judges, in their very existence, were prophecy to the nation. However, what we see in the life of some of the greatest judges God sent to save the

# Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment, we began to talk about the story where God tells Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. That story begins with the words that God tempted Abraham. Thus, we discussed how that statement seems to conflict with what the New Testament tells us about God not tempting us, and that led to a look at not just what temptation is but also the difference in the words used in the original languages of the Hebrew Bible versus the New Testament. In that, we see how in the New Testament we are basically being told God will never put us in a true no win situation because He can provide an escape. The “can” part of that statement is what has to do with why we should not tempt The Lord our God. (Deut. 6:16) We are not capable of creating an escape and God must punish sin. Only God could put someone like Abraham in the no win situation God was putting him in and still make a way of escape. Only God can take us to the edge without letting us go into real harm. This was a large subject due to the fact we also had to talk about what long-term hurt really is in light of eternal life. All that kept us in just the first verse of chapter 22 of the Book of Genesis, and we will begin in verse 2 this time.

Verse 2 is pretty straightforward in what it tells us, for there we find the instructions from God to Abraham about how Abraham was to sacrifice his son. That said, there are elements to how God puts these instructions which we want to look at. God says Abraham is to take his “son.” That part is obvious, but as we have covered, Abraham had Ishmael as well as Isaac. Since Ishmael had already been sent out of the house along with his mother, it is pretty clear to begin with that God is not talking about Ishmael, but that was not really the point here. We see the point in the next part of the command where God says, “...thine only son Isaac...” Not only does God call Isaac by name in this, but God emphasizes Isaac is Abraham's “only” son! It's interesting, to say the least, that God points this out to Abraham. Basically, what God is saying is that the choices of men, such as those which brought about the birth of Ishmael, are not relevant in this situation. This is not to say God looks at children this way in general, but what God is emphasizing again here is the fact God had a plan for Abraham's life. Abraham could go out and live life as he chose. That is a decision we each can make if we so desire. We can just live without care for God and His plan, but when it comes to our lives meaning something, we have to follow God in all things.

For Abraham's life it was God's plan to make of him a great nation. If Abraham wanted to go off and do his own thing, Ishmael and any number of other children he might have were fine and part of him living his life. However, when it came to the plan God had laid out for Abraham's life, Isaac was the only son of promise, and, therefore, the only son that mattered in what Abraham had been working for in serving God. Thus, when God says for Abraham to take his son, He is emphasizing Abraham is not to just take any child, but a son. This because a son is heir to his house. In saying Abraham has to take his only

son, God is emphasizing he is to take the only son who was heir to the promises of God for Abraham's life. These are important impacting things because God was telling Abraham, I gave you only one son to carry forward the plan your life has been about, and as much as that can mean your life would lose meaning by his death, My plan would be dead along with him, unless? See there is the interesting point in this whole story, and it relates to that idea God can make an escape, even if that escape had not been that Isaac survive all this. That point alone sends chills up my spine because oh how that speaks to what Jesus would one day do for us all!

God had made Abraham and Sarah wait to have a son until they were so old Sarah says, hey we have to do something about this, so use my handmaid as a surrogate and we'll have a child. However, God said no. In spite of the fact the plan did give Abraham a son (Ishmael), God would not accept that son because God had a plan they needed to trust in which would give Abraham and Sarah a son together. They continued to live before God, and Isaac was eventually born. If God truly wanted Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac, then, once again, Abraham and Sarah, at an even much older age by this point than when they miraculously had him, would have to trust God would somehow make a way! So God was not just asking Abraham to trust that doing this sacrificing of his son was the right thing to do in spite of the pain it would cause to kill one's own son, God was asking Abraham to trust that the plan for still ending up with an heir to carry forward God's purpose for Abraham's life was going to work out as well!

In the next part of the verse God instructs Abraham to go to the land of Moriah. In many ways the name Moriah is simple, it means “seen of the Lord.” This name is only used twice in the Hebrew Bible. Here in Genesis it is a name given to a specific portion of land within this region Abraham has sojourned. Later, in II Chronicles 3:1 it is used to refer to a specific mount or hill inside the “land of Moriah.” In Chronicles it is clear the reference is to the hill where the temple was to be built. It further specifies this is the spot David had obtained in order to stop the plague that was moving through the land, for there he would offer a sacrifice to The Lord which stayed the angel carrying out the plague. (II Sam. 24:18-25) We therefore know the Mount of Moriah is the hill just above the North of the city of David. This is the city of Jerusalem, which David took from the Jebusites and made his capital. Jerusalem is simply to say, “city of Salem,” and Salem was the city Melchizedek came from; who was a priest of The Most High God. (Gen. 14:14-20) This city was a city of peace because it was Moriah, in other words - seen of The Lord or watched over by God. Thus, when Abraham is instructed to take Isaac to the land of Moriah, Abraham was clear on exactly where that was. It was the area where the city of peace was.

God would further tell Abraham he was to offer Isaac

on one of the mountains which God would specify to Abraham when he got there. If we recall the stories of the New Testament, we remember numerous times Jesus went to the Mount of Olives and looked over Jerusalem and the Temple Mount itself. From this, we know there were other spots where it might have seemed logical to perform a sacrifice if one wanted to do it on a hilltop, which people normally did for the same reason man wanted to build the Tower of Babel after the flood, and churches still like to have spires. The land of Moriah encompassed more than one hill or slope, but once God pinpointed where He wanted Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, man would know the even more specific spot God would keep His eye on. That spot would be revealed to David in later times, and Solomon would be instructed to build the temple on that spot! All this, not because we need a specific spot to worship or to reach God from, but because man needs a symbol to demonstrate God does, in fact, have His eyes upon us. Man needs a place to look to in order to watch for God to act. This is why it was exciting in 1948 to see the nation of Israel once again officially established on this same strip of land Abraham sojourned in. It was even more exciting in 1967 when Israel took the land of Moriah back into its possession during the Six-Day War. Now we watch with anticipation for the Mount of Moriah to once again be fully claimed by God for use by His people, and we can rest assured, God's eyes are upon it even now!

The other specific God tells Abraham here is that Isaac is to be offered as a burnt offering. Some might wonder why this even matters or just think it's about the simple fact he would be offered as any sacrifice being killed and laid on an altar to burn. However, there is something important about calling this a burnt offering instead of just saying Abraham was ordered to sacrifice his son, and the detail is what makes some believe at least some kind of Law or portion of the Law must have existed at the time. Some people take that idea so far as to believe Cain and Abel actually had some law to go by and that's why Cain should have known to bring a blood sacrifice. Due to that, I cannot emphasize enough how much this kind of thinking is the wrong perspective to have. The Word of God does speak within a context better seen from the perspective of knowing the Law. Of that there should be no doubt, but that is not because the Law was given, even in little bits, before the time of Moses. God did not make such specific commandments for men until we see Him giving the Law to the chosen nation! That said, the Law of Moses was given as a way to set a perspective from which to teach and see the events that took/take place. We clearly see Paul and other writers of the New Testament using reference to the Law over and over, and it is used in such a deep way that many people pass over, or totally misunderstand, what is being said because they do not know the Law at all. That is a mistake, because knowing the Law is part of what Paul was telling Timothy when he talked about studying to show thyself approved! (II Tim. 2:15)

If the writers of the New Testament wrote in perspective of the Law, even when writing in some case primarily to non-Jewish people, why should it seem strange to us that the stories prior to the Law being given are also written in a way that is best understood by those who know the Law? It's details like this one here in Genesis about Abraham being told to offer Isaac, not just as a sacrifice but as a "burnt

offering," that tell us something deeper if seen in context of the Law's language, but only if we understand this commandment by God is not a Law or driven by some Law already laid down. It is driven by the simple fact God was at that moment commanding something specific of Abraham. This is the life without a Law true believers live. Jews can live within the Law doing daily, yearly things which they have been ordered to do day after day and year after year. However, the non-Jew, who was not asked to perform these over and over again representational ceremonies, lives by their faith in God. That is to say they live the way Abraham was living right here in this circumstance, by hearing and following the words of God, and just like with the Law, this is not a do it once and move on thing, it is a consistent lifestyle!

Now getting back to God calling what He asks Abraham to do with Isaac a burnt offering, we should understand that in the Law many sacrifices were consumed, at least in part, by the fire on the altar. So the burning is not what separates a burnt offering from others. The main categories of offerings are burnt offerings, peace offerings, and sin offerings. Without going into an entire study of that right now, just understand that both peace offerings and sin offerings are something individuals had to do in certain cases as in if this was done or that, certain offerings were required. On the other hand, what a burnt offering represented was an offering brought because someone wanted to offer themselves. I know, if you look in the Law you will find many times where burnt offerings were commanded to be used. Even here we see God telling Abraham to offer his son as a burnt offering. Thus, it is not to say you are not told to do it, but it is a choice of heart more so than any other offering. What I mean by that is man can refuse to do just about anything God asks of them, so yes, it is all a choice with consequences on both sides. However, we are told God loves a cheerful giver. (II Cor. 9:7) In our day we often relate that to the idea of giving money to God, but it was meant as more of an overall point than just a one item thing. When it comes to sacrifices there are many things God says, this is necessary for covering sin or for asking favor. This is man's pagan thinking, give and ye shall receive no matter what your attitude.

Of course, God never wants that to be the thinking, but to be crude about it, if it gets the sacrifice performed so be it. For example, things like sin offerings should be brought with a humble heart, but for the nation of Israel it was a commandment to be brought in order to cover sin whether you got that point or not. In spite of the fact burnt offerings happened many times with the same mindset, they were the sacrifices that really lost meaning if one did not do it with the right attitude. It is to burnt offerings that cheerful giving applies far more than other sacrifices because burnt offerings are not asking God for anything, they represent the willful giving of one's self to God! Thus, God was asking Abraham not just to give his only son Isaac as a sacrifice or offering for a specific action Abraham took which now required remission, or to clear the way for something upcoming. (Heb. 9:22) God was asking Abraham to freely give his son for no better reason than to come and worship God on Mount Moriah; willingly giving himself in representation by killing his son! Now, I want us all to sit back and think about that one for a few minutes and the impact it

# What About God's Chosen People?

## Part XXXIV

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

*"Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people."*

In our last segment, we talked about how the Jewish-Roman war came to Jerusalem and how that eventually led to the destruction of the temple itself. We also covered the point of how the last three strongholds of the Jewish resistance finally fell to the Romans. The last of these three was Masada, and that one came to a tragic end with the last of the Jewish rebels committing suicide before the Romans could break through. This they did to die as free people who were not under the Roman rule. Of course, we could go into the moral implications of all this, but staying with the history of it all, the leader of the rebels gives a speech that was preserved by a handful of people who hid and did not kill themselves. At the end of that speech he said, "...I cannot but esteem it as a favor that God has granted us, that it is still in our power to die bravely, and in a state of freedom." With that speech the Jewish-Roman war would come to an end, but by far it had not resulted in the freedom of the Jewish people.

To be clear, the war that came to an end with the defeat of Masada was only one of three distinct events to be considered the Jewish-Roman Wars. The next one, called the Kitos War, is an event the details of which are seriously lacking, but before we go headlong into that discussion, it is necessary to be clear on the fact these wars did not take place one right after the other. The Jews who held out to the last at Masada did so in the hope the Jewish people and maybe a few other allies would rise up to rekindle the flame of the Jewish resistance. Well, not only did that not happen in the short-term for those held up in Masada, but it would not happen again for sometime. However, this did not mean the Jews were content. After this first war the Jews, more than ever before, were now looked at as a rebellious people who had to have a close watch kept on them. In turn, this only served to make the discontent of the Jews grow. When studying all this one must keep in mind the fact the Jews came under Roman rule originally with a kind of friendship or cooperation agreement. While there were always those Jews like the Zealots and like-minded individuals who would never readily accept being under any foreign rule, there were many others who felt perfectly fine with it. That last group that was fine with it was going to dwindle as these types of events and wars came about.

The Jewish thought was and still is very much colored by the events of the past at this point. We are far, far away from the days of King David and Solomon, etc. Even during the years directly following the Babylonian captivity the nation was struggling to get on its feet and once again build what God, through the Law, had ask of them. In all those days from Moses forward the Jews were God's nation attempting to get things set up and right according to the Law, or failing to do so as the case

may be. Their success and failure brought the ups and downs we read about in the Bible. They go into captivity and return to their land to begin again. However, we then go into a history where the Jews must live under the ever shifting powers that call themselves empires, and while they had more tools to work with being on their land and the temple standing, the Jews found themselves under very similar circumstances as a captivity. They found they had little control much of the time in conducting their own affairs. They even went through many points when they did have a lot of freedom to do so, but they had trouble seeing it that way and did not take advantage of the things God was offering them in being under a ruling government but serving Him without concern for that. As time passed this took its toll on the nation, and unfortunately they sought answers from the minds of men and not from God.

The Jews, by this point we have made it to, had a heavy religious structure that guided all Jews who desired to be Jewish. As with any religious practice, not all agreed on the finer points of doctrine and the like, but what it meant to be Jewish had been well established by religious law by the time of The Messiah. That went largely unchanged after Jesus' ascension back to heaven. What changed is that point we spent a lot of time on already, which was the fact there were now Jews who lived still waiting for The Messiah and those Jews who believed Jesus was The Messiah. Those who believed in Jesus went out, especially after the work God showed through Paul, to take the Good News to not just Jews but Gentiles as well. This meant there was a growing population of both Jews and non-Jews who came to be known as followers of The Anointed One, in other words, The Christ, and they became known to the world as Christians. It was in the midst of all these political, social, and religious circumstances that the Jewish-Roman Wars we are talking about took place, and during that time, in no small part to the fact so many non-Jews were accepting Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, that Judaism and Christianity began to be looked at as two distinct religions.

We see by later history, mostly played out in Europe, Christianity became looked at as so distinctly different that if it had not been for the fact both Judaism and Christianity held the Hebrew Bible as Scripture, the truth these two religions had common roots might have been totally lost. In time, the Christians came to know the Hebrew Bible as "The Old Testament" in name, and by that point there was still a great loss, if not totally in the letter, certainly in the spirit of understanding that the two are directly related. Now, in a way I digress here, but in another way I do nothing but state the facts we can see more clearly in our modern times about how thought patterns can change. Seeing this helps us all try to grasp in some small way the impact the destruction of the temple had on the Jewish people as both a people and as a religion. You see, during the time of the Babylonian captivity the Jews had learned many

things about how to be Jewish without the temple. At this point we are now talking about a time where some of those practices had been carried on in spite of the fact the temple had once again stood for a very long time. This means up to this point there was a Judaism which was a morphing of the Law as it was intended to be practiced with the temple in place, and individual Jews doing rituals and/or ceremonies learned during the captivity that had to do with not having a temple.

What this further means is that some such practices by Jews were done without much of any thought of doing them strictly due to there being no temple. To many, these ceremonies and customs were part of what it was to be Jewish. In spite of so many of these things surviving even after the temple was rebuilt, the temple's destruction by the Romans brought a renewed interest in the subject of how to be Jewish without the temple. In this, we see an escalation of the religion in place of the spirit of the Law. While there is really little way to sort out all the ways this affected Judaism, the main point to keep in mind is that the destruction of the temple at the time of the Romans further affected the religion of Judaism and what it would look like. I am not here to debate the good and bad in all this because that is between the Jewish people and God. However, there is one very large thing to keep in mind with this that has to do with our question about the Jews being God's chosen nation. This change that took place was not just a shift in Jewish thinking and mode of religious practice based on the lose of the temple alone, but it also opened the door to separate Judaism even further from those Jesus believing Christians! We should also keep in mind that on the Christian side the apostles themselves had warned there were already those creeping into the church which represented the same on the Christian side. This means religious leaders among both Jews and Christians had motivation for finding ways to separate the two religions from one another.

With tears in my eyes I will now say, as much as the lose of the temple was a devastation for the Jews as a nation and in turn the world at large, because of the reason God wanted the nation to have one, the temple's destruction at the time of the Romans might have done far greater damage to Christians than anyone else! As we just covered, the Jews had gone through this before. The idea of not having a temple during the Babylonian captivity is what caused Jews to readily accept and build synagogues everywhere in order for Jews to have a common religious center in their more immediate communities. Since it was clear in the Book of Acts the apostles regularly went straight to the synagogues as they came place to place preaching the gospel, we know that practice was not dulled by the fact the temple stood. Thus, once the temple fell, synagogue life only increased, but it was already going strong. If we look at those facts we see that Christians had a strong knowledge at the time that the temple in Jerusalem was special, and the only reason most Christians could not regularly use the synagogue system to worship had to do with the official rejection of Jesus as The Messiah by the Jewish religious establishment. This, however, did not affect Jewish Christians from being Jewish in going to the temple.

In this, non-Jewish Christians got to see Jews from their own Christian churches going to the temple and how important that was along with how it affected them. Even Paul speaks in Romans of the Jew being teacher of the blind. (Rom. 2:17-20)

These are the kinds of things he meant. When Jews lived their lives in the synagogue they were closed off to the non-Jews in many ways, but when they met with those of like precious faith in Jesus, it included any number of non-Jews who could observe their lives and practices. In spite of the fact non-Jews were greatly outnumbering Jews within the Christian church, there was a connection and Jewish flavor that was maintained in Christianity by having Jews in their midst. The perspective God intended the Law to give people was readily on display and maintained within the church. There was a great understanding of what it meant to know Jesus was a Jew, and this was valuable to even, or should I say especially to, non-Jewish Christians. This speaks to why it was so easy for Paul to not just pen those words as God gave him the wisdom to do so but literally understand what he was writing when he said, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28 God was forced to scatter the Jews due to the nation's sin. However, after sending The Messiah, we find that Jews being everywhere was quite an asset as God would use them in all these communities to serve such purposes.

Now that purpose did not have to end just because the temple ended, but the problem with the temple being lost is that there was no longer something so distinctly and solidly Jewish for the Christian Jews to do. To be Jewish, once again, came down to being defined by what the religious establishment said, and that religious establishment was made up of those who had wanted to destroy Jesus and Christianity as a whole. This left Jews who were Christians a bit out in the cold, so to speak, or so it makes people feel. These Jews could not listen to the leadership who rejected Jesus, nor did they have the temple. They were meeting with many non-Jewish Christians and not going so much to the synagogue. Thus, they were on their own, and in many ways the responsibility of the Law became something so much more important for Christian Jews to hold onto as individuals. Understand that at the heart of it all there is not really a big difference between this and what God wanted of the Jews to begin with. In spite of the temple and all its ceremony, individuals seeking to follow God's Law, and in turn God Himself, is what the Law was designed to bring about. However, that does not mean it was easy!

Christians have a saying which has to do with the fact we put heavy emphasis on leading others to Christ, and it used to mean a lot more in how Christians tried to act, walk, and talk in their day by day lives. That saying was/is, "You may be the only Jesus some will ever see!" In other words, live as Christ lived and be an example of Him in all the ways you can because for some you may be their only exposure to a true believer. So too, this goes for the Jew and the Law! Without the temple it became more important than ever for individual Jews to know how to live by the Law because for so very many around them each of them probably were, "The only Torah some would ever see!" Remember we are also talking about a day long before the invention of the printing press! That I can not emphasize enough, and so I bring the subject up once again here! Today we take it for granted that most everyone who wants one can easily have a Bible. Even in countries other than the United States, where having a Bible should be very easy, there are resources for seeing one. Maybe there is a minister who has one or there is one left for the Christian community in your area to access or read

from. My point is simply this, back at the time when the temple was destroyed writing was not just everywhere, because the media to write on did not readily exist yet nor did the way to put the writing on that media. All writing was done by hand, which means existing copies of the written Law were very precious and rare. They also existed pretty much only in the hands of the Jews and a few wealthy people who could obtain a copy or visit some of the few libraries in the world who held a copy. The burden of teaching the words of the Law fell to each Jew in those days, and with the temple gone, the physical written Law quickly became the purview of the Jewish religious establishment.

While this did not cut off the availability of the written Law completely, it certainly made life much harder, and the church should have made it top priority to ensure this did not happen. That said, it was hard at the time, because going to the temple was open to all Jews, but Jews known to be believers in Christ would be more easily identified as such in their local communities, and allowing them access to Jewish things like the synagogue, including its copy of the Torah, could be easily denied. All this greatly hurt the ability of the Christians to access the Law itself in ways we can't really appreciate today. It also caused an even greater effect in that long-term there slowly became less and less of a Jewish influence within the church. This became especially bad as it was believed by many the right way to handle the Jews not accepting Christians for what they believed was to reject most things Jewish. This made life even harder for those Jews in the church who were trying. This kind of back and forth anger between religious people, none of which should have existed among either group of people who claim to serve The One True God, grew until it was basically official policy of both religions to reject each other. Neither religion wanted to be seen as the same or even directly connected to the other. Now, before anyone gets all angry at the Jews about this, understand that the idea of rejecting all things Jewish was far worse for the Christian side than it was for the Jewish side to reject Christianity. I could write a book on this subject alone, but understand just one simple thing, the only thing of real value the Christians held and still hold that the Jew does not automatically have in their belief system is the belief The Messiah has, in fact, come!

I understand completely the point people have about that being big enough, and that's really the part I could write a book on, but my point here is that as a religion for Jews to reject all things "Christian," aside from the base argument of whether Jesus was or was not The Messiah, the only thing Jews don't have is water baptism and the infilling of The Holy Ghost. While these are major points, we need to understand the symbol of water baptism is the symbol to show one understands and has received the message The Messiah was Jesus Who died, was buried, and Who rose from the dead. So water baptism is pointless without believing in Jesus. The baptism in The Holy Ghost has to do with being given the power to go out and be witnesses of Jesus in this world. (Acts 1:6-8, John 14:15-17) Thus, again, without the gospel in your belief system the point of receiving the baptism in The Holy Ghost is largely lost. That is why we do not see the fulfillment of Shavuot (Feast of Weeks or Pentecost) until after Jesus had come and gone back to The Father. The Holy Ghost is still here with us and will remain until Jesus returns, and there is another whole book because many

people are very confused by the work of The Holy Ghost. However, the bottom line is that until a Jew is willing to accept Jesus as The Messiah, the points Christianity hold are not needed by the Jew any more than they are for anyone in the world who does not receive Jesus for any number of reasons.

When it comes to the other side of things, the Jew who follows Judaism still follows a law given by God Himself, and still does today in spite of all the flaws religious thinking has brought into it. The Jew learns the ways of God and along with that the same ability to find and receive Jesus as any Jew who lived at the time Jesus arrived on the planet, and there is the real point! When it comes to Christianity losing out on things that are Jewish, we are talking about a religion who holds the truth of the Gospel but with little else to support it once the Jewish way of thinking and doing things is ripped away. People who understand there is at least some value in the Law, even at the ceremonial level, often find themselves asking the question, should I follow the Law? Because that question was a concern for a church that more and more pulled away from its Jewish roots, it was not well answered by church doctrine. Instead, in time it became not only church policy to say no you don't need the Law, but to also have this entire reason as to why the answer was no, and those reasons are very anti-Biblical! Things like the idea the Law is not even for the Jew and they just don't see it due to the fact they don't accept Jesus as The Messiah. Now there's a big one! The idea that the sacrifices have ended due to Jesus' being the ultimate sacrifice not only is telling the Jew who receives Christ false information, but making all Christians believe Jews who think the sacrifices should be done if the temple could be rebuilt are wrong in even their desire, much less their action if it were possible. All that is not to mention the entirely wrong theological basis all this creates concerning the idea the sacrifices had meaning toward forgiving sin on the other side of Christ which is now gone. That idea is probably about as bad as it gets. For Christians, of all people, to begin to believe anything but the sacrifice of Christ is what forgives ALL sin both past, present, and future just flies in the face of what Christianity is suppose to believe and stand for.

So do you see the problem with losing the temple? Ideas such as the argument of if non-Jewish believers in Jesus should or should not follow things in the Law, like being circumcised, was dealt with so early on we see it as a major argument in the Book of Acts! The reverse kind of arguments as to if the Jew should continue practicing the Law after receiving the Gospel could only be just around the corner, in any case. However, with the temple still standing it was just not a debate in the minds of most any Jew or non-Jew. This was good because God never intended the practice of the Law to end for the Jews. As a Jew they had been ordered to do so in the Law, and Jesus never said a thing to change that. Without the temple it has been easy for the church to point to the fact the sacrifices can not be done, and say it became that way because God wanted it to end after Jesus. That kind of thinking can and is used further to encompass the entire Law and throw it out with the excuse Jesus fulfilled the Law, thus it is no longer needed. In all these statements, once again, Christians are giving credit to rituals as having real power instead of being only the representative things they were/are. In doing so, they are taking power out of the hands of The One True God and putting it in the hands of men!

This kind of wrong thinking is exactly why Paul talks so much in the New Testament about understanding we are only saved by grace. This because we are all sinners who have fallen short of God's glory, but through faith, which without works is dead, we live for God, in the humility of understanding even that faith is not of ourselves but a gift from God! (Eph. 2:8-10, Rom. 3:21-26, James 2:17-23)

In rejecting a ritual system God Himself gave and put exclusively in the hands of the chosen nation, using the excuse we no longer "need" such ritual practices, we have in turn given power to the Law and ritual in general that they never had and never could have! If a ritual could ever save man or even delay his judgment, man would not need God. I don't know if we are all hearing what I'm saying here, but let me be blunt. The arguments of whether we should or shouldn't learn the Law and be knowledgeable of its precepts, no matter if it is or is not our personal job to perform its rituals, is far more than just a simple matter of debate! The consequences the church faced and still faces today in having even a debate on the issue is immeasurable and largely unrecognized by Christians today! That brings us back to the comment I made earlier about all things working for good. One might ask, so with all this downside to losing the temple what has been the upside? One thing we must keep in mind is that Paul never said all things work together for good period, end of sentence. He said it works that way for those who love The Lord and are called according to His purpose. There is a big difference. Thus, for those who do not want to follow The Lord in truth, the lose of the temple was a horrible thing, but for those who strive to serve God, there should have been the benefit of taking a greater interest in understanding we all need the words of the Torah in our mind for ourselves and not just depend on an ability to ask a Jew or watch them all the time.

If done, we would have found a church preparing itself for a day when maybe few to no Law practicing Jews are in every church. Meaning as the religious establishment on the Jewish side taught more and more Jews to simply reject Jesus as The Messiah out of hand, and Christian churches became even lower percentages of Jews, Christians would have been prepared to move on knowing the Law. Sadly, that did not happen, at least in a way that carried through to our time. There are many Christian organizations that would like to claim (and actually do) that they are the "Apostolic" church. This is to say, the church that stems from the original church as it existed during the lifetime of the original apostles, but just like sitting in a garage doesn't make you a car, calling yourself by a certain name does not make you what that name is meant to denote. I mean no direct insult against any church that has that in their name, but let's face it, the church as it began in those days when the original apostles still lived does not exist in any structural organized way. Instead, it exists in the individual(s) who have ears to hear what the spirit of God is saying. (Matt. 11:7-15) This is why God gave John the Revelation. It is the continuing knowledge Daniel sought but was told the time was not yet ready to have it. (Dan. 12:4) By the end of the Apostolic age, which John represents in that he was the last of the apostles to be alive, the time was ripe for this information to be given. Thus, in that revelation we see a beast rise up that is not like any of the ones Daniel saw but it represents the same

kind of thing. What Daniel saw, in representational form was empires that would come and go and which would rule over God's chosen nation or people; the Medes and Persians along with the Greeks and the Romans. What Daniel would not see in his visions was what was really being represented by the toes of the statue from the king's dream, which were made of part clay and part iron. (Dan. 2:26-45) That entity would be left to be represented in an individual beast form until John's Revelation. The description we find of that beast is that it had the appearance of a lamb but spoke with the voice of a dragon. (Rev. 13:11) Kind of reminds one of the verse that talks about having a form of Godliness but denies the power there of. (II Tim. 3:5) The idea is the same, but with the beast it is showing a full organized (whether loosely or not) entity not just an individual or one specific group. Yes, on many levels the Catholic organization is an easy target for saying they are this beast, but let's be clear here, all organizational "religious" Christianity is to blame.

This is why the toes in the statue are not all of one metal like the other parts. In fact, they are not entirely made of metal at all! The second part is clay, which can not even be molded with metal because they don't adhere to one another. This is the point. There are those giving strength to this beast by believing in what it stands for and/or following it. Others are striving against it or are not a part of any of it at all. Thus, we see the epitome of the statement, we're all in this together! In a world such as this, whether Jew or non-Jew, we are threatened by the power of man-made religion, and in its worst form are those religions that claim to serve and teach The One True God. On one hand, we have a religion in Judaism that does not believe Jesus is The Messiah and on the other hand, we have a religion in Christianity that has largely rejected the Law and which has so many problems they can not all be summed up in any short statement.

We can blame many things for why this happened. First, the Jews as a nation rejected The Messiah. Second, the temple was destroyed, and on and on we go. However, that part of the statement about good coming for those who love The Lord and are called according to His purpose is the real key. People, individuals, have to want to serve God and in doing so seek the truth. It is what we do as true believers. We do not simply follow a religion or organization of men no matter how old they are or what they claim to represent. We seek the truth no matter under how many layers of dust, dirt, and debris we have to dig through to find it. The true apostolic church is out there, but for many individuals it is only found by a lifetime of study and seeking. This too is a good thing, for in the seeking of the real truth we find ourselves growing in faith, not just at those times we find a gold nugget of information or knowledge but in the trying itself!

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

***Questions submitted to the Institute, answered by  
Philip E. Busby.***



#### **FBS continued from pg. 4**

should have on how we see this event. We so often feel all offerings are for the remission of sins and certainly outside the context of the Law which orders certain sacrifices to be things like peace offerings or such, we think of men sacrificing being all about doing some sin or being sinful in general, and thus needing to offer a sacrifice to God.

This is, as we have so often discussed, the point of having pagan thinking. Offerings and sacrifices are suppose to make up for something we have already done. They are to ward off something bad we think is going to come or attempt to earn favor for something we want. This is the pagan mindset! It is not God's mindset. God wants us to desire to worship Him. That desire is what caused Cain and Abel to bring their offerings, and Cain was not rejected because he failed to bring the right thing. Cain was jealous his offering did not get the same treatment as Abel's, and that was the problem. When we see Noah come off the ark, we do not see him being told by God to sacrifice offerings, but we are told he offered burnt offerings, nonetheless. (Gen. 8:18-22) You see it is the same wording because it is meant to say to us, Noah wanted to worship God and so he offered of the precious animals that had survived with him on the ark to represent he willingly gave his life to God. Now, we see Abraham being commanded by God to bring his son and offer him, but just like Noah, it was not as retribution or in preparation for something coming. Abraham was commanded to bring his son and offer him willingly in and as worship to God!

This is the kind of relationship Abraham had with God. A man so sold out to God and His purpose that even with the truth God will not put more on us than we can bear, God asks this of Abraham. (I Cor. 10:13) However, as we go into verse 3 we see just as with other times there is no hesitation on Abraham's part. We are told specifically he rose up in the morning to go and do exactly what God had asked of him. We are also specifically told Abraham does not just wake up his son and head out across the land to Moriah. He takes the time to prepare his pack animals, he chooses servants to go, he even cuts wood so he is not dependent on finding what he needs when he gets there. I am always struck by the methodical calmness of this verse. Sure, he's a man, but we see no record of him crying or being distraught. It does not say he did this slowly out of obligation or with a heavy heart. Just as if he was getting ready to go on any normal journey he does the work appropriate to the task at hand. The fact he was not letting on in any way that it was anything out of the normal is shown in Isaac's later question to his father. While I doubt Isaac was completely oblivious to what might be coming, there is no indication in Isaac's statement asking why his father seemed so down about this trip which was so obviously about going to worship God.

All that said, let us not believe Abraham was not just dying inside over this. I can only imagine the conflict of emotions he must have had, but the way he handles this test is really amazing beyond any faith we see in other places. The Roman centurion Jesus marveled at having such great faith showed an understanding of the power of God, in that Jesus did not need to do anything but speak the words and the miracle he needed would happen. However, in that case the man was

asking for his child to be healed. We find it easy to follow God when He is making things good, but how many of us can continue to serve God, and in no way doubt His plan, when God asks of us the kind of sacrifice Abraham was asked to give? We often talk about the ultimate sacrifice, and we do it most often when talking about people being willing to give their lives in defense of others. In no way do I demean that, but speaking as a parent myself, I can certainly say I'd give my life in a heartbeat if it would save my child's in exchange! A big part of Abraham had to be just crying with the thought he wanted to ask God for such a thing. This has to be true because we earlier saw in Abraham even a sadness in the fact Ishmael could not go on to be the chosen son. (Gen. 17:15-22) That all being so obviously the case, we still never see even the beginnings of Abraham asking God to spare Isaac or take his life in Isaac's place. Abraham did not ask for the ultimate sacrifice because he was clear he had to do this thing that was much harder in many ways.

Now, in verse 4 we see just that much more added pain to this whole event. We are told after three days they finally came close enough to see the place God was directing Abraham to off in the distance. Interesting fact not to miss here is another number three appears. No, not numerology or anything like that, but this entire event was symbolic, and I have a hard time believing three days and three nights of this was a coincidence. Abraham was told to do this, and so that was night one. He rose up, prepared and left to travel day one. He spent night two along the trail. Day two they traveled again and spent night three. Day three they would look up and see the place this entire journey was meant to lead in order to accomplish the task it was all about. In looking at this sequence we should see how much more the sequence Jesus went through for three days and three nights was as much about the agony of going through the events themselves and not just being in a grave for that long. On night one Jesus sweated as it were great drops of blood in the garden as He reached out to His Father! Day one Jesus, being the Son of God, would then go through a process humiliating for any human to go through and the pain of being crucified. Jesus' process would have Him in the grave as we see it on night two and day two. We would also not know the details of night three, but while we begin to see the victory on the morning of day three, Jesus tells Mary, "...Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father..." John 20:17

This is mirrored in what Abraham was put through. Night one was the agony of knowing what he had been told to do. Day one was the work of getting ready and starting the journey to the place needed to do it. Night two and day two as well as night three would be spent quietly doing the work of getting to the right place. Day three would bring the victory, but just as many had a difficult time accepting Jesus had risen from the grave the morning of day three, so too Abraham had no idea what this day would truly hold for him. Can you just imagine traveling for those days, living with the agony of what he was commanded to do when he got there? By this point, Abraham knew this land pretty well. He knew where to go to get to Moriah and had a good idea, considering terrain and season, how long it would take to get there. I don't know about you, but each night I laid down to try and sleep the agony would just be killing me. Every morning I woke up, if I even could sleep, would be just that much worse. To look up and see the place in

front of you, knowing the time with your son was almost over? Well, most of us just couldn't do it. I can't even type these words thinking about it without tears welling up in my eyes!

Now, the fact they saw the place afar off is directly connected to the facts told to us in verse 5 as Abraham would tell his servants to stay and tend to the animal(s) and their belongings. They were far enough away that his servants could not be witness to the events that would come next. When we do not understand how much the mount God led Abraham to was just up the hill from the city of Salem, we tend to think of this happening out in a very deserted place, but that's not the case. Since that was not the case, it would seem the logical thing was to take the men and animal(s) into the city. There would be supplies of food and water; a way to replenish supplies in general; and a more safe and comfortable place to spend the night if need be. However, Abraham does not bring the men to the city and then tell them to wait as he and Isaac only go up to the mount. Abraham leaves them out here a good ways off in the hills. This has a very interesting connection to the fact the temple would one day stand on this mount where Abraham was headed with Isaac, but only certain men would be allowed by the Law to perform sacrifices there. Only a certain nation of people would be allowed to bring their sacrifices and offerings into that temple, and, at this point, Abraham and Isaac were the only two men to represent that nation. However, the point on which the temple set could be seen from a great distance away when on top of hills in the surrounding area. If Abraham really was to kill his son and burn his body on that mount, the men would not have been close enough to see the specifics of how it happened, but they would have been able to see the smoke rising up from the mountain, and they knew Abraham was going to go sacrifice something!

In truth, Abraham did sacrifice something in the end, and these men would see the smoke of that offering rising into the air. This mirrors the later setup of the temple. Non-Jews who were not allowed to enter the temple and bring sacrifices to it would get a great view of this activity as they stood on those surrounding hills or just as they traveled toward the city. If you have not sat and given real thought to how the temple activities and sacrifices were to go, you might not have a good grasp on how constant the smoke would have been rising from the temple's altar. Not only was there a lot of activity in that sacrifices were offered both morning and evening and all through the day, there were sacrifices being brought by the people, but there is the simple fact that what got burned on the altar was parts of the animals, which created a lot of smoke and some of them would take a very long time to burn completely. The smoke would have been continuous at least from early morning until very late into the night, if not at all hours. In this way the chosen nation still had a pillar of cloud guiding them by day, just as they did while traveling to the promised land. (Ex. 13:20-22) While this pillar did not lead ever forward to something new, it led them to Moriah, the place where they would always be seen of God!

Now, the one last detail in verse 5 is the words Abraham speaks to his men here in the place far off from

Moriah. He tells them here is where they would wait, and the details of why that means something is what we already covered. However, he specifically tells them he and Isaac would go off to worship. It is at this point we see, if it had not been said in any way specific up until now, Abraham is telling them the reason they have been on this journey. I'm sure Isaac and the men had surmised that already, but this leaving the men this far away from the city itself showed this was no ordinary worship. It must have seemed odd to them that Abraham would head so close to a city when there was all this open space to worship God in which he was leaving them in. If we see it in this light, this point should further add to the curiosity we see in Isaac's question to his father as they move on. There was so much about this whole thing that was not normal, and while we are not told Abraham does any of this with a heavy heart, certainly not one that showed, he had to be somber about it all.

Then there is the last detail of verse 5 which exists in what Abraham said to the men. That detail was that they would go worship, "...and come again to you,..." Remember at this point Abraham had no idea God would do anything. While he might have hoped it would turn out different, he fully expected to go to that mountain and sacrifice his son. So, when he says come again to you, as far as he knows that means just him. There would be obvious questions from his servants if Isaac was not with him! Even if Abraham's somber mood, or all out grief by that point, of coming back from accomplishing the task caused the men to stay silent for a time, I don't see how they could have helped but ask something about it after they were all packed up and turning to leave this place with no sign Isaac was anywhere to be found. How much their minds could have even imagined the smoke they saw rising from the mountain afar off was Abraham offering Isaac is hard to say, but if these were not their thoughts, one would think they'd be just that much more bold in asking their master, what had happened to Isaac. Abraham was not a man who lied. He was not going to answer that question with some excuse of leaving him in the city to be an intern of some sort or other excuse that gave the thought Isaac was still alive!

What was he to do then? How do you go about telling servants you just offered your son to The God Whom these men had to know quite well never wanted such things as some other pagan gods did. These men no doubt knew such things were exactly not the kinds of things that happened in Salem! How was Abraham going to make sense of it all? We can brush it off as being none of their business so Abraham did not have to answer, and maybe that's right, but I have a hard time believing he had that kind of relationship with his servants, especially ones he had chosen to spend the last of his son's days traveling with! Of course, dealing with such questions very well might have been about the furthest thing from Abraham's mind at this point, but it all serves to make us see the ramifications of doing such a thing as God asked of Abraham to do were even deeper than one tends to see in the moment!

Until next time, Shalom!

## The Bible As A Book continued from pg. 2

nation from outside harm or free them from oppression, is many people of the nation believing the work of the judges was nothing short of the evidence they did, in fact, need a king! To those who do not truly love God and will not allow their lives to be directed according to His purposes, the very things meant to show people what it looks like to stray from God causes one to believe God's plan does not work or is not workable. Such was the case with Israel not having a king. Many saw it as something that just wasn't working. When we look at these books as just history and not in the light of prophecy, we too can begin to think such things. People can ask the question, why did God not give the nation a king right from the first if He knew He would have to one day? However, the answer is simple. God does not set us up for failure. Just as He created us in innocence and placed us in the garden to begin with, God gives us a chance at the pure; the good; the perfect situation. It is simply up to us whether we want it or not, and/or are willing to live in it. In any case, if God does not at least give us the chance, then we do not know there is a better way, no matter how unattainable that way is to get back to, at any given point as we travel through time. Thus, God gave the nation of Israel a chance to see His perfect way, and the best way for them to live as a people was not to have a king. We also see that could only work if they looked to Him for their needs and followed Him with their whole hearts, which they did not do!

We look at it today and can't imagine how any group of people without an official government structure to represent them and protect them could survive, and it seems the answer is no, but that is only true because we discount what it would be like to have God protecting and guiding us. We look at what Adam and Eve gave up in the garden and we see no way possible back to that. Man can dream of a utopia one day, but it still never looks like that, and if you think it does, you don't understand what they had! However, this is what heaven will be. Not the riding on clouds kind of thing people often think about, but the opportunity to get back all we have lost. If it was inevitable that Israel ends up with a king one day, and according to God's own words it was, it was not because God's original intent could not have worked and been much better! It is not the evidence that shows God was wrong in anyway that it did not work out. It was God giving us all a chance to see what is possible for those who follow Him with their whole heart. It was God showing us what He really wants for us, in spite of whether it is something still obtainable in this wretched world or not! These points we must see if we are to study the Bible and understand the plan of God as we should. These points are why Paul instructs in Romans 3:3-4 "For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."

Our understanding of all this is much better off if we see that Joshua was in no way a king or predecessor to one. Even his continuance of Moses' ministry, in the same way Elisha picked up where Elijah left off, is in no way the admittance that a king was inevitable. It is simply that Joshua, like Moses before him, was a prophet who was needed to bring the words of God to the nation and help guide them in order to get them where

God wanted the nation to be. Like any prophet, God's will can only go forward if people are willing to act upon what He instructs. Even in this, we see the hopelessness of men. Moses asked God at times and had it in his mind far more often than it was ever verbalized I am sure, that there was only so much he could take. Moses wondered how he could possibly care for a people who seemed to want him to be like a mother who holds her baby to her chest to breast feed. How could he carry them on his back like little children so often want their parents to do when they are tired of walking on their own. (Num. 11:10-15) Moses, and yes even Joshua after him, were necessary for the nation to get on their feet because individual people being given a simple charge by God will not listen, adhere, come together and do any great work as individuals who are all willing to follow the voice of God for themselves. God shows us through the giving of the Law that even a people given something in writing to continually read and ceremonially follow are not willing to do it. Thus, prophets, or in other words, men who are willing to be a conduit through which God can speak, are necessary for God to send in order to make an even further attempt at getting people set straight, established, etc. However, it is never God's will those people be the ones constantly necessary in order for individuals to get things right in their own lives, and in turn as whatever group God may or may not want them to be!

Thus, simply put, Joshua was a prophet in every sense of the word, and not only was he not the predecessor to a future king, he did not even represent a leadership role God intended the nation to continually have. This is why Joshua, near the end of his life, speaks some of the most basic and profound words in the Bible which anyone reading can simply understand. He speaks of how Israel had come a long way but was now on the promised land where they belong. Then he simply points out it would be up to the nation to choose who they would serve, and he ends his remarks by making it clear he and his house would serve The Lord. (Josh. 24:1-18) We should note that in this Joshua is in no way passing his work off to another man, not even a son. He, along with his house, meaning his children, would continue to serve God, but only in the way everyone in the nation should. By Joshua giving up his leadership role even before his death, he shows us how much his work in that role had run its course. He did not try to hold onto it out of pride, nor did any of his sons. We also see in the nation of Israel there was an understanding as to how much pushing for him to be replaced or his role to continue through choosing someone new was clearly understood as not the thing to do, for it never happened.

It's too bad those in the Christian religion do not understand all this, because it would save men from a lot of missteps. As I said above, no church today is the direct descendant of the church that existed when the apostles were still alive. However, that has not stopped certain churches from claiming to be, and one of the most interesting points in Christianity which relates to what we are talking about here is that of the Catholics having a Pope. You see, if you do not already know it, all you have to do is simply look it up and you will find that Catholic doctrine states the Pope is the continuing authority of Jesus Christ upon this earth. You can also follow the line of men who have, or at least have been said to have, filled the role of Pope going all the way back to Jesus. The way

they make the link through the apostolic age is to say that Peter was the first pope. This is an attempt to do just what we were talking about Israel not doing at the time of Joshua, and it is so very true that Peter never said anything to indicate he was a continuance of Jesus' authority. What the Catholics have done is established a religion, and within that religion established a very powerful position. They have then retroactively filled the role of Pope by going back through history and declaring certain leaders in the church as Popes so they can make this connection to Jesus and legitimize the position's existence.

As humans we not only have trouble doing what we should do because we know what to do based on our individual relationship with God. We want to be told what to do by a leader, and that is why God has wanted to avoid such men from the start, and at those times such as when the chosen nation demanded a king, God allowed such a position, but only if He controlled who that person was. Even in that and in many ways due to the nation's rebellion against that, the nation of Israel failed to follow God in the way He needed, much less wanted them to! So what had to be in God's plan? To send a perfect leader in The Messiah. A man, in the flesh, who would be able to lead with total purity in the ways of God. That man was Jesus, and what did the very nation to whom He was sent do? They had Him executed. However, not all rejected Jesus, and those who accepted Him went out to do the work of God in teaching the Gospel to the world. (John 1:6-14) Did they have a leader? No, but they had point men so to speak. Twelve men had been hand picked by Jesus to be like the prophets before them. Like Joshua they would help establish and further the Gospel message. Eleven would survive to see Jesus' ascension from this earth and be left to do that work, but there would already be far more than just the eleven who believed in Jesus. Jesus would also fill that twelfth spot once again by calling Paul. (Acts 9:1-8)

However, none of these men would carry any continuing authority of Jesus other than to do the work and spread the words Jesus had given, and they would need The Holy Ghost to even accomplish that. (Acts 1:6-9) The Holy Ghost would not be in just one of them or even just for those who did this ministry work. The Holy Ghost would be for any believer who sought to have Him. Again, in this, we see how ministers of the Gospel are nothing more than prophets in the most basic definition. They serve the role God calls them to serve and nothing more. Their position is not a dynasty or something to be carried on in directly being replaced. Those who work in the ministry are gifts from Jesus Christ to help individuals find their way, and as a group to be a church which Jesus will one day return for. That church will not be just one organization or any organization in particular. The church Jesus is coming back for is all those, no matter where they might be or how alone they might have been in living for God, who did exactly that – lived for God! Recognizing Jesus and Jesus alone as their authority. Not listening to men first and then God, but always to God, even if at times that word had to come to them through a man. If that is how they find what they need, then it is a further gift of God just like the faith in one's life that makes it all possible in the first place. (Eph. 2:8-10) That is why even those in the ministry are said to be gifts which Jesus gave as His

time to leave this earth had to come. (Eph. 4:10-16)

That is what Joshua, the judges, and the prophets of the Hebrew Bible were. Gifts to the nation of Israel to help them find their way, which is something so hard for so many to do on their own. Thus, as we go into our study of the history books, we want to keep in mind this is so much more than history. It is to see God has done all He can to get men to follow Him, to listen to His voice and do His will; to live their lives for what He created us to live them for. While this history focuses heavily on just the one nation, in doing so it shows us the entire condition of men. For if God could not focus His efforts through a single group of blood related people and get them to continually move in the direction He wanted them to move in, we can surely see how lost the world at large must be. Yes, it is a downhill cycle man is in and has been in since Eve first reached forth and took from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. We cannot win back all we have lost since that day, and the lose has been tremendous. However, what is also clearly shown in this history of man is that all along, not only has God reached further and further down in an attempt to reach all those who were still reachable at all moments through time, He has woven within all of it a plan which man's rebellion could not stop; a plan that can save all those who desire the truth.

That plan is more than the idea of giving us a written Law to follow in the end, or ceremonies to perform in representation of things we can only hope for. That plan is certainly more than an organization that calls itself the church. However, it is also more than a loose group of believers, many of whom live so alone they have no one else around them they clearly recognize as being a part of what they are a part of. There is so much more in the Word of God than just the doom and gloom of man's downhill slide of sin which is all we have in the here and now. The things of God, no matter how much we think we have seen them in some way, are things eyes really have not ever seen and ears have truly never heard. (Isa. 64:4, I Cor. 2:9) The wonders of God restoring what He designed us to be by taking all those who desire Him to a place where they can truly be given an eternal chance to grow and thrive is something far beyond our ability to comprehend in the state we now find ourselves in. So, in looking back into the history the Bible preserves for us, we are not looking back into a time where they had less but to a time they had more. In the ways we believe they had less, like the idea The Messiah had not yet come, we see only that they did not have as much need for such a thing in order to have their shot at living for God. The ultimate example of this truth is seen by backing our way all the way back to before Adam and Eve took of that fruit. There in the Garden of Eden where man stayed such a short time of his existence, we see the beginnings of what God wanted us all to have a shot at. Even that should be understood as only a beginning and not the true fruition of what can be, and that's the exciting part that makes a life lived for God worth living!

Let's stay in God's Word!