

Some of you may have picked up on the title for today. The rest of you are just too young. There used to be a show on TV with that title. It was a satirical view of the major news stories from the previous week. I'm going to change it up some. It will be a review of what we have heard through the year but, without the satire. Some of this is going to go by quickly, So, sit back, relax, while we do our own; ***"That Was The Week That Was"***.

We started the year where this should have started, in the **OLD TESTAMENT**. Specifically in **Exodus Chapter 20 v1-3: And God spoke these words, saying: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me..."**.
And as the stipulations close in the 23rd chapter v21-22.
"Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him, But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies...".

This is where God made His covenant with the human race. That led to this very profound statement. **GOD IS GOD & WE ARE NOT.**

We've all heard this before. ***God is the same, whether it be in the past, the present, or the future.*** Nothing we can say or do can change this. We try though. We only turn to Him when everything we try doesn't work. We try to put Him in a box and pull Him out when we want. Some even try to kill God.

We come to "Human Choice and the death of God." The human choice has a pretty straightforward meaning. "the death of God" however is a little more complex.

We know God cannot die, in the literal sense nor in the absolute sense. He doesn't even become truly absent. He's always here. As long as there is a single atom, God's power is there. ***The life-generating IMPACT of God can die, in a person, or even a culture.*** It can happen by our choice, it can even be set in motion by a single choice.

We see that in **1 Kings 12. There is a pattern that appears** whenever a person or a culture turns away from God. At first they ADD to God as **Jeroboam did by adding "high places"** so people didn't have to travel to Judah for religious purposes. By itself, not a

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problem. But, he had to put his own twist on it by making two golden calves to be the focal points.

The ***next phase is to replace God. He becomes less and less prominent.*** The culture becomes more politically correct. Sound familiar?

Finally it becomes time to kill God. Naturally they can't actually kill him so, they do the next best thing. They ***kill the people who are speaking for God.*** They kill Godly ***values and conscience.*** There is a twist to this story though. **It isn't really God who dies; it is you... or me; or our culture.**

Moving on to the second half of the Old Testament. We took a quick look at sacrifice.

THE FIVE ELEMENTS;

Perfection, Laying on hands, slaying, blood, and burning.

PERFECTION: Exodus 29.....

take one young bull and two rams without blemish.

It takes perfection to cover the imperfect.

LAYING ON HANDS: "You shall also have the bull brought before the tabernacle of meeting, and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands on the head of the bull.

So, what's with the hands?

Ancient Middle East culture had this concept. It was to ***transfer from the subject to the object.*** -A physical gesture for transferring blessing, of healing, of authority. But at the core it was the transfer of guilt, or sin.

SLAYING: This is where God separated His people from the pagans. There could be no human sacrifice. So, only animals could be used. They still had to be perfect, without blemish.

BLOOD: "You shall take some of the blood from the bull and put it on the horns of the alter with your finger, and pour all the blood beside the base of the alter" It ***symbolized that sin or guilt is a stain.*** ...By placing it on the alter it covered the stain from God's sight. The mental picture isn't so much cleansed. But of it being covered.

BURNING: “**And you shall take all the fat that covers the entrails, the fatty lobe attached to the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat that is on them, and burn them on the alter.**”

What happens when you burn fatty meat? The fat is refined out of it, isn't it? Burning choice parts isn't to **destroy them, but to refine them.**

The purpose of Understanding the Old Testament is to make it to the Promise Land and not die in the desert. If we don't work to get a deeper understanding the desert is entirely possible.

Moving along to the **E-GIFTS** we start out with the experiment of the dress.

Remember it? Some people saw it as white and gold, to others it appeared to be blue and black.

It showed us that ***color is not in the eye of the beholder.*** Physics proves that the dress was blue and black. Only 28% of the people saw it correctly. A wonderful ***illustration of spiritual truth!***

You cannot will or work yourself into spiritual life. There are all sorts of material out there, 8, 12, even 21 steps to spiritual awakening. The good news is that it only takes one step. Bad news is that we can't take it. That ***step has to be a gift to us.***

The first is SALVATION.

It starts with how we see Christ. We can't see Him as the image we want Him to be. We can't see Him through the worldly filter. We cannot have salvation unless we see Him for who He really is, Lord of All. Once we see this we need to see the need(for salvation), Then we need to accept the gift. Lastly we need to lean on Christ.

The need for GROWTH.

As a physical baby needs to grow, Christians need to grow also. Churches are full of them that don't. They accept Christ as their savior, they may even throw themselves into learning and ***servng for a year or two. Then they lose their desire,*** their drive. They quit growing. This was wrapped up with a way to check on our maturity status: Can you look back and see milestones of definite growth? When was the last one?...Are you able to teach? Lead another to the Lord?...Hebrews says we grow by “reason of use”; when was the last time you used your faith to the point of growing?

Next is SANCTIFICATION.

Remember the definition? It means **to set aside for a holy purpose**. What does it mean in our day-to-day life?

Remember the illustration of the rock and the playdough. According to the illustration ***salvation changes us from the rock to the playdough.***

Sanctification would be the gift of the mold. A key word for sanctification would be “conform”. ***In Romans 8:29, For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son...***

To conform in the world is seen as a negative. Letting peer pressure or the mindless ways in a society mold you repulse most people. So, it's natural that when you hear “conform” used in the Word you go WHOA, wait a minute. Whether we like to admit it or not ***we are going to be molded***. It's up to us which way we are molded; the worldly way or into the image of Christ.

The BEAUTIFUL BRIDE..What does it take to be part of this “Beautiful Bride” ***1Cor 12:12-14...the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many.***

Take Christ as our primary model. ***We have to have “humble intentionality”***. What does that mean?

Webster defines humbles as; ***not proud; not thinking of yourself as better than other people.*** An example of **NOT** having humble intentionality is the story of ***Ananias and his wife Sapphira***. They sold a possession, kept back some of the proceeds, gave the rest to Peter. Peter asked him why he had done this evil thing.

Peter asked Ananias because Ananias had said that he gave ALL the proceeds. So what now, do you give to the church and die? Naturally the answer is no. Ananias didn't die because he held back part of the proceeds. He didn't die because he lied to Peter. He died because he lied to the Holy Spirit. He died because he ***marginalized the paradigm of Godly giving***. The disturbing

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truth is; the lie Ananias is one of ***the most common lies*** in the Church today. His lie was; he deserved God's blessing without Godly giving. There is NO blessing without the heart and practice of biblical giving.

The secret of experiencing the biblical church is a common heart of Godly giving; ***CONSISTENT, HUMBLE, and in LOVE*** of the fellowship.

Moving along to the **SEVEN DEADLY SINS**.

PRIDE, ENVY, GLUTTONY, WRATH, SLOTH, LUST, and GREED. We know them. We have studied them more than once. BUT, they still catch more and more believers. A lot of people believe these sins are unforgivable. Not true! While they can be deadly in your spiritual walk, God can cure them. Ezekiel 36:26-27 says, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them."

Next up... **THE BIBLE EXPERIENCE**

This was the summer school, if you will. We read the New Testament like a novel. As we read it we were to ask ourselves the same five questions: What have you noticed for the first time? What questions came up for you? Did anything bother you? How does God's love show through? Lastly, What have you learned about loving others? This series wrapped up in Revelation of course. Pointedly, it came down to which mark do you carry. The answer is in the living. It is etched into you by the way you think and the way you live. Who's mark do YOU carry?

I have two more series to go.

Next up, **PREPARE**.

We start by seeing a spiritual disconnect. Just the week prior to this series we saw mass killing of Christians at an Oregon college, to the response on the Depauw campus of a message given on campus. Pastor Kevin put in a quote theologian John Piper used from "The Tale of Two Cities". ***It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of(willing disbelief), it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way.***

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Written in 1859, it fits us to a T today. ***We are free, We are in bondage to all sorts of addictions. Life has never been easier, Life has never been harder.*** Just look at the rising suicide rate. People have become lost. They perceive they have no purpose, they have no direction. We are losing our spiritual compass. The mission of Christ is nearly forgotten.

The World, for the most part, doesn't know Christ, so it says; "SHOW ME". That's fair, after all we Christians are supposed to have a fruit of the Spirit. Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, or Godly self-control. Not only are we supposed to have it, equally important, it is supposed to be VISIBLE.

There's a storm coming, what can we do. John Piper answers in part; Trust the sovereignty of God to use the world's insanity to serve His purpose. Let us labor to bind the minds of our young people to the word of God. And in ***1 Peter 4:19.. "Let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good"***. It's not learning about good, it's not talking about good, it's DOING GOOD! The only way we can continually do that is to live in God's word. We have to have the truth. In ***John 8: 31-32*** Jesus speaks of the truth. You might remember part of it. ***Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."***

What exactly does that mean, "abide in my word"?

...If we expanded the subtleties of the original Bible language it would say; only ***if you [men'-o] continue, dwell, endure, and take a stand in my [logos] the way I, reason, adopt my motives, communicate like I communicate, hold the spiritual and religious view I have, and make it your own; when you do that, well; it is then the truth will make you free.*** The bottom line for the true Christian is this: ***living in this world will get worse for the person "abiding in my word", before it gets better. But, when it does; it will be glorious beyond imagination.***

Want to check yourself to see how you're doing? Read the New Testament, daily, and take note of the Godly acts and people. Then ask yourself this one question; **"Does this describe me?"**

Last series... **HOW THE CHURCH WORKS**...before we can answer that we need to establish what the biblical church is. ***Acts 2:37*** is where it starts. Peters first sermon, When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ***"Brothers, what shall we do?"***

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They were cut to the heart because they realized three things:

They had **killed** God, they were **fallen**, and they were **accountable**.

They asked the question; **“What shall we do?”** That’s where biblical **Christianity starts**.

That’s where the biblical Church starts. The church is composed of the community that heard, they called and answered.

What happens in the church?

The first thing is they **repent**. To repent is more than changing the direction of your thoughts and actions. It is changing your very nature. The modern church for the most part takes a very superficial view of repenting. We are told to leave sober lives, which allows us to grow in Godly wisdom. Sober means focused, but it also means “sober”. Yet, there are those who drink excessively in church.

Okay, we have entered the church. We have **become a member of the body, now what?**

There’s a **change in the way we connect**, to the church, to each other, to the world. We make human connections through compassion, an awareness of need as we learn to see through God’s eyes. We can learn from the early church.

They continued in: receiving the Holy Spirit, in doctrine(in God’s Teaching), in fellowship, in sharing, and in prayer. The **church is referred to as a living body**. Each person is a part in the same way an eye or a foot is part of your body. It is (you are) attached in a very real sense; not sometimes, not “kind of”. It is not a “regular attendee”. **IT IS A MEMBER.**

I guess an analogy for these **limited connections would be like having a prosthetic limb**. It’s a wonderful thing, it can allow you to walk again. But the bottom line is that it is still a poor substitute for the real member that is missing.

I’m stopping here.

We have visited our history through the **Old Testament** series. We have learned about some **eternal gifts** that we can receive. We discovered the **Beautiful Bride** and how we can become it.

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We touched on the ***Seven Deadly Sins***. We went to summer school through the ***Bible Experience***. We studied how to ***Prepare*** for our Christian life. We saw ***How the Church Works***.

I didn't touch on the ***final series of the year; "GOD ENTERS OUR WORLD"***. I just didn't have time. I have to admit I discovered some things about myself doing this message. I can bite off more than I can chew. Did I do this review justice. DON'T THINK SO! There was TOO much information to distill down for one Sunday. So, I want to invite you to do your own ***review***.

Go to the website, Select the PDF Button on the right side of the page. When the next page comes up you will see the written versions of the messages listed on the right side. You can scroll through them. They are in order as they were given. If you don't want to read there is an audio archive also. You will be surprised how much you have forgotten or missed when the message was given.

So, ***what do we do with this information?*** Here's one man's viewpoint. This year has prepared us to truly step out and do God's work.

In order to be successful though we need everyone ***involved***.

I implore every that is not a ***member*** to do ***some REAL soul searching*** about becoming one. We need everyone to discover their spiritual gift/s and use them.

We need everyone's ***financial*** support. While the Board has thought we have been good stewards, maybe not. We have been trying to cut back and cut back, now we are to the point we can't cut anymore. We also can not grow without some needed funds. I know money is not a popular subject. However it is a necessary one. We have been dipping into the surplus that had been built up over decades. Now we have to live without it.

We won't know the true impact of our family until we are in Heaven. By then it will be too late to touch some of the lives we are meant to.

Challenge for the next year? Join the body. Become an active part of it.