

“IF” Statements of the Bible V “IF” Clauses in John #1

Fred Coulter—November 13, 2010

Greetings, everyone! Welcome to another Sabbath. With the things that have been going on in the churches lately, I just wanted to cover something that I covered earlier, which you probably heard me bring out. But I think it’s a very important thing that we understand how God does work when we all get lifted up in self.

This is something, that especially when you look at all the lives of all of the kings when they got older and turned their backs on God, then God had to punish them. Hezekiah was a man who was righteous, did very well with God. God intervened and saved Jerusalem and Judah from the invasion of Sennacherib and the army of 180,000, and when they were ready to attack Jerusalem, God sent that night an angel out there and killed all the troops. Now they had all their booty—all the gold, all the silver, all the spoil—everything they had from conquering all the countries that they had been going through. All of that fell into the hands of Hezekiah and the people of Judah. Then Hezekiah got sick and God added 15-years to him because he repented. Then after that Hezekiah made a major, major mistake. Because the ambassadors from Babylon came over because they heard of this defeat, heard of the army being wiped out miraculously, so they came with gifts and wanted to find out from Hezekiah what happened.

Well, he was all lifted up in vanity and he showed them all the treasury, all the spoil, everything that there was. So Isaiah was sent back and Isaiah came to him and said, ‘What did they see?’ He said, ‘Oh, I showed them everything!’ So he said, ‘It’s all going to Babylon and your sons will be officers in the king’s court, but you’ll have peace in your day; happen after you die.’

So here shows the vanity and selfishness in getting uplifted. He was a king that was righteous. So we can never say, ‘Oh, we’ve got it made.’ Like one man said, ‘I’m so old and have been faithful for so long Satan has no interest in me.’

Let’s see what happened here, because this is very interesting. 2-Chronicles 32:25: “But Hezekiah responded not again according to the good *done* to him, for his heart was lifted up.” Whenever we forget that in God we live and move and have our being—everything about us God has created and given to us for the very purpose so that we can learn His Word and enter into the Kingdom of God—short of that is falling short of our very purpose here.

“...Therefore, there was wrath upon him and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Notwithstanding, Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, he and the people of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah” (vs 25-26).

But let’s see what God says down here in v 31, because this is very instructive: “Nevertheless, in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent to him to ask about the wonder that was done in the land, **God left him...** [There comes a time within the Church that trials come that you wonder: Where is God? Well, God will pull back to see what you’re going to do. God will pull back to see do you really love Him, do you really want His way.] ...God left him **in order to try him**, to know all that was in his heart.”

So, in many of the situations in the Church of God that’s where a lot of people are, and the question then remains: Are they going to return to God? Which also fits in what I’m going to cover today. I’m going to cover **IF** statements in the Gospel of John. So thanks to Harry Curley, he got all 1,547 **IF** statements in the Bible, capitalized them, made them in bold and so the very first one also, let’s repeat that, because this states the whole rest of the purpose of the Bible when we understand it.

After God did not accept Cain’s offering, which is very instructive. When God tells us to do something His way, He wants us to do it His way. After all,

- Is not God perfect? *Yes!*
- Is not God love? *Yes!*
- Is not God true? *Yes!*

Everything He does is for our benefit. Is that not right? Sometimes we don’t understand it, but the key is this: *When you don’t understand it, if you’re faithful and follow God the way you ought to, then you will understand it afterwards.*

But here Cain brought an offering from the ground, undoubtedly in a manner that God did not accept. That’s why God did not accept his sacrifice, but accepted Abel’s. Here’s the whole summary of the entire Bible right here.

Genesis 4:7: “**IF** you do well... [even the New Testament says, yes, we can please God. We love Him and keep His commandments] ...**IF** you do

well, shall you not be accepted?... [Of course! God wants to accept us, but since He's God, then we worship Him His way, and that becomes the important thing.] ...But **IF** you do not do well, sin lies at the door." When we approach God according to our

- own thoughts
- our ways
- our own attitude

not choosing His way, the way that God has given to us, then what happens? *Sin lies at the door!* At that point we have a choice what we're going to do, because the crossroads are here.

Now sin: "...It's desire is for you, but you must rule over it!" (v 7). How do you rule over it? *By your choices!* God has given us the strength of mind and enough understanding what we need to do that we can stop doing evil. Now, that does not mean that we're called to conversion yet.

How many people do you know out there in the world who have gotten involved with drugs and things like that and finally they quit? That sin was ruling over them. But now they finally quit and they're ruling over it. So they understand that every day they have to make the choice not to do that and especially with drugs because once it gets into your system, that's quite a thing that takes place.

Let's see the same proposition here in Deuteronomy 30. Here's what we're confronted with in our lives, and our lives consist of day-by-day and year-by-year, every human being has this set before them. It's like Cain. Cain was not called to conversion, but he could have done things God's way. What happened when he chose not to repent and to do what God said? What happened? *He got angry, he got jealous, and he killed Abel!* So once you decide to take the step and go down the evil road, it's going to multiply and increase and get more and more and more, and especially those who are on drugs that's accelerated.

The key thing on drugs is this, like with cocaine. The first time that a person takes cocaine, the high is so exuberant, but it's the first and last time you'll ever be that high. So they want it again, so then it takes more and it takes more, not realizing that it's going to take down their health and their bodies. So that choice was presented to whoever said, 'Oh, I will.' or 'Why don't you take this, you'll really like it.'

Deuteronomy 30:15: "Behold, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil.... [let's remember, that's everyday] ...In that I command you this day to love the LORD your

God... [That's the important thing—loving God with all your heart and mind and soul and being. That's where God wants us to be.] ...to walk in His ways..." (vs 15-16). We have to

- walk in the paths of God
- walk in His commandments
- walk in the Truth

...and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments so that you may live and multiply. And the LORD your God shall bless you in the land where you go to possess it" (v 16). Spiritually that's for us, too. What are we going to inherit? *The Kingdom of God!* Everything that we do, if we yield to God and love Him and put Him first, will result in blessing. Now, also remember this, trials can become blessings when you follow all the way through and keep loving and serving God. Then you can turn around and you can have perfect hindsight to say, 'Yes, that's what God wanted.' And all of that is part of faith.

Verse 17: "But if your heart turn away so that you will not hear... [Now did that happen to Cain? *Yes!* Has it happened to other people? *Yes!*] ...but shall be drawn away and worship other gods and serve them." And we've seen that happen. That happened to the children of Israel. Look what is happening right now in Protestantism and Catholicism. They're just dwindling and coming to nothing. Well, that's going to work together for good in the long run, because out of that then, God is going to be able to call people to Him so they can really become converted.

But here's the process, once you do that, v 18: "I denounce to you this day that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong *your* days on the land where you pass over Jordan to go to possess it." How sure is this? *Anytime God does this you know it's true!* Just like Jesus said, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.'

So the truth of the matter is we see the witness, we walk on the witness that God has given us right here, v 19: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore, choose life, so that both you and your seed may live... [the whole purpose of living comes right here]: ...that you may love the LORD your God, and may obey His voice... [Now notice these conditions here: **love God first, obey His voice**, which is all in the Bible] ...and may cleave to Him; for He is your life and the length of your days, so that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers—to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob—to give it to them" (vs 19-20).

And, of course, the ultimate is the Kingdom of God. Also what's important for us to remember and understand is this: *The Kingdom of God is that which we are to seek every day*, as Jesus said there in Matt. 6:33. Everything physical you need God will take care of you and regardless what the circumstances are. If you don't think that's so, remember what happened to Elijah in the days of the famine.

Now a lot of people like to make themselves important, but look at Elijah. What did it show in the vision of the transfiguration? *Moses and Elijah!* But where was Elijah for three and a half years during the drought? *He was in the home of the widow!* What happened? *They had a cruse of olive oil and they had a small barrel of flour*—God replenished that everyday! No one knew where Elijah was. Ahab was looking for him day and night. He figured that Ahab was the one who caused him all the problems, but that wasn't true. So finally, when God wanted to bring him forth, then they had the confrontation.

Let's come here to 1-Kings 18; let's see what that confrontation was. Notice the parallels and the choices. That's what's important to do. I love this account here. Obadiah came out and he found Elijah. 1-Kings 18:11: "And now you say, 'Go, tell your lord, "Behold, Elijah *is here!*"' And it will be as soon as I have gone from you, the Spirit of the LORD shall carry you where I know not. And when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find you, he will kill me. But I, your servant, have feared the LORD from my youth. Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, how I hid a hundred men of the LORD'S prophets by fifty in a cave and fed them with bread and water? And now you say, "Go, tell your lord, 'Behold, Elijah *is here!*'" And *then* he will kill me!" (vs 11-14). He thought Elijah would again disappear as soon as he left.]

"And Elijah said, 'As the LORD of hosts lives, before Whom I stand, I will surely be seen by him today.' And Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him. And Ahab went to meet Elijah. And it came to pass when Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, 'Are you he that troubles Israel?' ['You caused the drought.' *No! It was the sins of the children of Israel!*] ...And he answered, 'I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and you have followed Baalim'" (vs 15-18). See how this follows right through from Cain right on through here, the same principle? *Yes, indeed!*

"Now therefore, send and gather to me all Israel to Mount Carmel, and four hundred and fifty of the prophets of Baal... [Remember Jezebel married the king of Tyre and her father was the high

priest of Baal. So this is a tremendous confrontation here.] ...and four hundred of the prophets of Asherah who eat at Jezebel's table.' Then Ahab sent to all the children of Israel and gathered the prophets together to mount Carmel.... [Here's Elijah's proposition. So now when we come into trouble like they had here, there's always a choice to make.] ...And Elijah came to all the people and said, 'How long will you vacillate between two different opinions?.... [The Hebrew means *jump from one to the other*. Sounds like the polls that we have: Who are you going to elect today.] ...If the LORD *is* God, follow Him. But if Baal is God, *then* follow him.' And the people did not answer him a word" (vs 19-21).

You know the rest of it. Elijah said, 'Okay, the prophets of Baal are many; let them beseech Baal, set up their offering.' So they did. They yelled and screamed probably with tom-toms and drums and shouts and chants to the sun-god. I like the *Elijah* by Mendelssohn and they have a song in there to Baal. 'Hear us oh Baal.' It's really catchy. But that's exactly what happened. So he said, 'Don't put any fire under it, you call out,' so they did. Then Elijah got up there and said, 'Oh, what's the matter boys'—I'll just paraphrase it—'you've been jumping up and down, yelling and screaming, now maybe he's on a trip. Maybe Baal is asleep and you gotta wake him up.' So they proceeded to yell more, slash and cut themselves and bled all over the place, cried out more loudly.

Verse 29: "So it came to pass when midday was past, and when they prophesied until the offering of *Elijah's* oblation... [The *King James* says 'until the evening oblation'; there was no temple, so that was not the time and it's not in the Hebrew.] ...there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor anyone who paid attention. And Elijah said to all the people, 'Come near to me.' And all the people came near him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been thrown down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob to whom the word of the LORD came, saying, 'Israel shall be your name.' And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD and he made a trench around the altar big enough to contain two measures of seed" (vs 29-32).

Covered it over with everything that was to be covered. Put the offering on it. Told them now—right at the end of the drought—now take water and put on it. Not once, not twice, but three times, so everything was all wet. Notice how short this prayer was because this becomes important that *anytime you truly call on God, He will hear*. Now sometimes the shortest prayer in your life and difficulty that you're going through, may be the most important indeed. So just think about that. Go

back and think about the times that God intervened for you. Sometimes it's only, 'God, help me. I don't know what to do.' And then God answers that prayer:

Verse 36: "Now it came to pass at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, 'LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that You *are* God in Israel, and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You *are* the LORD God, and that You have turned their heart back again.'.... [You measure that, that's probably far less than twenty seconds. Did God answer? *Yes, indeed!*] ...Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the burnt sacrifice and the wood, and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw, they fell on their faces. And they said, 'The LORD, He *is* the God! The LORD, He *is* the God!'" (vs 36-39).

Right after that Elijah had all of the prophets of Baal executed. Then he got afraid when he heard that Jezebel was after him, ran on down to Mount Horeb and hid in the cave. Then he thought, 'Oh, just me. I'm all alone.' Now we're all going to have that kind of thing, too. So these trials and difficulties that come upon us are for a purpose.

Let's go forward to the things that we're looking at for today. Let's come to the book of Matthew. What I want you to do is to see that ***the message of God is the same from beginning to end throughout the Bible.*** Circumstances change, the covenant with Israel was replaced with the covenant for eternal life, but nevertheless the message is the same. All of this is very instructive. I want you to notice the same message.

Matthew 7:13: "Enter in through the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it; for narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it" (vs 13-14). That is always the dividing line—is it not? *Yes, indeed!* Same choice!

You go back to Hezekiah, you go back to Cain, you go back to the time of the children of Israel in Deut. 30, the same choices are laid out there. You come to the time of the children of Israel and Elijah, the same choice is there. 'If the Lord be God, serve Him.' So here we have the same thing now expounded directly by Jesus Christ Who was God manifested in the flesh and Who was the Lord God of the Old Testament.

Verse 15, this is true. "But beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, for within *they* are ravening wolves.... [That really applies today of all the deceptions we have religiously and governmentally and worldwide in business, and everything like that.] ...You shall know them by their fruits...." (vs 15-16). That's why you have to understand

- the commandments of God
- the Word of God
- the will of God

—because how can you judge their fruits unless you know the Truth. Some of them use the Bible and use it quite well. I mentioned this in the past, but I'll mention it again, because I think it's really a tremendous example.

How many have heard of Charles Stanley? I think he's one of the better Protestant ministers today. He does well in helping people overcome their problems and say, 'Trust God and pray to Him so that you can get through your trials and difficulties,' and so forth. He does real good job that way. When it comes to the Sabbath, it's a high hurdle—*right over it*. And he said in one of his sermons, I heard in one of his sermons, I was listening to him and I thought, 'Boy, he's really going right down the line with the Bible. Yeah, that's very good. He's doing very encouraging.' Wouldn't Satan like you to solve some of your problems, even use the Word of God to do that and think that, yeah, you're going the right way? So then he said, 'Well, when I got depressed and I wasn't feeling up to anything, what brought me out of it was I had to prepare a sermon for every Sunday.' I wonder what he did with the word *Sabbath*.

Then when he got further into his sermon he said, 'And we're all going to go to heaven.' Then he got done with that and he had the traditional call that what you do, you say, 'Jesus, You died for my sins. Forgive me for my sins. Accept me and save me and come into my heart.' That's just a paraphrase—now you're saved. But you know with everything that is out there, since he's reading the Bible, everything sounds so good. But if you leave it off here and if you leave it off there and you leave it off in another place, then you're going to end up with minus the Truth. So you have to know those things so you know them by their fruits.

"They do not gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles, do they? In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a corrupt tree produces evil fruit. A good tree cannot produce evil fruit, nor can a corrupt tree produce good fruit" (vs 16-18). Now remember a counterfeit has a lot of

truth in it, so that's why Jesus said, 'Man has to live by every Word of God.'

- the Word of God is true
- the commandments are true
- the law is true
- His precepts are true

—all of those things. You know them by their fruits. This follows right along with what we've been covering: what God said *vs* what men want to do.

Verse 21: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but the one who is doing [practicing] the will of My Father, Who *is* in heaven." And we're going to see *practicing the will of God* becomes a central key. If you have the Spirit of God in you, that's what is going to lead you to really seek God when troubles come.

So it's not that you can say, 'Lord, Lord.' It's not that you can read the Bible. It is: Are you doing the will of My Father Who is in heaven? ***The judgment day is going to come. All of us are going to have to come before the judgment seat of God.*** Today, the Church of God is being judged—all of us! What are we going to do? When you stop and think about it, everyday is like a mini-judgment. What are you going to choose? What are you going to do? That's why in the model prayer we are told, 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.' Because we're going to fall short and we need forgiveness. That's bringing you back to God when you do it.

When you say, 'Oh, God, forgive me of this sin, but this temptation over here is really so great. I just couldn't resist it, so how about overlooking that one?' *No! You have to repent of all of them!*

Now here's talking about the prophets, v 22: "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy through Your name?... [Isn't that going to be a shock? Someone asked me, 'Why do you get after those Sunday-keeping preachers all the time? Some of them are so nice.' Well, the reason is—why do they, every Sunday, reject the Word of God? *That's why!*] ...And did we not cast out demons through Your name? And did we not perform many works of power through Your name?'" Build buildings, build churches, build hospitals, did all of these things. This is going to be really something. Think about this for a minute.

"And then I will confess to them, "I never knew you..." (v 23).

What does 1-John 2:3 say?: And by this standard we know that we know Him: if we keep His commandments. The one who says 'I know

Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar..." (vs 3-4). Now, think about this for a minute. A lot of people will say, *well, they are deceived*. That's correct. A lot of people will say, *they're very sincere*. That may be, but think of it this way: Is not a con man projecting the greatest amount of sincerity, but he wants you to believe his lies as truth and you end up losing your money because you trust in his sincerity. That's why the Bible tell us ***prove all things and hold fast to that which is good***. Sincerity does not equate to conversion. Always remember that. It's going to be something.

Notice what Christ going to say to them: Matthew 7:23: "And then I will confess to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who work lawlessness [iniquity (KJV)].... [Isn't that something? Now notice what He says here, because this becomes exactly the same thing from Gen. 4, Deut. 30, 1-Kings 18, 2-Chron. 32]: ...Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and **practices** them... [Now that's something—isn't it? *Live by them! Practice them!*] ...I will compare him to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock'" (vs 23-24). Not that rock is Christ (1-Cor. 10:4). We know that. Do a word search just in Psalms on *the rock*. See how many times David says, 'the rock, the Lord my rock.'

This has to do with doing it individually. When we come together as the called-out ones, which ecclesia means, that means those who have been called out. When we come together in a fellowship group or congregation, we then are a church group. But the church group is not the first layer.

1. the first layer is Christ
2. the next layer is individual conversion
3. the next layer is personal relationship with God
4. the next layer is church

The truth is, you can't reach out and preach the Gospel unless you first have got brethren that are converted and serving and a foundation upon which God can add more to. But He's not in the business of adding people to the Church of God now that want to go out and have something that's like the world. That's why the church is in flux again, as it was back in the 1990s, to shake out those who believe, who love God, from those who are clingers and socializers.

Then there's always another question you have to ask too: Where did all the Trinitarians go when they formed another church and they were preaching false doctrines in the one that they left, but when they went to the new church because they

could get a payday, they stopped preaching it. So the question is: Where are they? What's in their hearts? Have they really set those things aside or not? Or is this a preview of things to come? We don't know. That's all in the hands of God and that's all in the hands of the people going through it. But the ultimate judgment is going to come down right here to this. You build on Christ.

Here's what happens, because many afflictions are the righteous: "And the rain came down, and the floods came... [And who sends out the flood? (Rev. 12), Satan, problems and difficulties.] ...and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; but it did not fall, for it was founded upon the rock.... [Right back to exactly where we started—right?] ...And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not practice them shall be compared to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it" (vs 25-27). There we have the same process we are going through today—right? *Yes, indeed!*

We'll come back and we'll go to the Gospel of John and look at some of the **IF** statements in the Gospel of John.

(go to the next track)

Let's look at some of the IF clauses in the Gospel of John. What we are going to see all the way through when it relates to God, to Christ, to us, the choice is always up to us. John 5:30 where Jesus said: "I have no power to do anything of Myself... [That is of my very own self as a human being, I have no power to do that which is spiritual. That's what He's talking about. Same way with us; we can't do spiritual things on our own. We need the Spirit of God.] ...but as I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father, Who sent Me."

This also applies to us when we're judging situations, when we're looking at fruits to judge fruits, we do so according to the will of God. And then it's not our judgment and it's not our will. If we see it the way God sees it, we don't need to be all lifted up in how important we are and what we can do and all this sort of thing, but realize that it's from God.

Verse 31: "If I bear witness of Myself, My testimony is not true.... [God demands what? *Two or three witnesses—right?*] ...There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the testimony that he witnesses concerning Me is true" (vs 31-32).

Then He gives them a proposition, because they did send to John—didn't they? They sent a

delegation down there to say, 'Who are you, are you the Christ?' *No!* 'Are you Elijah?' *No!* 'Are you that prophet?' *No!* 'Well, who are you?' He said, 'I'm the voice of one crying in the wilderness.' Jesus said he was Elijah, but John didn't know it. So everyone who's out there claiming to be Elijah, listen up. If John didn't know it, what makes you think you know you are?

Verse 33: "You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the Truth. Now I do not receive witness from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved.... [So everything that He's going to say from here on, everything that He's going to say is so that they might be saved by what? *Coming to Christ.*] ...He was a burning and shining light, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works that the Father gave Me to complete, the *very* works that I am doing, themselves bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.... [We'll see what He's building up to as we come along.] ...And the Father Himself, Who sent Me, has borne witness of Me. You have neither heard His voice nor seen His form at any time" (vs 33-37).

That's why the one Who gave the Ten Commandments could not have been God the Father, because Moses saw God—right? In His glory, the backside of Him—correct? Talked to Him face-to-face. So did Abraham and Isaac and so did Adam and Eve and all the patriarchs that we have listed before the Flood. Because before the Flood God would appear not in His glory, but He would appear as a man.

This is a question we need to ask ourselves, and everyone who wants to serve God. Now here are the religious leaders, the ones who were supposed to speak the Truth, teach the Truth, bring the people to God, proclaim the Scriptures for them.

Verse 38: "And you do not have His word dwelling in you, for you do not believe Him Whom He has sent. You search the Scriptures... [Which most of them don't do. And how many times did Jesus say, 'Have you never read?'] ...for in them you think that you have eternal life; and they are the ones that testify of Me.... [but because of their human carnality and whom they were really serving] ...But you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life. I do not receive glory from men" (vs 38-41).

This was the downfall of Hezekiah. They came and said, 'Oh, Hezekiah, you must be really important to God'—because he did all of these things—'oh, look at all of that gold. Yeah, let's get our armies over here. Oh, look at all of that silver. Maybe two or three armies, and all of this other treasure. Ah, you're really a wonderful guy.' And he

just kept getting lifted up and lifted up and lifted up. He received the glory of men,

But Jesus said, v 41: "...I do not receive glory from men. But I have known you... [He knew them from the past. He knew them before He came.] (Now here's quite an indictment): ...that you do not have the love of God in yourselves" (vs 41-42). Oh, what an indictment that is! Remember, these were the religious leaders. These were the ones who came to the temple. These were the ones in charge of the Word of God. So this is really something—isn't it?

"But I have known you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves.... [And isn't that the very first thing we're to do? *Yes!* So, can you have a religion in form and shell, but be totally empty and void of any spiritual consequences? *Of course!*] ...I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; *but* if another comes in his own name, you will receive him" (vs 42-43). And isn't that what they did when Bar-Kokhba came along and Rabbi Akiva proclaimed him as messiah and the Jews suffered a worst defeat in 135_{A.D.} than they did in 70_{A.D.} Oh, they would believe him, but they wouldn't believe Christ.

Verse 44: "'How are you able to believe, you who receive glory from one another... [Rest my case. 'Oh, how good you are, Rabbi. Yes, that was wonderful. Oh, yes, and you really read those Scriptures well in the synagogue the other day. That was really, really nice. Oh, I love your new phylacteries.' *Oh, yes, I blew my trumpet fifteen times this last week. And I prayed for widows and she deeded it to the treasury.* 'Oh, really!' *Yes!* Received glory!] ...How are you able to believe, you who receive glory from one another, and do not seek the glory that *comes* from the only God?"

Notice, everything is God first—right? *Yes!* That's where the Churches of God have gone wrong. They have put the Church first and God second. Verse 45: "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is *one* who accuses you... [Present tense. Moses' words are still active because *they are spirit and they are truth.* And it's just like the law of gravity. All the laws of God work automatically, so the sins that they have Moses is accusing them, but notice what He says.] ...There is *one* who accuses you, *even* Moses, in whom you have hope."

Now here is the **IF** clause to bring us up to date on all that He was saying here, v 46: "But **IF** you believed Moses..." We can sure apply that to the Protestants, Catholics, can't we? *Yes, indeed!* To the Jews, too, because Judaism is nothing more than a religion of the traditions of men and all the other religions of the world.

Here's something I got and I've got to give a sermon on this: *Believers Of the World Unite.* How's that? This is put out by Dr. Pasha. I'll have to find out if he's a Hindu or whether he is a Muslim. And what is it? 'Everyone, we have a World Day of God!' All religions. Remember the first seal, (Rev. 6)? All of these things are going to come exactly as God said in His time. All right, let's set that aside.

Verse 46: "But **IF** you believed Moses, you would have believed Me; for he wrote about Me. And **IF** you do not believe his writings, how shall you believe My words?" (vs 46-47). Boy! Is that not true of Protestantism—correct? They believe some, just like Cain. 'We'll take some of your words, Lord.' You've gotta believe all of them. What did Jesus say? Man shall live by some of the words of God, part of the words of God, only the words of God they like? *No!* 'Man shall live by every Word of God. "**IF** you do not believe his writings, how shall you believe My words?"

We have all of these things here. Let's come down here to John 6:51, another **IF** clause. You have to read the whole chapter to see what He was building up to with this and again provoking the Jews, and again provoking His own disciples. Those who said, 'Oh, we believe you, Jesus.' Here was their test. And what happened after He got done here? *Many left and departed and followed Him no more,* because of what we're going to read here in John 6. Now that's pretty heavy duty—isn't it? *Yes, indeed!* So it's no surprise that we have very similar circumstances come up in the Church of God again to see do we really believe and love God.

John 5:51: "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven; **IF** anyone eats of this bread... [That goes back to Psa. 34, 'O taste and see that the Lord is good.' And of course the Jews—now you can have a lot of them out there, 'Boy, eat My flesh. Does He believe in cannibalism?' And then drinks My blood, as He says a little later.] ...**IF** anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is even My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

And even today the Jews say the Bible forbids human sacrifice, so we can't believe in Christ. That's something, but what if God loved you so much He gave His life for you. Do you ever think of it that way? We saw quite a dedication on television here recently of a man who received the Medal of Honor in Afghanistan. An explosive came in, I guess it was more than a hand grenade. He took his helmet and put on it and went over the top of it and blew himself up and killed himself. Quite a thing! Everyone said, 'Oh, what a wonderful man this was. He was really thinking of them.' So they gave him the Medal of Honor.

But if Christ comes and dies and gives His life willingly, lays it down voluntarily, you know the Jews say, ‘How could He give us His flesh to eat?’ So then Jesus wanted to make sure they got the point.

Verse 53: “Therefore, Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly I say to you, unless... [Which is almost another ‘if’ clause. Which is ‘if you do not,’ Could be translated that way, too.] ...unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up in the last day. For My flesh is truly food, and My blood is truly drink.... [He’s really laying it heavy on them here.] ...The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood is dwelling in Me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father; so also the one who eats Me shall live by Me.... [This was a heavy, heavy load for them.] ...This is the bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers ate manna, and died. The one who eats this bread shall live forever.’ These things He said in *the* synagogue as He was teaching in Capernaum” (vs 53-59).

Can you imagine the uproar after that? Kind of like the Apostle Paul. Every time he went into a synagogue of the Jews he almost started a riot.

Verse 60, the key: “Therefore, after hearing *these words*, many of His disciples said, ‘This is a hard saying. Who is able to hear *it*?’ But Jesus, knowing that His disciples were complaining about this, said to them, ‘Does this offend you? What **IF** you shall see the Son of man ascending up where He was before? It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you, *they* are spirit and *they* are life’” (vs 60-63). So that summarizes that whole thing. So the **IF** clause goes all the way through. **IF** you see the Son of man ascending up where He was before. Well, the disciples ended up doing that—didn’t they? *Yes, they did!*

All right, let’s come to chapter seven now. There are a few here that we need to understand. Let’s come here to John 7:14 when Jesus came up to the feast, in the middle of the Feast. Let’s see what He said then. And again we will see it is the same message, emphasized again, personal choice, personal responsibility all the way through.

John 7:14: “But then, about the middle of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and was teaching. And the Jews were amazed, saying, ‘How does this man know letters, having never been schooled?’” (vs 14-15). Now in the back of the Bible we’ve got an appendix, *God the Father Taught Jesus Christ*. Because those who believe in Judaism say,

‘Well, Jesus attended the synagogues and the rabbis taught Him.’ Do you think that God the Father would leave the One Who was to be the Messiah of the whole world to be educated by lying human beings? *NO!*

So you read Isa. 50 where He was awakened every morning. That’s when the Father taught Him. Now you can know for sure, ‘never schooled,’ that means never attended any of their schools. What do you think would have happened to the rabbi who taught Him had He gone to any of their schools and taught Him these things? *He would have been executed, too—right?*

“Jesus answered them and said, ‘My doctrine is not Mine... [That is, My teaching. ‘It’s not coming from Me.] ...but His Who sent Me.... [Now think about this again. All the words that we have to do with the New Covenant and actually all the words of the Bible, actually originate with God the Father through Jesus Christ, whether the Lord God of the Old Testament or Jesus Christ of the New.] (here’s the big): ...**IF** anyone desires to do His will... [Again, the will of God, again, again, again—right? *Yes!*] ...he shall know of the doctrine [teaching] whether it is from God, or *whether* I speak from My own self’” (vs 16-17).

So here we have another key. If you want to practice, or desire to do the will of God, you will understand it, that it’s from God. So there you go. How do you understand the will of God? By doing it as you learn it and the things that you learn and you take it a step at a time. That’s why God first begins to reveal to people things concerning the Sabbath. Then they have a choice to make. Will you keep the Sabbath or will you not keep the Sabbath? That’s a decision you have to make and that’s a choice you have to make. And each one of us could have our stories where we related to our employers why we needed the time off for keeping the Sabbath.

I know I was cooking in Kibby’s Restaurant in the kitchen down there in Palo Alto. I told my boss, I’d been working there for four years and worked sometimes two shifts and I’d work seven days a week. Good old reliable Fred, he’ll be there anytime, all we have to do is call him. So I came back from counseling for baptism and I knew I had to keep the Sabbath, so I came up to my boss and I said, ‘I need to let you know that I have to have off from Friday night sundown to Saturday night sundown.’ He looked at me and he said, ‘What for?’ And I said, ‘Because of my religion.’ He looked at me and said, ‘When did you become religious?’ So I finally got it worked out.

Then you begin to understand. When you respond to the will of God and obey, knowledge

comes in everything that God teaches. When you learn it, begin to do it, you say, 'Ah ha.' Then you also understand that it also comes from the love of God because He loves us.

Verse 17: "...he shall know of the doctrine, whether it is from God, or *whether* I speak from My own self. The one who speaks of himself is seeking his own glory... [watch Trinity Channel sometime] ...but He Who seeks the glory of Him Who sent Him is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. Did not Moses give you the law, and not one of you is practicing the law?... [Isn't that amazing! Were they there at the Feast of Tabernacles? *Yes!* But were they practicing the law of God? *No! Practicing the law of God comes from inside!* And what is the ultimate of conversion to be for us? What's to happen with the commandments and laws of God? *To be written in our hearts and in our minds*—right? (Heb. 10:16). Why do that? *So we can practice them automatically!*] ...not one of you is practicing the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?' The people answered and said, 'You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?'" (vs 17-20) Sound a little like the press today? Then He talks about circumcision here.

Verse 22: "Now then, Moses gave you circumcision—not that it was from Moses, but from the fathers... [from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob] ...and on *the Sabbath* you circumcise a man. If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with Me because I made a man entirely whole on the Sabbath?... [Talk about 'straining a gnat and swallowing a camel'—right? *Yes!*] ...Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (vs 22-24). Righteous judgment has to be based on the

- law of God
- love of God
- commandments of God

And remember this, repentance must come before the application of mercy. Most people want mercy with no repentance.

Let's come here to John 8:12. Now this chapter has 14 *IFs*. This is a central chapter that we need to understand in relationship between the way of God, the true Christ, and being religious. Also to understand something very fundamental: *Satan loves to come into what he considers the source of power within the structure of the Church*, or in this case with the structure of the scribes and Pharisees and the temple. What better place to be to deceive people than to be at the temple and lead them astray, say God says, when He never said. So here they profess that they believe in Jesus, but they were following

Satan the devil. So let's see how all of this builds up here.

John 8:12: "Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world; the one who follows Me shall never walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' Therefore, the Pharisees said to Him, 'You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true'.... [They're calling Jesus a liar, aren't they? We'll see a little later on in this, He said, 'Well, if I deny the Father, then I'd be a liar like you.')] ...Jesus answered and said to them, 'Even *IF*... [There we go, profound *IF*] ...I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, because I know where I have come from and where I am going. But you do not know where I come from and where I go'" (vs 12-14). Because the Father was with Him, so that would be two—correct?

"You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one...." (v 15). Yet, judgment is coming!

- there's judgment day-by-day
- there's judgment all of our lives
- there is the final judgment at the resurrection.

"...My judgment is true, for I am not alone; but I and the Father Who sent Me. And it is written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am one Who bears witness of Myself, and the Father, Who sent Me bears witness of Me'.... [Boy, they said, 'Now we've got Him.')] ...Then they said to Him, 'Where is Your Father?'... [By this time Joseph was dead, whom they thought was His father, but wasn't.] ...Jesus answered, 'You know neither Me nor My Father. *IF*... [There again the *IF*.] ...you had known Me, you would also have know My Father.'.... [Here again, we have things that come together—right? *The Father and the Son!*] ...Jesus spoke these words in the treasury while teaching in the temple; but no one arrested Him because His time had not yet come" (15-20).

This whole chapter is important. I know I've gone over this times in the past, but sometimes it's good that we go over Scriptures again so we can learn more lessons out of them as we go along. What this does, when we do, not only does it give us repetition, but this gives us conviction and understanding because we learn more from it.

"Then Jesus said to them again, 'I am going away; and you shall seek Me, but you shall die in your sin. Where I am going, you are not able to come.'.... [Now that's quite a statement—isn't it? What does this do about going to heaven, because that's where He was going? And when you disprove the immortality of the soul, what does that do about

believing in the immortality of the soul? By the way, Judaism believed in the immortality of the soul.] ...Therefore, the Jews said, 'Will He kill Himself? Is that why He says, "Where I am going, you are not able to come"?' (vs 21-22).

Notice, how this whole thing builds up all the way through John 8, and really, really builds to a tremendous climax right at the end of the chapter. You have to see the whole thing going through here and there are 14 **IFs** in this chapter.

"And He said to them, 'You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. That is why I said to you that you shall die in your sins; for **IF** you do not believe that I AM... [That told them clearly Who He was.] ...you shall die in your sins'" (vs 23-24). They didn't want to believe that. No, they didn't want to believe that. That's true! There's that **IF** clause—"IF you do not believe that I AM you shall die in your sins."

Now in the Greek there are two words for *I AM*. One is 'ego' and the other is 'emi.' When they're together, you have a double emphasis of it meaning—*I AM, I AM* (Exo. 3).

"Then they said to Him, 'Who are You?' And Jesus said to them, 'The one that I said to you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge concerning you; but He Who sent Me is true, and what I have heard from Him, these things I speak to the world.' But they did not know that He was speaking to them of the Father. [The Father is revealed to those whom God *calls*.] ...Then Jesus said to them, 'When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you yourselves shall know that I AM, and *that* I do nothing of Myself. But as the Father taught Me, these things I speak. And He Who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone because I always do the things that please Him'" (vs 25-29).

And we can likewise do the same thing, through

- repentance
- Spirit of God
- loving God
- obeying God
- keeping His commandments

And remember, ***we keep the commandments of God in a spiritual way***, not just in the letter. And by the way, we have the whole series, *God's Grace and Commandment-Keeping*, now on one CD. And that series is the most important series that we have done recently and also really helps crystallize and brings to life all the things in the New Testament as to how we are to do what we do, the way that we do it, the spiritual meaning behind all of it, and our relationship with God and what that does. That'll

help you understand that it will, in your own mind, lift in higher esteem and greater emphasis to know that God is dealing with us in a special way through His Spirit.

Scriptural References:

- 1) 2-Chronicles 32:25-26, 31
- 2) Genesis 4:7
- 3) Deuteronomy 30:15-20
- 4) 1-Kings 18:11-21, 29-32, 36-39
- 5) Matthew 7:13-18, 21-23
- 6) 1-John 2:3-4
- 7) Matthew 7:23-27
- 8) John 5:30-47
- 9) John 6:51, 53-63
- 10) John 7:14-20, 22-24
- 11) John 8:12-29

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Matthew 6:33
- 1-Corinthians 10:4
- Revelation 12; 6
- Psalm 34
- Isaiah 50
- Hebrews 10:16
- Exodus 3

Also referenced:

Sermon Series: *God's Grace and Commandment-Keeping*

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