

# WORD AT WORK

Dear Friends:

I hope “Converts or Disciples” is as thought-provoking for you reading it as it has been for me writing it. It is a very strong prophetic word directed specifically to the American church. Unlike most series which appear in Bible study format after a year or two of refining and shaping by congregational interactions, this word comes to print after one conference. Your feedback would be a blessing.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:24-27, ““A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops.”” The church should be God’s voice in the land.

The more I travel, the more stunned I have become at the hypocrisy of that voice. Discipleship has one aim: Christ-likeness demonstrated by standing for what is right biblically. How can any person claiming to be a Christian condemn ordaining a sodomite priest while supporting a candidate who promotes civil unions/homosexual marriage and see no contradiction? Why won’t church leaders take stands like Jesus took? Are we preparing a generation for persecution?

I am writing this month to ask for your prayer and intercession concerning warfare over an assignment. For some time I sensed the Lord pushing me to put “Sure Mercies” in a book. June, July and August were left open so I could stay home, spend time with the family and get “Sure Mercies” into print.

The last week in May, I herniated a disk in Texas and spent two weeks there before feeling good enough to get home. After six weeks on my back, I am still trusting God to redeem July and August with healing and release the supernatural pen of a ready writer. Your intercession is appreciated.

Thanks for agreeing with me,

Al Houghton

# WORD AT WORK

VOLUME XXIV NUMBER VIII  
**Converts** or **Disciples?** II

## SUNDAY, August 1

Scripture: Revelation 2:1-4

In Revelation 2:1-4, Jesus is speaking to the church at Ephesus. He commends them for their works, their labor, their patience and that they cannot bear those who are evil. He even says they have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and rightly discerned them. He commends them for their perseverance, for their patience, for their labor for His namesake and that they have not become weary. The only thing they need to improve on is in verse 4, “Nevertheless, I have this against you,....” For Ephesus it was, “...that you have left your first love.” But when the Lord took me to this passage for the American church, He said, “The one thing I have against you is that you have settled for making converts and not gone on to make disciples.” What happens when we settle for converts? When we settle for converts, we foster an unbridled carnal church with very little discernment, very little holiness and very little righteousness. The standards of Scripture are not woven into the cloth and fabric of the men and women who we should be leading into the Kingdom. **Converts** can get away with a whole lot of things that **disciples** can’t. This is the picture the Lord gave concerning the American church and the command to begin to delineate the differences and call for growth into maturity that is necessary for the last days.

## MONDAY, August 2

Scripture: Matthew 28:18-20

Matthew 28:18-20 records the great commission. In the great commission Jesus outlines the mission of the church. These verses say, “Then Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and in earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.” The word for disciples is **math-ayt-yoo-o**. It means to fully embrace your mentor until you can reproduce his responses in thought, word and deed. To walk like, act like, talk like, think like, work like Jesus – this is the purpose of discipleship. Paul said to the Galatian church, “I labor or travail until Christ is formed in you.” He was afraid for their future when he saw a lack of maturity and growth creating a vulnerability to bondage unto the elemental things. In the New Testament, Jesus outlined His purpose for the church and the apostles were very serious in embracing and imparting that purpose. How serious are we. Have we set success in the natural, judged by size of the congregation, above true discipleship? Perhaps we need to re-think what successful ministry really is. Successful ministry has only one biblical definition - leading people into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ. What would Jesus say about entertaining people to lure them into our congregations? What would He say about “feel good” programs that don’t really impart the true stature of Jesus Christ? Have we really made **disciples** or have we settled for making **converts**?

## TUESDAY, August 3

Scripture: Matthew 10:1-5

Matthew 10:1-5 records the calling of the Twelve, their empowering and the process of sending them out. After they are sent, in verse 2, He calls them apostles but notice verse 5. This passage records the initial training of the Twelve in how they should conduct their ministry. Verse 5 says, “These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: ‘Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans.’” The very first thing Jesus delineated for the Twelve when He sent them out was what they were *not* to do. He wanted them to clearly understand the guidelines, to understand where *not* to go and where to go. Perhaps one of the problems we have today is that we have rushed toward what we thought was best and have not really sought God and studied His word to find out for sure what is off limits and what we *can't* do! Those areas are certainly apparent in the Epistles. There is a pattern of sending and preparation that we need to pay attention to because it may be one of the primary reasons we find ourselves in a place where the Lord is speaking to us in America and saying, “One thing I have against you, you have settled for making **converts** and you have not gone on to make **disciples**.”

## WEDNESDAY, August 4

Scripture: Matthew 10:6-13

In verses 6-13 Jesus begins to outline for them what they *are* to do. For this specific season they are to minister “...to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Their message is, “...the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” The signs and wonders they are to do is “...Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons.” Freely they have received, freely they have to give. They are commanded not to do specific fund-raising in verses 9 and 10. They are told when they enter a city, the Lord will open the hearts of people who are worthy and they will be invited in. Wherever they abide, they are to let their peace rest upon that place. Jesus gave specific guidelines first about what *not to do* and secondly what *to do*. In the great commission, Jesus made some things very clear. He said, number one, “...make disciples of all nations”. Number two, “Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” And number three, “...teach them to observe all things that I have commanded you:...” Are we making **disciples** or are we settling for **converts**? Are we following the guidelines of the word? If we are, then the Lord has nothing against us. We can confidently face Him in the future. If we don't, we better change some things before we meet Him face-to-face.

## THURSDAY, August 5

Scripture: Matthew 10:16-21

When Jesus began to outline for the Twelve exactly what they were going to do, one of the subjects He introduced was the fact that not everybody would accept their message. Therefore, they needed to prepare because they were coming into a season of persecution. How much persecution? A significant amount of the preparation for the sending of the Twelve, in Matthew chapter 10, is given over to this subject. In verses 16 through 21, Jesus made it clear that even family members would deliver each other up to death. He says, “...a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.” That is pretty strong. What measure of **discipleship** would you have to achieve to walk in this? Could you walk in this as a **convert**? The problem we face today is we are progressively entering seasons where only disciples will be able to stand. Who is prepared for Muslim capture and beheading? Will converts stand? If we have had the opportunity to make others disciples, but were afraid of offending them or losing their tithe money, or whatever other reason didn't give them the input they needed – then judgment would be swift. If persecution breaks out, will we be giving account to the Lord Himself for those people who couldn't stand, because we allowed them to remain immature converts? Jesus refused to leave the Twelve in that condition. Do we see the difference? Are *we* paying attention? An entire generation of believers must be prepared for martyrdom!

## FRIDAY, August 6

Scripture: Matthew 10:22-28

In Matthew 10:22-28, Jesus continues dealing with them about what they are going to face. He says you are going to find yourself being hated by many, not because of anything you have done, but because you proclaim the name of Jesus. But know this, “...he who endures to the end will be saved.” He said, “...when they persecute you in one city, flee to another.” Then He says in verse 24, “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.” What does discipleship involve that we in America have not done? It is obvious from verse 24. We have not prepared people for persecution. We have told them that the Lord is coming to rapture the church and left them to assume they won’t have to worry about adversity. Or perhaps we read the Left Behind series and instead of using it as a witness tool for seeds of salvation we have embraced the theology as precisely what is sure to happen. Will we be surprised if we face the same persecution that Jesus did? How will we respond? It is happening to the church in many Muslim nations. What shall we say? The very fact that the majority of congregations in America today are totally unprepared for persecution is in itself an indictment of the truth of one thing the Lord has against us – we have settled for **converts** and not gone on to make **disciples**! A **disciple** has to be fully prepared to face the same persecution Jesus did. Then and *only then* can he move in the boldness required to speak with the full measure of anointing.

## SATURDAY, August 7

Scripture: Matthew 10:29-38

Jesus continues with the same theme, speaking of the birds and how the Father knows exactly what happens to them. He tells the Twelve “...the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows.” The issue of persecution is perhaps brought into greater view in verse 32. The preparation for it necessitates a platform in the individual by which he is empowered or enabled to follow the Lord in what he must say, whereas those unprepared probably can’t. Verses 32 and 33 say, “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.” One of the things that should concern us at this juncture, in the level of American church discipleship, is the church’s experience in Poland, in World War II. When the Nazi’s rolled in to a small town and demanded everybody renounce Jesus and affirm Hitler, because they had been taught the rapture and that God was going to deliver them, 96 out of 100 denied the Lord! 4 out of 100 refused! They were summarily executed. What fruit do we have when we do not prepare people for persecution and it suddenly breaks forth!? Have we made **disciples** or have we settled for making **converts**? In the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew, 61% of the verses Jesus spoke, concerning their preparation, deal with persecution and martyrdom. I wonder how that compares with the percentages of what is preached in today’s American pulpits?

## SUNDAY, August 8

Scripture: Philippians 3:17-21

How would the Twelve have defined discipleship? What was the level of discipleship that Paul considered minimal to qualify? In verses 17-21 we’re told, “Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the **enemies of the cross of Christ**: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame – who set their mind on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” It is obvious that Paul’s definition of discipleship was Jesus. Anything less than the commitment that Jesus exemplified simply didn’t meet the standard and the core issue of the standard is the willingness to use our faith on our flesh and accept the will of God – walking it out day by day. Paul makes clear what happens to those who are not willing to embrace that standard. He called them “...enemies of the cross of Christ...” and he said their end

“...is destruction....” How are we doing? Have we settled for converts or have we gone on to the full measure of discipleship?

#### MONDAY, August 9

Scripture: Philippians 2:19-21

In Philippians 2:19-21 we are told, “But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.” The fruit of allowing people to stay converts and not moving on to discipleship is they never get delivered from “...seeking their own.” And the conflict always comes between what is best for them and embracing the standard that Jesus lived, which is, “God, what is best for others. How do I lay my life down day-by-day for others?” **Discipleship** is a central key issue of the great commission. We were not commissioned to just go and get people saved. We were commissioned to make **disciples**! How are we doing? Are we being disciplined by our current church structure?

#### TUESDAY, August 10

Scripture: Luke 16:10,11

In Luke 16:10-11 we're told, “He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?” It seems that in the realm of progressive discipleship God starts out, somewhere in the beginning, with the issue of money – how we see it and the influence it has in our life. The dimension or degree which we are able to follow Him in obedience with our money determines how fast we move on to higher levels of discipleship where His true riches are dispensed. If we can't pass the initial test at the money level, Jesus seems to be saying how can we go on to pass the test to walk in the true riches of God? What are the initial money tests and **why would He use money for a dividing line?** What is the difference between how converts and disciples use their money?

#### WEDNESDAY, August 11

Scripture: Luke 16:12,13

Verses 12 and 13 continue the teaching by saying, “And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” It seems that one of the very first choices in our progression from conversion toward discipleship is the Lord forces us to make a choice over the issue of **money**. Are we going to serve Him with it, or are we going to serve ourselves with it? What we do with this initial money test dictates of the flow of the true and brings us to the issue of **why money would be a dividing line?** The answer to that is because it represents an issue of worship. ***We demonstrate where our heart is and who we really worship by what we do with our money.*** It was one of the very first tests Jesus had to face in Luke chapter 4 and apparently it is one of the initial tests we have to pass in our progression toward discipleship. How are we doing in that category? Can we stand before the Lord and say we have been obedient in all He has called us to do? Have we even sought Him? Have we even asked Him? Who directs the flow of our money? Do we? Do we follow a formula or do we allow the Holy Spirit to direct what we give? It is a major issue of **discipleship**. These are tests we must pass.

#### THURSDAY, August 12

Scripture: Ezekiel 28:13

Ezekiel 28:13 points us to Satan's job before he was kicked out of heaven. It says, “You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes Was prepared for you on

the day you were created.” Verse 14a says, “You were the anointed cherub who covers;...” Apparently within his own body he had the ability to make music and lead worship. The worship leader of heaven was tempted and **the temptation of the worship leader of heaven was to do what *he* wanted with what he had been given.** What are *we* doing with what we have been given? As long as we let God in on our decisions, we are growing toward discipleship. But he didn’t – and he lost his position! Discipleship has a goal. The goal is producing all we have been given individually and corporately. If He is not LORD of ALL - He is not Lord at all!

#### FRIDAY, August 13

Scripture: Isaiah 14:12-14

In Isaiah 14:12-14 we see more of what these temptations were that the worship leader of heaven encountered. We find out in verse 13, “For you have said in your heart: ‘**I will** ascend into heaven, **I will** exalt my throne above the stars of God; **I will** also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; **I will** ascend above the heights of the clouds, **I will** be like the Most High.’” The temptation was to assert *his* will over God’s will, to be “god” over what he possessed. One of the first areas of discipleship or growth we are called to is realizing that what we’re given and what we possess is not totally ours to do with as we would like. God lays claim to some of it and He wants a **voice** in its distribution. Are we giving Him that **voice**? That is the only issue – not where it goes or what we do with it – the issue is, are we giving Him voice? Does God direct what we give financially? If we can stand up and say, “I have obeyed the **voice** of the Lord my God and done all He has commanded me to do” – we have walked in victorious discipleship.

#### SATURDAY, August 14

Scripture: Second Thessalonians 2:3,4

The issue of **worship** is far more important than many of us may have thought. In Second Thessalonians chapter 2 we find verses 3 and 4 saying, “Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” One of the things we discover about Satan is he has to prove to himself that he is God. Notice the key part of verse 4 which says, “...who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is **worshiped**, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” The only way he can show himself that he is God is he has to receive **worship**. The receiving of **worship** is the primary thing that shows him that he is God. Without **worship**, he doesn’t get it. Somehow he must weave a web of deception snaring people into unknowingly yielding worship. Mammon is a primary mode of obtaining **worship**. That is why one of the initial tests of **discipleship** comes at this point. There is a pitched battle over it in the realm of the spirit and it must be discerned, it must be seen, and it must be understood. Are we **converts** or are we **disciples**?

#### SUNDAY, August 15

Scripture: Second Thessalonians 2:3-4 Revelation 4:9-11

The only way Satan can prove to himself that he is God is by gaining worship from man. The issue of who our actions **worship** is the golden thread that runs through the book of Revelation. Who we **worship** becomes the dividing line between those who believe and those who are deceived. Verses 9-11 of Revelation 4 say, “Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and **worship** Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crown before the throne, saying: ‘You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.’” When worship ascends to the Throne, it provokes an immediate response. **True worship** springing from obedient hearts impacts heaven. Satan is still jealous of God’s worship. Once we recognize that, we can understand why the enemy is so driven to prove to himself that he is God through the avenue of worship. **True worship** comes when our words and actions reflect obedience to God’s word and Holy Spirit guidance causing dramatic impact. When our words and actions

through deception reflect an unholy spirit, Satan receives that as worship and is empowered. What does that accomplish? Something quite different, we would expect, than true worship. Is there a looming battle over our worship? The answer to that is absolutely “**Yes**”!

#### MONDAY, August 16

Scripture: Revelation 5:13,14

We are told in verses 13 and 14, “And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: ‘Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!’ Then the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.” From chapter 4 to chapter 5 we see this continuing thread of worship and its impact. So far, what we see, is true worship of the Father and of the Lamb. Worship impacts heaven and heaven impacts earth and understanding the growing competition for the worship of man in the end-times will help us understand the magnitude of deception that is coming our direction. Who are we **worshipping**?

#### TUESDAY, August 17

Scripture: Revelation 7:11,12

Revelation 7:11 and 12 says, “And all the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: ‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen.’” Again, in Revelation chapter 7, we see that true worship continues, not only as it comes from those who dwell on the earth, but from those who are in heaven. Who we **worship** determines how we walk through this season of time described in Revelation. Do we know who we worship? Do we understand that all of our actions have worship implications? Some things we do demonstrate worship for God, whereas other things yield worship to the enemy. This is the dividing line or golden theme running through the book of Revelation. Who are we worshipping with our words and deeds? Is it possible to worship the true God with our words but worship the enemy with our deeds? That is happening far more than we would like to acknowledge. If we ask God to show us, He will. Who are we worshipping?

#### WEDNESDAY, August 18

Scripture: Revelation 9:20,21

Verses 20 and 21 say, “But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, **that they should not worship** demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.” Verse 18 says, “By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed – by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths.” What is the thread we are seeing here? Why do the plagues and the judgments come? They come in an attempt to reach wayward man through adversity and to cause them to stop the forms of **worship** which they are practicing. Is it possible to say, “I love you, Lord” with our words but set gold, silver, brass, stone, wood, and possessions ahead of God? Worship is more than what we say. It also includes what we *do* and the priorities we give certain things in our life. If God’s word doesn’t have top priority then we can bet somewhere in the mix is worship of other things. Demons receive that worship. Sacrifice of innocent children is one of the highest forms of demon worship. It is received as worship by Satan himself. How is it received when somebody who goes to church and says, “I love God with all my heart” singing the hymns on Sunday but on Tuesday casts their vote for a candidate who supports and upholds partial birth abortion? When our politicians do everything they can to make sure that abortion on demand stays the law of the land, who is worshiped? Who receives **worship** on Tuesday when we vote? There is great competition for our worship. And don’t think it doesn’t have an impact in heaven. It has just as much of an impact in heaven as it

does on earth. Are we, who name ourselves believers, going to worship truly or will we be caught in the enemy's deceptive devices? Who receives worship from our actions – God or Satan?

#### THURSDAY, August 19

Scripture: Revelation 11:15,16

In Revelation 11 we see the two witnesses come forth in such power that their testimony cannot be denied. In verses 15 and 16 we are told, “Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’ And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God,...” We find that true worship is the consistent theme that runs through Revelation bringing us even to God's ultimate judgment. God promises that He will overcome the enemy and He will reign in the last days, but when the judgment comes where will we be? Will we be among the deceived? Will we have said with our *mouth*, “Lord, we love you with all of our heart” and yet with our *actions* given worship to the enemy? That is the real issue that is currently facing the church. We have to see the impact our actions have and walk accordingly. If we don't, the fearful price paid will be eternity in the wrong place. We need to ask ourselves in all we do, which God will receive this action as **worship**?

#### FRIDAY, August 20

Scripture: Revelation 13:11,12

In Revelation 13:11 and 12 say, “Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to **worship** the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.” We see through counterfeit signs and wonders the fulfillment of what is described in Second Thessalonians 2:3-4. The question is, how does he do this? The ultimate in counterfeit signs and wonders duplicates the resurrection. That would be a lying sign and wonder because it leads people toward the worship of a counterfeit. Whether we interpret the book of Revelation literally or figuratively the thread that runs through it is pretty clear. There is little doubt. The dividing issue is who will our actions **worship** as we walk through these end-times. When we start asking that question and applying the same yardstick to our actions, we are well on our way to guaranteeing being true worshipers.

#### SATURDAY, August 21

Scripture: Revelation 13:15-17

Verses 15-17 say, “He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not **worship** the image of the beast to be killed. And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” What is Satan after and how far will he go to get it? Is the issue the mark? Is the issue being killed? The issue is **worship**. The enemy is willing to compel it by death. Are we preparing the church for seasons in which we either deny Jesus or are killed? Forfeiting our life is strong pressure to worship somebody else! Are we preparing a generation for that level of commitment and dedication? Jesus prepared the Twelve for it. He told us to “...make disciples...” Are the disciples in American churches being prepared for this level of confrontation, for this level of end-time worship? Would you hear a message like this in a “Seeker Sensitive” church? Are we preparing people to worship the enemy if we don't bring them into this level of commitment? In our ministries are we aiding the enemy by only teaching people what is comfortable and what they want to hear? Are we working for God or are we aiding the enemy? That is a question for all of us in full-time ministry. Who do *we* worship?



## SUNDAY, August 22

Scripture: Revelation 14:6,7,11

Verses 6, 7 and 11 say, “Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth – to every nation, tribe, tongue and people – saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.’” ..... “And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who **worship** the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” Worship in the last days is determined by what we *do* and to whom we give allegiance, to whom we show honor. Worship is more than just what we say with our words. Satan has to prove to himself that he is God by getting people to worship him and that means ultimately a generation will have to face death or denial of Christ. Its obvious that the golden thread of Revelation is who we worship. It really doesn’t make any difference whether we interpret it figuratively or literally, the same thread is right there. Our job is to make that application *now* to prepare the church before we ever get there, even if we get to miss it in the rapture it is much better to be prepared than to think we’re going to miss it and suddenly find we were wrong. We can’t afford that. I don’t know any minister who could afford to stand before Jesus and give an account for not preparing His people for what is coming. Its better to prepare and not need it than to meet it and having not been prepared. At such a time, the blood of all those people would be on our hands. The golden thread of Revelation is - - **WHO DO WE WORSHIP?**

## MONDAY, August 23

Scripture: Revelation 13:17 Malachi 3:10-12

In Revelation 13:17 we’re told, “...and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” The enemy’s mark that he puts on people is a **mammon mark**. By mammon mark we mean its foundation is mammon. You can neither buy nor sell without this mark. Throughout His ministry Jesus drew a major distinction between His ministry and that of the Pharisees by declaring, “You cannot serve God and mammon.” Mammon becomes a battleground for worship in the end-times. This process is further along than we might think. In Malachi 3:10-12 we find a very familiar passage, “‘Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house; And prove Me now in this,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,’ Says the LORD of hosts; And all nations will call you blessed, For you will be a delightful land.’ Says the LORD of hosts.” Perhaps the first major mammon test that every believer faces is the issue of our giving. Are we going to submit it to the Holy Spirit or are we going to make the same initial mistake which caused the worship leader of heaven to get kicked out, in the five declarations of “I will...” that we read in Isaiah 14. Who is Lord? Who will we worship? Are we Lord over our money? Will we worship ourselves with it? Or is Jesus Lord and will we submit it to Him? We have to conclude that perhaps the reason that this is the only place in the Bible where God challenges us to test Him is because the underlying principle is the issue of **true worship**. If we are willing to worship the one true God with our substance, then He says you can put Me to the test and watch what I will do for you. It is a test every believer has to face. Would such a simple test as this ultimately lead to a valley of decision in Revelation where our ultimate destination is determined by the choice we make? Would any believer be able to say “No” to the enemy’s mark had they not built a solid foundation through months and years of preparation? That is an interesting question that probably will only be answered on the day that it is faced! Even if we don’t see it, surely the wise among us prefer to prepare and understand our responsibility to prepare the next generation.

## TUESDAY, August 24

Scripture: Second Corinthians 9:6,7

In Second Corinthians 9:6 and 7 we’re told, “But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart,

not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.” Giving, in the New Testament, has some unique underpinnings. They are not different from the Old, but they are certainly presented in a much different way leading some to conclude that tithing is really not New Testament. They say the tithe would violate Second Corinthians 9:7, making giving grudgingly and of necessity. That interpretation misses the point of the passage. Could we not just as easily interpret “So let each one give as he purposes in his heart,...” to be an issue of worship? If we give as we purpose in our heart, that is much more reflective of the issue of worship than fabricating some sort of compulsive declaration. The compulsive declaration argument completely misrepresents the whole picture of tithing as it is presented in Genesis all the way through to the New Testament. Ephesians 2 says that we were “...strangers from the covenants of promise...” but “...now... we have been made near by the blood of Christ.” As we study tithing in its initial emergence in the Old Testament, the tithe was really brought to God as a covenantal blessing by both Abram and Jacob, which completely destroys the argument that in the New Testament it would be compulsory. It appears to me that it becomes our very first mammon test and the question is – what are we going to do with it?

#### WEDNESDAY, August 25

Scripture: Genesis 28:18-22

Verses 18-22 say, “Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, ‘If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God. And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God’s house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.’” While Abraham is the one who initiates the tithe in Genesis 14, it is Jacob who voices the covenantal application of the tithe. It is Jacob who is asking for the covenant, not God commanding it! What we see in Malachi is the issue of **worship**. “Put Me to the test and see if I will not...” is God’s response to truly worshiping Him. Jacob asks that he be kept in God’s will with provision, clothing and to be brought back in peace to his purpose for the establishing of God’s house. The issue of our giving is an issue of **worship**. That’s why it is personal and must proceed from relationship rather than from strict formulas. God must be allowed to direct. It is an issue of **worship and relationship**.

#### THURSDAY, August 26

Scripture: First Corinthians 16:1-4

In First Corinthians 16:1-4 we find, “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me.” What we see Paul doing here is saying Jerusalem needs help. One of the things we want to do is show our love and appreciation for all they have birthed and brought forth, which we are benefiting from, by being a supply for them in this season of their need. It was obviously Holy Spirit motivated and Holy Spirit received. When something is Holy Spirit motivated, it can easily be Holy Spirit received. Often conflict comes when we are presented with such challenges and the question is, are they Holy Spirit motivated? The Lord will witness to us in those seasons whether or not God originated or man originated and the Holy Spirit will also be faithful to witness to us as to our participation. True worship results when we respond to the Holy Spirit and if we don’t get a Holy Spirit nudge there is no guilt, condemnation, or even shadow of concern in not giving. Only in following the Spirit do we become **true worshipers**.

## FRIDAY, August 27

Scripture: Ephesians 2:11-13

In Ephesians 1:11-13 we are told, “Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh – who were called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands – that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ.” “...Covenants Of Promise...” include the covenant of the tithe. While first initiated by Abram, it was later confirmed by Jacob. Jacob embraced and spoke this concept to God as if it would be a covenant. What he said was “If You will do these things for me, then I will give a tenth to You.” That is covenantal terminology. So what do we know about the tithe? It is a covenant of blessing. It is a covenant of promise and as a covenant of promise it is available to us for participation. As a result of participation in that covenant of promise we learn true worship and ultimately God insulates us from the counterfeit deceptive false end-time worship that we find in Revelation. Can we afford not to participate in this covenant?

## SATURDAY, August 28

Scripture: Genesis 14:17-20

In Genesis 14:17-20 we find the following historical account, “And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him. Then Melchizadek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: ‘Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.’ And he gave him a tithe of all.” Its hard to draw any conclusions from this passage because it is simply a historical statement of what happened. Abraham had this victory and when God’s priest met him to bless him, then Abram gave him a tithe of everything he had repossessed. That is all we’re told. The tithe doesn’t really take shape as a covenant until we go to Jacob in Genesis 28. All the elements are here but they are not stated in the way that we can conclude it is, in fact, a viable covenant. The essence is there, but a clear statement is not. So God waits to define this covenant for us through Jacob in the third generation. It appears to be the very first mammon test we face as believers. The question is how are we doing in our **worship**?

## SUNDAY, August 29

Scripture: Deuteronomy 8:18

When the issue of covenantal blessing arises, Deuteronomy 8:18 presents us with a clear picture. It says, “And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.” Was Jacob asking for the power to get wealth? The answer appears to be “No” when we read Genesis 28:18-22. He was really asking God to bring him back in peace and to be with him, keep him in the way, give him bread to eat and clothing to put on. That is really all he was asking. He was asking for just provision, not even substantial provision. But apparently because it became an issue of **worship**, God promised more than abundant blessing. I suppose we would have to explore the meanings of the word “wealth” and, of course, by New Testament standards that would mean our soul prospering, being in health, the true wealth of God is much more than money. It is really His presence to bring to pass the salvation life, the zoe life that is in Christ. But one aspect of this covenant in Deuteronomy is certain the promise for finances to do whatever needs to be done. God appears to be adding emphasis as this subject moves through Scripture. He continues expanding our understanding so we can see how critical **true worship** is to develop. How are we doing in our **worship**?

## MONDAY, August 30

Scripture: Deuteronomy 26:14,15

Speaking of the tithe in Deuteronomy 26 we are told in verses 14 and 15, “I have not eaten any of it when in mourning, nor have I removed any of it for any unclean use, nor given any of it for the dead. I have obeyed the voice of the LORD my God, and have done according to all that You have commanded me. Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel and the land which You have given us, just as You swore to our fathers, ‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’” This is what the people were to proclaim when they obeyed the voice of the LORD in their giving. It is obviously covenantal and its obviously aimed at rewarding a people who truly worship God. The tithe has become an issue of obeying God’s voice. It is a covenant that comes out of relationship which has at the core of that relationship – **worship**.

## TUESDAY, August 31

Scripture: Deuteronomy 26:16-18

In verses 16 through 18 we are told, “This day the LORD your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments; therefore you shall be careful to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. Today you have proclaimed the LORD to be your God, and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice. Also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He has promised you, that you should keep all His commandments, and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God just as He has spoken.” This passage promises that God in relationship through worship will meet the need that we present before Him. It is a Hebrew hiphel causative verb and it simply means that when we, in relationship, in worship, ask Him what we’re to sow, then we can say at the end of the month, “I have obeyed the voice of the Lord my God” and know we can have what we ask Him. This is the covenant. The essence of it comes out of **relationship**. It is formed and founded on the principle of worship. The tithe was never to be an odious hard to perform command. It was a covenant of promise that was to come out of relationship in which God rewarded the relationship with His blessing. If we can present that – we’re well on our way.

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I’m looking for people  
Who desire to excel  
For kingdom warriors  
Who’ll teach others as well

Who’ll log kingdom miles  
And not just be content  
To walk in the “Sonshine”  
And stay close to the tent

I’m looking for mentors  
Who give selflessly  
To impart to others  
To invest faithfully

And such fruit amazing  
Is the promised reward...  
Will this be the purpose  
That you’re running toward?

Jayne Houghton