

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Great Valley of Decision

PART I

**Biblical Infallibility:
A Doctrine That Denies God's Power**

The stark and tragic events now coming down upon us make it necessary to speak forthrightly about the role of the Bible, and its usefulness in our decisions.

The Bible contains divine revelation. Without that information we could not know where God is taking us, nor what he is now asking of us.

The following remarks show my pivotal belief in the Bible, and indicate the limitations by which we all are bound. I go on to discuss elements of decision now facing us.

Background

In the fall of 1983 I became acquainted with a fundamentalist preacher of Baptist origins. He was pastor to a large and growing independent congregation, a dynamic person, a “go-getter for God,” respected in the community.

Just before Christmas I sent him a copy of an essay I called *A Personal Testimony* in which I described my religious background, my separation from God, how God brought me back to him, an unusual and deep spiritual experience I had late in 1967, and how God had opened my eyes to the meaning of prophecy. I quoted passages which say that God kept mysteries throughout history, Dan 12:9 and Rev 10:7, and that now, at the time of the end, the books were being opened, Dan 11:33, Matt 24:14, Rev 10:7. I went on to illustrate with selections showing judgment events now coming on our world.

In my discussion I mentioned that quotations were from the *Revised Standard Version* of the Bible.

The man replied, expressing his appreciation for my thoughts and stating emphatically that the Bible was not a book shrouded in mystery. My error in understanding was due to the fact I had used RSV, an unreliable translation and the work of modern liberals who did not know God.

In response I compared RSV passages with the *King James Version* and showed why modern minds would be able to understand more easily with RSV but not so readily with the antique phrasing of KJV. I pointed out that in certain cases I expressed a preference for the King James translation; this showed I kept

my KJV next to my RSV. I stated also that I felt RSV was an honest translation, although certainly influenced by modern attitudes but held in check by conservative elements within the sponsoring churches when the translation was made.

He replied to this by sending me a copy of a book by Dr. John Rice, a well-known fundamentalist, entitled *Our God-Breathed Book: The Bible*. He urged that I study it and then let him know my thoughts.

I was troubled by the direction of our dialogue. This was not due to a reluctance to study the book he sent me, since I am always eager to broaden my knowledge, but to a recognition that he was asking to continue a dialogue that would not grapple with the heart of my concern. He was unwilling to accept the simple and honest statements I had made about my experience and how that had changed my life. He assumed that my views were due to errors in thinking, and that such errors arose because I used a “liberal” translation. He discounted a real spiritual experience that enabled me to achieve deeper insight into God's word.

I debated further response for some time. I was acutely aware of the great differences between us. On the one hand I felt the personal presence of God; on the other his views were derived from doctrines he had followed throughout his life. I had acquired understanding through a spiritual experience; he rejected my testimony. As I reflected on this dilemma I came to recognize that I had cleaved the shell of the doctrine of biblical infallibility and had plunged directly to the heart of a faith based on that doctrine.

It came about in this manner:

1. For more than twenty years of adult life I was unable to make sense of the Bible. From my fundamentalist youth I knew its stories; I was acquainted in a small way with the teachings of Jesus; I knew the doctrines of personal salvation. As my children grew older I felt a duty to give them religious instruction but was at a loss where to begin. I joined my wife's Lutheran church to provide for them. I taught Sunday School but my work was desultory. I was merely repeating the same old worn phrases, myths and stories from two thousand years of Christianity. I had no inspiration to express dynamic belief in a real living God. I was aimless in my religious direction.

2. In 1967 I developed a deep interest in the Bible. The interest was not merely intellectual; something was working inside me to create that interest. Equally strong was an influence that seemed to guide my mind for insights into prophecy.

3. As I read those books I was amazed how appropriate they seemed for our own day. Prior generations would not have been able to understand: planetary conditions were not ripe; technological insights did not exist; proper knowledge had not yet been attained.

4. My interest was so keen I searched other translations. How did the *King James Version* present the prophetic statements? What of the *New English Bible*? What of the Catholic versions? I was eager to obtain the most reliable words I could find. RSV happened to be the version I used because of my Lutheran connections. Fortunately, it was a clear and clean translation. But there is no doubt in my mind that had I used another translation the same insights would have been given. Those insights went beyond the limitations of translation. God is not bound by human language.

5. This search taught me the problems of translation, not because I was an expert in Hebrew or Greek, but from practical use. I acquired dictionaries, grammar books, and lexicons to help me with puzzling phrases and passages. I was getting educated.

6. I found that no translation was perfect. Although RSV was influenced by modern attitudes it also had the benefit of greater scholarly knowledge. KJV was strongly influenced by attitudes of the sixteenth century, with less scholarly knowledge. I encountered the problem of how the belief of the translators influences their productions, a problem which affects all translations.

7. I had risen above the camouflage of translations. I was free of the biases introduced by the translators. I might not be able to penetrate obscure idioms or defects in text, but I had a large body of scholarship upon which to draw for guidance in difficult areas.

8. This exercise showed dramatically that my mind was actively at work to understand. There was a spiritual influence guiding me but understanding did not come unless I participated in the process. There were no flashes of knowledge devoid of the vehicle of written words. Although there were sudden mental connections and spiritual insights, specific details were required upon which to draw. The process at work was a combination of my own will and active mind together with an influence that both moved my interest and provided deep understanding. The Holy Spirit was at work.

9. Now that I was free of the camouflage of translations I clearly recognized that we did not have perfect documents. But I also recognized that God gave sufficient material for us to understand his message and that we in the modern world could determine the meaning of prophecy by worshipful study. The Holy Spirit could help us understand in spite of defects. On the one hand he provided insights; on the other he alerted us to errors and purely human elements.

10. This process led to a most important realization: the Bible was a vehicle of communication between God and man but it need not be perfect to serve that purpose. If men were guided by the Holy Spirit, and if they used their talents of education and knowledge, dedicated to him, understanding would come in spite of imperfections.

Open and conscious recognition of these factors was initiated by the insistence of the fundamentalist pastor for the *King James Version* of the Bible. In spite of his education, with a Doctor of Divinity, he had never been able to rise above translations. He was trapped by doctrine. By forcing me to squarely face the experience of spiritual guidance, which I had followed without conscious reflection, he led me to grasp the misconception of biblical infallibility. As I wrote to him:

1) If you say God cannot give men understanding of his truth except through the King James translation of the Bible you deny his power. You presume against God.

2) If you say the Holy Spirit cannot give men understanding of God's truth except through the King James Version of the Bible you deny his power also. You presume against the Holy Spirit.

God is not bound by translations; he can work through all translations.

This led to the final step on recognition of the fallacy of biblical infallibility. If the Holy Spirit could provide understanding in spite of defects in translation he certainly could provide understanding in spite of defects in original text. The Bible was given to us by the hand of God but it need not be perfect nor infallible. Although some might believe that God could not produce an imperfect communication a glance at the real world shows that his creation contains many imperfections. The message counted; not perfection of the written word. If translations were not a limit to understanding, why should perfect documents be necessary to receive God's message?

I also came to recognize why that fundamentalist pastor was frozen to KJV. If perfection was required in the written word only one translation could fulfill the requirement of perfection. If other translations were permitted, with their "liberal" influence, one could not receive God's perfect word. That would be counter to the doctrine of infallibility. Not only did originals have to be perfect; translations had to be perfect also.

Why did men so desperately desire perfection? The heart of the problem was contained in unconscious religious longings. They lacked assurance of divine authority; they did not have living divine agents directly present to give them personal instruction. They had only written words; therefore, they felt perfect communication necessary to receive God's truth. As I wrote further to the pastor:

3) Doctrines of biblical infallibility through divine inspiration contain a grave difficulty. On the one hand they state explicitly that the production of the Bible is perfect. On the other hand they require implicitly that a perfect production is necessary for God's people to receive his word. In the first case the Holy Spirit works to create a perfect document. In the second case the work of the Holy Spirit is disallowed.

From this insight the concept of "God-breathed" takes on a different cast. The writers of the Bible may have been led by the Holy Spirit but their works contain purely human elements as well as divinely-inspired elements.

I was up against a deadly serious problem. I was exposing a situation that afflicted Christianity since its origins. All Christians feel the Holy Spirit works with them to provide understanding. Theologians call it illumination. Indeed, it is true. The Holy Spirit worked with men through the centuries but only according to the insights he

wished to provide. Our understanding is limited by the action of God. The fragmentation of Christianity among a thousand different sects is a vivid demonstration of how much we did not understand God's word.

The Holy Spirit worked dynamically with the apostles and disciples; that influence was powerful in early Christian days. He worked with them to produce the New Testament; it provided great service over the centuries. But his work was greatly reduced in later generations. He helped bring about a new era; but after it was established the course of events came more under the control of men. They were left to determine their own religious paths. The result is again plainly evident. Rampant world secularism and godlessness shows a gross failure of Christianity to convert the world to truth and righteousness a failure rooted in Christian understanding of the Bible.

Men believed they understood the word of God; I saw that God kept deeper knowledge from them. Even more, I clearly perceived that the doctrine of biblical inerrancy was a mechanism by which men supported themselves all those generations. They believed the Holy Spirit worked to provide understanding. But perfection was desired because they did not recognize a strong spiritual influence within themselves. If they felt the presence of God they would not be troubled by different translations, nor would they be disturbed by imperfection. They would live more spontaneously through direct Spirit persuasion. They would feel a closer communion with God; they would be lifted above the mechanistic problems of verbal communication.

The fundamentalist pastor judged me according to the standard of his own condition. He was judgmental because of his own uncertainties. He did not express joy that God saved someone from a godless life. He did not express gratitude that God brought me back to him. He did not ask about the nature of my spiritual experience, express an interest in details leading to it, or desire to share with me. He did not want to know how I arrived at my views. He stated offhand that I did not perceive correctly because I used the wrong translation of the Bible. His reaction was not in positive enthusiasm for a soul saved but in a negative defensive reaction to a test of his doctrines so fondly held. He faulted me for error and misguided understanding. He saw me merely as another soul groping for reassurance in a lost and confused world. He implied, although not openly stated, that I did not have a valid spiritual experience.

I did more than penetrate to the heart of the doctrine of biblical infallibility. I exposed the true cause of dissension and contest among Christians. Their differences were due to man-made doctrines. They did not feel the Holy Spirit holding them together in brotherhood. They did not forgive differences in perception. They did not tolerate alternate views of God and his actions. They did not come together in agreement; they remained in contest with one another. Their faith did not derive directly from spiritual experience. Perhaps it derived from a love for God but it was burdened by the blind traditions of our Christian forefathers. They were chained by doctrines. Christians could not build brotherhood without a closer spiritual relationship with God and with one another. They would not alter their attitudes.

As a consequence God brings spiritual judgment down upon all of us. Now he will obliterate such childishness.

Rather than demonstrating God's power the doctrine of biblical inerrancy actually denies his power. The doctrine inherently worked from the principle that the Holy Spirit did not directly show individuals divine truth. The doctrine assumed that God did not work directly with men and women as he worked with Abraham and Moses, the Old Testament prophets, and the apostles and disciples. If God does so work today men and women become new instruments of revelation. They assume a destiny role equal to the prophets and the apostles who were the instruments for those olden revelations. But the doctrine forever froze God into a stagnant condition. And it locked men and women into attitudes that prevented them from becoming receptive to new knowledge and understanding. Jesus was viewed as the culmination of revelation; the world will end with a mysterious millennium; there is no long-term future for this planet.

Indeed, God held the world in a static religious condition for two thousand years; hence men thought his revelations were consummated with Jesus and the apostles. But God is now effecting a change in creation. We are at the end of an age. He is creating a new heaven and a new earth. He will restructure the rebellious heavenly realms; he will renovate this earth. No longer will God's people be strangers to one another.

The work of the Holy Spirit did not cease with biblical writings. He is dynamically at work once again. Now, at the end of the age, mysteries will be revealed. In the face of our grave planetary emergency God is executing a program to salvage his people from destruction. But only those with sincere, courageous, and intelligent love for God will survive.

PART II Personal Background

God had been working with me for a long time, in fact, all my life. I simply did not know it. I did not perceive how he directs the lives of men, how he uses them, and how he calls them.

My parents were deeply religious, Protestant holiness people. As a youth I was keenly conscientious about God, answering altar calls at an early age. This intense interest in God is illustrated by a vivid dream which took place when I was ten years old.

We lived in a farmhouse with an orchard adjacent to the kitchen at the rear of the house. Two windows flanked a wood-burning range at the back wall. In my dream I was in the kitchen with the blinds pulled down over the windows. I went to the right window and lifted the blind to look out. There, in the middle of the orchard, I saw Jesus standing, looking at me.

That dream never left my memory. Although it reflected my serious attitude toward God it also reinforced an awareness of his presence. As I grew and my mind developed I tried to comprehend the writings of the Bible. In my youthful view I felt that Christians should closely follow the advice given by Paul, Rom 12, Eph 4 and 5, Phlp 2:1-4, Tit 2, and so on. If Christians were sincere they should truly live sanctified lives. I took the Bible seriously. I believed it was God's holy, inspired, and infallible word. But I encour-

tered my own weaknesses and the common problems of everyday life among family and friends. The incompatibility between Paul's expressed ideals and the daily life I observed was prominent in my adolescent mind.

Other problems afflicted Christian practices. Although not clearly delineated in my youth there was an intuitive sense of falseness. If Paul was writing by the command of the Lord, as he says in I Cor 14:37, why did Christians permit women to speak in church? He was emphatic about it; he considered it shameful conduct, Cor 14:34-35. Yet most churches violate this command. Clearly many were interpreting Paul's word against practical reality. They were willing to deny the infallibility of that portion of the Bible by the use of their common sense. He also discoursed at length on the gifts of the Spirit, I Cor 12-14. He wanted the Corinthians to speak in tongues. Even more, he wanted them to prophesy, I Cor 14:5. Many churches today look with disdain on such practices. They claim that Paul's instructions were directed toward the early church and no longer apply. But if this part does not apply what other parts do not apply? Are we to pick and choose according to personal taste? Christian churches have certainly done just that. By picking and choosing they demonstrate that in reality they do not accept the Bible as infallible; practical reality conditions their acceptance. And then they contest with one another over their interpretations.

At the age of sixteen I decided to attend a private religious school in New Jersey with full intent of devoting my life to God. In my youthful anticipation I felt I would find more devout living, and that I would become educated in the deeper things of God. I was disappointed on both expectations. Many of my questions could not be answered; the people at the school were as human as those back home.

A year later I returned home, deeply disillusioned, and much in despair. At the age of eighteen I left home and God.

For twenty years I passed through the affairs of life mostly as the world does today, godless in attitude, yet seeking to understand the world and the purpose of life. I pursued human philosophies searching for answers. I read Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Spinoza, Henri Poincare, Charles Pierce and others. I became involved in the thoughts of Alfred Korzybski and his General Semantics. I grew to understand the practical side of semantics and how human beings are conditioned by the words they use. "Repent, and be saved," "Holy Mary, mother of God," "cleansing through the blood," and other phrases were verbal reassurances, not spiritual vehicles.

During this period I examined the physical sciences and their powerful methods. They had given us marvelous techniques in curing sicknesses; they had provided means of transportation never before known. They had overcome the problems of warmth and light and communications. They had lifted men's vision to the stars. They also found no visible evidence for intelligent formation of the worlds, the suns, or the galaxies. I reached the conclusion that one could explain the universe around natural law without resorting to a Creator God. I saw no other recourse but to believe that the world was an accident and that Jesus was merely a man.

I went on to marriage and family life. I received a strong formal education in mathematics, physics and engineering. Little did I realize how God would use that knowledge to show in more powerful ways the reality of his existence.

In 1965 God began to work more directly with me, in a manner I did not expect. He brought information and insights that, in retrospect, were adapted to my intellectual framework yet designed to bring me back to him. He used my knowledge in mathematics to show how invisible beings could be near us, working with us, but without our conscious detection or recognition. He showed me that celestial beings were of many different types, from the more material, (Gen 19), to the more spiritual. I learned that a heavy celestial activity was now going on around our planet and that this world had a unique position in universe affairs. This process of enlightenment went on for about two years without my conscious recognition of where he was leading me. And he led me back to the Bible. As I delved into the Old Testament prophets I began to understand the messages they carried. I recall stating to my wife emphatically in the summer of 1967, "I know what this book is saying."

Then late in that year he showed me how he was unfolding his will in our days, and the purpose behind the mystery he had long sustained. I fell on my knees trembling before him, with full recognition of his great majesty and power. I was deeply moved by his awesome presence. For months I carried new visions. In my acute state of spiritual awareness I truly felt I saw the world as the angels saw it and understood as they understood. The unique nature of my experience was brought strikingly home when I read a passage from the Dead Sea Scrolls:

For lo, Thou hast taken a spirit distorted by sin, and purged it of the taint of much transgression, and given it a place in the host of the holy beings, and brought it into communion with the sons of heaven.

Significantly, my experience did not come in a church environment. I did not feel I was under religious conviction. I did not answer calls to turn my heart to God. He brought me back to him without my conscious awareness of where he was leading me, in the daily activities of secular employment. There was a sudden and dramatic conversion experience but not because of a belief in Jesus as my personal savior. Concern for my personal salvation was far from my mind. I came back to him because I knew him as Lord and Creator. I knew him in great glory as God, the maker of a universe. I recognized that his power to save us is inherent in his prerogatives as Creator, and that his life on this earth had to have meaning for salvation beyond the primitive concepts of blood sacrifice. I also recognized fundamental misconceptions in the Christian doctrines of personal conversion and personal salvation. I saw that the limitations God imposed on revelation had forced Christians into narrow views of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. They had created a religion around Jesus but knew little about him as Lord and Creator.

The experience left me in an extremely difficult position. I felt impelled to tell others of my new insights and knowledge but I was greatly constrained by the limiting orientations of my fellow man. To overcome those barriers I felt I had to

provide explanatory background. However the task was imposing. I could not restrict myself to the Bible. My insights into biblical passages came because I was able to interpret them against physical reality. I also could place individual prophetic scenes into a framework of an unfolding destiny program, from the ages of the past, on to the far future. Again the views God gave me went far beyond the childish concepts of a seven-thousand year creation.

Furthermore, I felt if I were to convey to others those things which God showed me I could not align myself with any one group or organization. I labored for the full brotherhood of all his people. I had to remain neutral in religious and social affiliations. But that decision left me without a social vehicle. I became isolated and much alone.

There was a purpose to his actions. His work required a certain timeliness; if his plans were revealed prematurely the delicate balance between unfolding planetary destiny and the salvation of his people would be upset. Initially I had great enthusiasm to reach out to others but always my efforts were blunted and cut off without fruition. In spite of all this I have remained faithful and fully expectant. He is a great God and he will accomplish the purpose of his mind.

PART III Insights

Prominent in my memory of those early days of insight is Chapter 5 of Isaiah. As I commuted daily between my home in Frederick, Maryland and my employment in Washington, DC I gazed on the many fields and houses of the suburban Maryland countryside and I was reminded of those words from verse 8:

Woe to those who join house to house, and who add field to field,
until there is no more room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst
of the land.

Never, in the history of the world, have men enjoyed the material comforts of high technology as we do today, yet never have we felt so alone with neighbors living on every side. We have crowded ourselves together until we have become strangers to one another. Dense populations produce irritations and distractions which inhibit spiritual growth.

Again as I looked upon the many large and beautiful houses in the Washington area I was reminded further of verse 9:

The LORD of hosts has sworn in my hearing: Surely many houses
shall be desolate, large and beautiful houses without inhabitant.

There flashed into my mind a picture of those many large and beautiful houses sitting unoccupied. The inhabitants would be dead as the result of horrible nuclear destruction. Their houses might survive the devastating blasts of those abominable weapons but they would die in agony. This fact was brought

profoundly home when I read verses 24 and 25. The anger of our God was kindled against his people; he stretched out his hand and smote them. The mountains quaked on that great day and the corpses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away and his hand is stretched out still.

I found other statements about the present condition of the earth and God's judgment against it. In Isa 24:4-6 I read:

The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants . . .

The entire history of the earth has not witnessed the pollution which curses it today. The rivers and lakes, the great ocean bays, the ocean itself, the lands and the atmosphere all experience widespread pollution from chemicals and burning fuels. The forests of Europe and northeast America are slowly dying from acid rain. Many varieties of fish are dying. The deadly pfiesteria bacteria has now infected the waters of the Chesapeake Bay and the coastal waters of North Carolina. Dozens of species of birds are extinct or endangered. Horrible tumors now afflict the animal kingdom and man from polluted diets. The atmosphere carries a burden worldwide of sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxide and fluorides which pollute the air and disrupt the stratosphere. The great statues and temples of ancient Greece and Rome survived well into the twentieth century but now crumble under the attack of our poisoned air. The earth truly mourns and withers, the whole world mourns under the burden, the skies languish together with the earth.

Breaking forth wildly about us are unknown diseases. Pestilence in the form of AIDS, Ebola virus, and other forms of deadly afflictions, now reach beyond the power of our healing arts.

Men transgressed God's natural laws. They violated the rules for a sanitary, safe and pleasant world. They broke the covenant of care taking established by God. A curse devours the earth; therefore the inhabitants of the earth shall be scorched and few men will be left.

Many Christians look fondly forward to the coming of the Lord, expecting to be lifted away from all trouble and woe in a miraculous escape they call the Rapture. It is a sustaining hope that carries countless numbers of individuals through the difficulties of these times. They have ample support for such expectations from several passages in the New Testament. But the LORD said clearly to us:

Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the
day of the LORD? It is a day of darkness and not light, Amos 5:18.

Some claim that these words were intended for unbelievers. But do unbelievers look forward to and desire the day of the LORD?

The day of darkness is vividly described in the Old Testament, Joel 2:1-2, Isa 5:30. When I read those passages a striking picture of nuclear devastations came into my mind. Great clouds of dust and debris will rise into the atmosphere blotting out the light of the sun. It surely will be a day of clouds and thick darkness.

I was further impressed by the first seven verses of Isa 5. Judea and the people of Jerusalem were beloved of the Lord. He planted them as choice vines on fertile soil. He looked for a harvest of grapes but found only wild grapes. Now he would tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem their judgment. His vineyard would be devoured. He would remove its hedge and break down its wall. It would become a waste to be trampled upon. It would not be pruned; briars and thorns would grow up. He looked for justice but, behold, bloodshed; he looked for righteousness, but found only a cry.

One could say this was a warning to the people of Judah before the days of the Babylonian captivity. But it was striking to me because of the bloodshed and the violence among the towns and cities of Judea today. The prophecies tell us that, contrary to the fond expectation of both Jew and Christian, Jerusalem and Judea will be burned with fire and destroyed.

Other insights came to me.

A favorite passage for Christians is Isa 2:4. Men shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Many Christians believe this describes the millennium. But Rev 20:8 tells us that war will come at the end of the thousand years. At that time nations still lift up swords against the people of Israel. Rev 20:8 voids Isa 2:4 for the millennium. Therefore the planet has a long future after the millennium.

The passage in Rev 20 creates other difficulties. The usual concept of the millennium is a reign of peace and of the outpouring of righteousness. But sinful and misguided people still live on the planet. Otherwise how could Satan go out to deceive the nations?

In line with this same reasoning consider the passage of Jer 31:27-34. A new covenant is promised. God will put his law in our minds and write it on our hearts. He will be our God and we will be his people. Many believe this new covenant came when Jesus lived here. But note the following verse. No longer will men teach their neighbors; neither shall they say to one another, "Know the Lord."

How often did I hear it in revivals and at camp meetings. Altar calls were sounded and someone asked another, "Do you know the Lord?" There will come a time when men will no longer feel a need to ask that question, or to exhort one another to know the Lord. All shall know him, from the least small child to the greatest leader. This is not a promise for the past two thousand years; it is a promise for the future. There will be no need for preachers, missionaries, or evangelists in that new world. The need will no longer exist. Again, if this is to pervade the entire globe during the millennium, with all knowing him, from the least to the greatest, how can Satan deceive the nations?

Obviously there is great uncertainty of understanding. God's word is not perfectly clear.

My views of life and of God's creative acts had been lifted above the level of religious traditions to universal scope and magnitude. I no longer was tied to particular theologies or factional interpretations of God's word. He gave me un-

derstanding, and in so doing he created a most difficult personal situation. I found it impossible to talk with Christian believers in familiar terms; I was forced to restructure all attempts to tell others those things God showed me.

PART IV Mysteries

Several passages in the Bible tell us that God kept a mystery about his plans for the future of this world. These passages are in the Old Testament and the New, in Isaiah and Daniel, in Paul's letters, and in John's great book of *Revelation*.

Daniel was told to shut up the words and seal the book until the time of the end, 12:4. Many would run to and fro and knowledge would increase. He asked the mighty being how long it would be. He was told again to go his way; the words were shut up and sealed until the time of the end, 12:9.

This passage is pregnant with meaning. Over the past two thousand years many have run to and fro. Knowledge of astronomy and cosmology, of anthropology and archeology, of physics and chemistry, of biology and medicine — all have greatly increased. Those of us living in the twentieth century reaped the benefit of this vast accumulation of knowledge and its material applications in technology.

Although Daniel did not understand these matters he was given a sign. When the power of the holy people would be shattered these things would be accomplished. If the holy people are the Jews living in the Holy Land, the modern state of Israel, the remark is in perfect agreement with the predictions of Jer 25 and Dan 11:14. Jerusalem and Judea, together with surrounding countries, will be blasted from the face of the earth in a great judgment of fire. Then the end will come.

Few Christians paid serious heed to the significance of words being shut up and sealed. Daniel himself wanted to know but was told to take his allotted place in that great judgment at the end of the age. If the words were shut up and sealed how could anyone know their meaning? If our Creator kept this secret how could the apostles know? How could Paul know? If Paul revealed such knowledge would it not violate the seal? Would Jesus reveal the meaning if he were the one, as Creator, who imposed the seal?

Neither Jesus nor the apostles could reveal the meaning; to do so would violate the conditions guarding that information. Knowledge was kept secret until the time of the end. The sealing is now removed. Understanding now comes.

Furthermore, no one could reveal the meaning of the words: no Rabbi, no Christian father, no Pope, no Bishop, no Priest, no Pastor, nor any theologian. All theologies since the time of Daniel, including the *Book of Hebrews* in the New Testament, were short of this knowledge. Paul's expositions must be limited by the same condition. All Christian understanding over the past two thousand years suffered from this limitation. Christian theology was defective to greater or less extent.

Statements of mysteries are not limited to Daniel. John also spoke of such matters in his Revelation, 10:4-7.

And when the seven thunders had sounded I was about to write but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down." And the angel whom I saw standing on sea and land lifted up his right hand to heaven and swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay. In the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel the mystery of God, as he announced to his servants the prophets, should be finished.

Again this passage deserves careful attention. Like Daniel, John was chosen to present revelations about the end of the earth age and the judgment of the nations. His seven thunders follow a series of seven seals, trumpets, and bowls. Each symbol represents events more awesome than the preceding in its pronouncements of doom and terror. But when the seven thunders announced their judgments John was instructed to withhold. The prophetic knowledge they brought was to be sealed up, just as the words of Daniel were sealed up. At the time of the end, in the last days of the earth age, the trumpet call of the seventh angel would be sounded. There would be no more delay. No more would God hold events and knowledge in abeyance. Those living on earth would come to know the meaning of the mystery. It is now finished.

The word translated *fulfilled* in RSV is from a Greek root having the sense of being finished or consummated, an end attained. Although the mysteries are rightfully fulfilled they are also certainly finished. Now they become known; God makes them known. The knowledge and information is crucial to our decisions at this end of the earth age.

Importantly, this mystery was announced to God's servants, the prophets. For John, in the context of embryonic Christianity, those prophets had to be the Old Testament prophets. John would have been familiar with the phrase "the Law and the Prophets," and his readers would have understood in that manner. He hardly would refer to a variety of early Christians who claimed to be prophets. Furthermore, John could not have referred to himself. If we want to learn the mysteries we should carefully study the Old Testament prophecies.

But Daniel and John were not the only persons to write about mysteries and secrets. Paul did also: "the mystery of Christ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations," Eph 3:4-5; "the plan of the mystery hidden for ages by God," Eph 3:9; and "the mystery hidden for ages and generations," Col 1:26.

Jesus, as Creator of the universe, had devised a grand and consummate purpose in his creation. Time was the method he used to accomplish that purpose. We call it destiny.

"... according to (God's) purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time." Eph 1:9-10.

Those plans were not revealed to men of prior generations but Paul was now privy to them: "*the mystery was made known to me by revelation,*" Eph 3:3. He felt strongly that he was an instrument of revelation. It was his purpose "... *to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages by God . . .*," Eph 3:9. He also felt that it was made known to the other apostles and to the "prophets" living in his time. Furthermore all men could now see the plan of the mystery that was hidden for ages.

"... For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will . . ." Eph 1:9.

"... the mystery . . . now made manifest to his saints . . ." Col 1:26.

"... the mystery of Christ . . . has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." Eph 3:5.

Paul went on to explain those mysteries.

"... how the Gentiles were fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." Eph 3:6.

"... God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of the mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Col 1:27

Salvation was for all people, not merely the Jews. The promise of eternal life, the hope of glory, came through Jesus. The Gentiles acquired equal rights with the Jews and became part of the whole body of Israel. This was an amazing gift from God. Knowledge of these facts drove Paul to devote his life to the task of taking the news to the Gentile nations. This was the mystery revealed through Jesus' life, death and resurrection — a plan of personal salvation for all the people of the world.

But Jesus had an even larger purpose in his life on this world:

"... to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth . . ." Eph 1:10.

"... that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places." Eph 3:10.

Most Christians failed to recognize the cosmic magnitude of these statements. Heavy concentration on Jesus' life in the soul salvation of all world people overshadowed Paul's remarks about heavenly rebellion and creative rehabilitation. One reads the commentators making such remarks as

“. . . a disunity has crept into God’s world. Heaven is here a way of describing the invisible part of the universe, and ‘all in heaven’ describes superhuman forces of evil at work against God. These malignant powers are trying to rival God and keep him from his proper place.”

Such views see only abstract forces of good and evil; the commentators believed heaven was a way of describing the invisible part of the universe, whatever that may be. They did not perceive the truly glorious administrative structure of the heavenly realms, nor how a rebellion took place when Lucifer tried to set his throne on high, on the Mount of Assembly in the far north, Isa 14:13.

The phrase translated as *principalities and powers* in Ephesians 3 obscures the sense. The phrase literally is *rulers and authorities*. The heavenly realms extend throughout the universe, including the “far north.” The “far north” has meaning only for a physical orientation inside the universe, unless an undefinable heaven outside the universe also has a “far north,” a “south,” and so on.

It was the Father’s purpose that his Son would acquire dominion and power over all his created realms as the fruit of his human incarnation. All things would become united, not only upon earth but also in heaven. The heavenly rebellion would now finally be resolved and the earth would be brought back from its sin, degradation, trouble, and woe. The work of Jesus upon this earth was so great that it would reverberate throughout the cosmos. And the “church” was the instrument by which that demonstration would be made. Jesus would show all those rebel Rulers and Authorities that he was now in command and that his work on this planet was an example to an entire universe.

The word “church” meant the assembly of believers. We should not gather the wrong implication from this word. Paul meant that the whole body of believers would be the demonstration to the heavenly realms. The process of building this body was the demonstration, a process based on faith, and not on visible celestial influence.

But this was not to be accomplished within a few generations. Mystery would continue until all things would be fulfilled. Paul expressed this view in Rom 11:25.

“Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brethren: a hardening has come upon part of Israel until the full number of Gentiles come in, and so all Israel will be saved . . .”

This passage is one of the most difficult in Paul’s writings. It was subject to debate and contest since early Christian days. In spite of this difficulty it is highly instructive. Not only does it show the nature of Christian blindness and conceit; it also provides a clue to God’s program of time.

RSV uses *hardening* but KJV uses *blindness*. The Greek word means to petrify, or make stupid. It denotes a lack of ability to think or to understand, a callousness or insensibility. Part of Israel would remain insensible without ability to understand.

What did Paul mean by a part of Israel? Did he mean the Jews? Will a large part of the Jews remain blind while a small part will understand to become followers of Jesus. Will this condition continue until the full number of Gentiles “come in?” Then the remainder of the Jews, those who were hardened, will come to understand.

According to this view the mystery is that God finds it necessary to hold most Jews in this condition until the fullness of time. Unless the majority of Jews remain blind salvation cannot come to all Gentiles.

There are serious objections to this view. What is so mysterious about most Jews not accepting Jesus as the Son of God? Paul himself did not at first accept. Only after his personal visitation on the road to Damascus did he come to know Jesus as God. Did early Christians unrealistically expect that all Jews would be converted, and was Paul telling them this was not true? Was it necessary that Jews remain blind to force evangelistic efforts to concentrate on Gentiles? Hardly. Much early missionary work concentrated on Jewish conversion. Paul stated that his work was to the Gentiles while that of Peter was to the Jews, Gal 2:7. Did Paul support work to the Jews more out of a sense of duty than a sense of fruitfulness? Would work with the Jews deter from Gentile salvation? If this were so why did he say that Peter should devote his efforts to the Jews? Would he not want all effort to concentrate on the Gentiles?

If Paul meant Jews in this passage why did he not say Jews? He used the word about thirty times in his letters while he used the word Israel about half that number. Therefore he was not afraid of it. If he had used “Jew” we would be clear about his intent. But when he used the word Israel we are uncertain because it could apply to the Gentile part of Israel.

If Paul recognized spiritual Israel as composed of both Jew and Gentile would not the phrase “all Israel” mean both? Is it possible he meant to include both Jews and Gentiles as a part of Israel that would be hardened although some Jews and some Gentiles would follow Jesus and that such condition must hold until the full number of Gentiles had “come in?”

But what did he mean by the full number of Gentiles? Did this mean those Gentiles who were hardened but now would be converted to the gospel? If so what about the hardened Jews?

We can take a different view. The Greek word *ethnos*, from which we get our English word ethnic, more rightly denotes the general term *people*, and is properly translated as *nations: until the full number of nations come in*. The nations include all the people of the earth. Thus it is possible to have at least two different views, the worn traditional view of those who will be converted and have their souls saved, or a more cosmic sense in that the full number of nations will truly come in.

If Paul used the word *ethnos* to mean *nations* rather than *Gentiles* it puts an altogether different cast on his intent. Then we find our perspective lifted above *Gentile soul salvation* to a new vision of planetary *salvation of the nations*, a world rehabilitation. If Paul recognized a planetary rehabilitation he felt he was a major instrument in that new effort. He not only was saving individuals; he was also helping to save the planet.

In Paul's view salvation came to the nations because the Jews had failed in their mission as the people of God. They defaulted; they did not set righteous example for the nations. Now Jesus reclaimed that purpose; he personally assumed responsibility for that salvation. Paul was one of his instruments.

When did Paul expect the full number to come in? Fifty or a hundred years? A thousand years? What has history shown?

Did the nations not grow and develop to the present century? Since the world is now fully explored and settled and the colonial empires have reverted to independent countries could we not consider that the full number of nations has, indeed, come in?

Paul's remark shows a considerable period of earth time. Humanity would grow; the world would change. A hardening would remain upon Israel, spiritual Israel, until the world would ripen to the end of the age. The minds of Jews and Christians would remain petrified, unable to think or to perceive God's greater truths.

Paul cautioned the Roman Christians; he did not want them to be ignorant of the mystery. He had information or knowledge to which they were not privy. They thought they knew more than they demonstrated in understanding. In the face of this lack of knowledge they held conceits; he was warning them against such intellectual pride. Conceit continued to afflict Christians throughout the centuries. The conceit is well illustrated by the remark of that fundamentalist pastor in open contradiction to the plain statements of Daniel, John and Paul: *The Bible is not shrouded in mystery.*

This blindness was important for God to fulfill his purpose in salvaging "all Israel." If he had fully revealed his program it would have been upset by the ambitions of men. God had to harden the minds of both Jew and Christian to accomplish his purpose. Men had to remain blind.

Indeed, we ask: if God's mystery was fully revealed why such fragmentation and theological differences among God's people? Hundreds of sects fill the land, disputing with one another over the meaning of biblical truth. If God's word were clear could there be such quest impelling each denomination to believe itself the sole perceiver of God's truth? Does history not show a great struggle to understand God's message? But who is willing to accept they did not fully understand? Which Christian will freely admit he did not clearly understand? And if the Jews are to be enlightened at the fullness of the nations where is that ministry? Will Jews now see as clearly as Christians? If so, it would be a mockery. There could be no more disappointing commentary.

My personal experience impressed upon me the great lack of understanding that prevails among God's people. Great uncertainties existed in understanding God's will, his return to this earth, and his plans for the future. Although all Christians emphasized personal salvation, and believed this was the primary purpose of Jesus' life, they know great earth events are described in the Bible but do not agree on what those events portend.

If all things are to be united on earth then Jews and Gentiles will be united into one body of spiritual Israel. They are not so united today. But when will Jews accept Jesus as a divine Son of God? When will all Israel be united and saved? If the world has been in disarray for two thousand years, and if it is to be united, then it must have a long future before it.

What is to be united in heaven? Is the heavenly rebellion finally to be resolved? Was a part of heaven separated from another part? Were the heavenly realms in disarray as the nations have been in disarray here on earth?

How long will it take to unite both terrestrial and celestial realms? How many centuries or millennia cover the fullness of time? Will our world be united with the celestial realms in open and active communication, travel and exchange?

If Jesus is the instrument of this work, both in heaven and on earth, will he come back to this world to devote himself exclusively to the problems of this planet, or will he delegate that responsibility to another divine being, perhaps a Melchizedek, while he attends to the larger affairs of universe creation? Did Jesus live here exclusively for the benefit of this planet, or was his human life meaningful for other parts of the celestial realms? Did his mortal career contribute to the benefit of all creation?

If all things are fully revealed why are such questions not answered in Christian theology? Can we deny that Paul said all things would be united, both in heaven and on earth? We have emphasized personal salvation through Jesus but how did his mortal career affect planetary salvation and heavenly salvation? Paul states in I Cor 2 that his purpose to the Corinthians was not to proclaim the testimony (mystery) of God in lofty words or wisdom. He decided to know nothing among them except Jesus Christ and him crucified. Does this mean Paul abstained from discussing heavenly rebellion and celestial rehabilitation? Did he restrict his efforts exclusively to Christ in us, the hope of our salvation and personal glory, while limiting his teaching on cosmic programs? If so, he would not detail universe plans in his writings, and such knowledge has not come down to us through Paul. Then Christian teachings, founded to a major extent on the work of Paul, did not reflect God's larger plan. They were limited to the miracle of Jesus' life, God among us, and our personal salvation.

This does not mean Paul intended that God's secret was not available to us. As he stated in Rom 16:25-26:

“ . . . the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed and through the prophetic writings is made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God . . . ”

To repeat, the mystery was given in the prophetic writings. Again, for Paul, these could only be the Old Testament prophets. The mystery was now disclosed and made known to all nations, by the command of God.

But if Paul and the other apostles restricted their main efforts to teaching Jesus, and him crucified, critical elements of the mystery remained.

In spite of how we understand Paul's remarks, and in spite of how much he may have felt he was revealing, the full mystery could not have been made known to generations before us. The mystery is now finished at the time of the end. Paul's work could be only a partial revealing of the mystery, that part about Jesus and personal salvation, while other parts had to await this time.

PART V A Spirit of Deep Sleep

Lest anyone believe we have not been blind, and lest we remain content in our conceits, we should carefully examine God's word.

Stupefy yourselves and be in a stupor, Blind yourselves and be blind!
Be drunk, but not with wine; Stagger, but not with strong drink!

For the LORD has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, He has covered your eyes, the prophets, And covered your heads, the seers.

And the vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, (one who is educated), saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed." And when they give the book to one who cannot read, (one who is not educated), saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot read." Isa 29:9-12.

Indeed, we have been in a deep sleep. Our blindness prevented us from understanding the words God gave us through the prophets and the seers. The mystery was indeed kept secret for long ages, but is now disclosed at the time of the end and through the prophets is made known to all nations. The Bible contains the mysteries of God but we were blind to them.

Many of us know individuals with a sincere interest in God who did not study the Bible because it confused them. We know others who, when presented with deep questions, claimed inability to understand. I recall clearly the replies I received as a young man. Because my questions went beyond the range of normal thought and theology I was told we had to accept on faith. We were not to question the Bible; questioning was regarded as a mistrust of God. This problem was the root of a longstanding policy in the Roman Catholic Church. Lay members were discouraged from independent Bible study for fear of confusion and questioning of established theology.

How many understand the geological events described in the prophecies, Isa 24, Zech 14:4? How many understand long human life as promised in Isaiah 65:20-22? Would we dare deny God the power to keep us blind, no matter how such notion may offend our sensibilities? If he deemed such condition necessary for the future attainment of righteousness on this world can we claim our wisdom better than his? Is it not demanded of us to gain better understanding of his plans and his purpose? Would we not then become knowledgeable about the full significance of his will? Can we possibly understand his will if we do not understand his cosmic program, and how we, the inhabitants of this world, contribute to his cause?

The terror now descending upon us forces us to a thorough reassessment of our attitudes about God, his actions, and our relationship with him.

When considered from universe viewpoints, can we believe God is so elementary he restricted his will to simple charitable living, religious practice, ecumenical causes, or charismatic movements — the social activities of a confused world order? Were these the limits of a great and mighty Creator? Were we so provincial we believed the universe revolved around one small planet, and that destiny was limited to six or seven thousand years of human history?

God is not so small. He is a heavenly being, the Creator of a universe. Can we obey his purpose if we fail to dedicate ourselves to his cosmic program? We are not his children unless we are fully dedicated and fully consecrated to his universe plans as they affect us in these, our planetary days, and on this, our world.

1) Jesus, as God, revealed celestial programs only to the extent permitted by his policies. If creation is a coordinated reality all celestial agencies adhered to those policies, including the Holy Spirit, divine beings, and angels. The gospel record has no open or explicit instruction on universe affairs, the celestial host, or the administration of this planet. References to cosmic matters are brief.

2) Therefore, Jesus did not fully reveal his plans, although he did reveal a few matters associated with termination of the planetary age, Matt 24. The New Testament reflects his policies of limited revelation and cannot be regarded as complete or perfect. As a consequence Christian theology was subject to inherent limitation; it was incomplete and erroneous to greater or less extent. From these factors we can better understand why Christianity was so fragmented. As the world approached the termination of the age, with consequent unfolding developments, Christian doctrines became divorced more and more from unfolding cosmic reality. The views of early Christians, those who laid the foundations for Christian doctrines, derived from limited understanding and did not reflect the world of reality as it unfolds today. Belief about the return of Jesus and about the future of our world had to be speculative and not based on sure knowledge.

3) These factors lead us again to conclude, on different grounds, that the Christian doctrine of infallibility through divine inspiration was false. If God were prosecuting a policy of partial blindness he could not reveal things perfectly or clearly. The New Testament was the work of men, with all the limitations imposed by God. Although the New Testament writings were inspired by the respective experiences of the apostles and disciples, they were not perfect. We should recognize that the doctrine of infallibility was based on deep desire for perfect instruction simply because we lacked direct contact with infallible sources. Hence we elevated men to the status of gods, and ascribe to them godlike qualities. But this was a psychological problem, not a spiritual one.

We know the apostles were ordinary men, subject to the imperfections and faults of men. Refer to Paul's denunciation of Peter in Galatians 2. Remember that Paul was the one who conversed directly with a divine being, and that it was he who said we see now in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. *Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully.*

For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect . . . , I Cor 13. If Paul himself admitted partial knowledge how can we pretend he wrote perfectly? The horrifying world circumstances now make us put away such childish notions.

4) Since the New Testament is the work of human mortals, subject to the limitations of human understanding, hence incomplete and imperfect, we are faced with the difficulty of how to determine the reliability of God's word. What can be accepted as coming from God, and what are merely the thoughts and reflections of man?

When Paul made his famous remark about all scripture being inspired by God, Tim 3:16, he did not intend that later generations should regard his letters as infallible, even though II Peter 3:15 suggests a divine inspiration. But that was a later opinion about Paul's writings, after he began to receive recognition in the Christian churches. For Paul scripture was the Old Testament.

It is high time we learn to distinguish among:

- a) those writings which were dictated from on high,
- b) those which were the result of heavenly visions,
- c) and those which were from inspired men.

The Old Testament prophecies, for the most part, were dictated from on high. John's Revelation is the result of heavenly visions. The Gospels are the result of inspired lives.

Do we truly understand divine inspiration? Can the Holy Spirit bring perfection to that which was created imperfect? Do you remember the words of Job 4:17-19?

Can mortal man be righteous before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker? Even in his servants he puts no trust, and his angels he charges with error. How much more those who dwell in houses of clay?

5) If Jesus did not fully explain his plans for this world, and if he wanted his people to contribute to those plans in times of extreme world crisis, how would he make his purpose known? What would soften our hearts and open our minds to God's greater truth? How can we now begin to learn the full truth presented in the prophetic writings? How would God break the shackles of tradition, while presenting new insights into his greater glory? Can he shake us out of our lethargy unless he brings social, moral, religious, and spiritual crises?

If Jesus, as Creator, has ongoing plans, and continues prosecution of his universe purpose, then his work with man does not cease. If he is an active being, one who does not disappear from the universe scene, and if he is intelligent and wise, his actions with mankind cannot be limited to simple religious pursuits but must entail the real world of time and space. If he dealt directly with Abraham, Moses, the prophets, and the apostles over a span of two thousand years, why should he not deal directly with us? Merely because he held his celestial host quiet for two millennia does not mean he would continue that restraint indefinitely. Can we really believe our God is incapable of progressive action and is forever restrained from directing the course of unfolding world affairs? Is he not the com-

mander and ruler of a universe? The end of an age has come, and the judgment of a world; God wishes to help his people during this time of deep world crisis. He now begins to work with us in ways not seen during the past historic times.

We must remember that history demonstrates religious evolution. When Melchizedek appeared to Abraham he offered a promise that Abraham would be the father of many nations, and that through him all the world would be blessed. This was a statement of religious destiny on a material world, a departure from the older undirected patriarchal life. It created a new relationship with God. However, God did not cease action at the time of Abraham. Major changes in religious practice took place at the time of Moses, with presentation of the Mosaic laws. Again when Jesus lived among us he taught more elevated concepts of man's relationship with God; we no longer live by Mosaic law.

But in each case men held to their old familiar ways and resisted the changes God brought. Abraham's acceptance of directions to make a sacrifice of his son Isaac was not so much a test of his faith in God as it was a test of how much he clung to the old primitive rites of human sacrifice. Moses could not completely remove the desire of the people for their idols of wood and gold, although he did substitute animal sacrifice for human sacrifice. In turn, Jesus removed the blood sacrifice of animals, but Christians still cling to Jesus' blood sacrifice as necessary for salvation.

Will we react the way the Jews reacted, with rejection of God's new teaching? Did he not say he would create a new earth and that the former things would not be remembered or come into mind, Isa 65:17? Our God may be the same yesterday, today, and forever, but man is not. Man changes and the world changes, and those changes are according to God's plan in the fullness of time.

If many generations have stumbled along in partial blindness we should expect God to bring new spiritual works and new revelations to awaken his people from their lethargy. He now works again the way he worked during the days of the apostles, but with new spiritual power, and with new visions of his glory. We now are entering upon a miraculous renewal, one without compare. And there is a screening process at work to find his truly dedicated people.

An objective observer, gazing upon the world, must recognize the deep-rooted problems that afflict mankind. From physical pollutions of the world to great moral decay, social deterioration, and spiritual perversion, we see not the hand of God, but the results of general apostasy, greed, and grasping for material power. Huge segments of the globe now deny the existence of God. Christianity was ineffective in stemming the tide of spiritual perversion and materialistic world decay. Christianity failed to convert this world to righteousness and holiness. It now stands as the fossilized remnant of two millennia of frustrated hope in the spiritual revival of mankind.

We should remember Paul's words in Romans 9.

Can mortal man be righteous before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker? Even in his servants he puts no trust, and his angels he charges with error. How much more those who dwell in houses of clay?

And why does he still find fault? Who can resist his will? But who are any of us to answer back to God? Can we say to our Maker, "Why have you made me thus?" What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the vessels of wrath made for destruction, in order to bring about the glory of a new world for his chosen people?

It is in the prosecution of such great work that God calls to each of us. He asks all of us if we will answer his call. Those who respond will build for the future generations where the weak minds and hearts of stone are forever removed.