WORD AT WORK

VOLUME XXIX NUMBER II

Judging Righteous Judgment II

Dear Friend:

In Acts 1:6-8, before the ascension, Jesus answered a question about restoring the kingdom by stating, "It is not for you to know the times and seasons which the Father has put in His own authority." After pouring out the Holy Spirit, Paul proclaims in 1 Thessalonians 5:12, "But concerning the times and seasons, bretheren, you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves know perfectly…." In John 16:13, Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would show us things to come and Paul's statement in Thessalonians proves He consistently does.

As the church embraces the assignment to represent Jesus the Judge the first manifestation will fall within our own ranks as the plumbline of justice comes to leaders. While most of us desire to see the "Hand of the Lord" move against Supreme Court Justices and politicians who consistently promote antichrist policies, the Spirit seems to be pointing at church leaders first.

What can we expect as Jesus the Judge comes first to the church? Exposure of sin will continue as what is done in secret gets shouted from the housetops. God is determined to have a pure bride. The next 24 months should see some dramatic displays of God's revealing and dealing. Do not be surprised to see some leaders get carried out of the pulpit. Just like finance companies repossess automobiles, Jesus is going to repossess pulpits in America one at a time. Pray for the fullness of Christ to be manifested in the pulpit of the church you attend! It is coming!

Intercession needs to go forth for leaders to find their God given assignment and shoulder them without compromise. In a season like this, compromise can bring terminal justice. God is cleaning house! Ministers who use untempered mortar are facing a career change!

Yours in Him,

Al Houghton

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Judging Righteous Judgment II

SUNDAY, February 1
Scripture: John 7:14-24 Isaiah 14:12-15 Luke 4:5-8 Matthew 6:9-13

Judging righteous judgment is the new challenge for the church over the next 24 months as God weighs leader's lives over faithfulness to bring His word. Judging righteous judgment demands discernment for application. Just prior to the second presidential debate as I was turning on the TV, The Lord said don't watch because I'm having a debate about what to do to your nation and want your input. Based on what I heard myself pray the first manifestations of Jesus the Judge are coming to the leaders of ministries! The judgment for some will be blessing and promotion but for others who are not willing to change it will be terminal! The Lord is going to take home a number of His servants who have faithfully served Him as a reward for their obedience. The next 24 months will mark a major transition in Christian leadership just as the antichrist spirit possesses more and more of political government. The stage is being set for a major confrontation between political government and spiritual government. How many apostles will we have when the price is prison?

MONDAY, February 2
Scripture: John 7:25-31

Judging righteous judgment demands discerning spiritual origin. Blinders come with certain choices as evidenced consistently by the Scribes and Pharisees. When money rules, discernment flies away only to be repossessed by repentance and deliverance. Spiritual blindness exacts an eternal toll on every individual captured by it! Imagine meeting the creator and rejecting Him because you couldn't recognize who He was! Where does this lack of discernment begin? There is a pattern in Isaiah 14. Satan fell because of rebellion. Verse 13 says, *"For you have said in your heart:* ***I will*** *ascend into heaven,* ***I will*** *exalt..."*. Self-will always leads to self-exaltation, which guarantees confrontation with God and a fall. The higher an individual attempts to exalt himself, the lower he falls, as is witnessed in verse 15. Whoever's ***will*** is done determines whose kingdom is built. That's why Jesus taught us to pray, *"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done."* If we are going to help build the kingdom of God, our first motivation has to be to obey ***His will***. The initial money test in doing God's will is to embrace loss! Choose to tithe—lose money. Choose to preach **all** of God's will—lose people. Matthew 12:30 states, *"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad."*

TUESDAY, February 3
Scripture: Matthew 6:9-13

The last phrase of the Lord's prayer is very interesting. *"For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.*" Every individual has to choose a kingdom to serve. Whose kingdom we choose to serve

determines whose power and spirit we have, determines who gains glory from our actions. The last phrase gives us a beautiful progression in Christ. When we choose above everything else to serve God, it is His Kingdom we build. He honors our choices by giving us power, and the result is we give glory to His Name and eternal fruit accrues to our account. The counterfeit, on the other hand, has the wrong motivation for ministry. They want a position of influence; they want to be well known; they want glory for themselves; and satan supplies the power in most cases. When we disqualify ourselves for God's anointing the Kingdom loses because we have no power to confront! Mordecai Ham lived in such a way as to maintain power to confront. The result was antichrist adversaries died when he prayed! The job of the prophetic teaching ministry is to identify the pitfalls. Pitfall number one is "selfish ambition." When "selfish ambition" rules we refuse God's destination and choose our own with unforeseen consequences. Abraham didn't like Canaan and went south to Egypt, the unforeseen consequence was Sarah taken to Pharaoh's house. The first step to becoming a counterfeit is choosing our own destination. Watch out for "selfish ambition" – it's a killer of the anointing! We must maintain a relationship at all costs that allows us to bring justice where needed, sometimes permanently, removing the adversary!

WEDNESDAY, February 4
Scripture: Matthew 24:24

The second pitfall is "self-will." "Self-will" says I choose the magnitude of my success rather than yielding that arena to God. This pitfall manifested when Abraham and Lot separated. Abraham yielded the choice to Lot and Lot chose based on economic considerations. Water for the herd and crops brought him into Sodom and Gomorrah. Choosing the elements of financial success cost Lot his wife as a pillar of salt. "Self-will" is costly. Three great chapters in Matthew deal with end-times and perhaps show us more about what we will face in days ahead than any other place in scripture. Matthew 24:24 tells us deception in the last days will be so strong we must have deliverance from it in order to even stand. Numbers, chapter 12, tells us why ***anomia*** or lawlessness will abound, and the love of many will grow cold. One result of growing cold is we no longer have the perceptive ability to clearly discern. There is far greater tendency to *assume* something is good based on outward appearance. Lot assumed based on what he saw. The major manifestation of growing cold affects a person's ability to discern right from wrong. Sharpening our senses to discern is essential. The foundation for judging righteous judgment is accurate discernment!

THURSDAY, February 5
Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:1-9

The third pitfall is "self-protection" where we choose the path of development, toward God's promises. Abraham accepted Sarah's gift of Hagar resulting in Ishmael. Abraham pleaded for God's acceptance. God said "No." The child of flesh was not acceptable. God wanted what Abraham could not produce with his own ability. "Self-protection" takes the path of least resistance. It forfeits God's best! 1 Samuel, chapter 15, is a classic example of incomplete obedience initiating destructive forces, which result in loss of position. Saul is given a challenge by God. He is told to destroy everything. But verse 9 records instead of obeying God, he obeyed his own standard. He destroyed everything despised and worthless in his *own* eyes and kept everything considered good. He exalted his will above God's will. From this point on we see a downhill slide which ends up with Saul losing his anointing and leadership position. God rejects Saul as king because *"...rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."* When we reject the word of the Lord, He will reject us. These examples are written (1 Corinthians 10) for our training upon who the ends of the world have come.

FRIDAY, February 6
Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:10-33

The fourth pitfall is "self-righteousness" where we choose to develop our own doctrine versus bowing to the Father's directions even when we judge them to be extreme. God's command to destroy all Amalikites including men, women, and children was hard for Saul. He saw value where God ordered judgment. "Self-

righteousness" cost Saul his anointing! Good doctrine can be preached from a self-willed foundation. The result is growing cold and not seeing it. Many believers look for pure doctrine, but that is only fifty percent of the battle, for we must also have a pure **foundation.** What is perhaps most striking about Saul's situation is discovering in his own mind he thinks he has obeyed. In the process of deception, the standard is always blurred. It is so easy to feel ninety percent obedience will satisfy God, when God expects a hundred percent. Saul lost his kingdom because he tried to substitute partial obedience for whole obedience. Will God lessen His standard for any individual? Will those of us who have ministered the word get a free pass? Jesus the Judge will walk through taking inventory of the leaders. His response will in many cases be swift justice. Justice **will** be established. How much will we contribute?

SATURDAY, February 7
Scripture: Revelation 12:7-11, 17 Revelation 15

The fifth pitfall is "self-preservation" – mammon or hoarding. Saul refused to destroy what had value for him personally. God hates the spirit of mammon and all its fruit. It cost Saul everything because God will not tolerate this mixture. Mammon defiles ministry. This takes a very interesting path in Saul's life. The question which arises is what did Saul lose first, his positional or spiritual authority? In studying this account, we discover he *first lost* his spiritual authority. He kept his positional authority. According to 1 Samuel 15:27-35, Saul was much more interested in positional authority than spiritual authority. So much so he asked Samuel to please honor him before the people. The same thing is still true today. Many leaders are more concerned about positional authority than they are about spiritual authority. On the surface everything must look good. When we bow to any of the "self" temptations we begin to lose spiritual authority. Our rebellion forces God to find a replacement. In this case it took many years before that replacement was ready for the position. God continually grooms believers in the body of Christ. Many believers carry more spiritual authority than leaders. Can we discern a lack of spiritual authority? In ability to bring justice is a dramatic sign. Can we spot the five pitfalls? If so, we will be ready for the outpouring of justice that is coming!.

SUNDAY, February 8
Scripture: Matthew 8:5-13

When we study divine authority, especially spiritual authority, we discover a primary principle: The degree to which we exercise authority in the earth is the same degree to which we put ourselves under it. Jesus never commented on the great faith of His disciples. He only commented on the great faith of a Roman centurion. In the Roman army of those days there was great motivation to learn a life-style of obedience. If you were disobedient in any way, you lost your head. That being the case, multitudes of men inducted into the Roman army learned very quickly the life of obedience. This centurion learned well enough to have a hundred men placed under him. When it came to the things of God, he naturally responded with the same kind of attitude and motivation developed in the army. ***Obedience produced in him a great faith*** and consequently, spiritual authority. This centurion recognized Jesus as a man under great authority. The principle, of course, is in verse 9. He said, *"I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."* The reason he could exercise authority was because he was under authority, and so it was with Jesus. Does the New Testament not say that Jesus is the head and we are the body? Will then the body not demonstrate the authority of the head? Indeed in the last days the body will do everything the head wants done! Raise the dead or make 'em dead – His choice! Obviously the degree to which we are under authority is the degree to which we may exercise authority. Why does Jesus, in verse 12, after commenting on the great faith of the centurion, say, *"But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* Jesus is amazed He cannot find faith like the centurion in the covenant people of Israel. In verse 11 He refers to all the Gentiles who will be saved and come and sit down in the kingdom of God, but in verse 12 it is an entirely different matter. We need to recognize we can grow up, live our life in the church, die in the church and yet never qualify for God's authority. Jesus said it, that settles it, looking around at the church confirms it! We need a baptism of Spiritual Authority.

Only such an outpouring can turn the tide of secular humanism engulfing the nation! Jesus died guaranteeing access to spiritual authority enabling us to judge righteous judgment! Is it time to demand justice?

MONDAY, February 9
Scripture: Matthew 7:21-23 Acts 7:51-8:3 Acts 9:1-5

Jesus discerned individuals who did not have their origin in God's heart. They were doing religious things but not in the right spirit. They were working trying to build the Kingdom, but they did not have their origin in God's will. Their origin was in "self-will." To work without the need to know God's will is to have your origin in self or satan. ***Anomia*** is a principle that is reeking havoc in the leadership of the church today. God has begun to shake, and we have not yet seen the majority of that shaking. It is not enough to have a good, successful church, or preach good doctrine. We must have our origin in God. We must be doing what we are doing because God called us to do it! Saul of Tarsus is our chief New Testament example of one who has his origin in self. In Galatians, chapter 1, he is advancing beyond all his contemporaries in his own religion, but he is doing it at the expense of other people. Saul, watching, consented to Stephen's death. He enters every house and drags out men and women, committing them to prison. Suddenly it is no longer business as usual, because the Lord Advocate General of the church begins to move. He visits Saul, whose journey comes to a sudden and abrupt halt as he is knocked down and confronted by the Lord who created the heavens and the earth. Who can stand in His presence? When human power meets God's power, it always falls to the ground. The human power, or the feet, are trying to kick against the goads, God's authority. Jesus said, in verse 5, *"It is hard for you to kick against the goads."* In the church, more and more, as we open our eyes, we are going to see individuals kicking against the goads. We can't help what we can't see. Lord, open our eyes!

TUESDAY, February 10
Scripture: Acts 9:6-14 Acts 9:15-19

In reading this passage, we have to admit indeed there is great hope for the church. For he who had only man's authority met Him who had God's authority, and he was changed! His first response, trembling and astonished, was, *"Lord, what do You want me to do?"* I believe God has circumstances ordained for many in leadership today in which they are going to find themselves in situations evoking the very same response. "Lord, what would You have me to do?" It's so easy to do what *seems* right or to build according to man's wisdom or ability and never pray the words, *"Lord, what would You have me to do?"* When a person is really serious with God, they will sit down and pray that prayer from their heart. It is much easier to pray it out of our own will and submission than to have a visitation which knocks us off our horse. Let's pray, **"Lord, what would You have me to do?"** Suddenly we see the fruit of an encounter with God. The great Saul, the one seeking to be well known, receives a brother in the Lord who is known by no one, Ananias. Once you meet God's authority and get delivered from position, status, and worldly things, you no longer deal with men based on position or status. You look for God's authority in the man rather than the man's position. In the world's system of religion, people judge whether or not to receive someone based on status, but not so with the godly, for they look for authority and care not who the man is or what position he holds, if any at all. Is that our attitude? Begin to look for the authority of God in men and women. We will find it cropping up in some most unique packages!

WEDNESDAY, February 11
Scripture: Ephesians 2:19-22

God is determined to manifest His authority through the church as he prepares us to be a habitation for Himself in the spirit, but we have to be built together first. I believe God will manifest His authority through the church, and will demonstrate His sovereignty by the individuals He chooses to place together in team. God, and God alone, reserves the right to join people and individuals together to make ministry teams. He alone claims the right to join ministries and individuals together as a team, setting them in their positions. Man cannot make apostles. Man can proclaim people and position but only God can anoint and establish in office. Men can

designate pastors, but only God supplies the heart that makes the ministry real. Let's pray that God will open our eyes and we will begin to see the individuals He has called for the positions He has ordained. For only the God-ordained can bring forth a holy temple in the Lord.

THURSDAY, February 12
Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-13, 3-6

In order to have a church that is a habitation of God in the spirit, the fivefold ministry performing their God-ordained positions must be present. Proper ministry relationships can never develop unless verses 3-6 are operational. We must work to *"...keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* We recognize there is one body and one Spirit and we are called in one hope of our calling. We work for the unity of the body as an end-time necessity. Unfortunately there is a real spirit of control that seems to arise upon many individuals who populate boards and attempt to rule pastors. Many of us have encountered the stifling spirit of control. God is going to knock them off their horses until they begin to pray, **"Lord what would you have me to do?"** God is shaking up the body in order to bring each individual into their place. Then and only then will individuals qualify to be a place for the habitation of God in the Spirit. Let God come to visit and we will see where He chooses to stay! If God chooses to camp next door, whole congregations will move.

FRIDAY, February 13
Scripture: Ephesians 4:4-6 Ephesians 5:21

God will have a unified, glorious body, for the life of the head and the authority of the head go together. Without the life of the head we have no body. Without the authority of the head, we have no direction. When we receive delegated authority, we receive Him. God is going to breathe life into His body, and He is going to pour out divine authority and bring forth unity. The commitment which will have to be made by leadership and by the Saints is to *"...submit one to another in the fear of God."* We can measure preparational maturity present in the church, in each local body, in each individual by our willingness to submit to each other. As we submit to one another, the authority of the head prevails, the will of God is done and the church establishes the kingdom. Establishing His rule and reign in our midst is our calling. Proverbs 13:23 says, "The field of the poor yields abundant food, but without justice, it is swept away" in the Holman Christian Standard version.

SATURDAY, February 14 **HAPPY VALENTINES DAY!!**
Scripture: Matthew 28:18-20 Luke 10:17-20

Jesus paid the ultimate price to enable us to judge righteous judgment. He bought and paid for our access to throneroom justice. The promotion of evil deserves judgment. Romans 1:18 says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness". The next fourteen verses present a seven-step slide to judgment declaring all who practice such things deserve death. Jesus delegated justice to his disciples, based on His standing with God because of the virgin birth in which no sin passed to Him. At the cross He took our sins upon Himself and paid the price for us to have the same standing He had before the throne of God. In Matthew, chapter 28, He passed that authority on to us by saying, *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."* Verse 19 shows us Jesus immediately passed that authority on to the church. *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..."* inherently says we receive all Jesus bought and paid for! Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit through the will of God, we have been given authority to change things on earth: to rescue people, institutions, and governments from the power of darkness and bring them into a move of God in the Spirit. The primary mode of governmental rescue in the bible is judgment. The prophets proclaimed it and God performed it. Jesus proclaimed it and God performed it. Send perversion a valentine from the heart of God—judge it!

SUNDAY, February 15
Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

Second Thessalonians uniquely paints a picture for us of a spirit with which the church is at war. There is one thing we know about the antichrist spirit. This spirit seeks worship by opposing God's standard of righteousness. He is diametrically opposed to God's will, God's plan, and God's purpose for the life of every individual on this planet. He is working as hard as he can to get his way, especially in the church. The warfare within the church is over the leadership of the Holy Spirit and what He wants to do through us. Satan's number one goal is to show himself he can really direct and take the leadership function which belongs to God alone. He is the author of rebellion, and the warfare is over who will be in authority. Will we follow the Spirit or yield to self? Will God have His way with us, or will the enemy have his way through deception?

MONDAY, February 16
Scripture: Matthew 6:9-13

Jesus recognized the focal point of our warfare as He taught us to pray accordingly. The first section of the Lord's prayer is worship and praise to God. The first petition is for the will of God to be done and His kingdom come. The major warfare raging around our lives is discerning and discovering the will of God and being empowered to carry it out. Satan spends much of his time planning and strategizing to keep the people of God in the dark concerning divine purpose and plan. In the last part of the Lord's prayer we are instructed to pray for deliverance from the evil one. That tells us if we are ever to do the will of God in the earth, we must have deliverance from deception. There is not a day goes by we do not need some form or measure of deliverance from deception being sent our way. As we pray according to God's plan, we become the head and not the tail, above and not beneath, productive in the things of our Father.

TUESDAY, February 17
Scripture: Philippians 2:5-11 Isaiah 14:11-15

In contrasting these two passages, we see the difference in the character of our God and the nature of satan. Satan is the original self-promoter. Self-exaltation has always been his way and still is one of the major things he uses, through deception, to ensnare and entrap believers. There are two different pathways made available to obtain a measure of success in what we do in the kingdom of God. There is God's way to exaltation, and satan's way. God's way to exaltation requires humility and obedience. It is slow and seems to take forever. It involves the painful crucifixion of flesh, i.e. a personal application of the cross. Satan's way to exaltation is do it yourself, no pain, no strain, no shame. It is cheap, and quick with no waiting. God's way produces eternal fruit, while satan's way produces no fruit that will count for anything in eternity. If we listen to and watch those seeking leadership, we can tell which pathway they have chosen by how they act and what they say. Let's choose God's way and see His very best.

WEDNESDAY, February 18
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

When we identify God's path to promotion versus satan's, half the battle is won in the recognition. It becomes very clear in 1 Peter 5:1-7, God has a strong desire to exalt, bless and prosper His people. Satan's desire is to exalt himself and thwart the very plan and purpose of God, stealing, killing, and destroying in the process. But how is this manifested? How does it come about within the church? This is one of the primary reasons we must study the Old Testament. 1 Corinthians, chapter 10:1-13, clearly tells us the Old Testament is written for those of us upon the ends of the world have come. As we discern the lessons taught there, we will be thoroughly prepared. We will not fall in the wilderness as that generation who **knew not the ways of God**, nor recognized the attacks and deceptions of the enemy. God was not well pleased with them because many of them fell in the wilderness. We don't want to fall. We want to be people who recognize the attacks and deceptions of the enemy and stand with the fullness of God. The answers to how the enemy manifests himself in the church, are in the examples of the Old Testament. Let's study them and discover how we can win in this warfare!

THURSDAY, February 19
Scripture: Genesis 6:5-22; 7:1-16

One of the greatest examples of temptation comes from the account of Noah. In his day, the enemy had deceived the majority of mankind. Noah, however, found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and that grace was extended to his whole family. Noah chose to obey God, and no doubt he received a lot of persecution because of it. The Scripture says he was a preacher of righteousness and his platform was the size of the boat he built. The Ark would have been like Disneyland today. Its sheer size would have attracted multitudes of people, most of whom spent their time laughing and making fun of Noah for building such a monstrosity, and I imagine when he told them the reason, they really roared. Who ever heard of a flood coming to the earth that would destroy everything! Noah overcame by being obedient to the voice of the Lord. Verse 16 has a very unique statement. It says, *"...and the Lord shut him in."* Just as God shut Noah in, so in our day He has been shutting people in by circumstances that contribute to preparation for end-time ministry. Have you ever felt like God was shutting you in on every side? There is a season in which God has been preparing His people, as it were, shutting them in for a specific purpose. Adversity shuts doors and closes us in. In this place we develop our relationship and become ready to move with the Holy Spirit. Let's walk with the Lord in these days and be ready for His specific purpose and calling.

FRIDAY, February 20
Scripture: Genesis 8:15-9:17

Noah was divinely commissioned. Just as God had shut him in, there was a season for his coming out. So it is with preparation in ministry. There is a season of obedience when shutting in occurs. In that season, we hear God's voice, get direction, and find purpose. Immediately after our season of being shut in with God, we will come out to display and manifest the purpose and plan received, even as Noah did. Noah's purpose was to remove the curse from the earth, and because of his obedience, the curse was removed. Today we still enjoy the blessing of the principle of sowing and reaping. It is obvious from studying this passage, Noah's obedience brought him to a place where God could shut him in and prepared him for what was ahead. After many days God brought him out to start a brand new, fresh work on cleansed land. So it is, I believe, with God's people in this day. There have been seasons when our obedience has been tested. We have gone through years where the move of God was not anything close to what it was in the early days of the Charismatic renewal. It was as if we were shut in on every side. The season is changing. God is about to open the doors, let us out and turn us loose with a new anointing and a new flow of power. Noah, at this point in time, was the channel for God's authority and God's purpose in the earth. So it is with the church which is moving in obedience to the Holy Spirit. I believe there is a new measure of authority coming as we prepare to move with the Lord.

SATURDAY, February 21
Scripture: Genesis 9:18-24

From a fantastic feat of faith to a mighty fall in a short period of time characterizes Noah. Is it any wonder 1 Corinthians, chapter 10 says, *"...take heed, he that thinks he stands, lest he should fall."* Noah is the head of a family, socially, politically, and governmentally. His authority extends to every area. In verses 20,21, he sins and falls. His sin and shortcomings become a test for those who are under his authority. So it is for us with the leaders in our day. When sin, faults and shortcomings are revealed in leadership, how do we respond? Do we criticize? Do we get judgmental? Do we poke fun? Or do we take the New Testament principle of 1 Corinthians 12, *"... when one part of the body hurts the whole body hurts, when one part rejoices the whole body rejoices."* When a leader sins or falls, it becomes a test for those who have enjoyed or, at one time, participated in his leadership.

SUNDAY, February 22
Scripture: Genesis 9:22-23 Proverbs 17:9

There are attitudes revealed which teach us something very valuable for what is ahead. Ham saw the sin of his father, but did not cover it, rather he went out and advertised it with the wrong attitude and motivation, showing a measure of rebellion which was in his life all along. Shem and Japheth took an entirely different approach. They went in and covered their father's nakedness, maintaining respect for his position of authority. Proverbs, chapter 17:9, is a very appropriate principle here as it speaks to both of these attitudes. God does not in any way call us to gloss over sin, but our attitude in dealing with it is very, very important. The two attitudes demonstrated here are reflective of the two different spirits we have the choice of serving. Satan who rules and reigns in the flesh loves the faults and defects of those in authority, because then it gives an excuse to deny such authority. It takes real grace to see faults, defects, and sin in leadership and yet still support the cause of Jesus Christ and be willing to maintain the respect for that position and the person who God initially set in that place. I believe this is a truth worked out by example in our church life until we learn it. There are, in fact, in this season other things taking place in the body of Christ, through seasonal and generational changes, which go beyond the real application of this principle. Yet there will never be a church God will send us to be a part of where we will not see and recognize certain faults and defects in people in authority. The bottom line is, what is your attitude going to be toward them within that body? Let's grow up into the maturity of the Lord Jesus Christ!

<u>MONDAY, February 23</u>
Scripture: Genesis 9:25-27

The reason our attitude is so important in how we choose to deal with the faults and defects of those in authority is because, ultimately, it will determine the measure of authority God allows for us. When we read the rest of this account, we discover a curse fell on Canaan, the offspring of Ham, throughout his entire line. What it shows us is the one who chooses to disobey authority shall be put under authority of one who chooses to obey, even as Canaan was made subservient to the seed of Shem and Japheth. The proper attitude you and I have during a season of revealed faults and defects allows us to move into a place where God will trust us with His authority. Maturity grows exponentially in those who see a fault, stay put, deal with it in a right attitude, and stay in the position God called them to occupy. Would to God we saw that maturity level in the body of Christ! Jesus came from the line of Shem, and the nations who preach the gospel today came from the line of Japheth. Let's live up to our heritage!

<u>TUESDAY, February 24</u>
Scripture: Leviticus 10:1

In Leviticus 10:1, we see the culmination of a number of events which lead to violation of spiritual authority without any seeming understanding on the part of the participants, Nadab and Abihu, members of a family chosen for great leadership in Israel. Being trained for a day yet appointed, they suddenly take things into their own hands. Many times God gives a vision, and we know what our calling and future holds, yet we don't know the hour, day or season it will begin. Throughout training, we get familiar with "how to do" what we know God wants us to do. How easy it is to fall for the temptation to strike out on our own and try to make happen what we know in our heart God wants us to do! Nadab and Abihu were doing something they had watched done before. They knew it was a standard part of the worship of that day, yet the difference was God had not specifically instructed them to do it. Most of us grow up in churches today seeing every aspect and function of ministry, thinking surely we could do every bit as well, and perhaps better, than the ones currently in charge. Yet the difference is God did not tell us to do it. The key to moving in spiritual authority is to learn to do what God tells us to do when God tells us to do it. That is what releases the blessing and glory of the Lord. Are we doing anything the Father has not commanded us to do? Are we trying to help God out? Are we trying to move ahead of Him? What is *"...profane fire..."?* It is anything God has not commanded nor told us to do, even though He may have revealed we are to do it at a future date. The timing in obedience is as critical as the act. To know what God is going to do, and yet to try and initiate it ahead of time is as rebellious as deciding we are not going to do it at all. What pleases God and counts for eternity is only what He initiates. Let's make what we do count eternally!

WEDNESDAY, February 25
Scripture: Leviticus 8:1-36 Leviticus 10:1

Nadab and Abihu offered *"…profane fire…"* before the Lord, but how did they get to the place where they thought they could get away with it? That is no different than a homosexual bishop offering communion. What led to striking out on their own initiative, rather than waiting for the direction of God? The answer is in Leviticus, chapter 8 verses 1 through 13. From the very day God began to use Aaron in the position of High Priest, He also began to train his sons. When Moses called out Aaron, he called out his sons. When he called Aaron before the congregation, he called his sons also. When God cleansed Aaron with water, He cleansed his sons. When He began to dress the priests, He dressed Aaron first, but then in verse 13, He also dressed his sons. The only difference in dress was He put the breastplate with the Urim and Thummim on Aaron. Moses anoints Aaron and pours the oil upon his head to set him apart for that specific office. This he does not do to Aaron's sons. Everything else was done to both Aaron and his sons. How easy it is when you participate in everything God is doing to think you can do it equally as well as the one God chose! They learned the ropes. They learned all the aspects of the priesthood. They walked through it with their dad. They were set apart with him. They learned to minister with him. How easy it became to think they could do it as well as Aaron, overlooking what seemed to them a small issue, but was major in the kingdom of God. There is a respect which has to be developed for God's presence in our midst as He manifests it by whom He chooses to use. It is one of the ways He demonstrates His sovereignty, and we have to choose whether we are going to live with it or, in effect, try to overthrow it. Everything Aaron did his sons did. When he laid his hands on the bull for the sin offering, they laid their hands on the bull. When Aaron laid his hands on the ram for the burnt offering, his sons laid their hands on the ram. When he brought the second ram, the ram of consecration, both Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram. When Moses applied the blood to Aaron, he applied the blood to Aaron's sons. Whatever Moses put in Aaron's hands, he put in his sons' hands. He took the anointing oil, in verse 30, and the blood which was on the altar, sprinkled it on Aaron, his garments, on his sons and on their garments. What Moses told Aaron to do, in verse 31, he told his sons to do. What Aaron ate, his sons ate. Aaron's sons did everything he did and participated in everything. How easy it was for them to think they could step into his position and do what he did! Why not? They had been doing it anyway. They were being trained for it. The problem was timing. How easy it is to think we are ready for what God has called us to do when God has not yet released us! We are only ready when God releases us, even though we have done it a thousand times in preparation, and we know it like the back of our hand. There is something sovereign in what God does, and when He chooses to do it, that must be recognized, received and submitted to. This is where they failed. Let's make sure we don't fail at the same place.

THURSDAY, February 26
Scripture: Leviticus 9:1-9 Leviticus 10:1-3

Throughout this season of training, Aaron needs his sons' help. They never act independently. But unfortunately an attitude begins to grow on the inside of them. "If Dad can do it, so can we." They decide to offer without the command of God, for they served without being under authority. Even as they offered strange fire, so strange fire came down from heaven and destroyed them. Strange fire offered by man brings a fire sent from God. Strange fire doesn't know the will of God. It is not committed to obey the authority of God. It is done through man's zeal, and it only brings death. The ultimate principle we learn is in verse 3, *"By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified."* God is glorified when every man is in his position, doing what God called him to do. When he is out of position, doing his own thing (such as pastoring when he is really an evangelist, or pastoring when he is really a teacher, or pastoring when he is really a prophet, or trying to be an evangelist when he is really a pastor), he is offering strange fire. It is only the grace of God in our day that keeps strange fire from coming upon us in destruction. Jesus is to us what Moses was to Aaron. May our attitude be infinitely better than theirs. What is our attitude toward our church family? Is there strange fire coming out of our altar? Let's pray God will teach us to recognize strange fire and help us discover our position and place.

FRIDAY, February 27
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

If there is ever a passage which teaches us God is a God of order and submission to His perfect will, it is this passage. It tells us Jesus is risen from the dead and has become the firstfruits of those who have died. He gives us a divine order, even in the resurrection, that *"...as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet."* The primary problem we have on earth right now is the authority of God not being heeded nor obeyed in many circles. There is an outlaw spirit who is fostering rebellion from one end of the universe to the other. He has brought death and destruction, and he is an enemy to God's purpose and plan for the pinnacle of His creation. But all things will be put under His feet, including death. Verse 28 says we will see the day when total divine order is restored to the entire kingdom of God. For that we can rejoice, and I believe, in the last days, greatly contribute.

SATURDAY, February 28
Scripture: James 3:1-7 1 Timothy 1:1-11

The teaching ministry can be a good example of "strange fire". James 3:1 says, "Let not many of you become teachers, knowing we shall receive a stricter judgment." During the '60's and '70's, as the teaching ministry began to be restored and came into its full flow of freedom, many began to claim and try to move out in that position, yet they were neither called nor anointed for it. We saw a lot of strange fire beginning to come into the body of Christ. Verse 6 says, *"...the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity."* It is set so it can defile or profane the whole body, *"and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell."* In 1 Timothy, Paul speaks specifically to this issue. He says in verses 6,7, *"...from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm."* Verse 9 is very revealing: *"...knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless (`**anomos**') and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy..."* This word is ***anosios***, the strengthened form of ***anomos***, meaning "without rule, or without submission to the Spirit of God". Notice the very next phrase says, *"unholy (**anosios**) and profane"*. Even in Timothy we can discover why God counted what Nadab and Abihu did as "*profane"*. They did not do it under direction of the leadership of the Spirit of God. They tried to assume an office they were being prepared for, but the time had not yet arrived. The true teaching ministry brings forth James 3:4, for it turns the great ship of the body of Christ in the direction God wants it to go. Let's pray and believe God for the true ministries of God to come forth, be recognized in the body of Christ, and for every individual to find their position and calling, moving into a place with all authority. ***Then*** and only then will we see the army of God rise up and begin to reap the harvest as God intended.

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ITINERARY

February 8-9	City of Refuge; Andrews, TX (915) 523-6800 Meetings: 2/8/2008 10:30 am, 6:00 pm; 2/9/2009 7:00 pm
February 26	Women's VIP (Very Involved in Politics); San Diego, CA Meeting: 2/26/2008 10:45 am