

The World (Part 1)

What Is the World?

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Please turn to Nehemiah 5:

Nehemiah 5:14-15 Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year until the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the governor's provisions. But the former governors who were before me laid burdens on the people, and took from them bread and wine, besides forty shekels of silver. Yes, even their servants bore rule over the people, but I did not do so, because of the fear of God.

This is one example that will become obvious from a more complete reading of the book of Nehemiah that shows Nehemiah marched to the beat of a different drummer from those of his fellow Jews. And the verse tells us why—because of his fear of God. Because of his deep respect for God, he looked at events and circumstances differently from others. His world view motivated him to conduct his life with different objectives and purposes in mind.

In this particular case, he took no pay for his job as governor and the reason was that he felt the people were strapped already as it was, and putting that burden on them would be selfishness on his part—because he had sufficient monies of his own to take care of his needs, and apparently of all those who were eating from his table, and so he felt it would not be fair or right for him to take from those people.

I will tell you, would to God that we had politicians like that!

A reading of Nehemiah might make Nehemiah himself look to a modern person as if he were cranky, picky, and perhaps an over-righteous Pharisee. But God seems to have had pretty high regard for this man. Out of the

billions of people who have lived on this earth, there are not very many that have a biographical sketch of them in the Bible that is entirely positive. To the best of my knowledge, there is not one negative thing about Nehemiah in the entirety of the Bible.

I think we can understand that God respected this man for what he was. And as you read this book, I think that there is no doubt that you will come to the conclusion that this man loved Jerusalem. He wanted to see it flourish and be secure. But it was not the city itself that he was overly concerned about, but rather what is represented to the Jews. We have to remember when reading this book that the Jews were the remnant of the people of God—the covenant people.

Israel had gone into captivity almost 200 years before this, and the Jews were all that was left. To Nehemiah, it would not be enough that Jerusalem be prosperous and bustling with activity, and be secure, it also had to have a moral citizenry with their governor setting the example for them to follow. And then, Jerusalem's prosperity and security would mean that things were going at least reasonably well in the covenant nation's relationship to God.

Nehemiah's fear of God motivated him to understand, and thus conduct himself differently toward the world and those who preceded him in office. I believe this book shows that Nehemiah truly was a man of God.

Brethren, what truly pleases God is when we get to the place in our lives that we are looking at the world, at life itself, and our own lives in particular, as though we were looking at them through the eyes of God Himself.

This is because when this occurs, there is the overwhelming possibility that we will act in the same manner as God would were He in the same circumstance. And if we do not see things the way that God does, then how can we ever be in God's image?

Jesus said, "I always do those things that please My Father." He also said, "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father." Jesus really had this principle nailed down.

I chose this verse in Nehemiah because it states so clearly why Nehemiah did what he did. His view of the way he was to conduct his life was formed around his respect for God.

Today, what we are going to do is to begin a two-sermon look at the way God looks at what the Bible calls, “the world.” We are doing this in order to clarify our responsibility to the world while we are in this world. In this regard, the Bible shows that there are three characters. If we were looking at a stage and this subject, it would show three characters: God, Israel, and the world.

Let us begin in the book of Genesis chapter 10, which is not the place that one could begin. We could have begun in the Garden of Eden. But this is a very clear beginning for it because I want to show us that Israel’s roots are also in the world.

From the beginning there was only God. And then there were two characters: God, and the world. As we will see, step by step, a third character was introduced: Israel. Eventually, a fourth character will be introduced: the church.

All of these characters have a relationship to each other. And there are responsibilities that each one is to perform in this relationship.

Genesis 10:1 Now this is the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And sons were born to them after the flood.

Here is the world as we know it at its beginning, after the Flood, through the family of Noah. Now we begin to see the breaking of those families into a variety of parts, each of which became a nation of itself, so we see:

Genesis 11:10 This is the genealogy of Shem: Shem was one hundred years old, and begot Arphaxad two years after the flood.

Then the Bible follows Arphaxad’s line, and when we get down to verse 24:

Genesis 11:24 Nahor lived twenty-nine years, and begot Terah.

Genesis 11:26 Now Terah lived seventy years, and begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

These two chapters show very clearly that Israel, who came out of the line of Shem through Arphaxad, through Eber, through Terah, through Abraham, had its roots in the world. However, chapter 11 interjects something between verses 1 and 10 showing the alienation of these nations of mankind from God. These are all the nations that came from Noah through Shem, Ham, and Japheth, who were caused to live under a curse, being scattered across the face of the earth, indicating that they were away from the presence of the God, and therefore, the blessings of God.

As we finish chapter 11, it is immediately followed by the calling and separation of Abram in Genesis 12.

Genesis 12:1-3 NOW the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

I want you to see verse 3 in relation to chapter 11, verses 1-9. All the nations are put under a curse because of what they did at Babel and so they are away from the blessings of God. But God has not forgotten His purpose, and now we see in chapter 12 that He is going to separate one man away from the families and nations of earth, and through him all of the nations of earth will be blessed.

You can see a pattern developing that helps the church to understand its unique position in relation to God and the world. The pattern here is going to be repeated in the church. So we look at the Old Testament and what do we see? One family being separated out from the nations of the world; being a blessing to all the families of the world that are now being cursed.

Now, you might not be aware of it, but that blessing is so important, that it is repeated five times within the book of Genesis alone. If something is repeated that often, God wants us to get something—there is something important here. We will only look at two of them. Turn to Genesis 22, and see why there needs to be this blessing. This is being repeated to Abraham:

Genesis 22:18 “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

That is in the past tense. It is directly tied to Abraham’s obedience. Then in chapter 26, we find that it is spoken to Isaac,

Genesis 26:4-5 “And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.”

The nations of Genesis 10 and 11 are going to be blessed because of Abraham’s obedience. This includes every nation on the earth.

I am not sure that you would be able to find the term, “the world,” in the Old Testament in the same way that it is used in the New Testament. However, it is there many times, but under a different term. The Old Testament terms it, “Gentiles.” Gentiles mean nations. So, it may say, “Gentiles,” but in New Testament language it means the nations.

In both testaments, the term “Gentiles” and “the world” are used the same way spiritually. They refer to the peoples with whom God has *not* made a covenant. It is that simple. The world and the Gentiles refer to those people with whom God has not made a covenant. Both testaments accept the fact of nationalities, but these terms—Gentile, and the world—carry that fact beyond into the religious realm.

The first concept of nationality appears in Genesis 10. But Israel’s position relative to the other nations took a logical turn at the making of the covenant

at Mt. Sinai. In the making of that covenant, Israel became an elected people chosen of God. They were not only a nation of this world, but a religious community with special responsibilities.

Let us string together about five verses that will make a clear picture of what Israel became as the result of making the covenant, because the covenant separated them away from the other nations even though they were a nation of this world. It put them into a special category.

Exodus 19:4-5 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.'

So, God states His right—His authority—to separate them from the other nations, because He owns the whole earth. He can do with it as He pleases to the intention that Israel become His special treasure.

Deuteronomy 7:6 "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth."

Judges 20:2 And the leaders of all the people, all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand foot soldiers who drew the sword.

What has happened here? Now Israel is being called, "the people of God," which is very interesting. They are in the world, they are of the world, but they are different from other nations; they are the people of God.

II Samuel 5:2 Also, in time past, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and brought them in; and the LORD said to you, 'You shall shepherd My people Israel, and be ruler over Israel.'"

God Himself calls Israel, "My people."

II Samuel 14:13 So the woman said: "Why then have you schemed such a thing against the people of God? For the king speaks this thing as one who is guilty, in that the king does not bring his banished one home again."

Now, I will jump to a prophetic book to show you that this runs right on through the entirety of the bible, especially the Old Testament.

Jeremiah 13:11 'For as the sash clings to the waist of a man, so I have caused the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah to cling to Me,' says the LORD, 'that they may become My people, for renown, for praise, and for glory; but they would not hear.'

Because of God's election of them—or selection of them—they became, "My people," or, "the people of God." We read the word, "holy," in Deuteronomy 7:6, which at this point simply means separated—set apart. The morality aspect of it is secondary—that would come later. They were separated away from the other nations, even though they were still part of this world. And it was the covenant that set them apart.

I want to read to you a verse that ought to be a memory scripture found in the book of Amos. This verse shows how distinctive Israel was in its relationship to God, and the other nations of the earth.

Amos 3:2 "You only have I known of all the families of the earth . . ."

No other nation did God favor in the way that He did to Israel in selecting them to be His representative on earth.

What we have here is that even as with Abraham, God selected one man, and said, "I am going to work out My purpose through this man." That man responded so well, that God said, "The blessings are to come because Abraham obeyed." Then in the next step we find an entire nation separated

away from the other nations, which came physically from Abraham. And so they, like Abraham, were set apart for the same reasons—to be a blessing to all the families of the earth.

In Jeremiah, we find that he is commanded to say this to the people of Israel:

Jeremiah 11:3-4 And say to them, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel: "Cursed is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant which I commanded your fathers in the day I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, 'Obey My voice, and do according to all that I command you; so shall you be My people, and I will be your God.'

I want you to see that Israel's responsibility was in the relationship with God—to be faithful. Their responsibility as a nation was to do the same thing collectively that Abraham did as an individual, and family. They were to be as faithful to God as Abraham had been.

Jeremiah 11:8-11 Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but everyone followed the dictates of his evil heart; therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but which they have not done.'" And the LORD said to me, "A conspiracy has been found among the men of Judah and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers who refused to hear My words, and they have gone after other gods to serve them; the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My covenant which I made with their fathers." Therefore thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will surely bring calamity on them which they will not be able to escape; and though they cry out to Me, I will not listen to them."

What was the ultimate end He would bring upon Israel? It was that they would not only go back to the world—captivity—but they would be lost among the nations. They would even lose their identity. Did they? Nobody but a select few people even know who Israel is today. Even the Jews who identify themselves as Israel do not know where their brothers are.

And so the world thinks that Judah is all that remains of Israel, and all that had been of Israel. Now we are thankful that there are other prophecies, and that God is God. Even though that was carried out in a physical way, Amos tells us that though they be sifted through all the nations, not one kernel would be lost. He knows exactly where everybody is.

Turn to Deuteronomy once again. If you are with me on this, I want you to think ahead in relation to the church of God and see how the pattern is being established here in the Old Testament with Israel. This will help you to understand your selection by God, and what happens to you if you are not faithful to the covenant. You end up back in the world; you become lost. You lose your identity. What is your identity in the New Testament? Your new national identity is the Kingdom of God. The stakes are extremely higher!

The pattern is being established. here. It is put there so that we will understand our relationship in the covenant that God has made with us in the New Testament, with both Him and the world. The world is still here; God is still here; we are God's elect; and this triangle is still going on. In the background now, sort of out of the picture, is the nation of Israel, but they are still there too.

Deuteronomy 28:64 "Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known—wood and stone.

Look at this, right here in the Book! He told them that if you do not obey Me, if you are not faithful to the covenant, you are going to go right back to the world. When somebody leaves the church, what do we say? "They have gone back to the world."

Deuteronomy 28:65 And among those nations you shall find no rest, . . .

If the person really was converted, and they left the church, they will tell you at first, "It is so peaceful here," but it does not stay that way or God is not true. "You shall find no rest."

Deuteronomy 28:65-68 . . . nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul. Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life. In the morning you shall say, 'Oh, that it were evening!' And at evening you shall say, 'Oh, that it were morning!' because of the fear which terrifies your heart, and because of the sight which your eyes see. And the LORD will take you back to Egypt in ships, by the way of which I said to you, 'You shall never see it again.' And there you shall be offered for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you."

What a picture of being utterly forsaken!

Remember the blessing I told you appeared five different times in the book of Genesis? The book of Deuteronomy contains one of the clearest summaries of how God intended that to occur. This is important. Let us see it:

Deuteronomy 28:1-2 "Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God."

He also said that, "The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated" (verse 7), "The LORD will command the blessing on you in your storehouses" (verse 8). "The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself" (verse 9). "The LORD will grant you plenty of goods" (verse 11), "The LORD will open to you His good treasure in the heavens" (verse 12). "And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail" (verse 13).

As you go through there, you will find seven verbs that He uses in those verses: The Lord will *set*, the Lord will *cause*, the Lord will *command*, the Lord will *establish*, the Lord will *grant*, the Lord will *open*, the Lord will *make*. The implication is that Israel's greatness will accrue to them, but *not* at the expense of other nations. *God will give it*. That is so important to

understand, because in this world, the way nations become great is by conquest. They take it from each other. They send their armies out and take.

Here in the United States, we do it differently. We send our businessmen out to conquer the rest of the world. But the effect is virtually the same. And so, in a capitalist America, we become prosperous and wealthy through business means, but we have still used a form of conquest against others.

But Israel, with God blessing them, it would not be through conquest; God would give it—would grant it. Look at verse 10:

Deuteronomy 28:10 Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you.

I want you to think about that word, “afraid.” It does not have to mean “terror.” It can just as easily mean fear, as in, “the fear of God.” “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” What He is saying is how His way of life—the responsibility that He gave to Israel—is going to spread to the other nations. They are going to see the prosperity—the greatness—that Israel has been given by God, that Israel has, not because of their conquest of other nations, and they are going to respect Israel from all that, and they are going to want the same thing.

God is establishing a pattern here that is shown clearly in such prophecies as Isaiah 2 and Micah 4, where He says that all nations flow into Jerusalem coming, and singing, “Let us go and learn of the God of Jacob.” So, we begin to see the pattern established as to how the other nations are going to become under the Kingdom of God in the New Covenant.

And so, Israel’s election by God set them apart to their special responsibility far beyond their own care and preservation of their nationality. If you look back in Deuteronomy 4:

Deuteronomy 4:6-8 “Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there

that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?"

God's intention was that His ways spread through the nations through the attraction of a people living God's way and receiving visible physical blessings. On paper, this makes so much sense, and it looks so beautiful.

Now, what this leads to is seen in the pattern that was established through Abraham and Israel. What did God do? He called out Abraham. Abraham responded. God then began to bless the nation that grew from him. What God is saying here without saying it directly is that He would have done the same thing with the other nations as well. That He would begin to call out individuals within those nations; He would begin to bless them as they responded faithfully to the covenant that He made with them. That would begin to accrue to their nations; and eventually God would make a covenant with them, even as He made with Israel at Mount Sinai.

But there was another side of the promise that God gave to Abraham. Turn back to Genesis 12.

Genesis 12:3 "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

That puts a bit of a responsibility on the world—on the Gentiles. This was repeated in Genesis 27, only this time it was spoken to Jacob.

Genesis 27:29 "Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you!"

One more verse in this regard. This time it is Balaam who utters it regarding Israel:

Numbers 24:9 'He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him?' "Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you."

What that original promise to Abraham contained, then, were two conditions: (1) Israel had to be faithful, and (2) the nations had to respond by blessing God's covenant people.

Turn to Zechariah 8. We know from history that neither one did their part. Israel was not faithful, and the nations did not bless Israel.

Zechariah 8:13 'And it shall come to pass that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you, and you shall be a blessing. Do not fear, let your hands be strong.'

Zechariah 8:20-22 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Peoples shall yet come, inhabitants of many cities; the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, "Let us continue to go and pray before the LORD, and seek the LORD of hosts. I myself will go also." Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.'

Neither Israel nor the Gentiles—the nations—did their part; neither one of them met the conditions. The major part of the blame can undoubtedly be put upon Israel—unto whom much is given, much is required. The process should have begun with them, but because they were not faithful, there is no way that the Gentiles could be faithful for their part.

We are blessed, though, with understanding that the story does not end there, because God is God! God finishes what He starts, because what He starts is right. Therefore, Israel will yet become a light to the nations, and all nations will yet flow into Jerusalem to seek God. But it is not that way yet. The New Testament clearly shows the world being God's enemy, and therefore they are the church's enemy too.

Now, at this point, the sermon moves toward a different category.

We are going to step out of the Old Testament because the pattern has been established. Israel was called out of the nations. First it was Abraham, as a single individual. Then Israel as a nation.

Israel failed, and then the nations failed. The nations became the enemy of God as early as Genesis 11 and have not ever turned from that.

I want you to see that the pattern is still being repeated. This is one of the ways you can understand that God is involved in something. It will follow the pattern that He had established earlier.

Turn to Matthew 2. This is a portion of scripture that you would not think God would even bother to do something like this.

Matthew 2:14-15 When he arose, he took the young Child [Christ] and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

God specifically did this in order that the pattern be followed. Understand—think ahead—who is Christ, and what is He in the metaphor to the church? The church is the body of Christ. And Egypt is a type of the world. "Out of Egypt I have called My Son." This is Genesis 10, 11, and the story of Abraham and Israel all over again. And even with the One Man who becomes the Savior of mankind, He calls Him out of the world—out of Egypt!

Not only did that occur, but guess where Christ's ministry began—in the world! It was not in Israel, but it began in the world.

Matthew 4:14-16 . . . that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned."

Where was this where Christ's ministry began? Up in Samaria, in the land that was given over to the Samaritans. The Samaritans were a Gentile people put there by the Assyrians when they removed Israel from their northern portion of their land. There had been some mixing with the remaining Israelites, but it was considered Gentile territory though it had formerly been Zebulon and Naphtali.

Even though He was the Savior, and even though He was faithful, a very interesting thing began to occur. It began right away. As early as Luke 4, at the beginning of Christ's ministry to the Israelitish people—people of the Covenant—do you remember what happened in Luke 4:24-29? They tried to run Him out of town and throw Him off a cliff.

There is a very interesting thing taking place, here. It is instruction from God for you and me. We find in John 1 that He came unto His own people—the Jews—the remnant of the covenant people. They were the only ones around that were still formed into some form of a nation. Everybody else had been taken into captivity and disappeared. So He came to His own—His Jewish people/tribe—but His own received Him not.

Turn to Matthew 20. A very interesting thing is taking place here.

Matthew 20:18-19 "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles [the nations] to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again."

Matthew 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes [none of them are Gentiles], and be killed, and be raised the third day.

Turn one more time, this time to John 8. This takes place just before His death. This is the famous chapter that contains the scripture, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

John 8:37 “I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.”

John 8:44 “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

So, what has taken place here?

God is showing us that His covenant people, even those in Judah, were all the way back into the world. They were part of the world. They were just as much a part of the world, and enemies of their Messiah and Savior, that they did not even recognize who He was, even though He gave them ample evidence through His preaching, His works for them. They turned their backs; they were all the way back in the world.

Now, God's feelings about the world, are clearly expressed in John 3:16, the verse that is the most recognizable of the whole Bible to the people of the world, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

That is one of God's attitude toward the world. He loves the world. But how does He do it? He loves the world in the same way a person loves things that He has made. God made the earth and its inhabitants. They are made in His image. He loves the world because of its potential in the same way that a person loves something that they are making but has not yet finished. That gives Him every right because He owns the world to blast it into nothingness. But He does not do that, because He still loves it in that regard.

But God also hates the world with a perfect hatred for what it is doing, and what it has done to His creation. You know the prophecies well that the time is coming when He is going to smash it into oblivion at just the right time. Right now, He is using it for His purposes, because it fits the plan that He is working out.

We need to understand more clearly His attitude toward the world if *we* are going to have the right attitude toward the world. If we are going to have the same kind of world view as Nehemiah did that earned him such high marks from God, we must look at it the same way God does.

God loves it—He loves it, but also hates it with a passion.

I John 5:19 We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

That is pretty complete. The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. What does this tell us?

When we put this together with the other concepts that we have already seen, God looks at the earth. What does He see (in regard to this subject)? He sees only two classes of people—two groups, two nations in this regard—His, and the world's. That is all there is.

There is His elect, and the world. In this verse He shows us very clearly that there is a clear cleavage between the two. I mean, He sees it in black and white terms—you are either part of one, or the other. Either you have made the covenant with God, and are part of His elect, or you are still in the world. And if you are in the world, you are under the dominion of the evil one.

Is the evil one God's enemy? Is the world God's enemy? What did the world do to His Son? It killed Him. God hates the world with a passion that I do not think we appreciate.

He tells us His feelings for us are burning hot—He is jealous! He tells us, “Don’t you dare worship another god because the Lord your God is a jealous God.” He is going to move to protect His children. He will do it in His own good time. But there is a very distinct cleavage shown in the Bible between God's people and the world.

Let us go back to Galatians 5 and see this in a bit more personal setting.

Galatians 5:16-17 I say then: Walk by the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

This takes it into a smaller area so to speak, the cleavage. God says that there are two spirits. What are they? God's Spirit, and Satan's spirit. The whole world lies under the sway of Satan. He also says that these two spirits are contrary to one another. And when things are contrary to one another, what do they do? They fight one another.

Ephesians 2:1-3 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world [the enemy], according to the prince of the power of the air [Satan—God's enemy; the one who attacked God; the one who led the charge against His Son, and killed Him, we walked according to that one. Were we God's enemy? Yes!] the spirit [Galatians 5] who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all formerly conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath [we were not at peace with God], just as the others.

We now begin to see why the world kill the servants of God. The people may not really understand what they are doing. There is an antagonism there—contrariness—that the world has against the Spirit of God.

Turn to John 15. Let us take this into a more personal realm, again.

John 15:18-19 “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

John 16:20 “Most assuredly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice . . .”

That is an entirely different attitude, is it not?

Perhaps we do not individually feel the animosity that is there, and maybe that might be partly evidence of how close we are to the world. We loved it because the world loves its own according to its fashion.

Brethren, this is why Romans 8:7 says that the carnal mind is enmity against God. It is formed in this world, and this is what must be repented of—this enmity, this antagonism that we have toward God—this resistance to the Spirit of God. The two are contrary to one another. That is why Paul wrote in Galatians 5, quoted above, about why we cannot do what we want to do. The spirit of the world which is still part of our mind overpowers the Spirit of God, and takes us back into the way of the conduct of this world, and makes us antagonistic to submission to God.

Not only is the world seen as an enemy, it is also seen by the Bible as the source of the most powerful temptations to the destruction of our relationship with God.

What is to follow is quite important.

Deuteronomy 7:16 Also you shall destroy all the peoples whom the LORD your God will deliver over to you; your eye shall not pity them; nor shall you serve their gods, for that would be a snare [temptation] to you.

Exodus 23:30 “Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land.”

Exodus 23:32-33 “You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in your land, lest they will make you sin against Me. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.”

Now, turn to Psalm 106. What a sad commentary we have here:

Psalm 106:34-38 They did not destroy the peoples, concerning whom the LORD commanded them, but they mingled with the Gentiles [the nations; the world] and learned their works; they served their idols, which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan. . .

Can you understand that was something that at one time was so repugnant to the Israelites, they would not think of sacrificing their baby children. But after living with it as neighbors for a while, it became acceptable, and then they joined in.

Psalm 106:38 . . . and the land was polluted with the blood.

Children’s blood! Look at what has happened in the United States in the past 30-40 years in regards to abortion. The land is filled with blood. We are sacrificing little babies. Do you think the attitude of the nations have not taken over in the United States? Fifty years ago that was so repugnant that hardly anybody would have done it. But now we have people out there beating the drums, hiding behind a slogan, “I’m for choice! I want to choose whether I can murder or not.”

Psalm 106:39-42 Thus they were defiled by their own works, and played the harlot by their own deeds. Therefore the wrath of the LORD was kindled against His people, and He abhorred His own inheritance. And He gave them into the hand of the Gentiles, and those who hated them ruled over them. Their enemies also

oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand.

Did the Gentiles hate Israel? Yes they did, in the same way the world hates the church. They do not even know why, but it is there, because the two spirits are at war.

Brethren, I hope that we can begin to see why God gave such an alarmed instruction to the Israelites when they were coming into the land. He said, "Get rid of those people! Push them out! Get them completely out from your borders. I will help you do it. Get rid of them! Brushing shoulders with them is going to destroy you."

Understand, it was not the nationalities that He was against; He was against their practices, because they were going to destroy Israel's relationship with Him so that Israel would not be faithful to the covenant, and therefore, God could not bless either Israel or the nations.

God, like any concerned parent tells His children, "I don't want you playing with 'so-and-so.'" You know that 'so-and-so' is going to lead to the destruction of your child's attitudes and values, tearing that child away from you. You know people that you do not want your children to get close to.

Was God's concern justified that Israel would become exactly what He feared?

There is additional instruction that goes with this, and it appears in Deuteronomy 12.

Deuteronomy 12:1-5 "These are the statutes and the judgments which you shall be careful to observe in the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you to possess all the days that you live on the earth. You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. [These are additions, besides removing the people.] And you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their

gods and destroy their names from that place. You shall not worship the LORD your God with such things. But you shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling, and there you shall go.”

Where was this? First, it is wherever the Tabernacle was. Later, it was permanently established in Jerusalem. And then, more specifically, established at the Temple that Solomon reared for God.

What did that Temple represent? It represented the church—the place where God dwells.

I Corinthians 3:16-17 Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

God said to seek Him where He has placed His name. And not only has He placed His name—the church of God—on the body of Christ, He also lives in that temple by means of His Spirit.

There are two factors that make our situation more difficult than the Israelites: First is the configuration of the church; those who have made the New Covenant with God is no longer located in one specific place. The church has no civil or military power. We are not required to drive the people of the land out of a piece of territory. Instead, *we* are to come out of the world, even while being surrounded by it.

The second is that the gods of this world are not statues of wood or stone, metal and created things, but living spiritual entities whose influences are seen in the attitudes and beliefs and practices in regard to a way of life.

Paul said that there would be gods many and lords many (I Corinthians 8). And, it is these things which give the world its world view, perspective, point of view on every area of life.