Bible Questions and Answers, Part 5
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 1301-C

In what way are we dealing with the Kingdom today? Now, we talk a lot about this, and Jesus came, as well as John the Baptist, preaching the Kingdom, so came Jesus preaching the Kingdom. The question says what way are we dealing with the Kingdom today? The millennium, obviously, hasn't come. Listen, friends, if this is the millennium, we're in real trouble. This is...this is, you're right, it isn't the millennium. Yet, it says, clearly that we have been, according to Colossians 1, we have been transformed into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. We're in the Kingdom, right? We're citizens of the Kingdom, and, yet, this can't be the millennium. No.

Now watch, and this is not easy to explain, so kinda keep your brain alert on this. We are experiencing at this time all of the features of the Kingdom that are spiritual. For example, maybe I can get you involved in this. Think of the millennium, and think of some of the things that will occur in the millennium. What are they? You got any ideas? Peace, that's...that's one we always think about. Okay. Absence of Satan. Okay, for part of it. Okay, justice. Okay, how about this one? The rule of Christ. Well, you know, you can go on with some things like this and just talk about the various features of the Kingdom. There...there is going to be, we have to include this, salvation, righteousness. You know, we can...we don't need to go any further than that. Let's leave it like that.

There are some basic things. Now, think about this. The beautiful thing about this, this is all going to happen in a physical world. This is all gonna take place in the physical; and the whole world will be dominated by these things. But lemme ask you this. You're a Christian, and you're living today. Do you have peace? Sure, do you have it in your life? If you don't, you're in trouble...Has Satan been dismissed from your life and replaced by the Spirit of God? Yes. Is there justice in your life? Is Christ ruling in your life? Yes. Salvation? Has He given you His righteousness? Do you see, in a spiritual sense, you have already begun to experience all that will be fully revealed in a physical sense in the Kingdom. In that sense, we are in a form of the Kingdom now.

We are...some say this is the mystery form of the Kingdom. The King is absent; and, yet, He has...He has sent His Holy Spirit to begin to plant within us all of the features of the Kingdom that are spiritual. Someday in the millennium, they'll all become both spiritual and physical; and Christ will literally bring peace on the whole earth. Literally, Satan will be bound. Literal justice, and He'll rule with a rod of iron. That Christ will actually sit on the seat of the throne of David. Salvation will be all around the world. Israel will be restored and redeemed, and God's righteousness will rule the world. Now, all of that will be in a total sense fulfilled the worldwide, physically, really, literally; but now is being fulfilled

within us who are part of the Kingdom, spiritually. Do you see? So, in a sense, we are experiencing all the spiritual benefits of the Kingdom while we yet wait for the physical fulfillment of all that the Kingdom is.

Another question that comes in...in relationship to something that's happening in our current church scene today is explain why we have Messianic Jewish temples. What is the need for them? Are you familiar with this? Recently, there has been a...a...a surge of Messianic Jewish temples. Now, what this means is this. We all know that we are currently in the midst of what you might call an ethnic minority movement in our country; and I would be the first one to agree that many of the minorities in our country have suffered deeply from injustice. I do not deny that. Sometimes they have suffered because of the consequences of their own perpetuated society. Other times they have suffered consequences as a result of oppression.

But it's true. When the...when the Black Power movement and all of those movements began, and there was great liberation, much of it deserved among the blacks in the south; and when that all occurred, there...there was a natural tail to come along; and there became sort of a new identity if you were an ethnic. You...you, you know, before, everybody was an American, and everybody was waving the American flag, historically. You ever seen any newsreels of World War II, it's incredible. The victory after World War II. Everybody's Americans. You know, the melting pot; and now, all of a sudden, because of the drive of the ethnic movement, and because of the tremendous population growth and the mass, faceless humanity, everybody wants to be something. So now we've got movements among the brown people. We've got this over here, kind of a movement among these types of people. We've got...it's...you gotta be something. You can't just be you, who's an American. You've gotta be a...an Irish-American, a Polish-American, a...a gay American, a something...

You can't just be one of the faceless crowd. You have to be a minority, because that's the new identity; and I think, in this, all of sudden, there is this Jewishness concept. Listen, if there ever is a minority that has existed as a pure minority throughout history, it's the Jewish people; and they have waved the banner for years, because God has wanted them to maintain their dignity and their...their unity and their purity as a race. But what's happened is, I think that many well-meaning Christian people, evangelical people, are catering more to a sociological minority movement than they are to the Word of God. Because the Bible would never tolerate a Jewish church and a Gentile church. That is the one thing that the Apostle Paul spent the last months of his ministry trying to resolve, trying to get those two together; and when he wrote Ephesians, he said, "The middle wall is...what?...broken down and they two have become one new man." And my own belief is that it is ludicrous to have a Messianic Jewish temple, as much as it would be to have announced out here that this is the Grace Community Gentile church. Now, how do you think that would sit with Jewish people? They would say one thing. They're anti-Semitic. See? There's no reason for that.

Dr. Feinbergsaid to me one day, he says, "I don't know why everybody thinks because we're Jewish Christians, we're something special. We're not." Something special to God. Something marvelous to be Jewish, but not something for which you deserve an entire church all to yourselves. And now they have Christian bar mitzvahs. What is a Christian bar mitzvah?...You know, there were some people who filled out applications to go to Talbot Seminary, and they applied because they wanted to become Christian rabbis. Dr. Feinbergsaid to me, "What is a Christian rabbi?" They're out of their mind. They think a church wants a Christian rabbi? They think a synagogue wants a Christian rabbi? No, neither want either.

So you know what they do? They start their own Messianic temple. Some of these dear people really mean well; and I...I pray God that they'll win people to Christ; but that isn't what it's all about. That's, in a sense, Judaizing. I don't see any need for that at all. I praise God for the Jewish people in our...in our church. All you have to do is read Acts chapter 13, and you read about the five pastors there. Some of 'em were Jews. Some of 'em were Gentiles. Some of 'em were white. Some of 'em were black. Read it, Acts 13. They all pastor the same church. We don't have the Grace Community Irish-American Church. Don't see the point.

Another question. What is the abomination of desolation in the holy place, and how will it affect us or will it? What is the abomination of desolation? For that answer, we have to turn to Daniel chapter 9. Daniel chapter 9. This question is often asked when I have conferences. People ask about prophecy. Now, those are really the questions that usually dominate a question and answer time. I was pleased to see that they weren't dominating in your questions, not that they're...they shouldn't be asked, but that you should be preoccupied with other things than the future, namely, the present.

But in Daniel 9:24, it talks about the seventy weeks of Daniel. That's the period of history determined upon Israel, and you remember there's gonna be a period of Israel's history. Messiah's going to come...talks about the destruction of Jerusalem. Then in verse 27, it talks about the Tribulation...The antichrist is going to come. The prince that shall come, "And confirm the covenant with many for one week." One of the things that antichrist will do in the end time is make a pact with Israel for one seven-year period. One week means seven years. There will be a period of seven years that we call the Tribulation. At the beginning of that period, the antichrist will make a treaty with Israel to protect Israel. "However, in the midst of the week...in the middle of that time, three-and-a-half years...he will cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease." In other words, he...he will allow them the freedom to worship in their temple.

This is one of the reasons we believe Israel's gonna rebuild the temple, because they'll be worshipping during the Tribulation. They will be worshipping in the temple in the middle of the week. Antichrist swoops down, stops the sacrifices. Stops the oblation, "For the overspreading of abominations he makes it desolate." He comes in and just abominates or blasphemes, in their mind, the sacredness of that place. He wipes out their worship...in the middle of the week. That is the

abomination of desolations.

Now, this had a very apt figure in history. In a sense, it was almost fulfilled in a preliminary manner with Antiochus Epiphanes, who, during the period of the Maccabees, between the ending of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament, the period of 400 years, when the Jews were under the yoke of Greece. The Greeks had set up a man in there by the name of Antiochus to rule them, to rule the Jews. Well, he was bad. I mean he was terrible. He was a madman. That's what the people called him, Epimanes, the madman; and, in order to show his hatred for Israel, he went in there and slew a pig on the altar in the temple; and then he took the pork and crammed it down the mouths of the priests. Well, of course, the result of that was a unbelievable revolution; and the Maccabean revolt occurred as a result of that desecration. In a sense, that is what the prince that shall come is going to do in the middle of the week. Somehow, he will abominate and desecrate the worship of Israel in the midst of the Tribulation. Now, when that happens, that will be the trigger that'll blow the whole rest of the three-and-a-half year Tribulation. That's when it stops being Tribulation and turns into Great Tribulation.

For that understanding, turn to Matthew 24. They'll be getting along great. They'll have this pact. In fact, you know how the first...the first of the seven seals in Revelation 6 says, "There will be peace in the world"? A false peace. There it is. Three-and-a-half years of the Tribulation, false peace, then this antichrist swoops down, abominates their worship. And when that happens, that's the beginning of the really bad time. Verse 15 of Matthew 24. This is written to the Jews. "And when you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, when you see it stand in the holy place, when you see it happening right there in the holy place, then let them who are in Judea flee into the mountains...Get outta there...Let him that is on the housetop don't even come down to take anything out of his house; neither let the one who is in the field return back to take his clothes. Woe unto those who are with child...pregnant ladies...and those who are nursing their children. Pray that your flight won't be in the winter, neither on the Sabbath. For then shall be...what?...great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days would be shortened...the three-and-a-half years, as it is...there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake, they will be shortened."

So when that happens, that is the trigger that fires off the Great Tribulation. How will it affect us? It will not affect us at all. Why? We, who are belonging to Jesus Christ, I believe, will be Raptured before the Tribulation begins. We won't even be around. That is part of God's dealing with Israel. God dealt with them in the first 69 weeks. God will be dealing with them in the 70th week of Daniel, the Tribulation. Many nations are mentioned in the prophecies of the end times. Is there any indication of what will happen to America? No, there is no indication in prophecy whatever that I can see regarding America. That's simply answered.

All right, another question out of the Old Testament. What is the significance of the unleavened bread at Passover? Well, I can answer that quickly. In Exodus 12:15, when God said, "Get out of Egypt, 'cause I'm gonna take you out. You can leave now." He said, "I want you to have a feast, and I want the bread to be unleavened." Now, I'm not a baker, but I know a little bit about unleavened bread. That's about all. Wouldn't wanna try to make any, but I can describe it a little bit.

Bread is made out of dough; and, of course, when you make a batch of dough, if you were to take out a piece of the dough, you don't bake the dough, you just keep one little piece. It sours. The next time you make bread, you put that sourdough in it. That acts as a leaven on the bread. It causes it to rise; and we eat leavened bread. Leavened bread is bread, and unleavened bread is crackers. That's about as close a parallel as you're gonna get...It's flat.

Now, in those days, Israel normally, at least according to Hosea, I think it's chapter 7 verse 4, they normally ate leavened bread. They ate bread that was rising. There was nothing wrong with that; but unleavened bread was enjoined upon them because they were in a hurry. God was saying, "Make the bread of haste, because you've gotta get out of here. Don't take the time to let your bread rise. Bake it, cook it, eat it, you're gonna leave." And that was what was done at Passover, and so, in the memorial to the Passover in Egypt, when they made their bread in haste and got outta there, in memorial to that, God said, "Whenever you celebrate the Passover, celebrate it with unleavened bread as a memory that you left Egypt in a hurry, and you didn't have time for your bread to rise."...

You say, "Well, is that why had the feast of unleavened bread?" Yes, from the month Abeeb, from the 14th of Abeebto the 21st, seven days of unleavened bread, celebrating that. Somebody always says, "Well, doesn't leaven mean sin? Isn't it a type of sin?" Not really. If you wanna know really what leaven is, it is a symbol of power. It is a symbol of permeating power. Leaven can be used good, as it is Matthew chapter 13 and Luke 13, to speak of the influence of the Kingdom of God leavening the world. There it is used good. Leaven can be bad, as it is in Matthew 16, 1 Corinthians 5, Galatians 5, where it speaks of evil permeating. It's simply a permeating power; but unleavened bread, used in the Passover, was used in order for them to remember they had to leave in haste.

All right, another question. Is there a blessing if we adhere to Old Testament dietary and medical laws, or were they only for Israel? Now that's a much-asked question. First of all, that which was given to Israel in the Old Testament was for Israel, so they definitely were for Israel. Some of the things given to Israel were definitely medically beneficial. There were certain things that they were to do in terms of preparation of food, living in the age in which they lived, in the society in which they lived. Those things became medically very, very beneficial. There's an excellent paperback book called None of These Diseases, a little paperback by Dr. S.I. McMillen. Some of you may have read it. It's very helpful in telling you why God gave Israel many of their laws regarding communicable diseases and dietary laws and what they could eat and so forth and so on.

Now, some of those laws had that kind of medical significance. Other...others of them were purely to isolate Israel from other nations. God wanted them to dress funny, maintain a funny diet, and a strange calendar in order that it would be very difficult for them to mingle with other nations, because God wanted a separated people, didn't He? God wanted Israel as a light to the rest of the world, and He wanted to be sure they couldn't mingle, so He gave them very, very difficult things. Setting them apart. The process of cooking, the process of...of eating, the...the kinds of feasts and the kinds of things they had to eat seasonally, and that's, of course, where we get what today is called kosher food; and the Orthodox Jew still will only eat that which is kosher, that which is accommodating the Old Testament.

But, when you come to the New Testament age, those things that were dietary laws designed to separate Israel from other peoples are abolished because, in the church, the Lord wants to make of the Gentile and the Jew what? One; and so those dietary laws are abolished. They are no longer binding. Some of them might be medically practical today. Others of them aren't, because we have a purer type food in our country. I imagine if you were living in a pagan country, if you travel at all, you're very careful what you eat. And when we were in Egypt, we avoided those camel burgers and all that, and only Lennyate goat steak; and paid for it all the way to Rome, I understand.

There are certain things that you avoid in a cultural setting that would be medically beneficial to your health, healthy for you. But in terms of any proscribed thing, you have to understand that, as of the making of the church, Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4 and said this, "In the last days, some will come forbidding marriage and abstaining from foods...but Paul said...I'm telling you all things are to be received with thanksgiving. No longer are we under the dietary laws of Israel." Now this was in Acts 10. If you'll turn to it for a minute, I'll show you what happened.

Now, Peter had a vision up there on the roof, Joppa, he was sleeping there getting a suntan, and he started out praying, but fell asleep. Not uncommon, and he fell into a trance. The Lord spoke to him, and he saw this sheet come down from Heaven, and on this sheet in verse 11 it says, "There was s great sheet, and on it...verse 12 says...four-footed beasts of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and fowls of the air." Well, here were a whole lotta things that Jews weren't allowed to eat. Here he sees all these things coming down outta Heaven that he's not allowed to eat, and a voice says to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." Oh-ho, that's tough. In his vision, Peter hears this. "And Peter says, 'Not so, Lord, no way, I have never eaten anything common or unclean. I can't eat those things. Jewish law forbids.' The voice spoke unto him a second time, 'What God hath cleansed, that call thou not common.'" Three times, He had to do it to get the message across.

What Peter was really doing was being prepared to witness to Cornelius, who was a Gentile. The Lord was saying to him, "No longer are you separate from the Gentiles. Everything's clean. The Gentiles are accepted into our economy. No longer any dietary laws. You can move right over there,

and you can witness to Cornelius." Now, man, this was not easy for a Jew. Oh, this was really tough. Do you realize that a strict Jew would have absolutely nothing to do with a Gentile? He would never go into his house. He would never be a guest in his house. In fact, the...the Rabbinic law said, "The dwelling place of a Gentile is unclean." Ceremonial unclean, you contact the defilement when you enter it.

I jotted down some interesting things about that. The very dust of a Gentile country was unclean, and it defiled when you got it on your feet. Have you ever heard of shaking the dust off your feet? When an Israelite came back into Israel, he always shook the dust off of his feet, because he didn't wanna bring Gentile dirt back into Israel. And it was like the grave. It was like the essence of death. If any Jew came back and mingled Gentile dirt with Jewish dirt, he would defile everything that that dirt touched. I'll tell you an interesting thing that I learned in Jerusalem. Do you know that every single building that is built is Jerusalem must be built with all materials from Israel? Nothing is allowed to be imported for construction in Israel.

This is what our Lord was saying. They went so far that milk that was drawn from a cow by Gentile hands couldn't be consumed by a Jew. Bread and oil made by a Gentile couldn't be eaten by a Jew. No Jew would have dinner or any meal with a Gentile. If a Gentile happened to be invited to a Jewish house, he could never be left alone in the room, or every single thing in that room would be defiled. There had to be a Jew in there all the time with him. If they bought cooking utensils at the market, and a Gentile happened to sell them, they had to be purified by fire. If a weaving shuttle was made of wood grown in a Gentile country or a grove devoted to Gentile idols, every piece of cloth made on it was to be burned...

Now, folks, that's pretty strict stuff. Now, the Lord says to Peter, "Go on over to that Gentile Cornelius and straighten him out and eat anything you want." Peter goes, "Ohhhhh, see, I can't handle that, Lord." But what the Lord was saying was, "No longer am I separating you from Gentiles. I'm gonna make of both of you one new man," Ephesians tells us, one church. No, I don't believe that the dietary laws of Israel are any longer binding on the church. Not at all. In fact, I think God has made of us one, and in that oneness...those things have been erased; and I praise God, you know, for the beautiful unity of the church. That there are not any...separating things, but that everything is unified in Christ.

What is our relation to the food laws of the Old Testament? What is Christian liberty with regard to food? Now this has become, apparently, in recent days, a very interesting topic of conversation. There has been a tape circulating around, and I've listened to it, and some of you may have listened to it, where this gentleman bouncing off of a book that has recently been published about Old Testament dietary laws being the key to one aspect of the Christian life; and so folks are asking, "What is our relation to the food laws of the Old Testament?"

The answer to that comes in the New Testament, because that's what we relate to. The Old Testament has very sophisticated rules for Israel. But let's look, first of all, at 1 Timothy chapter 4...1 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 1. "Now the Spirit speaks expressly or pointedly, directly, that in the last times...and I believe this is the end of the church age. Paul is writing to Timothy in reference to the church...some shall depart from the faith, apostasy, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils." There will be a decay in theology. There will be a waning of...of orthodoxy, and we're seeing that today. "Speaking lies in hypocrisy, having conscience seared with a hot iron." In other words, there will be lying teachers, and there will be people whose conscience has been so often scarred that it's become scar tissue, and they don't sense the truth any longer.

And some of the things that they're going to teach, these false teachers, these doctrines of demons are these. "Forbidding to marry." And that has a lot of ramifications. That marriage is wrong or that marriage is, in our day, unnecessary. You can just live together, whatever. "And commanding to abstain from foods, which God has created to be received with thanksgiving by them who believe and know the truth." Now, some people are going to come in the last times saying that you shouldn't eat certain things...But verse 4 I think answers the question. "For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving." It isn't nearly so important what you eat as the attitude you have in eating it.

Now, this isn't to say that you're to eat garbage. It isn't to say that you're to eat something that obviously is diseased. But every creature designed by God is good. God looked at everything He made and said what? "It's good." And nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving. God is concerned with your attitude. You say, "But, John, what about all those Old Testament dietary laws? Have they been set aside?" Look at Acts chapter 10. Now, by the time we get to chapter 10, the church is pretty well Jewish. There hasn't been a great movement at all toward Gentiles. In fact, that's beginning in chapter 10. So the Jews have come to Christ; and they haven't really left their Judaism, frankly; and, at this point, it is somewhat of a barrier to Gentile evangelism. Very difficult, you see, for a Jew to be in a situation to evangelize a Gentile; and the reason is because they just didn't have any possible way of connecting up. A...A Jew, in the first place, wouldn't go in a Gentile house. A Jew wouldn't normally have a Gentile into his house. They would never sit down and eat the same foods, so there was very little opportunity for real confrontation. There was a...a built-in separation. The very...the very dust, for example, of a Gentile country was unclean, and when you came into Israel, you always shook the dust off your clothes, 'cause you didn't wanna drag Gentile dirt into Israel. This...this maintained a tremendous separatism.

For example, milk drawn from a cow by Gentile hands was forbidden. Jewish hands had to, you know...bre...you don't know. Bread and oil, what do you know about that in Panorama City? Bread and oil that had been prepared by a Gentile was not to be used by a Jew. No Jew would ever eat with a Gentile. If a Gentile was invited to a Jewish house, and that did happen on some occasions, he would never be left alone in a room...because if he was left alone in a room, every article in the room

would be unclean. If cooking utensils were bought from a Gentile, they had to be purified by fire. Any article, however distantly connected with Gentiles, was to be destroyed. One other interesting thing I found was if a weaving shuttle had been made of wood grown in a grove devoted to Gentile idols, every piece of cloth made in it was to be destroyed. If the weaving shuttle grew in a Gentile grove with idols, you couldn't wear the clothes that the weaving shuttle wove. Incredible. And the Gentiles answered back, believe me. They answered back.

Now, the strict Jew then believe that there was no way there could be any connection. Well, all this had to die, folks, if there was gonna be any way that the Jew was gonna reach the Gentile with the message of Christ, this was gonna have to die. It begins to die in chapter 10, and watch what happens. Beginning in verse 9, "On the next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on a housetop to pray about the sixth hour. He went up to pray, and he became very hungry...and would have eaten; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance." This is another one of those divine anesthetics where God just puts him to sleep, 'cause He's got a message for him.

"And all of a sudden in his trance or his sleep, he saw heaven opened and a certain vessel...it's a big sheet, actually...descends on him or to him, like a big sheet knit at the four corners and let down to the earth." Somehow there... there's this great big sheet, and the four corners are connected to some guy-wires coming outta heaven, and down comes a sheet. Say, "Well, what's in it?" Verse 12, "In which were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air." Now, the law of Israel forbade the eating of any of those things, see. That's what He's trying to get at. There were certain kinds of things they couldn't eat...and, all of a sudden, verse 13 says, "There came a voice to him, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.'" It's a new day, Peter. Jewish dietary laws are set aside. Why? Because Jewish dietary laws had, particularly as their purpose, to separate and isolate Israel from the Canaanites. If God could organize their diet so they had to eat such distinct food that they couldn't mingle with the people they were with, that was one way He could keep them from idolatry.

You see, when Israel went into the Promised Land, what were they supposed to do with the Canaanites? They were supposed to kill them, wipe them out, as God's judgment instrument. They were to wipe out the Canaanites. In order to help them to get at that business, God didn't want them making great friends and relationships, and so He designed a...a separate kind of existence, and this made them unique. It made them peculiar. It made them stick out. It made people say, "There's something different about them," and when they examined it, they found it wasn't just their diet, it was their theology.

But, all of a sudden, He says, "'Rise, Peter; kill and eat,' and Peter says, 'Not so, Lord, no deal. I'm not doing it, for I have never eaten anything common or unclean. I've never eaten anything like that. I can't handle it. I'm kosher.'" And he was. "And the voice spoke the second time, 'What God hath...what?...cleansed, that call not thou common.'" You think he was easily convinced? "This was

done three times." He was stubborn, but that's not easy for him, "And the vessel was pulled back up into Heaven."

What in the world is going on here? Well, God was preparing Simon to go to the house of whom? Cornelius. And all that old dietary stuff that was keeping Israel distinct was wiped out. You say, "What is proper for a Christian to eat nowadays?" Anything that's healthy, reasonable healthy. It isn't nearly so important what you eat as your what? Your attitude toward it. Are you thankful for it? You know, I'll tell you something. There are places in the world where Christians are serving in missions where they don't have a lotta choice. I mean if you would go, and I've been there, if you would go to Ecuador, out in the boondocks, you know, we have...we have those hotdogs on a stick here? Are you ready for this?...They have guinea pig on a stick with the stick going up through the end of the guinea pig and out the teeth; and they cook it just like that. Hair, eyeballs, everything. Businessman's lunch, and no mustard. Somebody is gonna say in that society, "Now, wait a minute. I'm not eating that." Little choice, and if you don't, in some cases, you would be offensive to the folks. I have been in countries in the world where I don't even know what I'm eating; and I don't ask; but I'll tell you what I do. I thank God that He is gonna preserve me. That's the issue. The Holy Spirit is saying to Peter, "The barriers are down. Let's cut the stuff out that isolates, and let's mix." Wherever you are in the world, the standards are simply to be thankful, because God is not trying to have a separate nation anymore.

Now the only prohibition I would say that comes along that line would be "If your brother is offended...as we've learned in 1 Corinthians...by meats offered to idols," then what should you do? Not eat those. But other than that, I don't really think it matters a whole what you eat. Now, obviously, it's good to feel good. So if you go out and eat a whole buncha junkie food, super greasy food, and you eat down at the greasy spoon all the time, you're not gonna feel too good. There's no sense in going through life feeling lousy. It's good to eat healthy food. God expects you to use your mind about it; but there is nothing that is forbidden, if it's properly prepared and cooked and reasonably healthy; and...and anything can be prepared reasonably if you burn it enough...

Now, what about fasting? Another question. What about fasting? Well, fasting is connected in the Bible. I'm just gonna give you a Biblical answer without discussing its medical benefits and all of that which could be debated. But what does the Bible say? Fasting is connected in Scripture with times of distress. Okay? The Jews, for example, fasted on the Day of Atonement, because they were showing distress over their sin. There were other Jewish fasts, some proscribed and some not-proscribed. But lemme just give you a few illustrations.

Fasting occurred during war. In Judges 20:26, Israel fasted at Bethel in the war against Benjamin. Secondly, fasting occurred during sickness. When David's infant son was sick unto death, David fasted and wept for his dying son, 2 Samuel 12:16. Fasting was connected with penitence. In Nehemiah 9, when the people heard the Word of God and repented of their sin, and when Ezra had read them the law, it says they fasted in penitence. War, sickness, times of penitence, fourthly, fasting

occurred in times of danger. In 2 Chronicles chapter 20 and verse 3, Jehoshaphat fasted when he was threatened by Edom. Fifthly, fasting occurred during times of revelation. There's an illustration in Daniel 9, and an illustration in Exodus 34, where Daniel on one occasion, and Moses on another occasion, both fasted after and before receiving God's revelation.

So it was in times of tremendous spiritual crisis. Times of great distress that fasting occurred. You say, "Well, what was it?" Well, sometimes it was the setting aside of certain things, not all food, but certain kinds of food. Sometimes it was setting aside luxuriant food to eat the simple things of life. Sometimes it was only for one or two meals a day. Sometimes it was for one day. We have some incidents of fasting for one night. We have other incidences of fasting for three days. David fasted for seven days on one occasion, the longest, 40 days. Only two people we ever know of in history fasted 40 days, three. Moses, Jesus, and Dick Gregory...But, biblically, Moses and Jesus. Some...it's amazing that he can do that, fast the way he does. I don't agree with the cause for which he fasts, but the discipline is astounding.

The New Testament also speaks of fasting related to John the Baptist, Jesus, and the disciples. The early church did it, 2 Corinthians 6:5, over vital issues. Paul did it, 2 Corinthians 11:27; and other than this, we have no New Testament word. It's never commanded. It is assumed that there will be times in our lives of great distress and great anxiety and great spiritual crisis when we would set aside food to concentrate on the things of the Lord. That's how it's presented biblically...You might also note that there are some demons, our Lord said, "that come not out but by prayer and fasting." Again indicating the spiritual crisis aspect.

Why did God wipe out whole towns of people in the Old Testament? It's a fair question. We hear that God is a God of love, coming out of the Bible. We preach that God is a God of love; and, invariably, people ask us the question, "If God is such a loving God, why does He wipe out nations of people? Why would He take Israel into the Promised Land, tell 'em to wipe out the whole nation of the Canaanites? Why did God destroy a certain village or a certain town, a certain society?

Well, the answer to that is really simple if you think about it. God is not only a God of love, but He is a God of justice; and when people sin, they incur His judgment; and when people incur His judgment, God is patient; but His patience runs out eventually. And God will tolerate sin for so long, and then God will move in judgment against that sin; and so some of these towns we see in the Bible only God's people moving in and judgment coming; and we don't stop to think about what's gone on for the 500 or 1,000 or whatever amount of years before that that brought them to the place of sinfulness where God just removed them from the earth. We have to remember that; and, in addition, one of the things that God has always endeavored to do is preserve society. The reason, for example, that it says that a criminal or a murderer should be...should be killed was because you can't have murderers running around in society; and it isn't really too safe to put a murderer in a prison; because, if he's a murderer, he'll murder somebody in the prison.

The reason God instituted prisons and places to keep people for other crimes was to get them out of society; and the reason God removes whole peoples or whole towns is because all of society is in jeopardy as long as they exist. When God destroyed the Canaanites, He did it to preserve His truth among the Israelites. They were like cancer; and when cancer exists, the only wise thing to do is to cut it out; and God does that in a...in a...a preserving act.

Further, I would add this. It is also...it is not only surgery removing a cancer in society; but, remember, that in every case where God ever did that, He always offered to those people salvation. In Malachi, He says, "I'm gonna come in and wipe out the land," but He says, "For those of you who believe in Me, you will be Mine in the day that I make up My jewels, and I will have a Book of Remembrance, and I'll write your name in it." He always does that. Before He wiped out Sodom and Gomorrah, what did He do? He preached the truth there. God always gives an opportunity to righteous or those who are willing to be believers in Him before there is ever a judgment; and I would add a further word; and that is that God is tremendously patient, tremendously tolerant.

Just look at Genesis chapter 15 for a moment, and I'll point up something there. Genesis 15:13, God said to Abram, "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a sojourner in a land that is not theirs, and serve them; and they shall afflict four hundred years." Now, Israel went out of their land. They were in...they were in Egypt. God says they'll be here four hundred years. Well, that's a long time. Four hundred years. Why so long? Verse 14, "Also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge, and afterward shall they come out with great substance." In other words, they're gonna come out of Egypt, "And go to thy fathers in peace and be buried in a good old age. In the fourth generation they shall come here again." You'll come back to the land of Canaan in the fourth generation, four hundred years later. "For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet...what?...full."

God says, "I...I...I can't yet destroy the Amorites, because their iniquity has not yet run its limits out where judgment is the only answer." In other words, God gave the Amorites four hundred years in which to get things straightened out; and it wasn't until that period of time that God would let the Israelites move in; and God, in His grace toward the Amorites, kept the Israelites four hundred years in slavery just to give the Amorites the same four hundred years; and in that period of time, they consummated and filled up their iniquity so that it was time for God to move in and judge before they infected society in the world to a great degree; and so when they...in Leviticus 18, we find it says in verse 24, "Defile not yourselves in any of these things, for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you, and the land is defiled. Therefore do I visit the iniquity thereof on it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants."

They have so debauched the land. They have so defiled the land, that even the land itself throws them out. "But you shall keep My statutes, My ordinances, and don't commit any of these abominations...and so forth...for all these abominations...verse 27...have the men of the land done,

who were before you, and the land is defiled, that the land spew not you out also when you defile it, as it spewed out the nations that were before you. For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit them shall be cut off from among the people. Therefore shall you keep My ordinance, that ye commit not any of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that you defile not yourselves therein: I am the Lord your God." In other words, "I don't care who you are, if you do this and you keep doing it, you're gonna bring upon yourself ultimate judgment." So, you see, God, first of all, is patient; and God, second of all, is just; and He will judge for the preservation of total society by removing the cancer, even if it's a citywide or a nationwide influence.

Now, here is another question. What is the Biblical standard for keeping the Sabbath holy? Well, that's a fair question. What is the Biblical standard for keeping the Sabbath holy? Well, the Sabbath was a part of God's plan from the start, that there be a day of rest. God created the world. On the seventh day, He rested. It wasn't because He was tired. He rested in order to set and example that there would be a day of rest, that there would be a time of recovery. Now, God didn't need to recover, but God wanted to institute for man the understanding that there was...was to be a day of recovery and a day of worship. But it was on the seventh day. Is that significant? It's only significant because there were no other days than those seven. I mean it had to be the seventh, because when He was finished, He was finished, and it was the seventh. So we can't necessarily make a universal principle about the seventh. Now, in the Law of Moses, God did institute that it be the seventh day, in, really, a commemoration, as it were, of the resting of God as He set the pattern; and so in the Law of Moses, the Mosaic Law, there was a seventh day of rest. It was for two purposes: the recovery of the human body and worship...

But in the New Testament, the external forms of worship have gone internal; and it becomes very apparent from the birth of the church in the Book of Acts in chapter 2, that the church is not nearly so concerned initially about meeting on any particular day; because in Acts 2, how often did they meet? Every day. And all of a sudden, this whole idea of worship isn't a matter of gathering all the family and parading down to the temple. The whole idea of worship, all of a sudden, goes inside; and the prescribed day of worship, listen, gives way to a way of worship, which is a daily thing; and in Romans chapter 14, Paul says, "Some regard the day, and that's...that fine, and some don't regard the day. Whatever your pleasure is."

Some people are hung up on the Sabbath. Some aren't anymore. Whichever you want, don't cut down the people who still hold to the Sabbath. That's important to them; and on the other hand, if some don't, don't bother them about it. Read it. It's in Romans 14. Because that's passed away. The worship has gone internal. Now, I still believe God expects a day of recovery and, apparently, the early church chose that day to be the first day of the week, as they met together to worship on the commemoration of the resurrection.

Lemme show you some Scriptures that'll help you on this. John chapter 5 verse 1, "After this was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went to Jerusalem. There is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, called in the Hebrew language Bethesda, having five porches." And it goes on to talk about the lame and impotent and blind and so forth, and a man was healed there by the Lord. Verse 7 discusses it. Verse 8, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." We got a problem now. "Immediately the man was made well, took up his bed and walked, and the same day was the...what?...Sabbath. Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, 'It is the Sabbath day; it's not lawful for you to carry your bed.'" Now that is crass legalism. The poor man, 38 years, hasn't taken a step, and they don't want him to carry his bed, because it's the Sabbath.

That's amazing. He answered them, he said, "He that made me well, the same said to me, 'Take up thy bed and walk.' And they said to him, 'What man is that who said unto thee, 'Take up thy bed and walk? How dare he say that.' And he that was healed knew not who it was, for Jesus had moved away, a multitude being in that place. Afterwards, Jesus finds him in the temple and said to him, 'Behold, thou art made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.' The man departed, and told the Jews it was Jesus who had made him well. And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus and sought to slay Him, because He'd done these things on the Sabbath day."

Now watch. "But Jesus answered them, 'My Father works hitherto, and I work.'" That was one of the most explosive utterances that ever came out of the mouth of Jesus. He said, "Two persons have a right to work on the Sabbath: God the Father and Me." That's an incredible statement. What was He claiming? They knew what He was claiming. "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said that God was His Father, making Himself...what?...equal with God." Jesus set the Sabbath aside, if you will. In effect, He was saying, "Look, I can work on the Sabbath, and so can My Father," and this was a new day for Judaism, a dawning that they had never ever understood before.

In John chapter 7 verse 22, "Moses therefore gave you circumcision...and you on the Sabbath day circumcise a man." They had to, 'cause they had to circumcise on the eighth day after he was born, and sometimes that fell on the Sabbath. "If a man on the Sabbath day receive circumcision, that the Law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I have made a man entirely well on the Sabbath day?" He's saying, "Let's not get too locked into this Sabbath thing. There's got to be a little flexibility," and, you see, what He's doing is easing them away from this rigid observance of the Sabbath.

In John 9:14, "And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees asked him how he had received his sight. He said, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed and do see.'" Which doesn't sound like too good of an explanation. "Therefore said some of the Pharisees, 'This man is not of God. Jesus can't be of God, because He doesn't keep the

Sabbath.'" Didn't matter that He made blind people see. "Others said, 'Well, how can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?' And there was a division among them."

You see, Jesus purposely kept violating the Sabbath. Purposely. He was...he was really shutting down Sabbath observance, little by little. Now, the key passage is Mark 2:27 and 28. Mark 2:27 and 28. "And He said unto them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.'" The Sabbath was made to accommodate man. Man is not to be a slave of the Sabbath. "Therefore, the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath." He gives us an important statement. He says, "Look, the Sabbath was only intended to accommodate man, not to become enslaving to man; and I am the Lord of the Sabbath; and what I say about it is what goes."

And little by little, Jesus begins to tear away the system related to the Sabbath. Listen to this. After the resurrection, the term Sabbath appears only three times in the New Testament. That's all; and each of those three times, it is in reference to a Jewish synagogue meeting where Paul went and preached; and that's its only use. It completely passed away. It became obvious that God was setting it aside. The transition is complete so that by the time you come to Romans chapter 14 verse 6, "He that regards the day, regards it to the Lord; he that regards not the day, to the Lord he doesn't regard it." Doesn't matter. It's gone. If you wanna observe it, fine. If you don't, fine; and the early church clearly established a new day, the first day of the week.

In Acts 20 verse 7, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." And that became the normal pattern, meeting on the first day of the week. In fact, in the 16th chapter, I think it is, of 1 Corinthians, we have a good indication of that. "Upon the first day of the week...verse 2...let every one of you lay by him in store as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." They even did their giving on the first day of the week. Revelation chapter 1 verse 10, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day." What is the Lord's Day? The first day of the week, the Lord's Day.

Another Scripture that I think is vital is Galatians 4:10. "You observe days and months and times and years." Hmmmmm, so? "I'm afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." You never got off the old system. Look at verse 9 now. "But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how can you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements unto which you desire again to be in bondage?" In other words, "You've been liberated," that's the message of this Book. "You've been liberated. How can you go back to the old system of observing days and months and times and years?" The old Sabbath system...

So, you see, that has already been set aside in the plan of God; and little by little then, as we study the New Testament, we see the Sabbath replaced by the Day of the Lord, and the worship goes internal. It goes inside. Colossians 2, I would read you verse 16. "Let no man therefore judge you in food. Let no man judge you in food, in drink, in respect of a feast day, or of the new moon, or of a

Sabbath day, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." Don't let anybody criticize you for not going by Jewish diet. Don't let anybody criticize you for not going by prescribed drink. Don't let anybody criticize you for not respecting a feast day. Don't let anybody judge you because you don't observe the new moon. Don't let anyone judge you for not keeping the Sabbath day. Those are only the shadow. The reality has arrived, and worship ceases to be external and goes internal. And, incidentally, all of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament, except one, and that one that is not repeated is, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," because that's set aside.

All right, another question. This is a short answer, ready? What Bible books were not written by Hebrews? What Bible books were did not have Jewish authors? Only two, as far as we know. Maybe Job was not a Jew, but we don't know. But only two, Luke and Acts. The only two books written by a non-Jewish author, and they were written by the same person, Luke. The only non-Jewish author in the Bible.

Okay, another question, and this one has come up, because I mentioned it a few weeks ago. Doesn't Lent represent Christ's 40 days in the wilderness? I made the statement that the observance of Lent...Lent is 40 days before Easter, right? Some of you comes...come from denominational backgrounds. Lent is a 40-day observance before Easter where you don't do something. You...you can choose what you don't do, but you just don't do it for those 40 days. It's...it's some sort of abstinence; and, depending upon your own proscription in your own family or your denominational background, it might various things.

Now, where did Lent come from? You can't find it in the Bible connected to Easter. You can't find it in the Bible connected to anything. You can never find the early church observing it. You can't find the early church fathers adhering to Lent. So where does it come from? I suggested that Lent came from a pagan custom, and someone asked, "Well, doesn't it come from the 40 days of Christ in the wilderness?"

No, it doesn't, because the 40 days that Christ was tempted in the wilderness were at the beginning of His ministry. It wasn't until three years later that He died and was risen from the dead. So that the gap of three years eliminates connecting the 40 days of His wilderness temptation to the resurrection. There's no way...Where does Lent come from then? Well, quoting from Hislop, it says this - and he's quoting a man, an ancient writer by the name of Cassianus. "It ought to be known...said Cassianus, the monk of Marseilles, writing in the fifth century and contrasting the primitive church with the church in his day...that the observance of the 40 days had no existence so long as the perfection of the primitive church remained inviolate." In other words, the testimony of this fifth century monk is that as long as the primitive church was pure, it never knew anything about Lent. It was until it got corrupted that Lent came in.

Where did it come from? It was borrowed from the worship of Babylonian mystery religions, and this is what we discussed. And we said, remember we said that all false religion began where? Tower of Babel, right? It all began there. The worship of whatever that Ziggurat was, that tower that they built, that false worship. And so God scattered them all; and when He scattered them, He changed their languages; and when they went to wherever they went, they took with them that false system of religion; and so that same system of religion found its way into all different cultures and all different societies and all different places in the world. And you might be interested to know that Lent is still observed by certain pagan devil worshipers, even in rather modern times. Some historians have even found it among the pagans in Mexico. The observance of a 40-day period, but they do it in honor of the sun.

Historians have found it, and archeologists have found it in Egypt, in a 40-day commemoration of Isis and Osiris. The Greeks even had a 40-day feast in connection with wailing for the rape of a certain goddess who was carried away by Pluto, who was known as the god of hell, and so they were weeping 40 days for this poor goddess named something line porcupine, but it's not porcupine. Persephone or something like that...

Now, it was a 40-day period of mourning prior to the supposed resurrection of the god Tamus, the false god. This was its...the way it was observed in Rome. To conciliate the pagans and to draw them into nominal Christianity, the Roman church, pursuing its usual policy, amalgamated the festivals of Christianity with pagan festivals; and since they celebrated Easter around April and May, and since the pagan Lent was celebrated in May in Egypt, and in April in Britain, it fit well with Easter; and so they just brought it together to kind of marry the pagans; and the Council of Orillia in 519 decreed that Lent should solemnly be attached to Easter and kept before Easter. That was 519 AD, so it has no Biblical base whatsoever.

Here's one. What kind of music pleases God? Okay, what kind of music pleases God? That's a good question. Lemme give you some thoughts. No. 1, joyful music. God likes joyful music. Psalm 66:1, "Make a...what?...joyful noise unto God, all you lands. Sing the honor of His name." God likes joyful music. All right. Another thing, Psalm 66, God likes music that glorifies Him. "Sing forth the honor of His name; make His praise glorious. Say unto God." Listen, God likes music that says something to Him about Him. Okay? "Say unto God, 'How awe-inspiring art Thou in Thy works. Through the greatness of Thy power shall Thine enemies submit themselves to Thee. All the earth shall worship Thee and shall sing unto He; they shall sing to Thy name.' Come and see the works of God; He is awesome... etc...He turned the sea into dry land," and on and on. God likes music that glorifies Him.

Now, something else. We got a little taste of it tonight. God likes old music. He does. He likes old music...How do you know that? Psalm 81...verse 2, "Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our

solemn feast day." Verse 1, "Sing aloud unto God our strength; make a joyful noise." And what do we sing? A Psalm from the psaltery, and that's old stuff. Sing the traditional hymns, the old ones, and play them on instruments.

You know something else? God likes new music. He likes old music. He likes new music. Psalm 96:1, "Sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth." You didn't know that was there? "Sing unto the Lord a new song." That's what it says. "Sing unto the Lord, bless His name; show forth His salvation from day to day." God likes old music. God likes new music. Verse 1 of Psalm 98, "Sing unto the Lord a new song, for He's done marvelous things." Listen, we're not just singing about a God who did something in the past, right? We're singing about a God who's doing something in the present. We oughta be writing new songs about Him.

So God likes joyful music, music that glorifies His character, old music, new music. God likes instrumental music. We just read that in Psalm 81. Read Psalm 50, He likes instrumental music. God also likes vocal music. He likes people to sing with their voices. Sure He likes some people to sing with their voices more than He likes other people to sing with their voices. But, anyway, Psalm 89:1, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever; with my mouth will I make known Thy faithfulness to all generations." All of us, He likes to hear us sing. God likes music out of a true heart. Amos 5 says, "Stop your songs; your heart isn't right." God wants music out of a true heart. And then lastly, God wants music inspired by the Holy Spirit, right? They were...and when they were filled with the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 5:18, spoke to themselves in what? Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing, and making melody of the Lord. So that's the kind of music that pleases God. All those things please God.

Where does it say in the New Testament to use musical instruments to praise the Lord? It doesn't. Doesn't say that in the New Testament. However, it does say it in the Old Testament. You know, I wanna make a thing clear. I think, you know, those of us who have this sort of quasi-dispensational heritage, this sort of...we have sort of a temptation to sort of whack out the Old Testament. "Well, it's only in the Old Testament." Well, wait a minute, I mean, after all, the same God that wrote the new wrote the old, true? And you don't find any disclaimers on Psalm 150. You know, I know it'll boggle you to think of it, but did you know Psalm 150 and other portions of the Psalm even advocate that dancing can praise the Lord? Whoa.

I can see it all now...but it's a certain kind. It's that personal expression of joy and fulfillment; and I mean you don't see too many Christians who are just that excited, that just get out in their...in their house all alone and just dance before the Lord. You'd look in the window and say, "Oh, no, it's, you know, said what happened to Harry." But that's a way to praise the Lord. You see...you see, that's the release of joy, and it can express itself that way. It could express itself in song. Psalm 150 says you could praise the Lord with every instrument, and it goes on and on and on and on, just adds instrument after instrument after instrument. You could praise the Lord with instruments. You can praise the Lord with your voice. You don't need a New Testament reference. If you'd like one,

however, there is one illustration in the New Testament of musical instruments, and it's the harps in Heaven in the Book of Revelation. Listen, anything good enough for the Old Testament and good enough for Heaven's, good enough for now. Okay.

Father, thank You tonight for our fellowship. Bless us as we go from this place, and for those who yet have not acknowledged Christ, may this be the night when they do that. Draw into the counseling room and the prayer room those that need to be there to have their needs met, and use us this week, father, to answer some of the questions that the world around us is asking, that they might know the same Lord Jesus Christ that we know and serve; and in whose name we pray. Amen.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2016 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).