

KINGDOM SPIRIT

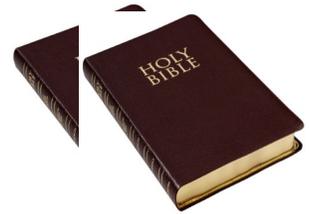
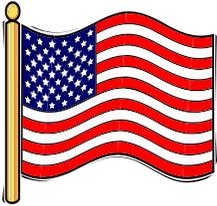
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“SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

Matthew 6:33



Issue 1511

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

We have been looking at Christ's "Sermon on the Mount" as recorded in Matt. 5-7. One of the problems that Christ encountered was the tendency of particularly the Pharisees making a show of their religion. We have already dealt with their tendency to make sure everyone around them knew when they did a good deed and when they prayed. Christ said that if they did these things as a show among men, they had their reward. He continues the same theme discussing fasting. (Read Matt. 6:16-18) People would disfigure their faces to make it look like they were really suffering from fasting. Christ says they have their reward. His advice was to do what ever was needed to keep one's fasting between him or herself and God.

(Read Matt. 6:19-21) I did a roof repair for a gentleman a few years ago who was known for his overwhelming desire for riches. When I finished the job and went in to give him my bill, he started questioning me about my financial future for some reason. I don't recall just how the conversation got started, but when I told him my desire was not necessarily to become rich, but rather to be sure that I did a good job, he refused to believe me that being rich was not my number one goal. To him that was the only goal in life. I don't know what he is going to do. I am sure he is worth millions, is in his eighties, and has no children to leave it to and still trying to earn more. When we get to the book of Revelation, we'll see that this is what is referred to as the mark of the

beast. Here in Matthew, Christ is telling us what and where our real treasure is and urging us to work to lay up that treasure.

(Read Matt. 6:22-23) The word "single" means free from defect. If we see clearly, our whole body is in the light, but if we cannot see clearly, our whole body is in darkness. Referring back to the previous verses, if our eye is only on material wealth, we are not seeing clearly, thus we are really in darkness. If our eye, or our light is on the treasures laid up in heaven, i.e. our relationship to Christ, we are truly in the light. (Read John 1:1-9 and 8:12)

(Read Matt. 6:24-34) Have you known someone who says they work for two bosses? This happens frequently when someone works for someone where the owner is the boss, but he has appointed a foreman or a superintendent over the employees. This works fine so long as the owner doesn't get involved in the management of the employees. But often, he does. When this happens there will always be dissension. Even if the goals of both bosses are the same, there will be dissension among the employees. When the goals differ, for example, the owner is primarily interested in a profitable company and the foreman is interested in promoting himself, serious problems are sure to exist. In the example here, Christ is talking of two masters with totally different goals. Mammon simply means wealth or riches. While mammon waves the flag of riches in this life, it is the easier one to follow because it offers satisfaction for the main three things within each of us that causes us to sin, lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and pride of life. Unfortunately we all want to satisfy these things while ignoring the ultimate outcome. Christ waves the flag of something that we can't see, feel or touch, but rather is something

that we have to have faith that we will see it, feel it and touch it, so to speak, in the future beyond this life. So serving these two masters are two entirely different things. There is no way that anyone can serve them both. Each one requires our full attention. To try to serve them both only leads to miserable dissension within ourselves.

Therefore, to serve Christ, He says we need to not worry about our food, drink and raiment. This doesn't mean that we are to sit down and let God feed and clothe us. The example he uses of the birds tell us the opposite. The birds go about working for their food daily, but the point is the food is there. I think all of us do a lot of worrying about paying our bills, having money enough for our needs. If we are in business, the worrying just takes on a higher level. How are we going to pay the employees, taxes, insurance, etc. and still have enough to take home for our personal and family needs. As one that has experienced this worry, I am ashamed to say that even though I have seen God provide when I didn't think there was any chance at all over and over, it did not stop me from worrying about the next crises, often even before it came.

I've always felt Jesus had a sense of humor. He exhibits this in verse 27 when He asks if any of us by worrying, or thinking about it can add a cubit to our height? This in effect tells us how useless it is to worry about a problem when we can't do anything about it. Our job is to do our job the very best way that we can and leave the rest to God. I might point out that sometimes He takes care of us in spite of ourselves. When I was in the equipment business, I reached a point that I felt we had to cancel our contract with our primary supplier. This was absolutely the last thing I wanted to do, but I had an overwhelming feeling I had to do it. It wasn't until a couple of years later that I finally saw God's hand in the decision. Had we not done what we did when we did it, we probably would have never recovered from what would have been the ultimate outcome. I have been thankful ever since.

Verse 33 is the verse we have chosen as the theme of our ministry. Let me lay a little bit of ground work first before we discuss this verse. We need to be sure we understand the difference between the kingdom and the church because most Christians do not understand this difference. Every person who is justified, i.e. accepts the gift

of justification, is a part of the church. Justify means to make right. "Church", as used in God's Word, refers to those who have been called out, or the congregation. It is not any organized denomination, but those who have accepted Christ's death as their death, or penalty for their sin. It is a free gift that Christ did for all of mankind because of His love of man. (Rom. 3:23-24) It is not something that can be bought, borrowed, or stolen, only accepted. Paul refers to this group of people as Christ's body. (I Cor. 12:27) Being justified places one's name in the book of life or a member of the body.

Kingdom is made up of those who will rule with Christ. (Rev. 20:6) These will have part in the first resurrection. Being part of the kingdom requires effort on our part. Verse 33 infers this in telling us to "seek" the kingdom. Luke 13:24 tells us, "**Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.**" Because many people use the term "salvation" as an all inclusive term, they get confused as to whether "salvation" is free or is it something they have to "work" for. We need to understand that justification is free, sanctification is something that has to be worked for and glorification is the result. Remember that Christ is teaching His disciples here, so I don't believe justification is what He is telling them to seek. Rather He is teaching them to strive to be a part of the kingdom of rulers with Him.

Jesus doesn't just say to seek the kingdom of God, but also to seek His righteousness. Seeking his righteousness is how we seek the kingdom. As we have mentioned before, once we accept the free gift of justification, we are like a baby. We need to grow up, to mature as Christians. As with a child who is growing up, learning obedience is of utmost importance. Righteousness is doing that which is right. What is right? The psalmist says in Psalms 119:172, "**My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness**" Being righteous is obeying God's law. However, total righteousness, which is Christ's righteousness, demands total obedience. None of us can claim to have done that. Genesis 15:6, speaking of Abraham, says, "**And he believed in the LORD: and he counted it to him for righteousness.**" Even Abraham was not totally righteousness, but because he believed God, God counted or reckoned

it to him for righteousness. So is it obedience or belief that makes us righteous? The apostle Paul tells us in Rom. 6:16, **“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.”** Then in Rom. 10:10 he says, **“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”** Total righteousness, Christ’s righteousness, comes through believing, because of His love for us, but if we believe, we are going to strive to obey Jesus out of our love for Him. If a child obeys his parents strictly out of fear, at some point he will rebel. If he obeys out of love for his parents, his missteps will be easily forgiven and he will mature to be like the father he loves. Only Christ is totally righteous and it is his righteousness that is reckoned to us when we believe and love Him.

If we are striving to be a part of His kingdom, then He says to not worry about tomorrow. Deal with today. Tomorrow will have its own problems, so He is telling us to do today what we know needs to be done today and leave tomorrow until tomorrow.

(Read Matt. 7:1-5) Verse 1 is being heard quite frequently today, primarily by non-Christians basically telling Christians not to judge them for what they are doing. The principle of these verses is basically don’t condemn someone else when you yourself are open to condemnation. I want to quote these first two verses from the Ferrar Fenton translation, **“Condemn not, so that you may not be condemned. For according to the sentence you pronounce, you will yourself be convicted; and with the same measure with which you measure, you will be measured.”** I don’t know how many of you have heard of the controversy that the leader of the Duck Dynasty TV program stirred up by saying in an interview for a magazine that he considered homosexuality a sin. I watched a debate about it on a news program and one of the debaters was a lawyer who said he was a homosexual and a Jew. He used verse 1 to say that the Duck Dynasty gentleman was being non-Christian and then launched into quite a tirade condemning the man every way he could think of. Usually when you hear someone use this verse, they are trying to keep you from seeing their sin. We do need to be careful that we

don’t open ourselves up to condemnation as most all of us have our own faults. But these verses are not intended for us to call something that is wrong by God’s law right so that we may be politically correct. Calling it a sin because God calls it a sin is not what Jesus is talking about here. Most of us are guilty at one time or another of talking about or deciding in our mind about someone based on something that we have heard about them, or what kind of vehicle they drive, or how they dress, where we see them, or a multitude of other reasons. This is what Jesus is talking about. When we know what someone has done, what is there to judge. It is not the place of an individual to carry out God’s judgments. An example of what I am talking about happened when I was a kid. My father always enjoyed joking around. One time one of the bars in town had him come to the bar to do some kind of repair job for them. He did not drink nor go to a bar for any other reason. When he came out, some acquaintance, knowing this, said something in a joking manner about him coming out of a bar. In the same sense of joking around about it, Daddy staggered like he was drunk. A young girl saw him do this without knowing what was going on and went and told the Baptist preacher’s wife what she saw and this lady then spread the rumor around town that Daddy was seen drunk on the street. This hurt my father greatly because he put great value on his name. Unfortunately he did not handle the situation properly, but the point is this lady judged when she should not have. Several people got hurt in the ordeal before it was over.

(Read Matt. 7:6) This verse has always bothered me some. Who or what is considered dogs? Matt. 15:21-28 may be of some help. (Read) Here we’re told the woman was from Canaan. Where the same story is told by Mark (Mark 7:24-30), he says she was a Syrian from Phoenicia. The point is that she was not an Israelite. Christ says that He came only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, so I think we can assume that at that point He was saying that non-Israelites were considered dogs in the sense that His primary mission was to Israelites. I don’t believe it is meant as derogatory as it first sounds, only that non-Israelites were secondary to His mission. I believe that one has to understand the whole story of the Bible to understand why Christ would say this.

But I believe that probably the same is meant here in Matt. 7:6. Let me try to briefly explain why. In the Old Covenant, God told Israel that they would be a kingdom of priests or rulers (Ex. 19:5) and they were to be His witnesses to the world. This did not change in the New Covenant. However, Israel had been cast off into the Assyrian captivity because of their sin and were not allowed to return to their homeland. In casting them off, God promised to redeem them or to buy them back. This was His primary mission and the reason that He said He came only to the house of Israel. But in redeeming Israel through His crucifixion on the cross, this gave Him lawful reason to redeem the whole world from sin. So while His primary purpose was to redeem Israel, His ultimate purpose was to save the whole world. (See Rom. 11) Once He had paid the price of redemption on the cross, I don't believe that the non-Israelite would be considered dog in the sense that I believe it is here. But at the same time there is a secondary meaning in that there isn't any use in wasting time on those who do not want to learn. Sometimes you might be able to change their mind to wanting to learn, but God will do that. We just need to be ready to do our part when He does.

(Read Matt. 7:7-12) In discussing these verses there always seems to be some "ifs" included. These verses appear to be quite straight forward, yet all of us can probably tell of things we asked for in prayer and did not receive. I have heard of some rather miraculous things happen and I have heard of some of what would appear to be very needed things asked for that were not received. We could say that "if" you had faith enough, you would receive what ever you asked for. Or "if" you were asking for only something that God knew you really needed it would be received. Or "if" you had done something so that you deserved to receive what you asked for. I had a lady tell me one time that she was needing a typewriter, so she prayed for a typewriter and the next day a stranger came to her and said they heard she needed a typewriter and they had one they were not using, so would like to give to her. She claimed that this had happened many times as she took these verses very literally. We were visiting a Pentecostal church one time that had a special program put on by some youths that had just completed some kind of special project. They

were telling how God had met their every need as they prayed for it. Then they claimed that all their silver teeth fillings had even turned to gold. To be honest, I still don't believe that last part. There is no question that God answers prayer, I have experienced it. Yet I still don't pray expecting as I should. But here is my take on these verses: Again He is teaching His disciples. While He hasn't offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin on the cross yet, I believe these disciples to be beyond what we now refer to as the justification phase and are in the maturing phase. As such, their faith should be at a higher level than most, though we will see that they certainly still had some development to go. But when a person is at the level of maturity that I believe they probably were, they are not going to ask God for frivolous things or selfish things. So when they ask, they will receive. But they leave it up to God. He is not going to give us something that will cause harm or be meaningless. The example He uses of men not giving their sons a stone for bread tells us this.

I believe this all ties into verse 12. He first says, "therefore" indicating that based on the knowledge portrayed in verses 7-11, we should treat others as we want to be treated. If we have the faith to pray expecting, this should give us a reasonable high level of security in our Lord. This level of security should then translate in how we treat other people. Jesus says this is the law and the prophets.

In Matt.22 a lawyer, in an attempt to trip Christ up on God's law, asked Jesus what was the greatest commandment. I'm sure he thought Jesus would answer with one of the ten commandments, for which I'm sure he had a prepared argument, but instead Jesus said, "**Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.**" If we then look at the Ten Commandments, the first four could come under the subhead of "**Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.**" The next six could come under the subhead of "**Thou shalt love thy**

neighbor as thyself.” Yet the two subheads could then come under the heading, **“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, so ye even so to them.”** or as Luke puts it in Luke 6:31, **“And as ye would that men should do you, do ye also to them likewise.”** Jesus tells us in John 14:15, **“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”** JRL

have a bearing on our understanding the prophet Joel.

The second of these fall feasts is the Day of Atonement. (Read Lev. 23:27-32) This was to be a day of self introspection. It is the one day of the year that the high priest was to first offer a sacrifice for himself, and then he was to offer a sacrifice for all the people and was to bring the blood of the sacrifices into the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle and later the temple.

Every 49th year, there was something else that was to happen on this 10th day of the seventh month. (Read Lev. 25:8-13) So every 49th year the trumpet was to be blown for the Day of Atonement and again for the Jubilee. One was to be a very somber occasion in preparation for the Feast of Tabernacles and the other a very happy occasion as all debt was to be released and all those in servitude for their debts were to be returned to their own land.

Then the last of these fall feasts was the Feast of Tabernacles celebrating the final harvest of the year. (Read Lev. 23:33-44) This was to be a happy time in which the people were to relax and enjoy themselves, their families, their neighbors, etc. (Read Deut. 16:13-17)

This is a brief look at the Feasts of the Lord that I think will let us gain some understanding from the prophet Joel as we look at his three chapter book. As an overview before we begin reading, consider the first chapter to deal with the time period between Pentecost, in which God poured out His Spirit on His disciples in the upper room as we read in Acts 2, to the Feast of Trumpets, that I think we can believe will soon come. Then chapter two deals with the Feast of Trumpets through the Feast of Tabernacles. Then chapter three deals with the time beyond leading to the Great White Throne of Judgment.

(Read Joel 1:1-7) The name Joel means JO=Jehovah, El=God. His father's name, Pethuel means “Vision of God. In verse 2 Joel is calling to the rulers of Israel telling them that something very unusual is going to happen. We're not told how soon it is to happen, but Joel indicates that it will be at least 3 generations before it comes to pass or is completed. He uses the locust to illustrate destruction in verse 4. In the Mid-East there is what is called the time of the locust. It lasts about 5 months with the locust starting in Arabia (Saudi Arabia today) and moving north and west

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JOEL

We are getting ready to study the book of Joel, but I felt we needed to set the stage, so to speak, before we started. In our last issue, we were discussing the fall feasts as I believe they

into the Palestine area. As it relates to the times we have been looking at with the feasts, it is usually about the time between Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles, roughly June through September. In the margin of my Bible the four phases of the locust here are referred to as the chewing locust, the swarming locust, the crawling locust and finally the consuming locust. In Rev. 9, the time of the locust is used to symbolize the rise of Islam starting with the Saracens to the Ottoman Turks. Here I believe it refers to the continual destruction of goods and property from the Day of Pentecost after Christ's ascension until the first resurrection (Feast of Trumpets.) By continual destruction of goods and property, even though the world is producing more and more, we actually have less and less. There is not enough goods (good money or goods to back the money) today to pay off the debts that have accumulated over the years, i.e. there is no way to pay the debts that have been accumulated by individuals, companies, or governments. The four stages of the locust are the actual life stages that the locust goes through to continue to propagate. The locusts might be considered armies, but not in the traditional sense. These armies continually ravage the land, what one group or army or generation doesn't consume or destroy, the next group, army or generation will, etc. until there is nothing left. This is part of the reason we see Peter speaking of a time of restoration (Acts 3:21). Verses 5-6 may be speaking of the Assyrian captivity of Israel as the beginning of all of this destruction.

(Read Joel 1:7-12) So far as Israel is concerned, the Assyrian captivity was the beginning of the time of consuming and destruction. Israel had married God, then was divorced from God, then was cast out of the land into the "wilderness" so to speak and God was missing from their midst. Thus verse 8 says, "**Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.**" Being cast out of the land, all the sacrifice offerings were cut off as there was no more growing of abundant crops to supply these offerings. Joel says this is so because of the withering away of joy of men.

(Read Joel 1:13-20) Joel then looks into the future and sees what he refers to as the day of the LORD and says "**as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.**" The destruction, I believe, will be a destruction of man's ways to be

replaced with the ways of God. However, to many, if not most, this will be very painful thing to happen. Just as a couple of examples, imagine a man who is used to ruling oppressively over men because of his wealth suddenly having no wealth and no power to oppress others. Or imagine a person used to living continually on the public dole with no idea how to work or take responsibility for himself suddenly finding that if he is to eat, he is going to have to work for it. In both cases, the destruction of man's ways is going to be very painful for either individual. Because man has neglected the ways of God for so long, everything that man has tried to do has only increased the problem. Joel gives the answer—cry unto the Lord and he says that even the beasts of the field will cry unto God.

(Read Joel 2:1-11) Now we pick up the pattern of the fall feast days. Verse 1 I believe refers to the Feast of Trumpets. If this is true, then from this point we will have two armies. The locusts and God's army. It would appear that the locusts are making a last ditch effort to overcome the army of God. I have never lived where there were huge swarms of locusts, but a few years ago we had a very large influx of some kind of worm that did very much damage as Joel describes the locust here. They were everywhere and were impossible to keep out of one's house if you were in their path. They were everywhere and short of a toxic spray, there was no way to stop them. So I can imagine the destruction of the locust as Joel describes them here. If we apply this to the destructive nature of man's ways as we can especially witness it in the times we are living in now. Throughout history, we have seen individuals rise to the top of various nations and wreak great havoc among their people and we usually think of these individuals when we think of the enemies of God's kingdom. But the example of the locusts brings the problem much closer to home. It is not just a particular leader or leaders, it is the people themselves that cause massive destruction to our society, whether we look at it from an economic aspect, a political aspect, or a religious aspect. It is not just the man with a sword, a bow, or a gun. It is man himself.

Very often some of us at least, think things are so bad that God Himself can't straighten them out. Verses 12-14 tell us otherwise. Because God is strong and His camp is great. He gives the an-

swer to all of the world's problems in verse 13. As Micah told us in Micah 7:18, **"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy."** Because He is a God like no other, He can change us as individuals and us as a nation and nations.

(Read Joel 2:15-17) We now come to the Day of Atonement. It is a time for serious contemplation of ourselves and repentance. It is a time of intercession for each other, our nation, our world.

(Read Joel 2:18-27) It appears that not only will it be a Day of Atonement, but also a Jubilee as well. For the serious reflection turns to happiness, a day of forgiveness, and cancelation of debt of all kinds. This then leads us in to the Feast of Tabernacles. God promises to Israel to restore the blessings of wine, grain, and oil and to remove the reproach that He placed on them when He divorced them and forced them from His land. Because Joel was familiar with the northern army, the army of Assyria, he uses this to symbolize all armies that threaten the Israel nations. In verse 23, the term "former rain" is actually a reference to teacher of righteousness which is a reference to Christ. He promises a great increase in this teaching. He promises to restore the damage done over the centuries by the "locust." Vs. 27 says it all, **"And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed."** It truly will be a time of happiness that was to be enjoyed during the Feast of Tabernacles.

(Read Joel 2:28-32) We might say that this is the real purpose of the Feast of Tabernacles. Whereas God poured out the earnest of His Spirit at Pentecost following the ascension of Christ, it has been and is His intent to pour out His Spirit in its fullness on all mankind ultimately. If we remember what happened with the apostles and disciples following the pouring out of the earnest of the Spirit, I think it will be hard to imagine what will happen following the pouring out of the fullness of the Spirit. To those who believe that it will be impossible for God to save all men, I say, just wait and see. Deliverance, or salvation shall be in Zion and in Jerusalem and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call. I believe this re-

fers to the New Jerusalem made up of this remnant, not necessarily a place, but in the hearts and minds of this remnant, those who have part in the first resurrection.

It appears to me that Joel looks at the time from the first resurrection to the Great White Throne of Judgment in the terms of the Day of Atonement. In a sense, the spring feasts provided the bread for God's table, the fall feasts, particularly the Day of Atonement provide the wine to make the table complete. I should have stressed earlier that the Day of Atonement was a preparation for Tabernacles. Not only did it call for a somber self inspection both for the individual and the nation, but it also called for the treading of the grapes to make the wine for tabernacles. With this in mind, let's look at chapter 3. (Read Joel 3:1-8) To bring again the captivity means to release from captivity. The kingdom of Judah was to be destroyed, but what Judah represents, i.e. the leadership (sceptre) of Israel and ultimately the world has been, in a sense, in captivity to the Babylonian system ever since Nebuchadnezzar took them into captivity.

Jehoshaphat means Yaweh Has Judged. In a sense, think of the valley of Jehoshaphat as a huge wine press in which all of the nations will be brought into for judgment. Also in the treading out of the grapes, the principle is to remove the flesh of the grape and leave only the juice. If we think of the judging, or the treading down of the nations in this huge wine press, we are talking of removing the flesh, i.e. man's ways, from men and nations. Not a bad thing, but a good thing. The nations, under this Babylonian system, are accused of casting lots for God's people, of trading a boy for a harlot, and selling a girl for wine. Though all nations have been a part of the Babylonian system, God's people have come under several nations, particularly the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans. Harlotry usually means idolatry in the prophet's writings. Young lives have been the price of idolatry. We the people in general have been willing to pay that price to maintain our idol worship.

The word girl refers to marriageable age young woman. This could refer to the bride of Christ. The churches have sold out the bride for Babylonian wine, which usually included drugs. We would rather be drugged than to recognize and support the true bride.

I think Tyre and Zidon refer to our economic system. We have stolen from God and given it to false gods. In verses 6-8 God indicates He will turn the tables on those who have held His people hostage or in captivity and will sell them to the Sabeans, or to a people far off.

(Read Joel 3:9-17) The words “Gentiles” and “heathen” are from the same Hebrew word, “goy” and simply means nations. This is the call to the nations, not individuals, to be gathered together for judgment. Keep in mind that even with nations, God’s judgment is always a restorative judgment, not destructive, so even though we read destruction, think restoration.

Verse 17 gives us the reason for all this judgment, **“So shall ye know that I am the LORD dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.”** My holy mountain means my holy kingdom. Once this judgment has taken place the people will know the true God, then Joel says **“then shall Jerusalem be holy** (or set apart). Then people will recognize the true Christians, the building stones of the New Jerusalem. When the second work of Christ is complete, there will be no strangers.

(Read Joel 3:18-21) This is comparable to the 21st chapter of Revelation. Once the Great White Throne of Judgment is over, God promises blessing upon blessing.

This completes our study of the minor prophets that were primarily prophets to Israel. Before we look at the minor prophets whose primary message was to Judah, we need to go back to our history so that we can know what is happening that often initiates these messages. Israel is now out of the historical picture so the history will center around Judah.

Hezekiah was king of Judah at the time that the Israelites were taken into the Assyrian captivity. Manasseh, his son succeeded him to the

throne. We’ll take of his history beginning with II Kings 20:20-21 and 21:1-9 in our next issue. JRL

At our house, Thanksgiving has been our most important holiday of the year. It was especially so this year. We pray that it has been just as enjoyable for you. Speaking for my self, I am far too neglectful in giving thanks to God for the many blessings He has bountifully poured out on me. It has taken me a long time to realize this, but I have to admit that some of His greater blessings has been when He said no. Of course, at the time there is no way that I think of it as a blessing, only after time has made things clear have I realized what a blessing “no” has been. But He has said “yes” often as well for which I am also thankful. This includes allowing us to edit and mail to each of you what we learn in God’s Holy Word. We thank God for each of you, our readers. JRL