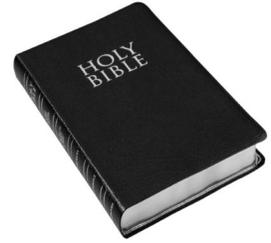




Publication of Kingdom Seekers Ministry
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Matthew 6:33

Issue 1709

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF LUKE

In our last issue we were looking at Maternus, a young man whom Christ raised from the dead. Though not named in Scripture, historians have recorded that his name was Maternus. We read the story in Luke 7:11-17. We have a little more to say about him before we continue on with our study of the book of Luke.

But though ready to take the lowest place among his Greek and Roman companions, Maternus appears to have been most active in his apostolic labours... Maternus alone is represented as pushing forward and reaching the farthest settlement of Tongres, where he is said to have built a little church which he dedicated to the Blessed Virgin—the first church beyond the Alps dedicated to her name and memory... “Maternus is accordingly recognized as the first bishop of Tongres.” Tongres was located far to the north in what is now northeast Belgium.

(Read Luke 7:18-23) It is interesting to me that Jesus did not answer John’s disciples directly, but rather showed them what He was doing by healing and raising people from the dead and then tells them **“blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.”** The marginal rendering in my Bible for the word “offended” is “cause to stumble.” I don’t know if John’s faith was fading, whether this was a veiled request to get him out of prison, or whether he wanted his disciples to know who Jesus really was. Whatever his reason for sending his disciples to Jesus, the answer was look at what I have been doing and make up your

own mind, but don’t cause someone else to stumble.

(Read Luke 7:24-30) We need to be careful to understand what Jesus is saying here concerning John the Baptist. He first says, **“Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist.”** This is quite a complement considering the great prophets we have studied. The prophets we have studied prophesied of the time of Christ and beyond, but it was John’s job to transition the people from the Old Covenant to the New. Jesus and the apostles and other authors of the New Testament deal primarily with the New Covenant. While we don’t have much record of John’s activities and preaching, the fact that he was baptizing unto repentance tells us of this transition.

We discussed this at some length a couple of lessons ago where we compared sin to leprosy. The priest would be called by one who felt he had been healed of leprosy and if the priest agreed that the person had been healed, or cleansed, he would, as part of the purification ritual, wash or baptize the man. The washing, or baptism did not heal the man, but rather was witness that the person had been healed or cleansed. We pointed out that the baptism of John was similar in principle. Baptism does not cleanse a man of his sins, but rather is a witness that he has repented and been cleansed, or forgiven by God. This then represents in principle the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. In the Old Covenant, the high priest represented the intercessor between man and God. Everything was based on if a person kept God’s law, and failure to do so required a blood sacrifice of a bull or goat. In the New Covenant, Jesus Christ is our intercessor and forgiveness is granted as a free gift based on the

sacrifice Jesus made for all the world on the cross, not anything that we might do to try to earn that forgiveness.

Back to Luke 7:28, Jesus concluded His thought with, **"But he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."** We need to understand that He was saying that when His kingdom is established here on the earth, the person who is least in the kingdom would be greater than John was then, even though Jesus said there was no greater prophet than John. Not only does this tell us a little about how great it will be to be a part of that kingdom, but it also tells us that there will be different degrees of responsibility that will be held by those who are in the kingdom. I believe that the rewards that are promised are degrees of responsibility.

(Read Luke 7:31-35) Jesus is still referring to John's ministry. He had probably preached both good and bad as he encouraged men to repent of their sin and be baptized as a witness of that repentance. Many of the common people responded to his preaching, but the religious hierarchy didn't respond, i.e. they neither danced or wept. Then He says in vs. 35, **"But wisdom is justified of all her children."** The wisdom He is speaking of is probably that that is defined in Deut. 4:6, **"Keep therefore and do them** (statutes, commandments and judgments); **for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations."** If wisdom is the keeping of the law, then it is justified by the actions of the children of the law, or the children of God. The word "justified" is from the Greek *"dikaioo"* which, according to Young's Analytical Concordance means "to make or declare right."

(Read Luke 7:36-50) Dr. Steve Jones has an excellent article on this passage that I am presenting here rather than trying to word it myself.

"Luke 7:36-50 is one of the longer stories in the book of Luke. A Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to dinner at his home. This was seemingly a friendly move, but when He arrived for dinner, He immediately discovered the set-up... The story assumes background information about the woman without informing us. Obviously, she was (or had been) a woman of ill repute. Lightfoot suggests that she was Mary Magdalene, out of whom seven devils had been cast, perhaps some weeks earlier. Luke places the story imme-

diately after verse 35, *"wisdom is vindicated by all her children,"* presenting this woman as an example of someone who hears and responds to the divine law and thus receives forgiveness of sins. This is, of course, contrasted to Simon the Pharisee himself. The story begins in Luke 7:36, 37,

³⁶ Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him. And He entered the Pharisee's house, and reclined at the table. ³⁷ And behold, there was a woman in the city who was a sinner...

"The story does not tell us immediately that all of the usual courtesies were ignored when Jesus arrived. We are not told this detail until later in order to provide a progression of revelation that brings the story to a climax. Nonetheless, we may understand the tension in the atmosphere from the start. It is obvious that the Pharisee did not intend to honor Jesus, but to test Him publicly and prove to all present that He was not a prophet. So he was not friendly toward Jesus, but had called Him to dinner in order to grill Him over some point of law or to find some proof that He was not truly a prophet. Obviously, they resented Jesus' popularity and were jealous of Him.

"Simon the Pharisee had a name which meant "hearing/obeying" and so he ought to have lived up to his name. But it is obvious that he did not hear or obey the very law which he proudly upheld. By way of contrast, however, a "sinner" from the town—that is, a lady of ill repute—heard and obeyed, thus fulfilling the law.

"Kenneth Bailey comments about this opening scene from the perspective of Middle East culture: *"This scene is filled with tension introduced by what did not happen. As Jesus entered the house, all the traditional courtesies were omitted. Custom required a kiss of greeting, usually on the face. After the guests were seated on stools around the broad U-shaped dining couch, called a triclinium, water and olive oil would be brought for the washing of hands and feet. Only then could the grace be offered. Finally the guests would recline on the couch (or couches) and the meal would begin...."*

"To omit the entire list would be a calculated and pointed insult.... When these common acts of welcome were omitted, Jesus had the full right to say, 'I see that I am not welcome here!' and leave, flushed with anger. This is not the way He re-

sponded.” (*Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, pp. 242, 243)

“Jesus’ first response was to recline at the table. No greetings or small talk are mentioned prior to taking a seat at the table. In the culture of the day the eldest was to seat himself first, but Jesus was only about thirty. The Pharisee’s condescending attitude probably indicated that he was older. The implication, then, was that Jesus acted as the adult and sat down at the table first. This act only increases the tension in Luke’s story.

“In verse 37 the woman is introduced in the story as a “sinner,” who no doubt had heard Jesus’ words of love and forgiveness from some hidden place apart the townspeople. She had been greatly moved by His words, and so when she heard that He had been invited to the house of the Pharisee for dinner, she came as well and joined the crowd that had gathered in the background of the house to observe and hear what was said.

“We do not know if she personally witnessed the public insult or if she arrived later and heard about it from others, but it is plain that it broke her heart. So she did what she could to make up for Simon’s omissions. Luke 7:37, 38 continues with the woman’s actions:

³⁷ ... and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee’s house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, ³⁸ and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet, and anointing them with the perfume.

“In that culture, it was mandatory that a woman should cover her hair in public. Yet she let her hair down in order to wipe His feet. Obviously, when she had come to the house, she had assumed that Simon would honor Jesus. If she had planned ahead of time to anoint His feet, she would have brought a towel as well. Yet she had no towel, so she wiped His feet with her hair.

Kenneth Bailey informs us (page 248),

“The Mishnah lists the offenses that justify a man divorcing his wife without giving her a ketubah (a financial settlement). Among the items mentioned are, ‘If she goes out with her hair unbound, or spins in the street, or speaks with any man’... If going out ‘with her hair unbound’ would trigger such a personal and financial disaster, then clear-

ly such an act was considered an intolerable offense with dire consequences.”

“This woman washed Jesus’ feet as a bold act to make up for Simon’s inhospitable behavior. Yet Simon could not see beyond the woman’s bad reputation and how she was defiling Jesus by touching Him. In fact, if Simon had intended to honor Jesus, would he not have been alarmed by her action and moved quickly to have her removed from the house? But instead, not only does he allow her to continue, but uses the incident to justify his own insulting behavior. No doubt he viewed the situation with a certain amount of satisfaction, for it seemed to prove to all that Jesus was not a true prophet.

³⁹ Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that is a sinner.”

“The Pharisee thus satisfied himself that Jesus could not possibly be a prophet, for a prophet would never allow such a woman to touch Him. Simon and his Pharisee friends probably exchanged knowing looks, as if to say, “See, what did I tell you?” Jesus saw this in their eyes and responded with the parable...⁴⁰ **And Jesus answered and said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you...”**

“This phrase, says Kenneth Bailey, “is a classical Middle Eastern idiom that introduces blunt speech that the listener may not want to hear.”

⁴⁰ ... And he replied, “Say it, Teacher.” ⁴¹ “A certain moneylender [banker] had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him more?” ⁴³ Simon answered and said, “I suppose the one whom he forgave more.” And He said to him, “You have judged correctly.”

“In Scripture, all sin is reckoned as a debt, because the law judges sinners by making them pay restitution directly proportional to the loss of their victims. Hence, a sin of theft normally requires double restitution (Exodus 22:4) in order to be forgiven in the eyes of the law. Jesus’ parable here employs the same “debt” theme as found in the parable of Matthew 18:22-35, where the man owing 10,000 “talents” was forgiven his debt.

“The obvious message that Jesus was conveying was that Simon and his friends owed God fifty denarii (or dinars) for their sins, while the woman owed God five hundred. Both were forgiven (including Simon), but the woman loved Jesus more.

“Only then do we get the full impact of the story. Only now are we informed of Simon’s lack of social amenities, which reveal the real reason why he had invited Jesus to dinner. Luke 7:44-47 lists three items contrasting Simon with the actions of this “sinner”:

⁴⁴ And turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. ⁴⁶ You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. ⁴⁷ For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.

”One can always tell the difference between a sinner and a Pharisee. It is not so much a difference between their acts, but of pride or humility. A Pharisee is willing to point out the faults of “sinners” in order to elevate himself in the eyes of his peers. Both are forgiven, but a sinner, having found forgiveness and rest, has a much deeper love for Jesus Christ.

“Of course, no one should deliberately go out and sin in order to learn humility, for that would defeat the lesson. People might then become as proud of their sin as they had been of their righteousness. But if they try hard to be righteous, yet fall, then their weakness is exposed, and they have opportunity to learn humility.

“The woman in Luke’s story needed no reminder that she was a sinner. The community, no doubt, constantly reminded her of this. So Jesus felt no need to extract any confession from her, nor any promise of future good behavior. [Luke 7:48](#) says,

⁴⁸ And He said to her, “Your sins have been forgiven.”

Jesus recognized her faith and her love. He saw her heart and needed nothing further before telling her that she had received full forgiveness.

⁴⁹ And those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, “Who is this man who even forgives sins?” ⁵⁰ And He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

“The other people at the table were, no doubt fellow Pharisees in Simon’s circle of friends. Simon was only “*one of the Pharisees*” ([Luke 7:36](#)). Like Simon, they had all conspired to trap Jesus in order to prove He was a false prophet. Because this heart idol already ruled their hearts, the lesson of love, faith, and forgiveness was lost on them. They made no comment about Jesus’ parable and showed no remorse for their insulting behavior. They could only continue in their criticism. But Jesus went about His business of extending forgiveness to those whose hearts had already received the truth and had responded with love.

“This is Luke’s example of how wisdom is justified by her children.” JRL

An angry man stirreth up strife, a furious man aboundeth in transgressioun. Prov. 29:22

A STUDY OF THE BABYLONIAN SYSTEM

Nations, or kingdoms, have developed and become more sophisticated since Nimrod and Babel. Assyria represents the progression of the man-system that we saw beginning to form under Nimrod. It is natural for us to think of nations when we look at history, but what we want to look at in this study is this man-system. It is a system that resides in the hearts of men. It is not exclusive to any nation as we find elements of this system in all nations. However, Biblically, it will appear to be nationally oriented for a reason that we will discuss shortly, but the important thing for us to learn and understand is the elements of this system that most or all of us have or will participate in, on purpose or involuntarily. When I say that Assyria represents the progression of this system, it is primarily because of their idolatrous religion. I have stated in the past that for any nation or such entity to exist it has to have three primary systems within the overall structure of their government. They have to have a religious system, and economic system, and a political system. Of course people and land are necessary but without any one of three systems the nation or entity cannot continue to exist.

Assyria had once been a part of the Babylonian kingdom, but had thrown off the shackles of dependency on Babylonia having rebelled and overcome Babylonia. At the time of Assyria's captivity of Israel and a major portion of Judah, Assyria was the dominant power in the then known world. While Ashur was the primary god of the Assyrians, at one time or the other they worshipped at least nineteen other gods. It is from idolatrous worship that much of the elements of this man-system that put in opposition to God have been derived. It is not the gods themselves that are the problem, but the general principle of idol worship. Assyria's government was a monarchy with a progression of very strong kings.

Israel and the portion of Judah that were taken into captivity by the Assyrians disappeared from Biblical history with the exception of the prophecies and promises that tell us that they did not cease to be a people, but rather were to appear

later in history to accomplish the purpose God had for them. The remainder of Judah continued to exist in Biblical history until Babylon once again became the dominant power in the Mesopotamian area.

The capital city of Babylonia was Babylon. This was not a mean city. It was the center of learning and innovation. Much of the math and science we know today was discovered by scientists of Babylonia. It was also well known for its arts. It was a very prosperous city. At its height, it was known for its fortifications, its hanging gardens, and its beautiful buildings.

Astrology was born in Babylonia and as one source I read said, it became the mother of astronomy. Much of the superstitions and worship of the sun, moon, and the stars that arose from astrology have been retained over the centuries in different forms to become a large part of the man-system that we are studying.

As part of the Babylonian domination of the Mesopotamian area, again turning to Biblical history, we see Babylon taking what was left of Judah, primarily the city of Jerusalem and surrounding area, into captivity and placing them throughout the Babylonian Empire. It is from the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel that we learn much about Babylon and the founding of its empire. It is from I & II Kings and I & II Chronicles and Jeremiah and Ezekiel that we learn the events of the actual captivity itself.

Just prior to the beginning of the captivities, Josiah was king of Judah. For the most part he was a righteous king. He had three sons Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah. At this point, Josiah still retained the right and responsibility to rule that had been part of the birthright that Jacob divided giving the scepter responsibilities to Judah. Again, this was manifested in King David of whom Josiah was a direct descendant. Josiah died in battle and his son Jehoahaz took the throne. He reigned three months when the king of Egypt deposed him and imposed a tax on Judah of 100 talents of silver and 1 talent of gold. The king of Egypt took Jehoahaz to Egypt and put his brother Jehoiakim on the throne in Jerusalem. Jehoiakim reigned for eleven years, but he was an evil king. King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon came against Jerusalem and bound Jehoiakim with the intent of taking him back to Babylon, but Jehoiakim apparently died before he could be taken to

Babylon. Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin, was put on the throne at the age of eight, but he too was evil and Nebuchadnezzar sent and had him brought to Babylon along with many of the vessels of the temple. Nebuchadnezzar then put Zedekiah on the throne where he reigned for eleven years. At the end of the eleven years Nebuchadnezzar came back to Jerusalem and destroyed the temple and the city and killed all of Zedekiah's sons and put Zedekiah's eyes out and took him to Babylon. The royal line that God recognized was Josiah, Jehoiakim, and Jehoiachin, but God cursed Jehoiakim (Jer. 36:30) saying that he would have none to sit on the throne of David. The reason was because Jehoiakim openly defied God. Jer. 36 tells us the story. But this meant that Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim's son could not sit on the throne which probably accounted for his being on the throne only three months. However God reinforced this curse as it applied to Jehoiachin in Jer. 22:30, **"Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David and ruling anymore in Judah."** Quoting from "God's Plan and Purpose for all Mankind": *This apparently meant that no seed of Jehoiachin was to sit upon the throne of David, because we know that Jehoiachin, did indeed have children (See I Chron. 3:17 and Matt. 1:12). However, keep in mind also that Jesus Christ descends from this man and that this curse would also apply to Him. We will need to later find an explanation as to how Jesus Christ can reign from David's throne in light of it.* The point I want to make is that the dominion mandate that was given to Adam seems to have run into a block wall. With this in mind we need to turn to the book of Daniel.

In Daniel 2, we read that King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that bothered him greatly, but the problem was that when he went to his magicians and astrologers for an interpretation he couldn't remember the dream to tell them what it was. It disturbed him so much that he was threatening to kill all of the magicians, astrologers, and wise men if they could not interpret the dream for him. Hearing of this, a young man named Daniel, of those who were taken captive from Jerusalem, went before the king and asked permission to interpret the dream for him. The king granted him permission. So Daniel went before God and God revealed the dream to him and the interpretation.

First, Daniel revealed the dream to the king in Daniel 2:31-35, **"Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."** Starting in vs. 37 Daniel gives the interpretation, **"Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdoeth all things: and as iron subdoeth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Forasmuch as thou sawest**

the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.”

This dream is very important for us to understand how this man-system continues to develop. We need to understand that the dominion mandate has been temporarily removed from the Davidic line of kings through the curse on Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin and as vs. 38 tells us, it has been given by God to Nebuchadnezzar and the kings following him in Babylon and then to the inferior kingdoms (the silver, the brass, and the iron kingdoms) that were to follow the kingdom of Babylon. While there will be other kingdoms come and go, some subservient to these four kingdoms, some not, but these kingdoms and their influence will determine the character of this man-system that I am going to call the Babylonian System from here on. The Babylonian Empire gave way to the Persian Empire which in turn gave way to the Greek Empire which then became a part of the Roman Empire. Of course, the fifth kingdom, the stone kingdom is the kingdom of God. It is important to note that even though each of these kingdoms were defeated by the succeeding kingdom the image remained intact until the stone kingdom destroyed it. This is part of the reason I want to call it a system, it isn't just one nation, but rather is an entity comprised of the influence of all of these kingdoms through the ages that were to follow. We will discuss this more later.

All of this is in accordance with God's plan for the nations. That God gave Nebuchadnezzar dominion over all the earth is confirmed in Jer. 27:5-7: **I have made the earth, the man and beast that are up on the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him.**

I can hear the question, "Why would God do something like this? Would it not have been

better to cause Israel and Judah to come to agreement with God? Here we have to understand the sovereignty of God and it is my position that we need to understand the whole plan. When I first realized this and began to really study with this thought in mind I was amazed at how the plan is carefully laid out in God's Holy Word. We can't pick and choose from the Scriptures to see this plan however. But God has a purpose in temporarily giving dominion to these pagan nations as they will play a major role in giving God the glory in the end.

We need to look at the character of these four kingdoms to see how the conglomerate influence of all four nations produce the Babylonian System we know today. Some of this knowledge will come from Scripture and some from secular history. Daniel 7, in effect, gives us a summary of these characteristics in his introduction to four beasts that I believe we will see represents the leadership of these four empires represented in the metal image. Revelation 13 then shows us that these four beasts became one beast with the characteristics of all four. We will discuss these beasts more shortly, but before we go there, let's first look at some of the characteristics of Babylon we find in Daniel's record of the events in Babylon. We have already mentioned the idol worship religion of Babylon and the fact that astrology was born in Babylonia. Many of the gods worshipped were gods of celestial entities such as the sun, the moon, and the star formations. As we said before, astrology was the mother of astronomy. Astronomy is a legitimate science studying the celestial entities, their placements and the patterns of their movements. Psalms 19 tells us that the gospel is spelled out by the stars. Vs. 1 says, **"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.** Astrology, as we have said, is the worship of these entities. We might say we don't worship these entities, yet how many people believe in their horoscope? This is but one example. It is important that we recognize the difference between Astrology and Astronomy.

We have a very interesting story in Daniel 3, the drama of which has often detracted us from some information that we need to know. This is the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego being thrown into the fiery furnace. Vs. 1 & 2 tells us, **Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image**

of gold, whose height was threescore cubits and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.” Then in vs. 4-6 we’re told, “Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar hath set up: And whoso falleth not down and worshipping shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.” We all know the rest of the story, that these three friends of Daniel’s, refused to bow down and worship the image and were cast into the fiery furnace. This furnace was probably the furnace that was used to heat the gold casting it into the image. We all love the romance of how these three men survived this ordeal without even the hair of their heads being singed. But the important point we need to consider is that first, this was not a religious gathering and second, the people were required to worship gold. The worship of gold and/or wealth probably had its real beginning here and has continued through the centuries becoming a major part of the economic system of man or the Babylonian System. The apostle Paul told Timothy in his first letter to him in chapter 6:10, “**For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**” Love can certainly be considered a form of worship, especially in the secular sense Paul is using here. JRL

God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us: Selah.

- 2 *That thy way may be known upon the earth, thy saving health among all nations*
- 3 *Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.*
- 4 *O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon the earth. Selah.*
- 5 *Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.*
- 6 *Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us.*
- 7 *God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him. Psalms 67*