

The Lesson of the Body of Moses

James Smyda

Recorded on December 14, 2024

Brethren, most of you are probably familiar with the fact that the New Testament includes a small book called the Book of Jude. It's a rather brief book. It's only about one chapter, and you probably don't turn to it very often because, again, there's not a whole lot there. But God did inspire this to be included in scripture. And in writing this one chapter, Jude makes kind of a side comment. It's not the main point he's making, but he makes a side reference to a dispute that happened between Satan and the archangel Michael, and he says that this dispute was about the body of Moses.

And again, it's kind of a side reference because it's not the main point he's focused on. But what we're going to do today is kind of dig into that reference to see what that was about and, more importantly, the lesson that that teaches us that we can apply in our Christian lives today. Because what we're going to see is if we dig into this and understand the context and what that was probably about, there's an important moral to the story. You know, a lesson that we can apply in our lives today that's very relevant for us. So, if you'd like a title for this sermon, it's

The Lesson of the Body of Moses

So, to start off with, let's turn over to the Book of Jude. It's the book right before the Book of Revelation. As I mentioned, it's only one chapter. So, you probably don't turn there a whole lot. But again, it's just right before the Book of Revelation. We're going to start reading in verse 8.

Jude 8 *"Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. 9) Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'"* (NKJV)

As you can see here, obviously the mention of the body of Moses is not the main point he's making. He's really focusing more on how Michael handled himself in this exchange between him and Satan. That's his main point. But obviously this whole dispute between them came about somehow regarding the body of Moses. Now, the Book of Jude doesn't elaborate on this any further or give us any more details to tell us exactly what this is about. And as we're going to see here, the Bible never explicitly explains more about this particular dispute.

But if we look more into the subject in general, I think we can pretty easily come to a very logical conclusion of most likely what this was about and what the lesson is that we can learn from it. Because again, we have to ask why would Satan be interested in the body of Moses? What could that be about? Well, there's another important clue. If we look over in the book of Deuteronomy, if you turn over to Deuteronomy 34, we'll see a

reference here that gives us some insight as to why Satan might be particularly interested in the body of Moses.

Deu 34:5 *“So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. 6) And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day.”* (NKJV)

Now, just to give you the backstory behind this, and we'll actually look at the account in Numbers here a little bit later today in this sermon. There was a point in working with Israel and their journey of their wandering around in the wilderness where Moses didn't fully follow God's instructions. When God told him specifically what He wanted him to do, but Moses kind of veered off from exactly what God told him to do, and he gets punished for it. And part of his punishment was that he wouldn't make it into the promised land. He would get up to the edge of it, and all the rest of Israel would cross the Jordan and go into the promised land, and he would die outside the promised land and be buried there. And that's what this is referring to here as to why God is burying him and everybody else has left.

But notice here, it specifically says no one knows where his grave is to this day. In other words, God made a point of concealing where his body was buried. Now, again, we're going to connect some dots here that the Bible doesn't explicitly say. Satan has a very clear track record of whatever God is doing, whatever His purpose is, well, Satan is in opposition to it. That's a pretty easy case to make. Whatever God's objectives are or what He's standing for, Satan's trying to interrupt it and fight against it. That's a very clear trend in the Bible.

So, if God was wanting to conceal where Moses' body was, obviously, Satan would want to do the opposite. He would want to find out where it was and make that public knowledge. Well, why would God make a point of concealing where Moses' body was? Because we can clearly see from the Bible why Moses wasn't able to enter the promised land. The Bible explicitly lays that out for us and explains it. So, we know why he died there while the rest of Israel moved on and went into the promised land.

But why hide where Moses' body was so that no one would know where it was at?

Well, again, the Bible doesn't explicitly state this, but if we just look at Israel's history of idol worship and of idolatry in general, it's pretty easy to put together a picture of most likely why this would be the case. Because if we look at Israel's history of really wanting to look to Moses to the exclusion of God. You know, looking at Moses as if he is the one that led them out of Egypt. Not just as God's physical tool but giving him credit for it and kind of pushing God out of the picture. You see that history, and not only that history, but their history of literally making images and idols to worship. That's a theme throughout Israel's history of falling back into idolatry.

Once you understand that context, it's easy to understand then why God would want them not to have access to Moses' remains. Because they would be inclined to take his

remains and make an idol out of it. And just to kind of show you this trend, turn over to Exodus 32. This is the famous golden calf incident here in Exodus 32. We oftentimes just think of the idolatry as the golden image. You know, the calf that they made, and they wanted to bow down and worship. And that is blatant idolatry. But I want you to notice in particular as we read through this that God is not even in the equation here in the eyes of the Israelites. Because in their minds, they're replacing Moses with the golden calf. God is not even in the equation at all from the standpoint of how they're thinking. Now, start off here in Exodus 32 and verse 1.

Ex 32:1 *"Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, 'Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'"* (NKJV)

Now, notice that they're giving Moses credit for bringing them out of Egypt. Now, obviously he's the physical instrument that God used as their leader. But repeatedly throughout the Bible, God identifies Himself as "I am the God who brought you out of Egypt". He makes it very clear. "I did this. Moses was my tool, but I did this. I parted the Red Sea. I rained down manna from heaven. I did all these miracles." That's who really did this. "Moses was just My tool." But they're seeing Moses as he's the one that brought us out of Egypt.

Moses has gone up to the mountain at this point to meet with God and we don't know how long he was gone. The Bible doesn't say explicitly how long he was gone. But obviously it's longer than the people were expecting. So, now, he's gone longer than they're expecting and they're kind of getting frustrated and giving up and now they want to replace Moses with an idol. Notice that God is not even in the picture in their minds. Continue on in verse 2 here.

Ex 32:2 *"And Aaron said to them, 'Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.' 3) So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. 4) And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!' 5) So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, 'Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.'"* (NKJV)

See, now he's making up fake Holy Days is what he's doing.

"6) Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 7) And the LORD said to Moses, 'Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. 8) They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made

themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!' ” (NKJV)

Now, notice, as I mentioned, from the perspective of the Israelites, God is not even in the equation. Because in their minds, they're replacing Moses with the idol. God's not even in the picture because notice also the way God words it talking to Moses. “YOUR people who YOU – “you” being Moses -- brought out of Egypt”. They're rebelling. God identifies Himself numerous times in the Bible as “I am the God who brought you out of Egypt”. But He's wording this in accordance with how the people are thinking. Because they're seeing Moses as if they've pushed God out of the picture and Moses has basically become an idol to them.

And this is a trend you'll see throughout Israel's history, you know, throughout this whole time. If you just pay attention to some of the accounts here and their wording, they literally look to Moses as the one who brought them out of Egypt. They're not just acknowledging that he's the physical tool that God's working with, but their giving Moses credit and pushing God out of the picture. Turn over to Exodus 17. We're going to look at a couple of examples of this. Exodus 17, we'll start reading in verse 1.

Ex 17:1 *“Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink. 2) Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, “Give us water, that we may drink.” So Moses said to them, “Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the LORD?” 3) And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, “Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” (NKJV)*

Notice they're saying, why have YOU -- you meaning Moses -- brought us out here, out of Egypt? God's not in the picture in their mind.

“4) So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!” 5) And the LORD said to Moses, “Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. 6) Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7) So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?” (NKJV)

But notice again that focus on Moses and “YOU brought us out of Egypt”. They're really looking to him, oftentimes pushing God out of the picture. And this is a common theme throughout their history of looking to a man -- their physical leader -- and kind of just pushing God out of the picture.

And to see another example of this turn over to Numbers 20. As we read through this, not only will we see here another example of Israel really looking to Moses as if he solely brought them out of Egypt and God's kind of not in the picture. But this is also the account I mentioned earlier when we were looking at Deuteronomy 34. I said there was a point where Moses didn't fully follow God's instructions, and as a result, he got punished and was not allowed to go into the promised land. Well, this is the particular account where that happens. This is Numbers 20, and we'll start in verse 1.

Num 20:1 *"Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the Wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh; and Miriam died there and was buried there. 2) Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron. 3) And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: 'If only we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! 4) Why have you brought up the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here? 5) And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink.'"* (NKJV)

Now notice once again, it's YOU – Moses -- who brought us up out of Egypt. Again, God identifies himself numerous times in the Bible as "I am the God who brought you out of Egypt". But notice in the people's minds -- the people of Israel -- very often they're looking to Moses as he's the one that brought us out of Egypt. You see, it's really just kind of pushing God out of the picture. Picking up in verse 6.

"6) So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of the LORD appeared to them. 7) Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 8) 'Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals.' 9) So Moses took the rod from before the LORD as He commanded him. 10) And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, 'Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?' 11) Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank. 12) Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.' 13) This was the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the LORD, and He was hallowed among them." (NKJV)

So, notice again, this is the event where Moses doesn't fully follow God's instructions like He told him to. And his punishment is he's not going to be able to go into the promised land. That's why we saw there in Deuteronomy 34, all of Israel had already moved on to enter the promised land and Moses is there alone and he dies there

outside the promised land and God buries him and conceals where his body is.

But as you can see here, Israel has a consistent track record of looking to Moses and kind of pushing God out of the picture. Even though they saw the dramatic miracles. They saw the plagues in Egypt. They saw the Red Sea parted. They're being fed with food that falls from the sky six days a week. And magically on day six there's twice as much and on day seven there's none, and then this cycle just keeps very consistently repeating. It should be obvious to them of God's presence here and Moses couldn't be pulling this off by himself.

But being carnal physical human beings, they're oftentimes kind of forgetting about God and just focusing on their physical leader. And this is something that the Israelites did literally from the very beginning. What I'm referring to is even at Mount Sinai when they're making the covenant with God. When God's presence is undeniable. I mean, they're seeing the dramatic display at Mount Sinai with all the thunder and lightnings and the booming voice coming from the mountain, and it's very obvious that God's presence is right there. They're literally afraid of this and they're like, "Moses, you just go talk to Him. We prefer dealing with you. God is too scary. We don't want to deal with Him." See, the entire time they're preferring to deal with their physical leader, and they push God out of the picture. Turn over to Exodus 20 and we'll briefly look at this. It's Exodus 20 and we'll look at verse 18.

Ex 20:18 *"Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. 19) Then they said to Moses, 'You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.' 20) And Moses said to the people, 'Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.' 21) So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was."* (NKJV)

So, notice from the very beginning, even when God is personally there speaking, and all the people can hear it and know of His presence. They see these dramatic miracles taking place and this unmistakable display. It's very obvious Moses can't fake any of this. So, there's obviously this real God involved here. Even then they're like, "Let's push Him away. Let's just deal with Moses. Let's just deal with our physical leader." See, this was the problem. And as we're going to see here, this is the lesson of the body of Moses.

Because I kind of asked at the beginning of this sermon, "What can we learn from this for our lives today?" Because we're carnal physical human beings as well. And as we're going to see later in this sermon, this has been something consistent throughout the history of mankind. That carnal tendency that we want to look to our physical leaders and kind of forget about God and kind of push Him out of the picture and kind of make an idol out of our physical leaders. We don't have to go to the extent of making a literal idol like a golden calf and bowing down to it. We can commit idolatry in more subtle ways, but again, it's still the same type of thing.

But you can see with Israel's history -- and just that natural human tendency of wanting to do that -- why Moses in particular would be an individual that they would want to hold up and potentially make an idol out of. Why God would want to go to such an extent to make sure his remains are not accessible, so they don't make an idol out of it. Because not only was Moses their physical leader, and carnal human beings can have a tendency to try to make our physical leader an idol, Moses played a very unique role. Not only was he the guy that worked with them through the Exodus. He's the guy that goes up to the mountain and gets the Ten Commandments and comes down with the plates. So, you can see in this unique role that he played why he in particular would be someone that they might make an idol out of.

And just to briefly look at this, turn over to Deuteronomy 34, because we'll see here that there's this kind of unique role in comparison to other servants of God that Moses played. But we're also going to look at a particular statement that's made here about Moses' unique relationship with God that oftentimes gets misunderstood, and some false concepts get created as a result of it. And this is Deuteronomy 34, in verse 9.

Deu 34:9 *“Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses. 10) But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,”* (NKJV)

Now, we're going to come back to that statement, because that's often misunderstood. But just continue on in verse 11.

“11) in all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, 12) and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.” (NKJV)

So, you can see here in this unique role that Moses fulfilled even compared with other major servants of God that He utilized. Moses of all people, if they're going to hold up a physical leader, and kind of make an idol out of him, Moses would be a top pick for that.

But now let's notice again this comment that Yehovah knew Moses “face to face”. Because an important thing to understand what this statement means here is we have to remember the Bible was not written in English. The reason I say that is because when we use the term in English today, in our common language when we say “face to face”, we're normally referring to a conversation where one person is standing directly in front of the other and they're looking into each other's eyes and having a conversation.

To illustrate that point, think of it in terms of a phone conversation. Even long before our modern technology of the internet and things like Skype and Zoom where you can still be looking at someone but not be in the same room, we've had telephones all of my life where you can have a direct conversation and it's a real time, two-way conversation with someone. But we typically would never refer to that as “face to face”. And the

reason being is because we can't see each other's faces. We're not looking into each other's eyes. We may be having a real time interactive conversation with each other, but we typically wouldn't use the term "face to face" because it doesn't meet our definition of how we typically use that phrase. But let's keep in mind, the Bible was not written in English. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and we have to understand that the Hebrew phrase, as we're going to see here in a minute, doesn't require the meaning of how we narrowly use the phrase "face to face" in English.

Now, turn over to Numbers 12, we'll see another reference here where it specifically tells us that Moses was unique. It's going to use this term "face to face", but it's going to give us a little more insight as to how to interpret that. So, turn over to Numbers 12 and we're going to kind of jump into a context here, because the greater story of what's happening in these verses, Miriam and Aaron were questioning Moses particularly over his marriage to an Ethiopian woman. You can see from God's response to this that they're really overstepping their bounds in where they're going with their questioning of him. And God winds up scolding Miriam and Aaron as a result. But let's just jump into the story here in verse 5 and notice some of the comments that God makes about His unique relationship with Moses because He's going to use this term "face to face" again. But let's just notice the context of what it's contrasted with. That gives us a little more insight as to what He's getting at here. This is in Numbers 12 and verse 5.

Num 12:5 *"Then the LORD came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward. ⁶ Then He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. ⁷) Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. ⁸) I speak with him face to face,..."* (NKJV)

Again, that same "face to face" comment.

"...Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?" (NKJV)

Now just notice here that "face to face" is contrasted with dark sayings and dreams and visions. Now again, we're going to see a comment here later in a minute in Exodus 33 where God makes it very clear. He refers to His relationship with Moses being "face to face", but we're going to see the account very clearly says God tells him "You can't see My face". So, obviously, He's not referring to looking into the whites of each other's eyes the way we typically refer to "face to face" or that comment wouldn't be made.

Notice here the contrast. The contrast is dreams and visions. That's a way that God can communicate His will to someone or give them instructions. But if you're having an inspired dream, that's kind of a one way communication. That's not "as a man speaks with his friend". "As a man speaks with his friend", that's a two way conversation. Just think about how we communicate with God today. God communicates with us through the Bible, you know, through His word. If we're willing to study it, we can perceive His

will there. We pray to Him, and we have conversations speaking to Him, but it's not like "a man speaks to his friend". He doesn't sit down in front of us and then speak back to us. He can inspire our thoughts through His Spirit and He can show us His will through His word. But it's not like "as a man speaks with his friend".

And to just further clarify this, turn over to Deuteronomy 4 because what we're going to look at here is another account of the Mount Sinai experience where they received the Ten Commandments. But what I want you to notice here is a couple of things. We're going to see in chapter 4 a description of what Israel experienced there at Mount Sinai and it's going to go into great detail to explain to us that God purposely made sure that the Israelites saw no visual representation of what God looked like at all.

And it's going to directly tell us that the reason He did that was because He knew because of their history in Egypt. It was a very idol worshipping culture of making images and bowing down and worshipping them. He knew with them coming from that background that if they saw any kind of visual representation, they would naturally make an idol out of it and they would bow down to it. And He didn't want to allow them to do that. So, He purposely made sure that they didn't see any image at all.

And we're about to read that and then we're going to notice in the next chapter that it refers to this exchange as talking to them "face to face". Well, he obviously wasn't meaning that they were looking into each other's eyes as we use it today because that wouldn't be possible. So, just to cover this, let's start off in Deuteronomy 4 and we'll start reading in verse 9.

Deu 4:9 *"Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren, 10) especially concerning the day you stood before the LORD your God in Horeb, when the LORD said to me, "Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children." (NKJV)*

Now, notice it comments about what their eyes have seen. Let's just keep reading and notice what their eyes actually saw.

"11) "Then you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the midst of heaven, with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness. 12) And the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice." (NJKV)

Notice their eyes didn't see any visual representation of God whatsoever.

"13) So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone. 14) And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that

you might observe them in the land which you cross over to possess. 15) "Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire," (NKJV)

Notice in the next verse here it's going to tell us explicitly why they saw no form. Why He did not allow that.

"16) lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, 17) the likeness of any animal that is on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, 18) the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that is in the water beneath the earth. 19) And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage." (NKJV)

So, notice He specifically made a point of not allowing them to see any visual representation of Him whatsoever. And the specific reason for that was because He knew, because of their idolatrous history, their history of making images and then bowing down and worshiping those images, that's what they would do. That that was their track record, and He was preventing this. But now let's notice in chapter 5 how this exchange is described. Because again, we just read in detail that they saw no visual representation of God whatsoever. They saw the fire. They saw the dramatic display of the thunder, the thick clouds and all of this. But they heard a voice, but they saw no visual image. But now notice how chapter 5 describes this. This is chapter 5, in verse 1.

Deu 5:1 *"And Moses called all Israel, and said to them: "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them. 2) The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. 3) The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive. 4) The LORD talked with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire. 5) I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up the mountain." (NKJV)*

From the description it's very obvious we're referring to the same account that took place in Exodus 20. But we just read in chapter 4 of Deuteronomy, they didn't see any visual image or any representation of God whatsoever. Yet it's referred to as what? As "face to face". See, that's because "face to face" in Hebrew -- the Hebrew wording there -- doesn't carry the same specific meaning of how we use the English phrase "face to face".

Now, I'm not going to go into the meaning of all the Hebrew words here. If you want to study that in greater detail. If you go to my website, it's SearchingTheScriptures.org. If you're watching this on YouTube, just look below this video. You'll see a little finger kind

of icon there. It says, "For Further Study", and it gives you the URL to the website. You can just click on that link, and it'll take you straight there. There's a study paper there. It's titled "Hearing and Seeing God", and it goes into this whole subject in a lot more detail. It'll take you through the actual Hebrew words and their meaning and break this down in more detail than what I'm going to cover today. What I want you to see here is that we can't just assume because the English translation of this uses the term "face to face", and we in common English today, when we refer to a "face to face" conversation, well, we're looking into each other's eyes, is what that means. We can't assume when we see that in the Bible, that it carries that exact meaning. And that even applies to Moses.

And let's turn over to Exodus 33, and we can see where we can prove that conclusively. Because again, we've noticed that Moses has this very unique relationship with God. It states this numerous times. And one of the things it states about what makes him unique is this "face to face" interaction with God. But let's just notice some details here that we can know for sure, it's not referring to seeing the face of God. This is Exodus 33 in verse 11.

Ex 33:11 *"So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle."* (NKJV)

Again, Moses is unique because of the "face to face" interaction. But now let's just jump over to verse 18, and read a few verses here. We're going to see it specifically tells us God would not allow him to see His face. So obviously, "face to face" as it's translated here, carries a different meaning than we typically assume and how we typically use that English phrase today. This is in verse 18.

Ex 33:18 *"And he said, 'Please, show me Your glory.' 19) Then He said, 'I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.' 20) But He said, 'You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.' 21) And the LORD said, 'Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. 22) So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. 23) Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.'" (NKJV)*

So, notice it's very clear here. We can obviously conclude from this, when it refers to "face to face", it's not a saying that Moses looked into God's eyes, and they were looking into the whites of each other's eyes the way we would typically use the term "face to face" today. Now, the reason I clarify that is because that phrase is oftentimes used for people to conclude, "Well, see, the God being that Moses talked to, well, that has to be Christ. It can't be God the Father because they talked "face to face", and you can't see the face of God the Father." Well, that's true, you can't see the face of God the Father. But it also says here the God being he was talking to wouldn't allow him to see

His face. So, "face to face" doesn't carry the meaning we typically apply to it. I just wanted to clarify that detail because again, it speaks to Moses's unique relationship.

But as we started off in this sermon, we kind of asked the question, what is the lesson of the body of Moses? We saw that God purposely buried Moses's body and didn't allow others to know where it was. Again, the Bible doesn't explicitly tell us this particular fact, but if we put the puzzle together. It never directly states that He did this so that they would not make an idol out of him. But again, if we just look at their history, it's not a hard conclusion to come to because they had a long history of holding up Moses and kind of looking at Moses as he's the one who brought us out of Egypt. He's the guy that's done all of this and God's just kind of not in the picture.

Even at the golden calf incident, what are they doing? They're replacing Moses with the golden calf. God's not even in the equation. So, you can see with all that Moses did and the major role he played, the unique role that even God Himself says that he played compared to other servants. If Israel's going to make an idol out of a physical leader, Moses is a prime candidate for that to happen. So, you can see why that would be the case.

It's easy for us in our modern day culture to look at that, because it's not common for us today to make a golden calf and to worship it. We typically immediately identify that as idolatry and something we wouldn't want to be involved in. But we shouldn't be so quick to assume that we would never fall into idolatry like that. We would never do what those people back in the Bible did. We're better than that. Because we can also take individuals or organizations -- as we're going to see -- and kind of accomplish the same thing. Because if you think back in the history of the Church of God, just in my lifetime, in our lifetimes, if there is an individual that would be kind of analogous, we might say to Moses. In other words, kind of a prime leader. If you're going to make an idol out of somebody who that would be? That would be most likely to be Herbert Armstrong.

And the reason I say that is, and again, I'm just kind of using a loose analogy here. But from Israel's point of view, kind of what starts them off from a physical perspective with their whole covenant relationship with God. Moses is the physical leader that they experienced through all of that. Well, most of us in the Church of God organizations today, kind of the greater Church of God as you might refer to it as. Most of us kind of trace our roots back through the Worldwide Church of God and the physical leader that founded the organization was Herbert Armstrong.

I can remember as a kid growing up in the Church that we all kind of firmly tended to believe that, well, obviously, Mr. Armstrong, he had to live to the very end for Christ to come. We just couldn't fathom the idea that somebody else would be leading the Church when Christ returned. Well, then 1986 rolled around and Mr. Armstrong died. And I can remember after that and even the years after that, there were even individuals who promoted a theory that they had kind of come up with that Mr. Armstrong was going to be physically resurrected and come back to lead the Church. They weren't referring to the idea of Mr. Armstrong being in the resurrection of the Firstfruits that the

Bible talks about and being included in the resurrection to eternal life. That's not what they were referring to.

They had developed a theory in their minds that, well, of course, Mr. Armstrong had to be the physical leader leading the Church at the end time. So, God just had to bring him back physically and continue that on. It's like it never dawned on them that if God could only use Mr. Armstrong to lead the Church, wouldn't He have kept him alive and not allowed him to die? Obviously, He was done with whatever He intended Herbert Armstrong to do by virtue of the fact that He let him die?

Well, there were others that didn't hold on to kind of crazier theories like that, but in their mind, they canonized everything Mr. Armstrong ever taught. It was like every opinion, every point of view, every speculation he ever had. Well, that was just equal with scripture. And it wasn't just acknowledging that the core of the truth that we learned, we kind of learned through his ministry and his teaching, which was true. But they kind of stopped even practicing what Mr. Armstrong himself said. Because he was famous for saying, "Don't believe me. Believe your Bible." In other words, listen to what I say, but compare it to your Bible. And if it matches, well, then great, accept that and follow it. And if it doesn't match, well, you should reject it. Because the Bible is the standard we should compare against.

Well, what happened was a lot of people kind of canonized everything he ever said. And there were even organizations that formed in the early years, they're out of the breakup of Worldwide. I remember looking back at some of their publications and I would read through it, and they would be quoting Mr. Armstrong's books and literature. Sometimes more often than they quoted the Bible. They had literally kind of taken a physical individual and kind of made him an idol to the point of kind of pushing God and His word out of the picture.

So, see, we in our world today can really do the same thing that ancient Israel did. We may not make a golden idol and bow down to it, but we can be guilty of idolatry and kind of falling into the same pitfalls because we have the same carnal human nature. We're influenced by the same Satan. We have the same weaknesses. It might manifest itself in a little different way, but those same tendencies exist because we're going to see here it's always been a trend throughout the history of mankind to want to look to physical leaders, physical organizations, and just pushing God out of the equation.

Because if you turn over to the Book of Mark, we'll see how Christ kind of dealt with this in His time. Because oftentimes some of the debates He would get into with the Pharisees of His time, their issue with Him really wasn't based around trying to allege that Christ was violating scripture. They were really quoting what they called the "tradition of the elders". To kind of make it analogous to our time, we don't tend to use the phrase the "tradition of the elders". What we'll say in the modern day Church of God is "what I've always been taught" or "what the Church has always taught", and we kind of hang on to that in the exact same way.

Start reading here in Mark 7 in verse 1. We'll see here an exchange that plays out between Christ and the Pharisees. Notice that they're saying, "You're violating our tradition". Because the culture they were coming from, it was common and even common today in Rabbinical Judaism to say, "Rabbi So-and-so taught this" and "Rabbi So-and-so taught that". They debate what the Rabbis say. But they'll literally hold that up higher in value and stronger than scripture itself and it kind of becomes an idol. Because now they're holding up men and the opinions of men and pushing scripture aside. So, start reading here in Mark 7 in verse 1.

Mark 7:1 *"Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. 2) Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. 3) For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders."* (NKJV)

Notice this is not a concept that you'll find in scripture at all. This was just their tradition. But their tradition had become so ingrained that they're literally pushing scripture aside and holding up their tradition. Because you're going to see here when Christ responds to this, He points out to them how they're ignoring what's really in scripture and they're clinging to their tradition which has no basis in scripture. Continuing in verse 4.

"4) When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. 5) Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" (NKJV)

And notice their issue with Him is not about scripture. It's not scripture says this and you're doing the opposite. It's you're violating our tradition. So, they've held up their tradition above scripture. They've made an idol out of it. In verse 6.

"6) He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. 7) And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' 8) For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." 9) He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. 10) For Moses said, "Honor your father and your mother"; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' 11) But you say, "If a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban'—" (that is, a gift to God), 12) then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, 13) making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do." 14) When He had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "Hear Me, everyone, and understand: 15) There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him,

those are the things that defile a man. 16) If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!" 17) When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. 18) So He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, 19) because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?" 20) And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. 21) For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22) thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. 23) All these evil things come from within and defile a man." (NKJV)

And see, just to give you kind of a modern day example of this. As I mentioned, we don't typically use the term "tradition of the elders" today. But what you will hear kind of batted around in Church of God circles quite often is the phrase, "what I've always been taught", or "what the Church has always taught". And again, that's not inherently in itself wrong. But I like to point out that it's a historical reference. I mean, it's a historical fact if this has "always been taught". But it's not a proof of a doctrine. It doesn't establish something is true or false. It's just simply a historical reference.

And to kind of illustrate this, back when I was attending Ambassador College, I was in a class my sophomore year called Fundamentals of Theology. There were various times when we would be discussing Biblical points, and we would kind of get into discussions. Kind of friendly debates about things where ideas would be being batted around. And our professor noticed a particular trend amongst a number of the students. Because oftentimes, some of the students would be making a point and they would comment, "Mr. So-and-so said X", or "I've always been taught X". And they didn't mean it as a historical reference. They weren't just trying to say where they had heard something or just historically noting the fact that they had always been taught X. They were presenting it as "Mr. So-and-so said X. Therefore, X is true." Or "I've always been taught X. Therefore, X is true". And it was being used as if that in and of itself conclusively proved a doctrine.

My professor got kind of irritated with this. And he got dogmatic at one point, and he said, "Look, don't ever come in this class with an argument of what "Mr. So-and so said" or "what I've always been taught". What "Mr. So-and-so said" and "what I've always been taught" is evidence for absolutely nothing!" He was trying to drill in the point to us that you have to base your arguments from scripture. You can't just say, "Well, Mr. So-and-so said this. Therefore, it's true."

On the same note, we looked at examples here where the Pharisees just had traditions that had absolutely nothing to do with scripture. We can also just cling to how we've always interpreted a scripture and never be willing to examine that maybe we had it wrong. Maybe we didn't understand it exactly right because let's look at an example the Apostle Paul dealt with. Turn over to Acts 17. We'll see here where Paul is teaching in Thessalonica and he's literally teaching from the scriptures.

Now, just to understand the historical reference here, realize the time Paul is doing this. Paul is the author of the majority of the New Testament. So, obviously, the scriptures he's referring to here is the Old Testament, because the New Testament hasn't been fully written and canonized at this point. But just notice he's talking to an audience in a synagogue, and these are Jews and he's teaching from the Old Testament. So, he's teaching from scriptures they're familiar with. But he's teaching about the Messiah. But he's presenting a view on the Messiah that you might say to put in our modern day terminology is not what they've "always been taught" or "what I've always believed".

It is what it actually said, but it's not how they always interpreted it.

And let's notice how the people responded. It's Acts 17 in verse 1.

Acts 17:1 *"Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2) Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3) explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.' 4) And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas."* (NKJV)

Now, as you're going to notice here in the next few verses, some of the Jews are violently upset with Paul as a result of this. Now, notice he's teaching out of scriptures they're very familiar with. This is at a synagogue on the Sabbath and he's teaching from the Old Testament. They too recognize this as scripture. But what he's presenting is a view of the Messiah that is what the Old Testament says, but it's not what "they've always been taught". And they don't respond to that too well because they're not willing to honestly look at what the scriptures say and evaluate that, "Well, maybe we've misinterpreted it. Maybe he has a point." No, they just violently turn on him because he is going against what "we've always been taught". And notice here in verse 5.

"5) But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. 6) But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, 'These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. 7) Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus.' 8) And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. 9) So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go." (NKJV)

And notice that they're very violently responding to this. Paul's teaching from scripture that they recognize as scripture as well. And the Old Testament teaches about the Messiah. But their view of the Messiah was He's going to come and be a national leader and lead us to freedom from the Romans. That was their concept. But Paul's saying, no,

that is the second coming of the Messiah where He's going to bring Israel into their land and they're going to be a unified nation. But the first coming of the Messiah, He's going to die for the sins of mankind. Well, that is what scripture says, but it's not what they were "always taught". That is how they would look at it. And they were very close minded to ever considering that maybe they didn't understand everything. Maybe there was more to learn from scripture than what they knew.

But now let's notice the Bereans and how they responded to this. Because they had a much more balanced view. Continue on now in verse 10.

"10) Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews." (NKJV)

Again, he's in the synagogue. These are Jews familiar with the Old Testament and he's teaching them. But notice the totally different approach that these brethren have.

"11) These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. 12) Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men." (NKJV)

Notice they had a very balanced approach. They didn't just look at this and say, "Well, we like Paul and he's a good guy. So, whatever he says must be true." Or they didn't say, "Wow, this is fascinating new stuff. I love to hear something new. So, it must be true!" They were like, no, let's hear him out and be fair and balanced. He's quoting from scripture. Well, let's look it up and go study the scripture and see if what he's saying matches.

So, they're taking the approach of "Don't believe me, believe your Bible". They're not making an idol out of "what I've always been taught" or "what Mr. So-and-so said". They're not locked onto that. Because oftentimes you'll find that today if you challenge something that has "always been taught" and you can sometimes give a stack of scriptures to show someone your point. But often they will respond with "Well, that's not what I've always been taught."

But maybe it is what it actually says!

Can you honestly look at what it says and consider that maybe we haven't learned everything?

Because one thing that we need to be kind of cautious about is the end time Church. How is it described? It's the Church in Laodicea, and what is one of the symptoms of that? "I'm rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing". In words, there's nothing else that I need to learn. I've got it all. I've got it all figured out. Well, see, if we make an idol out of particular teachers or an organization or "what I've always been taught", we're not learning the lesson of the body of Moses.

Because this was the very thing that God was trying to prevent. Ancient Israel would have probably literally taken his remains and bowed down to it like a golden calf. That's not something that we would typically do in our culture. That whole concept is kind of foreign to us. But we do have that tendency of that same human nature, to take what's familiar to us or an individual or an organization or of our tradition and kind of hold that up and make an idol out of that. And if we do, then we become blind to scripture. We've become blind to looking honestly at what it actually says, because we think we've got it all figured out and we know everything.

Well, another common way that in our culture today where we can kind of fall into the same pitfall that God was trying to avoid by hiding the body of Moses is we can make an idol out of our organization, out of the group that we're in. And this is an issue that we'll see addressed in the New Testament. Turn over to Mark 9 and we'll see here an exchange that takes place between Christ and some of the Apostles. But what's interesting is if we pay attention to some of the wording here. Mark 9 and verse 38.

Mark 9:38 *"Now John answered Him, saying, 'Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.'" (NKJV)*

Notice their problem with this guy is "he does not follow us". To put that modern day terminology or 21st century language, "he's not in our corporate organization". That's their problem with him. But notice in verse 39.

"39) But Jesus said, 'Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. 40) For he who is not against us is on our side. 41) For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.'" (NKJV)

Now, if you also notice some details of verse 38, notice the Apostles are saying we saw this guy casting out demons in your name. He's there using the name of Christ. So, obviously, this is an individual familiar with who Christ is and the authority that He has. But notice also, they're not claiming that this guy's a fraud. He's falsely claiming he's casting out demons. No, it's saying he's really doing that. We won't take the time to look at Acts 19, but if you look at the account in Acts 19, it talks about some Jews there that saw Paul casting out demons and they literally tried to kind of copy it. They even try to cast out demons saying, "by the name of Jesus who Paul preaches". The demon responds to them and says, "Christ I know and Paul I know, but who are you?" And he beats them up. In other words, they were fraudulent. They weren't real followers of God and Christ. They were just trying to do this as a magic trick and it turned out very badly for them.

Now, the reason I point this out is there's no claim here that the guy that they saw was fraudulently claiming to cast out demons. They stated this as a fact, like he's really doing this. Okay, he obviously knows who Christ is and is using His name and His

authority. And he's obviously being backed up. God the Father is obviously backing him up with the authority to cast out these demons. This guy is not a fraud. But the problem that the Apostles had with him is "He doesn't follow us". He's not in our corporate organization. That's how we would word it today in our modern day Church of God culture.

So, there's a lesson for us to learn in this is we shouldn't ever allow ourselves to get into the mentality of, "Well, God only works through this group. All those others, they may be nominal Christians. But real true Christians, that just those in this organization."

Because what that leads to is, "Well, as long as I'm in this organization and I'm warming a seat here, well, then I'm good with God." And then you stop being honest about your relationship with God. And are we truly following Him? And we're also misjudging other people because God is not limited to one organization. He can work wherever He chooses to. Notice over here in 1 Corinthians, Paul corrects the Corinthians several times over this very issue. Turn over to 1 Corinthians 1. We'll pick up here in verse 10.

1 Cor 1:10 *"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11) For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. 12) Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ.' 13) Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14) I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15) lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. 16) Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. 17) For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect."* (NKJV)

So, you notice here that the way Paul words this is consistent with the culture at the time. People are holding up, "Well, I follow this minister or that minister. Well, the guy I follow is better than the guy you follow." Well, what do we do today in the Church of God? "Well, I'm part of this COG organization. My group is better than your group. My group is more righteous than yours and God only works with my group." That's the culture that we live in. We do the exact same thing. We just put in corporational names rather than individual minister names.

And if you turn over to 1 Corinthians 3, Paul addresses this again with them. He's pointing out to them that basically they're making an idol out of individuals and God's getting kind of pushed out of the picture. They're not realizing it's not about these physical leaders. It's about your relationship with God, and are you faithfully following Him? And God can work through whoever He chooses to. This is in 1 Corinthians 3 in verse 1.

1 Cor 3:1 *“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. 2) I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; 3) for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?” (NKJV)*

Now, notice here what he describes as carnal behavior. Because oftentimes when you see this behavior today in the Church of God, those who are engaging in this behavior will be declaring themselves spiritual giants. And now continue in verse 4.

“4) For when one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not carnal? 5) Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? 6) I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. 7) So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. 8) Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. 9) For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building.” (NKJV)

So, he's pointing out here that God is what we should be focused on. And yes, He uses different physical servants for His purposes. And not everybody has the same gifts at the same time. Nobody has the same understanding as everyone else. We all have our flaws. We all have our weaknesses and areas where we come short. But he's saying our focus should be on God. It shouldn't be on holding up a man or an organization, you know, what we consider our “herd” or our group that we're in and saying, “Well, as long as I'm a part of this group. Well, that's all I need.” Well, that means we're making an idol out of it, and we're holding it up and God gets kind of pushed out of the picture.

See, it's the same thing as the lesson you might say of the body of Moses. Again, the Bible doesn't explicitly state that God buried him and concealed the knowledge of where it was so they wouldn't make an idol of him. But again, if we just put together their history, it makes a lot of sense. It's the most likely reason why that took place, because they had a clear history of idolatry. And if we look at their relationship with Moses, they were very often looking to Moses and kind of pushing God out of the picture.

Well, in our world today, we can fall into the exact same thing. Again, we typically don't make idols out of golden calves and bow down to that type of thing. But we can do the same thing in holding up a man, holding up an organization, holding up our tradition and saying this is infallible, and really just kind of become blind then to God's word and following it. And as we go forward in the Church of God in the coming years, we're going to be more and more challenged in this regard. And the reason I say that is if I look back in my lifetime, when I grew up in the Church of God, most people -- particularly if you lived in the United States -- typically had a congregation that was within an hour or two or better from their home. Like it was a reasonable driving distance. And you kind of had a group that you could be a part of -- like you're kind of part of a big family. You could be kind of a part of “the herd”, you might say.

Well, we also saw with the breakup of Worldwide, what happened was a lot of people wound up kind of establishing a relationship with an organization and a culture, you might say that they were a part of. But not necessarily a relationship with God in their own personal lives. Because once that organization turned against the truth, they happily turned against the truth as well. You can see they had made an idol out of the organization and the individuals that they knew in their social network or the main physical leaders that they looked up to. In their mind that had really kind of replaced their relationship with God, and it totally led them astray.

What's been happening ever since the breakup of Worldwide is the Church has gotten more and more scattered. And if you just kind of look at our demographics, and what I mean by that is, go to an average Feast site of any sizable group, and then just look around at the crowd. You're going to see lots of gray hair. Well, that tells you, just go a few years into the future. It's a declining population. That is what's going to happen.

Now, I'm not suggesting for a moment that God's Church dies out. Christ promised that the gates of hell would never prevail against His Church. But we can see what's going to happen there is it kind of gets more and more scattered. People have to learn to function more independently. And it becomes more about having a strong relationship with God and not being so dependent upon or making an idol out of our leader, our organization, or the group, the "herd" that we might consider ourselves a part of.

You see, Paul tried to make this particular point with the Philippians. Turn over to the Book of Philippians because when Paul wrote this letter, he was literally a prisoner. So, his movements were rather restricted. He wasn't able to be around and be with the people as he had in the past. But he was making a very important point with them that whether he's there or not, that's not the important issue because we all made a covenant with God. It's about our personal relationship with Him and whether we're striving to obey Him. I mean, yes, He has a purpose for organizations and for leaders and such that can serve a valuable purpose. But we should never make an idol out of that because if all that got removed from our lives, we still made a covenant, and our eternal life still depends upon it. We have to have that personal relationship because that is what really matters. So, notice here in Philippians 2 in verse 12.

Phil 2:12 *"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13) for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."* (NKJV)

See, what really matters is our personal relationship with God. It's diligently understanding and always striving to learn more about His word and to draw closer to Him. And that's even if there is no organization. If there is no physical leader to follow. If all of that were to be taken away and if it's just us and our Bible, that we're going to stick to that and endure through whatever we have to to be able to obtain the pearl of great price. You know, making it into the Kingdom of God.

So, brethren, as we go forward from this Sabbath, let's learn the lesson of the body of Moses. Because the lesson for us in all of this is not making anything an idol above God. Placing God first and foremost in our life and looking to Him. Not making an idol out of an individual. Not making an idol out of our group, out of our tradition or anything else in our lives. So, brethren, as we go forward, let's learn the lesson of the body of Moses and focus on our personal relationship with God.