

Tucson Zoom 7/10/22 Dan Ricciardelli
"Highly Favored"

We had a very good convention in Bowen's Mill recently, the emphasis of which being the salvation of the soul and often comparing the human soul to a woman. This is not particularly politically correct, but as the woman would be under the covering of the man so the soul must be under the covering and under the influence of the Spirit if we're going to be properly aligned, if we're going to be able to do the things that God is calling us to do. So I remember that in the beginning Bro David DiGloria mentioned, among other things, outlandish women. And compared outlandish women to the outlandish things that our souls, our minds, emotions and wills could come up with, and believe me, they are very adept at coming up with outlandish things. But at the end of the convention Bro Harmond from Peachtree City, GA ministered what I thought was a good message bringing out a couple of faithful women, one of those was Esther and the other was Mary. As he pointed out, it actually says that each was favored. Each one had received favor. It was a really good message and I hope that you will hear it, but as he was ministering there was something that I noticed, and it's going to kind of get us started off today, I noticed a slight difference although it might not be slight. It might be a major difference, and that is that in the book of Esther when the big scene happens where she goes in to the king having been coached by Mordecai, that she'd better get in there and she'd better plead the case for the Jews because she better not think that she is going to escape just because she's in the king's house, the wilds of Haman and the war that had been declared against them. I'm sure it was a struggle, I'm sure it took a lot to arrive at this but she finally made the decision, because the law was that if you approach the king uninvited and if he did not hold out his scepter to you in acceptance of you, you would be killed. And it could be that nothing like that had ever actually been done before. We don't know. So she said, I love the line and so do you, "If I perish, I perish." I'm going to do this because it's right. It's perhaps what I have been set in this place to do. So she went into the king and as you know he held out the golden scepter to her and she touched it and right before that it says that she obtained favor from the king. So in her case it was because of this act of obedience that she did that Esther received favor. Now I'd like you to turn to Luke 1.

Because of the other that he spoke of, Mary, she obtained favor too. And this is so great. Before I even get going here, and I was going to say this a minute ago, I want to thank you all for your being here and for this opportunity to minister to you. I want to thank you for your commitment to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who makes all of this possible and is working in each of our lives. And thirdly I want to thank you for your interest in the Bible. Your interest on the scriptures and the desire, not just to know more information but your desire to receive the life that will feed your inner man. That will strengthen you, and me too, to become the people that God wants us to be. And so, in Luke 1:26 "and in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee named Nazareth to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her and said 'Hail, thou that are highly favored. The Lord is with thee, blessed are thou among women'" When she saw him, she was troubled at his saying and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her 'Fear not Mary for thou hast found favor with God and behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son and shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there shall be no end.' Then said Mary unto the angel 'How

shall this be seeing I know not a man?’ And the angel answered and said unto her ‘The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee. Therefore, also, that Holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And behold thy cousin Elizabeth she hath also conceived a son in her old age and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren for with God nothing shall be impossible.’ And Mary said ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word.’ And the angel departed from her. And Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste into a city of Judah and entered into the house of Zaharias and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary the babe leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost and she spake out with a loud voice and said ‘Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb and whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.” Verse 56, “And Mary abode with her about 3 months and returned to her own house. Now Elizabeth’s full time came that she should be delivered and she brought forth a son” Well there’s so much more to all this but it’s such a glorious thing to think about the fact that that which had been prophesied in Isiah 7:14 “Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel” Those words were said hundreds of years before this event took place. Yet it was absolutely fulfilled exactly the way that God said it was going to be fulfilled. It was not fulfilled in Jerusalem. It was not fulfilled on TV. It was not on the internet. Nobody took a film of this for posterity and future generations. But it was fulfilled nonetheless and truly a virgin did conceive. And she did bring forth a son and what I want to point out to you before I forget to do it is that when the angel came in and said to Mary ‘Hail thou that art highly favored’ Mary had not yet done any act of obedience. She had the favor of God before the fact. Esther obtained the favor after the fact, which is fine, but this says something about the grace of God. This says something about the power of God. This says something about the intention of God. That God granted to Mary favor ‘you’re highly favored’ and granted her that favor knowing what was coming but before she actually said ‘Be it unto me according to thy word’. Now as an aside I’d like to say that I believe that when Mary said ‘Be it into me according to thy word’ that is what triggered the response of the Holy Spirit. That is where she was overshadowed by the Holy Ghost. If that is not an event that took place off in the future at that point but as soon as she said ‘yes’ to the Lord there was a conception that took place. And I read the verses about the timing so that you could see how this was working. The angel said to her that your cousin Elizabeth is at this moment six months pregnant and so then after Mary said ‘Be it unto me according to thy word’ shortly thereafter, as it says in verse 39 ‘in those days’, maybe it was in that week maybe the next day but shortly after she departed into the hill country to find Elizabeth. Interestingly in verses 41-44, of course we have verses that would really be appropriate right about now that the United States Supreme Court has finally overturned Row v Wade where they have finally allowed the people through their elected representatives to determine their stance on the taking of a human life before birth, which is a barbaric practice. And if a Christian needs any more instruction on it all that need is to look at those verses, especially verse 44 where Elizabeth says ‘when I heard your voice Mary this babe leaped in my womb for joy.’ And so an unborn child capable of leaping at a salutation and leaping for the emotion of joy is certainly the description of someone that is completely and entirely human. Even in that unborn condition. And so may God bless all those that have fought for decades to bring about what we have so far. And May God foil the attempts of all those that would like to destroy the work that has been done and may God give every American grace and wisdom and understanding in this very crucial development. But what I want you to see is that when she went into the hill

country verse 56 says that she stayed there 3 months. And so then returning to her own house and then Elizabeth's full time came and so the only way that the math works out is that Mary's conception took place right then and there when she said in the sight of God and in sight of the angel 'Be it unto me according to thy word.' Now let's turn to Ephesians 1

Before we read in Ephesians 1 I want to talk a little more about this highly favored business. The Greek word that is translated 'highly favored' occurs kind of rarely in the Bible. Khareetoo is a word that is similar to the word Karas that is translated as 'grace' or as 'gift' but it's a stronger one and it's really a word that means 'a pouring out of favor and a pouring out a blessing' but if you're highly favored, that is to say Khareetoo is to say you are indued with a special honor, you are honored with blessings. So that is an important thing to see and it helps us understand a little bit more of the grace of God, as I've already said in her case even before the obedient act was performed, she was already highly favored in the sight of God. And so this is an inspiration to us and we in the Protestant world have learned to take it only so far but there are those in the about one point three billion Roman Catholics in this world that take this 'highly favored' thing a lot farther in their human minds than what is stated here in the scriptures. And to them there is nobody on the earth presently or formerly or ever will be who is as highly favored as Mary. In fact, they are so intent upon that they they've got more going for it than just that which is scripturally obvious. The angel's visit, that's obvious. The conception and birth of Christ, that's obvious. Raising Jesus who was called by the angel the Savior and Christ and the Lord, what a privilege that was, that was obvious. But they have heaped other man-made ideas upon Mary because they feel or want to make her so highly favored one of the most man made honors is something that the Roman Catholics call The Assumption. The Assumption, one of the dogmas of their faith, is where they teach that Mary did not die like other people died but they teach that Mary was just assumed into Heaven. And this is what they call The Assumption. In fact, I have some clients who are monks in an abby that is called Assumption Abby because it's named in honor of this idea that Mary didn't die, that she just was assumed into heaven similar to Christ's ascension. Another man-made favor that the Roman Catholics would like to give to Mary is called the Immaculate Conception. If a Protestant hears the term Immaculate Conception, they think that they are talking about the conception of Jesus. I've got a news flash. They are not talking about the conception of Jesus. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is actually where they believe that Mary herself was immaculately conceived so that she also was as much without sins as Jesus was without sin. And so, you can see from these man made ideas what high regard they place Mary in. In fact, in some instances truly higher than Christ himself. So, you've got a big chunk of Christendom, some one point three billion people, that if they actually followed the things that they are taught, not many of them really do, but those that do would have to say that there was no one as highly favored as Mary.

Let's go to Ephesians 1:6. I want to show you that actually there is someone else who is as highly favored as Mary. The fact that we're coming to Ephesians 1 reminds me that 2 Zooms ago I was talking mainly out of verse 4 that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. And at that time we looked at verses that to me are very pertinent and significant that connect the coming of the Lord, which is a big topic, it is taught all the time, with the blameless condition of the church, which is not preached on very much at all. And yet we realize from about 6 or 7 very clear scriptures that those two are very much tied together in the mind of God and in His purposes for his church. The last time that we were together I was ministering out of vs 5 and that's talking about the predestination, talking about the adoption of children, in the Greek the Hoiuthesa, the placing of the son. And what an important thing that is to

understand, understanding those Roman laws like when we went through it that time helps us to see where we are and, to me, gives me the fortitude and gives me the inspiration to continue under the tutors and under the governors that are required right now so that one day I may graduate and for you too that you might one day graduate to the time appointed of the Father referred to in Romans 8 as the adoption, even the Hoiuthesa, to wit the redemption of our body. So having looked at vs 4 and 5 now it's time to look at vs 6.

I'll read Ephesians 1:4-6 just to get the flavor of what is being said. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the -Hoiuthesa- the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Now the Greek phrase 'accepted in the beloved' is the exact same word used of Mary when it said she was highly favored, Khareetoo, it only occurs 2 times on the New Testament. Once talking about Mary and that she is highly favored and the only other time it's used it is talking about you and it is talking about me. Listen you one point three billion people, there is somebody else in this world that is just as highly favored as the Virgin Mary. And it happens to be every believer in Jesus who is accepted in the beloved. That in the Greek 'accepted in the beloved' is Khareetoo and could just as easily be translated 'highly favored' as in he hath made us highly favored. Praise the Lord! I wish we could meditate on all that but we don't have time to sit and meditate today. So I would like you then to turn over to Romans 8.

We're going to read in vs 28. And the reason we're going to read Romans 8:28 is because we need to see that we're highly favored for a reason. There is a purpose. A purpose of God. Ephesians calls it an eternal purpose. And it's not that we're highly favored for no reason but God has a plan. God has a design and we're highly favored to be a part of that plan and a part of that design. And so we get a really good clue about it here when it says in Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose." Now if you want to know what that purpose is and there are young people all across America, maybe all across the world, saying 'I don't know what my purpose in life is.' If you're one of these people that you can't find yourself and you don't know your purpose in life, read on, vs 29 "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he (Jesus) might be the firstborn among many brethren." Vs 30 "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." So the purpose for which we are highly favored is to be completely and entirely conformed within to the image of Christ. I say this every time, but when we talk about the image of Christ we don't mean on the external. But we mean on the internal. Our spirit and soul and body 'preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord' goes hand in hand with those that have been conformed to the very image of Christ. And I want to look at a couple other places that are along those lines. Look in 2 Corinthians 3.

2 Corinthians 3:17, "Now the Lord is that spirit and where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." This is always the litmus test of whether the spirit of God is present in our life, in our relationships, in our churches, in our relationship one to another. Where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. Wherever there is manipulation. Wherever there is intimidation and those kinds of things often used in Jesus' church, and often used by leaders in Jesus' church, be careful. Because genuinely where the spirit of the Lord is there is always liberty in Him. Vs 18, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same

image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.” What I want to point out from this verse today is the process nature of this transformation, this change. The gospel message is that you and I can be changed. The new covenant message is that God would put his law in our inward parts and write it in our hearts. It is an internal transformation. Romans 12, “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Don’t be conformed to this world. Even to this religious world. But be transformed by the renewing of your mind and a part of that is that ‘beholding as in a glass’, it’s not perfect, but that beholding the glory of the Lord. And as we do so we are actually changed, transformed, processed from glory to glory. Ground gained, glory achieved, problem perhaps overcome, understanding gained, enlightenment had and then from that glory God brings us on to the next glory. “From glory to glory.”

If we turn the page over to the fourth chapter, 2 Corinthians 4:15, “For all things are for your sakes that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish” Look at you, look at me. We know that’s true. There’s no denying that. “But though our outward man perish” that’s easy to see “yet the inward man is renewed” here comes the process “day by day.” Renewed day by day. Transformed changed into the same image from glory to glory, the inward man is renewed day by day. One more verse in Colossians 3:8, “But now ye put off also all these, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” There are other verses along these lines but I want you to see not just Romans 8 but in other places in the word where it is talking about you and me being conformed, being transformed and conformed to the image of Christ. And I want you to see that that’s where we are now under the tutors and the governors. Our spirit has been quickened, we were dead in trespasses and sins and now we have been quickened. Ephesians also says, I don’t know exactly where else we would be quickened except our spirit. ‘The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord searching all the inward parts of the belly’. This is what Vicky greeted me with when we got here is that, yes, she really appreciated the fact that the candle of the Lord searching the inward parts of my belly has revealed a systemic self-righteousness there. Hey! I’ve got news for ya, there’s worse stuff in there than that! But I’m not gonna talk about those things today. But as the candle of the Lord continues to search and search the very knowledgeable of what is wrong. The very knowledge of what is not conforming to the image of Christ is in itself an indication of growth. Because at least we can see it. At least now we are dissatisfied with something that perhaps years ago was even in our field of vision, was not even brought yet to our attention. But now that it is it is an indicator that growth truly is happening. We mentioned before, and I don’t want to go into this too much, but it’s something that we have pretty well ascribed to in this move of God for a long, long time and that is that initially when we like Mary say ‘yes’ to the Lord our spirit is lit, that candle is lit. The spirit, I’d say, is saved, the spirit is delivered and yet, though that is an instantaneous thing, there is something that follows it which takes time. There is a process, that’s why I quoted two verses, to talk about the process from glory to glory and day by day. Because truly that growth that is taking place is something that takes time. Maybe we can hasten the day God by yielding to what God is doing, or at least wanting to be the way that God wants us to be. But aside from that it’s God, it’s the tutors and the governors under God that are determining the course of events. So, you can be a 1st grader and go into school and say ‘I don’t know I think this is taking too long. I think I need to graduate next week.’ And there’s no one who’s going to listen to you because you’re under the tutors. You’re under the governors. Believe me, you get in there and they are going to be the ones that determine when school is out. They’re going to be the ones who determine whether to not you have fulfilled

what is needed in order to graduate. It's going to be them, not you. And in the same way this program of God that we're in, the program of transformation, of being conformed to His image, this isn't something that you and I can determine where it begins and where it ends. But I do believe that we can co-labor together with God and at least we can yield to what he's doing and maybe at the most basic level we can simply want to. 'Lord, I want to. I see you; I see who you are, Lord Jesus, and I want to be like you. Whatever you've got to do, do it. Whatever I need, that you know what I need, whatever it is, you do it, you give it Lord. You bring it to pass, because that is what I want.' So now let's go back to Romans 8.

In Romans 8 there are two references to the placing of the son, the placing as the son. One of those references comes in verse 15. I'm going to read verse 14 and 15, "For as many as are lead by the spirit of God they are the sons of God" Let me put the emphasis where I think it belongs here "For as many as are lead *only* by the spirit of God *they and they only* are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage' or the spirit of slavery 'again to fear. But ye have received the spirit of adoption.' That is the spirit of son placing, the spirit of the Hoiuthesa. And let me just point out, I won't minister on this right now but, the Holy Spirit of God is referred to in this verse as the spirit of Hoiuthesa. That makes a huge difference in our understanding of what he's doing. The Holy Spirit operation in our lives is not random. It's not willy nilly. It's not just whatever comes along. No! It is as trained, it is as organized as the organization of school that you went to and the gradated, graduated levels of 1-12 and beyond, the spirit of Hoiuthesa God is giving you and me every single thing that we need in order to make progress day by day. To make progress from glory to glory. And so you receive the spirit of adoption whereby we cry "Abba Father", so that's one place where the mention of the Hoiuthesa is.

Let me say something about 'Abba Father' while we're at it because I know that there are many ministers that nowadays believe that the idea of the word 'Abba' simply means 'daddy'. I beg to differ. One reason is because though I'm not a Greek scholar I am a Greek clicker, so just as you can I can click on that word in my app on my phone and can see what Strongs has to say about the word 'Abba'. And it's interesting what it is saying. It is saying in the places where 'Abba Father' occurs on the New Testament-one here, one on Galatians and one where Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane and cries 'Abba Father!'-really what's going on there is where they have placed the Aramaic word 'Abba' and when they bring in an Aramaic word like 'Abba' or 'rabbi' or 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani' and all these things like that it's because they believe that there is not a Greek word to accurately or adequately define or describe the Aramaic word. And so what happened, according to Strongs, is that in these three places they give us the Aramaic word and then after it the Greek word that they believed was closest to translating that Aramaic word. So it appears in our King James Bible as 'Abba Father' but it really is the word 'Abba' and then an attempt by the translators to put in the word 'Abba' which kinda means 'Father' but it means something more than Father. So it seems to me that it's only been recently, that in the last 30 years or so, that someone has said that the word Abba describes such an intimate relationship with the Father that you can think of it as the word Daddy. I don't find that in Strongs. I don't find it in other study materials. I don't find it before about 30 years ago. And I think it's good and I think it's wonderful that folks are interested in that intimate aspect of a relationship of the son to the father. But I believe that Abba encompasses more than just 'Daddy', as if it was just the voice of a very young child simply rejoicing in their intimate relationship with their Daddy. But there was a minister that wrote an article a few years ago. In it he said that he was in Israel in the airport in Tel Aviv and when he went into the restroom to wash his hands, he overheard a conversation between a Jewish man and his little

son. I think the man was teaching his son to wash his hands or something like that, but what the minister overheard was the Jewish man said, "When I tell you do something, call me Abba." And I want to repeat that because I think it helps me put a little bit more into perspective what this Abba is all about. "When I tell you do something, call me Abba." It brings a little truer with me because this verse, the verse in Galatians and certainly the verse when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane are all related to obedience. Not just exalting in the relationship, though that's important too, but in the time of excruciating temptation to not do what the Father was asking him to do, Jesus cried 'Abba'. And here we have not received the spirit of bondage and of religious bondage, this is in Romans, a religious bondage system whereby we obey because of some kind of being bound by religion. But rather we have received the spirit of Hoiuthesa, that is of a willing obedience. I want to repeat that. We are not in religious bondage. Where the spirit of the Lord is there is a liberty. And it is a liberty to not obey if you don't want to obey. But, praise God, it is also a liberty TO OBEY. And so, in a willing manner we've received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry 'Abba'! Lord, I will obey you. Lord, when you want me to do something I will call you Abba. So anyway, be all that as it may, you can take that if you like it. Don't if you don't.

Now it says in verse 16, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Now I want to skip a couple verses there and go to verse 19. "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." And so creation is waiting because in verse 21 "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body." I want to pick this apart a little bit. The creation is waiting and we are waiting. Creation is groaning and we are groaning. But what we are waiting and groaning for is not the same thing as what they are waiting and groaning for. They are waiting and groaning for the effect of the change that will result in, now hear me, what will result in the manifestation of the Sons of God due to happen in the end of this age. What we are waiting for is for God to complete that day by day, from glory to glory transformation from what we use to be into the image of Christ. And when that is complete, when graduation time happens, what Galatians calls the 'time appointed of the Father', when that takes place then we have the second quotation in verse 23. We're waiting for the adoption; we're waiting for the Hoiuthesa. And what is that? Well, in this case, 'to wit, the redemption of our body.' Now the last thing I want to talk about is that. I'd like you to turn, off course, to 1 Corinthians 15.

There is a terrific event that is to happen at the end of this age. On the one hand it's the Hoiuthesa. It's the placing as a son. This is what sonship is all about. In the verses we skipped in Romans 8 talked about sufferings, 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be comparable.' But it's not just about sufferings. The spirit of the placing of the son has determined that yes, there are some sufferings, but those sufferings are leading us day by day and glory to glory into exactly what we need and only what we need. Nothing extraneous. Nothing superfluous. Only what we need. But in 1 Corinthians 15, and I'm reading this now because honestly, I would say probably most of my Christian life when I have read these things in Romans 8 and 1 Corinthians 15 and all, it has seemed far-fetched at times. This 'to wit the redemption of our bodies,' do you understand that he's talking about a transformation? Not just of spirit. And not just of soul. But he prayed that your whole spirit and soul and body would be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord. There is a change that is going to take

place in somebody's physical body as they walk on planet Earth. And it's going to happen at the very end of this age that we are living in. And so I think that, and most of the church would consider it to be kind of far-fetched and why even think about it and why even worry about it? Let me just sit in my pew, listen to a sermon or two. Listen to some Southern Gospel music every once in a while. Maybe lift my hands because I'm a really spiritual Christian and just wait for the rapture and be done with it. But that's not the hope. That's not the purpose for which we are called. We're called to participate in the amazing thing that God is doing.

So if we'll look in 1 Corinthians 15: 35. Wish we could read more but we'll just look at verse 35. What I want you to notice in all of this is the certainty that the events that I'm talking about and I haven't done a very good job talking about them, but the events I'm talking about are certainly going to come to pass. Verse 35, "But some *man* will say, How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come? *Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other *grain*: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body." Sometime we've got to talk about the power of the seed. The mystery of a seed. How important a seed is. What a genius if creation a seed is. Only God can do such a thing. A seed at the same time is the culmination of every generation that went before it and is also the beginning of every generation that is going to come after it. And it's no wonder that from early in the book of Ephesians God's promise concerns a seed. It is a promise TO a seed. And there's so much that we could say about all that but he brings it in here, verse 39, "All flesh *is* not the same flesh: but *there is* one *kind of* flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, *and* another of birds. *There are* also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another. *There is* one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for *one* star differeth from *another* star in glory. So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." Now it's easy to believe the first part. There is a natural body, touch yours. Give yourself a little pinch. There IS a natural body. That is easy to prove. But do you understand that in the same way, with the same certainty there is a spiritual body, so says God. "And so it written" verse 45, "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit. Howbeit that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man *is* of the earth, earthy: the second man *is* the Lord from heaven. As *is* the earthy, such *are* they also that are earthy: and as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy," that's easy to see, that is easy to believe. It doesn't take a Bible verse to show us that. That's easy. We have borne the image of the earthy. But here's where we need a little jump of faith. Here's where we need a little bit of inspiration "As we have born the image of the earthy, we shall" We SHALL "also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" Now I always thought that "We shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed" would make a good sign in the nursery. But aside from that use of the verse, the truth is that not everyone at the end of this age is going to go by way of physical death but there are some that are actually in whom the process is complete from day to day and glory to glory. They are going to graduate, come to the placing of the son and when that happens their literal physical body, their mortal body, is going to be changed. This is what the Bible says in verse 52 "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised

incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. So, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” and on and on it goes.

I could keep reading but I don't want to. But if you think this is far-fetched think about what we were reading earlier. Think about Mary and what happened to her and what the angel said to her. I think that back when Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 7:14 “behold a virgin shall conceive and bare a son and call his name Emmanuel” I wonder how many people literally believed that that was going to happen? Can you see the rabbis on the sabbath when people would ask about that, can you see the rabbis saying “Well, that's probably not literal. That's probably an allegory of some kind. That's probably just some kind of a metaphor that we don't quite understand, ‘that a virgin shall conceive’. Everybody knows that a virgin can't conceive.” the rabbi might have said. And so, it would have seemed far-fetched, perhaps, to everyone. Until it happened! God did it exactly the way he said he was going to do it. So, it did seem far-fetched to Mary. “How is this going to happen? Seeing I don't know a man?” she said. So, for her it was hard to believe. And yet she yielded. She said “Be it unto me according to thy word” and it happened. It took place. And although it happened, it took place it took time to show. It took time to grow. It took time to literally be birthed. And so, what I'm saying is that in the same way you and I, we received Christ and we said ‘Lord be it unto me according to thy word.’ And right then, the same as with her, a spiritual conception took place, and if you want to say this, a gestation is taking place right now, and one day there's going to be the birthing. And the end time is likened to a birthing process not without reason. If you think that this is far-fetched, let me bring an old worn illustration to you. So many preachers have used this that I hesitate to use it, except that it reminds me that I had a little dream one time and of course that's the illustration of the caterpillar and the change that it goes through. Many have pointed out that the word ‘metamorphosis’ that we know in English really comes from the Greek word that is used in change and transformation in the New Testament. So, the most common illustration is a little caterpillar, and one time not long before I was going to minister in Canton OH, I had a little dream. I dreamed I saw a little caterpillar just inching along like they do. He was on a tree limb and a beautiful butterfly just lights on the branch and my little caterpillar friend kind of looks as it and there was no sound, there was no thought, but I was thinking in my mind was this little caterpillar was saying, “Wow, I sure wish I was able to fly like that butterfly.” And this wasn't part of the dream but in my thinking, I was thinking the message would come to that little caterpillar “You will. You will.” And could that little guy even conceive of it? Could he even understand what was being talked about? Probably not. If a caterpillar could understand it would be completely far-fetched in his mind that such a thing could happen. And yet as you and I know, it DOES happen and the reason it happens is because God has determined that it happens. That's the way God made it. That's the way God predestinated it. But that seems like kind of a rare occurrence. I don't know how many millions of times it happens across the world, maybe even billions. I don't know. But think about this. Going back to the seed and what is mentioned early in our passage in 1 Corinthians 15 where it says the seed dies. The seed dies and then it's quickened. See, everyday all around us this illustration is happening and you know that the invisible things of Him from the beginning of the world are clearly seen. Clearly seen. Being understood by the things that's are made. And one of the things that are made is a seed that is falling into the ground and dying and being quickened. And if you've ever seen the process, if you've been a part of the process, if you've been a partner, been a planter, been a farmer, I don't know how to estimate how many millions, billions, quadrillions of seeds every year are planted into the ground. And every one of them is an illustration of the

invisible things of Him and they are clearly seen because what happens is that that seed is kind of a terrestrial thing. It's not alive, it has the potential for life but it is not alive. And in order to achieve that potential it's got to be put down into the ground where it is softened by the water and it comes into contact with the ground and the bacteria that is contained in there and the microbes and the minerals and they are all working to soften it up. And what looks to you and me like working to kill it. In fact, the Bible says it dies. And in the same way that the caterpillar there in his chrysalis is reduced at one point into a puddle of goo. Yet in the puddle of goo there is something else. There is the power to become, within that little puddle of goo. And because it has a God given power to become it becomes a creature completely different from the one that went into the cocoon, that went into the chrysalis. And in the same way, though you might not see that very often, the seed illustration you see very often. It's in your yard. It's in the forest. It's in the fields. It's everywhere. These seeds are going into the ground as one thing. They are terrestrial. They are dead. They're dry. And yet they yield, they yield, to the process that God has foreordained and, yes, they die but they're quickened. And there's a point at which that little seed is just a a vulnerable mass of gunk but within that little mass there is the life that is quickened. How did that happen? That happens because of God. Because of the favor of God and the goodness of God. God is good to sparrows. He's good to grass. And how much more good and how much more favor is he bestowing on you and me? So, it may seem far-fetched but hey, the caterpillar might have thought so. It may seem far-fetched but every dry seed might think so and when it's quickened it's no longer what it used to be. And interestingly, every one of those plants reach up toward the light and they reach up toward the heavens because it is a different creature now, it's not the same as what was planted. And so, if you think that it's far-fetched that we could be changed from corruptible to incorruptible, from mortal to immortal, from terrestrial to celestial, from earthy to heavenly, consider this. It's already been done once. God's already done it. What more do we need to see? Hebrews 2 says 'well gee we haven't seen all the victory happen yet' but then it says 'but we see Jesus'. We see Jesus because Jesus went into the ground and died and, praise God, was risen. He died for our offenses but he was raised for our justification. So, it's important to note that he is become now the firstfruits of them that slept. Jesus is the firstfruits of them that slept which means there is going to be more fruits to follow of them that slept. And there are going to be those who will follow him in this regeneration.

So now the last verse is Romans 12 and I'll be done. Saints, in the same way that it happened with Mary, despite anybody's thinking, it happened. It was prophesied. It happened. And it happened because she said 'yes'. And in the same way at the end of this age, and the things we're talking about, they are going to happen. And they are going to happen just the way God said because they are prophesied too. And they're going to happen in someone, some ones, who also say 'yes' to the Lord. The issue is not whether it's going to happen or not. The issue is am I going to be a part of it? Is the 'we' we? It says 'We shall be changed'. Am I a part of the 'we'? Are you a part of the 'we'? I want to be. And so we end here in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service." Don't think you're doing something special here. You're not. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Well, I appreciate your attention. Your desire to study the word of God. Your commitment to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ today and so with that I'm going to end. God bless all of you.