

The Ukraine  
*Last Things*  
By Bob Vincent

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**Bible Text:** Numbers 7:78-83; Luke 13:1-5  
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Numbers 7 beginning at verse 78. I read this yesterday and as I read it, I was impressed as I prayed, “God, why did You put this in the Bible? I’ve got to say, it’s the most boring chapter.” What do you mean it’s the most boring chapter? Well, if you look at verse 78 it says, “On the twelfth day,” and what this is, is a list of the 12 tribes’ leaders and what they each brought to offer to the Lord, and so what I’m about to read in verse 78 is identical to all the other 11 parts of this. And so as I meditated, I said, “Lord, why did You put this in the Bible?” To make you bored, Bob. No, there is always something in the Bible if we will meditate on it prayerfully, God will speak to us from everywhere in the whole Bible.

So, let’s give attention to God’s word in Numbers 7:78.

78 On the twelfth day Ahira son of Enan, the leader of the people of Naphtali, brought his offering. 79 His offering was one silver plate weighing a hundred and thirty shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each filled with fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering; 80 one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; 81 one young bull, one ram and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; 82 one male goat for a sin offering; 83 and two oxen, five rams, five male goats and five male lambs a year old to be sacrificed as a fellowship offering. This was the offering of Ahira son of Enan.

The word of the Lord.

May we pray.

*Lord, would You grant to me, Your unworthy servant, the ability to expound this text and apply it to our lives today for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

As I read this passage of Scripture yesterday and prayed and said, "God, why is this in the Bible? Why do You give us 12 identical sections of the leaders of the 12 tribes and what they brought?" Remember the 13<sup>th</sup> tribe is the tribe of Levi and they were given to the Lord as the firstborn of Israel, because every male that opens the womb has to be sacrificed to the Lord, and so the tribe of Levi was sacrificed to the Lord as a distinct tribe from the other 12.

And remember how did we get 13 tribes from 12 sons of Jacob? Because Reuben violated his father's wife and was removed as the firstborn, and Jacob gave that to Joseph, and the firstborn always got a double portion of what anybody gets, and so what happened is that Jacob's grandsons Manasseh and Ephraim inherited as if they were Jacob's sons, not grandsons, and Jacob, who wanted to show out how God often gives preference to the younger rather than the older, reversed it and he blessed the younger Ephraim over the older Manasseh.

So, we have this section in the book of Numbers which has some of the most fascinating stories in the whole Bible in it once you get past the first 10 chapters and until you get near the end when you get all those numbers again.

So, in the middle section there're some great Bible stories, there really, really are, but it's got all these lists. Why? I want you to think about one idea.

You know, God makes reference to our prayers individually, and God makes reference to our prayers corporately. Do you know we pray at home as individuals and in our families, but there is something profoundly special about praying with other believers.

And what I want you to see here in Numbers is that God not only records the giving of it, of individuals, that you'll see in the whole Bible, but here he's recording the giving of a tribe and that's significant.

So, here's the deal: how does God in a New Testament sense view Trinity Presbyterian Church or the First Baptist Church or the Methodist Church or the Catholic Church or the Episcopal Church if their people there are praying?

I want to submit to you that the New Testament application of the book of Numbers 7 is that God takes note of clusters of people who come together to pray and to seek his face.

Now what does that have to do, why are we talking about this in the sense of last things? I want you to consider with me a couple of passages of Scripture and the first one that we want to go to is Luke 13 in verse 1.

What can you do about the situation in the Ukraine? I'm turning 75 and I'm looking out over you, and I don't know very many people out there who can do anything particularly, except to argue on social media.

Think about it, what can Christians do about the situation in the Ukraine? We can pray. By and large, dear ones in Jesus, there is not much else you can do but pray, and I want us as we pray to look at page 1,619, Luke 13:1. How do we view the situation there?

When I was in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, I decided to write to the two most powerful men in the whole world as I perceived reality in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, which was during the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis. And so, I wrote to a man from Boston, and who was that man from Boston?

John Kennedy.

I wrote to John Kennedy, and I asked him for an autographed picture and, you know, in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade one day I received a big envelope in the mail from the White House and there was a picture of John Fitzgerald Kennedy that was autographed, and it was the neatest autograph I've ever seen.

(I used to do very careful autographs but what John Kennedy did looks like my autograph today which is basically a scribble. He should have been a doctor instead, sorry Tom and Lynn.)

Anyhow, I wrote to another world leader, the other one whom I considered to be the most powerful man in the world. He was a Ukrainian. What was that Ukrainian's name?

(And by the way, he never sent me an autographed picture. Can you believe that Ukrainian man did not send me an autographed picture?)

What was that Ukrainian man's name?

Nikita Khrushchev.

Why didn't he send me a picture?

I don't know. He knew I couldn't vote for him. Anyhow, but neither could I vote for Kennedy back then, you had to be 21.

So, anyhow what I'm getting at here is that as we look at the world today, we need to understand something about the way the world works.

In Luke 13, we are apt to judge other people when we see calamities and when we see man-made tortures. Let's look at verse 1.

"Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices."

Now that's the kind of thing that's going on right now in the Ukraine, people's blood is being shed by tyrants and it's terrible. It's awful. Thank God, I live in the United States and thank God, I live in Louisiana and come to Texas.

"Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices."

Look at Jesus' response, "Jesus answered, 'Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way?'"

Do you ever have the reaction when you see human suffering, "Well, it's their fault"? What's God doing?

I remember, I've told this story before, I had a funeral to do when I was a pastor in Wichita, Kansas in 1974. One of our deacons' wife had died in childbirth, and she was in a rural place called Anthony, Kansas. And the doctor and assistant tried to get her heart going again, and they did, and they sent her by ambulance to Wichita.

And I remember sitting with him there in the hospital with his mother and his other child, who Sandy and I kept at that point, and then she died. He was told, "You need to unplug her. She's not going to recover." And he asked me what to do. I'd never faced that question before.

And so Sandy and I took that little baby into our home for about six weeks, and I did her funeral, driving down from Wichita to Anthony, Kansas.

And do you know what people had the gall to say to my friend, Harold Madsen?

"Why is God punishing you by killing your wife?"

Are you kidding me? We look at calamities in this world and we think, “What did they do for God to do that to them?”

That’s a human reaction, isn’t it, because there’s a little self-righteous hypocrite in terms of all of us, “I’m better than she is. I’m better than he is and therefore God did that to him.”

I mean, they really were saying that to my dear friend Harold Madsen. I couldn’t believe it. Now after having been licensed to preach in 1965, I believe it.

So, what does Jesus say? Look at this. This is the important thing. When you look at the tragedies that are going on now around Kiev and you look at all of that, this is what Jesus would say to you in verse 3:

“I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”

What? What? What?

“Unless you too repent, you will also perish.”

Now that’s war, that’s conflict, that’s a foreign government occupying a country, Pontius Pilate who served there under the reign of Tiberius, the perverted Roman emperor.

Now, look at the next verse, natural calamities. Verse 4:

“Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?”

The wall fell on those folks, that brick fell off the top of that thing and hit him in the head and plumb, not only knocked him out, it plumb killed him.

Verse 5, “I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”

Wow.

So, when we see calamities in this world, we need to remember something very, very true: nothing in this world happens apart from God’s decree, either permissively or directly. Nothing in this world happens outside the sphere of the sovereignty of God. Jesus told us, said, “Look at the sparrows.” He said, “Not one of them falls to the ground apart from your heavenly Father.” Boy, this is the comfort. “And He numbers the hairs of your head. You are of much more value than many sparrows.” (Matthew 10:27-31)

So, I want you while keeping that in mind, to turn to Hebrews 10 for a moment. Hebrews 10 and we want to look at this, page 1,874. Hebrews 10:23. What is the war in the Ukraine about fundamentally, absolutely, and actually?

[unintelligible]

Yeah, that's true, but in the ultimate absolute sense, it's a signpost just as when you drive into Texarkana, you see signs when I-49 splits off to go towards, where does it end? Oh yeah...

[unintelligible]

Whereabouts?

[unintelligible]

Oh yeah. Well, that's right. See how poor my brain's working this morning? When it splits and we get and come in here and get on the 369 and then get on I-30, we rely on signposts.

Don't you?

Well, you've lived here long enough—you're used to driving across three interstates. I've got to say, I'm glad I live in rural Louisiana because driving across three interstates in the dark ain't no fun.

What am I getting at? We rely on signposts. We rely on markers on the road that say, "Seventeen miles to Nash," or what have you.

Do you know what the war in, I almost said Afghanistan, in the Ukraine is ultimately?

It's a divine signpost that says Jesus is coming. It is a signpost just as what we read in Luke 13 is a signpost. When Jesus was addressing the crowds, and they brought up and said, "Hey, think about those people who were killed by that Roman governor. Think about that tower that fell."

Jesus is basically saying, "Turn your eyes off of that and turn your eyes on yourself and realize that this is a signpost of the coming judgment of God that ultimately will include the entire world."

It is a signpost, I preached on this right after September 11, 2001, I preached on this passage then in my congregation and I entitled it, "Signpost of the *Dies Irae*."

Anybody ever take Latin? Do you know what *dies irae* is? It's the Day of Wrath. Signposts of the *dies irae*.

When we see a calamity in the world, when we see wars in the world, fundamentally that's a warning sign to you and me that God is in the process still of judging the world.

That's the first thing we want to remember. What's going on in the Ukraine with all its butchery and violence and typical warfare throughout history—except the wars that have been fought in the United States, inside the United States, as we look at all of that, as we look at it in light of the Old Testament wars, it's a signpost God is judging the world and he's about to judge it really, really bad.

And if you think it's bad to have bombs dropped on you and to be caught on fire and flamethrowers and all the things you see in the news, what is it like to be cast into the lake of fire, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched? (Matthew 25:41; Mark 9:42-48; Revelation 21:8)

If you think Putin is bad, think about God Almighty who is about to cast the entire human race, except for those who turn to Jesus, into a place of unimaginable, unending, torment and woe. No tyrant in history can match the Lord God for dealing with his enemies.

So, what are we dealing with here? We're dealing with something very serious, very profound.

So, let's look here at verse 23 of Hebrews 10, page 1,874:

“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”

Look at verse 25. Satan hates verse 25, and the worst thing that happened under COVID was how people scared the devil into us to get us from doing it.

That doesn't mean you have to be at church every time the doors are open. It doesn't mean that it's wrong to watch the church on tv. It doesn't mean that if you're sick that you should come to church and expose others. That's been true throughout human history.

But look at verse 25. What did the media and the government and governments around the world succeed in doing?

Do you realize that under Pope Francis, the Roman Catholic Church did something it had never done in its entire existence from the time that the Bishop of Rome replaced the Roman emperor in AD 476. What did they do?

Pope Francis gave a dispensation so that no longer did people have to attend Mass. That's never happened in the history of the Roman Catholic Church.

I have a good friend—he put Sandy and me up in the Catholic seminary in Washington, DC before he was a priest, right across from the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. We enjoyed our stay in Washington, courtesy of our friend who's a priest.

He is now a priest at St. Frances Cabrini Church and St. Frances Cabrini Church is a couple of blocks away from Christus St. Frances Hospital in Alexandria. Do you know what happened on Easter?

Because my friend, Chad Partain, was very burdened about Catholics being able to worship, he assembled a group of priests, and he brought the Monstrance.

What is a monstrance? It looks like a cross, and it's glass covered and inside that monstrance is a fragment of bone from St. Frances Cabrini. And he marched with that monstrance, another priest was holding over his head an umbrella, and as the priest marched from St. Frances Cabrini Church to Christus St. Frances Hospital, you could see pictures in our paper of Catholics everywhere bowing their knees. Why?

Because he was carrying the eucharist. The eucharist, in the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas is no longer bread and no longer wine, inside the eucharist the wafer—not inside—but that is the literal, actual, physical Christ himself, the entire Christ, his body and blood.

And so, Catholics were showing reverence as Father Chad marched, bowing their knees. You could see them in the middle of the street. You could see them on the sidewalks, everywhere, because he was burdened that Catholics would experience the worship according to the Catholic understanding going back to St. Thomas Aquinas, a Catholic understanding of the presence of Christ.

But what I'm getting at with this point is this: In the entire history of the Roman Catholic Church, no pope anywhere has ever suspended the obligation, particularly at Easter, the obligation to be present assembling themselves and what happened here?

(I confess my sin; I went along with this stuff.)

What's Satan's great weapon? I'll show you in a minute. Verse 25, let us “not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”



What is going on in the Ukraine is a signpost of that Day. It's saying, "You're very near Nash when you drive west of here." It's a signpost that Day is approaching.

Now turn back, if you will, for a moment, and we're virtually done, to Hebrews 2. What can you and I do about the situation in the Ukraine?

We can pray. We can encourage.

Let's look here at Hebrews 2:14 on page 1,864. "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity."

Who is the "he too"? That's the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus came into the world, the eternal Son of the eternal God, came into this world, he was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit inside the womb of the blessed virgin Mary, and he was exactly like you and exactly like me in every respect, except for two things:

He did not have a sinful, fallen, human nature, and he never sinned.

I have a sinful, fallen, human nature, and it still affects me today, especially on social media. It still affects me today, and I still sin.

I don't want to sin, I resist sinning, but sometimes I just can't help it. Wow!

Jesus never sinned, and he didn't have a sinful human nature, but he was tempted in every single, solitary way that you and I are. Wow!

So here he says in verse 14,

"So that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil."

Who holds the power of death still? He got the knockout blow when Jesus rose from the dead, but he still is operating in our planet, on our planet gloating. Satan loves war. Satan loves human conflict. Satan loves to see little boys get in fights on the playground. Satan loves to get husbands and wives squabbling over something like, "Did you see that?" "Yes, I did."

Satan loves all that. Satan loves conflict because Satan loves death. The thing Satan loves more than anything else in the entire universe is death. Wow! Loves it. Loves it like a hog loves slop. Satan loves death.

Now notice something about it,

"And free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."

Satan uses the fear of death to manipulate people into craziness. That's what he does. He's going to manipulate you; he's going to manipulate me to do stupid things. He manipulates through the fear of death.

Think about it. Jesus died to set you free from the fear of death. The fear of death.

Do you realize that when we are afraid, we are yielding ourselves to the tyranny of Satan who wants to manipulate us and control us and rob us of our inheritance?

So, what's the purpose of our assembling? It's so that we will encourage one another. It's so that we will cheer each other up. It's so we'll say, "Hey, look, it's not so bad. The Lord Jesus is coming soon. Hey, it's not so bad. God still heals people today. Hey, it's not so bad."

And you know, even in the midst of living in the Ukraine where there are lots of evangelical Christians, or in Russia where there are a lot of evangelical Christians too, you know, in the midst of the fire and confusion and fog of war, God has a word for people.

"Fear not."

How can I be in a subway place in Kiev with bombs dropping all around me and not be afraid? Because the Lord Jesus Christ loves us and he gave himself up for us, and if we come to him, we will never perish. We'll never perish (John 10:26-30).

"Do not fear."

So, what are we called to do and be? We're called to make a difference by prayer. I've been praying so much over the past months as I've traveled throughout my churches (which are about two-thirds of the state of Texas), I've noticed one thing, and it's made me very sad.

Churches don't gather to pray anymore. They don't. I'm struck with it. Prayer. Prayer is the great thing. We now have at least once a month a prayer time together.

Churches don't pray. Do you know what? Could it be in your case and my case and the case of Trinity Evangelical Presbyterian Church, this thing in Kiev is about getting us to pray?

I don't know what God's accomplishing in the lives of people in the old Soviet Union, but what does God want to accomplish in our lives?

He wants us to pray, and as we reflect on Numbers 7, here's the great truth, the great truth is that God is recording what you do for him.

That doesn't mean you're going to hell because you didn't do enough. That's not the point.

He's recording what you do as an individual and the most important thing you can do as an individual is to pray and share your faith with other people.

And he's also recording what this church is about. This church is an amazing church in many ways. I had no idea until yesterday, why Gary Miller, whom I asked to come and serve as your interim pastor, got so tired until I found out, as we met with his widow yesterday, his exhaustion was due to liver cancer.

Gary was a powerful man of God who became very weak, very weak. This church has had many blows, many blows, many blows, but you know, I look out here today, and we've been knocked down, but we're not out. We've been hit, but we're not collapsed and dead yet.

What does God want to do with Trinity? God wants to take Trinity just like one of those 12 tribes in the book of Numbers and make this place known:

"Man, that place on Robison Road, that is a praying church." And as we become a praying church, we will become a witnessing church and that changes the world.

And what can you do about the situation in Kiev and other places? Pray. Pray. What more is God going to have to do to the world to get us to pray together?

Let's pray.

*Lord, take this poor reflection on my part and stir our hearts, stir our hearts, stir our hearts. Lord, as we see the news, as we get on social media, as we read the news, stir our hearts against Satan's lies of fear to respond and say, "I can do something about this. I'll get off social media and quit arguing with people who know nothing, that only gets me upset and angry, and I'm going to pray."*

*And Lord, even to call some neighbors together and fellow church members together and pray in neighborhoods. Lord, prayer changes the world. Give us to remember that, know that, and do it.*

*In Jesus' mighty name. Amen.*